



MAO TSE-TUNG

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THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

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This is a speech delivered at a meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the May 4 Movement, held by the youth in Yen-an. Comrade Mao Tse-tung developed in this speech his ideas on the question of the Chinese revolution.

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TODAY is the twentieth anniversary of the May 4 Movement, and all our youth in Yen-an are gathered here to hold this commemoration meeting; I shall take the occasion to talk about some problems concerning the orientation of the Chinese youth movement.

First, it is quite right to have designated the fourth of May as the Youth Day of China.¹ Twenty years have already elapsed since the May 4 Movement, but it is an event of great significance that in this year we have at last designated it as the national Youth Day. For this indicates that China's anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution of the people will soon reach a turning-point. For several decades the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution of the people failed time and again and this situation is about to take a turn—not towards another failure but in the direction of

¹ May 4 was first designated as the Youth Day of China by youth organizations in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia border region. Under the pressure of the patriotic upsurge of the broad masses of the youth, the Kuomintang agreed to this decision. But later on, afraid that the youth would turn revolutionary, it proclaimed March 29 as its own Youth Day, because on that day in 1911 an abortive uprising was staged in Canton, in which many revolutionaries were martyred (their remains were later buried at Huanghuakang in the suburbs of the city). Yet May 4 continued to be observed as Youth Day in the revolutionary base areas under the leadership of the Communist Party. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government, in December 1949, officially proclaimed May 4 as China's Youth Day.

victory. The Chinese revolution is now advancing, and it is advancing towards victory. The failures of the revolutions in history cannot and must not be allowed to go on repeating themselves; the situation must be turned into one of victory. But has the turn already taken place? No. Such a turn has not yet taken place, we have not yet won victory. But victory can be won. In the present Anti-Japanese War we are precisely striving to reach the turning-point from failure to success. What the May 4 Movement opposed was a government of traitors, a government that conspired with imperialism and betrayed the interests of the nation, a government that oppressed the people. Was it wrong to have opposed such a government? If so, then the May 4 Movement was simply a mistake. But it is perfectly clear that such a government must be opposed and a government of traitors ought to be overthrown. And we should note that Dr. Sun Yat-sen, long before the May 4 Movement, was already a rebel against the government of his time, the Manchu government which he opposed and was to overthrow. Was he right in doing that? I think he was quite right. Because what he opposed was not a government that resisted imperialism, but a government that conspired with it; not a revolutionary government, but a government that suppressed the revolution. As the May 4 Movement carried out precisely the task of opposing a government of traitors, it was a revolutionary movement. The youth throughout China should see the May 4 Movement in such a light. Today, when the people of the whole country have vigorously risen to resist Japan, everyone, taking warning from the past experiences of failures in revolutions, has made up his mind to defeat Japanese

imperialism, and will not tolerate the traitors any more nor allow the revolution to fail again. Except for one section, all the youth of the country are awakened and are determined to achieve victory; to designate "May 4" as Youth Day precisely indicates this point. We are advancing on the road to victory and, provided that the people of the whole country make concerted efforts, the Chinese revolution will surely attain victory in the course of the Anti-Japanese War.

Secondly, what is the Chinese revolution directed against? What are the targets of the revolution? Everyone knows that imperialism is one and feudalism the other. What are the two targets of the revolution today? One is Japanese imperialism and the other the Chinese collaborators. To make a revolution we must overthrow Japanese imperialism, we must overthrow the collaborators. Who are to make the revolution? Who are the active participants in the revolution? None other than China's common people. The motive forces of the revolution are the proletariat, the peasantry and all the people of the other classes that are willing to oppose imperialism and feudalism; all these are the revolutionary forces against imperialism and feudalism. But among such a great number of people, who constitute the basic force and the backbone of the revolution? None other than the workers and peasants who make up 90 per cent of the country's population. What is the character of the Chinese revolution? What kind of revolution are we making at present? We are now making a democratic revolution of a bourgeois character, and nothing that we do will go beyond the scope of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. At present we should not yet destroy the bourgeois system

of private property in general, and what we want to destroy is imperialism and feudalism — this is called a democratic revolution of a bourgeois character. But the bourgeoisie is already powerless to accomplish this revolution, which can be accomplished only through the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people. What is the aim to be achieved by this revolution? The aim is to overthrow imperialism and feudalism and to establish a people's democratic republic. This people's democratic republic is a republic based on the revolutionary Three People's Principles. It is different from the semi-colonial and semi-feudal state of today, and will also be different from the socialist system of tomorrow. Under the socialist system of society, no capitalists are needed, while under this system of people's democracy capitalists will still be permitted to exist. Will China always need capitalists? No, definitely not in the future. This is true not only of China, but of the whole world as well. All countries whether Britain or the United States, France or Japan, Germany or Italy, will have no need of capitalists in the future, and China can be no exception. The Soviet Union is a country where socialism has been established, and beyond all doubt the whole world will follow it in the future. That China will certainly develop towards socialism in the future is a law nobody can defy. However, in the present stage we are not to carry out socialism, but to destroy imperialism and feudalism, to change the present semi-colonial and semi-feudal status of China, and to establish a system of people's democracy. The youth of the whole country should strive for this.

Thirdly, what are the lessons that we have learned from the past experiences in the Chinese revolution? This is also an important problem which our youth must understand. China's bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism was, properly speaking, started by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and has already continued for more than fifty years, while foreign capitalist countries have been committing acts of aggression on China for almost one hundred years. During the past hundred years China's struggles — starting with the Opium War against British aggression which was followed by the War of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the War of 1894,¹ the Reformist Movement of 1898, the Boxer Movement, the Revolution of 1911, the May 4 Movement, the Northern Expedition and the Red Army's War — though they took place under different circumstances, have all been waged to resist foreign enemies or to change the existing conditions. But it was only with Dr. Sun Yat-sen that a comparatively distinct bourgeois-democratic revolution began. During the last fifty years, the revolution that started with Dr. Sun has both scored successes and met with failures. Just consider, was not the revolution of 1911 a success in getting rid of the emperor? And yet it was a failure in the sense that it merely got rid of the emperor, that China still remained under the oppression of imperialism and feudalism and that the revolutionary task of opposing imperialism and feudalism was left unaccomplished. What was the May 4 Movement for? It was also for opposing imperialism and feudalism, but it failed in this respect, too, with the result that China

¹ Referring to the Sino-Japanese War.

still remains under the rule of imperialism and feudalism. The same was true of the revolution of the Northern Expedition; it scored successes, but it too failed. Ever since the Kuomintang started its anti-Communist campaign,¹ China has again come under the domination of imperialism and feudalism. Hence inevitably there ensued the ten years' war of the Red Army. But the ten years' struggle has accomplished the revolutionary task only in a part of China, and not in the country as a whole. In summing up the results of the revolution during the past several decades, we may say that we have won only temporary and partial victories but not permanent and nation-wide victories. It is just as Dr. Sun Yat-sen once said: "The revolution is not yet completed, all my comrades must strive on." Now it may be asked: The Chinese revolution has been carried on for several decades and why has it not attained its goal so far? Wherein lie the causes? I think there are two causes: first, the enemy forces have been too strong and, secondly, our own forces have been too weak. Because one was strong and the other weak, the revolution did not succeed. In saying that the enemy forces are too strong we mean that the forces of imperialism (which is the principal) and of feudalism are too strong. In saying that our own forces are too weak we have in mind the weaknesses manifested by us in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres; the chief reason for our weaknesses and our failure to accomplish the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal task, however, is that the toiling masses of workers and

¹ Referring to the counter-revolutionary *coups d'état* of 1927 staged by Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai and Nanking and by Wang Ching-wei in Wuhan.

peasants, constituting 90 per cent of the country's population, have not been mobilized. If we want to sum up the results of the revolution during the past several decades we can say that not all the people of the country have been fully mobilized, and that the reactionaries have always opposed and disrupted such mobilization. Only by mobilizing and organizing the broad masses of the workers and peasants, who constitute 90 per cent of the country's population, is it possible to overthrow imperialism and feudalism. Dr. Sun Yat-sen said in his Testament:

For forty years I have devoted myself to the cause of the national revolution with the aim of winning freedom and equality for China. My experiences during these forty years have firmly convinced me that to achieve this aim we must arouse the masses of the people and unite in a common fight with those nations of the world who treat us on the basis of equality.

It's now more than ten years since the death of Dr. Sun and, when the ten-odd years are added to the forty years he mentioned, the total is a good fifty years. What is the lesson of the revolution in the last fifty or more years? Fundamentally it is a lesson of "arousing the masses of the people." You should study this carefully, and all the youth of our country should study it carefully. All our youth must know that only by mobilizing the broad masses of workers and peasants, who constitute 90 per cent of the country's population, can we defeat imperialism and feudalism. Now we want to achieve the aim of defeating Japan and building up a new China; this is impossible without mobilizing the broad masses of workers and peasants of the whole country.

Fourthly, let me now return to the youth movement. On this very day twenty years ago there occurred in China the great historical event known as the May 4 Movement, in which the students participated; it was a movement of great significance. What role have the Chinese youth played since the May 4 Movement? They have in a way played the role of the vanguard, and this is recognized by all the people of the country except the die-hards. What is meant by the role of the vanguard? It is to take the lead, i.e. to stand at the head of the revolutionary ranks. Among the ranks of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal people in China, there is a contingent composed of the country's young intellectuals and students. This contingent is of considerable size; not counting those who have died, it numbers several millions at present. This contingent of several millions is a front army in the fight against imperialism and feudalism, and an important front army too. But this front army is not enough; we cannot defeat the enemy by relying on it alone, because it is not yet the main force. Who then constitute the main force? None other than the broad masses of workers and peasants. The young intellectuals and students of China must go into the midst of the masses of workers and peasants, and mobilize and organize these broad masses who constitute 90 per cent of the country's population. Lacking this main force of the workers and peasants, and relying only on the contingent of the young intellectuals and students, we cannot achieve victory in the fight against imperialism and feudalism. Therefore, the young intellectuals and students of the whole country must be united with the broad masses of workers and peasants and become one with them, so

that a powerful contingent can be formed. A contingent of hundreds of millions of people! Only with this huge contingent can the enemy's strong positions be smashed and his last fortress broken down. In examining the youth movement of the past from this viewpoint, we should call attention to an incorrect tendency: in the youth movement of several decades ago, a section of youth, unwilling to unite with the broad masses of workers and peasants, opposed their movement and constituted a counter-current in the tide of the youth movement. They were indeed very unwise in not uniting with these broad masses who constitute 90 per cent of the country's population and, what is more, in flatly opposing them. Was such a tendency good? I think not, because in opposing the workers and peasants they were in fact opposing the revolution, and, as I say, constituted a counter-current in the youth movement. Such a youth movement cannot bring about good results. A few days ago I wrote a short article¹ in which I made this remark:

The ultimate line of demarcation between the revolutionary intellectuals on the one hand and non-revolutionary and counter-revolutionary intellectuals on the other lies in whether they are willing to, and actually do, become one with the masses of workers and peasants.

There I proposed a criterion which I regard as the only criterion. What should be taken as the criterion in

¹ Referring to "The May 4 Movement," Volume III, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, English edition, London, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

judging whether a youth is a revolutionary? How shall we make him out? There is only one criterion, namely, to see whether he is willing to, and in practice does, unite and become one with the broad masses of workers and peasants. One who is willing to, and in practice does, unite with the workers and peasants is a revolutionary; otherwise he is a non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. If today one unites with the masses of workers and peasants, then one is a revolutionary today; if one ceases to do so tomorrow, or turns round to oppress the common people, one will become a non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. Some young people profess a good deal by word of mouth their belief in the Three People's Principles or in Marxism; but this does not count at all. Did not Hitler also profess his "belief in socialism"? And twenty years ago even Mussolini was a "socialist"! What at bottom is their "socialism"? It is nothing but fascism! Didn't Chen Tu-hsiu¹ also once

¹ While a professor at the Peking University, Chen Tu-hsiu was well known as editor of *New Youth*, an influential magazine which heralded the May 4 Movement. He took part in founding the Chinese Communist Party and, thanks to his reputation as well as the Party's immaturity, became its secretary-general. In the last period of the revolution of 1924-27, the Right opportunism in the Party as represented by him developed into capitulationism. In *The Present Situation and Our Task*, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said that the capitulators at that time "gratuitously relinquished the Party's leadership among the peasant masses, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie and especially among the armed forces, thus causing the defeat of that revolution." After the defeat in 1927 Chen Tu-hsiu and a handful of other capitulators lost their faith in the future of the revolution, and turned liquidationist. He took the reactionary stand of the Trotskyites and formed with them a small faction to oppose the Party. Consequently he was expelled from the Party in November 1929. Chen Tu-hsiu died in 1942.

“believe” in Marxism? What did he do afterwards? He went over to the counter-revolution. Didn’t Chang Kuo-tao¹ also “believe” in Marxism? Where has he gone now? He took to his heels and plunged straight into the mire. Some people call themselves “disciples of the Three People’s Principles” and old stalwarts of the Three People’s Principles — but what have they done? In fact their Principle of Nationalism means precisely conspiracy with imperialism; their Principle of Democracy means precisely oppression of the common people; and their Principle of People’s Welfare means precisely sucking as much blood from the common people as possible. They are adherents who affirm the Three People’s Principles by word of mouth but deny them in their hearts. Hence when we look at a person and judge whether he is a false adherent to the Three People’s Principles or a true one, whether he is a false Marxist or a true one, we need only

¹ Chang Kuo-tao, a renegade of the Chinese revolution, joined the Chinese Communist Party in its early period. He committed numerous mistakes leading to enormous crimes. In 1935, opposed to the northward march of the Red Army, he carried out his defeatist and liquidationist proposal that the Red Army be withdrawn to the regions of the national minorities on the borders of Szechuan and Sikang, thereby causing heavy losses to the Fourth Front Army. At the same time, he openly rebelled against the Party and the Central Committee by establishing a bogus central committee under his own control to disrupt the unity of the Party and the Red Army. Owing to patient educational work by Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the Central Committee, the rank and file of the Fourth Front Army and the broad masses of its cadres soon turned to the correct leadership of the Central Committee and have since played a splendid role in subsequent struggles. Chang himself proved incorrigible. In the spring of 1938, he fled all alone from the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia border region and joined the Kuomintang secret service.

to find out about his relationship with the broad masses of workers and peasants, and then everything will become perfectly clear. There is only this criterion and no other. I hope that the youth of the whole country will keep in mind that they should never fall into that dark counter-current but march towards a bright future, clearly recognizing that the workers and peasants are their own friends.

Fifthly, the present Anti-Japanese War marks a new stage of the Chinese revolution, a new stage that is the greatest, the most vigorous, the most dynamic. In this stage the youth shoulder tremendous responsibilities. The revolutionary movement in our country during the last several decades has gone through many stages of struggle, but no struggle was so wide in scope as the present Anti-Japanese War. When we say that the present revolution in China has a characteristic which distinguishes it from that of the past, namely, that it will turn from failure to victory, we mean that the broad masses of the people in China have made progress, of which the progress of the youth is a clear proof. Hence this Anti-Japanese War should be victorious and cannot but be victorious. As everybody knows, the basic policy in the Anti-Japanese War is the policy of the Anti-Japanese National United Front, which aims at overthrowing Japanese imperialism and the collaborators, transforming old China into new China, and liberating the whole nation from its semi-colonial and semi-feudal status. The disunity in the present Chinese youth movement is a serious defect. You should continue to demand unity, because only unity is strength. You must enable the youth of the whole

country to understand the present situation and achieve unity and resist Japan to the end.

Sixthly and lastly, I want to speak about the youth movement in Yen-an. The youth movement in Yen-an is the model for the youth movement throughout the country. The orientation of the youth movement in Yen-an is precisely the orientation for the youth movement throughout the country. Why? Because the line of advance of the youth movement in Yen-an is correct. Just consider: the youth of Yen-an have not only striven for but also achieved unity. The youth in Yen-an have achieved solidarity and unity among themselves. The youth in Yen-an, the young intellectuals, students, workers and peasants are all united. Hosts of revolutionary youth have come to Yen-an to study from all over the country and from among the overseas Chinese far away. Most of you who attend the meeting today hail from thousands or tens of thousands of *li* away; and irrespective of whether your surname is Chang or Li, whether you are a man or a woman, a worker or a peasant, all of you are of one mind. Shouldn't this be regarded as the model for the whole country? The youth in Yen-an are not only united among themselves, but are also united with the masses of workers and peasants; this in particular serves as a model for the whole country. What have the youth in Yen-an been doing? They have been learning the theory of revolution, studying the principles and methods of resisting Japan and of saving the nation. They have been carrying out the campaign for production and have reclaimed thousands and tens of thousands of *mou* of waste land. Such things as reclaiming waste land and cultivating the soil were not done even by Confucius. When Confucius