

READING 1

Candice Goucher, Charles LeGuin, and Linda Walton, "Resistance, Revolution, and New Global Order/Disorder," in *In the Balance: Themes in Global History* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 842–44, 872–77.

Abstract: Two world wars and a global depression undermined European hegemony, and resistance movements throughout the colonized world challenged European political, economic, and cultural domination. This essay explores the history of East Asian cultural and political resistance movements and the ideas that sustained them. In particular, it focuses on Mao's Marxist-inspired Chinese Revolution and on Japanese resistance to European-inspired models of the nation-state in the wake of the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

Marxism and Models for Revolutionary Change

Imperialism, Colonialism, and Revolution

Marx knew little about the non-European world, and he could not foresee the impact of imperialism and colonialism on the capitalist industrialism he was familiar with in Europe. In the generation after Marx, in the backwater of the European industrial revolution that was Russia at the turn of the century, Lenin saw beyond Marx's vision to the realities of his own time. While World War I was in progress, Lenin wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916–1917), arguing that imperialism had extended the life of capitalism by improving conditions for the proletariat in the advanced industrialized nations and therefore enabling capitalist societies to avoid revolution.

According to Lenin, Marx's prediction that the worsening condition of the working classes in advanced industrial societies would lead to revolution had not come true because imperialism had allowed the expansion of capitalist economies. Even though harsh economic inequities persisted, overall growth meant that conditions for the working classes had not worsened and may even have improved. Lenin concluded that Marx was not wrong about the process, only the timetable, since the unforeseen effects of imperialism had provided the means to extend the life of capitalism. However, in Lenin's view, imperialism carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. He believed he was witnessing this destruction in World War I, the result of the clash of imperialist rivalries that led to militarism, war, and widespread popular discontent. Lenin appeared to be right about Russia at least. World War I contributed significantly to the breakdown of the Russian monarchy and the opportunity for the Bolsheviks to seize power (see Chapter 18).

Twentieth-Century Agrarian Revolutions

The success of the Bolshevik Revolution impressed many Chinese intellectuals and attracted them to the study of Marxism. The model of the Russian Revolution was exported to China in the early 1920s, when Russian and other agents of the Communist International (Comintern) helped to organize the fledgling Communist Party. Because of its ideological focus on the urban proletariat and the necessity of an industrial base, the Russian Revolution had limited applicability to the Asian and African worlds, which were overwhelmingly agricultural.

The key transformation in Marxist ideology that made Marxism into a model of revolutionary change for agrarian societies took place in China where the urbanized, industrialized sector of society was far smaller even than that of Russia and where the peasantry was the vast majority of the population. Though early Chinese Marxist revolutionaries were inspired by the Russian Revolution, guided by Russian mentors, and looked to an urban proletariat for support, the young Mao Zedong (1893–1976) challenged Marxist dogma focused on the revolutionary consciousness of urban industrial workers with his own vision of the peasantry as the key to revolutionary change:

A revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows another. A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the authority of the feudal landlord class... If the peasants do not use the maximum of their strength, they can never overthrow the authority of the landlords which has been deeply rooted for thousands of years...

In a very short time... several hundred million peasants will rise like a tornado or tempest, a force so extraordinarily swift and violent that no power however great will be able to suppress it.

Written in 1927, Mao's words echo the revolutionary violence of the French Revolution, distant in time, context, and outcome though it was.

Nationalism, Resistance, and Revolution in East Asia

The experiences of nationalism, resistance, and revolution in East Asia were shaped by the forces of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century and by both Western and Japanese imperialism in the twentieth. As Western imperialism precipitated Japanese nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese imperialism in China during World War II gave rise to Chinese revolutionary or mass nationalism. Though China was never directly colonized by any Western power, the impact of Western imperialism dating from the mid-nineteenth century began a century-long struggle for national independence against the forces of both Western and Japanese imperialism as well as traditional society.

Nationalism and Resistance in Modern Japan

Modern Japanese nationalism was a product of the 1868 Meiji Restoration, a “revolution from above” led by an elite that transformed the Japanese political, economic, and social order. Resistance to this new order, which eradicated the social position of the samurai and the hereditary feudal rights of *daimyo* to rule their domains, came first from the samurai. The Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 came about as a result of conflicts within the Meiji oligarchy (group of leaders in power) following the 1873 introduction of a conscript army. It focused on the demand of Saigo Takamori (1828–1877) and his followers to launch an invasion of Korea and divide up territory among the samurai as a way to make up for the loss of their special status. A brief military engagement followed the Meiji government’s refusal, and Saigo and his followers were defeated.

Resistance to the new Meiji government came also from other groups in Japanese society such as farmers, who could identify with a legacy of resistance that dated at least to the Tokugawa period (1600–1867), which was peppered with peasant uprisings against the government of the shogun. These uprisings protested inhumane demands made on the peasant producers. The authors of the Meiji Constitution (1889) rejected the demands of the popular rights movement in the 1880s, which had agitated for more popular voice and representation in the governing of the country. Both before and after the promulgation of the Meiji constitution, however, resistance to the Meiji state persisted.

Rural and Urban Resistance

In 1884 farmers in Chichibu (Saitama prefecture) who depended for their livelihood on raw silk production were hit by agricultural depression and organized a campaign for debt deferment and reduced taxes. When this effort failed, between 7000 and 10,000 rioters broke into homes and offices of moneylenders and took over the prefecture. The uprising was soon crushed, four of the leaders were executed, and 3000 participants were either fined or imprisoned.

The Hibiya Riots in 1905 took place in Hibiya Park in central Tokyo and protested the terms of the Portsmouth Treaty ending the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Demonstrators attacked and burned public offices and buildings, including police stations. The army was called out, and martial law was declared in the Tokyo area. The Japanese government shut down newspapers and magazines that were critical of the government and prohibited demonstrations and political activities in downtown Tokyo close to the center of government.

Resistance of a different kind was expressed in demands that the Meiji government halt operations at the Ashio copper mine in Tochigi prefecture north of Tokyo, effluents from which were polluting rivers and thus jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of people in the area. Complaints began in the early 1880s, a resolution to close the mine was introduced without result in the Diet (parliament), and mass demonstrations took place in Tokyo in 1897. Anti-pollution legislation was passed, but it was inadequate, and the Ashio copper mine finally ceased operation only in 1973. Conflicting interests between the industrial benefits to the state of the production of the Ashio mines and the needs and welfare of local farmers were at the heart of this struggle, a harbinger of environmental pollution cases in the postwar period (see Chapter 20).

War and Resistance

Other economic concerns fueled demonstrations of dissent, too. At the end of World War I, which Japan officially joined as an ally of Britain, Japanese housewives demonstrated in 1918 against the cost of rice, the price of which had risen in mid-1918 to about four times the prewar level. Wages had failed to keep pace with the inflationary boom of the postwar period, and so the escalating price of rice, the principal dietary staple, created hardships for urban workers as well as for poorer farmers and tenants in the countryside. Following a demonstration against rice hoarding by fishermen's wives in Toyama prefecture, discontent erupted in a nationwide wave of riots and demonstrations affecting over 300 places in thirty prefectures. Tens of thousands of people were arrested, many of them members of the *burakumin* (the "untouchables") minority who were severely discriminated against in Japanese society; some of those arrested received the death penalty. The government responded, however, by reducing the price of rice, increasing domestic production, and importing rice.

Resistance in Japan was directed at the powerful nation state that was shaped in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration. Nationalism became a force that suppressed social revolution and strengthened the identity of individuals with the interests of the state under fascism in the 1930s. During World War II, resistance, though vigorously suppressed by the "Thought Police," persisted in opposition to the fascist state and to militarism. In postwar Japan resistance revived in the 1960s with demonstrations against the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty that allowed the United States to maintain military bases in Japan. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Japanese students joined their comrades in Europe and the United States in protest demonstrations against the Vietnam War (to which Japan was linked by its alliance with the United States) and other policies.

Revolutionary Nationalism and the People's Republic of China

Chinese nationalism evolved in two stages, elite and popular, and came to fruition only in the aftermath of World War II. Nationalism in China became a revolutionary force that overturned the traditional social order and provided the model of mass nationalism forged in the fires of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The May 4th Movement signalled the intellectual revolt against traditional society, culture, and politics and also gave birth to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Initially an elite movement of Marxist intellectuals, many of whom studied in Europe, the CCP under the leadership of Mao Zedong in the 1930s turned toward the peasantry as a source of revolution. In World War II Chinese Communist guerrillas fought the Japanese and gradually gained the support of the peasant masses. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Sino-Japanese War, the East Asian “theater” of World War II, ended. In China the end of global conflict marked the beginning of civil war. The nationalism inspired initially by Western imperialism, and later by Japanese imperialism, took a revolutionary form in the Communist movement. The Communists defeated their opponents in the civil war, the nominal “Nationalists,” in large part because they were able to win the support of the majority of the Chinese people as nationalists representing China against the forces of Japanese imperialism.

The People's Republic of China

With the Communist victory in 1949, the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was declared. The building of a socialist society was the goal of the newly formed government under Mao Zedong as chairman of the CCP and Premier Zhou Enlai. The most important international ally of the Chinese was the Soviet Union; the PRC and the Soviets signed a treaty of alliance and aid in 1951, cementing ties between two Communist giants of the postwar world. Ties with the Soviets shaped the initial stages of economic development in the PRC, determining that the Chinese would follow the Soviet model of centralized planning and industrialization.

The first external national crisis was the Korean War. Hostility on the part of the United States to the PRC and fear on the part of the Chinese that the United States would try to destabilize their government led to open conflict on the Korean peninsula, as Korea was divided in the postwar settlement at the 38th parallel. The threat from the United States in the Korean War had internal repercussions as an initially liberal policy toward professionals—managers, industrialists, bankers—shifted to persecution of professional elites identified with the former regime.

Many professionals in the early 1950s fled to Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China on Taiwan, where he and the Nationalist Army had installed

themselves as a government in exile after having bloodily suppressed the Taiwan independence movement. The Nationalists continued to rule Taiwan as a province of China, awaiting reunification with the mainland. Taiwan flourished economically, aided by the United States and by the economic infrastructure the Japanese built during their half-century colonial occupation (1895–1945).

By 1952, with the resolution of the Korean conflict, the new government on the mainland of China could turn its attention to issues of economic development and the socialist transformation of society. The Communists had gained strength under Mao's leadership as representing the interests of China's peasants, and land reform was one of the first programs that the new government carried out. Land reform had begun already in some areas in the late 1940s, and it was continued as a national policy after 1949. Peasants were grouped according to their material standing as rich, middle, or poor and allocated land confiscated from landlords on that basis. Despite the urban, intellectual background of the founders of the CCP in the 1920s, by the time they came to power as a national government in 1949, the CCP was alienated from China's urban development. It was much more difficult to resolve the problems of China's urban areas than to carry out land reform in the countryside.

The conflict between urban and rural development is one of the major themes that persists through the history of the PRC. This conflict can also be seen as one between the needs of agricultural development and industrialization. A Soviet model clearly inspired the First Five-Year Plan, adopted in 1952. Heavy industry was to be emphasized, and capital investment was to be drawn from the agricultural sector. The peasants, who had supported the Communists in their rise to power, were to pay for economic development.

The Great Leap Forward

Although industrialization proceeded, the conditions of the peasantry remained poor. In 1955 Mao called for the speeding up of the collectivization of agriculture, one of the primary steps toward the creation of a socialist society. Reorganizing individual peasant farms into cooperatives, collectives, and ultimately communes, agriculture was to lead the way to socialism. By 1958 Mao introduced a more radical series of policies in what became known as the "Great Leap Forward." These policies were designed to balance the needs of agriculture and industry, of urban and rural, by bringing industry to the countryside.

One of the most widely publicized and dramatic examples of this movement was the "backyard steel furnace," that required peasants to produce iron for industry during slack agricultural time. The economic consequences of these policies, as theoretically attractive as they may have seemed, were disastrous.

As many as a million people may have died as a result of the economic disruption caused by the Great Leap Forward. The withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1960 intensified China's economic woes. The Soviets sharply criticized Chinese "revisionism" because it rejected the Soviet model of development, and tensions between the two grew along the Sino-Soviet border.

The economic failures of the Great Leap Forward weakened Mao's position in the party, and he withdrew from the political spotlight. Despite the economic problems of the Great Leap Forward, a new vision of socialist society had been created and large numbers of people had begun to participate in politics and managerial decision making as they never had before. Although Mao had lost power in the CCP, he still had enormous charismatic leadership strength among the people and a base of power in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). By 1964 a political campaign to "learn from the PLA" began using the army as a model much as it had been during the 1940s when the Red Army led a guerrilla war against the Japanese.

The Cultural Revolution

In 1965 a critical review of a play suggested that Mao was being criticized by the playwright, who presented Mao in the guise of a corrupt emperor. Mao responded by calling for a cultural revolution to attack the lingering remnants of the old culture, old society, and old values. The Cultural Revolution raged for several years, most violently from 1966 to 1968. The most radical expression of the Cultural Revolution were the Red Guards, youths inspired by Mao's call for a cultural revolution, who shut down the universities and traveled about the country smashing idols of the old culture. The Red Guards destroyed libraries, attacked teachers, ransacked temples, and wreaked havoc throughout the country. The Party lost control of the situation, and the Army also began to fragment, bringing China dangerously close to civil war. When it became clear to Mao that the Red Guards had outlived their usefulness and were in danger of becoming too disruptive and too powerful, he withdrew support and tried to restore order.

The Cultural Revolution took a devastating toll on China, not only economically because of the severe disruption in agricultural and industrial production but also socially and culturally. The disruption of schooling for nearly ten years virtually denied a whole generation access to higher education. Intellectuals, writers, and artists had been persecuted and attacked, some committing suicide in despair at their treatment.

The Four Modernizations

After the death of Mao in 1976, his widow and three others were attacked as the infamous "Gang of Four" for their extreme radicalism during the Cultural Revolution. The eventual winner in the political struggles following Mao's

death was Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), who constructed China’s new strategy for development, the Four Modernizations: agriculture, science and technology, defense, and industry. Adopting some aspects of a market economy, and ultimately, of capitalism, China seemed headed toward an economic development model patterned far more after the capitalist West than Marxism. The idea of a centrally planned economy, symbolized in the five-year plan modeled after the Soviet Union, was gradually abandoned. Yielding to diverse economic demands and resources in different regional economies, the government allowed a measure of independence in planning.

China’s economic future began to look bright, and following the normalization of relations with the United States in 1978, American aid and investment began to support the economic growth of the PRC.

Accompanying the policies of the Four Modernizations, which generally set economic development as a priority and left the question of the socialist transformation of society in the background, a degree of liberalization was apparent in the relaxation of political restrictions on art and literature in the early 1980s.

Tian’anmen

But real political change was not forthcoming, and when students demonstrated for better conditions and more political freedom in May and June of 1989, the “Democracy Movement” was bloodily suppressed with the Tian’anmen massacre on June 4, 1989. Just as the Communists had led resistance to the dual forces of Western and Japanese imperialism, less than a half century after the founding of the P.R.C., some Chinese participated in organized resistance to state power represented by the entrenched government of the PRC. Many others agreed and were silenced by imprisonment or threat of arrest and unable to publicize or communicate their criticisms freely.

A Peasant Revolution?

Did peasants support the Communists because they believed in socialism or because they hoped to get their own land? Did peasants support the Communists because the Communists were perceived as nationalists fighting for China? Did the peasants really support the Communists, or were they manipulated into apparent support? The answers to these questions must take into account regional differences as well as conflicting goals among different groups in Chinese society. The underlying theme is echoed in the history of every developing country: the relationship between economic development and political rights, between economic development and social transformation.

When resistance becomes revolution as it did in twentieth-century China, political, social, and economic orders can be transformed, but as revolutionaries take power continuities with the old order persist in often subtle ways that can resurface with surprising swiftness. Tibet was a victim of Western imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; after the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the new Chinese government invaded and occupied Tibet. In 1959 Chinese troops brutally suppressed a Tibetan uprising led by the Dalai Lama, who subsequently fled to India where he has presided over a Tibetan government in exile. Like Gandhi, the Dalai Lama became known for his nonviolent opposition to the Chinese occupation of Tibet and in 1989 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Revolutionary nationalism in China engendered its own resistance movements, both internally and externally.