WOULD YOU HAVE SUPPORTED MAO ZEDONG'S COMMUNIST PARTY?

LETTER A

Dear (Name blacked out),

During the past several months since you left, there have been tremendous changes made by Chairman Mao Zedong in Chinese society. I don't think that you would recognize it! Just discussing them makes my headache. First, remember all the land that had been taken from the wealthy landowners and divided among all of us poor peasants? Well, the government has taken it all away from us now! They have used all of that land to form huge farms called COBS. Why? Something about communes being able to produce more food for China. Now, instead of working my own land, I must work the government's communes when THEY want me to. In addition, all private property, like my house and furniture has been turned into government property. I have no rights at all'. Mao is running China through the use of force.

Even worse is what happened to my son. Chairman Mao is eager to build China up into a great industrial nation. But he needs coal, oil, as well as thousands of miles of roads to transport these resources. Where does he get the workers for these projects? He drafted my son into a government work force. No one is permitted to resign from this work force. Those who object are sent to prison camps to be "re-educated".

As for me, every morning, hundreds of us get up every morning in the big farmhouse and work all day long for little money. China is getting rich but the people are staying poor. Such an environment makes all of us cry. There is such an atmosphere of sadness here. Best Wishes,

(Name blacked out)

Letter B

Dear Comrade Wang,

I am so proud of all the tremendous progress that we have made in China. Remember when China was once overrun by European invaders? That will never happen again! Chairman Mao has made our army the biggest in the world. In addition, we have more than enough new atomic weapons to defend ourselves from any attack.

You would not recognize the wonderful changes made in Chinese society. We now have thousands of miles of new highways that have been built, new factories are springing up everywhere, and our new farming system of communes is producing more food than ever. Everyone has a job in China and is helping to build China into a great industrial power!!!

But perhaps the best news is that we Chinese citizens have done away with all the evil greedy landlords who only took from the people. Now the government is in charge of everything in society. We don't have to struggle for better jobs or better pay, the government gives everyone the same things! Chairman Mao will surely go down as a hero to the Chinese people!!!
The Ideas of Mao Zedong: Analyzing a Primary Source

The following selections are from the *Thoughts of Chairman Mao*. For many years, Chinese peasants and workers learned to read by studying the "Little Red Book," the name given Mao's sayings by westerners. Read the selections carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

It is up to us to organize the people. As for the reactionaries in China, it is up to us to organize the people to overthrow them. Everything reactionary is the same; if you don't hit it, it won't fall. This is also like sweeping the floor; as a rule, where the broom does not reach, the dust will not vanish of itself.

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so . . . kind, courteous, restrained, and generous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.

We communists are like seeds, and the people are like the soil. Wherever we go, we must unite with the people, take root and blossom among them.

Communists should set an example in study; at all times they should be pupils of the masses as well as their teachers.

We should pay close attention to the well-being of the masses, from the problems of the land and labour to those of fuel, rice, cooking oil, and salt.... All such problems concerning the well-being of the masses should be placed on our agenda. We should discuss them, adopt and carry out decisions, and check up on the results. We should help the masses to realize that we represent their interests, that our lives are intimately bound up with theirs.

1. Who are the "reactionaries" Mao refers to in the first selection? ____________________ _______________________________________________________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ 

2. According to Mao, what is the goal of revolution? ______________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ 

3. According to Mao, what should the relationship be between Communist leaders and the masses? _______________________________________________________________________

4. To what people in China did Mao's ideas appeal most? ___________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ 

5. Why were Mao's ideas popular among these people? ____________________________ _______________________________________________________________________ _______________________________________________________________________