

The Role of Mao Tse-tung

By William Z. Foster

This is a short excerpt from Foster's book *History of the Three Internationals*, (NY: International, 1955 [re-issued in 2014]), from pages 525-527. This excerpt has been posted in various places on the Internet including on the Marxists Internet Archive.

The great leader of the Chinese Revolution possesses many of the qualities of leadership that characterized Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. A man of resolution, initiative, and boundless energy, Mao is a brilliant theoretician, an exceptional organizer, and a very powerful leader of the masses in open struggle. These were the qualities that enabled this creative Marxist genius, in the face of prodigious difficulties, to lead the more than half a billion of the Chinese people to decisive victory.

Mao's theoretical work ranges over a vast scope. It sums up to an adaptation of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions prevailing in China, a monumental task which he has done with profound skill and thoroughness. The basis of this work was a Marxist evaluation of the character, over the years, of the developing Chinese Revolution - his differentiation of the new-type bourgeois democratic revolution from the old type, and the establishment of its relationship to the socialist revolution, constitute major contributions to the general body of Marxist theory. Mao also paid close attention to the Marxist analysis of class forces in China and the relation to each other of democratic forces in united-front movements, his work in this respect being one of the classics of Communist political writing. Classical, too, are Mao's writings on military strategy and tactics, in the situation of a guerilla army gradually growing into a mass military force and carrying on the struggle in the face of a vastly stronger enemy. Splendid also is Mao's development theoretically of the leading role of the small Chinese proletariat especially in the midst of the vast sea of peasants. Another of Mao's many

theoretical achievements was his skilled utilization of the three principles of Sun Yat Sen, which are widely popular among the masses, as part of the minimum program of the Communist Party, thus taking over the democratic traditions of the famous Chinese bourgeois revolutionist. Brilliant also were his innumerable polemics with every sort of deviator and enemy. Mao's theoretical work extended not only into the fields of economics, politics, and military strategy, but also into literature, and philosophy. His work *On Contradiction* is a comprehensive, profound and popular exposition of the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge.

Mao is also a splendid mass organizer and administrator. He is not one merely to throw out broad slogans; he also knows how to go to the masses and organize them to realize these slogans. His works are filled with consideration of the most detailed questions of organizational work, in the building of the Communist Party, the people's army, the trade unions, and all other organizations of the people. And it is all written in the simplest of language. A classical example of this is his work *On the Rectification of Incorrect Ideas in the Party*, dealing with such errors as "the purely military viewpoint, extreme democratization, non-organizational viewpoint, absolute equalitarianism, subjectivism, adventurism, etc." Mao himself, born in 1893 of a poor peasant family in a village of Hunan, has had a hard life as a worker, soldier, student, and political leader. He is, indeed, a true son of the Chinese people, living their lives, knowing their thoughts and needs, and speaking their political language.

In the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, all of whom were fighters as well as great thinkers and organizers, Mao is also a superlatively good general, whether in the economic or political struggle or on the field of military battle. Along with Chu Teh and other leaders, Mao made the "Long March;" he was a noted guerilla fighter as well as tactician, and he took personal part in innumerable military campaigns. Mao's greatest political achievements have been in the sphere of direct leadership of vast masses of the people in different struggles against oppressors of every type.

When the Chinese people won the leadership of their country, there were very many elements in the capitalist world who said with final assurance: "Well, maybe it is not so bad after all; China is a vast, impossible chaos, and the Communists will break their

necks trying to organize and govern it." But this was only wishful thinking, typical capitalist underestimation of the revolutionary abilities of the Chinese Communists, and especially of their great leader, Mao Tse-tung. Now such remarks are rarely heard. Already, the Chinese Communists, with Mao at their head, have clearly demonstrated that they can organize and lead forward their huge people. This adds just one more to the many "impossibilities" that they have accomplished in their epic struggle for freedom.