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THE BEDFORD SERIES IN HISTORY AND CULTURE

**Mao Zedong
and China's Revolutions
A Brief History with Documents**

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The current guide inside China for permissible interpretations of CCP history and Mao's writings is "Resolution on Some Questions on Party History Since the Founding of the Nation," passed by the Central Committee on June 27, 1981 (see Document 16).⁹ Perhaps the best preliminary metaphor for the issues surrounding historicist party writings in the 1980s, including those on Mao's works, is that of academic theology in the Christian and Jewish traditions, where "scientific" linguistic and historical analyses seek to contribute to a living faith.

Finally, an assessment of Mao's writings would not be complete without at least a reference to the continuing debate in the West over the interpretations of these texts. Some of the documents in this book reflect these issues (see Documents 13 and 17). The reader should, however, be aware of a few issues in order to mine Mao's texts independently. Stuart Schram's basic text, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, and his collection of alternative Cultural Revolution "genius" editions of Mao's works, *Mao Zedong Unrehearsed*, provide ample background on these issues, as does Roderick MacFarquhar and company's *Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*. In addition, Schram has produced a review of the literature, "Mao Studies: Retrospect and Prospect," which raises problems of interpretation.¹⁰ More provocatively, Nick Knight challenges the reader to confront the problems of relativism and unconscious assumptions in analyzing Mao's texts.¹¹

In the selections, footnotes original to the document use footnote symbols (*, †, ‡, etc.); footnotes added by the editor of this volume are numbered.

⁹ *Beijing Review*, 6 July 1981, 10–39; Marín, *Cult & Canon*, 180–231.

¹⁰ Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1969); Stuart Schram, *Mao Zedong*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); Stuart Schram, "Mao Studies: Retrospect and Prospect," *China Quarterly*, 97 (1984): 95–125. See also, Brantly Womack's thoughtful review essay on the first five volumes of Schram and Hodes's *Mao's Road to Power: Mao before Maoism*, *The Chinese Journal*, no. 46 (July 2001): 95–117.

¹¹ Nick Knight, "Mao and History: Who Judges and How?" *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 13 (January 1985): 121–36. Knight makes a further contribution in "Mao Zedong: Ten Years After," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 16 (July 1986): special issue.

I

Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan

February 1927

This is one of Mao's most famous essays. It sets out to describe the uprising among poor farmers in the counties outside Changsha, in the central province of Hunan, in the winter of 1926–27. The full text of this report was first published in a local CCP journal in March and April 1927. Mao's intended audience was his fellow revolutionaries in the CCP and in the revolutionary wing of the GMD, or Nationalist Party.

The essay is organized into three broad topics: (1) an enthusiastic description and defense of the rural violence that had engulfed the area (and parts of neighboring provinces); (2) a class analysis of the leadership of this violence; and (3) a fourteen-point account of the achievements of the peasant associations that had sprung up to replace the decimated traditional power structure. Throughout the essay, Mao declares that this is the real Chinese revolution, not the urban revolution promised by European Marxism. Mao's genius was to locate the fundamental battleground of this class struggle not at the national or provincial level, but in local society. Mao especially claims that this rural insurrection fulfills the promise of Sun Yat-sen's 1911 Revolution, which had been subverted by militarists.

The essay includes one of Mao's most famous maxims: "Revolution is not a dinner party" (it is phrased slightly differently in this translation). This famous defense of the necessity and appropriateness of revolutionary violence, particularly summary executions of unpopular landlords, marked Mao as a serious and, among the GMD, hated revolutionary. He never looked back.

"Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha baogao," in Mao Zedong ji, ed. Takeuchi Minoru (Tokyo: Hokobosha, 1970), 1:207–49, which is taken from the 1944 and 1947 Chinese editions of Mao's Selected Works. Translation from Stuart R. Schram and Nancy J. Hodes, eds., Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949: Volume II: National Revolution and Social Revolution, December 1920–June 1927 (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 2:429–64. I have edited the text very lightly to minimize technical terms. I have not included Schram's extensive notations of textual variations between this original and the post-1949 editions of Mao's Selected Works.

I. RURAL REVOLUTION

1. The Importance of the Peasant Problem

During my recent visit, I made a first-hand investigation of the five counties of Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, Hengshan, Liling, and Changsha. In the thirty-two days from January 4 to February 5, I called together fact-finding conferences in villages and county towns, which were attended by experienced peasants and by comrades in the peasant movement, and I listened attentively to their reports and collected a great deal of material. Many of the arguments of the peasant movement were the exact opposite of what I had heard from the gentry class in Hankou and Changsha. I saw and heard many strange things of which I had hitherto been unaware. I believe that the same is also true of every province in all of China. Consequently, all criticisms directed against the peasant movement must be speedily set right, and the various erroneous measures adopted by the revolutionary authorities concerning the peasant movement must be speedily changed. Only thus can the future of the revolution be benefited. For the present upsurge of the peasant movement is a colossal event. In a very short time, several hundred million peasants in China's central, southern, and northern provinces will rise like a fierce wind or tempest, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to suppress it. They will break through all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will, in the end, send all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local bullies, and bad gentry to their graves. All revolutionary parties and all revolutionary comrades will stand before them to be tested, to be accepted or rejected as they decide. To march at their head and lead them? To stand behind them, gesticulating and criticizing them? Or to stand opposite them and oppose them? Every Chinese is free to choose among the three, but by the force of circumstances you are fated to make the choice quickly. Here I have written up my investigations and opinions in several sections, for the reference of revolutionary comrades.

2. Get Organized

The peasant movement in Hunan, so far as it concerns the counties in the central and southern parts of the province, where the movement is already developed, can be roughly divided into two periods. The first, from January to September of last year, was one of organization.

Within this period, January to June was a time of secret [activity], and July to September, when the revolutionary army was driving out Zhao,¹ an open time. During this period, the membership of the peasant associations did not exceed 300,000 to 400,000, and the masses directly under their command numbered little more than a million; there was as yet hardly any struggle in the rural areas, and consequently there was very little criticism of the associations in other circles. Because its members served as guides, scouts, and porters, even some of the officers had a good word to say for the peasant associations. The second period, from last October to January of this year, was one of revolution. The membership of the associations jumped to 2 million and the masses directly under their command increased to 10 million. (The peasants generally enter only one name for the whole family on joining a peasant association; therefore a membership of 2 million means a mass following of 10 million.) Almost half the peasants in Hunan are now organized. In counties like Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, Liuyang, Changsha, Liling, Ningxiang, Pingjiang, Xiangyin, Hengshan, Hengyang, Laiyang, Chenxian, and Anhua, nearly all the peasants have gone into the peasant associations or have come under their command. It was on the strength of their extensive organization that the peasants went into action and within four months brought about a great revolution in the countryside, a revolution without parallel in history.

3. Down with the Local Bullies and Bad Gentry! All Power to the Peasant Associations!

Now that the peasants have got themselves organized, they are beginning to take action. The main targets of their attack are the local bullies, the bad gentry, and the lawless landlords, but in passing they also hit out against patriarchal ideas and institutions of all kinds, against the corrupt officials in the cities, and against bad practices and customs in the rural areas. In force and momentum the attack is quite simply tempestuous; those who submit to it survive, and those who resist perish. As a result, the privileges the feudal landlords have enjoyed for thousands of years are being shattered to pieces. Their dignity and prestige are being completely swept away. With the collapse of the power of the gentry, the peasant associations have now become the sole organs of authority, and "All power to the peasant

¹Zhao: Zhao Hengti, governor of Hunan until March 1926

associations" has become a reality. Even trilling matters such as quarrels between husband and wife must be brought before the peasant association for settlement. Nothing can be settled in the absence of peasant association representatives. Whatever nonsense the people from the peasant association talk at meetings, that, too, is sacred. The association actually dictates everything in the countryside, all rural affairs, and quite literally, "whatever it says, goes." People outside the associations can only speak well of them and cannot say anything against them. The local bullies, bad gentry, and lawless landlords have completely lost their right to speak, and none of them dares even mutter dissent. Faced by the intimidating force of the peasant associations, the top local bullies and bad gentry have fled to Shanghai, those of the second rank to Hankou, those of the third to Changsha, and those of the fourth to the county towns, while the fifth rank and the still lesser fry surrender to the peasant associations in the villages.

"Here's ten yuan.² Please let me join the peasant association," one of the lesser bad gentry will say.

"Ha! Who wants your filthy money?" is the peasants' reply.

Many middle and small landlords, rich peasants, and even some middle peasants, who were formerly opposed to the peasant associations, are now seeking admission. Visiting various places, I often came across such people who pleaded with me, "Mr. Committeeman from the provincial capital, please be my guarantor!"

Under the Qing dynasty, the household census compiled by the local authorities consisted of a regular register and "the other" register, the former for honest people and the latter for burglars, bandits, and similar undesirables. In some places the peasants now use this to scare those who were formerly against the associations. They say, "Put their names down in the other register!"

Afraid of being entered in the other register, such people try various devices to gain admission into the peasant associations. Their minds are entirely set on this, and they do not feel safe until their names are entered in the peasant association register. More often than not the peasant associations turn them down flat, and so they are always on tenterhooks; with the doors of the association barred to them, they are like tramps without a home or, in rural parlance, "mere trash." In short, what was generally sneered at four months ago as the "peasants' gang" has now become something most honorable. Those

²yuan: one Chinese dollar. Its value fluctuated, but it was always a lot of money for poor farmers.

who formerly prostrated themselves before the gentry now all prostrate themselves before the power of the peasants. Everyone, no matter who, admits that the world has changed since last October.

4. It's Terrible and It's Fine

The peasants' revolt in the countryside disturbed the gentry's sweet dreams. When the news from the countryside reached the cities, the urban gentry were immediately in an uproar. When I first arrived in Changsha, I met all sorts of people and picked up a good deal of gossip. From the middle strata of society upwards to the Guomindang right-wingers,³ there was not a single person who did not sum it all up in the phrase, "It's terrible!" Even very revolutionary people, influenced by the views of the "It's terrible!" school which dominated the climate in the city, became downhearted when they tried to picture the situation in the countryside in their mind's eye and were unable to deny the word "terrible." Even very progressive people could only say, "This kind of thing is inevitable in a revolution, but still it's terrible." In short, no one at all could completely reject this word "terrible." But as I have already said, the fact is that the broad peasant masses have risen to fulfill their historical mission, and that the democratic forces in the countryside have risen to overthrow the forces of feudalism in the countryside. This overthrowing of the feudal forces is the real objective of the national revolution. What Mr. Sun Yatsen wanted, but failed, to accomplish in the forty years he devoted to the national revolution, the peasants have accomplished in a few months. The patriarchal-feudal class of local bullies, bad gentry, and lawless landlords has formed the basis of autocratic government for thousands of years, and is the cornerstone of imperialism, warlordism, and corrupt officialdom. [To overthrow them] is a marvelous feat never before achieved, not just in forty but in thousands of years. It is fine. It is not "terrible" at all. It is anything but "terrible." To give credit where credit is due, if we allot ten points to the accomplishments of the democratic revolution, then the achievements of the city dwellers and the military rate only three points, while the remaining seven points should go to the achievements of the peasants in their rural revolution. "It's terrible!" is obviously a theory for combating the rise

³Guomindang right-wingers: In 1926 and early 1927, the CCP and GMD cooperated in a united front. Mao was a member of both the GMD and the CCP at the time. Here Mao is criticizing conservative members of the GMD who do not support peasant activism.

of the peasants in the interests of the landlords; it is obviously a theory of the landlord class for preserving the old feudal order and obstructing the establishment of the new democratic order; it is obviously a counterrevolutionary theory. No revolutionary comrade should echo this nonsense. If your revolutionary viewpoint is firmly established, and if you go to the villages and have a look around, you will undoubtedly feel a joy you have never known before. Countless thousands of slaves—the peasants—are there overthrowing their cannibalistic enemies. What the peasants are doing is absolutely right; what they are doing is "fine!" "It's fine!" is the theory of the peasants and of other revolutionaries. Every revolutionary comrade should know that the national revolution requires a great change in the countryside. The Revolution of 1911 did not bring about this change, hence its failure. Now a change is taking place, and this is an important factor for the completion of the revolution. Every revolutionary comrade must support this change or he will be a counterrevolutionary.

5. The Question of "Going Too Far"

Then there is another section of people who say, "Although peasant associations are necessary, their actions at present are undeniably going too far." This is the opinion of the middle-of-the-roads. But what is the actual situation? True, the peasants are in a sense "unruly" in the countryside. Supreme in authority, the peasant association allows the landlord no say and sweeps away the landlord's prestige. This amounts to striking the landlord down into the dust and trampling on him there. They coined the phrase: "If he has land, he must be a bully, and all gentry are evil." In some of the places even those who own 50 *mu*⁴ of fields are called local bullies, and those who wear long gowns are called bad gentry. The peasants threaten, "We will put you in the other register!" They fine the local bullies and bad gentry, they demand contributions from them, and they smash their sedan-chairs.⁵ In the case of local bullies and bad gentry who are against the peasant association, a mass of people swarm into their houses, slaughtering their pigs and consuming their grain. They may even loll on the ivory-inlaid beds belonging to the young ladies in the households of the local bullies and bad gentry. At the slightest provocation they make arrests, crown the arrested with tall paper hats, and parade

⁴ *mu*: about one-sixth of an acre

⁵ *sedan-chairs*: chairs in which rich people traveled in rural China. Two or four porters would lift and carry the chair, which had sides and curtains.

them through the villages, saying, "You dirty landlords, now you know who we are!" Doing whatever they like and turning everything upside down, they have even created a kind of terror in the countryside. This is what ordinary people call "going too far," or "going beyond the proper limits in righting a wrong," or "really too much." Such talk may seem plausible, but in fact it is wrong. First, the local bullies, bad gentry, and lawless landlords have themselves driven the peasants to this. For ages they have used their power to tyrannize over the peasants and trample them underfoot; that is why the peasants have reacted so strongly. The most violent revolts and the most serious disorders have invariably occurred in places where the local bullies, bad gentry, and lawless landlords perpetrated the worst outrages. The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves severe punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly—the peasants keep clear accounts, and very seldom has the punishment exceeded the crime. Therefore, Mr. Tang Mengxiao⁶ also said "The peasants are arresting local bullies and bad gentry, nine of ten arrested deserve it." Secondly, a revolution is not like inviting people to dinner, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so "benign, upright, courteous, temperate and complaisant."* A revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows the power of another. A rural revolution is a revolution in which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class. If the peasants do not use extremely great force, they cannot possibly overthrow the deeply rooted power of the landlords, which has lasted for thousands of years. The rural areas must experience a great, fervent revolutionary upsurge, which alone can rouse the peasant masses in their thousands and tens of thousands to form this great force. All the excessive actions mentioned above [result from] the power of the peasants, mobilized by the great, fervent revolutionary upsurge in the countryside. It was highly necessary for such things to be done in the second period of the peasant movement, the period of revolutionary action. Such actions were extremely necessary during the second period of the peasant movement (the period of revolution).

⁶ *Tang Mengxiao*: Tang Shengzhi, a military commander for Hunan's governor Zhao Hengti. In March 1926, Tang succeeded Zhao as governor and worked with the GMD. In early 1927, Tang supported Mao's work, but he later turned against the Communists.

*These are the qualities that enabled Confucius, according to his disciple Zigong, to obtain information about the government of the countries he visited. See the *Analects*, I, X, 2.

In this period, it was necessary to establish the absolute dominance of the peasants. It was necessary to forbid criticism of the peasant associations. It was necessary to overthrow completely the authority of the gentry, to knock them down and even stamp them underfoot. All excessive actions had revolutionary significance during the second period. To put it bluntly, it is necessary to bring about a brief reign of terror in every rural area; otherwise we could never suppress the activities of the counterrevolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry. To right a wrong it is necessary to exceed the proper limits; the wrong cannot be righted without doing so. The argument of this group seems on the surface to differ from that of the group discussed earlier, but essentially they proceed from the same standpoint and likewise voice a landlord theory that upholds the interests of the privileged classes. Since this theory impedes the rise of the peasant movement and so disrupts the revolution, we must firmly oppose it.

II. THE REVOLUTIONARY VANGUARD

1. The Movement of the Riffraff

The right wing of the Guomindang says, "The peasant movement is a movement of the riffraff, a movement of the lazy peasants." This argument has gained much currency in Changsha. When I was in the countryside, I heard the gentry say, "It is all right to set up peasant associations, but the people now running them are no good. They ought to be replaced!" This argument comes to the same thing as what the right-wingers are saying. Both admit that it is all right to have a peasant movement (since the peasant movement has already come into being, no one dare say otherwise), but they regard the people running it as no good. Their hatred is directed particularly against those in charge of the associations at the lower levels, whom they call "riffraff." Those people in the countryside who used to go around in worn-out leather shoes, carry broken umbrellas, wear green gowns, and gamble—in short, all those who were formerly despised and kicked into the gutter by the gentry, who had no social standing, and who were completely deprived of the right to speak, have now dared to lift their heads. Not only have they raised their heads, they have also taken power into their hands. They are now running the township peasant associations (the lowest level of peasant associations), and have turned them into a formidable force. They raise their

rough, blackened hands and lay them on the heads of the gentry. They tether the bad gentry with ropes, crown them with tall paper hats, and parade them through the villages. (In Xiangtan and Xiangxiang they call this "parading through the township" and in Liling "parading through the fields.") Every day the coarse, harsh sounds of their denunciations pierce the ears of these gentry. They are giving orders and running everything. They, who used to rank below everyone else, now rank above everybody else—that is what people mean by "turning things upside down."

2. Vanguard of the Revolution or Outstanding Contributors to the Revolution

When there are two different ways of looking at a certain thing, or a certain kind of people, two opposite assessments emerge. "It's terrible!" and "It's fine!" are one example and "riffraff" and "vanguard of the revolution" are another. We said above that the peasants had accomplished a revolutionary task for many years left unaccomplished and had done the principal work in the national revolution. But has this great revolutionary task, this principal work in the revolution, been performed by all the peasants? No. There are three kinds of peasants: the rich, the middle, and the poor peasants. These three categories live in different circumstances and so have different ideas about the revolution. In the first period, what appealed to the rich peasants (those who have surplus money and grain are called rich peasants) was the talk about the Northern Expeditionary Army's sustaining a crushing defeat in Jiangxi, about Chiang Kaishek's being wounded in the leg and flying back to Guangdong, and about Wu Peifu's recapturing Yuezhou.⁷ The peasant associations would certainly not last and the Three People's Principles⁸ could never prevail, because they had never been heard of before. Thus an official of the township peasant association (generally one of the riffraff type) would walk into the house of a rich peasant, register in hand, and say, "Will you please join the peasant association?" How did the rich peasants reply? "Peasant association? I have lived here for decades, tilling my land. I never saw such a thing before, yet I've managed to live all

⁷These are all rumored setbacks in the Northern Expeditionary Army's military campaigns. Wu Peifu was a northern militarist who at one point reportedly retook the central Chinese city of Yuezhou from the Northern Expeditionary Army.

⁸*Three People's Principles*: socialism, nationalism, and democracy—the goals of Sun Yat-sen and the official ideology of the Northern Expeditionary Army

right," says a rich peasant with a tolerably decent attitude. "I advise you to give it up!" A really vicious rich peasant says, "Peasant association! Nonsense! Association for getting your head chopped off! Don't get people into trouble!" Yet, surprisingly enough, the peasant associations have now been established for several months and have even dared to stand up to the gentry. The gentry of the neighborhood who refused to hand over their opium pipes were arrested by the associations and paraded through the villages. In the county towns, moreover, some big landlords were put to death (such as Yan Rongqiu of Xiangtan and Yang Zhize of Ningxiang). On the anniversary of the October Revolution, at the time of the anti-British rally and of the great celebrations of the victory of the Northern Expedition, tens of thousands of peasants, holding high their banners, big and small, along with their carrying poles and hoes, demonstrated in massive, streaming columns. The rich peasants began to get perplexed and alarmed in their hearts. During the great victory celebrations of the Northern Expedition, they learned that [the city of] Jiujiang had also been taken, that Chiang Kaishek had not been wounded in the leg, and that Wu Peifu had been defeated after all. What is more, they saw "Long live the Three People's Principles!" "Long live the peasant associations!" "Long live the peasants!" and so on and so forth clearly written on the red and green proclamations (slogans).

"What?" wondered the rich peasants, greatly perplexed and alarmed, "Long live the peasants! Are these people now to be regarded as emperors?*" So the peasant associations are putting on grand airs. People from the associations say to the rich peasants: "We'll enter you in the other register!"

"In another month, the admission fee will be ten yuan a head!"

Only under the impact and intimidation of all this are the rich peasants tardily joining the associations, some paying fifty cents or one yuan for admission (the regular fee being a mere ten coppers), some securing admission only after asking other people to put in a good word for them. But there are quite a number of diehards who have not joined to this day. When the rich peasants join the associations, they generally enter the name of some sixty- or seventy-year-old member of the family, for they are in constant dread of conscription. After joining, the rich peasants are not keen on doing any work for the association. They remain inactive throughout. How about the middle peasants?

*The most common expression in Chinese for "Long live!" is *wansui*, literally "ten thousand years," which was used of the emperor.

(Those who do not have any surplus money and rice, are not in debt, and are able to assure themselves of clothing, food, and shelter every year are called the middle peasants.) The attitude of the middle peasants is a vacillating one. They think that the revolution will not bring much good to them. They have rice cooking in their pots and no creditors knocking on their doors at midnight. They, too, judging a thing by whether it ever existed before, knit their brows and think to themselves, "Can the peasant association really last?" "Can the Three People's Principles prevail?" Their conclusion is, "Afraid not!" They imagine it all depends on the will of Heaven and think, "A peasant association? Who knows if Heaven wills it or not?" In the first period, people from the association would call on a middle peasant, register in hand, and say, "Will you please join the peasant association?" The middle peasant replied, "There's no hurry!" It was not until the second period, when the peasant associations were already exercising great power, that the middle peasants came in. Even though they are somewhat better in the peasant associations than the rich peasants, they are never very enthusiastic, and retain their vacillating attitude. The only kind of people in the countryside who have always put up the bitterest fight are the poor peasants. From the period of underground work straight through to the period of open activity, it is they who have fought. As for organization, it is they who are organizing things there, and as for revolution, it is they who are making revolution there. They alone are the deadly enemies of the local tyrants and evil gentry, and they strike them without the slightest hesitation. They alone are capable of carrying out the work of destruction. They say to the rich and middle peasants:

"We joined the peasant association long ago, why are you still hesitating?"

The rich and the middle peasants answer mockingly:

"What is there to keep you from joining? You people have neither a tile over your heads nor a speck of land under your feet!"

It is true that the poor peasants are not afraid of losing anything. They are the disinherited or semidisinherited in rural life. Some of them really have "neither a tile over their heads nor a speck of land under their feet." What, indeed, is there to keep them from joining the associations? According to the survey of Changsha county, the poor peasants comprise 70 percent, the middle peasants 20 percent, and the rich peasants 10 percent. The 70 percent, the poor peasants, may be subdivided into two categories, the utterly destitute and the less

destitute. The "utterly destitute" are the completely dispossessed, that is, people who have neither land nor capital, are without any means of livelihood, and are forced to leave home and become mercenaries or hired laborers and wandering beggars, or commit crimes and become robbers and thieves. They make up 20 out of the 70 [percent]. The less destitute are the partially dispossessed, that is, people with just a little land or a little capital who eat up more than they earn and live in toil and distress the year round, such as the handicraftsmen, the tenant-peasants (not including the rich tenant-peasants), and the semitenant-peasants. These make up 50 out of the 70 [percent]. (The number of poor peasants in other counties may be smaller than in Changsha, but there should not be a big discrepancy.) This great mass of poor peasants constitute the backbone of the peasant associations, the vanguard in overthrowing the feudal forces, and the foremost heroes who have performed the great revolutionary task which for long years was left undone. Without the poor peasant class (the riffraff, as the gentry call them), it would never have been possible to bring about the present revolutionary situation in the countryside, or to overthrow the local bullies and bad gentry and to complete the democratic revolution. The poor peasants (especially the portion who are utterly destitute), being the most revolutionary group, have gained the leadership of the peasant associations. In both the first and second periods almost all the chairmen and committee members in the peasant associations at the lowest level (i.e., the township associations) were poor peasants (of the officials in the township associations in Hengshan county the class of the utterly destitute comprise 50 percent, the class of the less destitute 40 percent, and poverty-stricken intellectuals 10 percent). This leadership by the poor peasants is extremely necessary. Without the poor peasants there would be no revolution. To deny their role is to deny the revolution. To attack them is to attack the revolution. From beginning to end, the general direction they have given to the revolution has never been wrong. They have discredited the local bullies and bad gentry. They have knocked down the local bullies and bad gentry, big and small, and trampled them underfoot. Many of their "excessive" deeds in the period of revolutionary action were in fact the very things the revolution required. Some county governments, county headquarters of the Guomindang, and county peasant associations in Hunan have already made a number of mistakes; some have even sent soldiers to arrest officials of the lower-level associations at the landlords' request. A good many chairmen and committee members of township associations in Hengshan

and Xiangxiang counties have been thrown in jail. This mistake is very serious and unintentionally feeds the arrogance of the reactionaries. To judge whether or not it is a mistake, you have only to see how joyful the lawless landlords become and how reactionary sentiments grow whenever the chairmen or committee members of local peasant associations are arrested. We must combat the counterrevolutionary slogan of a "movement of riffraff" and a "movement of lazy peasants," but at the same time we should be especially careful not to help the local bullies and bad gentry (however unintentionally) in their attacks on the leadership of the poor peasant class. In fact, though a few of the poor peasant leaders undoubtedly did "gamble, play cards, and not earn their living by hard work," most of them have changed by now. They themselves are energetically prohibiting gambling and suppressing banditry. Where the peasant association is powerful, gambling has stopped altogether and the peril of banditry has vanished. In some places it is literally true that people do not take articles left by the way-side and that doors are not bolted at night. According to the Hengshan survey, 85 percent of the poor peasant leaders have made great progress and have proved themselves capable and hard-working. Only 15 percent retain some bad habits. The most one can call them is "an unhealthy minority," and we must not echo the local bullies and bad gentry in indiscriminately condemning them as "riffraff." As to dealing with the "unhealthy minority," we can proceed only under the peasant associations' own slogan of "strengthen discipline," by conducting propaganda among their masses, by training the "unhealthy minority," and by improving the discipline of the associations; in no circumstances should soldiers be arbitrarily sent to make such arrests as would weaken the faith [in] the poor peasants and feed the arrogance of the local bullies and bad gentry. This point requires careful attention.

III. PEASANTS AND THE PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS

Most critics of the peasant associations allege that they have done a great many bad things. I have already pointed out in the preceding two sections that the peasants' attack on the local bullies and bad gentry is entirely revolutionary behavior and in no way blameworthy. But the peasants have done a great many things, and we must closely examine all their activities to see whether or not what they have done is really all bad, as is being said from without. I have summed up their

activities of the last few months; in all, the peasants under the command of the peasant associations have the following fourteen great achievements to their credit.

1. Organizing the Peasants under Peasant Associations

This is the first great thing the peasants have achieved. In counties such as Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, and Hengshan, nearly all the peasants are organized and there is hardly a remote corner where they are not on the move; these are the best places. In some counties like Yiyang and Huarong, the bulk of the peasants have arisen, with only a small section not yet arisen; these places are in the second grade. In other counties, like Chengbu and Lingling, while a small section has arisen, the bulk of the peasants have still not arisen; these places are in the third grade. Western Hunan, which is under the control of Yuan Zuming, has not yet been reached by the associations' propaganda, and the peasants of many of its counties have completely failed to rise; these form a fourth grade. Roughly speaking, the counties in central Hunan, with Changsha as the center, are the most advanced, those in southern Hunan come second, and western Hunan is only just beginning to organize. According to the figures compiled by the provincial peasants' association last November, organizations with a total membership of 1,367,727 have been set up in thirty-seven of the province's seventy-five counties. Of these members, about one million were organized during the time of October and November when the power of the associations rose high, while up to September the membership had only been 300,000 to 400,000. Then came the two months of December and January, and the peasant movement continued its brisk growth. By the end of the month the membership must have reached at least two million. As a family generally enters only one name when joining and has an average of five members, the mass following must have reached ten million. This astonishing and accelerating rate of expansion explains why the local bullies, bad gentry, and corrupt officials have been isolated; why society has been amazed at how different the world was before and after; and why a great revolution has been wrought in the countryside. This is the first great thing that the peasants have achieved under the command of the peasant associations.

The table [on pp. 56-58] gives the membership of the peasant associations in all the counties in Hunan province as of last November [1926].

2. Dealing Political Blows to the Landlords

After the peasants are organized, the first thing they do is to smash the political prestige of the landlord class, and especially of the local bullies and bad gentry, that is, to pull down the power and influence of the landlords and build up the power and influence of the peasants in rural society. This is a most serious and urgent struggle; it is the central struggle in the second period, the period of revolution. If this struggle is not victorious, there can be no possibility of victory in any of the economic struggles, such as the struggle for rent and interest reduction, or for capital and land, and so on. In many places in Hunan like Xiangxiang, Hengshan, and Xiangtan counties, this is of course no problem since the power of the landlords has been overturned and the peasants constitute the sole power. But in counties like Liling, there are still some places (such as the two western and southern counties of Liling) where the power of the landlords seems weaker than that of the peasants but, because the political struggle has not been sharp, landlord power is in fact surreptitiously opposing peasant power. In such places it is still too early to say that the peasants have gained political victory; they must wage the political struggle more vigorously until the power of the landlords is completely cast down. . . .

[In the remaining part of this item, Mao catalogs the methods used by peasants to attack landlord power in Hunan: auditing accounts, imposing fines, levying contributions, holding minor and major demonstrations, parading landlords in dunce caps, jailing, banishment, and execution. In the next item, Item 3, Mao covers the economic powers of the peasant associations, including keeping grain in the county, limiting rents, protecting tenants' rights, and lowering interest on loans.]

4. Overthrowing the Feudal Politics of the Local Bullies and Bad Gentry in the Rural Areas—Smashing the Districts and the Townships

The old organs of rural administration in the districts and townships, and especially at the district level (namely just below the county level), used to be almost exclusively in the hands of the local bullies and bad gentry. They had jurisdiction over a population of from ten to fifty or sixty thousand people. They had their own independent armed forces, such as the township defense corps; their own independent fiscal

Comparative Table of Peasant Association Membership by County

SOCIAL STATUS OF MEMBERS

NAME OF COUNTY	NO. OF ASSNS ^a	XIAN ASSNS ^a	LABORERS	SHARE CROPPERS	SEMI-OWNER PEASANTS	OWNER PEASANTS	HAND- CRAFT WORKERS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS	SMALL MERCHANT	WOMEN	OTHER MEMBERS	NO. OF		
												MEMBERS	OTHER MEMBERS	MEMBERS
Xiangxiang	44	499	16,400	87,590	52,635	14,793	12,514	151	634	57	400	190,544	139,190	176,000
Liyang	21	568	27,000	54,100	12,400	8,460	7,400	1,100				120,460	88,223	82,223
Hengyang	23	244	17,358	37,725	7,332	5,628	6,135	2,256	1,463	643	1,579	66,415	62,300	66,415
Changsha	12	640	17,527	25,948	9,131	5,381	4,915	1,425				62,300	58,476	58,476
Liling	15	323	6,746	35,460	6,920	3,998	3,643	230	601	195	683	58,476	58,000	58,000
Ningxiang	18	400	5,000	20,000	10,000	4,000	8,400	600	100	16	1,133	57,262	30,016	30,016
Chenxian	14	696	19,725	26,898	2,124	2,550	5,711	118				29,475	29,475	29,475
Hengshan	13	203	3,623	16,933	2,965	2,174	3,328	1,794	582	156		20,000	20,000	20,000
Linwu	6	32	2,183	10,143	4,146	2,291	933	254				18,400	18,400	18,400
Youxian	7	67	1,568	5,017	6,586	1,586	784	32	126			15,680	14,652	14,652
Huarong	6	49	2,000	6,595	2,453	1,887	401	1,216				14,183	12,946	11,660
Yizhang	10	185	1,438	8,936	1,637	1,283	802	87				11,660	11,260	10,450
Laiyang	9	149	1,145	6,865	2,684	1,844	342	66				11,260	11,260	11,260
Linhui	6	49	2,000	3,000	2,400	4,000	200	60				4,450	4,450	4,450
Chaling	4	124	500	7,000	2,500	1,000	200	60				4,450	4,450	4,450
Yongxing	16	107	1,200	2,800	4,020	2,200	200	30				2,852	2,852	2,852

Pingjiang	17	162	1,023	4,298	1,781	1,612	1,093	214	85	4	42	10,152	9,746	9,545
Xinming	9	25	1,722	6,533	858	375	184	74				9,746	9,545	9,377
Changde	3	59	890	2,800	2,080	3,500	310	65				9,000	9,000	9,000
Wugang	8	40	1,800	4,500	900	900	900	900				8,865	8,865	8,865
Baoding	7	136	1,438	2,367	1,481	1,744	771	900				7,000	6,464	6,377
Zhuping Lu		21	997	3,152	732	539	687	50	297	10	36	7,000	6,464	6,377
Nanxian	6	49	1,384	4,064	907	406	69	89	45		7,226	7,000	6,464	6,377
Xinhua	6	52	1,526	3,246	497	424	472	202				6,377	6,377	6,245
Guiyang	4	445	445	274	1,673	1,525	402	24				6,245	6,245	6,245
Qiyang	15	70	1,312	1,917	601	492	546	218	382			6,000	5,468	5,468
Lingxian	12	48	2,148	1,123	891	341	699	122				5,468	5,324	5,324
Zixing	5	79	2,148	1,123	891	341	699	122				5,324	5,193	5,193
Guidong	7	95	816	1,156	1,022	1,507	94	62	204	297	25	5,193	5,150	5,150
Xintian	8	47	456	2,927	955	488	299	25				4,549	4,496	4,496
Changning	11	48	263	1,550	601	1,806	236	40	105	152	81	4,496	4,000	4,000
Taoyuan	7	36	624	995	847	1,195	47	31				4,000	3,839	3,839
Yuanjiang	3	19	241	1,174	520	1,615	243	46			35	3,839	3,350	3,350
Lanshan	4	51	765	1,499	604	385	41	21				3,350	2,549	2,549
Lixian	4	16	597	1,033	389	249	215	66				2,549	2,452	2,452
Jiahe	3	27	295	598	588	850	89	32				2,452		

^aA *qu* is a subdistrict of a county.

powers, such as the power to levy taxes; and their own judiciary, which could freely arrest, imprison, try, and punish the peasants and so on. The bad gentry who ran these organs of rural administration were virtual monarchs of the countryside. Comparatively speaking, the peasants were not so much concerned with the president of the republic, the provincial military governor, or the county magistrate; their real "bosses" were these rural monarchs. A mere snort, and the peasants all knew they had to watch their step. As a consequence of the present revolt in the countryside, the authority of the landlord class has been struck down everywhere, and the organs of rural administration dominated by the local bullies and bad gentry have naturally collapsed in its wake. The heads of the districts and the townships all steer clear of the people, dare not show their faces and hand all local matters over to the peasant associations. They put people off with the remark, "It is none of my business!"

Whenever their conversation turns to the heads of the districts and the townships, the peasants say angrily, "That bunch! They are finished!"

Yes, the term "finished" truly describes the state of the old organs of rural administration wherever the storm of revolution has raged.

5. Overthrowing the Armed Forces of the Landlords and Establishing Those of the Peasants

The armed forces of the landlord class were smaller in central Hunan than in the western and southern parts of the province. An average of 600 rifles for each county would make a total of 45,000 rifles for all the seventy-five counties; there may, in fact, be more than this number. In the southern and central parts where the peasant movement is being developed, the landlord class cannot hold its own because of the overwhelming momentum with which the peasants have risen, and its armed forces have largely capitulated to the peasant associations and taken the side of the peasants; examples of this are to be found in such counties as Ningxiang, Pengjiang, Liuyang, Changsha, Liling, Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, Anhua, Hengshan, and Hengyang. In some counties such as Baoqing and so on, a small number of the landlords' armed forces are taking a neutral stand, though still with a tendency to capitulate. Another small section are opposing the peasant associations, but the peasants are attacking them and may wipe them out before long, as, for example, in such counties as Yichang, Linwu, and Jiahe. At the present time, stronger measures are being taken against

Comparative Table of Peasant Association Membership by County (continued)

SOCIAL STATUS OF MEMBERS		COUNTY													Total
NO. OF MEMBERS	NO. OF OTHER MEMBERS	ANXIANG	YONGMING	YUEYANG	XUPU	DAOXIAN	LUXI	SUNING	NINGYUAN	CHENGBU	LINGLING	MAYANG	ZHIJIANG		
2,298	2,182	13	31	47	11	39	17	15	13	8	15	9	4	680	6,867
1,965	2,010	2	7	136	11	540	102	121	86	130	23	348	9	76	118
1,435	1,306	13	47	830	775	540	540	314	480	195	133	167	15	440	760
1,306	1,435	3	58	410	331	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
1,111	1,306	6	5	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
892	889	8	5	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
889	697	1	7	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
697	58	4	7	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
630	48	4	7	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760
274	21	7	7	830	775	540	350	297	159	372	251	167	15	440	760

* A qu is a subdistrict of a county.
 * A xiang is a subdistrict of a qu.

these forces, which may all be eradicated soon. The armed forces thus taken over from the reactionary landlords are all being reorganized into a "standing household militia" and are under the new organs of rural self-government, which are organs of the political power of the peasantry. This "taking over these old armed forces" is one part of building up an armed force of the peasantry. Even though some of them are still struggling, the various counties in southern and central Hunan have no problems anymore. There are some problems only in western Hunan. In addition, there is a new way for establishing an armed force of the peasants, which is through the setting up of spear corps under the peasant associations. The spears have pointed, double-edged blades mounted on long shafts, and there are now 100,000 of these weapons in Xiangxiang county alone. Other counties such as Xiangtan, Hengshan, Liling, and Changsha have 70,000 to 80,000, or 50,000 to 60,000, or 30,000 to 40,000 each. In every county where there is a peasant movement, the spears are spreading rapidly. These peasants thus armed form an "irregular household militia." This multitude equipped with spears, which is larger than the old armed forces mentioned above, is a newborn "thing," the mere sight of which makes the local tyrants and evil gentry shiver. The revolutionary authorities in Hunan should see to it that this kind of thing is built up on a really extensive scale among the more than 20 million peasants in the seventy-five counties of the province, that every peasant, whether young or in his prime, possesses a spear, and that no restrictions are imposed as though a spear were something dreadful. Anyone who is scared at the sight of the spear corps is indeed a weakling! Only the local bullies and bad gentry are frightened of them, but no revolutionaries should take fright.

6. Overthrowing the Political Power of the County Magistrate and His Bailiffs

That only if the peasants rise can the county government be cleaned up has already been proved in Haifeng, Guangdong province. On this occasion in Hunan, we have obtained further ample proof. In a county that is under the sway of the local bullies and bad gentry, the magistrate, whoever he may be, is always a corrupt official. In a county where the peasants have risen there is clean government, whoever the magistrate may be. In the counties I visited, the magistrates had to consult the peasant associations on everything in advance. In counties where the power of the peasant movement was very strong, the word

of the peasant association worked miracles. If the peasant association demanded the arrest of a local bully in the morning, the magistrate dared not delay till noon; if they demanded it by noon, he dared not delay till the afternoon. When the power of the peasants was just beginning to make itself felt in the countryside, the magistrate worked in league with the local bullies and bad gentry. When the peasants' power grew till it matched that of the landlords, the magistrate took the position of trying to accommodate both sides, accepting some of the peasant association's suggestions while rejecting others. The remark that "the word of the peasants works miracles" applies only when the power of the landlords has been completely beaten down by that of the peasants. At present the political situation in counties such as Xiangxiang, Xiangtan, Liling, and Hengshan is as follows:

a. All decisions are made by a joint council consisting of the magistrate and the representatives of the revolutionary mass organizations. The council is convened by the magistrate and meets in his office. In some counties it is called the "joint council of public bodies and the local government," and in others the "council of county affairs." Besides the magistrate himself, those attending but not voting are the representatives of the county peasant association, trade union council, merchant association, women's association, school staff association, student association, and Guomindang party office. At such council meetings the magistrate is influenced by the views of the public organizations and "invariably does their bidding." The adoption of a democratic committee system of county government does not, therefore, present the slightest problem in Hunan. The present county governments are already quite "democratic" both in form and substance. This situation has been brought about only in the last two or three months, that is, since the peasants have risen all over the countryside and overthrown the power of the local bullies and bad gentry. It has now come about that the magistrates, seeing their old props collapse and needing new props to retain their posts, have begun to curry favor with the public organizations, and the situation has changed as described above.

b. The judicial assistant has scarcely any cases to handle. The judicial system in Hunan remains one in which the county magistrate is concurrently in charge of judicial affairs, with an assistant to help him in handling cases. To get rich, the magistrate and his underlings used to rely entirely on "collecting taxes and levies, procuring men and provisions for the armed forces," and "extorting money in civil and

criminal lawsuits by confounding right and wrong," the last being the most regular and reliable source of income. In the last few months, with the downfall of the local bullies and bad gentry, all the legal pettifoggers have disappeared. What is more, the peasants' problems, big and small, are now all settled in the peasant associations at the various levels. Thus the county judicial assistant simply has nothing to do. The one in Xiangxiang told me, "When there were no peasant associations, an average of sixty civil or criminal suits were brought to the county government each day; now it receives an average of only four or five suits a day." So it is that the purses of the magistrates and their underlings perforce remain empty.

c. The armed guards, the police, and the bailiffs all keep out of the way and dare not go near the villages to practice their extortions. In the past the people in the villages were afraid of the people in the towns, but now the people in the towns are afraid of the people in the villages. In particular the vicious curs kept by the county government—the police, the armed guards, and the bailiffs—are afraid of going to the villages, or if they do so, they no longer dare to practice their extortions. They tremble at the sight of the peasants' spears.

7. Overthrowing the Clan Authority of the Ancestral Temples and Clan Elders, the Religious Authority of Town and Village Gods, and the Masculine Authority of Husbands

A man in China is usually subjected to the domination of three systems of authorities: (1) the state system (political authority), ranging from the national, provincial, and county government down to that of the township; (2) the clan system (clan authority), ranging from the central ancestral temple and its branch temples down to the head of the household; and (3) the supernatural system (religious authority), ranging from the King of Hell down to the town and village gods belonging to the nether world, and from the Emperor of Heaven down to all the various gods and spirits belonging to the celestial world. As for women, in addition to being dominated by these three, they are also dominated by men (the authority of the husband). These four authorities—political, clan, religious, and masculine—are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal ideological system, and are the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants. How the peasants have overthrown the political authority of the landlords in the countryside has been described above. The political authority of the landlords is the backbone of all the other systems of

authority. With the politics of the landlords overturned, the clan authority, the religious authority, and the authority of the husband all begin to totter. Where the peasant association is powerful, the clan elders and administrators of temple funds no longer dare oppress those lower in the clan hierarchy or embezzle clan funds. The worst clan elders and administrators, being local bullies, have been thrown out. No one any longer dares to practice the corporal and capital punishments that used to be inflicted in the ancestral temples, such as flogging, drowning, and burying alive. The old rule barring women and poor people from the banquets in the ancestral temples has also been broken. The women of Baiguo in Hengshan county gathered in force and swarmed into their ancestral temple, firmly planted their backsides on the seats, and joined in the eating and drinking, while the venerable clan bigwigs had willy-nilly to let them do as they pleased. At another place, where poor peasants had been excluded from temple banquets, a group of them flocked in and ate and drank their fill, while the local bullies and bad gentry and other long-gowned gentlemen all took to their heels in fright. Everywhere religious authority totters as the peasant movement develops. In many places the peasant associations have taken over the temples of the gods as their offices. Everywhere they advocate the appropriation of temple property for peasant schools and to defray the expenses of the associations, calling it "public revenue from superstition." In Liling county, prohibiting superstitious practices and smashing idols have become quite the vogue. In its northern districts the peasants have prohibited the incense-burning processions to propitiate the god of pestilence. There were many idols in the Daoist temple on Fubo Hill in Lukou, but when extra premises were needed for the district party offices [of the Guomindang], they were all piled up in a corner, big and small together, and no peasant raised any objection. Since then, sacrifices to the gods, the performance of religious rites, and the offering of sacred lamps have rarely been practiced when a death occurs in a family. Because the initiative in this matter was taken by the chairman of the peasant association, Sun Xiaoshan, he is hated by the local Daoist priests. In the Longfeng Nunnery in the North Third District, the peasants and primary school teachers chopped up the wooden idols and actually used the wood to cook meat. More than thirty idols in the Dongfu Monastery in the Southern District were burned by the students and peasants together, and only two small images of Bao Gong were snatched up by an old peasant who said, "Don't commit a sin!" Everywhere it has always been the case that only the older peasants

and the women believe in the gods; all the younger peasants do not. Since the latter control the associations, the overthrow of religious authority and the eradication of superstition are going on everywhere. As to the authority of the husband, this has always been weaker among the poor peasants because, out of economic necessity, their womenfolk have to do more manual labor than the women of the richer classes and therefore have more say and greater power of decision in family matters. In sexual matters, they also have relatively more freedom. Among the poor peasants in the countryside, triangular and multilateral relationships are almost universal. With the increasing bankruptcy of the rural economy in recent years, the basis for men's domination over women has already been weakened. With the rise of the peasant movement, the women in many places have now begun to organize rural women's associations; the opportunity has come for them to lift up their heads, and the authority of the husband is getting shakier every day. In a word, the whole feudal-patriarchal ideological system is tottering with the growth of the peasants' power. But in the past and at the present time, the peasants are concentrating entirely on destroying the landlords' political authority. Wherever it has been wholly destroyed, they are beginning to press their attack in the three other spheres of the clan, the gods, and male domination. But such attacks have only just "begun," and there can be no thorough overthrow of all three until the peasants have won complete victory in the economic fight. Therefore, our present task is to lead the peasants to put their greatest efforts into the political struggle, so that the landlords' authority is entirely overthrown. The economic struggle should follow immediately, so that the economic problems of the poor peasants may be fundamentally solved. As for smashing the clan system, superstitious ideas, and one-sided concepts of chastity, this will follow as a natural consequence of victory in the political and economic struggles. If too much of an effort is made arbitrarily and prematurely to abolish these things, then the local bullies and bad gentry will seize the pretext to put forward such slogans as "the peasant association has no piety towards ancestors," "the peasant association is blasphemous and is destroying religion," and "the peasant association stands for the communization of wives," all for the purpose of undermining the peasant movement. A case in point is the recent events at Xiangxiang, Hunan, and Yangxin, Hubei, where the landlords exploited the opposition of some peasants to smashing idols. It is the peasants who made the idols, and when the time comes they will cast the idols aside with their own hands; there is no need for any-

one else to do it for them prematurely. Our propaganda policy in such matters is, "Draw the bow but do not release the arrow, having seemed to leap."⁸ The idols should be removed by the peasants themselves, the ancestral tablets should be smashed by the peasants themselves, the temples to martyred virgins and arches for chaste and filial widows and daughters-in-law should be demolished by the peasants themselves.

While I was in the countryside, I did some propaganda against superstition among the peasants. I said: "If you believe in the Eight Characters,⁹ you hope for good luck; if you believe in geomancy,¹⁰ you hope to benefit from the location of your ancestral graves. This year within the space of a few months the local bullies, bad gentry, and corrupt officials have all fallen from power. Is it possible that until a few months ago they all had good luck and enjoyed the benefit of well-sited ancestral graves, while suddenly in the last few months their luck has turned and their ancestral graves have ceased to exert a beneficial influence?"

"The local bullies and bad gentry jeer at your peasant association and say, 'How odd! Today, the world is a world of committeemen. Look, you can't even go to pass water without bumping into a committeeman!' Quite true, the towns and the villages, the peasant associations and the labor unions, the Guomindang and the Communist Party, all without exception have their executive committee members—it is indeed a world of committeemen. But is this caused by the Eight Characters and the location of the ancestral graves? How strange! The Eight Characters of all the poor wretches in the countryside have suddenly turned auspicious! And their ancestral graves have suddenly started exerting beneficial influences!"

"The gods? Worship them by all means. But if you had only Lord Guan and the Goddess of Mercy and no peasant association, could you have overthrown the local tyrants and evil gentry? The 'gods' and 'goddesses' are indeed miserable objects. You have worshipped them for several thousand years, and they have not overthrown a single one of the local bullies or bad gentry for you! Now you want to have your

⁸Mao here takes his text from the *Mencius*, VII, 1, XLI, 3. The moral that Mao wished to draw from the passage is clear, in any case: the master illustrates the action to be taken, driving home the message with dramatic gestures, but leaves it to the disciples to carry out the action.

⁹*Eight Characters*: a written record of the astrological moment of a person's birth and thus his or her fate

¹⁰*geomancy*: a practice in which the placement of household furniture, buildings, and even family graves is chosen to produce auspicious effects; also known as *feng shui*

rent reduced. Let me ask you, what method will you use? Will you place your faith in the gods, or in the peasant associations?"

When I spoke these words, the peasants laughed, and in the midst of their laughter, I imagined that the gods and idols all fled from sight.

8. Spreading Political Propaganda

Even if ten thousand schools of law and political science had been opened, could they have brought as much political education to the people, men and women, young and old, all the way into the poorest and remotest corners of the countryside, as the peasant associations have done in so short a time? I think they certainly could not have. Down with imperialism! Down with the warlords! Down with the corrupt officials! Down with the local bullies and bad gentry!—these political slogans have grown wings, they have found their way to the young, the middle-aged, and the old, to the women and children in countless villages, they have penetrated into their minds and flowed back from their minds into their mouths. Suppose, for example, you watch a group of children at play. If one gets angry with another, if he glares, stamps his foot, and shakes his fist, you will then immediately hear from the other the shrill cry: "Down with imperialism!"

In the Xiangtan area, when the children who pasture the cattle get into a fight, one will take the part of Tang Shengzhi and the other that of Ye Kaixin.¹¹ When, after a while, one is defeated and runs away with the other chasing him, it is the pursuer who is Tang Shengzhi and the pursued Ye Kaixin. As to the song "Down with the Imperialist Powers. . .," of course almost every child in the towns can sing it, and now many village children can sing it too. Some of the peasants can also recite a little of Mr. Sun Yatsen's Testament. They pick out from it the terms "freedom," "equality," "the Three People's Principles," and "unequal treaties" and apply them, if rather crudely, in their life. When somebody who looks like one of the gentry encounters a peasant on the road and stands on his dignity, refusing to make way along a path-way, the peasant will say angrily, "Hey, you local bully, don't you know the Three People's Principles?"

Formerly, when the peasants from the vegetable farms on the outskirts of Changsha entered the city to sell their produce, they used to be pushed around by the police. Now they can find a weapon, which is no other than the Three People's Principles. When a policeman strikes or swears at a peasant from a vegetable farm, the peasant from the

¹¹Ye Kaixin: a competitor of Tang Shengzhi in Hunan

vegetable farm immediately answers back by invoking the Three People's Principles and the policeman has not a word to say. Once in Xiangtan, when a district peasant association and a township peasant association could not see eye to eye about a certain matter, the chairman of the township association declared: "Down with the district peasant association's unequal treaties!"

The spread of political propaganda throughout the rural area is entirely an achievement of the peasant associations. Simple slogans, cartoons, and speeches have produced such a widespread and speedy effect among the peasants that it is as though every one of them had been to a political school. According to the reports of comrades engaged in rural work, the influence of extensive political propaganda was to be found in the three great mass movements: the anti-British demonstration, the celebration of the October Revolution, and the victory celebration for the Northern Expedition. In these movements, political propaganda was conducted extensively wherever there were peasant associations, arousing the whole countryside. Consequently, the impact was very great. From now on, care should be taken to make use of every opportunity gradually to enrich the content and clarify the meaning of the simple slogans mentioned above.

9. Peasant Bans and Prohibitions

When the peasant associations establish their authority in the countryside, the peasants begin to forbid strictly or to restrict the things they dislike. Gaming, gambling, and opium smoking are the three things that are most strictly forbidden.

Gaming: Where the peasant association is powerful, mahjong,¹² dominoes, and card games are wholly banned.

The peasant association in the Fourteenth District of Xiangxiang burned two basketfuls of mahjong [pieces].

If you go to the countryside, you will find none of these games played; anyone who violates the ban is promptly and strictly punished.

Gambling: Former hardened gamblers are now themselves forcefully suppressing gambling; this abuse, too, has been swept away in places where the peasant association is powerful.

Opium smoking: The prohibition is extremely strict. When the peasant association orders the surrender of opium pipes, no

¹²mahjong: a board game using small tiles on which bets can be made

one dares to raise the least objection. In Liling county, one of the bad gentry who did not surrender his pipes was arrested and paraded through the villages.

The peasants' campaign to "disarm the opium smokers" is no less impressive than the disarming of the troops of Wu Peifu and Sun Chuanfang by the Northern Expeditionary Army. Quite a number of venerable fathers of officers in the revolutionary army, old men who were opium addicts and inseparable from their pipes, have been disarmed by the "emperors" (as the peasants are called derisively by the bad gentry). The "emperors" have banned not only the growing and smoking of opium, but also trafficking in it. A great deal of the opium transported from Guizhou to Jiangxi via the various counties of Baoqing, Xiangxiang, Yuoxian, and Liling has been intercepted on the way and burned. This has affected government revenues. As a result, out of consideration for the army's need for funds in the Northern Expedition, the provincial peasant association ordered the associations at the lower levels "temporarily to postpone the ban on opium traffic." This, however, has upset and displeased the peasants.

There are many other things besides these three that the peasants have prohibited or restricted, the following being some examples:

The flower drum. An obscene and vulgar local opera. Its performances are forbidden in many places.

Sedan-chairs. In many counties, especially Xiangxiang, there have been cases of smashing sedan-chairs. A prohibition on taking sedan-chairs has become a vogue. The only people who can take sedan-chairs are the peasant movement officials; otherwise, they will be smashed. The peasants, detesting the people who use this conveyance, are always ready to smash the chairs, but the peasant associations forbid them to do so. Peasant movement officials tell the peasants, "If you smash the chairs, you only save the rich money and lose the carriers their jobs. And the carriers will be out of a job if they have no work to do. Will that not hurt yourselves? Seeing the point, the peasants answer, "That's right." They then adopt a new [policy on] sedan chairs—"to increase considerably the fares charged by the chair-carriers" so as to penalize the rich.

Distilling and sugar-making. The use of grain for distilling spirits and making sugar is everywhere prohibited, and therefore the distillers and sugar refiners are constantly complaining.

Distilling is not banned in Futianpu, Hengshan county, but

prices are fixed very low, and the wine and spirits dealers, seeing no prospect of profit, have had to stop it. Figs. The number of pigs a family can keep is limited, for they consume grain.

Chickens and ducks. In Xiangxiang county the raising of chickens and ducks is prohibited, but the women object. In Hengshan county, each family in Yangtang is allowed to keep only three chickens, and in Futianpu five chickens. In many places the raising of ducks is completely banned, for ducks not only consume grain but also ruin the rice plants and so are worse than chickens.

Feasts. Sumptuous feasts are generally forbidden. In Shaoshan, Xiangtan county, it has been decided that guests are to be served only three kinds of animal food, namely, chicken, fish, and pork. It is also forbidden to serve bamboo shoots, kelp, and lentil noodles. In Hengshan county it has been resolved that eight dishes and no more may be served at a banquet, and not even one more is allowed. Only five dishes are allowed in the East Third District in Liling county, and only three meat and three vegetable dishes in North Second District, while in the West Third District New Year feasts are forbidden entirely. In Xiangxiang county, there is a ban on all "egg-cake feasts," which are by no means sumptuous. When Tie Jiawan in the Second District gave an "egg-cake feast" at a son's wedding, the peasants, seeing the ban violated, swarmed into the house and destroyed the "egg-cake feast." In the town of Jiamuo, Xiangxiang county, the people have refrained from eating expensive foods and use only fruit when offering ancestral sacrifices.

Oxen. Oxen are treasured possessions of the peasants in the South. "Slaughter an ox in this life and you will be an ox in the next" has become almost a religious tenet; oxen must never be killed. Before the peasants had power, they could only appeal to religious taboos in opposing the slaughter of cattle and had no real power to ban it. People in the towns always want to eat beef, and therefore people in the towns always want to kill cattle. Since the rise of the peasant associations, their real jurisdiction has extended even to the cattle, and they have prohibited the slaughter of cattle in the towns. Of the six butcheries that formerly existed in the county town of Xiangtan, five are now closed and the remaining merchant

slaughters only enfeebled or disabled animals. The slaughter of cattle is totally prohibited throughout Hengshan county. No one in the county town dares slaughter either. A peasant whose ox fell from a high place, broke a leg, and is now disabled dared not kill it. He consulted the peasant association and got their permission before he dared kill it. When the chamber of commerce of Zhuzhou rashly slaughtered a cow, the peasants one day swarmed into town and demanded an explanation. As a result, the chamber, besides paying a fine, had to let off firecrackers by way of apology.

Vagrant ways. A resolution passed in Liling county prohibited the drumming of New Year greetings or the chanting of praises to the local deities or the singing of lotus rhymes.¹³ Various other counties have passed resolutions prohibiting this; in other places, these practices have disappeared of themselves, and no one engages in them anymore. The "beggar-bullies" or "vagabonds," who used to be extremely evil, now have no alternative but to submit to the peasant associations. In Shaoshan, Xiangtan county, the vagabonds used to make the temple of the Rain God their regular haunt and could not be persuaded by anyone, but since the rise of the associations they have all stolen away. The peasant association in Hutu township in the same county caught three such vagabonds and made them carry clay for the brick kilns. Resolutions have been passed prohibiting the wasteful customs associated with New Year calls and gifts.

Besides these, a great many other minor prohibitions have been introduced in various places, such as the Liling prohibitions on incense-burning processions to propitiate the god of pestilence, on buying preserves and fruit for ritual presents, on burning ritual paper garments during the Festival of the Dead, and on pasting up good-luck posters at the New Year. At Gushui in Xiangxian county, there is even a prohibition on smoking water pipes. In the Second District, letting off firecrackers and ceremonial guns is forbidden, with a fine of 1.20 yuan for the former and 2.40 yuan for the latter. Religious rites for the dead are prohibited in the Seventh and Twentieth Districts. In the Eighteenth District, it is forbidden to make funeral gifts of money. Things like these, which defy enumeration, may be generally called "peasant bans and prohibitions." They are of great significance in two

¹³lotus rhymes: popular Buddhist chants

respects. First, they represent a revolt against bad customs, such as gaming, gambling, and opium smoking. These customs arose out of the rotten political environment of the landlord class and are swept away once its authority is overthrown. Second, the prohibitions are a form of self-defense against exploitation by city merchants; such are the prohibitions on feasts and on buying preserves and fruit for ritual presents. Because manufactured goods are extremely dear and agricultural products are extremely cheap, the peasants are very ruthlessly exploited by the merchants, and they must therefore engage in passive resistance. The reason for all this is that the unscrupulous merchants exploited them; it is not a matter of their rejecting manufactured goods in order to uphold the Doctrine of Oriental Culture.¹⁴ The peasants' economic protection of themselves necessitates that the peasants organize consumers' cooperatives for collective sale and production. Furthermore, it is also necessary for the government to provide help to the peasant associations in establishing credit cooperatives. If these things were done, the peasants would naturally find it unnecessary to ban the outflow of grain as a method of keeping down the price; nor would they have to prohibit the inflow of manufactured goods as the sole method of economic self-defense.

10. Eliminating Banditry

In my opinion, no ruler in any dynasty from Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang [in ancient times] down to the Qing emperors and the presidents of the Republic has ever shown as much prowess in eliminating banditry as have the peasant associations today. Wherever the peasant associations are powerful, there is not even the shadow of a bandit. It is truly amazing! In many places there are no longer even those pilferers who stole vegetables at night. Though there are still pilferers in some places, in the counties I visited, even including those that were formerly bandit-ridden, there was no trace of bandits. The reasons are: First, the members of the peasant associations are spread out everywhere over the hills and dales, spear or cudgel in hand, ready to go into action in their hundreds, so that the bandits have nowhere to hide. Second, since the peasants have prohibited the outflow of rice, the price of rice is extremely modest. It was six yuan a

¹⁴Doctrine of Oriental Culture: a belief that foreign (that is, Western) things are inferior to Chinese or Oriental things. Mao is making fun of the doctrine and claiming that peasants reject modern things not because of the doctrine but because merchants are overcharging for them.

picul¹⁵ of rice last spring but only two yuan last winter. The poor peasants can buy more grain with less money. And the problem of food has become less serious than in the past for the people. Third, members of the secret societies have all joined the peasant associations, in which they can openly play the hero and vent their grievances, so that there is no further need for the secret "mountain," "lodge," "shrine," and "river" forms of organization. In killing the pigs and sheep of the local tyrants and evil gentry and imposing heavy levies and fines, they have adequate outlets for their feelings against those who oppressed them. Fourth, the armies are recruiting large numbers of soldiers and many of the "unruly" have joined up. Thus the evil of banditry has been eliminated with the rise of the peasant movement. On this point, even the well-to-do approve of the peasant associations. Their comment is:

The peasant associations? Well, to be fair, there is also something to be said for them.

In prohibiting gaming, gambling, and opium smoking, and in eliminating banditry, the peasant associations have won general approval.

11. Abolishing Exorbitant Levies

As the whole country has not yet been unified and the authority of the imperialists and the warlords has not been overthrown, there is as yet no way of removing the heavy burden of government taxes and levies on the peasants or, more explicitly, of removing the burden of expenditure for the revolutionary army. However, the exorbitant levies imposed on the peasants when the local bullies and bad gentry dominated rural administration, for example, the surcharge on each *mu* of land, have been abolished or at least reduced with the rise of the peasant movement and the downfall of the local bullies and bad gentry. This too should be counted among the achievements of the peasant associations.

12. The Movement for Education

In China education has always been the exclusive preserve of the landlords, and the peasants have had no access to it. But the landlords' culture is completely created by the peasants, for its sole source

¹⁵picul: about 133 pounds

is the peasants' sweat and blood that they plundered. In China, more than 90 percent of the citizens have had no access to culture, and of these the overwhelming majority are peasants. The moment the power of the exploiting class was overthrown in the rural areas, the peasants' movement for education began. See how the peasants who hitherto detested the schools are today zealously setting up evening classes! They always disliked the "foreign-style school." When I was going to school and saw that the peasants were against the "foreign-style school," I, too, used to identify myself with the general run of "foreign-style students and teachers" and stand up for it, feeling always that the peasants were "stupid and detestable people." Only in the 14th year of the Republic [1925], when I lived in the countryside for half a year, did I realize that I had been wrong and the peasants' reasoning was extremely correct. The texts used in the rural primary schools were entirely about urban things and unsuited to rural needs. Besides, the attitude of the primary school teachers toward the peasants was very bad and, far from being helpful to the peasants, they came to be disliked by the peasants. Hence the peasants preferred the old-style schools (the so-called "Chinese classes") to the modern schools and the old-style teachers to the ones in the primary schools. Now the peasants are enthusiastically establishing evening classes, which they call "peasant schools." Some have already been opened, others are being organized, and on the average there is one school for every township peasant association. The peasants are very enthusiastic about setting up these evening schools and regard them, and only them, as truly their own. The sources of funds for the evening schools come from the local "public revenue from superstition," from ancestral temple funds, and from other idle public funds or property. The county education boards wanted to use this money to establish national primary schools (that is, "foreign-style schools" not suited to the needs of the peasants), while the peasants wanted to set up peasant schools. Inevitably, there were clashes between the two sides, and the result was generally that both got some of the money, though there were places where the peasants got it all. The development of the peasant movement has naturally resulted in raising their cultural level. Before long, several schools will have sprung up in the villages throughout the province; this is quite different from the empty talk about "universal education," which the intelligentsia and the so-called "educationalists" have been bandying back and forth and which after all this time remains an empty phrase.

13. The Cooperative Movement

The peasants really need cooperatives, especially consumers', marketing, and credit cooperatives. When they buy goods, the merchants exploit them; when they sell their farm produce, the merchants cheat them; when they borrow money or rice, they are fleeced by the usurers; and they are eager to find a solution to these three problems. During the fighting in the Yangtze valley last winter, when trade routes were cut and the price of salt went up in Hunan, a great many peasants organized cooperatives for salt. When the landlords deliberately stopped lending, there were many attempts by the peasants to organize credit agencies because they needed to borrow money. A major problem is the absence of detailed, standard rules of organization. In all localities, many of these spontaneously organized peasant cooperatives fail to conform to cooperative principles; as a result, the comrades engaged in the peasant movement are always eagerly enquiring about "rules and regulations." Given proper guidance, the cooperative movement can spread everywhere along with the growth of the peasant associations. Because the term *hezuo* is not at all familiar to the peasants, [the idea] could also be rendered as *hehuopu*.*

14. Building Roads and Embankments

This, too, is one of the achievements of the peasant associations. Before there were peasant associations the roads in the countryside were terrible. Because roads cannot be repaired without money, and the wealthy were unwilling to dip into their purses, the roads were left in bad shape. If there was any road work done at all, it was done as an act of charity; a little money was collected from families "wishing to gain merit in the next world," and a few narrow, skimpily paved roads were built. With the rise of the peasant associations, orders have been given specifying the required width—three, five, seven, or ten feet, according to the requirements of the different routes—and each landlord along a road has been ordered to build a section. Once the order is given, who dares to disobey? In a short time many good roads have appeared. This is no work of charity but the result of compulsion, and

**Hezuo* (cooperate, literally "work together"), and *hezuoshe* (cooperative) have been the standard Chinese terms since the 1920s. The alternative that Mao suggests, *hehuopu*, means literally joint goods shop." It is in fact this coinage which he used for "cooperative" in the title of this section of his report in the original version.

a little compulsion of this kind is not at all a bad thing. The same is true of the embankments. The ruthless landlords were always out to take what they could from the tenant-peasants and would never spend even a few copper cash on embankment repairs; they would leave them to dry up and the tenant-peasants to starve, caring about nothing but the rent. Now that there are peasant associations, they can be bluntly ordered to repair the embankments. When a landlord refuses, the association will tell him very affably:

"Very well! If you won't do the repairs, you will contribute grain, a *dou*¹⁶ for each workday." As this is a bad bargain for the landlord, he hastens to do the repairs. Consequently many defective embankments have been turned into good ones.

The fourteen deeds enumerated above have all been accomplished by the peasants under the command of the peasant associations; would the reader please consider and say whether any of them is bad? Only the local bullies and bad gentry, I think, will call them bad. Curiously enough, it is reported from Nanchang that Chiang Kaishek, Zhang Jingjiang, and other such gentlemen do not altogether approve of the activities of the Hunan peasants. This opinion is shared by Liu Yuezhi and other right-wing leaders in Hunan, all of whom say, "They have simply gone Red." But where would the national revolution be without this bit of Red? To talk about arousing the masses of the people day in and day out and then to be scared to death when the masses do rise—what difference is there between this and Lord She's love of dragons?*

¹⁶ *dou*: thirty pounds

*The reference is to an anecdote in the *Xin xu* (New Prefaces) of Liu Xiang (76–5 B.C.E.), a descendant of Liu Bang. Lord She professed such a love of dragons that he decorated his whole palace with drawings and carvings of them. Pleased by this report, a real dragon paid him a visit and frightened Lord She out of his wits.