

The Chinese Civil War and the Rise of Mao: Source Pack

1. Background (to 1927): Sources on the Treaty of Versailles / May 4th Movement

Source A

From an account at the website <http://www.chinatourdesign.com>

China had entered World War I on the side of the Allied Triple Entente in 1917 with the condition that all German spheres of influence, such as Shandong, would be returned to China. That year, 140,000 Chinese labourers (as a part of the British army, the Chinese Labour Corp) were sent to France. Instead of rewarding China for its contribution to the Allied victory, the Versailles Treaty awarded Shandong Province to Japan.

Chinese diplomatic failure at the Paris Peace Conference became the incident that touched off the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, and became known as the "Shandong Problem".

On the afternoon of May 4th over 3000 students of Peking University and other schools gathered together in front of Tiananmen and held a demonstration. The general opinion is that the Chinese government was "spineless".

The May Fourth Movement served as an intellectual turning point in China. It was the seminal event that radicalized Chinese intellectual thought. Previously Western style liberal democracy had a degree of traction amongst Chinese intellectuals. However the Versailles Treaty was viewed as a betrayal. Marxism began to take hold in Chinese intellectual thought, particular among those already on the Left.

Source B

The official account of the May 4th Movement by the CCP.

The May Fourth Movement was a thoroughly anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary movement. Young students acted as its pioneers. The Chinese working class went up on the political stage, and functioned as the main force in the later period of the movement ... On the local level, future Communist Party leader Mao Zedong rallied opposition against Hunan's warlord Chang Ching-yao.

The May Fourth Movement covered more than 20 provinces and over 100 cities of the country...Its great contribution lay in arousing the people's consciousness and preparing for the unity of the revolutionary forces.

The May Fourth Movement promoted the spreading of Marxism in China, and prepared the ideological foundation for the establishment of the Communist Party of China. The October Revolution pointed out the direction for the Chinese revolution. The May Fourth Movement...was a part of the world's Proletarian Revolution.

Questions

1. Why, according to Source B, was the May 4th Movement significant?
2. Compare and contrast the views on the May 4th Movement expressed in Sources A&B.

2. The First Civil War (1927-37): Sources about strengths of the CCP

Source C

Statement by a Red general, Peng Dehuai, in 1936

I remember the winter of 1928 when my forces in Hunan were encircled. The KMT troops burned down all the houses in the surrounding area, seized all the food there and then blockaded us. We had no cloth, we used bark to make short tunics, we had no quarters, no lights, no salt. We were sick and half-starved. The peasants were no better off, and we would not touch what little they had. But the peasants encouraged us. They dug up from the ground the grain which they had hidden from the KMT troops and gave it to us, and they ate potatoes and wild roots. Even before we arrived they had fought the landlords and tax-collectors, so they welcomed us. Many joined us, and nearly all helped us in some way. They wanted us to win. Tactics are important, but we could not exist if the majority of the people did not support us. We are nothing but the fist of the people beating their oppressors.

Source D

Extracts from the writings of Edgar Snow, an American journalist who lived in China for many years from 1928 onwards. He got to know all the leading figures during this period, and his book *Red Star Over China*, describing his experiences, was published in 1937

I had to admit that most of the peasants to whom I talked seemed to support the communists and the Red Army. Many of them were very free with their criticisms and complaints, but when asked whether they preferred it to the old days, the answer was nearly always an emphatic yes. I noticed also that most of them talked about the soviets as 'our government'. To understand peasant support for the communist movement, it is necessary to keep in mind the burden borne by the peasantry under the former regime [the Kuomintang]. Now, wherever the Reds went, there was no doubt that they radically changed the situation for the tenant farmer, the poor farmer, and all the 'have-not' elements. All forms of taxation were abolished in the new districts for the first year, to give the farmers a breathing-space. Second, the Reds gave land to the land-hungry peasants, and began a reclamation of great areas of 'wasteland' - mostly the land of absentee or fleeing landlords. Thirdly, they took land and livestock from the wealthy classes and redistributed them among the poor ... However, both the landlord and the rich peasant were allowed as much land as they could till with their own labour.

Source E:

The eight rules of the Red Army (1928), quoted by Edgar Snow

1. Return and roll up the straw matting on which you sleep.
 2. Be courteous and polite to the people and help them when you can.
 3. Return all borrowed articles.
 4. Replace all damaged articles.
 5. Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
 6. Pay for all articles purchased.
 7. Don't take liberties with women.
 8. Be sanitary, and, especially, establish latrines a safe distance from people's houses.
- Edgar Snow adds: These eight points were enforced with better and better success, and today [1937] are still the code of the Red Soldier, memorised and frequently repeated by him.

Questions

3. What message is conveyed by Source E?
4. With reference to their origins and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Sources C and D for historians studying CCP tactics in the First Chinese Civil War.

3. The Sino-Japanese War (1937-46): Sources about KMT Weakness / Foreign Intervention

Source F

Taken from the website www.thecorner.org

In 1936 the Kuomintang's Northeastern Army headed by Chang Hsueh-liang and the Kuomintang's Northwestern Army headed by Yang Hu-cheng were stationed in and around Sian; they were charged with the task of attacking the Chinese Red Army which had arrived in northern Shensi.

Influenced by the Chinese Red Army and the people's anti-Japanese movement, they agreed to the Anti-Japanese National United Front put forward by the Communist Party of China and demanded that Chiang Kai-shek unite with the Communist Party to resist Japan. Chiang Kai-shek turned down the demand, became even more active in his military preparations for the "suppression of the Communists" and massacred the anti-Japanese youth of Sian.

Chang Hsueh-liang and Yang Hu-cheng took joint action and arrested Chiang Kai-shek. This was the famous Sian Incident of December 12, 1936. Chiang Kai-shek was forced to accept the terms of unity with the Communist Party and resistance to Japan and was then set free to return to Nanking.

Source G

Edgar Snow, *Scorched Earth* (1941), writing about the "Rape of Nanking".

The Japanese entered Nanking on December 12th 1937, as Chinese troops and civilians were still trying to withdraw to the north bank of the Yangtze River... Scenes of utmost confusion ensued. Hundreds of people were machine-gunned by Japanese planes or drowned while trying to cross the river; hundreds more were caught in the bottleneck which developed at Hsiakuan gate, where bodies piled up four feet high.

Anything female between the ages of 10 and 70 was raped. Frequently mothers had to watch their babies beheaded, and then submit to raping. One mother told of being raped by a soldier who, becoming annoyed at the cries of her baby, put a quilt over its head, and smothered it to death... Some 50,000 troops in the city were let loose for over a month in an orgy of rape, murder, looting and general debauchery which has nowhere been equalled in modern times.

In Shanghai a few Japanese deeply felt the shame and the humiliation. I remember, for example, talking one evening to a Japanese friend, a liberal-minded newspaper man who survived by keeping his views to himself, and whose name I withhold for his own protection. "Yes, they are all true," he unexpectedly admitted when I asked him about some atrocity reports, "only the facts are actually worse than any story yet published." There were tears in his eyes and I took his sorrow to be genuine.

Questions

5. Why, according to Source F, did Chiang's own generals kidnap him in 1936?
6. What message is conveyed by Source G?



4. The Second Civil War (1946-49): Sources about KMT Weakness / Foreign Intervention

Source H

Report by an American official to the US State Department, November 1944

Relying on his dispirited troops, on his decadent and corrupt bureaucracy, and whatever nervous foreign support he can muster, Chiang Kai-shek may plunge China into civil war. He cannot succeed. The Communists are already too strong for him. Chiang's feudal China cannot long exist alongside a dynamic popular government in North China. The Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Chiang's but theirs.

Source I

Extracts from a speech by John F Kennedy to Congress on the Communist capture of Peking (Beijing), January 1949

Over this weekend we have learned the extent of the disaster that has befallen China and the United States. The responsibility for the failure of our foreign policy in the Far East rests squarely with the White House ... So concerned were our diplomats and their advisers with the imperfection of the democratic system in China after 20 years of war and the tales of corruption in high places, that they lost sight of our tremendous stake in a non-Communist China. This house must now take up the responsibility of preventing the onrushing tide of Communism from engulfing all of Asia

Source J

President of the Chinese Red Cross, reporting in 1949.

In many of the reception centres that I had visited, the [KMT Conscripts] were tied to one another to forestall any possible escape. They had no freedom of movement whatsoever. They would be immediately whipped if, in the judgement of the officers, they had misbehaved. The food they ate was not only crude to the greatest extreme but also inadequate in quantity. Its only function was to prevent them from starving to death....According to my estimate, the total number of conscripts who died from a variety of causes during the eight years of war was no less than 14 million.

Questions

7. Compare and contrast the views on the KMT's defeat expressed in Sources I & J.
8. With reference to their origins and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Sources H and J for historians studying the reasons for the CCP's triumph over the KMT in 1949.