

A Great Starting Point

— Reminiscences of the great leader and teacher
Chairman Mao's early revolutionary activities



In commemoration of the first anniversary of the passing of Chairman Mao, newspapers and periodicals throughout the country have published articles on his revolutionary activities during different historical periods. Following are extracts from some of these articles.
— Ed.

CHAIRMAN Mao was a revolutionary all his life. Early in his youth he took an active part in the struggle for the liberation of the Chinese people. After the victory of the October Revolution, he earnestly studied and widely disseminated Marxism-Leninism, using it as a sharp weapon for observing problems and guiding the Chinese revolution. In the years immediately after the founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921, he upheld the principle of integrating Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution in building the Party and launching the workers' movement and the peasant movement.

Building the Party

Upon his return to Hunan Province after the conclusion of the First National Congress of the Party, Chairman Mao worked unstintingly to build the Party. He established the Hunan Party branch in October the same year, the first of its kind in the country; later, on the basis of the development of this branch, he set up the Hunan district Party committee, the first of its kind on a provincial level, with himself as secretary.

To build the Hunan district Party committee into a staunch headquarters leading the

proletariat and other revolutionary people to fight class enemies, Chairman Mao together with other committee members delved into Marxism-Leninism and made earnest efforts to study and implement the Central Committee documents. Practising strict democratic centralism in day-to-day work, he always put the questions to be decided on by the committee before all members for discussion, let them air their views fully and then made the relevant decisions by relying on the experience and wisdom of the collective. He attached great importance to Party discipline and democratic life and persisted in practising criticism and self-criticism among committee members, exhorting them to overcome their shortcomings and correct their mistakes in good time, which he metaphorically likened to a patient taking medicine. He often took the lead in going among the workers and peasants to learn from them modestly. He also talked with people wherever possible, acquainted himself with the situation, wrote articles and worked out plans. By his own deeds he set a brilliant example for the other comrades of the committee.

Chairman Mao paid the utmost attention to building the Party in the course of mass revolutionary struggles. Under his leadership, the Hunan district Party committee admitted into the Party advanced elements of the Socialist Youth League and other revolutionary organizations who had gone through tests in struggle, as well as those who had come to the fore in the workers' movement which the Party organized on a wide scale. Moreover, Chairman



Chairman Mao at the
First National Congress
of the Communist Party
of China.

Oil painting by Chiu
Jui-min and Chen
Yi-wei

Mao often went to factories, mines and villages to promote the building of the Party.

Thanks to Chairman Mao's correct leadership, Party organizations multiplied in Hunan. Within a year, Party branches or groups were set up in many factories and schools in Changsha, a regional Party committee was formed in Anyuan and the preparatory office of the Southern Hunan Special Party Committee was established in Hengyang. Party organizations also came into being in several counties.

In the course of building Party organizations, Chairman Mao attached great importance to ideological education in Marxism-Leninism. The Hunan district Party committee under his leadership, for instance, gave lectures and ran libraries and bookstores to educate the workers and revolutionary youth. He himself founded a college in Hunan to train Party and Youth League cadres and bring up progressive young people. At this college where the students learnt chiefly through their own efforts, Chairman Mao lectured on the fundamentals of

Marxism-Leninism, guided them to investigate the real conditions under which the Chinese revolution was developing, and edited a monthly publication called *Hsin Shih Tai* (New Era) in the name of the college. Both the college and the periodical established the good style of linking theory with practice, thus disseminating Marxism more widely and training large numbers of personnel for our Party.

Organizing the Workers' Movement

With the founding of the Hunan district Party committee, Chairman Mao concentrated most of his energy on Party building while at the same time putting a great deal of effort to organizing the workers' movement in Hunan. His activities in the latter constitute a splendid chapter in the annals of the workers' movement in China.

The Anyuan Coal Mines in Pinghsiang, Kiangsi Province, was a bureaucrat-comprador capitalist enterprise controlled by the imperialists. Here the workers were weighed down by the triple oppression of imperi-

alism, bureaucrat-capitalism and feudalism. Since Hunan and neighbouring Kiangsi were linked by the Chuchow-Pinghsiang Railway, the Party organization in Anyuan was affiliated to the Hunan district Party committee. In the autumn of 1921, Chairman Mao went to Anyuan. He talked with the miners down in the pits and in their dormitories, acquainted himself with their sufferings, needs and demands and called upon them to unite and fight against the capitalists. During his week-long stay there, he became a bosom friend of numerous workers.

Back in Changsha, Chairman Mao sent some cadres to Anyuan to open a night school for educating the workers in Marxism-Leninism, set up a workers' club and establish the Party organization. The club membership grew to more than 7,000 in one year and became a powerful revolutionary force.

The awakening of the workers terrified the reactionary railway and mining authorities, who plotted to disband the club. At this critical moment, Chairman Mao went to Anyuan again early in September 1922 to meet with the responsible members of the Party organization and the club. Together they analysed the revolutionary situation, took into account the balance of forces between the workers and the enemy and decided to call a general strike. Chairman Mao told the Anyuan workers that in struggling against the capitalists it was necessary to maintain strong unity and a firm fighting will. At the same time, heart-stirring slogans were raised to win sympathy and support and influence public opinion in their favour.

Under Chairman Mao's leadership, more than 17,000 workers in Anyuan went on strike on September 14, shouting the slogan "From now on, we are human beings, not beasts of burden!" The strike forced the reactionary authorities to come to terms in respect to the workers' demands for political rights, improvement in living and working conditions and wage increases. This was the first victory for the Hunan Party organizations in leading the workers' movement and fully demonstrated the tremendous strength of united, fighting workers.

Following this, Chairman Mao initiated and led a strike of more than 4,000 masons and carpenters in Changsha. He himself drew up plans, drafted manifestos and aroused public opinion to support the strike. At the height of the struggle, on October 22, he was seen at the command post encouraging the workers to fight on. On the 24th and 25th, Chairman Mao in his capacity as senior representative of the strikers confronted officials from the Hunan provincial government and compelled the reactionary authorities to comply with the workers' demands for more pay and freedom to carry on their trade without interference. Thus the strike, lasting almost 20 days, was crowned with success.

As these two strikes were in progress, the workers from the Wuchang-Changsha section of the Kwangchow-Hankow Railway also downed tools with demands for safeguarding political rights, improving their livelihood and punishing scabs. In keeping with the situation of the current struggle, Chairman Mao made careful arrangements which, coupled with the support of railway workers in other parts of the country, ensured the signal victory of this strike.

Chairman Mao, sensitive to the workers' feelings and demands, always stood in the van, getting the masses organized and boosting their morale at every juncture of their struggle. He consistently stressed that the workers' movement must be guided by Marxism-Leninism and co-ordinated with the peasant movement.

Launching the Peasant Movement

The peasant problem is fundamental to the Chinese revolution. It is the peasants who are the main political force in the Chinese revolution whose outcome hinges on the development of the peasant movement. But quite a number of comrades in the Party at that time lacked a sober understanding of this problem.

To greet the high tide in the revolution throughout the country, Chairman Mao returned from Shanghai to Hunan in the spring of 1925 and personally launched the peasant movement in his native place Shaoshan. He set up a peasants' night school for education in opposing

imperialism and feudalism and, recruiting four activists into the Party, he organized a Party branch in Shaoshan. This Party branch led the local peasant association in struggles to compel landlords and rich peasants to sell their food grain to peasants at normal prices, prevent them from shipping out grain to make excessive profits elsewhere, increase farm labourers' wages and reduce land rents. While in Shaoshan, Chairman Mao made an investigation of the political and economic situation in the rural areas and studied the peasants' revolutionary demands. He saw at first hand the revolutionary might of the organized peasants in the struggle against imperialism and feudalism. Thus a wealth of experience was gained for Party leadership of the peasant movement on an extensive scale.

Ideological preparations for a nationwide peasant movement and the training of peasant cadres were on the agenda. Chairman Mao in May 1926 went to Kwangchow to head the National Institute of the Peasant Movement, which was aimed at training a backbone force for peasant movements in various parts of the country. A total of 327 trainees coming in successive groups from 20 provinces attended the institute.

He paid great attention to guiding the trainees to apply the Marxist stand, viewpoint and method to the study of problems in the Chinese revolution and, in particular, to the peasant problem. He gave lectures on "The Peasant Problem in China," "Rural Education" and "Geography" as well as lectures on his own work *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*.

He also made it a point to encourage trainees to go among the masses and learn from their experience in practical struggle. It was Chairman Mao who arranged the sixth class of trainees to go to Kwangtung Province's Haifeng and Shaokuan to learn at first hand about the class struggle in the countryside. This enabled them to link theory closely with practice and fortify their determination to devote themselves to the peasant movement.

While going into matters concerning the peasant problem which he learnt from the

trainees from various parts of the country, he helped them study the conditions of different classes in the rural areas, the forms of feudal exploitation, the peasants' resistance and struggles, and farm production.

In his lectures, Chairman Mao clearly pointed up the importance of waging armed struggle and building the peasants' armed forces. He stressed that revolution must be carried out with arms in a tit-for-tat manner and that it was necessary to build the peasants' own armed forces to overthrow those of the landlords. On his proposal, the trainees were given strict military training so as to be well prepared for taking part in the forthcoming revolutionary wars.

The National Institute of the Peasant Movement founded by Chairman Mao thus trained large numbers of backbone cadres for the peasant movement in all parts of the country. Under Chairman Mao's leadership and guidance, the peasant movement in Hunan was forging full steam ahead before long. From October 1926 onwards, the peasant associations became the sole organs of authority in the province's rural areas. The organized peasants directed their attack at the local tyrants, the evil gentry and the lawless landlords, but in passing they also hit at patriarchal ideas and institutions, corrupt officials in the cities and bad practices and customs in the countryside. In force and momentum the attack was so tempestuous that the privileges which feudal landlords had enjoyed for thousands of years were being shattered to pieces.

With a view to summing up experience and pushing the revolution to a new high, the Hunan provincial peasant association and trade union council called the first provincial conference of peasant representatives and that of worker representatives respectively in Changsha on December 1, 1926. The two conferences sent a cable to Chairman Mao inviting him back to Hunan to give guidance. After his return to Changsha he made speeches at the welcome meetings in his honour and at the closing ceremonies. He pointed out that the central issue of the Chinese revolution was the peasant problem and stressed the need to strengthen the



Chairman Mao with participants in the peasant movement in Hunan.

Oil painting by Chan Chien-chun

revolutionary alliance of peasants and workers. Under his guidance, the two conferences issued manifestos and adopted resolutions on throwing out the corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry, establishing democratic political power and building the peasants' armed forces. All this gave a tremendous impetus to the development of the peasant movement in Hunan.

Rapid spread of the peasant movement throughout the country with Hunan as its centre threw the landlord class and the right-wingers of the Kuomintang into a panic and incurred their bitter hatred. They vilified the peasant movement as "a movement of the riff-raff, of the lazy peasants" and threatened to "ban the peasant movement." Catering to the counter-revolutionary demands of the landlord class and the right-wingers of the Kuomintang, the Right opportunists in the Party with Chen Tu-hsiu as their representative also attacked the peasant movement as "terrible" and "going too far," in a vain attempt to dissolve the peasants' armed forces, liquidate their political power and snuff out the peasant movement.

To counter the mudslinging of the landlord class and the right-wingers of the Kuomintang against the peasant movement and refute the carping criticisms of the Right opportunists within the Party, Chairman Mao made a first-hand investigation of conditions in five counties of Hunan Province — Hsiangtan, Hsianghsiang, Hengshan, Liling and Changsha — from January 4 to February 5, 1927. After making a scientific Marxist analysis of his on-the-spot findings, he wrote the famous article *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* which is included in Volume I of the *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*.

In this report, Chairman Mao spoke highly of the peasants' revolutionary actions, eulogized their significant role in the revolution and roundly refuted the slander and attacks against the peasant movement by class enemies both inside and outside the Party. This brilliant work armed the Communist Party members and the worker and peasant masses ideologically and helped push the peasant movement in Hunan to a new stage.