

# SERVE THE PEOPLE

**September 8, 1944**

[This speech was delivered by Comrade Mao Tse-tung at a memorial meeting for Comrade Chang Szu-teh, held by departments directly under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.]

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Our Communist Party and the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies led by our Party are battalions of the revolution. These battalions of ours are wholly dedicated to the liberation of the people and work entirely in the people's interests. Comrade Chang Szu-teh [1] was in the ranks of these battalions.

All men must die, but death can vary in its significance. The ancient Chinese writer Szuma Chien said, "Though death befalls all men alike, it may be weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather." [2] To die for the people is weightier than Mount Tai, but to work for the fascists and die for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather. Comrade Chang Szu-teh died for the people, and his death is indeed weightier than Mount Tai.

If we have shortcomings, we are not afraid to have them pointed out and criticized, because we serve the people. Anyone, no matter who, may point out our shortcomings. If he is right, we will correct them. If what he proposes will benefit the people, we will act upon it. The idea of "better troops and simpler administration" was put forward by Mr. Li Ting-ming, [3] who is not a Communist. He made a good suggestion which is of benefit to the people, and we have adopted it. If, in the interests of the people, we persist in doing what is right and correct what is wrong, our ranks will surely thrive.

We hail from all corners of the country and have joined together for a common revolutionary objective. And we need the vast majority of the people with us on the road to this objective. Today, we already lead base areas with a population of 91 million, [4] but this is not enough; to liberate the whole nation more are needed. In times of difficulty we must not lose sight of our achievements, must see the bright future and must pluck up our courage. The Chinese people are suffering; it is our duty to save them and we must exert ourselves in struggle. Wherever there is struggle there is sacrifice, and death is a common occurrence. But we have the interests of the people and the sufferings of the great majority at heart, and when we die for the people it is a worthy death. Nevertheless, we should do our best to avoid unnecessary sacrifices. Our cadres must show concern for every soldier, and all people in the revolutionary ranks must care for each other, must love and help each other.

From now on, when anyone in our ranks who has done some useful work dies, be he soldier or cook, we should have a funeral ceremony and a memorial meeting in his honour. This should become the rule. And it should be introduced among the people as well. When someone dies in a

village, let a memorial meeting be held. In this way we express our mourning for the dead and unite all the people.

## **NOTES**

1. Comrade Chang Szu-teh was a soldier in the Guards Regiment of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. A member of Communist Party who loyally served the interests of the people, he joined the revolution in 1933, took part in the Long March and was wounded in service. On September 5, 1944, when making charcoal in the mountains of Ansai County, northern Shensi, he was killed by the sudden collapse of a kiln.
2. Szuma Chien, the famous Chinese historian of the 2nd century B.C., was the author of the *Historical Records*. The quotation comes from his "Reply to Jen Shao-ching's Letter".
3. Li Ting-ming, an enlightened landlord of northern Shensi Province, was at one time elected Vice-Chairman of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region Government.
4. This was the total population of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningela Border Region and all other Liberated Areas in northern, central and southern China.

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**Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung**