

CHAPTER
30

Section 3

PRIMARY SOURCE *from* **The Peasants of Hunan**
by Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong (1891–1976), the son of a Hunan peasant, was one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. He believed that he could bring economic and political change to improve the lives of China's rural peasants. According to the following passage written in 1927, what was Mao Zedong's vision of the Communist revolutionary movement in China?

During my recent visit to Hunan I conducted an investigation on the spot into the conditions in the five countries of Siangtan, Siangsiang, Hengshan, Liling, and Changsha. In the thirty-two days from January 4 to February 5, in villages and in county towns, I called together for fact-finding conferences experienced peasants and comrades working for the peasant movement, listened attentively to their reports and collected a lot of material. . . .

All kinds of arguments against the peasant movement must be speedily set right. The erroneous measures taken by the revolutionary authorities concerning the peasant movement must be speedily changed. Only thus can any good be done for the future of the revolution. For the rise of the present peasant movement is a colossal event. In a very short time, in China's central, southern and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a tornado or tempest, a force so extraordinarily swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to suppress it. They will break all trammels [restraints] that now bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will send all imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local bullies and bad gentry [members of the upper or ruling class] to their graves. All revolutionary parties and all revolutionary comrades will stand before them to be tested, and to be accepted or rejected as they decide.

To march at their head and lead them? Or to follow at their rear, gesticulating at them and criticising them? Or to face them as opponents?

Every Chinese is free to choose among the three alternatives, but circumstances demand that a quick choice be made. . . .

A revolution is not the same as inviting people to dinner, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing fancy needlework; it cannot be anything so refined, so calm and gentle, or so mild, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous [generous in forgiving]: A revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows another. A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the authority of the feudal landlord class. If the peasants do not use the maximum of their strength, they can never overthrow the authority of the landlords which has been deeply rooted for thousands of years. In the rural areas, there must be a great, fervent revolutionary upsurge, which alone can arouse hundreds and thousands of people to form a great force. . . .

from Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Vol. I (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 21–22, 27. Reprinted in Peter N. Stearns, ed., *Documents in World History*, Vol. II (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 137.

Discussion Questions

Recognizing Facts and Details

1. How many Chinese peasants did Mao Zedong predict would join the Communist revolutionary movement?
2. According to Mao Zedong, what three choices did Chinese Communist revolutionaries face in view of the growing peasant movement?
3. **Perceiving Cause and Effect** According to Mao Zedong, what was the purpose of the rural revolution in China?