

REVOLUTIONS

CHINA RISING 3RD EDITION



TOM RYAN

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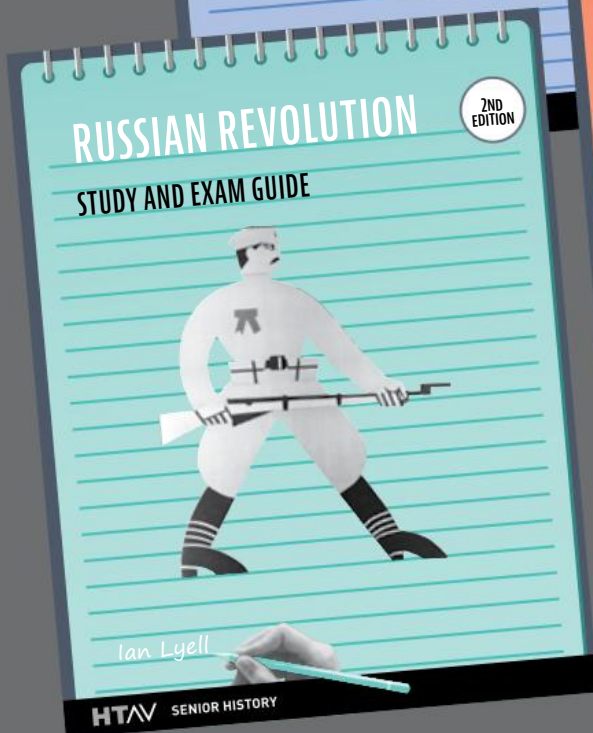
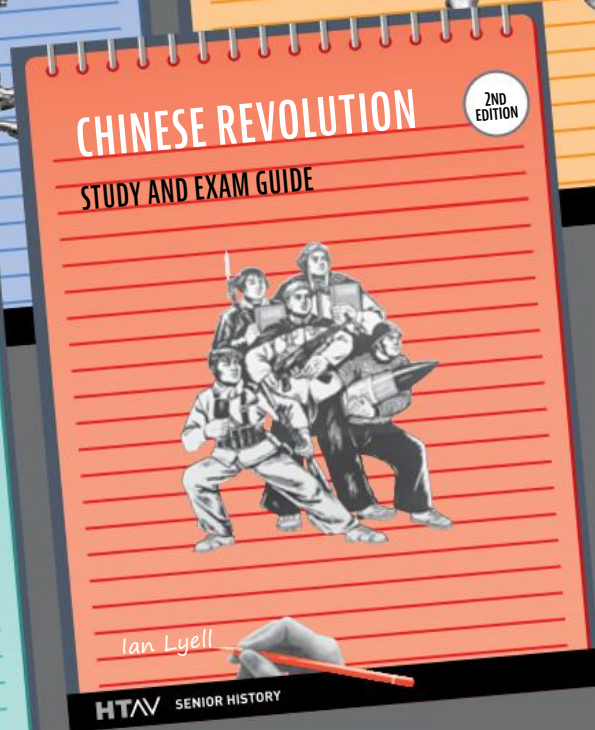
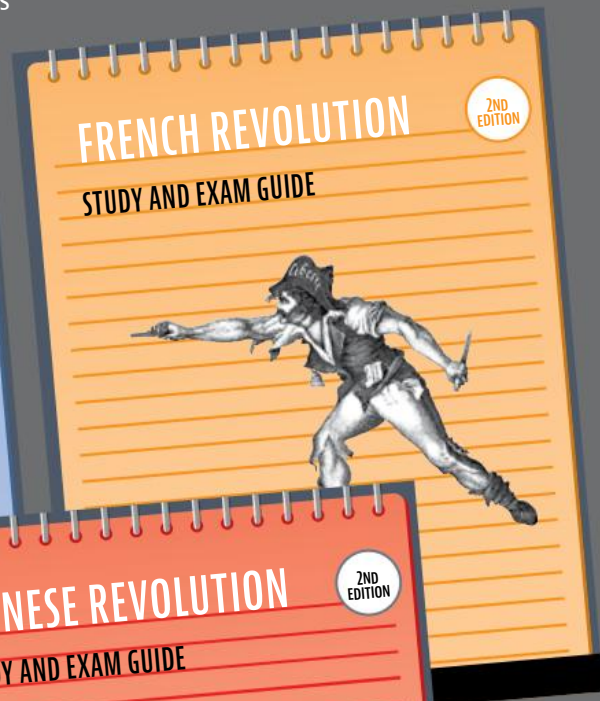
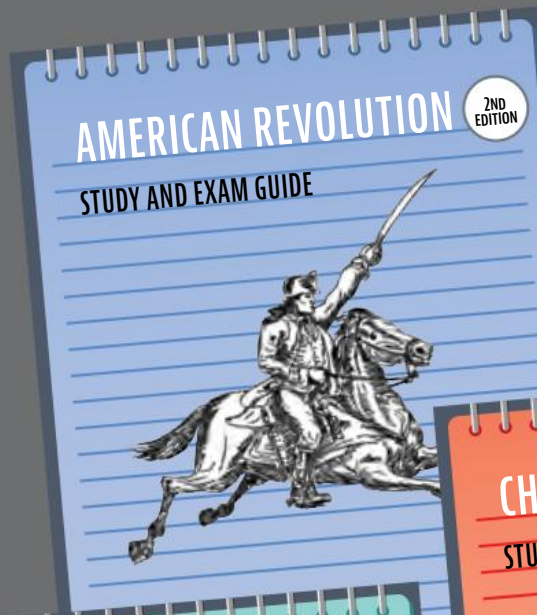
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Give yourself the best chance of exam success

ADVICE FOR THE EXAM

- tips for writing a high-scoring response
- annotated exemplars for different question types
- sample exam with sample responses



REVISION TOOLS

- revision checklists
- timelines
- quizzes

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- tables and diagrams summarising key information
- key quotes (primary sources and historical interpretations)
- key individuals, movements and ideas
- content mapped to the VCE Study Design

CHINA RISING

3RD
EDITION

TOM RYAN

HTAV

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	vi
About the Author	vii
Revolutions—An Introduction	viii
Spelling of Chinese Terms	x



SECTION A: CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

1

Overview.....	1
Timeline	2
Chapter 1: The Middle Kingdom (1793–1912)	4
China's Past, the Land and its People	8
Chinese civilisation	8
Geography	9
Climate.....	9
Provinces	10
People and language.....	10
Chinese Culture.....	11
Confucianism.....	11
Daoism	12
Buddhism.....	12
Chinese Society.....	13
Peasants	13
Townsppeople	15
Landlords and officials	15
Women.....	17
Foot-binding.....	17
The Mandate of Heaven.....	18
<i>Rise and fall of the Qing Dynasty</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Sun Yixian, 1866–1925</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Revolutionary feminist: Qiu Jin, 1875–1907</i>	<i>28</i>
The Xinhai Revolution.....	29
The Double Tenth	29
Sun Yixian returns to China.....	30
The role of Yuan Shikai	30
Pu Yi's abdication	31
Chapter 1 Review	33
Chapter 2: The Troubled Republic (1912–1927).....	34
Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China	36
Song Jiaoren and the Guomindang	37
Yuan's dictatorship	38
Failure of the second revolution.....	38
Japan's Twenty-one Demands.....	39
A new emperor	39
Yuan's significance	39
<i>Yuan Shikai, 1859–1916.....</i>	<i>42</i>
The New Culture Movement.....	44
New ideas and meaning	44

Cai Yuanpei and Beijing University	44
Hu Shi and language innovations	45
Lu Xun and the critique of Confucius	45
Chen Duxiu and <i>New Youth</i>	45
Li Dazhao: Nationalism and Marxism	46
Ding Ling: feminist writer	46
May Fourth Movement	47
<i>Marxism.....</i>	<i>48</i>
Founding of The Chinese Communist Party.....	51
Maring and the First CCP Congress	51
The Chinese Communist Party.....	52
Party debates.....	52
The United Front	54
Sun Yixian's Guangzhou government	54
The Sun-Joffe Declaration	55
The benefits of the coalition	56
The Nationalist army	57
The Death of Sun Yixian.....	57
Consequences for the revolutionary movement.....	58
Increased support for the CCP	58
The rise of Jiang Jieshi	59
Chapter 2 Review	61
Chapter 3: A Tale of Two Chinas (1926–1937).....	62
The Northern Expedition	64
Nationalist Revolutionary Army	64
Victory after victory	65
The White Terror.....	66
Shanghai's Green Gang	66
The Shanghai Massacre.....	66
End of the United Front.....	67
Northern Expedition continues.....	68
<i>Jiang Jieshi and the Soong dynasty.....</i>	<i>70</i>
Communists in Crisis	72
The Nanchang Uprising.....	72
The Autumn Harvest Uprising.....	72
The Guangzhou Commune	73
Recriminations	73
New leadership	73
Further defeats	74
Twenty-eight Bolsheviks	74
Mao's Laboratory: The Jiangxi Soviet	75

The First All-China Congress.....	75	Purges and struggles	119
The Chinese Soviet Republic.....	76	Maoist virtues.....	119
Mao's Red Army.....	76	Theory and practice.....	120
Guerrilla tactics.....	77	Mao's allies.....	120
<i>Zhu De, 1886–1976</i>	78	Growth of the CCP.....	120
The role of peasants.....	79	Mao Zedong Thought.....	121
Mao loses influence.....	79	The Xian Incident and the Second United Front.....	122
Social change at Jiangxi	80	Zhang's truce with the Red Army	122
<i>Mao's Futian Purges</i>	81	The Xi'an Incident	122
The Nanjing Decade	82	A Second United Front	123
Jiang and the Nationalist state	82	Conflict with Japan	123
Cliques and factions	82	The Second Sino-Japanese War	124
Regional pressures	83	Trading space for time.....	124
Financial challenges	84	The Chinese retreat.....	124
Modernisation programs	84	Japanese atrocities at Nanjing	125
Limitations of Jiang's government	85	Impact of the War	126
The New Life Movement	87	Chongqing and 'free China'	126
Changing behaviour	88	Corruption and mismanagement	127
Jiang and fascism.....	89	<i>The Henan famine</i>	<i>127</i>
<i>Jiang Jieshi, 1887–1975</i>	90	Foreign relations in World War II.....	128
Chapter 3 Review	93	Jiang's military blunders	128
Chapter 4: The Long March (1933–1936).....	94	End of the United Front	130
A Forced Retreat	96	The CCP and war with Japan.....	130
Encirclement campaigns.....	96	<i>The story of Wood Fairy</i>	<i>131</i>
Communist losses.....	97	The Dixie Mission	131
The March begins.....	97	Hurley's failed negotiations	131
A nation on the move	97	Japan surrenders.....	132
Battles, Meetings and Mao	99	The Chinese Civil War.....	133
The Battle of Xiang River.....	99	Land and men.....	133
The Zunyi Conference	100	The People's Liberation Army.....	134
Mao takes charge.....	100	Peasants	134
<i>Zhou Enlai, 1898–1976</i>	102	The Nationalists surrender.....	134
The Battle of Luding Bridge.....	103	Chapter 5 Review	137
Yang's forced march.....	103		
The heroes of Dadu.....	104		
Debates over Luding Bridge	104		
Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands.....	106		
The Great Snowy Mountains	106		
High Grasslands.....	107		
The End of the Long March.....	108		
The Long March spirit.....	109		
Chapter 4 Review	111		
Chapter 5: War and Revolution (1931–1949).....	112		
Japan Invades Manchuria	114		
The Manchurian incident.....	114		
Manchukuo.....	114		
War.....	115		
The Yan'an Way	115		
Land and tax reforms	115		
Social change.....	116		
Economic change.....	116		
Political change.....	117		
Mao's Rectification Campaign.....	118		



Overview.....	138	The Eighth Party Congress.....	170
Experiences of Revolution.....	140	The Hundred Flowers Campaign.....	172
Timeline.....	142	Initial resistance.....	172
Chapter 6: The People's Republic of China (1949–1957) ...	144	On contradictions.....	173
The New Order.....	146	Blooming and contending.....	174
A new political system.....	146	'Poisonous weeds'.....	174
National People's Congress and State Council.....	147	The Anti-Rightist campaign.....	175
Chinese Communist Party.....	147	<i>The Hundred Flowers: Historical interpretations</i>	176
Military Affairs Committee.....	148	Chapter 6 Review	179
People's democratic dictatorship.....	148	Chapter 7: The Great Leap Forward (1958–1964).....	180
Consolidating Communist Power.....	149	The Great Leap Forward.....	182
Working with national capitalists.....	150	Five-Year plans.....	182
New currency.....	150	The east wind prevails over the west wind.....	182
The role of the army.....	150	Seeking truth from facts.....	182
The Korean War.....	151	The virtue of backwardness.....	183
North Korean ambitions.....	151	Simultaneous development.....	183
North invades South.....	152	Launching the Great Leap Forward.....	184
China joins the war.....	152	People's Communes.....	185
Stalemate and ceasefire.....	153	Bigger and more Socialist.....	185
Consequences of the Korean War.....	154	From Socialism to Communism.....	186
Fanshen and Land Reform.....	155	Backyard steel production.....	187
Agrarian reform law.....	155	Communal kitchens.....	188
Speak Bitterness.....	155	Experiments and Statistics.....	189
Land reform escalates.....	156	Lysenkoism.....	189
Mass Campaigns.....	156	The Four Pests campaign.....	189
Thought Reform.....	156	Manipulating statistics.....	190
Public denunciations.....	157	Sceptics and deniers.....	191
Sanfan: The Three Antis.....	157	False surplus.....	191
Wufan: The Five Antis.....	158	The End of the Great Leap?.....	192
Purges and executions.....	158	The Wuhan Plenum.....	192
Household and workplace registration.....	158	President Liu Shaoqi.....	193
Class labels.....	159	Fact-finding missions.....	193
Speak frankness.....	159	The Lushan Plenum.....	194
Women's Rights and Social Campaigns.....	160	Mao silences his critics.....	194
The Marriage Law.....	160	Peng confronts Mao.....	195
Women and work.....	161	<i>Peng Dehuai, 1898–1974</i>	196
Cleanliness drives.....	162	The significance of Lushan.....	197
Public health.....	162	The Three Bad Years Famine.....	197
<i>Mao in Moscow</i>	164	A Mao-made famine.....	198
The First Five-Year Plan.....	165	Consequences of the famine.....	198
Priority industries.....	165	<i>Was Mao really a monster? Historical interpretations</i>	200
Production quotas.....	166	<i>Mao's policy failures: Historical interpretations</i>	201
Loan repayments.....	166	The Sino-Soviet Split.....	202
Staged collectivisation.....	166	Rising tensions.....	202
Agricultural stagnation.....	167	Nuclear technology.....	202
Gao Gang and the High Tide of 1955.....	168	Mao and Khrushchev's disputes.....	202
Collectivisation debates.....	168	The Soviets withdraw support.....	203
The Gao Gang affair.....	168	Revisionism and the end of diplomatic relations.....	203
The high tide of collectivisation.....	169	Chapter 7 Review.....	205
Nationalisation of industry.....	170	Chapter 8: Recovery and Retreat (1961–1965).....	206
Problems and debates.....	170	Post-Great Leap Recovery.....	208

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TOM RYAN

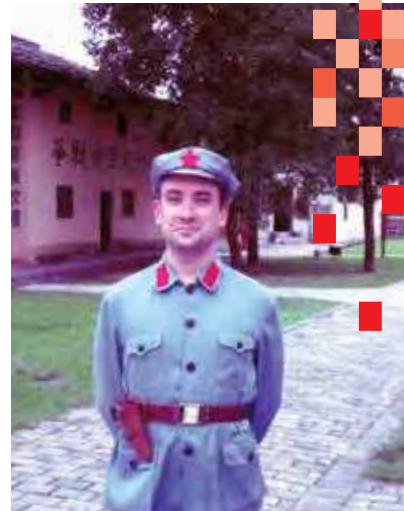
Tom is the Humanities Learning Area Leader at Woodleigh School. He is the lead author of *Reinventing Russia* and the presenter of the Chinese Revolution History course for Edrolo. He is a regular presenter at HTAV conferences and offers in-school revision programs. As 'Comrade Tom', he occasionally records Soviet-themed power ballads and 'one-take wonder yolo' videos on YouTube.

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'The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours. You young people, full of vigour and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed on you. The world belongs to you.' —Mao Zedong, talk at a meeting with Chinese students and trainees in Moscow, November 1957.

The first edition of China Rising was dedicated to the memory of my uncle, Paul Murray (1955–2009). Your wit, knowledge of antiquities and love were deeply appreciated. I dedicate the second and third editions to my daughters Frances and Agnes. You are the most amazing, wonderful and beautiful things your dad has helped create.



Author at Ruijin, Jiangxi Soviet, 2010 (colourised).

REVOLUTIONS—AN INTRODUCTION

A study of revolutions is important because it allows us to look at how critical moments in history alter the function of nations and their societies, and the lives of generations of people. They allow us to examine issues of power—who has it and who doesn't—and to explore what happens when there is a radical shift in power.

STUDYING REVOLUTIONS

The study of Revolutions is based on the understanding that revolutions 'represent a great rupture in time and are a major turning point in the collapse and destruction of an existing political order which results in extensive change to society.'¹ Often revolutions involve a transfer of power from the oppressor to the oppressed, from the privileged to the less privileged. In some instances, a revolution is a response to hierarchical authority and its inequalities, while in others a revolution can be a response to colonial oppression.

Typically, revolutions are driven by strong ideological beliefs about how society should operate. Central to these beliefs are ideas about equality and control, and how a government should balance these. It is important to note that while revolutions are considered primarily political events, there are also significant economic, social and cultural factors that need to be considered. In the context of Revolutions, these are examined through the lens of key historical thinking concepts.

WHAT IS A REVOLUTION?

The term 'revolution' is used widely and often loosely. Consider for example, how advertisers frequently refer to products as 'revolutionary' to generate a sense of something being special or beneficial or even necessary. Understanding what a revolution is—and what it is not—is crucial in a study of Revolutions. This is no easy feat as sometimes the term 'revolution' is used by different people to mean different things. This is evident when we consider the differences between a revolution and other forms of conflict such as a rebellion, a revolt or a coup, and the ways in which these terms are sometimes randomly assigned to different events.

THE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The causes of revolution are often complex and overlapping. It can be useful to consider the long-term and short-term **causes**, and the **triggers**, of revolution. If you consider the metaphor of a revolution as a fire, the descriptions to the right outline the role of each of these.

The path towards revolution is never a smooth one. Rarely do you see revolutionary tension steadily rise; rather it ebbs and flows as those in power attempt to put an end to discontent (through a combination of repression and reform). This results in periods of escalation and de-escalation of revolutionary beliefs and action. Identifying a series of crisis points in the lead up to revolution can help you more clearly see this process.

Of course, one of the challenges in a study of Revolutions is to evaluate the various factors that cause revolution. How are these factors related? Are some factors more significant than others? To what extent? Does this change over time? Why?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Seizing power is only one of the hurdles a revolutionary party or movement faces. All too often, the threat of further revolution or counter-revolution drives the new government's decisions and actions. Revolutionary ideals may be compromised. Arguably, the consequences of revolution can be unintended—this study asks you to identify the intended and unintended effects of revolution and evaluate how these impacted different groups of people at the time. You should compare the perspectives of people within and between groups and evaluate the positive and negative consequences of living in the 'new society'.

¹ VCAA, VCE History Study Design 2022–2026.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Ultimately, the concepts of cause and consequence are used to understand not just the dynamics of a revolution but also to analyse the extent to which revolution resulted in change. The rhetoric of revolutionary leaders, parties and movements is often utopian—they promise a better life with greater freedom, less hierarchical control and more equality—but do they deliver? Sometimes the new regime ends up every bit (or even more) repressive than the regime it supplanted.

In comparing the political, economic and social dimensions of life in the 'old' and 'new' societies, this course of study invites an appraisal of the changes and continuities a revolution brought to society. What changes were evident? Were they positive or negative? What stayed the same (continued)? Why? Did life change for all groups in society or just for some? How do we know?

LONG-TERM CAUSES

The sources of fuel needed to stage a revolution are long-held political, economic, social and cultural structures, often based on issues of equality and control. These act to interrupt the status quo—much like chopping down a tree interrupts the ecology of a forest system.



SHORT-TERM CAUSES

Unresolved and growing over time, these structures generate grievances and resentments that metaphorically become the fuel for the revolutionary fire.



TRIGGERS

The spark that ignites a revolution can be planned or unplanned; it can be an **event** or the actions, or inactions, of an **individual** or a group. Regardless, the trigger often galvanises revolutionary **movements** into action. Sometimes that action involves a mass-movement, whilst at others it offers an opportunity that smaller groups can utilise to seize power.



SIGNIFICANCE

As you examine the causes and consequences of revolution, and the resultant changes and continuities, *Revolutions* also asks you to evaluate the relative significance of these. Were some movements, ideas, individuals and events more significant than others? Why/Why not? When assessing significance, consider:

Scale	How many people did it affect?
Duration	How long did it last?
Profundity (how profound something is)	What intensity of change did it produce? Deep impact or surface-level change?

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Significance is a relative term. One must always ask—significant to whom? In answering this, consideration must be given to:

- the **perspectives** and experiences of different groups of people at the time. Were certain movements, ideas, individuals and events seen as more significant by certain groups? Why/why not?
- the **interpretations** of others (often historians) after the time. Have views of significance changed? Why/why not?

*Ultimately, the complexities and moral dilemmas found in the study of revolutions makes for rewarding analysis and evaluation. As a student of *Revolutions* it is your job to grapple with these concepts and construct your own evidence-based historical arguments.*

written by Catherine Hart

SPELLING OF CHINESE TERMS

As you read about China, you will find that names and terms are spelled differently in different books. This is because the traditional Chinese writing system uses thousands of characters that represent words or parts of words, and people have used different methods to be able to express those characters in the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet. Before 1979, the Wade–Giles system of writing Chinese terms in English was used widely; since then, Pinyin has become more popular.

In this book we use Pinyin, with Wade–Giles terms in brackets after the first mention only—for example, Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). Remember that in China, the family name appears before the given name.

This list will help you with some of the terms commonly used in the Chinese Revolution.

Some Pinyin words are often mispronounced by people who are unfamiliar with Chinese. These errors often involve the letters 'c,' 'q' and 'x'. In Pinyin, use the following pronunciation:

c = ts

q = ch

x = sh

PLACES

PINYIN	WADE–GILES
Beijing	Peking; also Beiping
Chongqing	Chungking
E-Yu-Wan	O-Yu-Wan
Fujian	Fukien
Fuzhou	Foochow
Gansu	Kansu
Guangdong	Kuantung; also Canton Province
Guangzhou	Kuang-chou; also Canton
Hebei	Hopei
Henan	Honan
Huangpu	Huangp'u; also Whampoa
Jiangxi	Chiang-hsi (or Kiangsi)
Manchuria	Dongbei
Nanjing	Nanking

PINYIN	WADE–GILES
Ruijin	Juichin
Shaanxi	Shensi
Shandong	Shantung
Shanxi	Shansi
Shenyang	Formerly Mukden
Sichuan	Szechuan
Tianjin	Tientsin
Xi'an	Hsian; also Sian
Yan'an	Yenan

OTHER

PINYIN	WADE–GILES
Dao	Tao
Guomindang	Kuomintang
Qin	Ch'in
Qing	Ch'ing
Sanminzhuyi	Sanminchui
Tongmenghui	T'ungmenghui
Yangzi (river)	Yangtze
Yi He Tuan	I Ho Tuan

PEOPLE

PINYIN	WADE-GILES
Bo Gu	Po Ku
Cai Yuanpei	T'sai Yuan-p'ei
Chen Boda	Ch'en Po-ta
Chen Duxiu	Ch'en Tu-hsiu
Chen Jieru	Ch'en Chieh-ju
Chen Jiongmíng	Ch'en Chiung-míng
Chen Yi	Ch'en I
Chen Yun	Ch'en Yun
Cixi (dowager empress)	Tz'u-Hsi
Dai Li	Tai Li
Deng Xiaoping	Teng Hsiao-p'ing
Du Yuesheng	Tu Yueh-sheng
Feng Yuxiang	Feng Yu-hsiang
Gao Gang	Kao Kang
Guangxu (emperor)	Kuang-hsu
Hai Rui	Hai Jui
He Long	Ho Lung
He Zizhen	Ho Tzu-chen
Hu Hanmin	Hu Han-min
Hu Shi	Hu Shih
Hua Guofeng	Hua Kuo-feng
Jiang Jieshi	Chiang Kai-shek
Jiang Qíng	Chiang Ch'íng
Kang Sheng	K'ang Sheng
Li Dazhao	Li Ta-chao
Li De	Li Te
Li Lisan	Li Li-san
Li Zhisui	Li Chih-sui
Liang Shuming	Liang Shu-míng
Liao Zhongkai	Liao Chung-k'ai
Lin Biao	Lin Piao
Lin Liguo	Lin Li-kuo
Liu Bocheng	Liu Po-ch'eng
Liu Shaoqi	Liu Shao-ch'i

PINYIN	WADE-GILES
Lu Ping	Lu P'ing
Lu Xun	Lu Hsun
Luo Ruiqing	Lo Jui-ching
Mao Zedong	Mao Tse-tung
Nie Yuanzi	Nie Yuan-tzu
Peng Dehuai	P'eng Te-huai
Peng Zhen	P'eng Chen
Pu Yi (emperor)	P'u-i
Qin Shi Huang (emperor)	Ch'in Shih-huang
Qiu Jin	Ch'iu Chin
Qu Qiubai	Ch'u Ch'iu-pai
Song Jiaoren	Sung Chiao-jen
Soong Meiling	Sung Mei-ling
Soong Ziwen (also known as T.V. Soong)	Sung Tzu-wen
Sun Shuyun	Sun Shu-yun
Sun Yixian	Sun Yat-sen
Tian Jiaying	T'ien Chia-ying
Wang Bingnan	Wang Ping-nan
Wang Guangmei	Wang Kuang-mei
Wang Hongwen	Wang Hung-wen
Wang Jiaxiang	Wang Chia-hsiang
Wang Jingwei	Wang Ching-wei
Wu Peifu	Wu P'ei-fu
Xie Fuzhi	Hsieh Fu-chih
Yang Chengwu	Yang Ch'eng-wu
Yao Wenyan	Yao Wen-yuan
Yuan Shikai	Yuan Shih-k'ai
Zhang Chunqiao	Chang Ch'un-chiao
Zhang Guotao	Chang Kuo-t'ao
Zhang Xueliang	Chang Hsueh-liang
Zhang Yufeng	Chang Yu-feng
Zhou Enlai	Chou En-lai
Zhu De	Chu Te

SECTION A

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the significant causes of revolution?
- How did the actions of popular movements and particular individuals contribute to triggering a revolution?
- To what extent did social tensions and ideological conflicts contribute to the outbreak of revolution?¹

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'Without a people's army, the people have nothing.'

MAO ZEDONG



'From the people, to the people.'

MAO'S MASS LINE

12,000 KMS

100,000

SET OUT ON THE MARCH



7000–8000

SURVIVED

SINO-JAPANESE WAR

3 MILLION
CHINESE SOLDIERS
KILLED

18 MILLION
CIVILIANS KILLED

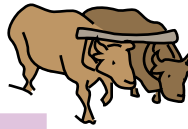
95 MILLION
REFUGEES CREATED

ZHONGGUÓ
'MIDDLE KINGDOM'

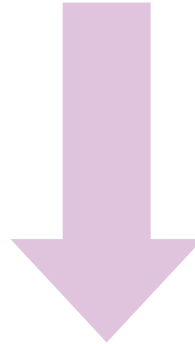
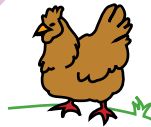
中国

PURCHASING POWER OF
100 CHINESE DOLLARS

1937: 1 OXEN



1943: 1 HEN



1949: 1 SHEET
OF PAPER



*'Keep men, lose land, land
can be taken again;
Keep land, lose men, land
and men both lost.'*

People's Liberation Army song
c. Chinese Civil War

SHANGHAI MASSACRE

10,000 KILLED
12 APRIL 1927

*'If I control the army,
I will have the
power to control the
country. It is my road
to leadership.'*

JIANG JIESHI

1 YEAR

THE LONG MARCH



18
MOUNTAIN
RANGES

24
RIVERS
CROSSED

11
PROVINCES

TERRITORY COVERED

TIMELINE

PRE-1912



1644

1644
Qing Dynasty comes to power

1736-1795

1736-1795
Reign of Emperor Qianlong

1839-1842

1839-1842
First Opium War

1850-1864

1850-1864
Taiping Rebellion

1894-1895

1894-1895
Sino-Japanese War

1894

24 NOVEMBER 1894
Founding of Revive China Society

1898

11 JUNE-21 SEPTEMBER 1898
The Hundred Days of Reform

1899-1900

17 SEPTEMBER 1899-15 AUGUST 1900
Boxer Uprising

1905

20 AUGUST 1905
Sun Yixian forms the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance)

1907

15 JULY 1907
Execution of Qiu Jin

1908

15 NOVEMBER 1908
Death of Dowager Empress Cixi

1911

10 OCTOBER 1911
'Double Tenth' uprising at Wuhan



1912-1 OCTOBER 1949



1912

1 JANUARY 1912
Republic of China proclaimed

12 FEBRUARY 1912
Abdication of Emperor Pu Yi

10 MARCH 1912
Inauguration of Yuan Shikai as president of the Republic of China

25 AUGUST 1912
Guomindang (GMD) established

1913

20 MARCH 1913
Song Jiaoren assassinated

1914

10 JANUARY 1914
Yuan dissolves national parliament

1915

7 MAY 1915
Yuan accepts Japan's Twenty-one Demands

15 SEPTEMBER 1915
New Youth journal established;
New Culture Movement emerges

1916

1 JANUARY 1916
Yuan ascends Imperial throne

6 JUNE 1916
Death of Yuan Shikai

1919

4 MAY 1919
May Fourth Movement

1921

23-31 JULY 1921
First Congress of Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai

1923

KEY EVENT

26 JANUARY 1923
Sun-Joffe Declaration: First United Front develops (formalised January 1924)

1924

3 MAY 1924
Jiang Jieshi appointed head of Huangpu Military Academy and commander-in-chief of Nationalist Revolutionary Army

1925

11 MARCH 1925
Death of Sun Yixian

27 JULY 1925
Northern Expedition begins

KEY EVENT

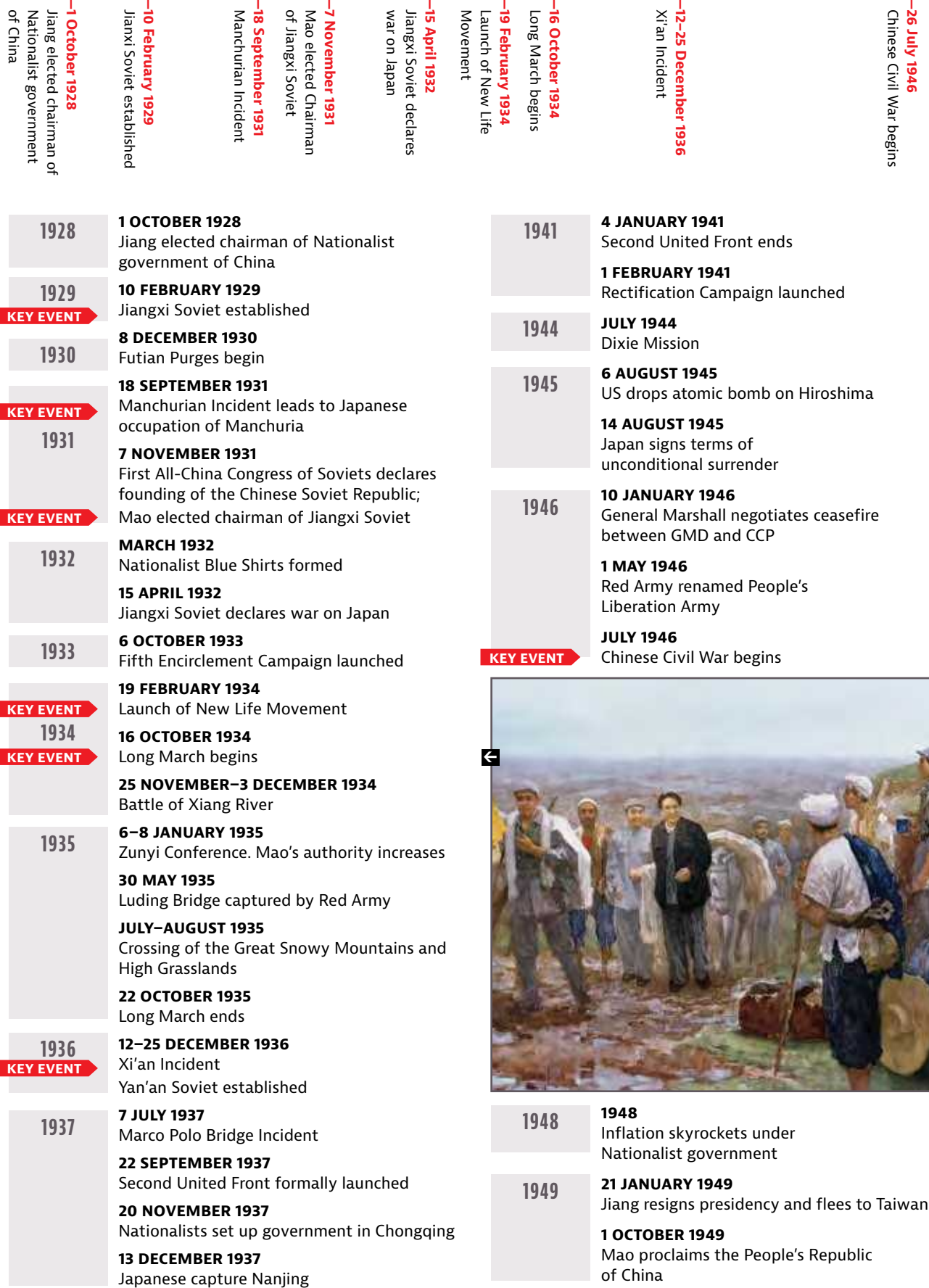
12 APRIL 1927
Shanghai Massacre

KEY EVENT

1927

7-13 SEPTEMBER 1927
Mao's Autumn Harvest Uprising

31 DECEMBER 1927
Jiang Jieshi marries Soong Meiling



THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

(1793–1912)



Source 1.01 Beijing's Forbidden City—the residence of the Son of Heaven.

CHAPTER 1

‘Chaos after prolonged unity and unity after prolonged chaos are eternal rules under heaven.’

—Luo Guanzhong

China is a land of natural beauty, steeped in history and rich in culture. It was ruled for thousands of years by emperors from the same family (which is called a dynasty). Ancient Chinese society was hierarchical—that is, people were ranked according to their status. At the top was the emperor, who had enormous power and authority, while the day-to-day administration of the empire was provided by an elite group of officials. Lowest in status were the common people—mostly poor peasants. This hierarchical structure was reinforced by Confucian traditions.

The last of China's Imperial rulers was the Qing dynasty. China had more than 150 years of peace and prosperity under the Qing emperors. Unfortunately, this period of good fortune came to an end in the nineteenth century as a number of challenges emerged:

- land shortages led to social inequalities and economic hardship
- peasant rebellions and defeats by foreign powers exposed the weaknesses of the Qing regime
- efforts at reform were inadequate, ineffectual or opposed by reactionaries.

The once great Chinese Empire was in trouble by the 1890s. Revolutionaries—namely Sun Yixian and his Revolutionary Alliance—fanned the flames of popular discontent. Imperial China was a revolution waiting to happen.

On 10 October 1911, a mutiny by a group of disgruntled soldiers provided the spark that lit a near nationwide revolution. The Qing dynasty was overthrown and the Chinese Republic was declared. Sun Yixian had inspired the revolution—however, leadership of the republic was granted to a powerful militarist named General Yuan Shikai, who was proclaimed president. Yuan was skilled in the arts of war and politics, and had played a critical role in the fall of the Qing—but his commitment to the ideals of the republican revolution had yet to be seen.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the defining geographic, demographic, cultural and social features of the Chinese Empire?
- How did the size and nature of the Chinese Empire cause challenges for the established authority? How did the environment create hardships for common people?
- How did social and economic inequalities emerge from land shortages, Confucian traditions and the privileges maintained by the landlord-official elite?
- What authority was used to legitimise rule by an absolute monarch? How was this authority used to explain change in the ruling order?
- What were the significant developments and conditions that led to the decline of the Qing Empire?
- How did the revolutionary actions and ideas of Sun Yixian challenge the existing order?
- What role did Yuan Shikai play in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Chinese Republic?



KEY EVENTS

- 1644**
Qing Dynasty comes to power
- 1839–1842**
First Opium War
- 1850–1864**
Taiping Rebellion
- 24 November 1894**
Founding of Revive China Society
- 20 August 1905**
Sun Yixian forms the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance)
- 10 October 1911**
'Double Tenth' uprising at Wuhan
- 1 January 1912**
Republic of China proclaimed
- 10 March 1912**
Yuan inaugurated as the president of the Republic of China



This page:

- **Source 1.02** (top)
Spoken languages of China.
- **Source 1.03** (bottom)
Provinces of China.

Opposite page:

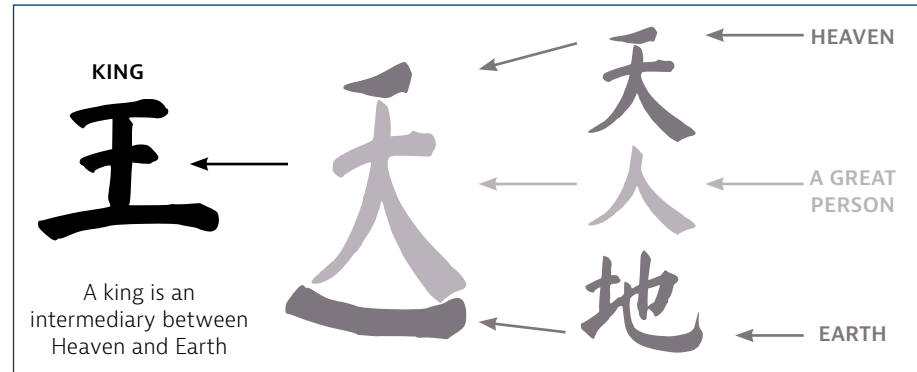
- **Source 1.04** (top)
Climate/geography of China.
- **Source 1.05** (bottom)
Chinese conflicts, 19th century.



CHINA'S PAST, THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Dong Zhongshu: 'Whoever invented writing in ancient times connected three lines through the middle and called it "king." The three lines stand for Heaven, earth, and man. The one who connects them through the middle joins their paths. Who else but a king could take the central place among Heaven, earth, and man and connect them all?'

➡ The character '王' comes from inscriptions found on ancient Chinese oracle bones. The long central stroke represents a strong man of great knowledge and virtue—essentially a king. The stroke at the top represents Heaven, which sits above the king. The middle horizontal stroke symbolises humankind, while the bottom stroke is Earth. The three strokes together represent the three realms of Heaven, humankind and Earth. The vertical stroke in the centre suggests that the king is an intermediary between Heaven and Earth.



dynasty a series of rulers from the same family

DID YOU KNOW?

One of Mao Zedong's favourite books was *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Luo Guanzhong, which is set in the turbulent years of the Three Kingdoms after the collapse of the Han dynasty. Another favourite book was *Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid of Those Who Govern* by Sima Guang, which covered over 1400 years of Chinese history and told the story of each dynasty.

↓ Landscape painting by Wu Guxiang, from the Qing dynasty era.



CHINESE CIVILISATION

China has one of the longest continuous histories of today's nations. Chinese civilisation can be traced back more than 5000 years, and has 3500 years of written history. The complex story of the triumphs and tragedies of China's past would fill volumes of text. Across China's history, distinct **dynasties** held power and governed the realm. There were dynasties that lasted hundreds of years, while others held power for short periods of time.

Some dynasties were established by different ethnic groups, such as the Mongols and Manchu people, who conquered central China. Each dynastic period brought new traditions and adapted the old. There were also periods where central power was fragmented and wars between rival kingdoms divided the land.

So while there was a continuing cycle of change of dynasties, there was also continuity over time. Some things that were constant throughout China's history were:

- political traditions
- written language
- cultural institutions
- values.¹

The legacies of China's long and often turbulent past continued to influence the hopes and anxieties of the Chinese people into the twentieth century. These legacies were not limited to changes and instabilities in the ruling order. The name by which the Chinese civilisation was known, the size of the territory it encompassed, and the very question of what it meant to be Chinese only became established in the relatively recent past. Such questions form part of the backdrop to China's struggles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Before this era, the Chinese civilisation was referred to by the name of whichever ruling dynasty held power. The word 'China' is actually of Western origin, and was first used by early Portuguese explorers. Traditionally, the Chinese call their

nation *Zhongguo*, which translates as ‘Middle Kingdom’ or ‘Central Kingdom’. Until foreign powers started to intrude in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the Chinese considered their Middle Kingdom to be the centre of the universe and the most developed of human civilisations. This vast realm was thought to encompass ‘All-Under-Heaven’.²

GEOGRAPHY

China encompassed an immense territory in ancient times. Today China covers 9.6 million square kilometres and is the third largest country in the world. Its geography and climate are very diverse, ranging from tropical weather in the south to subarctic temperatures in the north-west. It is a land of contrasts, with vast high plateaus, lush river valleys and scenic hillsides. Around 60 per cent of the country is covered by mountain ranges, and only 15 to 20 per cent of the land is naturally suitable for farming.

Because of the shortage of suitable farmland, early human settlements formed where there was access to sources of irrigation. Many of these early settlements developed into the sites of modern-day cities and towns. The majority of the population lived along the coastal areas, as well as along the central Yangzi, Pearl and Yellow rivers. These rivers, which flow from east to west, also provided a natural route for travel from the time of the earliest Chinese civilisation. A series of canals running between the major rivers provided an additional route for barges.

CLIMATE

There are great differences in the climate between the north and the south of China. The north-west—which borders the Gobi Desert—is flatter than the south, and extremely dry. Areas of north China are used for farming crops such as millet, wheat and cotton. However, the temperatures are very cold for much of the year, there is little rainfall, and drought is a recurring problem. Much of the sediment from the farmlands ends up as silt in the Yellow River (hence its name). This build-up of silt has caused devastating floods over time, earning the river its other name: ‘China’s Sorrow’.

Southern China is comparatively temperate. The regions along the Yangzi remain green all year round. The misty hillsides of the south are particularly beautiful and often feature in traditional artwork. Humid temperatures in the south and east are well suited to growing rice—which is one of the staple foods for many Chinese people. Monsoonal rains are common in the south.



 *Zhongguo*, which translates as ‘Middle Kingdom’ or ‘Central Kingdom’.

DID YOU KNOW?

French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte reportedly said of China: ‘There lies a sleeping giant. Let it sleep, for when it wakes it will shake the world’.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Grand Canal is more than 1700 kilometres long and runs from Beijing in the north to Hangzhou in the south.

DID YOU KNOW?

To control flooding and provide a further source of power to eastern and central China, the Chinese government has built the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangzi River. It is the world’s largest hydro-electric power station. Although the dam is beneficial in many respects, it has displaced over 1 million people from their homes.

 The Yangzi River.

 The Three Gorges Dam across the Yangzi River.



DID YOU KNOW?

The 'Four Great Inventions' of ancient China are gunpowder, paper, the printing press and the magnetic compass. Other Chinese inventions include the astronomical clock, the encyclopedia, the decimal system, the longest series of books, silk weaving, hot air balloons, the abacus and the seismograph.

Imperial the period where the Chinese empire was ruled by dynastic emperors (monarchs)

republic representative democracy in which the head of state is not a monarch

Extreme weather can cause difficulties, as the coast of south-eastern China is subject to typhoons in late summer. While the Chinese Empire was a land of great diversity and beauty, its geography caused challenges for the ruling order, and the limited farmland was a particular cause of hardship for common people. South-eastern China remained an area for either careful attention or neglect by governments into the twentieth century.

PROVINCES

China was historically divided into a number of provinces, just as it is today. These provinces include Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Hebei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Shaanxi, Shandong, Sichuan and Yunnan. The outer regions of Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang were also provinces of the Chinese kingdom, although today they have varying degrees of either political autonomy or independence.

Conflict between the people of the outer regions of the empire and the more settled farming lands of central China was a source of tension in **Imperial** China. This conflict continued into the modern era. Regionalism—where provinces or territories tried to break away from the rule of central authorities—was a challenge for the rulers of both Imperial China and modern China.

PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

China is a diverse land with many ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group is the Han, which makes up about 90 per cent of the population. Today, the People's **Republic** of China recognises around fifty-five other groups including Mongols, Yi, Miao, Tibetans, Zhuang, Manchus, Hui and Uighurs.

China has always been—and continues to be—linguistically diverse. The Beijing dialect, known as Mandarin Chinese, has become the most widely used and official form of spoken Chinese. Other regions have their own dialects that differ from Mandarin, such as Hokkien and Cantonese. Similarly, some ethnic groups have their own distinct languages—for instance, Tibetan and Mongolian.

The differences in the spoken languages of the Chinese kingdom were resolved by creating a standard written language, which is based on symbols that communicate concepts and ideas, rather than the pronunciation of words. This means that people who speak different dialects can understand the same written script.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How long is China's historical record?
- 2 By what term is 'China' traditionally referred to by the Chinese people? Include a translation of this word in your answer.
- 3 List five or more geographical features or climatic differences of the Chinese Empire.
- 4 Outline two or more examples that illustrate the ethnic and linguistic diversity of China.

DISCUSSION

How might the size of the Chinese Empire, its geographical features, and its ethnic and linguistic differences have contributed to tensions or challenges for the ruling order? How might ruling powers have managed such challenges? Discuss your ideas in small groups, then brainstorm your responses as a class.



CHINESE CULTURE

Mencius: ‘The empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and family in one’s own self.’

CONFUCIANISM



The teachings of Confucius (551–479 **BCE**) played a significant role in Chinese culture.

Confucius and his disciples, such as Mencius, stressed the importance of different social relationships and their obligations. Traditionally, this was seen as critical for ensuring social harmony and ethical behaviour. According to Confucius, a good person should aspire to the *five virtues*: benevolence (kindness); wisdom; trustworthiness; righteousness; proper conduct. These virtues are then applied to the

five relationships: son to father; wife to husband; younger brother to elder brother; friend to friend; people to ruler.

Within this order of relationships, all interactions were ideally based on respect for each person’s elders and betters. This was known as **filial piety**. Confucius described this as the kind of respect and obedience a good son would show towards his father. Of the five relationships, only the relationship between friends was equal.

Confucianism stressed the importance of the family unit as the foundation of Chinese society, and included ancestor worship. Most Chinese homes had a small altar where prayers and offerings were made to deceased relatives. Filial piety also influenced the institution of marriage, and most marriages were arranged by parents rather than based on love. The birth of sons who would continue the family name was critical. Even Chinese names reflect the traditional view that the family is more important than the individual. In Chinese, a person’s family name comes before their given name—for example, Mao Zedong’s family name is *Mao*; Sun Yixian’s family name is *Sun*.

Confucianism reinforced China’s traditional social structure, which was based on a rigid hierarchy. According to Confucius, people with lower social status had an obligation to respect those with higher social standing. In turn, people in positions of power and authority were obliged to care for and guide those below them. These values fostered a culture of obedience.

A harmonious society would be maintained if the rulers of the Middle Kingdom governed the Chinese people in the way a wise and kind father would raise his children. In turn, the people must accept the guidance and leadership of those in authority. These values had significant political consequences in the Imperial era, because to challenge authority meant to challenge the natural order. Confucianism continued its influence into the twentieth century. Some people looked to the teachings of Confucius as a model on which to build a virtuous modern society. By contrast, frustration with Confucian morality and hatred of its ideals drove the passions of many Chinese revolutionaries.

BCE ‘Before the Common Era’—previously referred to as BC (before Christ)

◀ Confucius.

DID YOU KNOW?

The words of Confucius reflect the shared ethical views of many religions. When asked if there was a single word that serves as a guiding principle in life, Confucius is said to have replied: ‘reciprocity’. He said: ‘Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do to you’.

filial piety Confucian virtue of respect for your parents, ancestors and people of higher social standing

THE FIVE VIRTUES

Benevolence (kindness)

Wisdom

Trustworthiness

Righteousness

Proper conduct

THE FIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Son to father

Wife to husband

Younger brother to elder brother

Friend to friend

People to ruler

DAOISM

A further influence on the Chinese social order was the philosophy of Daoism. Daoism was founded by Laozi, a contemporary of Confucius, and spoke of following the 'Way of the Truth'. This meant being in harmony with the *Dao* (way, path or road) of nature. Daoism sees a balance of complementary forces in all life, as represented in the ideals of *yin* and *yang*. This is best understood as principles of universal balance and cyclical change. Daoists praise 'actionless acting'—which means engaging in life just as water flows over rocks. The natural order of things should not be disrupted.³ Chinese culture and people sought wisdom from both Daoist and Confucian traditions. Importantly, Daoism further strengthened acceptance of the existing social order.



➡ Yin and yang.

CE 'Common Era'—previously referred to as AD (*Anno Domini*, after the birth of Christ)

BUDDHISM

Buddhism made its way from India to China via the Silk Road in the first century **CE**. In this era, the Han dynasty was coming to an end and many people's lives were unstable. Buddhism's 'Four Noble Truths' found a willing audience among people who were searching for meaning during a time of upheaval. The Four Noble Truths are:

- Life entails suffering.
- Suffering is because of attachment, which causes anxiety and disappointment.
- Suffering can be overcome if attachment is given up.
- Leading a virtuous, disciplined life and practising meditation can conquer attachment. Insight will overcome ignorance, thereby revealing the path to enlightenment.⁴

People were attracted to Buddhism for its hope of eventual salvation and its emphasis on kindness, charity and preservation of all forms of life.⁵ By the fourth century, Buddhism had become part of Chinese culture. The Chinese landscape was also transformed by Buddhist pagodas—which were tall buildings built to store holy writings—and impressive cave sculptures dedicated to Buddhist holy figures.

A belief in spirits of the land and mystical beings—often referred to as ghosts or demons—was another aspect of China's rich spiritual life. The many different religious and philosophical traditions in China were not seen as competing with each other, and many people held and observed a range of different beliefs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Chinese Buddhist monks made pilgrimages to India to visit sacred sites and bring back holy texts. One famous pilgrim was Xuanzang (602–664 CE), better known as Tripitaka. Xuanzang's travels provided the basis for the much-loved sixteenth-century novel *Journey to the West*. In the novel, Xuanzang was said to have been accompanied by Pigsy, Friar Sandy the water demon, a talking horse and Monkey King. These characters were featured in the popular TV series *Monkey*, which was based on *Journey to the West*.

➡ Lingyin Buddhist Temple, Hangzhou.

➡ (far right) Big Goose Pagoda, Xi'an. Built to house the scriptures of the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang.



ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 Briefly explain how particular virtues and relationships provided the foundations of Confucianism. Refer to filial piety in your response.
- 2 How did Confucianism and Daoism reinforce the established order in Chinese society?
- 3 Why did different religious and philosophical traditions not overshadow each other in their influence on Chinese society?

CHINESE SOCIETY

Mencius: 'Those who labour with their minds govern, and those who labour with their strength are governed.'

Until the twentieth century, China was essentially a society of two classes:

- the **peasants**
- the ruling **elite**—mostly landlord-officials.

There were also other social groups that lived in towns and cities, and different subgroups among the land-owning nobles and officials. However, the majority of the population were peasants.

Traditional Chinese society was structured as a hierarchy, based on Confucian values. The people considered:

- the least virtuous were at the bottom
- the most virtuous were at the top.⁶

This social structure reinforced the existing order, but also limited social advancement for most people. Confucianism outlined an idealised conception of social relationships; however, the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy and powerful led to rising social tensions by the mid-to-late nineteenth century. According to a popular expression, filial piety meant that the people above you were 'tigers to be feared' and the people below you were 'dogs to be kicked'.⁷

peasants farmers; rural labourers

elite a class or group which enjoys superior social, intellectual or economic status over others

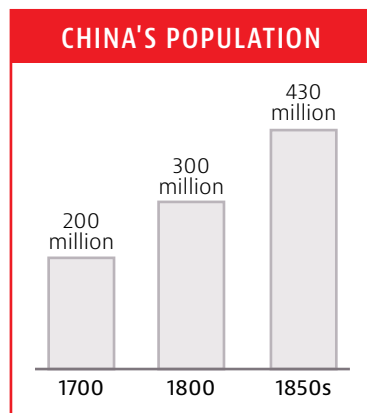
PEASANTS

Around 80 per cent of China's population were peasants. Peasants were valued in Confucian thinking as nobody could live without the food that they produced. Peasants played a vital role in an economy dominated by agriculture. Before the introduction of chemical fertilisers, Chinese farming produced a greater yield of crops per hectare than anywhere else in the world. The careful cultivation of every available portion of land dominated the rural landscape. China's peasants tended their fields meticulously and made the most of natural fertilisers, especially human faeces. Because of the care and attention shown to the land, Chinese farming was said to resemble gardening.⁸

Peasants lived in villages that housed between ten and 100 families. Most peasants lived in simple dwellings, with compressed mud walls, a thatched roof and a swept dirt floor. Those who were better off might be able to afford tiles and a raised floor. Peasant households had simple, practical furnishings. A peasant diet was monotonous and

DID YOU KNOW?

Pearl Buck's novel, *The Good Earth*, which was first published 1931, offers a vivid portrayal of life in the Chinese countryside through the fictional story of Wang Lung.



tenant farmers farmers who rent their land

not very nourishing. Most meals consisted of millet porridge, sweet potatoes, rice gruel and a small portion of pickled vegetables. Meat or fresh fruit was rare.

Peasants worked long hours of backbreaking labour, usually from dawn to dusk. Fields needed to be ploughed and crops planted. Ploughs were normally pulled by oxen—although poorer farmers would use family members to pull the plough instead. Rice farming required careful irrigation with the aid of foot-driven water wheels. The rice-planting season meant days of bending over and standing in knee-high water. When crops did not need looking after, families would work on handicrafts such as weaving to supplement their income. Peasants would also work on large-scale construction projects when required by the government.

China had a population that was greater than any other country. An extended period of prosperity and peace during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to a rapid increase in the population.

By the late nineteenth century, population growth was greater than the availability of land. This had enormous consequences:

- Individual landholdings shrank as families divided up their land among their sons.
- As land became scarce, prices and rents increased, which reduced farmers' profits.
- Many peasants incurred crippling debts and were forced to sell their land and become **tenant farmers**.
- Some impoverished single men moved to towns in search of work; others emigrated.
- Working people's wages were kept low because there were so many workers available.
- There were also long-term ecological impacts, as previously untouched woodlands were cleared for timber and farming. This gave short-term access to more land and resources, but often increased soil erosion.

Life had become very hard for China's peasantry by the mid-nineteenth century. The average life expectancy was just twenty-five years, which shows how hard daily life was.⁹ As poverty and debt closed off opportunities for social advancement, popular discontent increased. The peasantry, who were impoverished and exploited, emerged as a potent force for violent rebellion.

➔ **Source 1.06** Farmers who could not afford to keep an oxen had to pull their ploughs themselves.



TOWNSPEOPLE

By the end of the Imperial era, China had no significant modern industry—which meant that it also had no industrial working-class people or upper-middle-class industrialists. So, in Marxist terms, China lacked both a **proletariat** and **bourgeoisie**. Nevertheless, millions of people lived in China's cities and towns. These people made up a comparatively small percentage of the overall population. Townspeople included various minor classes such as merchants, soldiers, tradespeople and common labourers.

Merchants were a diverse class of people; they ranged from small stallholders and street vendors to wealthy businessmen who specialised in trading silk, tea or salt. In terms of the Confucian hierarchy, merchants were looked down on for pursuing personal wealth by selling the products of other people's hard work. Some merchants accumulated vast wealth and used it to purchase land, which allowed them to join the nobility as landlords and thus enhance their social standing.

Like merchants, common soldiers also lacked respect as they earned their living by killing and fighting. Service in the military was not popular. Most soldiers were either:

- conscripts—who were forced into the army
- poor—men with few other options.

The status of soldiers is clear from the Chinese saying: 'Good iron is not made into nails, good people do not become soldiers'.¹⁰

Artisans (craftsmen) and tradespeople provided a range of services. Among this group were:

- tailors
- shoemakers
- blacksmiths.
- weavers
- carpenters

Artisans could manage a reasonable income if they were skilled in their craft and careful in their business dealings. The Confucian tradition valued tradespeople as producers of useful goods and services. Unskilled workers earned a living as porters, rickshaw-pullers, dock workers and general labourers. And although they lived a life of poverty and toil, unskilled workers were viewed favourably for their services to the community.

The least respected of China's traditional hierarchy were social outcasts, which included:

- beggars
- travelling entertainers
- gravediggers.
- prostitutes
- bandits

LANDLORDS AND OFFICIALS

As prices for land increased, ownership of farmland became concentrated in the hands of wealthy landlords, who typically rented out their land to tenants and lived off the profits. Many landlords did not even live in the countryside, but rather lived in towns and employed people called **bailiffs** to collect their rents.

In the 1850s, up to 60 per cent of land was owned by wealthy Chinese,¹¹ and this trend continued into the twentieth century. In the 1930s, landlords made up 4 per cent of the population but held 50 per cent of the land. The poorest of the peasantry, which made up 70 per cent of the rural population, owned just 17 per cent of the land.¹²

Landlords also increased their wealth by acting as moneylenders. Rather than owing loans to a bank, poor peasants sought funds from the local rural elite. As the landlords were not governed by any official regulations, they could charge peasants whatever interest or rents they pleased.

proletariat industrial working class (factory workers)

bourgeoisie wealthy middle-upper classes who own factories

DID YOU KNOW?

In the West, Chinese labourers have sometimes been referred to as 'coolies', which comes from the Chinese phrase *ku li*, meaning 'bitter strength and work'.

bailiff person employed by another to collect taxes and rents

The land-owning gentry were the foundation of the existing order in the countryside. They were different from the nobility of Europe, especially during the Imperial era when elite social status required not only ownership of land but also knowledge of Confucian beliefs. Landlords who wanted to have their status officially recognised had to sit for and pass a rigorous exam on Confucian ideas. They were also expected to play a role in supporting the established authorities by acting as informal local administrators in their regions.

In this sense, China's rural elite is often described as scholar-gentry. Officials were drawn from this class in the Imperial era, as positions in the government could only be obtained by taking a series of higher-level Confucian exams. The gentry were the esteemed and sometimes feared leaders of their communities, which meant that they often:

- settled local legal disputes
- raised militias to deal with bandits or rebellions
- looked after maintenance of bridges, canals and roads in their region.

In return for their support of the established order, the land-owning gentry:

- paid reduced taxes
- were subject to laws that were more lenient than those applied to peasants.

The idealised noble-landowner wore the robes of a scholar and acted as a wise, selfless and benevolent father-figure to those less fortunate. However, contrary to the Confucian model, scholar-officials and landlords were notorious for being corrupt and exploiting ordinary people. By the 1800s, it was even possible for the wealthy to purchase an examination rank.¹³ Officials were infamous for:

- demanding bribes
- pressuring impoverished farmers to sell off their land to settle their debts
- taxing peasantry above the rates set by the central government and pocketing the difference.¹⁴

➔ (right) A scholar-official.

➔ (far right) Members of the Imperial court.



DID YOU KNOW?

One task of the Confucian exams was a complex written piece known as an 'eight-legged essay'. Other tasks might ask candidates to discuss topics such as: 'In carrying out benevolence, there are no rules'; or 'He who is sincere will be intelligent and the intelligent man will be faithful'.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What percentage of the Chinese population were peasant farmers?
- 2 Why did a chronic shortage of farmland emerge in the nineteenth century?
- 3 Outline three or more aspects of everyday life that illustrate the difficulties faced by China's peasants.
- 4 Briefly explain why merchants and soldiers lacked social status and respect according to the Confucian social hierarchy.
- 5 Using a number of examples, explain how the scholar-gentry and landlord class were the dominant group in the traditional Chinese social hierarchy.

WOMEN

Fu Xuan: ‘To breed a girl is something no one wants, She’s not a treasure to her family.’

The traditional Chinese social order was dominated by men, which means it was a patriarchal hierarchy. Women of all social classes faced discrimination and mistreatment, and during the Imperial era they could not hold official positions. There were occasions when a woman would rise to a position of authority—such as Dowager Empress Cixi during the Qing era—however, this was very unusual. Such discrimination against women continued into the republican period.

This patriarchy extended into all elements of gender relations. According to Confucian tradition, women were subject to the ‘three subordinations’, which were:

- obey your father before marriage
- obey your husband in marriage
- obey your son after your husband has died.

Women were not allowed to marry again if their husband died or left them.

By contrast, it was common for men of wealth to have second wives or mistresses (called concubines). A young bride would go to live with her husband and his parents, where she was expected to follow the orders of her mother-in-law.

In general, girls were seen as a burden and a curse. This was because:

- boys carried the family name
- people who had no sons had no one to care for them in old age
- when a daughter married, her parents had to offer a dowry, which was a payment of money or goods.

For these reasons, girls were sometimes killed by their families. When food was scarce, young girls from poor families were allowed to die from neglect. Such little thought was given to women that many were called by a number rather than a proper name. It was common for girls to be called First Sister, Second Sister, and so on.

FOOT-BINDING

Perhaps the greatest hardship suffered by women was the practice of foot-binding. Tiny feet were considered attractive, and would boost a girl’s chances of marriage, so from around the age of five, girls’ feet were tightly bound in bandages to stunt their growth and produce ‘golden lily feet’. On a bound foot, the toes were bent underneath the sole and bound with cloth—so that the toes were crushed and eventually deformed. Women with bound feet had great difficulty walking normally. One writer described the hidden horror of foot-binding:

Foot-binding

In her tiny embroidered shoes, with beribboned pantaloons falling prettily over the swollen and deformed ankles, or in elegant spats, the Chinese girl minced along daintily on the arm of one of her sons or one of her servants. This was the famous ‘lily walk,’ for the movement of her figure as she tottered on her cramped and crippled feet was celebrated in thousands of years of verse, even though, when the bandages were renewed, the stench of compressed flesh was appalling.

Source 1.07 Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress: Life and Times of Tz’u-hsi 1835–1908, Empress Dowager of China* (London: Vintage).

Source 1.08 The effects of foot-binding.



DID YOU KNOW?

The custom of foot-binding originated among female entertainers during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). By the end of the Song reign, the practice had been adopted by members of the Imperial court and noble families.

A woman with bound feet tottered when she walked (in a bid to stay upright), and this 'lily walk' was considered pleasant to look at. Foot-binding was done by all classes of the Han and some other Chinese, but not by Mongol or Manchu people. Colin Mackerras notes that 'the practice ensured that about half the population was crippled and in constant and severe physical discomfort'.¹⁵ Only very few of the poorest families did not bind feet, as they either required their girls to perform hard labour, or did not have time to do the bandaging.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the 'three subordinations' of Confucian doctrine that women were expected to obey?
- 2 Outline two or more examples that illustrate how women were discriminated against by men in traditional Chinese society.
- 3 Why did Han Chinese women suffer the tradition of foot-binding? How did this practice impact on their day-to-day lives?

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Explain how tensions due to social and economic inequalities contributed to the likelihood of revolutionary discontent in China by the late nineteenth century. Use evidence to support your response.

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

Emperor Qin Shi Huang: 'I am Emperor, my descendants will be numerous. From the second generation to the ten thousandth, my line will not end.'

One of the most significant legacies of the Imperial era was the tradition of rule by an absolute monarch. The emperor was the supreme lord of the Middle Kingdom. He was revered as the 'Son of Heaven'—and seen as a representative of divine power. The emperor commanded total and complete obedience and reverence.



Source 1.09 A Chinese magistrate grants an audience to peasants who kowtow, bowing and touching their foreheads to the ground to show their humility.

Any official or dignitary who sought an audience with the emperor had to show their deepest respect by performing a *kowtow*. A kowtow involved kneeling three times, and placing your forehead on the floor three times for each kneel.

An emperor had many duties, including:

- reviewing petitions
- composing new laws
- carrying out rituals to bring prosperity to the land.

The day-to-day life of the Son of Heaven was isolated from the hardships of everyday people. The emperor lived in Beijing's royal residence, which was known as the **Forbidden City**, and was looked after by a vast group of officials, guards, servants and concubines. The emperor sat at the top of the Chinese hierarchy, and had absolute power in all matters. As supreme law-maker and law-enforcer, the authority of the emperor was unrivalled.

It was unthinkable to question or disobey the emperor because of a uniquely Chinese custom of rule by divine right, called the **Mandate of Heaven**.

The Chinese idea of Heaven was very different from the Christian concept of a spiritual realm where those who have lived virtuous lives receive eternal salvation. For the Chinese, Heaven was a divine force that governed all things in the world. If the emperor ruled wisely and remained virtuous, then peace and harmony were guaranteed—but if the emperor did not govern with virtue, Heaven might show its disapproval through natural disasters. This was a sign that the mandate to rule was in jeopardy.

The Mandate of Heaven was thus a force for stability or change. A successful rebellion or **coup** was not immoral, for Heaven clearly approved.¹⁶ According to the Chinese saying: 'He who fails becomes a bandit, he who succeeds—a king'. When a new dynasty came to power it would claim the Mandate of Heaven and rule by its authority. The Chinese word for revolution, *geming*, literally means 'to abolish the mandate'. Historian W.J.F Jenner argues that the tradition of absolute rule continued to influence the leadership styles of China's rulers in the twentieth century. According to Jenner, 'The tyranny of Chinese history and the history of Chinese tyranny are monsters that have long fed on each other'.¹⁷

↓ Left to right: The Dragon Throne and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.



DID YOU KNOW?

As no 'man' other than the Son of Heaven could spend the night in the Forbidden City, the emperor's personal servants were all eunuchs. These were males who in the Chinese custom were brought to the Forbidden City as boys and had their 'thrice precious' removed—in other words, they had been fully castrated. Eunuchs kept their preserved 'thrice precious' in a special box so that when they died, they could be buried as 'whole' men.

Forbidden City the Imperial residence in Beijing

Mandate of Heaven the mystical authority through which an Imperial dynasty claimed its right to rule

coup seizure of political power by threat or force

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Outline three or more examples that illustrate the absolute authority of the Chinese emperors.
- 2 By what authority did the Chinese emperor rule?

DISCUSSION

How did the social and geographic nature of the Chinese Empire encourage the tradition of rule by absolute monarchy?

DID YOU KNOW?

A five-clawed yellow dragon was the symbol of Imperial power in China. Only the emperor was allowed to wear yellow dragon robes. The grand chair on which he sat was known as the Dragon Throne.

RISE AND FALL OF THE QING DYNASTY

Sun Zi, The Art of War: 'When the leader is morally weak and his discipline not strict, when his instructions and guidance are not enlightened, when there are no consistent rules, neighboring rulers will take advantage of this.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Emperor Qianlong wrote and published over 42,000 poems. Literary critics generally agree that the poems were not very good.

➔ Emperor Qianlong.

Qing the Qing royal dynasty (1644–1912), China's last Imperial regime

queue a hairstyle with a long plait and shaved forehead; all Chinese men were required to wear the queue during the Qing era

DID YOU KNOW?

Manchu women did not bind their feet, although those in the upper classes wore stilt-like shoes to emulate the 'lily' walk. These shoes can be seen in photographs of the Qing Court from the mid-1860s onwards.

➔ **Source 1.10** Groups of men and women wearing typical Manchu dress.

Expansion and prosperity under Qianlong



The **Qing** (1644–1911 CE) was China's last Imperial dynasty. The Qing were of the Manchu people from the far northern Chinese region of Manchuria. When the Manchu conquered the Ming dynasty in 1644, the Qing adopted many of the established Chinese cultural and civil practices.

The Qing also introduced their own customs, insisting that all Han Chinese men wear a Manchu-style haircut. This involved shaving the front of your head and combing the rest of your hair into a long plait called a **queue**. Those who refused were killed.

From the founding of the Qing dynasty, the majority Han Chinese felt that the Manchu represented a foreign reign. Anti-Manchu sentiment would later play a part in the downfall of the Qing in the early twentieth century. However, under the rule of Emperor Kangxi (1661–1722) and his grandson Qianlong (1735–1796), Imperial China experienced one of its greatest eras of prosperity and administrative stability. Qianlong's treasury was so rich that he cancelled tax payments on four occasions.¹⁸ In the sixteenth century, the Qing used military might and diplomatic means to expand the Chinese Empire to its greatest size. But a number of faults and challenges were apparent toward the end of Emperor Qianlong's long reign. These problems worsened over time, and the regime had become weak and ineffectual by the end of the nineteenth century.



Decline of the Qing

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a range of challenges and deficiencies had fatally compromised the Qing dynasty. These problems weakened the stability of the regime, and the likelihood of revolutionary change was high.



Source 1.11 *The Reception of the Diplomatique and His Suite*, by James Gillray, 1792. In 1793 a delegation from Great Britain met with Emperor Qianlong to try to open diplomatic and trade ties with China. Qianlong thanked his British visitors for their gifts but rejected all treaty offers: 'We possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures.'¹⁹

Long-term factors

While China experienced much prosperity under the reigns of Kangxi and Qianlong, the successes of the 1700s inadvertently created long-term problems. Land shortages and rural poverty emerged in the 1800s.

The Qing had grown complacent and corrupt by the later years of its long reign. Tensions between the Qing and Han Chinese, as well as minority peoples, had festered.

Foreign imperialism caused national humiliation

The Qing wanted nothing from foreign lands or peoples, whom they saw as inferior and barbaric. The Middle Kingdom considered that it was the most civilised of nations under Heaven.

However, such self-assurance was rocked by military defeats in the 1800s. War broke out after the Qing tried to stop British merchants smuggling **opium** into China. This war between Britain and China, called the Opium War (1839–1842), marked the beginning of a century-long struggle against **imperialism**. China suffered further military defeats in the following years. By the 1890s, European powers, Japan and the United States had all declared areas of China to be their **spheres of influence**, and many Chinese feared that their nation was being carved up by foreign powers.

opium addictive narcotic

imperialism extension of control and dominion over other territories; political or economic control exercised by powerful states over others

spheres of influence in the Chinese context, territories dominated by Western powers and Japan. Though the spheres were not officially colonies, controlling nations would use them to dominate trade and to establish infrastructure and enterprises in China

CONTINUED ...

Dowager Empress the title given to the mother of the emperor

regent someone who administers a state because the reigning monarch is either a minor, absent or incapacitated

Self-Strengthening Movement a reform movement of the late Qing era. Self-Strengtheners believed in gaining knowledge of Western military technology and engineering while at the same time maintaining Confucian institutions and prioritising philosophical study

↓ Dowager Empress Cixi.



Peasant rebellions revealed incompetence of the government

The military defeats of the mid-to-late 1800s came at a time of great social unrest in the Chinese countryside. A number of factors contributed to rising tensions:

- local handicrafts were being undermined by foreign imports
- shortages of land were leading to rural poverty
- natural disasters were making hard times worse.

The countryside was ripe for upheaval. Almost every region of China was affected by peasant rebellions in the nineteenth century. The largest and most spectacular uprising was the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), which was the most destructive civil war of modern times, with approximately 30 to 50 million people killed.

In the late 1890s, another peasant-based uprising took place in the north of China. The so-called Boxer Rebellion began as a reaction against foreign-built infrastructure and Christian missionaries, which were blamed for causing floods and droughts. The rebels practised martial arts, which gave them their name: Boxers. The Qing encouraged the Boxer movement as a way to rid China of its ‘foreign devils’. The movement escalated into a Qing declaration of war on all foreign powers in China. An army of soldiers from the major European powers—as well as from America and Japan—defeated the Boxer and Qing forces. In 1901, the Qing were forced to sign a humiliating and financially devastating peace agreement.

Popular rebellions highlighted the military weakness of the Manchu regime. At the same time, China’s humiliation at the hands of foreign powers increased popular resentment toward the Qing.

Efforts at reform led to unfulfilled hopes for change

The 1860s saw a new direction in the Qing leadership under Empress Cixi. Cixi rose to influence as the favourite concubine of the ninth Qing emperor. She was the mother of his only son and heir. Cixi’s five-year-old son came to the throne following the 1861 death of his father, the reigning monarch. Because of her son’s age, **Dowager Empress** Cixi acted as co-**regent** for her son; she managed state affairs and became the dominant force at the Qing court. A number of reforms known as the **Self-Strengthening Movement** were initiated in the early years of her rule. The reform movement aimed to preserve Confucian institutions while embracing Western weapons and technological innovation, but had significant flaws:

- the Qing failed to appreciate modern military, scientific and technical training
- funds for modernising projects were misused.

Subsequently, the Qing experienced further military defeats.

When Cixi’s son died in 1875, she was able to have her young nephew Guangxu appointed to the throne. She continued to rule as regent until Emperor Guangxu assumed his full duties in 1889. Young Emperor Guangxu had an independent mind and soon realised that Qing institutions were to blame for China’s lack of progress.

Inspired by more progressive-minded advisers, Emperor Guangxu issued a flourish of royal decrees in mid-1898. These reforms, later to be known as the Hundred Days of Reform, outlined a bold program for modernisation. However, conservative officials were appalled at the threat to their prestige, and appealed to Cixi to end the reforms. With the support of military officials—notably General Yuan Shikai (Yuan Shih-k’ai)—Cixi staged a coup. Emperor Guangxu was placed under house arrest and Dowager

Empress Cixi resumed the powers of regent. All of Guangxu's reforms were cancelled over the following months. The failure of the Hundred Days of Reform showed that the Qing were unwilling to adopt change by peaceful means.

The humiliation of the defeats after the Boxer Rebellion finally shocked the Qing out of complacency. Between 1901 and 1909 a 'New Government' period saw a number of important reforms implemented in the bid to update China's military and political institutions and restore the legitimacy of the Manchu dynasty:

- New armies were trained and armed in a modern fashion.
- Consultative forums were established in the provincial capitals.

Despite this, it seemed that the further the Qing moved toward progressive change, the more they showed up the inadequacies of the dynastic system. The reforms raised hopes of further change among the Chinese people, but popular anger toward the Qing increased when these expectations were not fulfilled.²⁰

The New Government reforms unintentionally set Imperial China on the road to revolution.

Qing leadership was reactionary and incompetent

The decades-long rule of Dowager Empress Cixi stifled China's efforts at modernising. Cixi was unable to respond effectively to the challenges of foreign imperialism and popular uprisings, and her reforms were inconsistent and ineffective. Both Dowager Empress Cixi and Emperor Guangxu passed away in November 1908. The emperor, who died one day before Cixi, was likely murdered by arsenic poisoning.

Before she died, Cixi appointed her grand-nephew Pu Yi to the throne. As had been the case for much of the nineteenth century, a child emperor ruled as the Son of Heaven. Pu Yi's father—a conservative man who was not committed to reform—served as his regent. The Qing court antagonised General Yuan Shikai, the most powerful military figure in northern China. General Yuan was pressured into early retirement, which left him angry and vengeful. Soldiers and some officers of the New Armies became increasingly disgruntled, and revolutionary tensions continued to grow among the general population.

Pu Yi, living blissfully in the Forbidden City, had no idea of the upheaval unfolding around him.



Emperor Pu Yi.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Briefly describe the significance of the following factors that destabilised the Qing dynasty by the early twentieth century:

- foreign influences and imperialism
- peasant rebellions
- reactionary leadership
- ineffectual reform.

DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, discuss this statement: 'By 1911, a revolution in China was inevitable.'

Funds intended for building a modern navy were used instead to build a decorative marble boat in the Summer Palace to entertain Cixi.

SUN YIXIAN, 1866–1925

Sun Yixian: 'Only when imperialism is eliminated can there be peace for mankind. To achieve this goal, we should first rejuvenate Chinese nationalism and restore China's position as a sovereign state.'



KEY INDIVIDUAL

↑ Sun Yixian.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sun Yixian learned English during his time abroad but had difficulty understanding the language spoken by most Chinese. Because Sun came from Guangzhou in the south, he spoke Cantonese not Mandarin.

émigré a person who has left their country for economic or political reasons

DID YOU KNOW?

While attending medical school in Hong Kong, Sun Yixian and three of his friends liked to spend time between their studies discussing contemporary issues and how the Qing dynasty should be overthrown. Their small group became known as the Four Bandits.

Sun Yixian (Sun Yat-sen) was one of the most important leaders of the Chinese revolutionary movement. He came from a poor peasant family in Guangzhou, in the south of China. His family wanted a better life—they made sure their children attended school, and encouraged several of their sons to find work abroad. When he was thirteen, Sun Yixian was sent to live in Hawaii with his elder brother, and while he was there he finished his secondary education and learned to speak English. He was also exposed to Christian teachings and later baptised. A talented student, Sun went on to further study in Hong Kong and gained a degree in medicine.

Early revolutionary years

As a young man, Sun Yixian was inspired by stories of the Taiping rebels, and had seen the virtues of modern, democratic government during his time in the USA. Sun was incensed by China's domination at the hands of foreign powers, and by the corrupt and ineffectual Qing. For Sun:

- the Imperial system was outdated and must be overthrown
- modernisation was only possible if China adopted progressive Western-style political and economic institutions
- China could not progress unless it became a republic.

Sun was softly spoken but very charismatic, and people were drawn to his determination and unique ideas.

In 1894 Sun founded his first formal revolutionary group—the Revive China Society. The Society called for the 'overthrow of the Manchus, the restoration of China to the Chinese, and the establishment of a republican government'.²¹ The Revive China Society was first based in Hawaii, and quickly gained support among the Chinese **émigré** community of south-east Asia. In 1895, a further branch of the Society was established in Hong Kong, where Sun Yixian and his associates made plans for an anti-Qing uprising in nearby Guangzhou. However, the uprising was a dismal failure, and Sun was forced to flee to Hawaii, and later to Japan.

Sun Yixian's Three Principles of the People

KEY IDEA

Sun Yixian continued his revolutionary work among **émigré** Chinese communities in Japan, Canada, Britain and the USA. Sun tried to gain the support of Chinese criminal organisations—known as triads—but with limited success. He also supported independence movements in the Philippines.

In October 1896, Sun was kidnapped by Qing authorities while he was in London, and imprisoned in the Chinese embassy. Qing officials hoped to return him to China for execution. However, Sun managed to contact his former medical professor who came to his aid, and with assistance from Scotland Yard, the *Times* newspaper and the British Foreign Office, Sun was released. The kidnapping drama received a lot of publicity, and boosted support for Sun's cause.

In the following years Sun travelled to Europe, Vietnam and the USA raising funds for his revolutionary work. He lived in Japan for much of his time in exile, and the Revive China Society had its main office in Tokyo. Sun also met and inspired many Chinese students who travelled to Japan for study following the Qing educational reforms.

Sun Yixian continued his own examination of political systems and ideologies, and developed his own revolutionary philosophy, which he termed the *Sanminzhuyi*—‘Three Principles of the People’. These principles provided a clear outline of Sun’s revolutionary intentions, and were broad enough to attract people from diverse backgrounds to his movement.

DID YOU KNOW?

A Western journalist once asked Sun Yixian if he was a socialist. Sun turned to his adviser, W.H. Donald, and asked him: ‘Am I?’

DID YOU KNOW?

Sun Yixian was known by a number of different names. His birth name was Sun Wen. As a student in Hong Kong, Sun started using the name Sun Yixian, which in Cantonese is pronounced Sun Yat-sen. This is the name by which he is most well-known in the West. In China, Sun is known as Sun Zhongshan, which comes from the Japanese name Nakayama (‘Middle Mountain’). This was a pseudonym given to him during his early revolutionary career in Japan.

Sanminzhuyi Sun Yixian’s ‘Three Principles of the People’: Democracy, Nationalism and People’s Livelihood

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PEOPLE: SUN YIXIAN



Nationalism (*Mínzú*)

The domination of foreign powers in China must come to an end, and the Manchu ousted from power. The Han Chinese should rule themselves.

The principle of Nationalism was summed up by the slogan: ‘China is the China of the Chinese’—a clear statement of anti-Qing feeling.



People’s Livelihood (*Mínshēng*)

This principle broadly spoke of improving the welfare of China’s working people.

People’s Livelihood was understood by Sun to mean more regulated ownership of agricultural land, strong state influence in industry and a single, fairer tax system.

Often described as a form of socialism, People’s Livelihood was somewhat vague. Sun once described it as ‘socialism, it is communism, it is utopianism’. During one of his lectures in 1924, Sun spoke of his great respect for the ideas of Karl Marx—but suggested that Marx’s methods were not applicable to China.



Democracy (*Mínquán*)

China should become a republic, with a popularly elected president and parliament.

Sun hoped to model his future government on Western judicial, executive and legislative traditions, but the system would also include Chinese-style examinations for appointments to the civil service.

As China had little experience with modern political institutions, democracy was to be implemented in three stages:

1. Three years of military dictatorship to ensure political and social stability.
2. A tutelage period of six years during which democratic procedures would be explained and trialled.
3. After nine years, the military government would be disbanded, a new constitution drawn up and popular elections held.

Sun believed this ‘guided’ introduction of republican democracy would enable a true sense of nationalism and citizenship to be fostered among the Chinese. He felt the Chinese were ‘a heap of loose sand’ lacking the patriotic values that bind a nation together.

CONTINUED ...

Tongmenghui 'Revolutionary Alliance'—an anti-Qing revolutionary organisation founded by Sun Yixian

Tongmenghui: Revolutionary Alliance

In September 1905, Sun brought together a coalition of different revolutionary groups into the **Tongmenghui** or Revolutionary Alliance. The Tongmenghui was a considerable achievement, for it represented the unification of many different anti-Qing revolutionary groups. The group's newspaper *Minbao* ('People's Paper') was smuggled into China, where it was eagerly read by more and more Chinese people—particularly students. The Tongmenghui had 10,000 members by 1906, as well as contacts in many Chinese provinces and funding from Chinese communities overseas.

Between 1906 and 1908, Sun's followers staged five uprisings. Three of the four major anti-Manchu rebellions between 1908 and 1911 were sponsored by the Tongmenghui.²² While none of these uprisings succeeded or gained much support, historian John King Fairbank wryly notes that Sun 'certainly deserves A for Effort'.²³ The anti-Qing revolutionary groups would not play a direct role in bringing down the Manchu dynasty—but their efforts in encouraging anti-Qing feeling were considerable. The vision of Sun Yixian and the Tongmenghui popularised the idea that revolution and an end to Qing rule were the keys to modernising China. According to Edwin Moise, 'The final collapse of the Qing Dynasty was to a considerable extent inspired by a revolutionary from Guangdong named Sun Yat-sen'.²⁴

DID YOU KNOW?

Melbourne has its own statue honouring Sun Yixian as the 'father of modern China'. It can be found near the Museum of Chinese Australian History, off Little Bourke Street in Melbourne's CBD.



Later years

Sun played no immediate part in the rebellions that brought down the Qing in 1911–1912. However, his ideas were cited by the rebels as the inspiration for their actions. Sun Yixian served briefly as provisional president but stepped down in favour of Yuan Shikai, with the founding of the Chinese Republic. He later held the post of Minister of Railways in Yuan's government.

However, Sun Yixian found himself in a precarious position when Yuan revealed that he was not committed to democratic principles. Sun's political party—which was now called the Guomindang (GMD or Nationalists)—was increasingly repressed. Faced with personal danger, Sun was forced into exile and spent much of the next ten years in the political wilderness.

Sun returned to China in the Warlord period after Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, but struggled to maintain his republican revolutionary movement. Sun was forced to move between Guangzhou and Shanghai as he fell in and out of alliances with various warlords. His fortunes changed in 1922 when the Soviet Comintern offered financial and organisational assistance. Sun Yixian accepted the subsequent United Front alliance with the Comintern and Chinese Communist Party, and was pleased by plans for a military expedition to unite China under a genuine republican government. But Sun did not live to see his dream come to fruition—he died from cancer on 12 March 1925, aged 58.

Sun Yixian left a significant legacy. His party lacked a clear heir to his leadership, which led to political conflict and turmoil in the following years. However, his Three Principles served as the ideological foundation of the Nationalist government that came to power in 1928. The Chinese Communists also admire and respect his legacy, and Sun Yixian is celebrated as the 'father of the nation' for his tireless work in popularising anti-Qing feelings and inspiring the republican revolution.

KEY POINTS

- Sun Yixian was one of the most significant of China's anti-Qing revolutionaries.
- He united the anti-Qing opposition with the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance).
- He gained support and raised funds to support his revolutionary movement through Chinese émigré communities. These funded a number of unsuccessful rebellions.
- Sun developed the 'Three Principles of the People', which provided a vision for China's future as a democratic republic and popularised anti-Qing sentiment. His ideas inspired the 1911–1912 Xinhai Revolution.
- He was Minister for Railways in the first Chinese republican government.
- He struggled to achieve his revolutionary goals in the face of repression, lack of military support and financial difficulties.
- He agreed to an alliance between the Nationalists and Chinese Communists following negotiations with the Soviet Comintern.
- He died at a relatively young age before his vision of a strong and united Chinese Republic was achieved.



 Statue of Dr Sun Yixian at the presidential palace in Nanjing, China.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 List three or more influences that encouraged Sun Yixian to develop a revolutionary outlook.
- 2 What was the main slogan (and the aims) of Sun's Revive China Society?
- 3 Write a brief summary of Sun's 'Three Principles of the People': Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood.
- 4 Why was Sun's founding of the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance) an important development?
- 5 Which of the following statements best describes Sun Yixian's significance as a revolutionary?
 - Sun was a military strategist whose army overthrew the Qing dynasty. He contributed little to revolutionary theory.
 - Sun was an ineffective revolutionary whose achievements were limited. He focused his energies on gaining personal power rather than acting for the general benefit of the nation.
 - Sun founded and organised a number of significant Chinese revolutionary groups. His ideas were the inspiration for the anti-Qing and republican revolutionary movements.

CREATIVE TASK

Make a propaganda poster explaining the key ideas of the Tongmenghui to the Chinese people. Alternatively, compose a speech or poem to be given at a public rally to gather support for Sun Yixian's revolutionary movement.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Explain the importance of Sun Yixian's Three Principles of the People in challenging the existing order. Use evidence to support your response.

REVOLUTIONARY FEMINIST: QIU JIN, 1875–1907

Qiu Jin: 'I have thought this through thoroughly: rather than be treated as a slave, why should I not stand up for myself?'



↑ Qiu Jin.

One of the Chinese revolutionaries of the early twentieth century was a young woman named Qiu Jin (Ch'iu Chin). Qiu was unconventional for a woman of her era, and is an inspiring example of someone who refused to accept discrimination and despotic authority. Qiu Jin came from a scholarly middle-class family. In 1904, at the age of twenty-six, Qiu rebelled against her loveless arranged marriage, sold her jewellery and fled to Japan, where she became involved with fellow Chinese revolutionary activists.²⁵ While living in Japan, Qiu joined Sun Yixian's Tongmenghui.

Feminist

Qiu returned to China in 1906, and campaigned for women's rights. According to Qiu, 'We, the 200 million women of China, are the most unfairly treated objects on this earth'.²⁶ She encouraged women to seek financial independence by gaining an education and entering professional careers. She wrote:

Qiu Jin on women's rights and revolution

Women must get educated and strive for their own independence; they can't just go on asking men for everything. The intellectuals are all chanting, 'Revolution! Revolution!' But I say the revolution will have to start in our homes, by achieving equal rights for women.

↑ **Source 1.12** Cited in Harriet Ward, *China in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Heinemann Educational, 1990), 8.

Qiu was a staunch critic of foot-binding: 'As long as we have these tiny three-inch [7 cm] feet we can do nothing. We must end this practice!'²⁷ Qiu unbound her feet. She challenged other gender norms by dressing in men's clothing, learning to use a sword and rifle, and admitting that she enjoyed drinking wine. She condemned discrimination against women, including:

- arranged marriages
- female infanticide (killing of baby girls)
- domestic violence
- pressures on widows to remain chaste (or 'pure').

Qiu was also a talented writer, and expressed her views by writing journal articles and poetry:

Poem by Qiu Jin

My body will not allow me
To join the ranks of men
But my heart is far braver
Than that of a man.

← **Source 1.13** Cited in Gail Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 80. Also see www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/obituaries/overlooked-qiu-jin.html

Qiu Jin became head of a modern girls' school, where her students practised firearms drills with live ammunition. The school's weapons were part of a stash kept by a local revolutionary group whose members included Qiu's brother, her cousin and Qiu herself.

Revolutionary

In late June 1907 one of Qiu Jin's revolutionary associates attempted to assassinate the provincial Manchu governor. The plot failed, but local students were inspired to rise up and attack the local armoury. A fierce battle unfolded between Qing troops and the revolutionaries. The final standoff was at Qiu's school. The rebels were unsuccessful, and Qiu was arrested, along with seventeen others. On 15 July, at the age of thirty, Qiu was tried and found guilty of insurrection. She was sentenced to death and beheaded.²⁸

After her death, Qiu Jin became an icon of the anti-Qing movement and China's first female revolutionary martyr. Historian Gail Hershatter notes that Qiu was 'a unique figure in the history of modern Chinese women', but also 'quite typical of educated women grappling with the challenges of the time'.²⁹ She remained an inspiration for Chinese feminists and is often described as 'China's Joan of Arc'. As Qiu declared in one of her poems: 'Don't tell me women are not the stuff of heroes!'³⁰

THE XINHAI REVOLUTION

Sun Yixian: 'The abdication of the Qing Emperor and the union of the North and South are largely due to the great exertion of Mr. Yuan.'

By 1911, a fatal combination of political mismanagement, domestic rebellion and continued humiliation at the hands of foreign powers had thoroughly discredited the Qing dynasty. It appeared that the Imperial leadership could not resolve such profound problems in the foreseeable future. Only a spark would be needed to ignite the fires of revolution—but in the end it was a bomb. And although this explosion was not intentional, it still led to the fall of the Manchu regime. The Qing court was so weak that even an unprepared and indecisive revolutionary movement could gain the upper hand.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wuhan is known as the 'Triple City' because it is made up of three smaller cities along the Yangzi River: Hankou, Hanyang and Wuchang. Some accounts of the Double Tenth refer to the 'Wuchang Uprising' because the garrison involved in the rebellion was based there.

THE DOUBLE TENTH

On 10 October 1911 (the **Double Tenth**), a bomb being assembled by **New Army** officers exploded prematurely in the city of Wuhan, in central China. The soldiers had loose connections to the Tongmenghui, and had been radicalised by revolutionary journals. A subsequent investigation by Qing authorities revealed a stash of unauthorised weapons and a list of conspirators.

The soldiers had been plotting an uprising—they were now forced to bring their plans forward. Rather than face arrest, the officers and soldiers of the Wuhan garrison rebelled. The provincial governor immediately fled the city and the rebels soon had control of the whole of Hubei province. An officer named Li Yuanhong (Li Yuan-hung) assumed the role of military governor.

Double Tenth uprising by New Army soldiers which eventually brought down the Qing dynasty. It began on 10 October 1911 (tenth day of tenth month) in the city of Wuhan

New Army military units developed in the late-Qing New Government period. New Army soldiers were trained and equipped in a modern military manner, and tended to be loyal to their commanding officers rather than to the Qing government

Xinhai the Chinese people refer to the events that brought down the Qing as the Xinhai Revolution, a term that comes from the name given to the year 1911 in the traditional Chinese calendar

DID YOU KNOW?

The Wuhan rebels had sent a note to Sun Yixian asking for his approval and support of their plans. However, Sun was busy on a speaking tour and did not read the note until after the Double Tenth Uprising was underway. He learned of the rebellion when he read about it in a Denver newspaper.

Beiyang Army 'Northern Ocean Army.' This New Army was the largest, best equipped and most advanced of the Qing's military forces. Based near Beijing, its troops were committed to their commander, General Yuan Shikai

Source 1.14 Yuan Shikai in military dress.



Li Yuanhong was a reluctant revolutionary. Although he was appointed head of the Double Tenth (**Xinhai**) movement, he was hesitant about assuming such a prestigious role. Despite Li Yuanhong's reluctant leadership, the uprising spread to other provinces. Within six weeks, fifteen of China's twenty-four provinces had declared their independence from Qing rule. All of central and southern China was in revolt, along with some north-western provinces. The rebel leaders were mainly New Army officers working with delegates of the provincial assemblies. Members of the Tongmenghui were also active in some provinces.

SUN YIXIAN RETURNS TO CHINA

Sun Yixian, who had been on a speaking tour of the United States, returned to China when he heard of the uprisings. It was assumed that he would play a significant role because he was a leading figure in the Chinese revolutionary movement. On 29 December 1911, a provisional government of the Republic of China was proclaimed at Nanjing. On 1 January 1912, Sun Yixian became China's provisional (or temporary) president. Li Yuanhong, the Wuhan garrison officer, was named vice-president.

However, there was a catch—the Qing still remained in power in Beijing.

THE ROLE OF YUAN SHIKAI

At this point, Yuan Shikai played a decisive role. Yuan was a general from northern China who had successfully modernised the **Beiyang Army** under his command. He was also a cunning politician. Yuan had sided with Dowager Empress Cixi during the Hundred Days of Reform, but was not trusted by Pu Yi's regent after Cixi's death in 1908. In January 1909, General Yuan was relieved of his duties and ordered to rest until he had recovered from a supposed foot injury, which he took as an insult.

In late 1911, Yuan was recalled to Imperial service to head the military campaign against the republican revolution. He agreed to do so—but only after being appointed commander-in-chief of the Qing military and being given a leading ministerial post in a new government cabinet. Yuan also insisted that Pu Yi's regent step down in favour of the emperor's adoptive mother, Dowager Empress Long Yu (Guangxu's consort).



DID YOU KNOW?

The 'cutting of queues' was the defining symbol of the 1911 Revolution. The Manchu queue was a long plait that men wore throughout the Qing period as a sign of subservience. In 1911, the revolutionaries insisted that all men cut their queues—and they set up checkpoints at city gates where men with scissors would force others to comply. Afterwards, some men made fake pigtails out of horsehair because they were worried about reprisals if the Qing retained power.

Source 1.15 Cutting of a queue during the anti-Qing revolution.



Source 1.16 Revolutionary forces capture Nanjing during the Xinhai Revolution, c. 1915.

General Yuan's forces then marched south and restored order. However, Yuan ordered his troops to halt their offensive at Wuhan, where he started negotiating with the revolutionaries. Yuan wanted to be president of the new government, and he was willing to play both sides off against each other.

Foreign observers and many in the republican movement saw Yuan as a man of prestige, authority and experience. They agreed that he was a fine choice for head of the new government. It was also felt that Yuan would be able to restrain fellow regional military leaders, particularly in the north.

PU YI'S ABDICATION

Sun Yixian agreed to stand down as president of the new republic on the condition that Yuan secured the abdication of the Qing emperor. Yuan accepted this offer and promised to uphold the republican government. The Manchu regime, which no longer had any support or authority, passed on its Mandate of Heaven. On 12 February 1912, Pu Yi's regent signed the abdication edict on behalf of the emperor—Pu Yi was the tenth and last Qing monarch. Over 2000 years of dynastic rule thus came to an end.

On 14 February 1912, Sun Yixian stepped down as provisional president in favour of Yuan Shikai. General Yuan was sworn in as the new president of the Republic of China on 10 March 1912. Historian Peter Zarrow highlights the limitations of the Xinhai Revolution and the significance of Yuan Shikai's rise to power:

Historian Peter Zarrow on the 1911 Revolution

In the final analysis, the Qing fell because its own army commanders were unwilling to support it and because the Chinese elites—gentry and wealthy merchants—saw no reason to prefer the Qing over the revolutionaries. The true face of the 1911 Revolution belonged to Yuan Shikai, not Sun Yat-sen [Sun Yixian].

Source 1.17 Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution: 1895–1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), 35.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which event sparked the Xinhai Revolution?
- 2 Why is this event called the 'Double Tenth'?
- 3 Where was Sun Yixian and what was he doing when the Xinhai Revolution began?
- 4 Briefly outline Yuan Shikai's role in the downfall of the Qing in 1912.
- 5 Who became the first formal (rather than provisional) president of the Chinese Republic: Sun Yixian or Yuan Shikai?

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES



← **Source 1.18** 'The Most Unkindest Cut of All.' The kneeling figure's cap is labelled 'Manchu' and the standing figure's belt is labelled 'New China'.

Historian Immanuel Hsü on the 1911–1912 Revolution

The rise of the republic was an epochal [period of great importance and change] event in Chinese history, for it brought an end to more than two thousand years of imperial dynasties. China no longer belonged to any 'Son of Heaven' or Imperial family but to all the people. The success of the revolution fulfilled not only the dreams of the two-and-a-half-century nationalistic revolutionary tradition, but went beyond narrow racial considerations to liberate political power ... from the Manchus [Qing], and extend it to all the people of China ... Yet the revolution was an incomplete one with many unfortunate repercussions ... When the dynasty was overthrown and the republic established, they [the revolutionaries] felt that their prime objectives had been achieved. So anxious were they for peace that they were willing to compromise with so unprincipled a man as Yuan ... They ignored Sun's three-stage revolutionary program altogether. Their readiness to cooperate with the old elements ... paved the way for future warlordism [rule by military dictators] and attempts to revive the Imperial system.

← **Source 1.19** Immanuel Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 475.

Using Sources 1.18 and 1.19 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline why the Xinhai Revolution triumphed over the Qing dynasty.
- 2 Explain the successes and limitations of the Xinhai Revolution.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of the Xinhai Revolution in changing the power relations and social conditions in China. Use evidence to support your response.

CHAPTER 1 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The Chinese Empire was a huge, geographically diverse state. The climate and shortage of suitable land made farming difficult in many regions.
- Different languages and dialects were spoken, but a standard written language helped communication and the administration across the empire. Most Chinese are Han, but a number of other ethnicities were found across the empire.
- Most people were peasants, and many of them lived in poverty and hardship. Most of the wealth was owned by the land-owning nobility, who also served as the empire's officials.
- Confucianism reinforced the established social hierarchy.
- Women were discriminated against and oppressed by male-dominated (patriarchal) views and customs.
- A series of dynastic emperors ruled the empire. Their authority came from a form of divine right called the Mandate of Heaven.
- From 1644, China was ruled by the Qing (Manchu) dynasty. After a long period of expansion and prosperity, the Qing were faced with a number of challenges in the mid-to-late 1800s.
- The problems that confronted the Qing had weakened the regime by the early twentieth century.
- Sun Yixian was the leading anti-Qing revolutionary. His ideology, the Three Principles of the People, inspired popular unrest.
- The Qing were overthrown in the Xinhai Revolution of 1911–1912.
- General Yuan Shikai played a critical role in the events that led to the abdication of the last Qing emperor.
- The Chinese Republic was proclaimed in 1912, and Yuan Shikai became its first president.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Create a one-page summary of the ideas, individuals, popular movements, events and other conditions that led to the downfall of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic of China. Try to find twenty to fifty 'facts' that tell the story of this period.

CREATIVE TASK

Collate a number of images that depict people from a range of social backgrounds during the Imperial era in China (ideally under the Qing). Using speech or thought bubbles, compose the thoughts and opinions of these people regarding the political, economic and social conditions of the Chinese Empire.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Economic and social inequality, institutional weakness and flawed leadership created the preconditions for revolution in the Chinese Empire by 1911'. To what extent do you agree?



THE TROUBLED REPUBLIC

(1912–1927)



Source 2.01 Yuan Shikai having his hair cut. Published in *Le Petit Journal* in China, 1912.

CHAPTER 2

‘The republic is universally recognised as the best form of state ... Let us henceforth forge ahead and endeavour to reach a state of perfection. Never shall we allow the monarchical system to reappear in China.’

—Yuan Shikai

The Xinhai Revolution ended the Qing dynasty and brought General Yuan Shikai to power as president of the new Chinese Republic. Yuan was a strong and accomplished leader, but his commitment to the ideals of the republican revolution were uncertain. The Tongmenghui embraced the opportunity to change from revolutionaries to parliamentarians and evolved as the Guomindang (GMD). They achieved good results in China’s first parliamentary elections, but proved to be an ineffective opposition.

Sun Yixian and his colleagues soon found that President Yuan was not interested in democratic principles. Instead, Yuan:

- increased his authority by dubious means
- pressured parliamentary delegates
- intimidated some of his critics, and murdered others.

Eventually Yuan Shikai did away with the parliament altogether, and crowned himself emperor. But despite his strength, Yuan was not strong enough to enforce autocratic power—he was forced to step down from the Dragon Throne and died shortly afterwards.

Without Yuan’s unifying influence, the Middle Kingdom fell under the rule of military strongmen, or warlords, who had little regard for the good of the nation. In these unstable times new ideas were embraced by a young China yearning for social equity, political stability and international respect.

The New Culture and May Fourth movements showed that young people were no longer willing to accept China’s humiliation at the hands of warlords and foreign powers. From this radicalism came the Chinese Communist Party (or CCP). The Guomindang also benefited from the rising tide of revolutionary sentiment. Advisers from Communist Russia brought funding and organisational guidance. Sun Yixian did not live to see a united Chinese Republic. After his death, different factions contested for leadership. The candidate with the least political experience and fewer party credentials eventually emerged as the winner: Jiang Jieshi.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the strengths of Yuan Shikai’s leadership? What were his limitations?
- What challenges did the Guomindang face in its attempt to limit the authority of Yuan Shikai?
- What happened to central political authority following the death of Yuan Shikai?
- What was the nature and purpose of the New Culture Movement?
- Why did anti-imperialist feelings increase as an expression of the May Fourth Movement?
- What led to the founding of a Chinese Communist Party?
- How did the Soviet Comintern influence and support the Guomindang?
- What was the significance of the First United Front?
- Who emerged as the leading contenders for power in the Nationalist movement following the death of Sun Yixian?

YUAN SHIKAI AND THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

KEY EVENTS

- 10 March 1912**—Inauguration of Yuan Shikai as president of the Republic of China
- 20 March 1913**—Song Jiaoren assassinated
- 15 September 1915**—*New Youth* journal established; New Culture Movement emerges
- 6 June 1916**—Death of Yuan Shikai
- 4 May 1919**—May Fourth Movement
- 23–31 July 1921**—First Congress of Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai
- 26 January 1923**—Sun–Joffe Declaration: First United Front develops (formalised January 1924)
- 11 March 1925**—Death of Sun Yixian

Yuan Shikai: 'Parliament was an unworkable body. 800 men! 200 were good, 200 were passive, 400 were useless. What had they done? They had not even agreed on procedure.'

According to historian C.P. Fitzgerald, 'the decision to replace the dynasty, and the monarchy, with a republic was, at that time, a most radical step ... That the Chinese, of all people, should choose a republic rather than a new dynasty seemed to be wildly idealistic, unpractical and reckless.'¹ Was a republic a fanciful adventure that was bound to end in disaster? It did not seem so to many at the time. President Yuan Shikai was a capable and proven administrator. As a military commander and former provincial governor, he had shown his willingness to initiate improvements.

Yuan's government introduced a number of modernising projects, including:

- reforming China's legal system
- suppressing opium farming
- encouraging primary education
- centralising the national currency—controlling minting of coins; withdrawing outdated banknotes and regional currencies
- increasing crop yields through irrigation and flood-control projects; encouraging farmers to breed hardier livestock and use new agricultural techniques.

Yuan also strengthened his government's influence over the provinces by appointing loyal military commanders as provincial governors. There was much praise in the British press of Yuan's firm leadership in holding together the volatile former Chinese Empire. 'Yuanity' became a slogan for 'unity' and 'strength'.² Yet Yuan's authoritarian nature was also a threat to the new republican system. According to historian John King Fairbank, 'He knew how to make the old system work, but it turned out that ...

his strength was his weakness: he had no vision of a new system'.³ Yuan was a stabilising influence, but he also was ambitious and domineering, and his leadership was far from democratic in style. Perhaps with some naivety, Sun Yixian declared that Yuan was 'just the right man' to lead the republic. His enthusiasm would soon fade.



 Yuan Shikai.



DID YOU KNOW?

A silver 'dollar' coin bearing Yuan Shikai's portrait was minted during his presidency. This became the dominant coin used in China prior to the Communists' rise to power in 1949.



BRAVO!
On the 19th February three Imperial Edicts were issued by the Throne, the first accepting a Republic, the second accepting the conditions agreed upon by Yuan Shih-k'ai and the Republicans, and the third stating that the Emperor was abdicating in deference to the will of the people. These Edicts instructed Yuan Shih-k'ai to undertake the task of organising the Republic, and the next day Yuan published a manifesto announcing his acceptance of this task and asking the co-operation of Dr. Sun and his associates in Nanking.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Republic of China adopted a striped, five-coloured flag. Each colour represented the different peoples of China: Han, Tibetan, Hui, Mongol and Manchu.



DID YOU KNOW?

An Australian journalist named George Morrison served as Yuan Shikai's public relations officer. Morrison was a respected China correspondent, and he made sure that Yuan got favourable press in the West. Yuan employed a number of other foreign advisers from Japan, Germany, Australia, Belgium and the USA.

Source 2.02

Supplement to The National Review, 12 October 1912. Sun Yixian is on the left, depicted in Western attire. Yuan Shikai is on the right, wearing traditional Chinese clothing. Behind them is the flag of the Republic.

SONG JIAOREN AND THE GUOMINDANG



Sun Yixian was given the post of Minister of Railways in Yuan's government. Rail infrastructure was an important focus for China's development, and Sun set to work planning the expansion of the train network. Sun Yixian remained the leader of the republicans, but responsibility for day-to-day political matters now fell to Song Jiaoren (Sung Chiao-jen).

Song was a founding member of the Tongmenghui and a long-time anti-Qing revolutionary. As Sun's deputy, Song began preparing the revolutionary movement for parliamentary politics. His great achievement was turning the Revolutionary Alliance into a modern political party.

← Song Jiaoren.

In August 1912, the Tongmenghui was combined with four smaller parties to form the **Guomindang** (National People's Party, or GMD). Parliamentary elections were set for January 1913 and, under Song's leadership, the GMD campaigned strongly and gained a majority of seats. Song was chosen by his party colleagues to serve as prime minister—he hoped to curb Yuan Shikai's executive powers by encouraging a 'responsible' ministry and determined parliamentary opposition.

Guomindang KEY MOVEMENT

GMD, National People's Party, or 'Nationalists'. Formerly the Tongmenghui, the GMD was the reorganised political party led by Sun Yixian and Song Jiaoren that engaged in parliamentary politics in the republican period.

Perhaps Song was overconfident. He made no secret of his intentions, which greatly irritated President Yuan. And, as it turned out, electoral victory did not translate into real power for the GMD.

YUAN'S DICTATORSHIP

DID YOU KNOW?

During an inspection of China's railways, Sun Yixian drew up a map showing where new tracks would be laid. Sun was very pleased with his map, but his Australian adviser W.H. Donald thought it best to hide Sun's maps from foreign reporters, businessmen and diplomats. That was because Sun had drawn his proposed new tracks using a ruler—which produced nice straight lines between stations, but took no account of geography. Donald hid the map away whenever visitors were expected.

As well as being president, Yuan's power remained strong because he remained in control of the military. He had no intention of allowing the parliament to obstruct his rule and insisted that the new government make its capital in Beijing—which was his stronghold—rather than Nanjing. The most influential cabinet posts, such as minister of foreign affairs and minister of war, were given to Yuan loyalists. Members of the Guomindang were given lesser posts, such as ministries of education and agriculture.

In June 1912, Yuan pressured the four GMD ministers of his cabinet to resign. Song Jiaoren did not get his chance to serve as prime minister—he was assassinated while waiting to board a train from Shanghai to Beijing on 20 March 1913, probably shot by one of Yuan's henchmen. In April 1913, Yuan secured financial independence by a 'Reorganisation Loan' of \$100 million, which was granted by a group of foreign banks. He arranged this loan without parliament's approval. Meanwhile, as Yuan made a mockery of republican democracy, opposition forces prepared for a showdown—despite Song's death. When the GMD tried to impeach the president over the Reorganisation Loan, Yuan had the parliament surrounded by armed troops—and the parliament was forced to back down.

FAILURE OF THE SECOND REVOLUTION

In July 1913, the GMD-backed provincial governor of Jiangxi declared independence from Yuan's government; within a month, six other southern provinces had also rebelled. This so-called 'second revolution' was easily put down by Yuan's armies. Fearing for his life, Sun Yixian again fled to Japan.

Yuan had little interest in democratic processes:

- On 4 November 1913 he banned the GMD, after foreign powers recognised his leadership.
- In January 1914 he dissolved the national and provincial parliaments and replaced them with a purely advisory state council.
- By May 1914, Yuan had secured a new constitution that extended his term as president from five years to ten years.

The new constitution consolidated Yuan's dictatorship and granted him increased powers over military, diplomatic and financial decisions.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 List the reforms initiated by Yuan Shikai and note the benefits of his leadership.
- 2 What position was held by Sun Yixian in the early years of the republic?
- 3 What were the differences between the Tongmenghui and Guomindang (GMD)? What were the continuities between these groups?
- 4 Who led the Guomindang in the 1913 elections? What happened to this person in March 1913?
- 5 List the actions by Yuan Shikai that challenged the republican order.

JAPAN'S TWENTY-ONE DEMANDS

On 18 January 1915, Yuan's luck changed. In return for granting loans to the Chinese government, Japan presented **Twenty-one Demands**. The demands proposed that China give Japan:

- extensive rights to economic development in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia
- control over mining in central China
- control of the Liaodong Peninsula near Korea
- the right to appoint Japanese advisers of the Chinese government.

If Yuan agreed to this proposal, China would be a virtual protectorate (or district) of Japan. Yuan rejected the demands for Japanese advisers in China's administration, but accepted the economic conditions. Many Chinese were outraged and patriotic protests erupted. A 'day of shame' was announced on 7 May when the Twenty-one Demands were signed. Afterwards, 7 May each year was commemorated with anti-imperialist rallies.

Twenty-one Demands in January 1915, Japan demanded a number of economic rights in Manchuria and northern China. When President Yuan Shikai accepted the demands, popular protests broke out

A NEW EMPEROR

Disregarding popular opinion, Yuan set about founding a new Imperial dynasty. He placed orders for a set of yellow Imperial robes, a 40,000-piece porcelain banquet set and a large jade seal (of the type used by emperors to sign decrees.) He took to performing the rituals of an emperor at the Qing Temple of Heaven and planned for the reintroduction of Confucianism into official proceedings. Yuan's advisers, such as Professor Frank Goodnow, reassured him that a return to monarchy was a sound path for China to follow:

Frank Goodnow on the virtues of a Chinese monarchy

It is of course not susceptible of doubt that a monarchy is better suited than a republic to China. China's history and traditions, her social and economic conditions, her relations with foreign powers all make it probable that the country would develop ... constitutional government ... more easily as a monarchy than as a republic.

On 1 January 1916, Yuan assumed the title of emperor—but his quest for power had gone too far. Many of his generals and provincial governors voiced their disapproval, and some even declared independence from the Beijing government. Yuan was forced to renounce his claim to the throne on 22 March. Deeply humiliated and with ambition thwarted, Yuan grew ill, and on 6 June 1916 he died from kidney disease. The Chinese say the cause of Yuan's dramatic and sudden death was from 'eating bitterness'.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each Chinese emperor took a 'reign name' that was intended to say something about the hopes or intentions for their rule. Yuan Shikai chose 'Hong Xian', meaning 'Grand Constitutional Era'. Yuan evidently failed to see the irony of his Imperial name.

 **Source 2.03** Cited in Ranbir Vohra, *China's Path to Modernization: A Historical Review from 1800 to the Present* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 116.

YUAN'S SIGNIFICANCE

Yuan's revival of an autocratic-style leadership revealed the limitations of the Xinhai Revolution. The Qing were deposed, which achieved the end of Manchu supremacy, but Sun Yixian's other ideals were largely unfulfilled. China's traditional ruling elite, the militarists and landed gentry, were still in authority. The old economic and social structures continued largely untouched.

Sun Yixian remarked, 'Without revolutionary reconstruction, what's the use of a revolutionary president?'⁴ For all his faults, Yuan Shikai had held China together—which was a considerable achievement given China's size and ethnic diversity.

DID YOU KNOW?

Yuan Shikai claimed that he assumed the Imperial throne in response to popular pressure after receiving telegrams and petitions from across China. It is now known that Yuan faked these so-called popular appeals.

warlord a leader who controls a particular region by military might

After Yuan died, regional tensions rose again:

- central political authority fragmented
- China became divided into areas controlled by provincial strongmen, or **warlords**
- Tibet and Mongolia declared independence.

A 'national' government continued in Beijing under Yuan's successor, Li Yuanhong (Li Yuan-hung), but it was a national authority in name only. In the coming years, control of Beijing would change hands more than ten times.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some warlords were quite eccentric. General Feng Yuxiang, known as the Christian General, used a fire hose to 'baptise' groups of soldiers.

➡ Feng Yuxiang.



Real power was divided among the warlords, who ruled over regions that were more or less self-governing (or autonomous). Some warlords even received the backing of foreign powers and signed their own treaties and business agreements. For the next decade, China would be governed by these 'many small despots' whose rule brought much 'oppression'. The warlords were not all bad—some tried to provide for the ordinary people—but for most, their first priority was holding and capturing territory. Because they were poorly paid, warlord armies often plundered peasant crops and resources. Such plundering, combined with their strongarm tactics, earned them the reputation of robbers and bandits. Historian C.P. Fitzgerald illustrates China's predicament in the years following Yuan Shikai's death:

➡ **Source 2.04** C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1976), 43.

C.P. Fitzgerald, extract from *The Birth of Communist China*, 1976

Not far from Peking [Beijing], in the western hills, there is an ancient temple, where grew a strange and rare plant. This plant flowered at long intervals, and then only at the accession of a new emperor. Then it put forth a single blossom. When the Empire fell the plant flowered again, but this time was covered with a multitude of small flowers. So, at least, the Peking people will tell you. The monks were asked to explain this strange phenomenon. To republican officials, visiting foreigners and other persons of modern cut, they said that the crowd of little flowers symbolized the rule of the many, the people of China. To the more old-fashioned inquirers the monks would say perhaps the explanation of the miracle was that in place of one sovereign, the Empire would now suffer the oppression of many small despots.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly explain the significance of the Twenty-one Demands.
- 2 To what extent did Yuan Shikai succeed in his ambitions to reign as emperor?
- 3 Which groups emerged as the dominant authorities in different regions following Yuan's death?

ACTIVITY

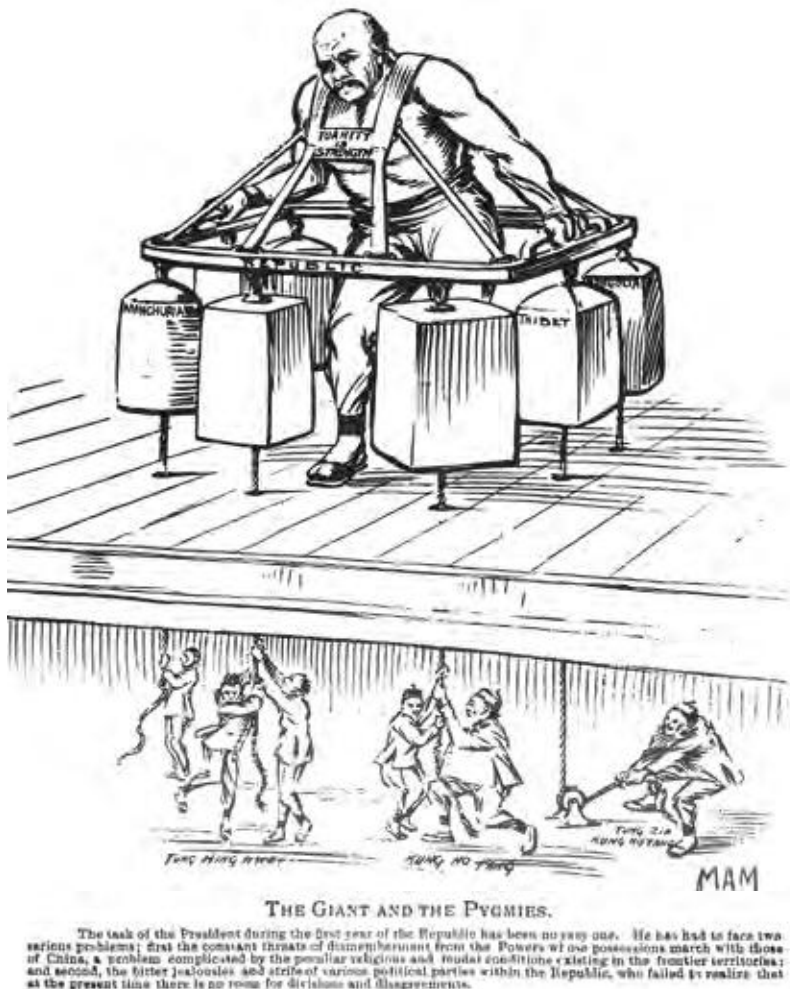
HISTORICAL SOURCES

Liang Qichao was a leading figure in the reform movement in the late-Qing era and head of the Progressive Party in the early years of the Republic. He gave the following assessment of Yuan Shikai after his death:

Liang Qichao on Yuan Shikai

Yuan does not know the difference between a man and a beast. All he knows about human beings is that they fear weapons and love gold, and it is by these two things that he rules the country. For four years, there have been no politics in Peking [Beijing] except the ghostly shadows of a knife and a piece of gold ... Day in and day out he has enticed people by waving a piece of gold in front of their eyes and waving a knife at their backs. By bribery and terror, he has enslaved our people ... For four years, there have been no moral standards among the elite of our country. It cannot be denied that seven or eight of every ten of them are now thoroughly corrupt and rotten. Who is responsible for this? I do not hesitate a moment in saying that it has been entirely due to Yuan Shih-k'ai ... If his empire exists and continues to exist for many years to come, good people will continue to become fewer and fewer, until they eventually disappear: only the bad ones will survive and the entire Chinese nation will lose all sense of human values.

◀ **Source 2.05** Cited in Jerome Chen, *Yuan Shih-kai 1859–1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), 199.



◀ **Source 2.06** A cartoon entitled 'The Giant and the Pygmies', from *The National Review*, October 1912. The harness reads, 'Yuanity is strength'. The weights are labelled 'Manchuria', 'Tibet' and 'Mongolia'. The figures tugging on the ropes represent political parties, such as the Tongmenghui/Guomindang.

Using Sources 2.05 and 2.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline Yuan Shikai's achievements as president of the Chinese Republic.
- 2 Explain why China struggled to develop an effective democracy after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.
- 3 Evaluate the challenges to the early republican era that emerged under President Yuan Shikai. Use evidence to support your response.

YUAN SHIKAI, 1859–1916



KEY INDIVIDUAL

Source 2.07 Yuan Shikai by Hubert Vos, 1898.

Source 2.08 Yuan Shikai in 1915.



Yuan Shikai: *'China should bury its head to work diligently for ten years and then raise head and face Japan.'*

From officer to viceroy

As a young man, Yuan Shikai twice failed the Confucian examinations required to get a job in the Qing civil service. He grew up in the Henan countryside, where he was fond of physical activities, such as horseriding and boxing, which led him to seek a career in the military.

Yuan's family purchased a minor rank for him, which allowed him to begin training as an officer rather than a regular soldier. He quickly rose through the ranks, serving with distinction in important diplomatic and military missions to Korea. As a protégé of the leading Self-Strengthening reformers, Yuan developed a pragmatic approach. 'Yuan got things done', writes John King Fairbank.⁵ He applied what worked best, rather than what was dictated by Confucian ethics. Such was his talent that Yuan was promoted to command one of the largest and best equipped armies in China: the Beiyang Army.

Yuan set the standard for excellence in his military career. He was immensely proud that his was the best trained and best led of the Qing New Armies, and his officers and commanders were fiercely loyal to him. Yuan also served in a number of important governmental posts. He was provincial governor of Shandong in 1899–1901, and was promoted to Viceroy of Zhili, which involved overseeing civil and military matters across three provinces. Significantly, Yuan's positions allowed him to build up his influence in the regions around the national capital, Beijing.

Political intrigues

Yuan Shikai had the ability to choose the 'right side' in tumultuous times. He refused to join in the Boxer Uprising. Instead, Yuan used his troops to protect foreign interests and suppress the movement in areas under his administration. He sided with Dowager Empress Cixi during the Hundred Days of Reform. Yuan fell out of favour with the Qing leadership after Cixi's death, and resented the way that he was pressured to retire. Yuan kept his influence with the military, and he was asked to lead the campaign to suppress the Wuhan Uprising in 1911. Yuan initially led his forces against the republican rebels—but then turned on the Qing once the republicans offered him the presidency.

President and emperor

As a strong and capable leader, Yuan effectively united China under his presidency. He implemented a range of reforms and was respected by Western powers. He was also an ambitious man who preferred authority to democratic sentiment. Yuan undercut the republican parliament and suppressed his critics. His rule came undone in 1915 after Japan imposed its Twenty-one Demands. Yuan claimed the Imperial throne in 1916 but his reign as emperor was opposed by regional governors and leading generals. He was forced to step down and died a few months later of liver disease.

KEY POINTS

- Yuan Shikai was a leading military and political figure in the late-Qing and early republican period.
- Yuan commanded the most powerful military force in the north of China. He used the military to further his political ambitions.
- He emerged as president of the Chinese Republic following the 1911–1912 Xinhai Revolution.
- He implemented important reforms, including an effective opium suppression campaign, modernisation of China's legal system, and improvements in agriculture and education.
- He undermined constitutional and democratic principles by repressing the Guomindang (GMD) (which held a majority in the parliament) and intimidating his opponents. One of Yuan's most vocal critics, Song Jiaoren, was murdered.
- Yuan consolidated his authority by extending his term as president and dissolving China's national and provincial parliaments.
- After accepting Japan's Twenty-one Demands, Yuan faced a surge in popular opposition, especially among patriotic students who vigorously protested his action.
- He assumed the throne as Emperor Hong Xian, but was soon pressured to step down.
- Yuan died with his ambitions for power unfulfilled. His death marked the beginning of the Warlord period.

TIMELINE: YUAN SHIKAI AND REPUBLICAN CHINA

1912	—1 January 1912	Proclamation of the Republic of China
	—10 March 1912	Inauguration of President Yuan Shikai
	—25 August 1912	Tongmenghui reorganise into the Guomindang (GMD)
1913	—January 1913	National parliamentary elections
	—20 March 1913	Assassination of Song Jiaoren
	—26 April 1913	Reorganisation Loan
	—15 July–12 September 1913	'Second Revolution'; Yuan's forces victorious
1914	—4 November 1913	GMD banned; Sun Yixian flees China
	—10 January 1914	National parliament dissolved
	—1 May 1914	New Constitution gives Yuan further authority
1915	—18 January 1915	Japan's Twenty-one Demands
	—7 May 1915	Day of Shame
1916	—1 January 1916	Yuan ascends the Imperial throne (as Emperor Hong Xian)
	—22 March 1916	Yuan abdicates
	—6 June 1916	Death of Yuan Shikai

ACTIVITY

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Yuan Shikai's desire for power doomed hopes for a democratic republic in China.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'Sun Yixian could inspire a revolution, but he failed to establish a republic.' Is this a fair assessment of Sun?
- 'After the Xinhai Revolution, China required a strong leader like Yuan Shikai. China's history, culture and the circumstances following the end of the Qing demanded it.' Discuss.

DID YOU KNOW?

Several Western thinkers were invited to China during the New Culture period, including Albert Einstein (1922), Margaret Sanger (1922), Bertrand Russell (1920–1921) and John Dewey (1919–1921). Dewey said: 'There seems to be no country in the world where students are so unanimously and eagerly interested in what is modern and new in thought'.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao Zedong was not a major figure in the New Culture Movement, but as a young man he engaged with its debates enthusiastically. Mao's early works were newspaper articles written during this era. In one of his articles, Mao wrote about the benefits of rigorous exercise. He was particularly keen on swimming and hiking. Mao argued that the Chinese should strengthen their nation by strengthening themselves. As Mao put it: 'Exercise should be savage and rude'.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the early May Fourth protests, students marched on the house of the government minister who was seen as responsible for giving in to Japanese demands. The official tried to flee but was seized and badly beaten. The students then burned down his house. A foreign correspondent who witnessed the event described how the angry young people, 'advanced quietly down the *hutong* (alleyway) to the little side street in which Cao Rulin [the minister] resides, came to his big double doors—and then went mad'.

THE NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

KEY MOVEMENT
KEY IDEA

Hu Shi: 'Chinese literature produced by the literary men during the last two thousand years is a dead literature written in a dead language.'

NEW IDEAS AND MEANING

An extraordinary 'flowering of intellectual energy' occurred during the Warlord period. This so-called New Culture Movement had begun during World War I (1914–1918) as a result of the ferment of nationalist feeling, political fragmentation and the decline of Confucian influences in the final years of the Qing.⁶

The New Culture Movement sought to create a new cultural identity for China. It was headed by young intellectuals and adopted by students. One leading thinker of this era was Hu Shi (Hu Shih), who wrote: 'What is the sole aim of the new thought tide? It is to recreate civilisation.'⁷ China appeared to be in profound danger from foreign powers—both morally and physically. The New Culture Movement was effectively asking: what does it mean to be Chinese?⁸ Its approach was to:

- question Confucian traditions
- find new writing styles
- examine China's future.

Young Chinese people searched eagerly for new ideas and new ways of thinking, including:

- nationalism
- women's rights and feminism
- liberalism
- Darwinism
- democracy
- anarchism
- socialism
- Marxism–Leninism.

Partly because the republican revolution had not brought peace or national unity, China's young people engaged in deep soul-searching and an intellectual re-evaluation of China's place in the world. They hoped that such a re-evaluation would reveal a way forward. It was an incredible intellectual rebirth for China's students and scholars. Historian Rana Mitter describes the period as, 'intellectually and socially one of the most promising and exciting times in Chinese history'.⁹ The New Culture Movement is complex, but its essential elements can be seen by having a closer look at its leading figures.

CAI YUANPEI AND BEIJING UNIVERSITY

One of the centres of the New Culture Movement was Beijing University. A thriving intellectual community of like-minded thinkers emerged there under the university's chancellor Cai Yuanpei (T'sai Yuan-p'ei). Cai had been a member of the Tongmenghui, and briefly served as education minister in the republican government. Cai was an advocate of free thinking, and attracted brilliant and innovative staff to the university. Four of the leading figures of the New Culture Movement worked under Cai Yuanpei: Hu Shi, Lu Xun (Lu Hsun), Chen Duxiu (Ch'en Tu-hsiu) and Li Dazhao (Li Ta-chao).

HU SHI AND LANGUAGE INNOVATIONS

Hu Shi's major contribution was to promote a more accessible, **vernacular** form of writing. Most formal and academic written texts were incomprehensible to ordinary people because of the language, grammar and vocabulary used by Confucian scholars. Hu popularised **baihua**, everyday writing, which had previously been considered coarse or vulgar. Hu saw that using everyday writing was sensible and had great value, as it allowed a wider range of people to access literary works and new ideas. He dismissed the Confucian style of writing as a 'dead language'. Advocates of New Culture argued that a modern nation needed literate people, as they would be more likely to understand new ideas and values.¹⁰

vernacular everyday language used by ordinary people

baihua the 'everyday' style of writing made popular in literature and media during the New Culture movement

LU XUN AND THE CRITIQUE OF CONFUCIUS

A central part of the New Culture Movement involved criticising Confucian values. Lu Xun wrote a number of short stories that left readers with the impression that Confucian culture was outdated and morally bankrupt. Written in *baihua* style, Lu's stories inspired others to break with classical literary traditions. Fiction, according to Lu, was a powerful means of educating people about problems in Chinese society. In *The Diary of a Madman*, written in 1918, Lu described Confucian society as cannibalistic:

Lu Xun, *The Diary of a Madman*

I recollect in ancient times, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history [the Confucian Canon] has no chronology, and scrawled over each page are the words: 'Virtue and Morality.' In any case, I could not sleep, so I read half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words, 'Eat People.'

By associating Confucian texts with cannibalism, Lu was condemning what he saw as an amoral tradition. Confucianism, he argued, reinforced exploitation at the expense of social harmony. His short story 'The True Story of Ah Q' is considered a masterpiece of modern Chinese literature. In it, Lu used satire and tragedy to illustrate what he saw as faults in the mindset and character of many contemporary Chinese people.

Lu Xun.



Source 2.09 Cited in Ruis, *Mao for Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 47.

CHEN DUXIU AND *NEW YOUTH*

Chen Duxiu was arguably the most influential scholar of the New Culture Movement. He founded the literary journal **New Youth** in 1915. This became an influential forum for the discussion of new ideas. Historian Ross Terrill describes it as 'a magazine that jabbed the rapier [sword] of modern Western ideas through the ribs of China's rigid traditions'.¹¹ *New Youth* was at the forefront of the vernacular language drive. Lu Xun and Hu Shi were regular contributors. The journal gained considerable circulation. In the first issue Chen wrote, 'The strength of our country is weakening, the morals of our people degenerating, and the learning of our scholars is distressing. Our youth must take up the task of rejuvenating China.'¹² In one article he praised 'Mr Science' and 'Mr Democracy' as being far superior to Confucianism. 'Scientific' ideas would allow a 'new' society to emerge while 'democracy' held attraction as both a political and a moral system.¹³ Chen would become one of China's founding Marxist thinkers. Like many of his contemporaries, Chen saw revolutionary Marxism as particularly inspiring and 'modern' after the successful Communist revolution in Russia in October 1917.

New Youth revolutionary journal, founded and edited by Chen Duxiu in 1915, that provided a forum for new ideas during the New Culture and May Fourth movements

Chen Duxiu.





↑ Li Dazhao.



↑ Ding Ling.

left-wing having progressive or liberal views; in favour of a strong public sector and welfare state

LI DAZHAO: NATIONALISM AND MARXISM

Li Dazhao was a history professor and the chief librarian at Beijing University. He was a close associate of Chen Duxiu, and began a study group to explore Marx's theories. Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) was a member of Li's study circle and worked as one of his library assistants. Li wrote articles and served as editor for *New Youth*. One of his theoretical contributions was exploring how nationalism and Marxism could be brought together. Li argued that the whole Chinese nation was being exploited by stronger capitalist imperialist powers.¹⁴

DING LING: FEMINIST WRITER

Women activists, such as the writer Ding Ling, were prominent in the New Culture Movement. Women lacked many rights under the old order, and embraced new learning and other opportunities with enthusiasm. Many women were inspired by the example of revolutionary martyr and feminist Qiu Jin, and increasing numbers of women in the cities took up employment as teachers, civil servants and nurses. Many women campaigned for the right to vote (known as female suffrage) and for higher legal status. Female students at high schools and universities were avid readers of *New Youth*.¹⁵ Ding Ling rebelled against old-fashioned gender roles, as did many other young women of the movement. She was keenly interested in **left-wing** politics, and refused to enter an arranged marriage. Ding wrote important literary works that explored what it meant to love and be loved as a woman in China's changing society. One of her most popular stories was *The Diary of Miss Sophie*.

However, only limited gains were made in furthering women's rights because of ingrained patriarchal (male-dominated) attitudes in wider Chinese society—especially in the countryside.

NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

INFLUENTIAL IDEAS

- » Democracy
- » Anarchism
- » Marxism
- » Feminism
- » Nationalism
- » Darwinism
- » Socialism
- » Liberalism
- » Western science

KEY PEOPLE

- » Cai Yuanpei
- » Hu Shi
- » Chen Duxiu
- » Li Dazhao
- » Lu Xun
- » Ding Ling

IMPACTS

- » Anti-imperialist and anti-warlord protests
- » Increased Chinese nationalism
- » Confucianism discredited
- » Urban youth increasingly radicalised
- » Cultural and literary innovations

MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

Poor treatment of China with the Treaty of Versailles leads to nationwide protests by students, intellectuals and workers

SIGNIFICANCE

Many Chinese revolutionary figures were influenced by, or involved in, the New Culture Movement

MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

KEY MOVEMENT

The New Culture Movement expressed outrage at the disproportionate power of warlords and at China's treatment by foreign powers. In early May 1919, students in Beijing were preparing for Day of Shame protests on 7 May when they received news about the peace agreement that ended World War I, known as the Treaty of Versailles.

China had entered World War I in 1917 on the side of the Allies, and had contributed 100,000 labourers to the war effort in Europe. The Chinese expected that, after an Allied victory, **German concessions** in Shandong province would be returned to China. The Chinese had also been encouraged by US President Woodrow Wilson, who spoke in favour of national self-determination—an ideal that recognised the rights of nations and peoples to decide their own territorial questions.

However, the national government in Beijing had made a secret agreement in 1918, and had agreed to give German concessions to Japan. Chinese diplomats at Versailles did not know about the secret agreement and were mortified when they heard of it. They protested the terms of the treaty vigorously, but their concerns were ignored.

Popular reaction was even stronger. Outrage and shame at this betrayal and further submission to imperialism led to the Day of Shame protests being brought forward to 4 May. Students from Beijing's universities took to the streets in a series of huge protests that came to be known as the May Fourth Movement. Over 3000 students rallied at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Tiananmen Square.

After a number of students were arrested, protests in support of the students and their cause broke out in cities across the nation. Workers went on strike and Japanese goods were boycotted. The leading figures of the New Culture Movement were also prominent in the May Fourth Movement (these terms are often used interchangeably). This unity of workers, students and intellectuals was the beginning of a credible and important nationalist movement.

This yearning for national renewal was one of the most significant periods of modern Chinese history.¹⁶ The May Fourth Movement created a sense of urgency in the resistance of foreign imperialism and warlord corruption. According to historian Rana Mitter, 'the May Fourth period marked a unique combination of ... a sense of real and impending crisis; a combination of a plurality of competing ideas aimed at "saving the nation", and an audience ready to receive, welcome, contest and adapt these ideas'.¹⁷

Radicalised by anti-imperialist sentiment, many members of the movement turned to the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx.



DID YOU KNOW?

While Japanese delegates to the Versailles conference were seated at the main table with Western powers, the Chinese had to remain standing throughout.

German concessions German-controlled areas and infrastructure

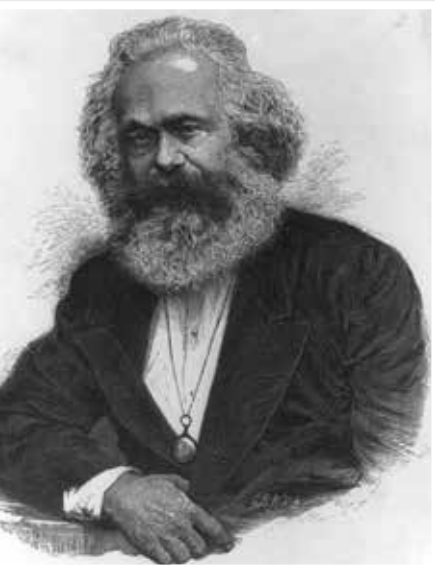
ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Briefly explain why young Chinese people were keen to consider new ideas and different ways of thinking during the New Culture Movement.
- For each of the people below, write a brief description of their area of interest or their contribution to the New Culture Movement:
 - Cai Yuanpei
 - Hu Shi
 - Chen Duxiu
 - Li Dazhao
 - Lu Xun
 - Ding Ling.
- Where did many of the main figures of the New Culture gather and spend their time?
- What was the leading journal of the New Culture Movement?
- What development led to the May Fourth Movement? Why were the Chinese so angry about it?

 **Source 2.10** Student demonstration at Tiananmen Square during the May Fourth Movement.

MARXISM



↑ Karl Marx.

Karl Marx: 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!'

Marxism is the revolutionary philosophy of German thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In 1848, Marx and Engels authored one of the most influential texts of modern times: *The Communist Manifesto*. The *Manifesto* was a call to revolutionary action by the workers of the world. In 1867 Marx produced the first volume of his monumental work *Capital*. Marx compiled a synthesis of many economic, philosophical and historical studies which essentially provided a framework for understanding the modern world.

For Marx, the primary forces that shaped society and history were economic forces and class struggle. He famously declared that all history was the history of class struggle, and that it was the ongoing struggle between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' that drove development and change in human societies.

Many of the May Fourth generation were drawn to Marxist ideas as an explanation for—and solution to—the inequalities of Chinese society and its place in the world.

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM: MARXIST STAGES OF HISTORY



evolves into



evolves into



bourgeois revolution

Primitive communism

- » Hunter-gatherer societies
- » People live in tribes
- » No formal government
- » No private property or exploitation of one group by another

In ancient times, people lived in tribes and, as hunter-gatherers, shared most of their basic resources. Society lived under a primitive form of communal egalitarianism. As humankind progressed, powerful chieftains and their tribes developed into kingdoms. A class structure headed by privileged nobility emerged.

Ancient societies

- » Rule by powerful kings
- » Slaves exploited
- » Agricultural production

The powerful kingdoms of ancient times were built on slavery. Absolute monarchs ruled and agriculture was the dominant form of economic production. The mass labour of slavery allowed some ancient societies to build impressive structures, which were used to emphasise the power and ideals of the monarchs. Surplus food, produced through the exploitation of slave labour, was distributed by the ruling classes (the masters) to other classes (such as soldiers, priests, officials, etc.) in return for their support.

Feudalism

- » Monarchies and nobility rule
- » Peasants exploited
- » Agricultural production
- » Towns begin to develop
- » Merchants emerge

Feudalism saw monarchies and noble aristocracies rule over largely peasant societies. Farming provided the backbone of the economy, and ownership of land was the key to wealth. As villages developed into towns with merchants and workers, discontent with absolute monarchism grew. An emerging bourgeoisie—the educated middle classes who owned factories and businesses—demanded greater political rights. Monarchies were overthrown and parliamentary democracies came about.

Historical materialism

Marx's theory of *historical materialism* was an attempt to demonstrate that history is made by people, not by 'the hand of God' or 'destiny'.¹⁸ Past history and the predicted future progress of human development could be seen in definable stages. These stages are measured by differing *modes of production*—or how work was done. The modes of production identify:

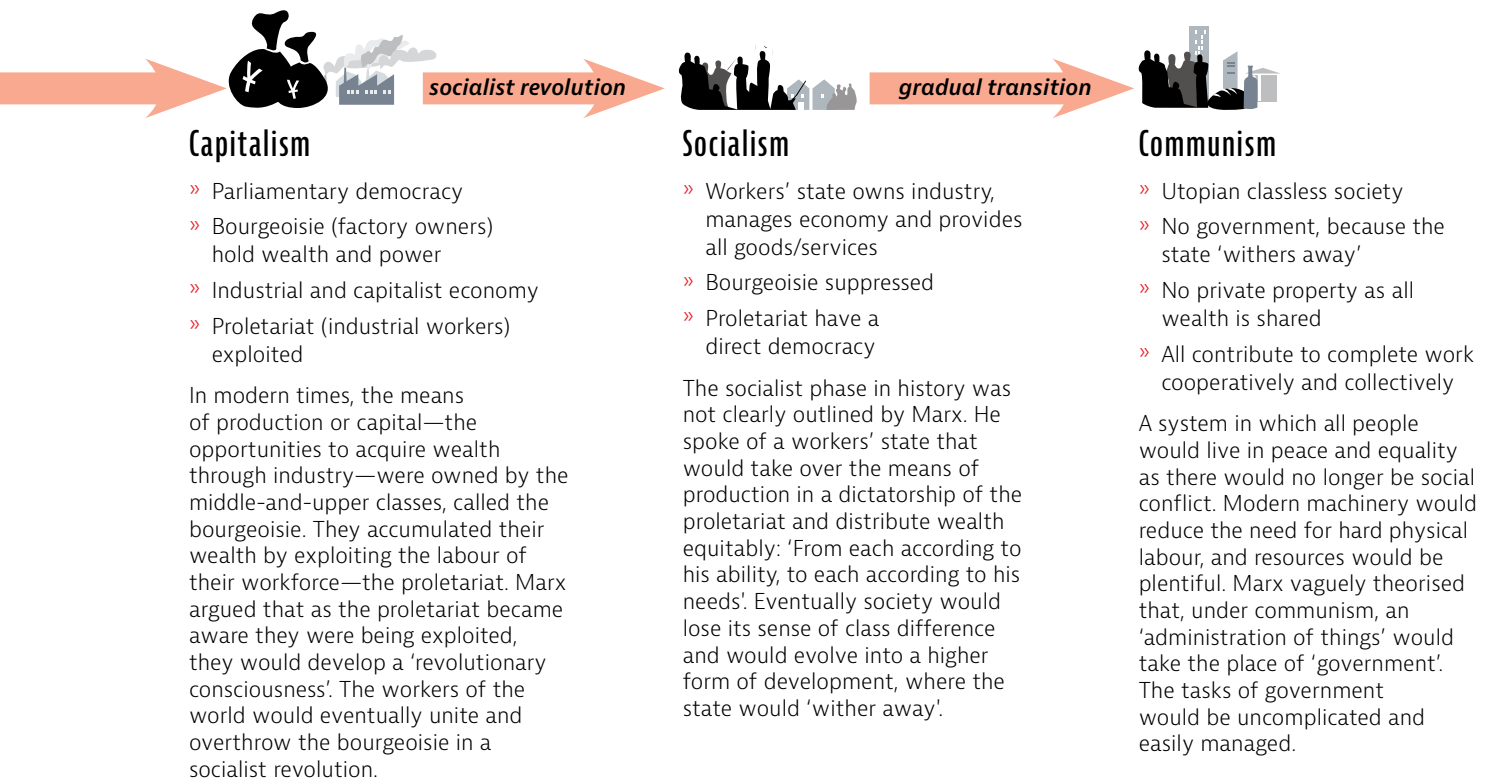
- who owned the *means of production*—or the ability to create wealth
- who was *exploited for their labour*—who did the work, but received little for it.

According to Marx, the dominant values and ideologies of every period are those of the ruling classes. Society therefore accepts the social structure to which values of this group adhere.¹⁹

capitalism economic system based on free-market principles, in which individuals are encouraged to seek prosperity and private capital (or wealth). In theory, the government plays a limited role in the economy in a capitalist system, and allows the marketplace to decide on prices, salaries and conditions. Individuals and corporations are encouraged to trade goods, services, labour and land.

socialism ideology that calls for the equal distribution of wealth by the state. The basis of socialism is a society built on fair and equitable political, social and economic structures. Revolutionary socialism argues that this can only be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism; reformist socialism argues that such changes can come gradually and without undue conflict.

communism a political and economic doctrine that aims to replace all private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and collective control of the means of production—such as agriculture, natural resources and manufacturing.



CONTINUED ...

Dialectical materialism

For Marx, revolution was inevitable. The scientific manner for understanding the conflict that brought revolutionary change was called *dialectical materialism*. *Dialectic* means 'an argument'. Marx believed the world was inherently full of clashing and opposing forces.

Dialectical materialism refers to a *thesis*, or given state of things, and an opposing force—the *antithesis*. Marx believed the clash of opposing forces would become so great that a resolution or *synthesis* would come about. He argued that this idea could be applied to social development.

Under capitalism, the thesis—or given state of things—was the bourgeois ownership of capital (industry) and exploitation of the worker (the proletariat). Marx believed an antithesis—or opposing force—would emerge with the growth of revolutionary consciousness among industrial workers. This would lead to socialist revolution—which would be the synthesis (or resolution) of the inevitable conflict.

For Marxists, history could be understood as essentially a series of contradictions and their resolution, but this manner of thinking could also be applied to both the contemporary world and the desired future.

Marxism-Leninism

Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin drew on Marx's ideas to form what became known as Marxism-Leninism. One of Lenin's many theories was that revolution in a 'backward' nation with poor industrial infrastructure—such as Russia or China—could inspire urban workers and peasants in other countries. A revolutionary movement in the colonial world would undermine capitalist nations, and speed up their decline. Many members of the May Fourth Movement embraced this idea.

Marxist Basics

The following concepts are the foundations of Marxist theory.

- **Class conflict:** All history is the history of *class struggle*. Human societies—both past and present—and the forces for change that shape them are fundamentally an outcome of conflict between the wealthy and powerful, and the poor and powerless.
- **Historical materialism:** History and the development of human civilisation is a *linear progression*. This progression can be seen in *definable stages*. The measures for defining these stages are: who owns wealth, how is the wealth accumulated, and who is exploited to produce this wealth?
- **Dialectical materialism:** The build-up of opposing forces—social, economic and political—and their resolution, usually through revolution, explains how society develops from one stage to another. This is the dialectical concept of *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis*.
- The importance of **economic relations**: The foundation of a society's economic activity—essentially who owns what and why—shapes a society's political institutions and social values. These are the principles of **base** and **superstructure**.
- In the modern world, the central conflict was between the middle and upper classes who owned factories and business (called the **bourgeoisie**), and the industrial working class (called the **proletariat**). Socialist revolution would come when the proletariat developed and acted upon their **revolutionary consciousness**—the awareness that they are exploited and should no longer accept it.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, consider and discuss the following questions:

- What elements of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism would have been attractive to young Chinese intellectuals at the time of the May Fourth Movement?
- What difficulties, either practical or theoretical, would need to be considered when applying Marx's theories to China?
- How might these challenges have been resolved in the minds of New Culture thinkers?

FOUNDING OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

KEY MOVEMENT

Li Dazhao: 'The bell has rung for humanitarianism! The dawn of freedom has arrived! See the world of tomorrow; it assuredly will belong to the red flag!'

The Chinese delegates to the Paris Peace Conference at the end of World War I had expected fair and equal treatment from those representing Western democracies. They were deeply disappointed.

Similarly, China's humiliation at Versailles was a sore point for the protestors of the May Fourth Movement. Young intellectuals became disillusioned with the liberal politics of the West and looked instead to Soviet Russia for inspiration. The appeal of Soviet Russia was strengthened on 25 July 1919, when the Soviet government declared in its Karakhan Manifesto that it would renounce all imperialist claims in China. Soviet Russia did so as a rejection of its tsarist past, and in the spirit of fraternal internationalism.²⁰

The Russian Communists were keen to encourage revolutionary groups abroad. To further this aim, the Communist Internationale or **Comintern** was founded in March 1919. The Comintern would provide the theory and support for the formation of revolutionary groups worldwide. In April 1920, Grigory Voitinsky, an agent of the Comintern, came to China hoping to organise a Chinese Communist party. He met with Li Dazhao, who had already formed the Marxist Study Society at Beijing University. Chen Duxiu, then living in Shanghai, was also approached to head a Communist party cell in the south. Voitinsky made favourable reports to Moscow about his Chinese fact-finding mission.

Comintern Soviet (Russian) organisation that supported and organised Communist and left-wing parties worldwide. Short for 'Communist Internationale'

MARING AND THE FIRST CCP CONGRESS

On 3 June 1921, a more senior Comintern agent arrived in China. Dutchman Hendricus Sneevliet—who went by the pseudonym 'Maring'—had already spent five years in Asia working with Communist agitators in Indonesia. Li Dazhao was not impressed by Agent Maring, who was a self-assured and domineering man.

Li Dazhao on Agent Maring

This foreign devil was aggressive and hard to deal with; his manner was very different indeed from that of Voitinsky ... He saw himself coming as an angel of liberation to the Asian people. But in the eyes of those of us who maintained our self-respect and who were seeking our own liberation, he seemed endowed with the social superiority complex of the white man.

However, Maring's organisational drive and the appeal of a functional Chinese Communist organisation allowed such personal concerns to be overlooked, and efforts to create a national organisation continued. On 23 July 1921, twelve delegates representing Communist cells in Beijing, Wuhan, Hubei, Shanghai, Jinan, Guangzhou and Japan met in the classroom of a girls' school in the French Concession of Shanghai, while the school was closed for holidays. This was the First National Party Congress of the **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)**. Mao Zedong attended as the delegate from his home province of Hunan and served as note-taker. Zhu De (Chu Te), who would later

DID YOU KNOW?

During a meeting of the First Congress of the CCP, a stranger walked in unannounced, claimed he was lost, then left. Maring rightly suspected the stranger was a police agent, so he quickly ended the meeting. To guard against further intrusion by authorities, Maring arranged for the remaining meetings to take place on a pleasure boat on a lake in Shanghai.

 **Source 2.11** Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 119.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

the ruling party of the People's Republic of China that exercises supreme political authority. The party was founded after Marxist ideas spread to China with the May Fourth Movement of 1919

National Congress the national parliament or elected consultative body of the PRC



↑ **Source 2.12** Site of the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Shanghai.

➔ **Source 2.13** Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 242.

➔ **Source 2.14** Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 239.

be a famed general of the Communist Red Army, was also in attendance. The Congress had to be convened in secret as local authorities did not approve. Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu were not able to attend for fear of arrest. Despite the secrecy and the absences, the Congress was a success—and marked the official birth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Chen Duxiu was elected secretary-general to lead the party.

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The CCP was initially very small. The twelve delegates to the First **National Congress** represented just fifty-seven members. Most were intellectuals, and they were a tiny drop in an ocean of 400 million people. Still, the promise of funds from Soviet Russia and the revolutionary potential of the Chinese people were cause for excitement. An official guidebook to the museum that stands on the site of the first CCP Congress describes the gathering as ‘an epoch making event’.²¹

In their controversial biography of Mao Zedong, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday claim that:

- the CCP was actually formed in August 1920 under Voitinsky’s guidance
- Mao Zedong was not present
- Mao Zedong had nothing to do with the party’s foundation.²²

However, most Chinese and Western historians accept that the CCP officially began at the 1921 congress, which makes Mao a central figure in the birth of Chinese communism.

PARTY DEBATES

The early CCP was not disciplined or unified. One important point of difference was to do with the role of the peasants. Chen Duxiu, from Shanghai, was a traditional Marxist—he believed the proletariat (or urban workers) would be the chief revolutionary class in China. The peasants, according to Chen, were tied to traditional customs and would be too hard to unify.

Chen Duxiu on peasants and revolution

The peasants are scattered and their forces are not easy to concentrate, their culture is low, their desires in life are simple, and they easily tend toward conservatism ... These environmental factors make it difficult for the peasants to participate in the revolutionary movement.

By contrast Li Dazhao, from Beijing, called for the peasantry to play a central role. Li offered both a romantic celebration of the long-suffering rural people and a pragmatic assessment of Chinese conditions.

Li Dazhao on peasants and revolution

In economically backward and semi-colonial China, the peasantry constitutes more than ninety per cent of the population; among the whole population they occupy the principal position, and agriculture is still the basis of the national economy. Therefore, when we estimate the forces of the revolution, we must emphasize that the peasantry is the most important part.

The differences were so pronounced that the Communists coined the expression, ‘Chen in the south, Li in the north’.²³ (Notably, Mao was a member of Li’s study group and his former assistant in the Beijing University library, and was deeply influenced by his mentor.)

Relations between the Chinese Communists and the Comintern agents were also tense. Chen Duxiu had a fiery temper. He exploded with rage on a number of occasions when he felt the Russians were being dictatorial. Maring called him ‘the volcano’.²⁴ Despite Chen’s outbursts and Li’s unorthodox Marxism—both of which the Russians thoroughly disapproved—the Comintern maintained its influence over the CCP. Money from Moscow provided almost all of the Party’s funds and, as the only socialist nation in the world, Soviet Russia remained the original source of revolutionary wisdom. Such was the influence of Russian communism that Sun Yixian would soon also accept Soviet guidance and support. The spirit of revolutionary China was rising.



Source 2.15 The pleasure boat on which some meetings of the First Congress of the CCP were held.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the Comintern? Briefly explain its interest in China.
- 2 Who was the leading Comintern agent sent to China to organise a Communist party?
- 3 When was the First Congress of the CCP held?
- 4 Who did the Congress elect to lead the CCP?
- 5 Briefly explain why members of the CCP described their ideological leaders as, ‘Chen in the south, Li in the north’.

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss the issue below:

- The Chinese Communist Party was founded with just fifty-seven members. Yet Li Dazhao declared, ‘See the world of tomorrow; it assuredly will belong to the red flag!’ What gave the CCP leaders such hope for a Marxist future?

CREATIVE TASK

In small groups, act out a meeting of the Chinese Communist Party shortly after the First National Congress was held in 1921.

Represent the following figures: Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Maring (Hendricus Sneevliet).

The meeting should discuss:

- the key ideas of the party (e.g. Marxism, Marxism–Leninism)
- the political objectives of the CCP
- tensions between leaders from the north and south of China
- the relative importance of peasants and urban workers in the revolutionary struggle.

The meeting should go for about 5–10 minutes, and each person should speak at least three times.

THE UNITED FRONT

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Sun Yixian: 'The Republic is my child. It is in danger of drowning. I am trying to keep it afloat and we are being swept down the river.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Chinese warlords often had nicknames, such as Philosopher General, Dog-meat General, Old Marshall, Young Marshall, Model Governor and Pig-tailed General. The Dog-meat General, Zhang Zongchang, was known for his brutality but preferred the title Great General of Justice and Might. He once described himself as a 'big, round-faced, long-legged overfed ruffian'.

The death of Yuan Shikai did not make things easier for Sun Yixian. In 1917, Sun returned to China and based himself in Shanghai, where he again involved himself in politics. With little influence over the Beijing government, Sun spent most of his time writing and lecturing. Prime Minister Duan Qirui (Tuan Ch'i-jui) and President Li Yuanhong squabbled continuously. Real power was dispersed among the various regional warlords. According to historian Jonathan Fenby, authority was 'based on force in a meritocracy of violence'.²⁵ In August and September 1917, members of the old National Assembly gathered at the southern city of Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province, under the protection of a local warlord. And there, on 10 September 1917, Sun was elected grand marshal of a new military government.

SUN YIXIAN'S GUANGZHOU GOVERNMENT



➔ Sun Yixian.

Sun's government allied itself with several southern warlords and, as the self-proclaimed true representatives of the republic, Sun and his followers stood in opposition to the government in Beijing. Sun even sent delegates to attend the 1919 peace treaty negotiations at Versailles—even though his government was not recognised by world powers. However, foreign governments continued to negotiate agreements with both regional warlords and the official government in Beijing—usually to their own advantage.

Factional infighting kept Sun's government weak and divided. He fell out with his warlord backers and was forced to leave Guangzhou for Shanghai, where he spent the next few years writing and lecturing. Sun returned to Guangzhou in 1921 and, in alliance with Chen Jiongming (Ch'en Chiung-ming), the Hakka General, established yet another government on 5 May. However, Sun and Chen had different views:

- Sun wanted to build up a military force to march north and re-establish the republic
- General Chen wanted to consolidate his position in the south.²⁶

After a series of failed military expeditions, which Chen did not support, their alliance broke down and Sun fled into exile, first to Hong Kong, then to Shanghai. Sun attributed his lack of success at this time to:

- poor organisation
- lack of discipline
- limited ideological commitment within the GMD.²⁷

THE SUN-JOFFE DECLARATION

Sun Yixian called for support from the West and from Japan, but he was consistently discouraged. He had more luck when the Soviet Comintern turned its attention to China. In August 1922, Sun met with Comintern agents Maring and Adolph Joffe to discuss reorganising the GMD and the conditions for Soviet aid. Moscow had decided that the prestige of the Guomindang would be useful in furthering the revolutionary movement in China, and they hoped to form ties between the CCP and Sun's GMD.

The Comintern, despite objections from a number of Chinese Communists, began negotiations for a **United Front**, in which CCP members could take up individual membership in the GMD. Chen Duxiu, head of the CCP, grudgingly accepted the alliance. Given the tiny membership of his party, he could also see advantages in working with the larger and better known GMD.

On 26 January 1923, Sun and Joffe put out a joint manifesto outlining the goals of the new alliance:

- 'national independence'
- 'national unity'.

The national revolution was to come before the socialist one—in other words, it was considered more important to find common ground as Chinese people before tackling class divisions. The **Sun-Joffe Declaration** also made clear that China was not yet ready for communism. At this time Sun expressed admiration for the organisational structures of the Soviet government, but admitted that his alliance with the Comintern was one of desperation.

United Front the terms of agreement and periods of cooperation between the Guomindang and CCP

Sun-Joffe Declaration a joint statement presented in early 1923 on behalf of the Guomindang and Comintern. It outlined the groups' respective positions on key revolutionary ideologies and the goals of the forthcoming alliance (United Front) between the GMD and CCP

The Sun-Joffe Declaration, 1923

KEY SOURCE

Dr Sun is of the opinion that, because of the non-existence of conditions favourable to their successful application in China, it is not possible to carry out either communism or even the Soviet system in China. M. [Mr] Joffe agrees entirely with this view; he is further of the opinion that China's most important and most pressing problems are the completion of national unification and the attainment of full national independence. With regard to these great tasks, M. Joffe has assured Dr Sun of the Russian people's warmest sympathy for China, and of willingness to lend support.

 **Source 2.16** Cited in Colin Mackerras et al. (eds.), *China in Revolution 1850–1976* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 40.

Sun Yixian on the Republic and Soviet Russia, 1923

The Republic is my child. It is in danger of drowning. I am trying to keep it afloat and we are being swept down the river. I call for help to England and America. They stand on the bank and jeer at me. There comes a Russian straw. Drowning I clutch at it. England and America, on the bank, shout at me, on no account to clutch the Russian straw. But they do not help me. No. They jeer themselves and at the same time tell me not to clutch that Russian straw. I know it is a straw, but it is better than nothing.

 **Source 2.17** Cited in B. Martin and Shui Chien-tung, *Makers of China* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 211.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 2.16 and 2.17 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the reasons Sun Yixian turned to Soviet Russia for assistance.

- 2 Explain the conditions and goals of the United Front.
- 3 Analyse the significance of the First United Front in contributing to the Chinese revolutionary movement. Use evidence to support your response.

THE BENEFITS OF THE COALITION

DID YOU KNOW?

Sun Yixian shocked Maring by saying there was 'nothing new in Marxism'. He declared that it had all been said 2000 years ago in the Chinese classics.

➔ Mikhail Borodin.

Bolsheviks the Russian Communist party led by Vladimir Lenin until his death in 1924. Josef Stalin headed the party by the late 1920s

democratic centralism a disciplined, hierarchical party model favoured by Lenin; ordinary members could debate issues and make suggestions, but once the party leadership made a decision everyone had to accept it

DID YOU KNOW?

At the beginning of the United Front, the Chinese Communist Party had just 420 members.

➔ **Source 2.18** Cited in Ssu-yü T'eng and John King Fairbank, *China's Response to the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954).

DID YOU KNOW?

Students from Korea, Tibet, Thailand and Vietnam undertook military training at the Huangpu Military Academy. One such graduate was a young Vietnamese man named Nguyen Ai Quoc—who would later be better known by his pseudonym: Ho Chi Minh.



Despite Sun's doubts about his alliance with the Comintern, his fortunes were improving. A base was re-established at Guangzhou on 16 January 1923 after a force of mercenaries funded by Sun captured the city from General Chen. Sun returned on 21 February. The Comintern lent further support to Sun by sending Mikhail Borodin to help the GMD reorganise, along with a military adviser named General Vasily Galen.

Meanwhile, Sun sent his leading military man Jiang Jieshi on a three-month visit to Moscow, where he received further training, met with leading **Bolshevik** Leon Trotsky and reviewed the Soviet military.

Borodin was more tactful, easy-going and persuasive than the dictatorial Maring, and he managed to calm anxieties among both the Communists and the Nationalists. As Sun's adviser, Borodin overhauled the GMD. The first National Congress of the reorganised GMD was held on 20–30 January 1924. The Congress formally approved a new Leninist-style party structure governed by **democratic centralism**, and reaffirmed the United Front—a three-way alliance between the GMD, CCP and Comintern.

The party's guiding ideology was the *Sanminzhuyi*: Sun's Three Principles of Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood. However, the principles were slightly changed to emphasise the need to rid China of warlord and imperialist rule, and to expand on the crucial role of workers and peasants. There were still some concerns about the relationship between the Communists and Nationalists, but leading Communist Li Dazhao insisted that the CCP was not a 'bloc' or faction within the GMD seeking only to further its own needs.

Li Dazhao on the United Front

To complete successfully this revolution, we have to have a united, all encompassing revolutionary party for the simple reason that in the process of conducting this revolutionary movement we cannot afford to have our revolutionary forces divided ... We want to become part of the Guomindang and to be organised as one of its armies, so that we can fight for the successful completion of our national revolution shoulder to shoulder with other comrades, under the same leadership and abiding by the same discipline ... We join the Guomindang because we believe that we can contribute to its strength as well as provide an additional rationale for promoting our national revolution; we are not the opportunists who merely wish to use the Guomindang label in order to advance the Communist movement.

Many long-time GMD activists were impressed by the passion of the (mostly) younger Communists. After the Congress, GMD veteran Wang Jingwei (Wang Ching-wei) said: 'The young people of the May Fourth Movement are something to be reckoned with, after all. Look at the enthusiasm with which they speak, and their energetic attitude.'²⁸ Three of the twenty-four seats on the new GMD Central Executive Committee (CEC) were given to Communists, including Li Dazhao. Mao Zedong was one of seven Communists given a place on the sixteen-place alternative CEC membership (which were non-voting positions). Communists were given the task of rallying support among workers and peasants.

Meanwhile, Galen and Borodin had shown their value—they had assembled an effective militia that repulsed a campaign by General Chen to re-take Guangzhou.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY

With the founding of a military school in **Huangpu**, steps were taken to prepare a professional military force for the new Nationalist coalition. Huangpu Military Academy was financed by the Soviets, and situated on an island in Guangzhou's Pearl River. Huangpu began training and arming officers for a new Nationalist army.

On 3 May 1924, Jiang Jieshi—having returned from the USSR—was appointed head of Huangpu Military Academy and commander-in-chief. Galen worked closely with Jiang. In addition to military training, Huangpu cadets were indoctrinated in Nationalist ideology, which encouraged:

- simple living
- initiative
- bravery.²⁹

Most graduates developed a strong loyalty to Jiang. Communists also attended; among those who would later rise to prominence was Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), who served as the chief political commissar (adviser) of the Academy until 1927.



Huangpu Military Academy the officer training institute of the Guomindang Nationalist Revolutionary Army, based at Guangzhou and founded under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi in May 1924

◀ Jiang Jieshi.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly describe the challenges faced by Sun Yixian in the years following Yuan Shikai's death.
- 2 What were the two main goals of the United Front?
- 3 Briefly explain three or more benefits for the GMD that emerged from the United Front.
- 4 What were the conditions for the CCP within the United Front alliance?
- 5 Who was Jiang Jieshi? What was he appointed to lead in May 1924?

◀ **Source 2.19** Zhou Enlai in GMD uniform during the United Front days.

THE DEATH OF SUN YIXIAN

Sun Yixian: 'Just as Christ was sent by God to the world, so God also sent me.'

In late 1924—after a conflict between northern warlords—a new government in Beijing seemed likely. Sun Yixian, as one of the nation's best-known political leaders, set out for the capital to engage in talks with those competing for power. He hoped to gain agreement for a proper representative government, thus preventing a military campaign from the south. But Sun had stomach pain when he arrived in Beijing and was taken to hospital, where he was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sun's chief bodyguard was a Polish-Canadian named Morris 'Two-Gun' Cohen. Cohen was a former petty criminal, arms dealer and real-estate agent. His nickname came from his habit of carrying two pistols and being able to shoot with either of his hands.

The Father of the Republic died in Beijing on 12 March 1925, at the age of fifty-eight. Sun's final testament urged his followers to continue the struggle for national reunification. In a letter to Stalin and the Soviet government, Sun wrote: 'I leave behind a party which, as I always hoped, will be allied with you in its historical task of liberating China and other suppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism'.³⁰

➔ Sun Yixian's body was laid to rest in an elaborate mausoleum in the hills outside Nanjing.



CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

However, not every Nationalist felt that working with the Communists was a good idea. Sun had kept the various factions and interests in the United Front together. His death destabilised this fragile union. Sun also left behind a party unsure of its leadership and prone to arguing with each other in small groups (or factions).

The mantle of leadership fell to Wang Jingwei and Liao Zhongkai (Liao Chung-k'ai), who headed the **left faction** of the GMD, and Hu Hanmin (Hu Han-min), who dominated the **right faction**.

- Hu had held several ministerial positions in the Guangzhou government.
- Wang was one of Sun's closest associates, and had been by his side when he died.
- Liao was the party's financial expert.

But none of these men had Sun's prestige or authority. A further source of power was the military under Jiang Jieshi. Jiang admitted to his wife, 'If I control the army, I will have the power to control the country. It is my road to leadership.'³¹

INCREASED SUPPORT FOR THE CCP

The death of Sun Yixian was the first of several events in the mid-1920s that shaped the course of the Chinese revolutionary movement.

- On 30 May 1925, British guards fired on protesting textile workers in Shanghai—eleven men were killed. The protestors had been locked out of their factory by Japanese management.
- A protest in Guangzhou in solidarity with the 'May 30 Martyrs' was broken up by British soldiers—fifty-two protestors were left dead.
- The **May 30 Atrocious Incident**, as it was called, inflamed anti-imperialist feeling and renewed the protests of the May Fourth Movement.

left and right factions the left faction of the GMD was more radical and favoured continued cooperation with the CCP; the right faction was more conservative and had close ties with the military. Many of the right faction were suspicious of the Communists

May 30 Atrocious Incident on 30 May 1925, British troops fired on protesting Chinese workers in Shanghai and Guangzhou, thus inflaming nationalist sentiment and increasing support for the CCP among workers

Historian Rebecca Karl argues that, ‘The May 30th Incident and its aftermath helped usher in a new hope for social mobilization and revolutionary upsurge’.³² Support for the CCP swelled as workers and students were increasingly attracted to the message of Communist agitators. Strikes spread throughout the country and by the start of 1927 the CCP had 57,000 members.³³

THE RISE OF JIANG JIESHI

While the more **radical** elements of the United Front increased their influence after Sun’s death, the first challenge for leadership appeared from the right.

On 20 August 1925, a leading member of the GMD left faction named Liao Zhongkai was assassinated. An investigation pointed to the involvement of Hu Hanmin of the GMD right, and Hu was subsequently packed off to Moscow to ‘study communism’. A three-man leadership team of Wang Jingwei, Jiang Jieshi and Mikhail Borodin was established.

On 20 March 1926, a gunboat commanded by a Communist officer was alleged to have been involved in an unsuccessful attempt to kidnap Jiang. Jiang blamed the CCP and retaliated by placing Soviet advisers under ‘protective custody’.

At Jiang’s urging, the Guomindang CEC resolved to remove several Communists from senior positions and restrict their involvement in committees: ‘comrades on the left ... should retire for a while’.³⁴ There was little Borodin could do to moderate Jiang’s measures. As Jiang still needed Soviet support, relations between the two, while tense, were maintained. When Wang Jingwei was suspected of association with the plot against Jiang, he sensibly decided to retire from politics and leave for France.

No one had anticipated that Jiang Jieshi would end up leading the GMD. Yet less than eighteen months after Sun Yixian’s death, Jiang had secured his position in Guangzhou and sidelined most of his rivals for leadership. One Soviet adviser wrote the following assessment of self-proclaimed ‘generalissimo’ (commander-in-chief) Jiang: ‘We consider Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] a peculiar person with peculiar characteristics, most prominent of these being his lust for glory and power and craving to be the hero of China’.³⁵

radical favouring extreme or revolutionary ideas or practices; the opposite of reactionary



↑ Jiang Jieshi.



↑ Wang Jingwei.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did Sun Yixian die? What was the cause of his death?
- 2 Who were the three main rivals for power within the GMD after Sun’s death? What ideas or approaches did they represent?
- 3 By 1927, who emerged as the dominant figure in the Nationalist movement?

ACTIVITY



CREATIVE TASK

Imagine you are a young Chinese student who writes articles for a Beijing university newspaper. You were involved in the May Fourth protests and are interested in the Chinese Communist Party. You are lucky enough to meet with Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Agent Maring. They each tell you of their beliefs and attitudes about the CCP. Write up your interviews in a short article for the student newspaper.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Deng Yingchao was a young woman who was studying in Tianjin as the May Fourth Movement began. In the coming years she continued to play an active role in politics, especially in regard to women's rights. Deng later married one of the leading figures in the Chinese Communist movement: Zhou Enlai.

Deng Yingchao

When the May Fourth Movement took place in 1919, I was only sixteen years old, a student ... On May 4 1919, students at Beijing held a demonstration asking the government to refuse to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty and to punish the traitors at home. In their indignation, they burned down the house ... and beat up ... the Chinese envoy [diplomat] to Japan. The following day, when the news reached Tianjin, it aroused the indignation of the students there ... We had no political theory to guide us at that time, only our strong patriotic enthusiasm. In addition to the Beijing students' requests, we demanded 'Abrogate [repeal] the Twenty-One Demands!' 'Boycott Japanese Goods!' and 'Buy Chinese-made goods!'

Despite the fact that it was a patriotic students' demonstration, the Northern warlord government of China resorted to force to quell [suppress] the protest ... However, our political awareness awakened a new spirit in us during our struggle with the government ... To awaken our compatriots, we organized many speakers' committees to spread propaganda among the people ... Usually tears streamed down our cheeks when we gave our speeches and our listeners were often visibly moved ... The reactionary Northern warlord government, however, turned a deaf ear to us. They ultimately bowed to Japanese powers ... and tried to suppress the student movement.

... The women's liberation movement was greatly enhanced by the May Fourth Movement; this became an important part of the movement. And slogans such as 'sexual equality,' 'freedom of marriage,' 'coeducational universities,' 'social contacts for women,' and 'job opportunity for women,' were all put forward ... male and female activists among us took the lead and we bravely worked together to overcome all obstacles ... Women students ... worked especially hard for we knew we were pioneers among Chinese women to show that women are not inferior to men.

... At this time cultural movements were developing rapidly and students were receptive to publications which promoted new ideas. In Beijing, for example, there was *New Youth* ... In Tianjin, the Student Union every week would invite a progressive professor (such as Li Dazhao) to give us an academic lecture on the new literary ideas such as how to write in vernacular Chinese ... As more scientific subjects and new ideas poured into China, we felt an urgency to learn, discuss, study, and understand them.

Source 2.20

Deng Yingchao, 'The Spirit of the May Fourth Movement', in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 360–363.

Using Source 2.20 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the issues that inspired young people to action during the May Fourth Movement.
- 2 Explain how women contributed to and were influenced by the New Culture Movement.
- 3 Evaluate the extent to which the ideas and activism of the New Culture and May Fourth movements challenged the existing order in China. Use evidence to support your response.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- President Yuan Shikai came to power following the fall of the Qing and the founding of the Republic.
- Yuan was a charismatic and strong leader. He had a proven record as an effective administrator, reformer and military commander.
- Reforms carried out under Yuan's presidency improved a number of areas: currency, the legal system, education and agriculture.
- With Sun Yixian busy as Minister of Railways, Song Jiaoren reorganised the Tongmenghui into the Guomindang (GMD). The party did very well in the national elections, winning almost half the seats.
- Song and GMD hoped to restrain Yuan's authority and hold him accountable to constitutional processes. This failed, as Song was assassinated, and Yuan dissolved the parliament. Sun Yixian went into hiding.
- Japan's Twenty-one Demands increased anti-imperialist feeling and anger toward the government. Students played a central role in these protests.
- As Emperor Hong Xian, Yuan Shikai founded a new Imperial dynasty. Provincial rebellions and the withdrawal of support from key allies forced him to step down.
- Yuan's death in 1916 led to the fragmentation of central political authority and the rise of provincial militarists called warlords.
- The breakdown of central power and national humiliation at the hands of foreign powers led to the New Culture Movement. Intellectuals and students explored a range of ideologies and advances in the search for a sense of national identity and models for China's future.
- Anger and disillusionment at further imperialist humiliation developed into the May Fourth Movement. The influence of Marxism–Leninism grew.
- A Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed with the assistance of Soviet Russia through the Communist Internationale (Comintern).
- The Comintern also supported and guided the GMD, leading to an alliance with the CCP known as the United Front.
- Sun Yixian died in 1925. It was not immediately clear who should lead the GMD; the party was divided over a number of issues and there were several people contending for authority.
- By early 1927, Sun Yixian's leading military man, Jiang Jieshi, unexpectedly emerged as the leading figure in the Nationalist movement.

ACTIVITY

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The First United Front marked the beginning of a critical new phase in China's revolution.' Discuss.
- 'The young people of the May Fourth Movement are something to be reckoned with!' How did the energy, hopes and fears of the May Fourth generation contribute to the development of the revolution in China?
- 'Sun Yixian was the Father of the Nation, but he did not live to see his child grow up.' Explain the role of Sun Yixian in China's republican revolution.



A TALE OF TWO CHINAS

(1926–1937)

After the death of Sun Yixian, the militarist Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) steadily gained influence. Jiang styled himself as the heir to Sun's Nationalist revolution. His Northern Expedition ended the warlords' regional infighting and re-established a unified and internationally recognised government at Nanjing.

By 1928, Jiang Jieshi emerged triumphant as the leader of Nationalist China. Jiang had outwitted his political rivals and turned on those he saw as threats to his advancement—but his victory was born of blood. The United Front came to a violent end when Jiang turned on his Communist allies mid-way through the campaign for national unification. The CCP fled in disarray to the countryside. The Comintern continued to shape Chinese Communist tactics, but often with disastrous consequences.

These setbacks caused some members of the CCP to reconsider their vision of Marxist revolution. From their remote bases in the Jiangxi mountains, Mao Zedong and Zhu De developed effective strategies for revolutionary warfare and an original model of socialist community.

Meanwhile, the Nationalists (GMD) instituted their own systems and reforms in the so-called Nanjing Decade. Jiang's government made progress with an impressive record of urban modernisation and improved relations with Western powers. However, there were still considerable difficulties.

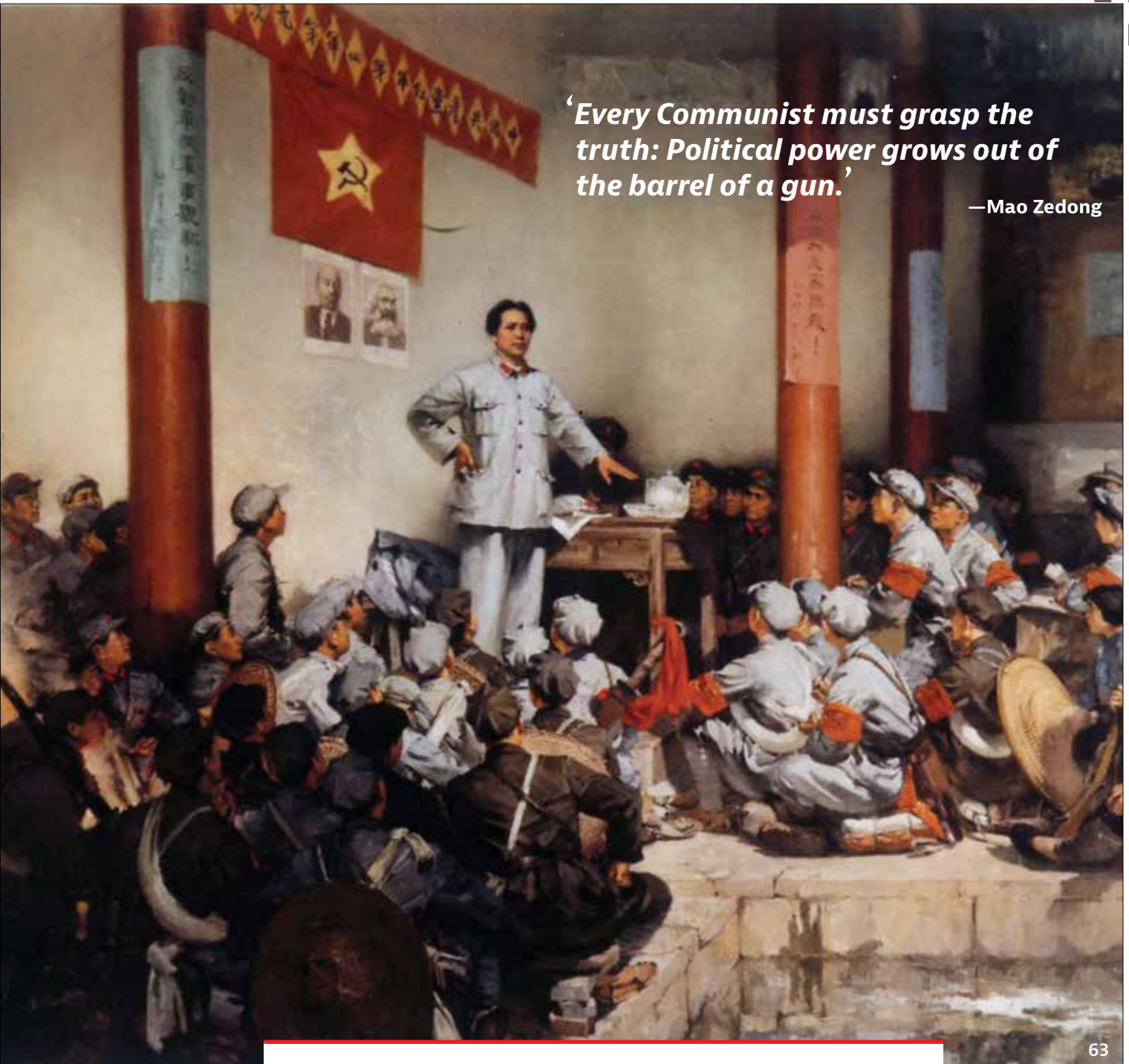
- The strength of the government and the unity it imposed varied from region to region.
- Regional militarists continued to cause trouble for Jiang.
- The Nationalists were continually short of funds.
- Corruption and other moral deficiencies were addressed by the New Life Movement—but often with questionable results.
- Improvements in the cities were not matched by improvements in rural areas, and the poverty of the villages was mostly ignored.

Meanwhile, the peasantry was emerging as a viable revolutionary force for the CCP. Thus, the revolution became a tale of two Chinas, as Communists and Nationalists established their different approaches to the challenges of governing the Middle Kingdom.

KEY QUESTIONS

- To what extent did the Northern Expedition achieve its aims of national reunification?
- What led to the Shanghai Massacre? What were the consequences of this for the CCP?
- What is the significance of Jiang Jieshi's connections to the Soong family?
- How did the influence of the Comintern influence the leadership and strategies of the CCP?
- What significant strategies and reforms were developed by Mao Zedong and Zhu De during the Jiangxi Soviet period?
- What were the strengths and limitations of the Nationalist government during the Nanjing Decade?
- What were the intentions and impact of the New Life Movement?
- What was the role and significance of Jiang Jieshi's leadership during the Nationalist Decade?

CHAPTER 3



‘Every Communist must grasp the truth: Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.’

—Mao Zedong

Source 3.01 Mao giving a speech to soldiers of the Red Army, c. December 1929.

KEY EVENTS

- 27 July 1925**
Northern Expedition begins
- 12 April 1927**
Shanghai Massacre
- 7–14 September 1927**
Mao's Autumn Harvest Uprising
- 1 October 1928**
Jiang elected chairman of Nationalist government of China
- 10 February 1929**
Communist base established at Ruijin, Jiangxi
- 7 November 1931**
First All-China Congress of Soviets declares founding of the Chinese Soviet Republic
- 19 February 1934**
Launch of New Life Movement

Northern Expedition the military campaign waged by the Nationalist Revolutionary Army in 1926–1928; led by Jiang Jieshi

reactionary extremely conservative or opposed to change

THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Jiang Jieshi: 'The importance of this fight is not only in that it will decide the fate of the warlords. But, whether or not the Chinese nation and race can restore their freedom ... In other words, it is a struggle between the nation and the warlords.'



It was not long before Jiang Jieshi had the opportunity to pursue personal glory and fulfil one of Sun Yixian's long-held dreams.

On 1 July 1926, Jiang announced the mobilisation of the **Northern Expedition**: 'To protect the welfare of the people we must overthrow all warlords and wipe out **reactionary** power so that we may implement the Three People's Principles and complete the National Revolution'.¹ On 6 July, Jiang was elected chairman of the GMD Central Executive Committee (Nationalist), giving him full control of the party's military and political organisations.

Source 3.02 Jiang Jieshi, commander-in-chief at the Huangpu Military Academy.

NATIONALIST REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

On 27 July 1926, the Nationalist Revolutionary Army began its march north, with Jiang as its commander-in-chief. The Nationalists had 85,000 troops led by 6000 Huangpu officers. The China correspondent for the *New York Times* wrote that 'the expedition appeared to be a hopeless folly'.

The Nationalist army would need to conquer all of the northern warlords. Between them, warlords 'Philosopher General' Wu Peifu (Wu P'ei-fu), 'Old Marshall' Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin) and 'Nanjing Warlord' Sun Chuanfang (Sun Ch'uan-fang) had a combined force of 750,000 troops.

However, the Nationalists had major advantages over the northern warlords.

- Although southern China was relatively united under the GMD, the north was divided, with little chance the warlords could mount a coordinated defence.²
- Many of the northern troops were poorly trained and badly equipped.
- The Nationalist army was a disciplined, professional fighting force with high morale.
- Jiang was advised by General Galen and his Soviet experts.
- The Nationalist government was in a good financial situation after appointing T.V. Soong (Soong Ziwen; Sung Tzu-wen) finance minister. Soong built up a silver reserve for the Nationalist government, which brought stability to the currency, and increased tax income.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Cantonese, the name Jiang Jieshi is spelled and pronounced as Chiang Kai-shek (in the Mandarin variation). Because the Nationalists were first based in Guangzhou, where Cantonese is the main dialect, Jiang became commonly known in the West by his Cantonese name of Chiang.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang Jieshi described the warlords to his wife, Jennie Chen: 'They are willing to ally with me or anyone else, just so they save their skins. They are stinking opportunists!'

VICTORY AFTER VICTORY

Communist agitators travelled ahead of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army—their role was to mobilise support among the peasants and to rally workers' organisations. The warlords were also destabilised by strikes and other acts of sabotage by ordinary people.

Against all expectations, the Nationalist Revolutionary Army swept into central China and enjoyed victory after victory. They captured the city of Wuhan on 10 October—an auspicious date in republican history. Nanchang fell a month later. By 1927, Jiang's army, enlarged with defections from warlord forces, was advancing on Nanjing and Shanghai.

However, despite their success on the battlefield, the relationship between the Nationalists and their United Front allies was full of suspicion, tension and jealousy.



Source 3.03 Northern Expedition, 1926–1928.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did Jiang Jieshi announce the Northern Expedition? When did the Expedition begin?
- 2 What was the intention of the Northern Expedition?
- 3 Why did the *New York Times* claim that the Northern Expedition was likely to fail?
- 4 To what extent had the Nationalist army achieved success by 1927? Use details from the map to support your response.

THE WHITE TERROR

DID YOU KNOW?

The warlord Zhang Zuolin, who ruled Beijing, launched an anti-Communist purge in April 1927. His troops attacked the Soviet embassy and executed many Chinese Communists sheltering there, including Li Dazhao.

fifth column a subversive group within an organisation that appears to be loyal but quietly works towards its own interests, or to those of an enemy group

Soviet in the Chinese context, a Communist rural base or community. The term was borrowed from Russia, where it denoted a workers' and soldiers' council

Green Gang a Shanghai criminal syndicate headed by 'Big Ears Du' and 'Pock-marked Huang'

DID YOU KNOW?

Big Ears Du had a colourful way of encouraging people to pay their gambling debts and protection fees: he would have an empty coffin delivered to their front door. The delivery was a blunt warning: pay up, or start planning your funeral.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the leaders of the Green Gang, Huang Jinrong, was known as 'Pock-marked Huang' because of the smallpox scars on his face. Huang was not only a top member of Shanghai's most powerful triad, he was also boss of the Chinese detectives in the city's French Concession. This was invaluable, as it meant that the Gang's drug trade could continue without interference from authorities.

Jiang Jieshi: 'I have never taken the view that I cannot cooperate with the Communists ... But I have also made it clear that while I was opposed to the oppression of the Communists, I would check their influence as soon as they grew too powerful.'

On 1 January 1927, the Nationalist leadership and Comintern adviser Borodin moved to Wuhan in central China to set up their new seat of government. The extraordinary powers granted to Jiang Jieshi at the start of the Northern Expedition were withdrawn. Wang Jingwei returned from France and further boosted the Wuhan government.

Jiang was furious and insisted that the government be based at Nanchang, a city he had captured in 1926. However, the dispute remained unresolved—and the two opposing sides continued to bicker.

SHANGHAI'S GREEN GANG

As Nationalist troops advanced on Shanghai, Communist-led workers' unions formed militias and staged a huge strike. Organised by Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), the strike paralysed the city. The Nationalist Revolutionary Army breached Shanghai's defences on 18 March 1927 and, thanks to the workers' efforts, faced little resistance. By 22 March, the Nationalists held the city.

However, Jiang was concerned by the influence of the Communists among Shanghai workers: 'This could be portrayed either as **fifth column** aid for the Nationalists', argues Jonathan Fenby, 'or as a bid to set up a **Soviet**, or both. It was a major threat to Jiang since the strikers would greatly outnumber his troops.'³

On his arrival in Shanghai, Jiang sought the help of the city's leading businessmen, bankers and foreign diplomats—all of them were keen to get rid of the militant workers' movement. However, Jiang's first meeting was with 'Big Ears Du' (Du Yuesheng)—the leader of the notorious **Green Gang** criminal network. Big Ears Du was one of the most feared men in Shanghai.⁴ The Green Gang (*Qingbang*) ran drug smuggling and distribution, as well as gambling dens, prostitution and protection rackets.

Jiang called on the power and connections of the Green Gang in order to deal with Shanghai's Communist 'problem'. In return, the Gang was promised immunity from the law and exclusive rights to sell opium in Shanghai.

In early April 1927, Wang Jingwei (GMD) and Chen Duxiu (CCP) issued a joint statement. It reaffirmed the relationship between their two parties, and reassured the public that there were no plans for a Communist uprising in Shanghai. However, their statement gave a false impression of unity. As Zhou Enlai had warned Borodin at the outset of the Northern Expedition, some leading Nationalists 'may not be as friendly as you think they are'. Zhou's assessment proved prophetic.

THE SHANGHAI MASSACRE **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

Big Ears Du armed a 2000-man militia: the China Mutual Progress Association. Early on the morning of 12 April, the Green Gang militia fanned out through Shanghai's working-class districts. They wore blue denim overalls and white armbands with the Chinese character for 'labourer' printed on them.

Just before dawn the militia began a massacre. Communists and union activists were rounded up and executed. Nationalist troops joined in the slaughter. Somewhere between 5000 and 10,000 Communists and unionists were killed. Historian Maurice Meisner argues that Jiang had brought about ‘a bloodbath that virtually destroyed both the CCP and the workers’ movement in China’s largest city’: it was ‘an orgy of counter-revolutionary violence’.⁵

The **White Terror** spread to other cities under Nationalist control, with the eventual death toll numbering in the hundreds of thousands—nobody kept an official record. In disarray, Communists discarded their trademark red-neckties and tried to avoid capture. Zhou Enlai went into hiding—he was one of the lucky ones who escaped. American Vice-Consul Frederick Hinke described the fate of many less fortunate radicals:

American Vice-Consul Frederick Hinke

Execution squads patrolled the streets and on finding a suspect, they questioned him, examined his neck for the tell-tale red. If found, they ordered the victim to open his mouth, thrust a revolver into it, and another coolie [worker] came to the end of his Communist venture. I, myself, saw a rickshaw stopped, the coolie grabbed by the police, his shirt jerked from his neck disclosing the red stain. He was rushed to the side of the road, compelled to kneel down, and unceremoniously shot while the crowd of people in the street applauded.

White Terror the term ‘White Terror’ comes from the Russian Revolution where the forces that opposed the Communist ‘Reds’ during the Russian Civil War were known as ‘Whites’. Chinese Communists used the term to imply that Jiang Jieshi and his allies were ‘counter-revolutionary’

◀ **Source 3.04** Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism* (London: World University Library, 1966), 104.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the Horse Day Incident of 21 May 1927, the Nationalist commander in Changsha ordered the deaths of 10,000 Communists.

END OF THE UNITED FRONT

Stalin’s Comintern had greatly underestimated Jiang. A week before the Shanghai Massacre, Stalin said, ‘We are told that Chiang [Jiang] is making ready to turn against us again. I know that he is playing a cunning game with us; it is he that will be crushed. We shall squeeze him like a lemon and then be rid of him.’⁶ Wang Jingwei’s Wuhan government accused Jiang of a ‘massacre of the people’. On 17 April they expelled him from the GMD. Jiang did not care—he had a powerful army and his own government, now based in Nanjing (which he had captured on 24 March).

Meanwhile, the CCP leadership was bewildered by the confusing orders they were receiving from Stalin. On several occasions they had asked Moscow to allow them to split from Jiang and work exclusively with the Nationalist left. The Chinese Communists also wanted to:

- encourage revolution in the countryside
- raise their own military force.

Their proposals had been repeatedly vetoed (or rejected) by Stalin because:

- rural disturbances would alienate support for the Nationalists among the landlords
- many Huangpu Academy officers came from the landlord class.

After the Shanghai Massacre, the CCP leadership cut ties with Jiang but continued to work with Wang Jingwei.

The CCP was now instructed by the Comintern to adopt the same strategies that had been refused in previous weeks. Chen Duxiu said it was ‘like taking a bath in shit’; another Communist said he didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.⁷ The arrival of a new Comintern adviser named Mahendranath Roy made matters worse for

DID YOU KNOW?

Borodin and Galen were killed in Stalin’s purges in Russia during the 1930s and 1940s.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Note two or more developments that encouraged Jiang Jieshi to break with the CCP and the left GMD.
- 2 What was the Green Gang? Who was its leader?
- 3 When did Jiang launch the Shanghai Massacre?
- 4 Approximately how many Communists were killed in the Shanghai Massacre?
- 5 What happened to the United Front in the aftermath of the White Terror?
- 6 What did Jiang Jieshi decide to do during the leadership squabbles of 1927?
- 7 Briefly outline the achievement of Jiang's Northern Expedition.

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) contributed to a rising revolutionary situation in China up to 1927.
- Explain the impact of the Shanghai Massacre and the White Terror on the Chinese revolutionary movement.
- Explain how the Northern Expedition represented a turning point in the development of the Chinese Revolution.

State Council the government ministries of the PRC, headed by Premier Zhou Enlai until 1976

the CCP. Borodin and Roy disagreed over policy. Roy made a terrible blunder—he showed Wang Jingwei a confidential telegram from Stalin that proposed forming an exclusively Communist army. Roy had hoped to reassure Wang with his openness, but instead aroused his suspicions.

On 15 July, the Nationalist left expelled the CCP and Comintern representatives from its government. The leading Russian advisers were sent home by the end of the month. 'It's all over', despaired Borodin.⁸ Before he left, Borodin urged his Chinese comrades to continue their struggle and defy Jiang's 'counter-revolutionary' regime. Borodin later described the GMD (Nationalists) as 'a toilet which, however often you flush it, still stinks'.⁹

NORTHERN EXPEDITION CONTINUES

After the expulsion of the Communists, the left faction of the GMD 'remained a house divided against itself ... Its revolutionary ardour [passion] was broken, its unity shattered, and its leaders had become rivals for power'.¹⁰ The right GMD at Nanjing was similarly unsettled. In late 1927, Jiang made the surprising—but clever—move of taking a break from the leadership struggle.

Pretending to give up his ambitions, Jiang travelled to Japan and married his third wife, Soong Meiling (Sung Meiling). 'This cleared the way for his rivals to tear at each other's throats', writes historian Sterling Seagrave.¹¹ By the end of 1927, many in the GMD were yearning for a strong leader and for the party's factions to reconcile. The Wuhan government dissolved and joined with the government at Nanjing.

Jiang was asked back, and on 1 January 1928 he returned to the Nationalist capital. He once again took the role of commander-in-chief and the Northern Expedition resumed. In alliance with the warlord 'Christian General' Feng Yuxiang (Feng Yu-hsiang), Nationalist troops took Beijing by June. The city was renamed Beiping, meaning 'northern peace', as Nanjing remained the centre of power. On 10 October, Jiang Jieshi was elected chairman of the Nationalist government of China.

The Northern Expedition achieved a semblance of national unity and the Guomindang government was recognised by world powers. While some areas remained outside the government's immediate control, China was now under its first unified government since the death of Yuan Shikai. The Nationalist flag flew throughout north, south and central China, as well as Manchuria.

Jiang Jieshi had enormous power and prestige. He held the positions of:

- chairman of the Central Executive Committee and **State Council**
- secretary-general of the GMD
- head of the Military Council.

Under Jiang's leadership, China embarked on a decade of modernisation and national reconstruction. However, many cracks remained behind the impressive new façade. After the White Terror, the story of the revolution became a tale of two Chinas: Communist and Nationalist.¹²

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

This print was produced in Shanghai in 1927 as a souvenir celebrating the achievements of the Northern Expedition. Look carefully at the source and respond to the questions.



← **Source 3.05**

A record of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition.

- 1 Match these details to the image. Annotate the image (using sticky notes) with the corresponding letter:
 - A Title: 'A Record of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition' (larger text in red).
 - B Sun Yixian is a central figure. The portrait used here was the one that featured at his funeral. His image is framed by the flags of the Guomindang.
 - C Jiang Jieshi is sitting on a white horse (a traditional symbol of great leadership) and is holding a long sword known as a sabre.
 - D The Nationalist Revolutionary Army is depicted in formation, standing behind machine guns and light artillery. The regular troops are wearing dark green uniforms. Guomindang flags are held behind them.
 - E Huangpu Military Academy officers stand at attention in front of the troops. They are wearing lighter coloured uniforms.
 - F The text at the bottom says: 'The Nationalist Revolutionary Army receives its pre-campaign speech and is ready for war'.
 - G The battles for two cities are shown. Both fly the five-coloured flag of the Beijing government (the flag used by the Republic under Yuan Shikai and his successors). Nationalist troops are charging towards fortified positions and are under heavy fire. In each scene they are being led by a commanding officer (in lighter and brown uniforms.)
 - H The text at the top left says: 'Your comrades must continue to make efforts'.
 - I The text at the top right says: 'The revolution is not yet completed'.
- 2 What is the origin and purpose of this source?
- 3 Evaluate the extent to which this source offers an accurate depiction of the Northern Expedition.
- 4 Explain the significance of the Northern Expedition in the development of the Chinese Revolution.

JIANG JIESHI AND THE SOONG DYNASTY

Jiang Jieshi: 'I am desperate. Ailing has struck a hard bargain, but what she says is true. Her offer is the only way for me to achieve my plans to unite China. I now ask you to help me. I beg you not to say no. After all, true love is measured by the sacrifice one is willing to make.'



The importance of family and business

On 31 December 1927, Jiang Jieshi married the youngest daughter of Charlie Soong (Soong Jiashu), one of Shanghai's wealthiest businessmen. Jiang's new wife, Soong Meiling, was a woman of great beauty and intelligence. She was educated in the USA, spoke fluent English with a slight American accent, and had considerable 'connections'.

Meiling strengthened Jiang's ties with the Shanghai business elite, as her elder sister, Ailing, was married to Shanghai's leading banker, H.H. Kung (Kong Xiangxi). Ailing was ambitious and keen to link her family to politics, and she had arranged the marriage between Jiang and Meiling on behalf of her family. The youngest brothers of the family—Tse Liang 'T.L.' Soong (Soong Ziliang) and Tse An 'T.A.' Soong (Soong Zian)—were also influential financiers. T.V. Soong, their eldest brother, was already Jiang's finance minister. Meiling's other sister, Qingling, was the widow of Sun Yixian.

Source 3.06 'Generalissimo' Jiang Jieshi and Soong Meiling.

DID YOU KNOW?

T.V. Soong was said to have been the wealthiest man in the world in the 1940s.

On marrying Meiling, Jiang Jieshi became one of the in-laws of the Father of the Republic. Jiang's marriage to Soong Meiling strengthened his ties to China's economic and social elite. His association with the so-called 'Soong dynasty' shows:

- smart political manoeuvring
- the importance of family 'connections' in Chinese culture.

Soong Meiling

Once Jiang came to power, Soong Meiling proved to be a valuable political asset. She made a number of speaking tours of Europe and the USA to rally support for Jiang's government. She was a hit with the American public, and was regularly featured in magazines. Her eloquence and beauty were much admired.

As a Methodist, Meiling was popular with the anti-Communist Christian right in America (and Jiang had also become a Methodist after marrying Meiling). In 1937, Jiang and Meiling made the front page of *Time* magazine as 'man and wife of the year'. Photographs taken later, during World War II, show Meiling linking arms with both her husband and his American adviser, General Joe Stilwell (see page 129). Meiling was Jiang's link to the West—both literally and symbolically.

Chen Jieru (Jennie)

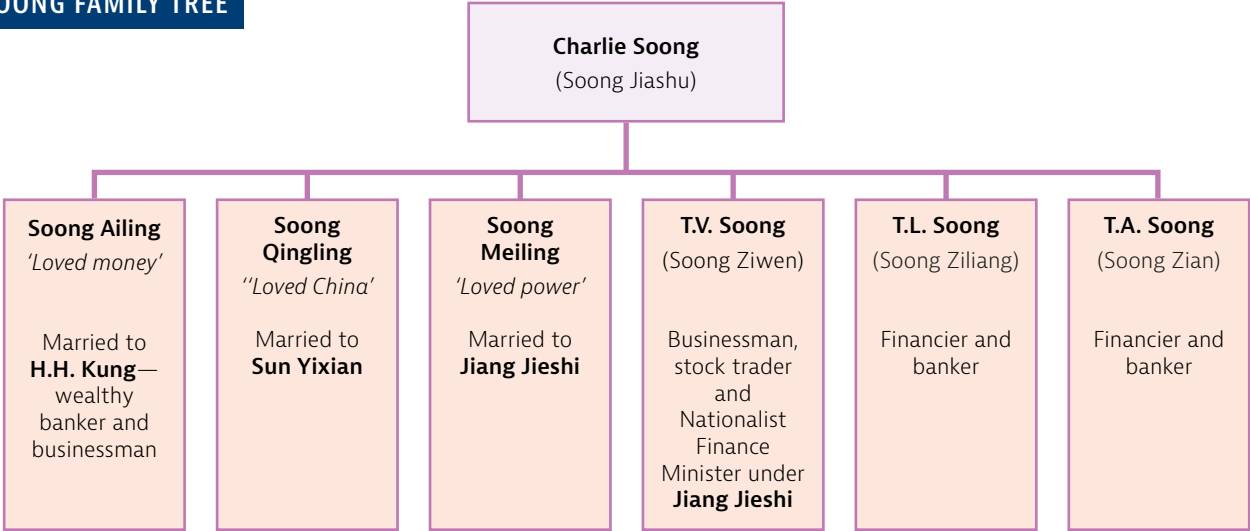
Before Jiang could marry Meiling, he had to work out what to do with his other wife, Jennie (Chen Jieru). Jiang convinced Jennie that he was only marrying Meiling for political convenience; he arranged for Jennie to go to the USA on a five-year ‘study tour’. Jiang promised Jennie that he would send for her after the five years and their married life would resume. Jennie took some convincing, but eventually agreed. Jiang even made a vow in Jennie’s presence before a Buddhist shrine: ‘Should I break my promise and fail to take her back, may the Great Buddha smite me and my Nanjing government.’¹³

However, once Jennie was in America, she learned from articles in the press that Jiang denied their marriage—and that he claimed to have paid a former ‘concubine’ to move to the USA. Jennie was shattered. Mind you, it was not the first time Jiang had dealt Jennie an awful blow—he had given her syphilis on their wedding night, and the treatment to cure it left her infertile.

↓ ‘Jennie’ Chen Jieru.



SOONG FAMILY TREE



DID YOU KNOW?

According to a popular Chinese saying, one Soong sister loved money (Ailing), one loved power (Meiling) and one loved China (Qingling).

COMMUNISTS IN CRISIS



↑ Josef Stalin.

Josef Stalin: 'To play with insurrections instead of organising a mass uprising of workers and peasants is a sure way of losing the revolution.'

After the breakdown of the United Front, the Communists had to find a scapegoat—and it wasn't going to be Comintern. On 7 August 1927, Chen Duxiu was accused of 'opportunism and betrayal', and resigned as CCP secretary-general. He was replaced by Qu Qiubai (Ch'u Ch'iu-pai), a much younger man who had studied in Moscow.

The CCP was used as a pawn in a political powerplay between Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky in the months after the Shanghai Massacre. Trotsky criticised Stalin—who had never been to China—for failing to devise effective policy for the Chinese Communists. Stalin hoped to prove Trotsky wrong and quickly dispatched two new Comintern advisers to China. Both of the new advisers were loyal Stalinists, and with their help Stalin was able to direct several uprisings against the GMD in key urban centres.

THE NANCHANG UPRISING

The first uprising against the Nationalists was launched on 1 August 1927, at Nanchang in Jiangxi province. Several of the Nationalist army divisions garrisoned in Nanchang were led by Communists. This was a perfect opportunity for rebellion. Prominent members of the CCP in Nanchang included Zhou Enlai, Zhu De (Chu Te) and He Long (Ho Lung). The rebels seized control of the city and proclaimed a revolutionary government, but the local people were indifferent. The Communists held out for four days before loyal Nationalist troops recaptured the city. The surviving Communists were forced to flee south.

Autumn Harvest Uprising an unsuccessful military campaign launched in September 1927 by Communist forces against urban centres (Changsha) in Hunan. Led by Mao Zedong

↓ **Source 3.07** Mao arrives at Jinggangshan.



THE AUTUMN HARVEST UPRISING

A motley group of soldiers in Hunan was led by the former head of the GMD Peasant Department, Mao Zedong. Mao and his men hoped to incite an uprising among the Hunanese peasantry and capture the capital, Changsha.

Mao had some experience as a rural revolutionary activist. He had been principal of the Farmers' Movement Training Institute, which trained revolutionaries for work in the countryside. In early 1927 he had submitted a controversial assessment on the revolutionary potential of the rural working class, entitled *Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. (Mao's assessment contrasted with the traditional Marxist-Leninist focus on urban workers.)

However, Mao's **Autumn Harvest Uprising** of 7–13 September was a disaster. His forces seized a few small towns but didn't get anywhere near the capital, and suffered severe casualties from fighting against GMD troops. Mao was even briefly captured, but managed to escape.

Mao's ragged mob of 1000 survivors eventually found sanctuary in a remote area along the Hunan-Jiangxi border called Jinggangshan ('Well Ridge Mountain'). In January 1928, Mao was joined by fellow Communist Zhu De, who brought with him 2000 soldiers—all veterans of the failed Nanchang uprising.

THE GUANGZHOU COMMUNE

Stalin, meanwhile, was still keen on a decisive victory, and ordered Qu Qiubai and the CCP to launch another insurrection, this time at Guangzhou. A dispute between local GMD-backed warlords had created a politically unstable situation that the Communists sought to exploit. On 11 December 1927, CCP troops seized control of the city and proclaimed a Guangzhou Soviet Council. A radical program of socialist measures was announced. It included:

- redistribution of land
- collective ownership of industry
- reduced working hours for the city's proletariat (workers).

However, the *Guangzhou Commune* lasted just two days. As in Nanchang, the workers of Guangzhou were not interested in what the Communists had to offer—and some were even hostile to the revolutionaries.¹⁴ Unionists helped in the campaign against the Communists. The Nationalists re-took the city with the aid of foreign gunboats. Brutal reprisals were dished out to suspected Communists and their sympathisers, and around 5700 people were killed. Trucks stacked high with bodies drove through the streets.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the suppression of the Canton Commune, girls with bob-style hair—a popular hairstyle among radical students—were executed as suspected leftists.

Guangzhou Commune the Communist workers' uprising in the southern city of Guangzhou (Canton) in December 1927

RECRIMINATIONS

By the late 1920s, the Chinese Communists were in disarray—they were fractured in organisation and uncertain of policy. Their active membership had fallen from 57,000 to 10,000. The Soviet Comintern had imposed policies on their Chinese comrades that, to succeed, required military strength and widespread popular support—but the CCP had neither. Stalin's call to 'deepen the revolutionary tide' and the failed uprisings that resulted from it exposed Communist agents to further repression.¹⁵

Moscow remained stubbornly unaffected by its failures, instead blaming the Chinese. Stalin even accused the CCP of 'playing' with insurrections. In November 1929, it was decided at a CCP *Politburo* meeting that:

- the 'general line' of urban-directed insurrection was 'entirely correct'
- Mao had taken 'a purely military viewpoint'
- Mao had not effectively roused the revolutionary consciousness of the people
- Mao had indulged in 'military adventurism'.

Mao lost his seat on the Politburo, but he did not actually learn of his demotion for several months because communication between party branches was so infrequent.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Mao had formed the view that peasants would be too scared to rise up against the established order unless they were offered protection from a powerful army.

Politburo 'Political bureau': the top-level leadership group of the Communist Party Central Committee

NEW LEADERSHIP

The repression of Communists in China was so widespread that the Sixth Party Congress of the CCP (18 June–20 July 1928) had to be held in Moscow. There was much discussion at the Congress of who was to blame for the Communists' disastrous position. The Congress condemned the 'right opportunism' of Chen Duxiu and the 'left deviationism' of Qu Qiubai.

Qu was demoted from general-secretary of the Party, while Li Lisan (Li Li-san), who headed the Party's propaganda department, came to prominence in developing policy. Li had a long history of urban revolutionary work. He held strong views on the

importance of industrial workers and cities as the foundations of socialist revolution. According to Li, 'The villages are the limbs of the ruling class. The cities are their brain and heart.'¹⁷

FURTHER DEFEATS



Source 3.08 Early photo of Zhu De (left) and Mao Zedong.

Li's theories were given a chance in 1929 and 1930, after regional militarists in central China rebelled against Jiang. On 23 July 1930, the situation had become so volatile that the Comintern advised the CCP: 'The new upsurge in the Chinese revolutionary movement has become an indisputable fact'.¹⁸ The global Great Depression gave further credibility to the idea that the triumph of communism was imminent.

Following Moscow's assessment, Li Lisan ordered the Communist Red Armies to launch yet another round of campaigns against cities in the Yangzi River valley. General Peng

Dehuai (P'eng Te-huai) took Changsha, but his men were driven out after eight days. Mao and Zhu De tried to capture Nanchang, but failed. Communist forces also made an unsuccessful attack on Wuhan.

However, the problem was not just that the military campaigns were unsuccessful, but that they provoked Jiang Jieshi into organising operations against Communist rural bases that he had previously ignored.

TWENTY-EIGHT BOLSHEVIKS

The failure of the **Li Lisan Line** led to Li's dismissal from the CCP leadership. On 8 January 1931, the task of heading the Politburo was assigned to a new group of Moscow-trained Chinese students headed by Wang Ming and Bo Gu (Po Ku). They were informally known as the 'Twenty-eight Bolsheviks' or the 'Returned Students' Clique'.

The new leadership was young and inexperienced, which led to them being ridiculed by the veterans of the revolutionary movement. As one Communist later recalled: 'These fellows were just a group of young students who, needless to say, had done nothing for the revolution. While we were carrying out the revolution, they were taking milk at their mothers' breasts.'¹⁹

For the time being, the CCP **Central Committee** in Shanghai was far removed from the revolution that was taking shape in the remote mountains, being led by Mao, Zhu and others. By 1931, Mao and Zhu were known as the 'real power faction' among their Party comrades.²⁰ The Communists were finally gaining strength—but it was in the villages, not the cities.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, consider Stalin's warning to the Chinese Communists: 'To play with insurrections instead of organising a mass uprising of workers and peasants is a sure way of losing the revolution'. To what extent was this a fair assessment of the events of 1927–1931?

Li Lisan Line the Communist policy of directing military campaigns against urban centres; proposed by Li Lisan in mid-1930

Central Committee the central coordinating body of the Chinese Communist Party



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What instruction was given to the CCP by the Comintern following the Shanghai Massacre?
- 2 Which Communist insurrection was led by Mao Zedong?
- 3 Which insurrection was based on a military rebellion led by Communist officers?
- 4 By how much had the membership of the CCP fallen by the late 1920s?
- 5 Which group was assigned leadership of the CCP in January 1931?
- 6 Briefly describe how each of the following created difficulties for the CCP in 1927–1931:
 - Nationalist repression
 - Comintern interference
 - unstable leadership
 - flawed policies.

MAO'S LABORATORY: THE JIANGXI SOVIET

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mao Zedong: 'Without a people's army, the people have nothing.'

The Communists established about a dozen rural bases after the failed insurrections of 1927–1930. One of the most significant was the base organised by Mao Zedong in Jiangxi.

Mao's immediate concern after the Autumn Harvest Uprising was survival—and **Jinggangshan** in the southern Jiangxi mountains provided him and his followers with a remote and easily defended base where they could regroup. As historian Brantly Womack argues, 'Necessity was the mother of the CCP's reinvention'.²¹

Before Jinggangshan, Mao was a relatively minor figure in revolutionary circles, but the chance to act independently meant that he was able to confirm that his revolutionary strategies worked. When he arrived at Jinggangshan, Mao recruited a band of impoverished local bandits into his army. Even after Mao was joined by units under Zhu De and Peng Dehuai, the Communists' First Workers' and Peasants' Army was not exactly a formidable fighting force in its early days.

Although Mao and Zhu could muster 10,000 troops, their men often went hungry and were greatly under-equipped—some were armed only with spears. For now, this was not a concern—Mao often said that in war it is people who count more than weapons. Mao was happy to recruit the dispossessed and outcasts of Chinese society, and said of his new vagabond recruits: 'They are all human beings'.²² Mao had a vision for his motley crew—it was to become an improved Red Army. According to Mao: 'These people are capable of fighting very bravely, and, if properly led, can become a revolutionary force'.²³

In January 1929, Mao and Zhu had to abandon Jinggangshan after raids by GMD armies and difficulties finding enough food. They needed a new base deeper in the mountains—and chose the small Jiangxi town of Ruijin as their new headquarters.

Jinggangshan the Jinggang mountain range in remote Jiangxi-Hunan, where Mao Zedong and Zhu De established a Communist base after the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1927

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Jiangxi Soviet period, Mao married his third wife, a young revolutionary by the name of He Zhizhen. A popular song from the time went: 'Commander Zhu is hard at work—carrying rice through the ditches; Commander Mao is hard at work—making love'.

THE FIRST ALL-CHINA CONGRESS

On 7 November 1931, the First All-China Congress of Soviets was convened at Ruijin. The Congress involved fierce policy debate between Mao and the Twenty-eight



Source 3.09 The hall in Ruijin where the Second All-China Congress of Soviets was held.

Source 3.10 Mao Zedong, *Proclamation to the Popular Masses of the Whole Country about the Direct Negotiations between China and Japan* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 8.

DID YOU KNOW?

Communist bases (called soviets) were often established in border regions between provinces. This meant that if warlord governors wanted to attack the soviets, they would have to coordinate and cooperate in their efforts. Jealousies and personal rivalries meant they were usually unwilling to do so.

Jiangxi Soviet a Communist community based around the town of Ruijin, established in 1928. Led by Chairman Mao, the soviet was abandoned at the start of the Long March following Jiang's Fifth Bandit Encirclement and Extermination Campaign

commissar a political adviser to the military. Under guidance from the Comintern, the Nationalist and Communist armed forces had commissars

Bolsheviks led by Wang and Bo. Mao's faction was criticised for its 'opportunistic pragmatism', but won out against the Comintern-backed Politburo. For the moment, Mao's policies would be pursued.

THE CHINESE SOVIET REPUBLIC

At the First All-China Congress of Soviets, a Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed, with Mao appointed chairman of its executive committee. Mao spoke of the importance of the **Jiangxi Soviet**.

Mao Zedong

From now on there are two totally different states in the territory of China. One is the so-called Republic of China ... The other is the Chinese Soviet Republic, the state of the broad masses of the exploited and oppressed workers, peasants, soldiers and toilers. Its banner is that of overthrowing imperialism; eliminating the landlord class; bringing down the Guomindang warlord government ... and striving for genuine peace and unification of the whole country.

A Chinese soviet was different from a Russian soviet; it was a *community* rather than a workers' council. The Chinese Soviet Republic had a governmental structure, a constitution, and endorsed laws and policies. Although Mao was chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet, this did not mean he had taken leadership of the CCP. The Central Committee remained under the control of Wang, Bo and the other Twenty-eight Bolsheviks, who returned to Shanghai after the Congress. Mao stayed on, determined to pursue his revolutionary agenda and further his own ambitions. Historian Delia Davin argues that Ruijin was 'a social laboratory' for trying out new ideas.²⁴

MAO'S RED ARMY KEY MOVEMENT

Mao's first and most important innovation was the attention he gave to the Red Army. Mao famously said that, 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'. While Zhu served as commander-in-chief of operational matters, Mao was chief political **commissar**. His job was to give the army a sense of self-worth, discipline and direction.

Mao set about reversing the Chinese saying that one should 'not waste good iron making nails, nor good men as soldiers'.²⁵ Political instruction was given, along with military training. Mao used simple language and words that referred to the natural world—such as fish, trees, soil, seeds, shit—that were readily understood by his troops.

The Red Army was a volunteer force, and it offered captured warlord or Nationalist soldiers a choice:

- return to your home, with some travel money
- undergo political training, then join our army.

To spread party ideology among the troops, political commissars served alongside officers. Officers were treated the same as the soldiers. Red Army officers:

- had no badges or honours to signify rank
- shared their men's hardships, ate the same food and lived among them
- were not allowed to beat the common soldiers.

After each battle, large meetings were held where soldiers could voice their concerns and offer criticism or praise to officers.

Red Army soldiers were subject to strict rules of discipline. Every Communist soldier serving in Soviet areas had to memorise and live by the code of conduct devised by Mao and Zhu:

The Three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention

KEY SOURCE

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows:

1. Obey all orders in all your actions
2. Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses
3. Turn in everything captured.

The Eight Points for Attention are as follows:

1. Speak politely
2. Pay fairly for what you buy
3. Return everything you borrow
4. Pay for anything you damage
5. Do not hit or swear at people
6. Do not damage crops
7. Do not take liberties with women
8. Do not ill-treat captives.

 **Source 3.11** Mao Zedong, 'On the Re-issue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention,' in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 256–257.

The Red Army's rules were made into a catchy tune, which the soldiers sang as they marched. This had two purposes:

- it raised morale
- it reinforced the rules among those who were illiterate.²⁶

The Red Army's rules and behaviour were starkly different from those of other armies. Traditionally, soldiers pillaged, raped, killed and destroyed property—but not Communist soldiers. When not on active duty Red Army soldiers carried out chores, such as cutting firewood for the surrounding communities and helping sow crops.²⁷ This won them respect.

Red Army personnel were often the first point of contact between the party and the people, so their political work and conduct were vital if they were to be a 'people's army'. Power might come from a gun but, as historian Ross Terrill argues, the 'gun is useless if the trigger puller is not the missionary of an appealing cause'.²⁸

DID YOU KNOW?

The reputation of Mao Zedong and Zhu De spread throughout the Jiangxi Soviet, but many peasants thought that they were the same person: the legendary 'Zhu Mao'.

GUERRILLA TACTICS

The way the Red Army fought was significant. From his reading of ancient Chinese military texts, as well as from trial and error, Mao came to realise the tremendous advantages of guerrilla warfare (using a small, mobile, flexible force against an established army). Communist troops were taught Zhu and Mao's general strategy:

The enemy advances, we retreat;
The enemy camps, we harass;
The enemy tires, we attack;
The enemy retreats, we pursue.²⁹

From 1930 onwards, Jiang Jieshi made a number of **bandit extermination campaigns** against the Communists at Jiangxi. Abandoning positional warfare, the Red Army successfully resisted much stronger forces, and achieved a number of victories. Their key tactic was to lure Nationalist troops 'in deep' to Communist territory. Communist troops could then use their intimate knowledge of the terrain—which allowed for concealment and quick retreat—to strike against the enemy's weakest points. They hit fast and hard against troops that they knew they could overwhelm. This demoralised and exhausted the invaders, and led ultimately to their withdrawal.

bandit extermination campaigns a series of five military campaigns from 1931–1934 against Communist strongholds in rural areas. The fifth campaign, coordinated by General von Seeckt, proved successful and forced the CCP on the Long March

ZHU DE, 1886–1976



↑ Zhu De.

Zhu De: 'The tactics we have derived from the struggle of the past three years are indeed different from any other tactics, ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign. With our tactics, the masses can be aroused for struggle on an ever-broadening scale, and no enemy, however powerful, can cope with us. Ours are guerrilla tactics.'

Zhu De was a senior military commander in the Chinese Communist Party who became a figure of legend for his early work in establishing the Red Army alongside Mao Zedong.

Zhu De came from an impoverished Sichuanese peasant family, but his adoption by a wealthy uncle allowed him to improve his situation. As a young man, he worked as a physical education instructor before enrolling in his local military academy. He took part in the Xinhai Revolution and later served as an officer under a number of warlords in Yunnan and Sichuan. Zhu developed a significant opium addiction but kicked his habit once he left China for Europe.

In his travels, Zhu met Zhou Enlai and became a committed Communist. He was one of the leaders of the 1927 Nanchang Uprising, and in 1928 he joined Mao at Jinggangshan. Zhu was Mao Zedong's chief military commander from the time of the Jiangxi Soviet, and he was instrumental in drafting the Red Army's code of behaviour. Zhu was a master of both guerilla warfare and conventional strategies. Although Mao provided much of the theory in this period, it was Zhu who put military theory into practice. His success as a battle commander led the Jiangxi peasants to believe he had supernatural abilities.

Zhu gained a place on the CCP Politburo in 1934, and was a veteran of the Long March. He led the CCP's Eighth Route Army in the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–1945), and was the top military figure of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during the Chinese Civil War (1946–1949). In 1955, he was made a Marshal of the PLA in recognition of his outstanding military contributions.

Under the People's Republic, Zhu held a seat on the Standing Committee of the Politburo and chaired the National People's Congress. However, he lost his influence after the 1959 Lushan Conference, when he refused to make a hardline criticism of General Peng Dehuai. By the mid-1960s, Zhu was an elder statesman with little active participation in politics, and was subject to mild rebuke during the Cultural Revolution. He was protected from further harassment on Mao and Zhou's orders. Zhu De died in July 1976, six months after Zhou Enlai and two months before Mao.

THE ROLE OF PEASANTS

Successful guerrilla warfare mostly relies on two things:

- mobility
- support of the local populace.

According to Mao, ‘The peasants are the sea; we are the fish. The sea is our habitat’.³⁰ The Jiangxi peasants provided the Red Army with shelter, food, local knowledge and intelligence on enemy movements. Land reform carried out under the protection of the Communist armed forces strengthened the ties between the Soviet government and the people, as did the disciplined conduct of Red soldiers.

Mao’s land reforms were based on a pragmatic view of social relations in the villages, which was a point of dispute with the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks. The young heads of the Politburo were ‘good at theory and bad at most other things’, Terrill argues.³¹ Wang Ming and Bo Gu wanted land reform that would redistribute the holdings of ‘rich’ landowners to the ‘poor’. Mao had followed such a policy at Jinggangshan, and learned that he had alienated a significant proportion of the local people—including those who were the most successful farmers.

At Jiangxi, Mao implemented a more moderate, common-sense approach: the ‘fish’ shouldn’t excessively stir up the ‘water’. Mao went to great lengths to ensure that the goodwill and grain production of middle-level peasants were maintained. The most exploitative and brutal of landlords were executed, but land was redistributed to all members of the village—including ‘rich’ peasants, who were allowed to keep more than enough land to support their families. Exploitative rents were abolished and a fixed grain tax of 15 to 20 per cent was set to ensure the government received adequate supplies of food. While he was at Jiangxi, Mao was criticised by the Politburo for ‘not killing and burning enough’.³²

MAO LOSES INFLUENCE

A significant point of ideological dispute between Mao and the CCP Politburo was his insistence that peasants could be a revolutionary class. That Mao welcomed peasant recruits into the party was seen as dissenting from the ‘correct’ path of Marxist proletarian revolution. Even the successful guerrilla tactics of the Zhu–Mao Army were ridiculed as ‘roving bandit ideology’. While he could, Mao ignored calls from the Politburo to change his ways. He was inclined to disobey orders when he thought they were irrelevant to his army and base.³³

In the end, Mao’s stubbornness meant his political fortunes fluctuated. Mao took ‘sick leave’ on several occasions. Sometimes he was genuinely ill, such as when he had a nasty case of malaria, but there were also times when, as Bo put it, ‘diplomatic disorders’ and depression took hold. On 12 October 1932, Mao was replaced by Zhou Enlai as general political commissar of the Red Army. According to Mao, ‘From 1931 until 1934 I had no voice at all at the Centre’.

In January 1933, the Central Committee moved from Shanghai to Ruijin, which reduced Mao’s influence even further. Bo launched a sweeping campaign to undermine Mao. Once the Politburo took up residence in the mountains, Mao had little input into broad policy and military matters. He now turned his attention instead to civil administration, making a detailed study of the economy and overseeing social policies.

↓ Zhou Enlai.



SOCIAL CHANGE AT JIANGXI

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1933, a group of Mao's supporters, including Deng Xiaoping, were brought before the Communist leadership and denounced for their disobedience. They were called 'country bumpkins' and told in no uncertain terms that there was 'no Marxism in the mountain valleys'.

A number of initiatives during the Jiangxi Soviet period improved education, gender equity and services for local people. Reading classes were held for soldiers and peasants. Women were encouraged to attend. Mao said that educating a man means educating an individual, whereas teaching a woman means educating a whole family.³⁴ The CCP aimed to break the connection between the control of women and ownership of land, and campaigned against:

- foot-binding
- forced marriages
- child slavery.

Divorce and marriage rights were made equally available to women. Opium farming was strongly discouraged (at least according to Communist rhetoric). A Red postal service was established, along with a 'People's Bank' with its own currency.

The Jiangxi Soviet came to govern 3 million people in a region covering 30,000 square kilometres. Another 3 million people lived under the smaller soviets that fell under Jiangxi's administration. As a result of Jiang's anti-Communist campaigns, the Jiangxi Soviet lasted only three years—but it did provide Mao and Zhu with a framework for their future revolutionary work.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the capital of the Jiangxi Soviet?
- 2 According to Mao, what was the significance of the founding of the Chinese Soviet Republic at Jiangxi?
- 3 What were the differences between the term 'soviet' in the Russian and Chinese contexts?
- 4 Briefly explain the importance of the Communist Red Army. Refer to each of the following in your response:
 - rules of conduct
 - morale
 - leadership
 - tactics
 - propaganda.
- 5 What role did land reform play during the Jiangxi Soviet?
- 6 Briefly outline Mao's political challenges during the Jiangxi period.
- 7 List five or more of the social reforms initiated at Jiangxi under Mao's direction.

CREATIVE TASKS

Complete one or more of the tasks below in pairs or small groups.

- Compose an instruction manual (500–600 words) for Red Army soldiers serving in the Jiangxi Soviet (1931–1934). Explain the philosophy underpinning the army, as developed by Mao Zedong and Zhu De. Give soldiers practical advice on how to conduct themselves in warfare and daily life.
- Create a propaganda poster, poem or song explaining the Zhu–Mao Red Army to the public.

HISTORICAL INQUIRY

Research then write an Inquiry report in response to the question below. Your inquiry should include an introduction, a number of body paragraphs supported by evidence, and a conclusion. An annotated bibliography that demonstrates further reading is essential. Use subheadings or sub-questions to focus your research on the different possible elements of this topic.

- How did the ideas, policies and achievements of the CCP during the Jiangxi Soviet period lay the structure for their future revolutionary success?

MAO'S FUTIAN PURGES

Mao Zedong: *'A revolution is not like inviting people to a dinner party.'*

During the Jiangxi period, Mao showed that he could be ruthless towards those who got in his way.

In October 1930, he instigated a **purge** of Red Army units whose loyalty was questionable. Local Communist officials and troops of the 20th Corps based in the southern regions of Jiangxi had been reluctant to follow Mao's orders, and were suspected of being loyal to Li Lisan. Mao claimed the group:

- were protecting members of a secret GMD clique called the Anti-Bolshevik League
- were 'mountaintopists'—meaning they put local concerns and their unit's interests before the greater good of the party.

It is claimed that Mao placed 4000 men of the accused unit under arrest, and had 1000 of them executed. Those killed included the four founding members of the local Party committee. Many of those arrested were tortured to extract a confession, including:

- being hung up by their arms and beaten with bamboo rods
- having bamboo splinters rammed under their fingernails
- being burned with incense sticks
- having their hands nailed to tables.³⁵

Under torture, it's quite understandable that quite a few of the 20th Corps 'confessed' to being members of the Anti-Bolshevik League.

A few months later the purge escalated. On 8 December, some of the remaining 20th Corps freed their imprisoned comrades, who were held in the town of Futian. They retreated to a neighbouring town where they hoped they would be safe. In the town square they raised banners proclaiming: 'Down with Mao Zedong!'³⁶ For the next few months they remained an 'independent' group and appealed to the CCP Central Committee for leniency.

In June 1931, Mao called a meeting of the 'rebel' officers of the 20th Corps. They came—200 in total—thinking that they would discuss and resolve their differences. As they sat down in the local hall, troops loyal to Mao seized the unsuspecting officers and took them away for execution. In this way, the problem of the troublesome garrison and its Party committee was removed.

However, the killing did not end there. The purge spread throughout the Jiangxi Soviet as people denounced each other and Party investigators extracted 'confessions'. In the end, many thousands lost their lives.³⁷ One man who remembered the killings told historian Sun Shuyun about them.

A witness recalling the Futian Purges

Madness! It was total madness. Nobody could understand what was going on. Red Army was killing Red Army! Communists were killing Communists! How could there be so many enemies anyway? If the men of the 20th Corps and the Jiangxi Committee had been bad people, why hadn't they defected to Jiang Jieshi? Nobody dared to tell Mao that. They were too scared. They kept their mouths shut like a grasshopper on a cold day.

Source 3.12 Sun Shuyun, *The Long March* (London: HarperCollins, 2006), 62.

Sun Shuyun argues that the purge may have claimed up to 20,000 people over the course of the year. She believes that the purge:

- seriously undermined the Communists' following
- squandered their popular support
- led to their eventual abandonment of the Jiangxi Soviet.³⁸

Although there is some debate among historians over what happened at Futian, the episode certainly demonstrates Mao's capacity for brutality.³⁹

purge removing a person or group from an organisation by threat or violent force

THE NANJING DECADE

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Jiang Jieshi: 'I am the Generalissimo; I do not err. China cannot do well without me.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang Jieshi held altogether eighty-two military and civilian positions in the Nationalist state.

Yuan government bureaus of the Nationalist government

DID YOU KNOW?

Chinese is a tonal language, which means that words that are written the same in English are pronounced slightly differently in Chinese because they are written in different characters. The word *ma* can mean mother, horse, hemp, to curse or abuse someone, and also to indicate a question. This same concept applies to *yuan*: Nationalist government departments, Yuan Shikai and the Chinese currency (called the yuan) are not the same word even if it looks the same.

DID YOU KNOW?

Several former warlords served in Jiang's first cabinet. The Christian General, Feng Yuxiang, was minister for war; Model Governor, Yan Xishan, was minister of the interior.

JIANG AND THE NATIONALIST STATE

Jiang Jieshi founded his Nanjing Nationalist government on 18 April 1927 in the aftermath of the White Terror. The capture of Beijing in June 1928 marked the victory of the Northern Expedition and the unification of China under GMD rule. Sun Yixian's first stage of democracy—military unification—was complete.

Jiang was inaugurated as president, and the structure of his government was formalised on 10 October 1928—the anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. The Nationalist state was structured as five major bureaus (or departments) called the **Yuan**:

- Executive Yuan: government
- Legislative Yuan: parliament
- Judiciary Yuan: legal system
- Examination Yuan: civil service appointments
- Control Yuan: behaviour and standards in the bureaucracy.

Jiang Jieshi headed the government as chairman of the State Council, which was the highest body of the Executive Yuan. There was no separation between the government and the party. In March 1929, the GMD announced that the party would monopolise power on behalf of the people for the period of 'political tutelage' (or political education) in line with Sun Yixian's program. The timeframe was left somewhat vague. This meant that the GMD party sat alongside the government, and all major positions in the government were held by senior members of the GMD.

CLIQUEs AND FACTIONS

Jiang was not an all-powerful dictator, but he was the dominant figure in the Nationalist state. He exercised further influence through his control of the military, which provided core support for his government. As a way of showing his pre-eminent political and military standing, by 1931 Jiang had assumed the title Generalissimo—which literally means 'general of generals'.

In addition to his formal roles, Jiang maintained his authority through several 'cliques' or factions, including:

- the Family Clique—people with links to the Soong family, which allowed Jiang to emphasise his supposed close relationship to Sun Yixian
- the Huangpu Clique—this was embedded in the military and a secret society called the Blue Shirts
- the Political Study Clique—associated with financial investors and the right-wing faction of the GMD
- the CC Clique—named after the Chen brothers Lifu and Guofu, who were the most powerful backers of all. The Chens were Jiang's long-standing friends, and members of the CC Clique held posts throughout the Nationalist government and party. The Chens were very ambitious and fiercely anti-Communist. Chen Lifu had set up an intelligence organisation to rival Dai Li's, because Jiang Jieshi 'needs two sets of eyes and ears'.⁴⁰

Other factions sought to limit Jiang Jieshi's authority, but with varied and limited success. Jiang's old rivals Wang Jingwei and Hu Hanmin returned to politics, and both:

- held important positions in the government and party
- used their influence and prestige to undermine Jiang.

Wang Jingwei even sided with regional governors and formed a rival government in opposition to Nanjing. With its various cliques and factions, the Nationalist government found it difficult to maintain its unity and cohesion.

REGIONAL PRESSURES

The Nationalist unification of China was a major triumph, with much hope and goodwill for Jiang's government. It was believed that a united country would be able to renew itself through economic modernisation and campaigns for moral virtue.

Yet throughout the Nanjing Decade, the Nationalist government was beset with problems and conflicts. Historian Lucien Bianco argues that the 'peace and order were relative, just as the unification achieved in this decade was more apparent than real'.⁴¹ Regionalism remained a potent force, and Jiang was forced to invest serious time and money maintaining internal unity.

There were several occasions in the 1930s when militarist governors broke away from Nanjing and ruled their domains independently. Although these provincial governors were not warlords by name, they:

- often behaved like warlords
- did their best to keep large armies
- tried to remain autonomous from the national government.

Twenty-three campaigns were waged to subdue rebellious provinces, and Jiang used bribery and force to play off his allies against each other. The Generalissimo was strong enough to suppress any single breakaway region—but not strong enough to impose order across the whole nation. The Nanjing government held direct control of only four provinces in the central Yangzi region: Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangsu and Jiangxi.

The GMD continued to have strong influence in Guangdong in the south. The other provinces were governed, with varying degrees of cooperation, by provincial strongmen.⁴² In these areas, the central government had no say in appointments or administration.

Source 3.13



FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Lack of strong centralised rule limited the Nationalist government's tax income because:

- income tax was difficult to enforce and collect
- provincial leaders imposed and pocketed taxes as they wished.

This left indirect customs revenue and indirect taxes on goods as the chief sources of income for Nanjing. The government was continually short of funds—the cost of unification campaigns meant that up to 80 per cent of government spending went on the military.

At the same time, Jiang had great difficulty convincing provincial governors to cut the number of soldiers under their command. The GMD government budget was in deficit throughout the Nanjing Decade—in other words, the government was spending more money than it had coming in. This deficit would develop into damaging inflationary policies in the later years of its rule.

MODERNISATION PROGRAMS

Jiang's vision for national renewal was limited by regional politics and financial constraints. Despite this, historian Jack Gray points out that the Nationalist record 'should be judged ... by what took place where its power was sufficient'.⁴³ In such places Jiang had many achievements, especially the modernisation projects.

During the 1930s, visitors to Nanjing and Shanghai marvelled at the new architecture and vibrant nightlife. Going to the cinema became a popular pastime for urban dwellers. There was a cosmopolitan feel to life in the major coastal cities. Historian William Kirby says that the Nationalists made 'stunning accomplishments from a position of unenviable weakness'.⁴⁴ Similarly, historian Jack Gray says, 'there is no doubt that by 1937 in every respect China under the Nanjing government was solving her problems, at least on an experimental scale'.⁴⁵

DID YOU KNOW?

The introduction of electric trams in cities took trade away from rickshaw-pullers. In October 1929, over 25,000 rickshaw men rioted—they smashed trams and shelters, pulled up tramlines and cut power cables. The army was brought in to end the riot.

📌 **Source 3.14** Steam train, Shanghai.



TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Nationalist government upgraded basic transport and communication infrastructure.

- *Railways*: Rail tracks were extended and hundreds of new locomotives and freight wagons were imported. Modern signal systems were installed, and new stations built at major transport hubs.
- *Roads*: Thousands of kilometres of new roads and bridges were built. Buses and trams became a common sight in Nanjing, Beiping (Beijing) and Shanghai.⁴⁶
- *Ferries*: Ferry routes were introduced between cities on major rivers.
- *Airlines*: A Chinese airline was founded.
- *Postal service*: The number of post offices increased and deliveries became more efficient.
- *Radio stations*: A network of radio stations was set up, and the system of telegraph lines was extended.

CONSTRUCTION

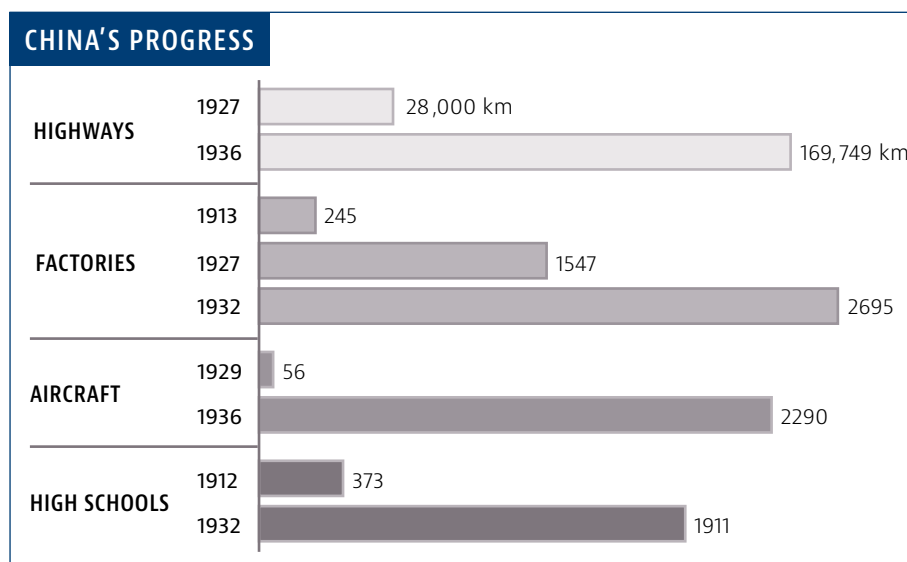
Power plants were built, and factories appeared in major ports. The cotton industry was a particular success. New hospitals were built, including one of international standard at Nanjing. Flood-control walls were erected in some regions.

FINANCE

Jiang's finance minister, T.V. Soong, reformed the banking and currency sector. The Central Bank of China was established and a modern-style annual budget was devised. Trading centres in Shanghai boomed. Measurements and weights were standardised and an income tax system established—although this last change made little progress.

CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY

Under the Nationalists, many Western claims over China were dissolved, and the right to charge tariffs and customs duties was handed back to the Chinese. Twenty of the thirty-three foreign concessions administered by European powers were given up. Chinese diplomats addressed and participated in international bodies such as the League of Nations, and China began to gain greater respect from other nations.



DID YOU KNOW?

Changes in fashion accompanied the modernisation period, with hybrid Chinese-Western-style dresses (called *qipao*), haircuts and high heels becoming popular in Chinese cities.



LIMITATIONS OF JIANG'S GOVERNMENT

Jiang Jieshi faced many difficulties that led to unpopular decisions, despite the achievements of the Nationalists. The most pressing difficulty was finance, as the regime was perpetually short of funds.

INFLATION

Paying off debt and funding the military accounted for 80 per cent of government spending.⁴⁷ Soong resigned in protest at the high level of military expenditure. He was replaced by H.H. Kung—the husband of Ailing Soong—who dealt with the crisis by printing more banknotes, which led to inflation becoming a huge problem by the 1940s.

EXCESSIVE TAXATION

The provincial governments that collected taxes on behalf of Nanjing were not always quick to pass on the revenue. Also, they imposed their own 'special taxes' on everyday items, which put a heavy burden on common people—for example, during the 1930s, peasants in Gansu (Kansu) paid forty-four different taxes (see Source 3.15).

DID YOU KNOW?

When T.V. Soong resigned, he said: 'Being minister of finance is no different from being Jiang Jieshi's dog. From now on, I am going to be a man, not a dog.'

➔ **Source 3.15** O. Edmund Clubb, *Twentieth Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 187.

The forty-four taxes of Gansu province

- acreage tax
- skin overcoat tax
- army mule tax
- uniform-alteration tax
- change of defence expenses
- wealthy-house tax
- general headquarters loan
- land tax
- military clothing tax
- troop movement tax
- merchants' loan
- copper tax
- public debt
- communications tax
- extraordinary tax
- additional goods duty
- penalty tax
- wheat bran tax
- stocking tax
- military expenses tax
- repair of defence expenses
- kindling-wood tax
- purchase of equipment tax
- military-aid tax
- circulation [of money] tax
- cereal-price tax
- repair of weapons expenses
- flour-shop tax
- road-building expenses
- purification of countryside tax
- soldier reward tax
- kettle tax
- trestle work tax
- special loan item
- bedding tax
- water-mill tax
- investigation expenses
- hemp shoe tax
- miscellaneous expenses tax
- house tax
- hog tax
- temporary expenses
- soldier-enlistment tax
- horse-fodder tax.

There was even a 'happy tax' to raise funds to promote goodwill on the day taxes were due! Some officials collected more tax than they should, or collected tax several years in advance—for example, 1971 taxes in Sichuan province had been collected by 1933.

In other provinces, taxes eleven times higher than the official rate were collected between October 1931 and March 1933. These taxes often went into the pockets of local officials rather than into the treasury of the Nanjing government. A British researcher named R.H. Tawny—who visited China during the Nationalist period—said the common Chinese farmer was like 'a man standing permanently up to his neck in water so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him'.⁴⁸ Most peasants suffered terrible poverty because of:

- excessive taxation
- land scarcity
- soil exhaustion
- exploitation by landlords and moneylenders.

Floods along the Yangzi River in 1931 created further devastation in the central farming regions.

CORRUPTION

Corruption and laziness were common among government officials in both city and country areas. Jiang admitted:

I have observed that many of the staff members do not seem to know what they are supposed to do while others do not know how to work at all. That is why our organisation becomes worse and worse. I have often observed that many staff members just sit at their desks and gaze into space, others read newspapers and still others sleep.⁴⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

By the 1930s, industrial advances had made mechanised farming an option, but most landlord farmers preferred to use human labour rather than machinery or even draft animals. It was cheaper to use the surplus of poor labourers than pay for the fuel and maintenance costs of a tractor or to buy the food for a donkey. Moreover, a donkey had to be cared for and given shelter all year round—whereas a man could be dismissed when he was no longer required.

In the years 1931–1937, the Control Yuan (or anti-corruption bureau) received 69,500 reports about infringements and poor efforts by GMD officials. Only 268 of the reported officials were found to be at fault, while only thirteen were sacked.⁵⁰

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When was Jiang Jieshi inaugurated as president? What was significant about this date?
- 2 Briefly outline the ways in which the Guomindang (GMD) party and the Nationalist government were linked.
- 3 What role did the various 'cliques' within the Nationalist state serve for Jiang?
- 4 Briefly explain how each of the following demonstrated progress during the Nanjing Decade:
 - transport infrastructure
 - finance and banking
 - construction
 - international recognition
 - culture.
- 5 Briefly explain how each of the following proved a challenge for the Nationalist government:
 - regionalism
 - finance
 - factions
 - taxes
 - corruption
 - rural poverty.

THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT KEY MOVEMENT

Jiang Jieshi: 'Stated simply, the New Life Movement is to thoroughly militarise the lives of the citizens of the entire nation so that they can cultivate courage and swiftness, the endurance of suffering and a tolerance for hard work, and especially the habit and ability of unified action, so that they will at any time sacrifice for the nation.'

Jiang tried to fight corruption and improve the character of the Chinese people through a series of campaigns to improve behaviour. On 19 February 1934, the **New Life Movement** was launched as an attempt to bring about national moral rejuvenation through discipline and traditional values.

Jiang Jieshi was strongly influenced by Confucian thought. He hoped that the Chinese would re-embrace the virtues of:

- social decency (*li*)
- right conduct (*yi*)
- honesty (*lian*)
- self-respect (*qi*).

The social **Puritanism** of Soong Meiling's Christianity was also an influence. Or, as a joke from this time put it: 'There's Methodism in this madness!'

While the Confucianism of Jiang's approach might seem outdated, historian Rana Mitter sees the New Life Movement as being driven by modernisation; it aimed to 'create a citizenry that was self-aware, politically conscious, and committed to the nation'.⁵¹ It was meant to give China a sense of moral purpose and an alternative to communism. Soong Meiling described it as 'a direct attempt to compete with the Chinese platform of economic and social reform, substituting a retreat to Confucius for an advance to Marx'.⁵²

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang Jieshi told his officials to treat ordinary people like three-year-olds and to demand the respect that a child gives his or her father.

New Life Movement a Guomindang campaign launched in 1934 to instill virtuousness and correct behaviour. Influenced by Confucian, Christian and fascist ideals

Puritanism a Christian tradition based on ideals of moral purity and frugal living. Methodist Christianity was influenced by Puritan ideals

CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

Source 3.16 (left) 'If You Have Nothing to Do, You Should Find Something to Do', New Life Movement poster.

Source 3.17 (right) 'A Residence Should Be Tidy', New Life Movement poster.



The New Life Movement resulted in a series of campaigns that encouraged the Chinese people to be more virtuous in their everyday lives. There were ninety-six 'rules' that detailed a wide range of ideal behaviours and things to avoid, along with an emphasis on personal hygiene and healthy living. Jiang explained this as a case of starting with small, commonplace actions as an individual contribution to the greater goals of building the nation: 'If we are to have a new life ... then we must start by not spitting heedlessly. If we are to restore the nation and gain revenge for our humiliations, then we need not talk about guns and cannon, but must first talk about washing our faces in cold water.'⁵³ The New Life 'rules' were very specific and seem quite petty.⁵⁴ (Just a few are listed below.)

However, the New Life Movement achieved very little—other than intruding into people's personal lives. Young thugs loyal to the Nationalist regime handed out beatings and intimidated those who ignored the ninety-six rules. It remained an urban movement, with little impact on the peasantry. Calls to live frugally made no sense to people who in many cases spent their lives in wretched poverty. As W.H. Donald—an Australian adviser to a number of key figures in the Nationalist government—told Jiang: 'The rickshaw man and the wharf coolie are worse off than the horse and camel in many another land'.⁵⁵

Confucian influences saw the movement discourage women from embracing feminist ideals, or as one New Life instructor explained it, a woman's role was to 'regulate the household'. Officials in Jiangxi even detailed down to specific measurements the length of hem lines for women's dresses.

The hypocrisy of the movement was also shown by the Nationalist leadership. Meiling was a heavy smoker in private, while other leading figures maintained very comfortable and flamboyant lifestyles. One of the greatest ironies was Shanghai's Opium Suppression Bureau—which was directed by the Green Gang boss Big Ears Du Yuesheng. Du helped to finance the government with the profits he made from selling opium!

EXAMPLES OF NEW LIFE 'RULES'

» Clothing should be tidy and clean	» Be punctual for appointments	» Say good morning to others every morning	» Reduce the number of meaningless parties or gatherings	» Keep windows open as much as possible
» Hats should be worn straight	» Do not scold, swear at, or hit others	» Do not smoke opium	» Go to bed early and rise early	» Exterminate mosquitoes
» Sit upright	» Do not laugh or talk loudly on boats or in buses	» Salute the national flag when it is raised and brought down	» Keep your face clean	» Exterminate rats
» Bowls and chopsticks should be set correctly	» Keep to the left when walking on the street	» Be filial to your parents and love your brothers and sisters	» Breathe fresh air	» Do not spit on the ground
» Do not write on walls	» Stay in line at the station when buying tickets	» Do not wear your hat indoors	» Comb your hair	» Do not urinate as you please
» Furniture should be simple	» Do not gamble or visit prostitutes		» Do not eat snacks	» Do not throw fruit peels in the street
» Do not laugh when others have funerals			» Do not get drunk	» Get vaccinated
			» Do not smoke	» Everyone should keep himself clean all the time.
			» Exterminate flies	

JIANG AND FASCISM

Historian Frederick Wakeman describes Jiang's ideology as 'Confucian Fascism'.⁵⁶ By the mid-1930s, Jiang saw himself as the very embodiment of his nation. He was inspired by the authoritarian **right-wing** regimes of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, and identified with their notion of the 'Great Leader'. It fitted well with his Confucian notion of filial devotion to an all-powerful leader.

By 1935, Jiang was openly saying: 'Can **fascism** save China? We answer: yes. Fascism is now what China most needs.'⁵⁷ The Generalissimo saw fascism as 'a stimulant for a declining society', and 'a wonderful medicine exactly suited to China'.⁵⁸ Jiang even had his own fascist-like organisations to boost his leadership. In 1932, a secret brotherhood called the **Blue Shirts** was founded at the Huangpu Military Academy, clearly inspired by similar organisations, such as the Black Shirts in Fascist Italy and Brown Shirts in Nazi Germany.

The Blue Shirts swore an oath to advance Jiang's supreme leadership by any means—including violence. They infiltrated the military, police force, banks and bureaucracy. Although Jiang denied their existence, it is estimated that by 1935 there were 14,000 Blue Shirts. The Blue Shirts assassinated people who posed a threat to Jiang or who criticised the regime. Communists and Communist sympathisers were prime targets.

One of Jiang's closest associates, Dai Li (Tai Li), coordinated the Blue Shirt assassinations. Dai was the only man allowed to carry a pistol in the Generalissimo's presence. He also headed Jiang's secret police—the **Military Bureau of Statistics** (*Juntong*). Dai's agents:

- carried out surveillance
- arrested 'subversive elements'
- gathered intelligence
- executed suspected rebels.

Thousands of trade unionists, journalists, students and CCP supporters were rounded up by Dai's men.

The Nationalists claimed that 24,000 Communists and 155,525 left-wing sympathisers were arrested and 'reformed' between 1927 and 1937. Communist sources claim that during the same ten years, the GMD murdered some 300,000 people.⁵⁹ The CC Clique had its own secret intelligence agency, which paralleled Dai Li's *Juntong*.

Despite the Nationalist government's attempts at modernisation and social progress, historian Jack Gray points out that it 'nevertheless presented an ugly face to the world'.⁶⁰ In describing life under Jiang's rule, Australian historian C.P. Fitzgerald argues that, 'the Chinese people groaned under a regime Fascist in every quality except efficiency'.⁶¹



DID YOU KNOW?

Wherever possible, Dai Li employed men from his home district. Their obscure dialect provided a 'code' they could use to discuss secret matters. His real name was Dai Chunfeng. He changed his name to Dai Li (which in Chinese means 'an assassin's hood') when he began working with Jiang Jieshi at the Huangpu Military Academy. In his youth, Li had been a member of the Green Gang and was a close associate of Big Ears Du.

➡ **Source 3.18** Jiang Jieshi addresses the Chinese people. ➡ (far left) Dai Li.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When was the New Life Movement launched?
- 2 What were the major influences on the New Life Movement? What was its intention?
- 3 List five of the ninety-six New Life 'rules' for behaviour. Describe their areas of attention.
- 4 Briefly explain the impact of the New Life Movement.
- 5 Who was Dai Li? What organisations was he associated with?
- 6 What elements of fascism did Jiang Jieshi see as valuable?

right-wing conservative or reactionary; embracing individualism, capitalism and a limited role for government

fascism extreme right-wing ideology based on centralised authoritarian rule, militarism, adherence to nationalistic values and suppression of opponents

Blue Shirts a secret organisation whose members swore loyalty to Jiang Jieshi and carried out assassinations to advance his cause

Military Bureau of Statistics political police force that uncovered and arrested opposition and critics of Jiang's regime

JIANG JIESHI, 1887–1975

Jiang Jieshi: 'We write our own destiny, we become what we do.'



↑ Jiang Jieshi..

Jiang Jieshi was one of the most significant Chinese politicians and military leaders of the twentieth century. After the death of Sun Yixian, Jiang emerged as the leader of the GMD, and he headed the Republic of China from 1928 to 1949.

Early life

Jiang Jieshi—whose name is pronounced Chiang Kai-shek in the Cantonese dialect—came from a merchant family in Zhejiang. His father died when he was nine years old, leaving his mother to struggle in raising six children. Jiang later recalled that his mother was a model of Confucian virtue.

Early on, Jiang decided on a military career. He attended the Baoding Military School, which trained officers for the New Army—and which also served as a model for Jiang's own Huangpu Academy. Jiang moved to Japan to further his military training. During his time in Japan, he was introduced to and joined the Tongmenghui and served briefly in the Japanese Imperial Army. Hearing news of the Double Tenth Uprising, Jiang hurried back to China and joined the republican revolution.

During the reign of Yuan Shikai, Jiang resumed his studies in Japan, returning briefly during the 'Second Revolution'. Jiang became a committed follower of Sun Yixian during his Japanese exile. Details of Jiang's life 1915–1921 are somewhat murky. During these years he made connections with the Green Gang, the Chen brothers (his life-long friends and supporters), and figures in the Shanghai business world. By his own admission, Jiang was quite a 'playboy' in these years—he gambled large sums of money, took drugs and was a regular visitor to brothels.

Rise to power

Jiang Jieshi became close to Sun Yixian during the days of the Guangzhou government, and acted as Sun's security and military adviser. Once Sun had negotiated the First United Front, Jiang was sent to the Soviet Union for further military training. In the Soviet Union, he observed the work of the Cheka—the Bolsheviks' feared secret police—and spoke with Trotsky about the Soviet Red Army.

In 1924 Jiang was appointed head of the Nationalists' Huangpu Military Academy. After Sun's death, he led the Northern Expedition to unite China under Nationalist rule and, with the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, brought the United Front with the CCP to a bloody end. Jiang used his ties to the powerful Shanghai business world—and its organised criminal syndicates—to his advantage during this time. He consolidated his leadership of the GMD by outmanoeuvring rival factions, and by 1928 he was recognised as China's ruler—a position he held for the next twenty years.

Jiang was married three times. His first union was an arranged marriage that he did not like. He then married Chen Jieru and, later, Soong Meiling. His marriage to Soong brought him considerable 'connections' and political advantages.

Nationalist China

Like Mao Zedong, Jiang has a mixed legacy. When his government came to power, he initiated significant modernisation and social programs. These programs made some progress—but also had mixed results:

- The Nationalist government was plagued with corruption and mismanagement.
- Jiang tended towards authoritarian rule, and grew more authoritarian when faced by increasing difficulties.
- Jiang faced opposition from the Communists—who he ruthlessly suppressed—and breakaway movements by provincial military leaders.

However, Nationalist China's greatest challenge came in 1937 with the Second Sino-Japanese War. This dealt a huge blow to the Republic of China—and forced the government to retreat inland, away from its support base and coastal economic centres.

Jiang tried to maintain the bearing of a Confucian scholar, but he had a short temper and was stubborn. He often meddled needlessly in his government's bureaucratic processes and military decisions. His moodiness caused friction with his leading American adviser during the war with Japan.

Despite this, Jiang was recognised as one of the leading Allies in World War II. After the war, Jiang's forces fell into a bitter civil war with the Chinese Communists, which they ultimately lost. In 1949, Jiang fled China for Taiwan, where he ruled until his death. Historian Lloyd Eastman offers an outline of Jiang's varied contributions to modern China: 'Some Chinese revered him as a flawless national leader; others reviled him as a feudalistic militarist. Some foreigners lauded him as a Christian defender of democracy; others denounced him as an outmoded Confucian and ruthless dictator.'⁶² In many ways, Jiang Jieshi was all these things. His leadership was marked by different elements; both successes and failures.

KEY POINTS

- Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) was a loyal and dedicated follower of Sun Yixian.
- He became Sun's leading military adviser and headed the Guomindang Huangpu Military Academy.
- He led the Northern Expedition to end the Warlord era and unite China.
- He emerged as the leader of Nationalist China and ruled China from 1928–1949.
- An unwavering adversary of the Chinese Communist Party, Jiang did his best to rid China of the CCP (e.g. Shanghai Massacre, Encirclement Campaigns, Chinese Civil War).
- He introduced a range of economic and social reforms, with mixed results.
- Jiang was inclined toward authoritarian rule and expressed his admiration for fascism.
- He fled to Taiwan after the Civil War, where he re-established the Republic of China in exile.

ACTIVITY

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the actions of Jiang Jieshi's government during the Nationalist Decade contributed to the development of the revolution in China.
- Discuss Jiang Jieshi's role as a revolutionary leader in the Warlord period and the Nanjing Decade.
- Explain the challenges faced by the GMD once they became the ruling power in China.
- How did the New Life Movement mobilise Chinese society in support of the Nationalist state?

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Jiang Jieshi, *Why Is a New Life Needed?* (extract from speech given in September 1934 in support of the New Life Movement)

The general psychology of our people today can be described as spiritless. What manifests itself in this behaviour is this: lack of discrimination between good and evil, between what is public and what is private, and between what is primary and what is secondary. Because there is no discrimination between good and evil, right and wrong are confused; because there is no discrimination between public and private, improper taking and giving [of public funds] occur; and because there is no distinction between primary and secondary, first and last are not placed in the proper order. As a result, officials tend to be dishonest and avaricious [greedy], the masses are undisciplined and calloused, youth become degraded and intemperate, adults are corrupt and ignorant, the rich become extravagant and luxurious, and the poor become mean and disorderly. Naturally it has resulted in disorganization of the social order and national life, and we are in no position either to prevent or to remedy natural calamities, disasters caused from within, or invasions from without. The individual, society, and the whole country are now suffering ... In order to develop the life of our nation, protect the existence of our society, and improve the livelihood of our people, it is absolutely necessary to wipe out these unwholesome conditions and to start to lead a new and rational life.

 **Source 3.19** Jiang Jieshi, 'Why Is a New Life Needed?', (speech, 1934), in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 341–344.

Historian Immanuel Hsü on the successes and limitations of the Nationalist government

On balance, at the end of its first decade the Nationalist government appeared stronger than it really was. On the surface, it looked as though it were forging a new order out of chaos—having pacified or reached working arrangements with the new warlords and the dissident politicians, quarantined the Communists in the Northwest ... carried out some modernization programs ... A superficial observer might readily say that a new China was emerging on the horizon. Yet beneath the veneer of progress lay fundamental problems of social and economic injustices and the chronic ill of deficit spending. Of the three goals it set out to achieve in 1928—nationalistic revolution, democratic reconstruction, and social reform—the government by 1937 had made considerable progress toward the first, modest advance toward the second, but failed miserably in the third ... The decade under review may be summed up in a neat Chinese expression ... the government was 'strong on the outside but weak inside'.

 **Source 3.20** Immanuel Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 573.

Using Sources 3.19 and 3.20 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the intentions and results of the New Life campaign as a popular movement.
- 2 Explain the progress and successes that emerged during the Nanjing Decade.
- 3 Evaluate the problems and limitations of the Guomindang government as a contribution to the Chinese Revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- In 1926–1927, Jiang Jieshi commanded the Northern Expedition that ended the rule of warlords and united China under a Nationalist government.
- The 1927 Shanghai Massacre and White Terror decimated the CCP and forced them to retreat to rural bases. The Comintern continued to insist on urban insurrections, which were unsuccessful.
- By 1928, Jiang was the recognised leader of the Guomindang (GMD) and Nationalist government. He outsmarted his rivals, removed opponents and secured a number of positions as the basis of his authority. He strengthened his position by relying on loyal 'cliques' and furthering his connections to China's social elite through his marriage to Soong Meiling.
- Mao and other CCP survivors regrouped by establishing bases called soviets in remote rural areas. Working with military commander Zhu De, Mao developed effective strategies for guerilla warfare and rural administration at Jinggangshan and later Ruijin (Jiangxi Soviet).
- From 1928, the Nanjing Decade saw the development of government structures, transport, urban services and financial reform, as well as international recognition. However, the Nationalist government also faced challenges, such as excessive taxation and inflation, corruption, internal division and regionalism.
- As more challenges emerged, Jiang Jieshi became used to ruling in an authoritarian manner. By the mid-1930s, he was expressing his admiration for fascist-style government.
- The New Life Movement aimed to improve social conduct, patriotic feeling and self-discipline among ordinary people. Confucian ideals were a major influence on its values. However, the movement made little progress apart from harassment.

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

In the 1930s and 40s, under the influence of publishing magnate Henry Luce, *Time* magazine ran a number of special editions on Jiang Jieshi and his government. Jiang and Soong Meiling featured on the cover of a number of editions. Luce was a friend of the Jiangs, so the articles and interviews tended to be quite favourable. Working in small groups or as a class, create your own brief *Time* magazine-style feature on Jiang and his Nationalist government. Try to highlight the successes, limitations/challenges and key personalities of the Nanjing Decade. Look at a current edition of *Time* for ideas on layout and features. Consider including advertisements that reflect the period.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'The Chinese people groaned under a regime fascist in every quality except efficiency.' To what extent did China make political, social and economic progress during the Nanjing Decade?



THE LONG MARCH

(1933–1936)

‘We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history, that is, it is a manifesto, an agitation corps and a seeding machine ... To sum up, the Long March ended with our victory, and the enemy’s defeat.’

—Mao Zedong

Despite the many challenges facing the GMD, Jiang Jieshi remained determined to destroy the Communists. From 1930, the Nationalist military waged a series of campaigns against the CCP bases in the countryside. The first four of these campaigns ended in failure. The fifth campaign was different: significant manpower, weaponry and advanced tactics essentially gripped the Jiangxi Soviet in a stranglehold.

The CCP had little choice but to abandon their base and run for their lives. So began the Communists’ epic Long March. Most had little idea of the nightmare they were about to endure. The Long March was a harrowing experience that few survived. Exhaustion, sickness, cold, hunger, vast distances, inhospitable landscapes, hostile tribal people and attacks by Nationalist troops decimated the Long Marchers. Those who did survive became legends. The veterans of the Long March proved they were an indestructible force guided by a daring and dynamic leader.

Mao Zedong’s bid for power began on the Long March. His strategies of guerilla warfare brought the Red Army back from disaster. Mao’s decision to lead the marchers through the wilderness to a new home in the remote north of China was questioned by some comrades. The new base at Yan’an (Yenan) was by no means a land of plenty, but it did allow the Communists to establish a movement that would conquer China. The fearless and heroic ideals forged on the Long March played a significant part in this revolutionary tradition.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why did Jiang Jieshi’s Fifth Encirclement against the Jiangxi Soviet succeed when four previous campaigns had not?
- What was the initial size of the Long March, and what were its tactics and intentions?
- How did the Battle of Xiang River impact on the nature of the march?
- Why was the Zunyi Conference a critical turning point in the Long March?
- What changes in leadership and strategies emerged after Zunyi?
- Why is the Battle of Luding Bridge commemorated for its heroism by the CCP? Why do some historians claim that key details of the battle are exaggerated?
- What difficulties were faced by the Long Marchers as they crossed the Great Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands?
- What is the significance of the Long March as a feat of endurance and survival, a symbolic narrative, and the basis of a revolutionary tradition that was further developed at Yan’an?

CHAPTER 4



Source 4.01 Chairman Mao and the Red Army crossing the Great Snowy Mountains.

A FORCED RETREAT

Mao Zedong: 'The withdrawal from the Soviet became a flight of panic and a sort of house-removal operation.'

KEY EVENTS

- 6 October 1933**
Fifth Encirclement Campaign launched
- 16 October 1934**
Long March begins
- 25 November–3 December 1934**
Battle of Xiang River
- 6–8 January 1935**
Zunyi Conference. Mao's authority increases
- 30 May 1935**
Luding Bridge captured by Red Army
- July–August 1935**
Crossing of the Great Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands
- 22 October 1935**
Long March ends
- 12–25 December 1936**
Yan'an Soviet established

positional warfare military fighting carried out in a regular manner along established positions

↓ General von Seeckt.



ENCIRCLEMENT CAMPAIGNS

Throughout the Nanjing Decade, Jiang was determined to rid China of the Communists. He maintained his commitment to destroy the CCP even while Japan increasingly menaced China's territorial sovereignty from 1931. According to Jiang Jieshi: 'The Japanese are a disease of the skin: they can be cured. The Communists are a disease of the soul: it affects the whole body.'¹

Jiang believed that although the Japanese threat was urgent, it would be short-lived. By contrast, the destabilising influence of the Communists would plague the Nationalist government for a long time to come. Because of this, national unity had to take precedence over foreign affairs, as external threats could not be addressed by a divided nation.

Beginning in December 1930, several Bandit Extermination and Encirclement campaigns were launched against CCP strongholds in the countryside. Yet the Zhu–Mao Army at Jiangxi was an elusive enemy, as guerrilla warfare allowed the 30,000 men of the Red Army to repel better equipped and much larger Nationalist forces on several occasions.

The first campaign in December 1930 involved 100,000 Nationalist troops; the second, in March 1931, involved 200,000 troops; and the third, in July 1931, involved 300,000 troops. After Bo Gu arrived at Ruijin and Zhou assumed the position of chief military commissar, the CCP adopted a policy of holding Soviet territory through **positional warfare**—their aim was to 'halt the enemy at the gates'.²

Communist military commanders were being advised by Otto Braun, a German Comintern operative, who was also known as Li De (Li Te). Braun could not speak Chinese, but he had considerable influence. At this stage, policy was largely determined by a 'three-man group' of Bo, Zhou and Braun. Their 'halt the enemy at the gates' approach was effective in resisting Jiang's fourth extermination campaign, but the fifth campaign, which began in October 1933, would be very different.

Meanwhile, Jiang had also acquired a German adviser. Following an appeal for help from Jiang, the Nazi government sent General Hans von Seeckt to assist the Nationalist government. Von Seeckt adopted new tactics.

Rather than sending Nationalist troops into Communist territory on find-and-destroy missions, von Seeckt ordered them to construct small concrete forts (called blockhouses) that were linked by roads and barbed wire. These forts would encircle Soviet bases and offer cover while more blockhouses were built. Von Seeckt had essentially devised a concrete and steel 'noose' that could be gradually tightened around the enemy. Over 1 million men, including some of Jiang's elite units, were brought in for the purpose. Two hundred aircraft provided support and reconnaissance. The ring of forts deprived Communist-held territories of trade and made guerrilla warfare difficult.

As the Nationalist forces advanced, von Seeckt encouraged a scorched-earth policy—which meant destroying farmland that could support the CCP and Red Army. As a result, some mountain communities were hit by famines and many villages were devastated.³

DID YOU KNOW?

Communist soldiers referred to von Seeckt's blockhouses as 'turtle shells'. In Chinese, this had rude connotations.

COMMUNIST LOSSES

Thousands of CCP soldiers were killed. At the battle of Guangchang on 11–16 April 1934, over 4000 men were killed and 20,000 wounded. It was the worst defeat inflicted on the Communists in many years. General Peng Dehuai, whose men bore the brunt of the assault, was furious. He yelled at Braun: 'You dogmatists are tactical experts only on maps and paper. Your plan has produced heavy casualties. Do you feel no guilt in your conscience? Do you feel no pain in your heart?'⁴

However, Braun's strategy was not altered, and the losses of men and land increased. By September, sixty of the seventy Soviet-controlled counties had fallen. It left the Communist leadership with a stark choice: run, or stay and die. The CCP decided to abandon Ruijin and move their base to Hunan, 550 kilometres to the west, where He Long had established a soviet. With great secrecy the Red forces at Jiangxi prepared to leave and join He's base. This destination, though, was not certain.

Mao was excluded from the discussions. The decision to leave was made by Zhu De, Otto Braun, Zhou Enlai and Bo Gu (a leading member of the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks). Zhou took the lead in coordinating the withdrawal strategy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Communist accounts of the Long March typically blame Otto Braun for the failure to fend off the Fifth Encirclement Campaign. In 2001, a Chinese television drama showed Braun shouting, ignoring advice and banging tables. However, recent studies have recognised that Communist guerrilla warfare tactics were no longer effective by the time of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign.

THE MARCH BEGINS

Leaving a small force behind to defend the Jiangxi Soviet, over 80,000 soldiers and 20,000 CCP support staff prepared to leave. Only thirty-five women were allowed to go—all of them wives of leading Communists.

Only the party leaders knew the immediate aim of moving to Hunan. And although the leaders spoke of a 'big house-moving operation', common soldiers believed they were heading off on a march that might take a few weeks to complete. Instead, from 16 October 1934, the Communists embarked on an epic trek that would become known as the *Long March*.

Around 28,000 members of the community and Red Army were left behind in Jiangxi, many because they were too young, too old, too ill, or because they were wounded. Those remaining were told to do their best in guerilla fighting and try to preserve the CCP influence in the surrounding countryside. Many of the remaining Communists suffered greatly once Nationalist troops captured Ruijin. One of those left behind was former CCP general-secretary Qu Qiubai, who was captured and executed by the Nationalists in 1935. Mao's younger brother, Mao Zetan, was also killed.

Long March the year-long 12,000 km journey made by the Chinese Communists when they fled their Jiangxi Soviet in October 1934

A NATION ON THE MOVE

The first stage of the journey was relatively easy. Historians Chang and Halliday argue that Jiang allowed the Reds to escape. This was allegedly done under pressure from Stalin (because Jiang's son was studying in Moscow), and had the added advantage of allowing troops to be deployed in regions where Nationalists had limited control.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao's wife, He Zhizhen, was heavily pregnant when she set out on the Long March. She had to give away her baby girl to a peasant and never saw her again.

However, there is significant evidence to dispute the view that the Communists were 'allowed' to escape. The process of breaking out of the encirclement was aided by secret agreements between the Communists and southern warlord generals, such as Chen Jitang (Ch'en Chi-t'ang), who ruled over Guangdong to the west of Jiangxi. Chen allowed the Communists safe passage through his territory so that Jiang would *not* send in his troops. The Reds were also able to intercept Nationalist radio communications, which helped them to avoid reconnaissance patrols.

Jiang did not even know the Communists had left Jiangxi for some weeks, but he did not remain ignorant for long. The Communists were a nation on the move: their marching columns were up to eighty kilometres long, weighed down by tonnes of equipment, including printing presses, sewing machines, typewriters, the entire Ruijin library, boxes of government files and an X-ray machine (which was so heavy it needed twenty men to carry it!). One Red general said the columns were like an emperor's sedan chair.⁵ The average marcher covered only three kilometres on the first day of the trek. Many were soon exhausted by the policy of round-the-clock marching, in a gruelling cycle of four hours walking, followed by four hours rest.

Source 4.02





ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Jiang was determined to destroy the CCP. 'The Japanese are a disease of the skin: they can be cured. The Communists are a disease of the soul: it affects the whole body.' Put simply, what did Jiang mean by this?
- 2 How many troops were deployed in Jiang's three initial Bandit Extermination and Encirclement Campaigns?
 - December 1930: _____
 - March 1931: _____
 - July 1931: _____
- 3 The key strategy of guerrilla warfare that proved successful against these Extermination Campaigns was 'Lure the _____ in _____'. Copy and complete this sentence, then briefly explain how this tactic was applied.
- 4 Under the leadership of Bo Gu and Wang Ming, and the advice of Otto Braun, the Red Army adopted what style of warfare?
- 5 The key objective of these tactics was to: 'Halt the _____ at the _____'.
- 6 How did the Fifth Encirclement Campaign differ from previous campaigns?
- 7 How many Communists set out on the Long March? How many of the marchers were women?
- 8 True or False: Mao was involved in the key planning regarding the decisions to abandon the Jiangxi Soviet.
- 9 When did the Long March begin?
- 10 Briefly describe the progress of the Long March in its early days.

BATTLES, MEETINGS AND MAO

Edgar Snow: 'It was one long battle from beginning to end.'

THE BATTLE OF XIANG RIVER

As the Communists moved into Guangxi province, Jiang ordered an offensive to halt them at Xiang River. A pitched battle from 25 November to 3 December 1934 almost ended the Long March.

The Communists made it through, but suffered horrendous losses—especially among non-combatants. The river ran red with blood and bodies piled up on its banks. Many deserted, and only 30,000 people were left to continue the journey.⁶ From this point on, 'It was one long battle from beginning to end'.⁷ Air attacks and artillery bombardment continued to inflict casualties.

After Xiang River, the commanders of the Red Army grew increasingly angry. As they marched, Mao told some of his opinions to his comrades, and fanned the flames of discontent. In Tongdao on 12 December 1934, Mao made his concerns known to the rest of the leadership. Mao said the march was hampered by taking a predictable route and carrying too much equipment. Following the directions of 'Head On, Straight On' Li De (Braun) had allowed Jiang to guess correctly that the Red Army was heading toward He Long's Hunan Soviet, and set an ambush at Xiang River to block their way.⁸

At Mao's urging, but with no clear direction, the Jiangxi exiles headed south-west into Guizhou province, where provincial troops were said to have little fighting spirit. The marchers tossed aside the remaining heavy baggage as they moved as quickly as possible to avoid being detected by Nationalists.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Long March, many Communist leaders were carried in stretchers (or 'litters'), either because they were wounded or because they had been up all night talking strategy. Wang Jiaxiang, a wounded Politburo member, was impressed with the 'litter talks' he had with Mao as they were both carried along, and the talks convinced him that the March was being poorly led.



↑ Site of the Zunyi Conference.

DID YOU KNOW?

To capture the city of Zunyi, Red soldiers dressed in Nationalist uniforms, approached the gate singing GMD songs and asked to be let in. They then seized the entrance while the rest of the Red Army poured in.

DID YOU KNOW?

The following slogan was issued to the Red Army on 16 February 1935:

We must be prepared to walk on highways and also on small roads.

We must be prepared to travel on a straight line or on a zig-zag course.

We must not damage property because we may come that way again.

THE ZUNYI CONFERENCE TURNING POINT

On 7 January 1935, the Reds captured the city of Zunyi, and then called twelve days rest so the party leadership could meet to take stock. The Zunyi Conference of 15–17 January was a significant turning point. In a bid for leadership, Mao strongly criticised Bo Gu and Otto Braun for their handling of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign and the first stages of the march. Bo tried to blame the ‘objective conditions’ of Nationalist troop supremacy, but received little support. Mao, backed by two members of the Politburo, Luo Fu (Lo Fu) and Wang Jiaxiang (Wang Chia-hsiang), replied that the problem was tactics, not numbers.⁹ Braun later described Mao, Luo and Wang as the ‘Central Triad of the faction which waged a subversive struggle to take over the Party and Army leadership’.¹⁰ Generals Peng Dehuai, Zhu De and Liu Bocheng (Liu Po-ch’eng) added powerful voices to the chorus of discontent. They trusted Mao’s credentials as a guerrilla strategist and military commissar. Zhou Enlai, sensing change, threw in his lot with Mao, saying: ‘He had been right all the time and we should listen to him’.¹¹

MAO TAKES CHARGE

The only formal changes made at Zunyi were putting Mao in the role of chief adviser to Zhou and promoting him to the Politburo Standing Committee.¹² Yet the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks would no longer command the party. Braun, now out of contact with Moscow, was also sidelined. Although Mao’s authority was far from absolute, he was in a powerful position. A military commission made up of Mao, Zhou and Wang now took control of the march. Mao’s authority and influence was considerable, especially as the primary focus of the March was military.

Mao introduced a number of changes:

- Rank-and-file commissars boosted their efforts to keep up morale.
- Troops were given explanations of their movements.
- Catchy slogans were used to reinforce the tactics and rules of the Red Army.¹³

Mao coined the slogan ‘March North to Fight the Japanese’ to give an upbeat, patriotic spin to what had been (and still technically was) a forced retreat. Tactically, traditional strategies were abandoned and the Zhu–Mao Army assumed its old guerrilla ways and even its old name—the First Front Army.

Some victories finally came their way. At the Battle of Loushan Pass, two GMD divisions were soundly defeated, and 3000 prisoners captured. By Mao’s own admission, the next few months were his proudest military achievement. Historian Philip Short describes how ‘Mao engaged in a dazzling, pyrotechnic display of mobile warfare, criss-crossing Guizhou and Yunnan, that left pursuing armies bemused, confounded Chiang Kai-shek’s [Jiang Jieshi’s] planners and perplexed even many of his own commanders’.¹⁴

As they passed through towns and villages, large meetings were held to explain the nature of the ‘people’s army’. Those who could no longer march because they were wounded or sick were left in the care of friendly villagers, and given money and arms in the hope they might start up guerrilla bands once they recovered. The rules of discipline were repeated again and again. The conduct of the Red soldiers as they moved through the southern provinces was an important propaganda initiative. Historian Edgar Snow claimed that the Long March was ‘the biggest armed propaganda tour in history ... millions of peasants have now seen the Red army and heard it speak, and are no longer afraid of it’.¹⁵

However, the Red Army was not kind to all:

- young men were sometimes ‘recruited’ by force
- landlords and merchants had their property stolen (it was then given out to the poor or taken as supplies for the march)
- sometimes whole towns were sacked, left deserted and in ruin.¹⁶

Many young people joined the Red Army because of poverty. When asked why they wanted to join up, many replied: ‘I have nothing to eat’.¹⁷

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How many Communists survived the Battle of Xiang River?
- 2 Why did Mao critically describe Otto Braun’s tactics as ‘straight on, head on’?
- 3 When was the Zunyi Conference held?
- 4 Briefly describe the significant changes in CCP leadership that emerged from the Zunyi Conference.
- 5 What did Zhou Enlai say about Mao at the Zunyi Conference?
- 6 Briefly describe the changes in tactics and strategy that developed following the Zunyi Conference. Try to note three or more changes.
- 7 Read Philip Short’s description again (page 100), then look carefully at a map of the Long March (Source 4.02) and note the route taken by the marchers after Zunyi. As you read more about the March, continue to follow its route on the map. Highlight key locations.
- 8 What slogan did Mao devise to explain the direction and purpose of the March?
- 9 True or false: The Red Army was victorious at the Battle of Loushan Pass.
- 10 Explain what Edgar Snow meant when he described the Long March as an ‘armed propaganda tour’.

 **Source 4.03** Mao Zedong with Zhou Enlai during the Long March in the north of Shaanxi, c. 1935.

KEY SOURCE



ZHOU ENLAI, 1898–1976



↑ Zhou Enlai.

Xi'an Incident the dramatic arrest of Jiang Jieshi by Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang in December 1936, resulting in the Second United Front between the GMD and CCP (against the Japanese)

DID YOU KNOW?
Local tour guides in China often praise Zhou Enlai as 'very handsome' with classic good looks and a charming manner. He was also an excellent dancer.

Zhou Enlai: 'Study diligently, grasp essentials, concentrate on one subject rather than seeking a superficial knowledge of many. On the basis of principles, resolutely combat all incorrect ideology in others as well as myself. Insofar as possible, make the most of my strengths and take concrete steps to overcome my weaknesses.'

Early life

Zhou Enlai came from a wealthy family of scholar-officials, and excelled in his academic studies. He was a radical student during the May Fourth Movement, and in 1920 he travelled to France to take part in a student–worker exchange. He established a European branch of the CCP in 1922.

Revolutionary

On his return to China, Zhou became political commissar at the Huangpu Military Academy and a Communist labour organiser. In April 1927, he led the general strike that enabled the Nationalists to seize Shanghai with barely a struggle, then later just managed to escape the Shanghai Massacre. Zhou was a member of the Politburo from 1927, and initially backed the Comintern-endorsed CCP leaders such as Wang Ming and Bo Gu. He was one of the leaders of the Nanchang Uprising and, after October 1932, chief political commissar of the Red Army.

Zhou sided with Mao at the Zunyi Conference during the Long March, and played an important role during talks with the Nationalists in the Yan'an period. His influence and negotiating skills were critical during the ***Xi'an Incident***, the Second United Front and peace talks following the end of the war with Japan.

Premier

After 1949, Zhou was Premier of the People's Republic—he headed the government and its ministries in a role comparable to being prime minister. He played a big role in foreign affairs and was known for his keen political antennae, polite manner and willingness to work hard—attributes that enabled him to survive the tumultuous campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s.

Many credit Zhou with moderating Mao's more radical inclinations. However, Zhou actually went along with all of Mao's major campaigns. During the early 1970s, Zhou, assisted by his vice-premier Deng Xiaoping, began to implement his 'Four Modernisations' reforms, which would bring progress and economic stability to China. He was central in the negotiations that led to the normalisation of diplomatic relations between China and the USA, culminating in the historic 1972 visit to China by US President Richard Nixon. Stricken with cancer, Zhou died in 1976, just a few months before Mao. His death was met by a massive public outpouring of grief.

THE BATTLE OF LUDING BRIDGE

TURNING POINT

General Liu Bocheng: 'We've given plenty of blood and energy to get you, Luding Bridge, but we've got you! We've won out!'

Eventually Mao's First Front Army decided upon a new destination; they would make a huge loop through Yunnan and ultimately head north. The plan was to head to Sichuan to meet up with the Fourth Front Army under Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-t'ao), whose force had established a new base after fleeing the E-Yu-Wan Soviet in 1932.

However, the Reds encountered a new threat after they crossed the Golden Sands River and arrived in Lolo territory, home to the fierce Yi tribal people. The Yi could make the journey north very difficult. Luckily, General Liu Bocheng knew the region well and spoke the local dialect. Liu secured safe passage for the Communists. At one stage, Liu swore an oath of brotherhood with a Yi chieftain by drinking chicken blood. Some Yi warriors also joined the march.

YANG'S FORCED MARCH

North of the Lolo territory lay the raging, treacherous Dadu River. Nationalist troops were closing in on the Red Army, and they needed to find a suitable crossing point. Crossing by boats would take too long, so Mao made a fateful decision—the First Front Army would race to the Luding Bridge.

The Luding Bridge was a plank and chain-link construction that spanned steep cliffs. It had been the site of the last battle of the Taiping Rebellion, where a Taiping army had been slaughtered by the Qing after they failed to cross the bridge. A vanguard unit commanded by Yang Chengwu set off on a three-day march to take the bridge before Nationalist reinforcements arrived. Failure to take the bridge would spell their doom, just like the Taiping. As Yang's troops marched during the night, they could see the torches of their opponents marching on the opposite bank. At one point they covered 120 kilometres in twenty-four hours!

However, when Yang and his unit arrived at the bridge on 29 May 1935, they found it was defended by enemy troops from Sichuan province, who had torn up half the bridge planking—and left only the chains swaying in the breeze. Yang Chengwu recalled the battle to take the bridge:

Yang Chengwu, account of Luding Bridge battle

The attack began at four in the afternoon. The regimental commander and I directed it from the west end of the bridge. The buglers of the regiment gathered together to sound the charge, and we opened up with every weapon we had. The blare of the bugles, the firing and the shouts of the men reverberated through the valley. The 22 heroes, led by Commander Liao, crept across on the swaying bridge chains in the teeth of intense enemy fire. Each man carried a tommy-gun or a pistol, a broadsword and 12 hand-grenades. Behind them came the men of the Third Company, each carrying a plank in addition to full battle gear. They fought and laid planks at the same time.

Just as the assault party reached the bridgehead on the opposite side, huge flames sprang into the sky

outside the town's west gate. The enemy was trying to throw a fire barrier across our path. The blaze, reddening the sky, licked fiercely around the end of the bridge.

The outcome of the attack hung by a hair ... With the clarion call of the bugles, our assault party swiftly plunged into the flames. Commander Liao's cap caught fire. He threw it away and fought on. The others also dashed through the flames, closely behind Liao ... Our gallant men fought until all their bullets and grenades were spent ... the Third Company came charging to their rescue. Then regimental Commander Wang and I sped across the bridge with our reinforcements and entered the town ... The enemy's dream ended in smoke, for though we followed the same route as Shi Takai [the Taiping general killed by the Qing], history did not repeat itself. Ours was a people's army led by the Communist Party and Chairman Mao.

DID YOU KNOW?

Liu Bocheng was one of the CCP's top military commanders. He had lost his right eye in a battle and was therefore affectionately known as the One-eyed Dragon among his troops.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2002, two British journalists followed the trail of the Long March. Although they found some distances had been overstated, they were impressed by the stamina of Red soldiers. The journalists said the march to Luding was 'the equivalent of two marathons, back to back. At least half of that was on treacherous mountain paths; a third of that time they marched in the dark. You try it.'

 **Source 4.04** Yang Chengwu, 'Lightning Attack on Luding Bridge,' in Liu Bocheng, *Recalling the Long March* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), 98–100.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 4.04 and 4.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the challenges faced by the Red Army in crossing the Luding Bridge.
- 2 Explain why the CCP considered the Battle of Luding Bridge to be a turning point in the Long March.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of the Long March for the Chinese Communist Party. Use evidence to support your response.



 **Source 4.05** *Swiftly Taking Luding Bridge* by Lei Tan.

THE HEROES OF DADU

Four men fell to their deaths from the Luding Bridge, but the bridge was captured. The main body of the First Front Army arrived and crossed a few days later. According to historian Ross Terrill: ‘Spirit somehow triumphed over matter that afternoon at the Dadu’.¹⁸ The extraordinary feat of the twenty-two heroes of Dadu, ‘the most critical single incident of the Long March’, was first presented to Western readers in a similarly dramatic fashion by journalist Edgar Snow.¹⁹ Snow gave an influential (and somewhat idealised) account of the March:

Edgar Snow on the Long March

Adventure, exploration, discovery, human courage and cowardice, ecstasy and triumph, suffering, sacrifice, and loyalty, and then through it all, like a flame, this undimmed ardour and undying hope and amazing revolutionary optimism of those thousands of youths who would not admit defeat either by man or nature or god or death—all this and more are wrapped up in a history of an Odyssey unequalled in modern times.

Fellow journalist Agnes Smedley backed up Snow’s account after an interview with Zhu De at Yan’an in 1937.

DEBATES OVER LUDING BRIDGE

Many accounts given by survivors of the Long March were strongly influenced by the official Communist Party line, as were reports by Western journalists such as Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow. From their perspective, Luding Bridge proved the unconquerable revolutionary spirit of the Red Army. Chairman Mao was right: with the correct attitude, any obstacle could be conquered.

However, what actually occurred at Luding Bridge has been a point of debate, with the strongest doubters being Jung Chang and Jon Halliday:

 **Source 4.06** Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943), 189.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, discuss the following topics:

- Why was the Battle of Luding Bridge a critical point in the Long March?
- How and why has the battle been an event of historical dispute?
- Which account of the battle do you find most convincing? Why?

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday critique the Luding Bridge battle

This bridge is the centre of the Long March myth created by Mao, who fed it to the journalist Edgar Snow in 1936 ... This is complete invention. There was no battle at the Dadu Bridge. Most probably the legend was constructed because of the site itself: the chain bridge over the roiling river looked a good place for heroic deeds. There were no Nationalist troops at the bridge when the Reds arrived on 29 May ... The numerous Nationalist communications make no mention of any fighting on the bridge or in the town ... Chiang [Jiang] had left the passage open for the Reds.

← **Source 4.07** Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 158–159.

Eye-witnesses, one of whom Chang and Halliday use to support their view, offer contradictory accounts that can be used to support different viewpoints. Sun Shuyun interviewed Blacksmith Zhu, whose recollection differed from the ‘official’ version:

Blacksmith Zhu describes the Luding Bridge

Only a squadron was at the other end. It was a rainy day. Their weapons were old and could only fire a few metres. They were no match for the Red Army. When they saw the soldiers coming, they panicked and fled—their officers had long abandoned them. There wasn’t really much of a battle. Still I take my hat off to the twenty-two soldiers who crawled on the chains ... Those men were brave. They crossed very quickly.

← **Source 4.08** Sun Shuyun, *The Long March* (London: HarperCollins, 2006), 161.

As Mao crossed the bridge, his bodyguard exclaimed, ‘Chairman, with one squad we could hold a bridge like that indefinitely’.²⁰

The troops guarding the Luding Bridge were provincial warlord men, rather than disciplined Nationalist soldiers. Ed Jocelyn believes there was a fight at Luding but that it wasn’t as spectacular as the Communists later made it out to be. Philip Short agrees: ‘The reality was only slightly more prosaic [unexciting] than the myth which Snow created. The assault force did not “swing out ... hand over hand”; they crept out crabwise along the chains at each side of the bridge, while a second group laid an improvised floor of planks and branches behind them.’²¹ Harrison Salisbury cites an elderly Nationalist officer who later recalled that the men who defended the bridge had old guns and mouldy cartridges. As Blacksmith Zhu had told Sun Shuyun, their bullets could barely cover the width of the river.²²



↑ Luding Bridge.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What challenge did the Long Marchers face in Lolo territory? How did General Liu Bocheng resolve this?
- 2 How long was Commander Yang Chengwu’s forced march to Luding Bridge?
- 3 Why was the site of the Luding Bridge battle historically significant?
- 4 Explain why the men who captured the Luding Bridge are celebrated by the CCP as the ‘Heroes of Dadu’?
- 5 Drawing on the accounts of the Battle of Luding Bridge in this chapter, create a table like the one below and fill it in.

WRITER/HISTORIAN	WHAT HAPPENED AT LUDING BRIDGE	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Yang Chengwu		
Edgar Snow		
Chang and Halliday		
Sun Shuyun		
Philip Short		



↑ Imitation Long March sandals.

DID YOU KNOW?

Before they crossed the Great Snowy Mountains, Communist soldiers were taught the following song:

*The Jiajin Mountain is very high,
We must pay attention,
Wrap your feet and rub them well,
Don't take a rest at the top.*

↓ **Source 4.09** Painting depicting the Red Army crossing the Great Snowy Mountains during the Long March.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS AND HIGH GRASSLANDS

Mao Zedong: 'The Red Army fear not the trials of the Long March. And thinks nothing of a thousand mountains and rivers.'

According to historian Jonathan Spence, 'The Long March, later presented as a great achievement in Communist history, was a nightmare of death and pain while it was in progress'.²³ This can be clearly seen in the obstacles that confronted the Communists after they left Luding Bridge.

THE GREAT SNOWY MOUNTAINS

The Red Army soldiers, wearing cotton clothes and straw sandals, dragged themselves up and over the Great Snowy Mountains. Mao told his bodyguard, 'The snow has confiscated my feet!' Men slipped down deep, icy cliffs and died from exposure. Those who stopped for a rest at the summit often did not wake up again.

The 10,000 survivors made their way into Sichuan, and met up with advance units of the Fourth Front Army, led by Zhang Guotao. There was much rejoicing at the Red reunion, but political rivalry soon emerged between Zhang and Mao. Zhang was a founding member of the CCP and had 40,000 men under his command. He was not ready to let Mao assume leadership of the party.

The two men disagreed about where the march should go next:

- Mao wanted to head north-east and join with a small soviet led by Gao Gang (Kao Kang) in Shaanxi
- Zhang wanted to head to western Sichuan.

For two weeks the armies rested while a decision was made. In the end, the two forces split. Zhang went west while Mao's forces made their way north. The worst part of the Long March lay before them.



HIGH GRASSLANDS

The First Front Army entered the High Grasslands in August 1935. It was a horrific experience. Xie Fei, who survived the march, recounted the difficulties of terrain: ‘That damned place was very strange—just grass, no trees ... It rained every day ... The ground was all wet.’²⁴ The grasslands were one big, deadly swamp, with deep, black muck pits that swallowed up men and horses.

Food became critically scarce:

- The southerners could not digest the local grain (wheat) and developed stomach problems.
- There was nowhere dry to rest and no clean water.
- Many caught dysentery, then had diarrhoea from drinking the swamp water.
- Some people ate weeds and became even sicker.
- Others boiled leather belts and boots and ate them.
- Some people picked through the faeces of those who had marched ahead in the hope of finding undigested grain.²⁵

Untold numbers lost their lives—the exact number of casualties is hard to determine. One woman told of a particularly harrowing experience: ‘I walked and something squeaked under my foot. I parted the dense weeds and my foot was in a dead man’s face. I still dream of it.’²⁶ Another recalled, ‘Some people got stuck in the mire and just couldn’t be saved and so we trod on their shoulders’.²⁷ On the edges of the swamp, hostile Tibetan tribes further hampered the marchers.

On 16 September 1935, a final battle was fought at Lazikou (Latzu) Pass against provincial GMD troops. The Red Army was victorious and its tribulations almost over.

 **Source 4.10** *Chairman Mao and the First Front Army Crossing the Great Snowy Mountains.*



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 4.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline how the CCP considered the challenges of the Long March to be a positive experience.
- 2 Explain the significance of Mao’s leadership during the Long March.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of the Long March in the development of the Chinese Revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

THE END OF THE LONG MARCH

Mao Zedong: 'Well, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? No, never.'

On 19 October 1935, the First Front Army straggled into the small Shaanxi town of Wuqi Zhen, which was then the base of Gao Gang's soviet. The end of the Long March was officially proclaimed on 22 October. Of the original 100,000 marchers, only 7000–8000 survived. But survive they did—Jiang Jieshi failed to exterminate the Communist army.

Tactically, the Long March was a retreat, but psychologically it gave the Communists a strong sense of purpose. Organisationally it brought Mao to the forefront of leadership.²⁸ Edgar Snow famously wrote, 'the Reds finally reached their objective with their nucleus still intact, and their morale and political will evidently as strong as ever'.²⁹ In a year the Long Marchers had:

- walked 12,000 kilometres
- passed through eleven provinces
- crossed twenty-four rivers
- crossed eighteen mountain ranges.

Mao said it was a march of 25,000 *li*.

In December, the soviet base was moved to the town of Yan'an. The remnants of Communist bands soon arrived from other abandoned soviets and boosted troop numbers to 30,000.

Meanwhile, the Fourth Front Army under Zhang Guotao failed in its bid to establish a base in Sichuan, and the remaining 2000 men made their way to Shaanxi. Zhang's political career never recovered, and he was no longer a threat to Mao's authority.

li a traditional Chinese measurement of distance. One *li* is about half a kilometre; however, a *li* also takes into account the effort involved in travel, such as going uphill or covering difficult terrain

Source 4.11 From left, Bo Gu, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Mao Zedong in northern Shaanxi after the Long March of the Chinese Red Army, c. 1937.



THE LONG MARCH SPIRIT

Yan'an would be the capital from which Mao would clarify his revolutionary program, rebuild the Red Army and ultimately conquer China. Historian Maurice Meisner describes Mao after the Long March as a latter-day revolutionary Moses: 'the experience ultimately contributed enormously to the perception of himself as a man of destiny who would lead his followers to the completion of their revolutionary mission ... for Mao was the prophet who had led the survivors through the wilderness'.³⁰

The Long March is the foundation narrative of the **People's Republic of China (PRC)**, which was established in 1949. But like many legends the march is shrouded in controversy. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday claim it is 'one of the biggest myths of the twentieth century'.³¹ However, not all historians agree. Although there has been, and continues to be, a lot of Communist 'spin' attached to the tale, Ed Jocelyn sees the Long March as a 'true story exploited for propaganda purposes'.³²

What the Communists, particularly ordinary soldiers, achieved through the Long March was an extraordinary feat of survival and endurance. This was the essence of the Long March 'spirit': perseverance and correct attitude help in conquering great difficulties. The March also had profound consequences on the party leadership. Its deeper meaning—the moral of the story—was similarly important.

In his study of Russia's October Revolution, Frederick Corney examines how revolutionary foundation narratives are a means of constructing cultural identity. The question isn't one of myth versus reality, but an appreciation of 'a story told in the telling'.³³ Seen in this light, Luding Bridge and the Long March are parts of a story that the Chinese Communists and others identified with and sought to popularise. In their telling of the heroic exploits of the Long March, the CCP were saying something about who they thought they were and what they believed in.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Long March remains a celebrated and much-admired achievement in China today. The virtues of 'Long March spirit' and 'hard struggle attitude' are revered by many.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

government established by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party in 1949. Still the official name for China

DID YOU KNOW?

'He who doesn't reach the Great Wall isn't a true man!' (*Bú dào Chángchéng fēi hǎohàn*). This is one of Mao's sayings often quoted to tourists visiting the Great Wall. A more accurate translation is 'Like Mao Reaching the Great Wall—Heroes Overcome', which is a celebration of revolutionary commitment and tenacity.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How many Long Marchers remained after crossing the Great Snowy Mountains?
- 2 Who challenged Mao's leadership and led a column of Long Marchers west into Sichuan while Mao's group headed north?
- 3 Briefly explain three or more difficulties faced by the Long Marchers as they crossed the High Grasslands.
- 4 When did the Long March officially end?
- 5 Review the physical challenges overcome during the Long March:
 - How many kilometres were covered?
 - How many provinces did the March pass through?
 - How many rivers were crossed?
 - How many mountain ranges were climbed?
- 6 How many Long Marchers initially set off on the march? How many survived?
- 7 Where was a new soviet established at the end of the Long March?

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss the following topics:

- In your own words, define the Long March 'spirit'.
- In Communist accounts of the Long March, what are the CCP 'saying' about themselves and what they believe in?
- What aspect of the Long March was the most difficult? Why?
- What was the most significant event or development of the Long March? Why?

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Mao Zedong on the Long March, December 1935

We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history ... we encountered untold difficulties and great obstacles on the way, but by keeping our two feet going, we swept across a distance of more than twenty thousand li through the length and breadth of eleven provinces. Well, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? No, never. The Long March is ... a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, and that the imperialists and their jackals, Jiang Jieshi and his like, are perfect nonentities. The Long March is also an agitation corps. It declares to approximately two hundred million people of eleven provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation ... The Long March is also a seeding machine, it has sown seeds in eleven provinces which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in the future. To sum up, the Long March ended with victory for us and defeat for the enemy.

 **Source 4.12** Mao Zedong, 'On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism,' in *Selected Works I* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press), 160.

Historian Craig Dietrich on the significance of the Long March

Although the Long March was a tactical defeat, it had very beneficial psychological and organizational effects and gave the Communists an important strategic advantage. Psychologically, the Long March was not unlike Valley Forge in the American Revolution. The suffering and heroism actually strengthened the movement and proved that it was indomitable. Organizationally, the Long March clarified the leadership of the Party. Mao began to emerge as the undisputed leader. (One biographer describes him as a latter-day Moses.) With the support of several talented military and political men, some of whom had opposed him in earlier times, he reclaimed his position at the top.

 **Source 4.13** Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

Using Sources 4.12 and 4.13 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Compare how the sources describe the importance of the Long March.
- 2 Describe the challenges the Red Army overcame during the Long March.
- 3 Explain how the Long March brought beneficial changes to the CCP.
- 4 Evaluate the extent to which the CCP achieved a victory through the Long March. Use evidence to support your response.

CREATIVE TASK

Using sock puppets, perform a short three-minute dialogue where two or more key people discuss significant developments during the Long March. Some suggested topics and characters:

- two Red Army soldiers as they head out on the Long March
- a group of Red Army officers following the Battle of Xiang River
- Mao Zedong and Otto Braun during the Zunyi Conference
- Mao and his bodyguard as they cross the Great Snowy Mountains
- two Communist women during the crossing of the High Grasslands
- Mao and Zhang Guotao before they split up on the march
- a peasant farmer and a Red Army soldier who meet during the Long March
- a group of Long Marchers as they arrive at the town of Wuqi Zhen at the end of the march
- two Long March veterans reminiscing about the Long March ten years later.

CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Jiang Jieshi ordered a number of 'Bandit Extermination' campaigns against the Jiangxi Soviet. The first four proved unsuccessful, but the fifth put such pressure on the Communists that they were forced to abandon Ruijin.
- 100,000 Communists set out on the Long March. Most were soldiers; just thirty-five were women.
- Massive amounts of equipment were initially taken on the march. This slowed its progress in its early days.
- Under the leadership of Bo Gu and Comintern operative Otto Braun, the Long March followed what was essentially a predictable route. This led to disaster at the Battle of Xiang River.
- Mao made a bid for leadership at the Zunyi Conference. His criticism of the current leadership was supported by Red Army generals and Zhou Enlai.
- Mao reinstituted guerrilla strategies and put a patriotic spin on the march. He deliberately chose unpredictable and unconventional directions to elude the Nationalists.
- With the Nationalists still in pursuit, the Communists were forced to race to the Luding Bridge. A supposed heroic battle was fought at the bridge, with the daring and bravery of Red soldiers securing victory.
- In the weeks after crossing the Luding Bridge, the CCP faced two of the most difficult challenges of the Long March: crossing the Great Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands. Many people died of hunger and exposure.
- A little over a year from when it began, the Long March ended in the far northern province of Shaanxi. A new soviet was established in the small town of Yan'an.
- The Long March is celebrated by the Chinese Communist Party for its heroic traditions and as the point when Mao came to greater authority.

ACTIVITY

ESSAY

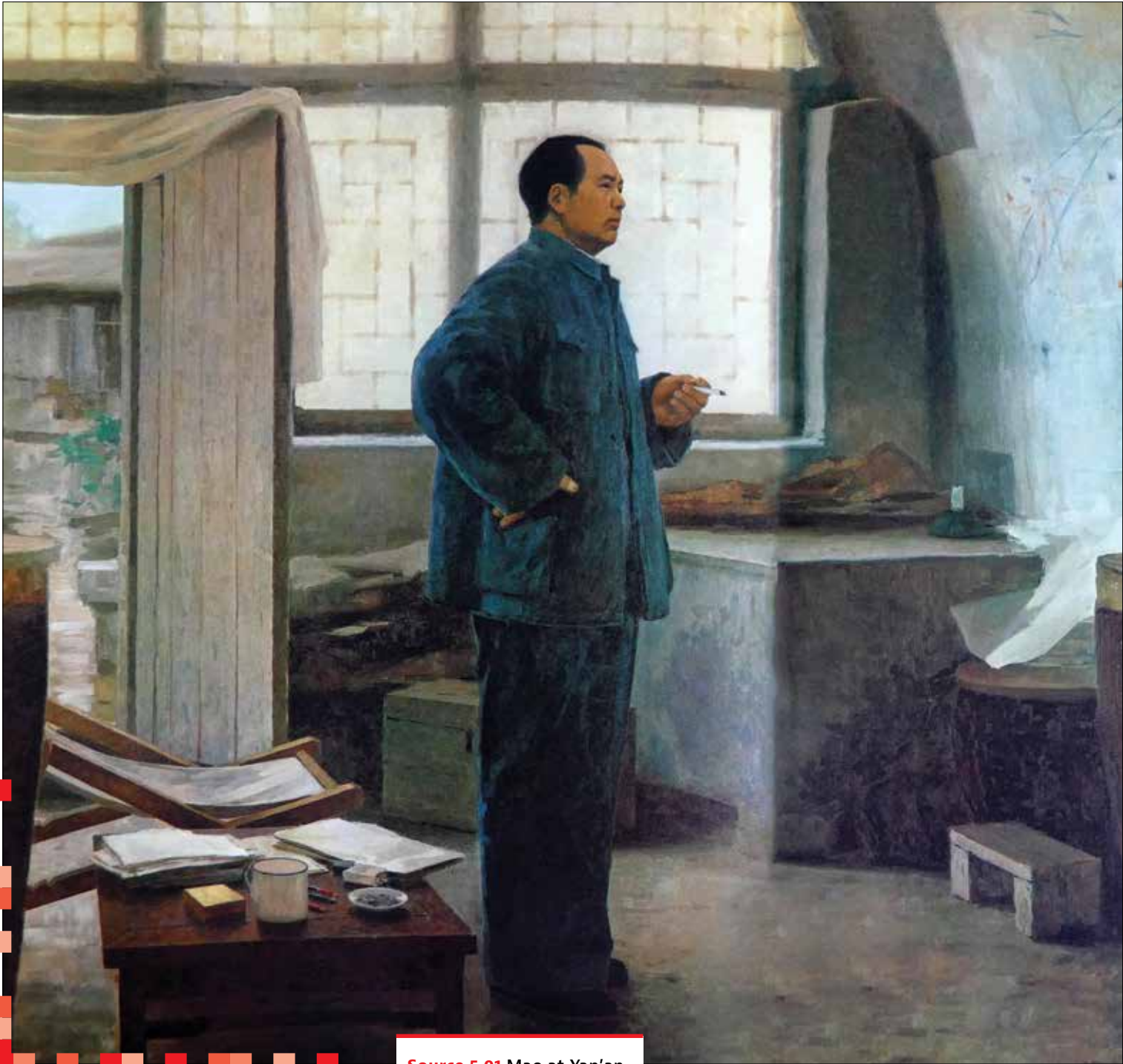
Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the following topics. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Adventure, exploration, discovery, human courage and cowardice, ecstasy and triumph, suffering, sacrifice, and loyalty ... an Odyssey unequaled in modern times.' Why is the Long March historically significant?
- 'To sum up, the Long March ended with victory for us and defeat for the enemy.' What gains did the Long March achieve for the CCP?
- 'A nightmare of pain and death.' To what extent was the Long March a devastating forced retreat for the CCP?
- 'Mao was the prophet who led the survivors through the wilderness.' How did the Long March lay the foundations of Mao's rise to power?



WAR AND REVOLUTION

(1931–1949)



Source 5.01 Mao at Yan'an.

CHAPTER 5

‘I judge the Guomindang and Communist Party by what I saw: GMD—Corruption, neglect, chaos, economy, taxes ... black market, trading with the enemy. Communist program ... reduce taxes, rents, interests ... Participate in government. Practice what they preach.’

—General Joseph Stilwell

The Sino-Japanese War was pivotal in the fate of the Nationalist government and the Chinese Communist Party. Jiang Jieshi's efforts at modernisation and domestic unity came to a grinding halt when China had to fight for its national survival. The Nanjing regime was forced to retreat inland, and hoped that time would wear down its significantly stronger enemy.

The war was a dreadful experience for many Chinese people, who endured untold hardship and suffering at the hands of a brutal foreign occupation. It was distressing for many patriots that Jiang maintained his hostility toward the CCP despite the threat to China's sovereignty.

Yet the war was a blessing in disguise for the CCP. From their remote base in Yan'an, the CCP built a successful socialist community. The party was also ideologically unified under the leadership of Mao Zedong. By contrast, the worst elements of the Nationalist regime were shown during this time.

The USA brought the war with Japan to a sudden end in 1945. As one of the allied powers, Nationalist China was given substantial American assistance, and Jiang appeared to have the upper hand when China descended once more into war. Ultimately the Communists won and the Nationalists lost the Chinese Civil War. This was a fundamental conflict between the support bases, social and economic policies, leadership and vision of the two parties. In 1948 Major General David Barr described the Nationalists in a report to his superiors in Washington:

... the military debacle in my opinion can all be attributed to the world's worst leadership and many other morale-destroying factors that led to a complete loss of will to fight. There is complete ineptness of high military leaders, widespread corruption and dishonesty throughout the armed forces.¹

Perhaps the most telling indictment of Jiang Jieshi's regime was that the CCP, in its own way, was more faithful to Sun Yixian's Three Principles of 'nationalism', 'democracy' and 'people's livelihood' than the Nationalists. The CCP adopted effective strategies in the art of war and won the hearts of China's peasants. This approach, alongside the failures of the Nationalists, ensured a Communist victory.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did Jiang Jieshi's government respond to Japanese military aggression in the north of China?
- What developments led to a second Sino-Japanese War in 1937?
- What policies and strategies were implemented by the CCP at Yan'an?
- What was the purpose and nature of Mao's Rectification Campaign?
- What was the essence of the Yan'an Way?
- How did the Xian Incident lead to a Second United Front? What were the details of this agreement?
- How did the war with Japan impact the Nationalist government?
- What observations and judgements did the US Dixie Mission make regarding the CCP at Yan'an?
- Why did the CCP win and GMD lose the Chinese Civil War?

KEY EVENTS

20 November 1937

Nationalists set up government in Chongqing

4 January 1941

Second United Front ends

1 February 1941

Rectification Campaign launched

14 August 1945

Japan signs terms of unconditional surrender

10 January 1946

General Marshall negotiates ceasefire between GMD and CCP

1 May 1946

Red Army renamed People's Liberation Army

1948

Inflation skyrockets under Nationalist government

Guandong Army a Japanese military force stationed in Manchuria to protect Japanese interests in Manchuria and the north of China. It was one of Japan's largest and most prestigious military units

Manchukuo translated as 'land of the Manchus', Manchukuo was the Japanese protectorate established over Manchuria in 1931

DID YOU KNOW?

A popular Chinese song in 1931 went: 'Kill the enemy! Kill the enemy! Hurry up and kill the enemy!'

JAPAN INVADES MANCHURIA

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Pu Yi: 'Hoping to carry out my vows and return to the throne, I followed the instructions of the Guandong Army while working long hours under the illusion that I would be able to use my power as head of state. But this diligence did not last long and there was no state business to transact and I soon found out my powers existed on paper only.'

THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT

In 1931, Japan began to intrude on Chinese territory again. Members of the Japanese military wanted to gain control of Manchuria, a region rich in minerals. Many leading Japanese politicians saw the exploitation of the north of China for Japan's industrial and social needs as justifiable.

On 18 September 1931, without approval from the Japanese civilian government, a group of military officers took matters into their own hands and set off a bomb on the tracks of the South Manchurian Railway near the city of Mukden. Troops of the Japanese **Guandong Army**, who were guarding nearby stretches of the line, responded to this so-called Manchurian Incident by occupying a number of cities, including Mukden.

On hearing of the apparent unauthorised invasion, the Japanese prime minister commented, 'The units have already moved, so what can be done?''² In the coming months, most of the officers involved received commendations or promotions.

MANCHUKUO

By the end of 1931, Japan controlled all of Manchuria. People in China were furious, and thousands of students took to the streets of Nanjing and Shanghai in protest. There was little Jiang could do—his armed forces were in no position to challenge Japan. He prevented Manchuria's governor, former warlord Young Marshall Zhang Xueliang, from resisting the invasion. Instead, Jiang appealed to the League of Nations (the predecessor to the United Nations), which sent the Lytton Commission to investigate the matter.

On 18 February 1932, Japan declared Manchuria's independence from China, and established a puppet state called **Manchukuo** ('land of the Manchu'). The deposed Qing emperor Pu Yi was appointed as its formal head of state. A proud Manchurian, Pu Yi was delighted to return and rule his homeland—but he soon found he was just a convenient figurehead for the Japanese.

When the Lytton Commission released its report criticising Japan's actions, Japan responded by leaving the League of Nations. Japanese military aggression in the north of China continued.

- In February 1933, the province of Rehol was annexed by Manchukuo.
- In 1935, the provinces of Suiyuan, Charar, Shanxi, Shandong and Hebei were designated the North China Autonomous Region, under Japanese administration.
- By 1935, Hebei (which included the major cities of Beiping and Tianjin) was also under Japanese influence.

There were some pockets of Chinese resistance, such as Shanghai, where the Nationalist Army fought to defend the city in 1932. But for the most part, Jiang's unwillingness to confront Japan brought his government into disrepute. Popular dissatisfaction grew when it became clear that appeasing the Japanese did nothing to reduce the threat of all-out invasion.

WAR

In mid-1937, the nightmare became a reality: Japan launched an all-out assault on the Republic of China. This second **Sino**-Japanese War, which served as a prelude to World War II, had profound consequences for China. Historian John King Fairbank argues that, 'In an era of peace and order the Nanjing Government might have ridden the crest of modernisation, but its fate was determined almost from the first by the menace of Japanese militarism'.³ Jiang's Nationalist government floundered as the war with Japan dragged on.

Meanwhile, Mao's Communist government in Yan'an flourished.

THE YAN'AN WAY

Mao Zedong: '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.'

From their base in Yan'an, the CCP extended its influence and won the support of the local peasantry. Yan'an was a poor area with no industry or major buildings, where the local people lived in caves cut out of rock. Few people could read or write, and some still wore the queue plait of the Qing era.

Yet Mao and his comrades built a thriving community in this impoverished rural backwater. The experience of the Long March and the Yan'an years would reinforce many of the ideals that became fundamental to the Chinese Communists. A revolutionary tradition, dubbed the **Yan'an Way**,⁴ was forged during this era. Mao also established himself as a revolutionary theorist and consolidated his grip on the party leadership.

LAND AND TAX REFORMS

Land reform played a big role in winning over the Shaanxi peasantry to the CCP. From 1935 to 1937, surplus land was taken from landlords and redistributed to those in need. The land reform was carried out by poor peasants' associations, under the protection of Red Army troops. **Cadres** of the CCP gave advice where necessary, but it was emphasised that the people themselves must *fanshen*, or 'turn over', the established order. Mao hoped for the fusion of the Communist revolution with an agrarian (or agricultural) revolution.⁵ Most landlords were left with enough land to support their families.

After the Second United Front emerged in 1936, the Communists moderated their land-reform policies. To make sure that the anti-Japanese campaign was supported by all social classes, including the wealthy, land was no longer taken outright. The only land redistributed was surplus land abandoned by landlords who had fled the area.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did the Manchurian Incident occur?
- 2 How did the Japanese government react to the actions of the Guandong Army in Manchuria?
- 3 Who was appointed head of state in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo?
- 4 What actions were taken by Jiang Jieshi in response to the Japanese annexation of Manchuria?

Sino Chinese



Source 5.02 Buildings and cave dwellings in the hillsides of Yan'an.

Yan'an Way the policies, revolutionary ideals and mass mobilisation campaigns carried out by the Communists during the Yan'an Soviet era, particularly during the 1940s

Cadres Communist Party officials or activists

DID YOU KNOW?

As a youth, Zhu De had travelled to France. There he developed a liking for European-style salads. At Yan'an the Red Army commander-in-chief grew his own lettuces.

DID YOU KNOW?

The formal name of the Yan'an Soviet was the Shaan-Gan-Ning Soviet. This came from the three provinces over which the Soviet had territory: Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia.

DID YOU KNOW?

During one of Edgar Snow's interviews with Mao at Yan'an, the Chairman dropped his trousers and began searching his own body for lice. Mao liked to flaunt his 'peasant ways' as a contrast to the urbane manners of party intellectuals. Snow was surprised, but continued with the interview.

DID YOU KNOW?

When visiting American journalist Anna Louise Strong praised Yan'an's dry weather, Mao replied bluntly: 'We didn't pick it'.

However, the CCP reduced interest on loans and mortgages from 18 per cent to 1.5 per cent, and rents were cut to no more than 25 per cent of the harvest. This meant that poorer peasants were able to increase their landholdings to a profitable size. Also, more land became available as landlords reduced their farmland as incomes they received from leaseholders fell. Landlords who invested in local industry or who had a son in the Red Army were given tax bonuses. All peasants were encouraged to form cooperatives to sell their produce.

SOCIAL CHANGE

In Yan'an, as at Jiangxi, women's associations were set up to support women with abusive husbands, or those who were too poor to feed their children. The infant mortality rate was reduced by teaching local midwives how to use sterile childbirth techniques. Nursing mothers and pregnant women also received additional food rations.⁶

The literacy rate in Yan'an was raised from 1 per cent in 1936 to 50 per cent by 1943. Evening schools were established for children and adults. Other clever innovations were used to boost literacy:

- soldiers marched with Chinese characters stitched onto their packs so that those behind could memorise them
- signs with characters on them were placed at the end of each furrow so peasants could learn to read while they ploughed their fields.

The local University of Anti-Japanese Resistance attracted left-wing students and intellectuals from across China who had grown disillusioned with the Nationalist regime. Many were attracted to the CCP on account of its:

- ordered government
- anti-Japanese sentiment
- apparent integrity.

ECONOMIC CHANGE

Building a solid economy in remote Shaanxi was not an easy task. However, Mao argued that hardship and adversity made people become self-sufficient and thus more confident. Morale at Yan'an was high. Foreign journalists like Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley were struck by the enthusiasm and drive among the Communist officials and the discipline of Red Army soldiers. 'The situation is excellent!' replied cadres, when asked about conditions or the progress of campaigns.

Soldiers who were not training or on patrol helped peasants to:

- till the land
- harvest grain
- construct irrigation channels.

Land was set aside for Red soldiers serving at the front. Their fields were worked either by their family or cooperatively by volunteers from the local peasants' association.⁷

Everyone was involved in growing food, as well as making useful things such as:

- matches
- wire
- tools
- batteries
- soap
- leathersgoods
- clothing.

Women's spinning cooperatives produced most of the cloth required by the soviet, and most army units managed to produce 40 per cent of their own food.⁸ Mao even grew his own tobacco.

However, one farming activity was kept secret from visiting Western journalists. The greatest source of income for the Yan'an government was opium, which they grew and then sold to Japanese-occupied territories. It was noted in records as 'soap', 'foreign trade' or 'special product'.⁹



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the relationship between the CCP and the peasantry that developed under Mao's leadership.
- 2 Explain how Mao adapted Marxist revolutionary ideas to suit Chinese conditions.
- 3 Analyse the role of Mao Zedong in shaping the CCP's approach during the Yan'an period. Use evidence to support your response.

 **Source 5.03** Mao speaking with peasants, Yan'an, 1939.

POLITICAL CHANGE

A degree of popular representation was encouraged in the **border regions**. For example, at Yan'an, local government was based on the principle of **three-thirds**:

- one-third of members were from the CCP
- one-third were from other leftist groups
- one-third could be anyone except Japanese collaborators, landlords, 'local bullies' or right-wing Guomindang.

The soviet government had a simple structure: a hierarchy of regional, district and village councils, loosely governed by democratic centralism, were popularly elected at the lowest level. Officials were given the independence to meet local needs, and intellectuals and bureaucrats were encouraged to do manual labour alongside 'ordinary' people.¹⁰

Mao established the theory and practice of **mass line**, a principle that served as the foundation of model leadership for the CCP. It meant that the Communists should learn from the masses and develop programs that provided appropriate revolutionary leadership. This was captured in the saying 'from the people, to the people'. In short, cadres needed to work among peasants, listen carefully to their concerns, and then find practical solutions to their problems. According to Mao, good revolutionary leaders should, 'Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership—such is the basic method of leadership'.¹¹

border regions another name for the Shaan-Gan-Ning (Yan'an) Soviet. Refers to the manner in which Soviet territory crossed over several provincial borders

three-thirds the principle underpinning representation in local government during the Yan'an era

mass line Mao's notion of correct leadership. Cadres should listen to ordinary people and their concerns, then develop policies to address these needs

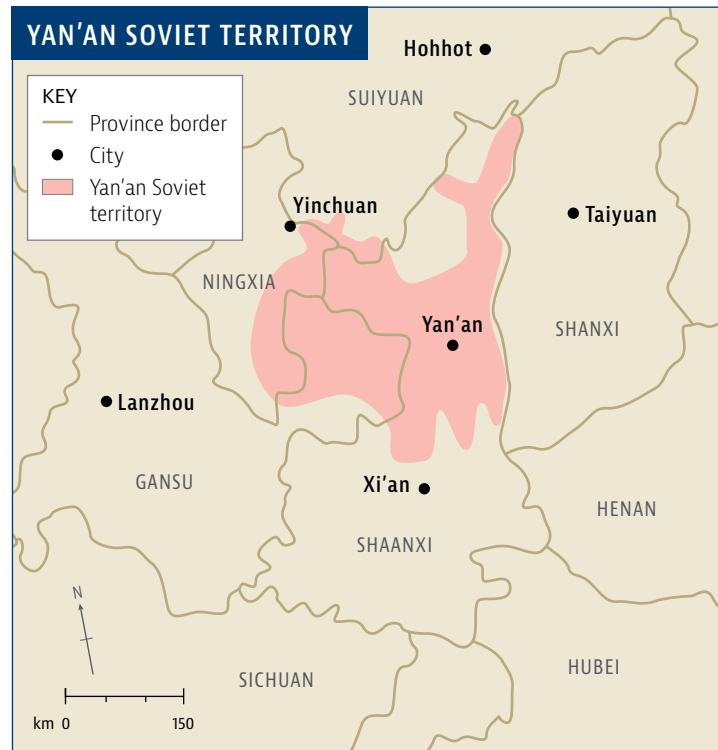
DID YOU KNOW?

Many people in the border regions were illiterate, so local elections were sometimes done by colour code. Candidates wore different colours and voters indicated their vote by placing corresponding coloured beans into a bowl.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly describe the living conditions and level of economic development in Yan'an.
- 2 Briefly describe Mao's approach to land reform at Yan'an.
- 3 Briefly describe each of the following advances encouraged during the Yan'an period:
 - women's associations
 - literacy campaigns
 - the University of Anti-Japanese Resistance.
- 4 What was the common reply given by cadres when they were asked how things were progressing at Yan'an?
- 5 Briefly explain how the following Maoist principles were put into practice at Yan'an:
 - economic self-sufficiency
 - three-thirds local government
 - mass line.



Source 5.04



Source 5.05 Mao Zedong and Zhu De.

zhengfeng the Maoist Rectification campaigns of the 1940s

MAO'S RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

Mao Zedong: 'But our aim in exposing errors and criticising shortcomings, like that of a doctor curing a sickness, is solely to save the patient and not doctor him to death ... So long as a person who has made mistakes does not hide his sickness for fear of treatment or persist in his mistakes until he is beyond cure ... we should welcome him and cure his sickness so that he can become a good comrade.'

The 1940s were Mao's most creative and productive years for developing his core ideologies. He spent up to fourteen hours a day reviewing policies and making a systematic study of Marxism. Mao was determined to prove himself as a theorist in his own right and produced many groundbreaking revolutionary works in this period.

On 1 February 1942, Mao formally launched his **zhengfeng** campaign or Rectification of the Party's Style of Work. The aim of the campaign was to teach Mao's own revolutionary ideas to Chinese Communists and eliminate the influence of his political opponents.¹² The movement emerged from an educational drive in 1939. There was concern that many new party members did not have a sound grasp of Communist ideology—or, as Mao put it, 'the correct style of work'.¹³ Unity and discipline needed tightening, and Mao stressed the need for 'correct revolutionary consciousness' from which would come correct revolutionary action. The key factors in determining whether someone was a 'revolutionary proletariat' were their views and actions, not just their socio-economic class.

PURGES AND STRUGGLES

By late 1941, the Rectification Campaign was shaping up as a purge. There are several possible reasons for this. Mao:

- needed to head off any rivals for leadership
- may have felt threatened by the influx of intellectuals into the soviet
- may have felt some new recruits were unreliable
- may have felt his authority was being reduced.

One potential rival was Wang Ming of the Returned Students' Clique, who had come to Yan'an from Moscow in 1937. Mao complained, with some exaggeration, that following Wang Ming's arrival 'my authority did not extend beyond my cave'.¹⁴

The Rectification Campaign followed a set routine:

- Mao or one of his allies would give a lecture to a mass gathering.
- The audience would then break into small groups for discussion and 'study' of the ideas presented. The aim was to grasp the 'correct' interpretation.
- Those who were seen as unreliable were required to stand before denunciation meetings called 'struggle sessions', where they offered self-criticisms and responded to the criticism of their peers.
- This was followed by intense study of Mao's writings.

People who needed to 'reform' their thinking were also required to carry out manual labour for a period of time. Those who resisted could be demoted, imprisoned, expelled from the party—or executed. Mao spoke of unity–criticism–unity bringing a higher level of understanding. The Maoist ideal of 'continuous revolution' further underpinned the Rectification movement. Communists needed to struggle against becoming ideologically stagnant and continuously renew their revolutionary energy.

The Rectification Campaign successfully removed Mao's opponents, such as Wang Ming, from further influence in the Party leadership. Critical and independent-minded comrades were also placed under immense pressure to conform—feminist writer Ding Ling was among those who suffered in this time.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mao married his fourth wife, Jiang Qing, at Yan'an. His third wife, He Zizhen, was physically weak and mentally fragile after the ordeal of the Long March. Jiang was an attractive and ambitious young woman who had been an actress. The Central Committee reluctantly agreed to the marriage on condition that Jiang had no involvement in politics—and her resentment of this condition would have extraordinary consequences later during the Cultural Revolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao identified three 'wrong tendencies' with the CCP during the Rectification Campaign:

1. Subjectivism: An over-reliance on book learning and dogmatic ideology.
2. Sectarianism: Independent action at odds with the Party's instructions.
3. Formalism: Relying on complex expressions, using meaningless quotes and producing stereotyped Marxist analyses with little relevance to Chinese conditions.

◀ **Source 5.06** Mao giving a lecture during the Rectification period (Zhengfeng).

MAOIST VIRTUES

Particular virtues and habits were also important. Cadres needed to be humble so they could work well among the people. Mao believed in the primacy of human will over material forces—that people mattered—so it followed that attitudes also mattered. Struggle, sacrifice, selflessness, diligence, ingenuity and courage were celebrated as the Yan'an Way. These **Maoist virtues** were intrinsic to revolutionary success. They served the Communists through the Long March and went on to bring revolutionary victory in the future.

Maoist virtues diligence, courage, selflessness, struggle and self-sacrifice

THEORY AND PRACTICE

When explaining policies, ideology and their foundations, Mao pointed out that ideas needed to be grounded in practical application and adjusted to fit current experience. Mao believed that theory and practice went hand-in-hand—for example, if you wanted to know the taste of a pear, you had to eat one.

Mao sneered at those Communists he saw as champions of ‘book learning’, and he had no respect for those who hung onto the strict beliefs and doctrines—or ‘dogma’—of **orthodox** Marxism. In Mao’s words, ‘dogma is less useful than shit ... shit can fertilize the fields ... And dogmas? They can’t fertilize fields ... Of what use are they?’¹⁵

According to Mao, revolutionary socialism needed to be tailored to ‘specific, concrete Chinese conditions’.¹⁶ Above all, revolutionary ideas needed to work—‘Marxism–Leninism has no beauty’, he said, ‘nor has it any mystical value. It is only extremely useful.’¹⁷

orthodox traditional; adhering to strict interpretations or beliefs

↓ **Source 5.07** Mao at Yan’an.



MAO’S ALLIES

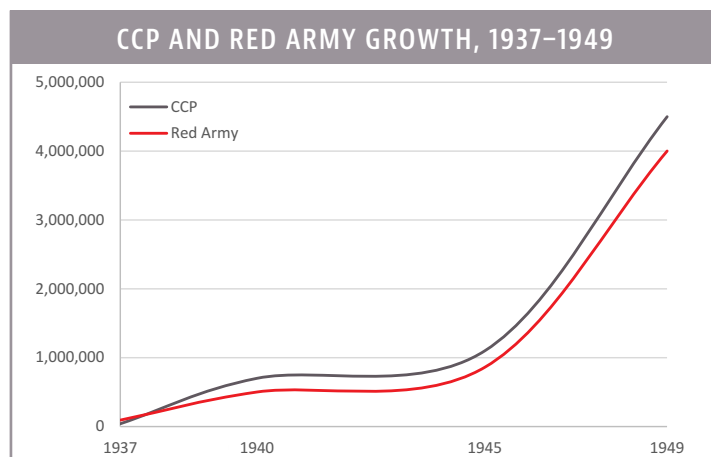
The head of the CCP Propaganda Bureau was a man named Chen Boda (Ch’en Po-ta), who was an important figure in the Rectification Campaign. Chen did not deliver speeches—as he had a strong Fujian accent and a bad stutter—but he was a brilliant writer. He helped Mao refine his essays and rewrote Party history in order to emphasise Mao’s importance.

By 1939, Chen was comparing Mao to Confucius.¹⁸ Another close ally was Kang Sheng (K’ang Sheng), the director of the Communist ‘social affairs department’—which was actually a secret police force. Kang arrested and executed comrades who resisted ‘treatment’ and could not be ‘cured’ of their ideological ‘sickness’.

GROWTH OF THE CCP

Although life in rural Shaanxi was tough and lacked material comforts, the Yan’an Soviet grew into a sizeable state, and by 1940 over 50 million people lived there under Communist rule. Yan’an was governed efficiently, was free of corruption and brought welcome benefits to its people.

↓ **Source 5.08**



Peasants showed genuine respect to the Soviet government. The phrase *women de zhengfu* (or ‘our government’) was often heard.¹⁹ The Yan’an period saw a considerable increase in Communist Party membership, from 40,000 in 1937 to 800,000 in 1940; and by 1945 there were more than a million members. At the end of the Civil War in 1949, the Communists had 4.5 million cadres.

The Red Army showed similar growth:

- 1937: 92,000 soldiers
- 1940: 500,000 soldiers
- 1945: 860,000 soldiers
- 1949: 4 million soldiers

The vast majority of support for the CCP and Red Army came from the peasantry—Mao's chosen vanguard class of the revolution—but intellectuals were increasingly attracted. Mao's 1940 work *On New Democracy* outlined a broad policy that embraced all social classes in the united front against Japan. This encouraged educated Chinese and rallied patriots to the cause. The fusion of communism with nationalism was an ingenious program.

MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

KEY IDEA

Mao's ideology, or Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought, to give its full name, became part of the collective consciousness of the CCP at Yan'an. It provided a cohesive vision and unity of purpose.

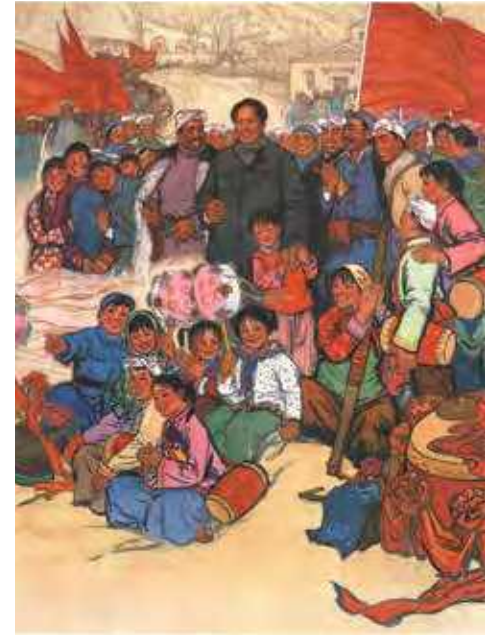
By the time the Rectification Campaign drew to a close in 1944, the leadership cult and political dominance of Chairman Mao was well and truly established. Recalling his time in Yan'an, US translator Sidney Rittenberg highlighted his impressions of Zhou Enlai and the charismatic qualities of Mao: 'When I was with Zhou, I felt I was with a real friend, a comrade. With Mao, I felt I was sitting next to history. With Zhou I felt warmth, with Mao, awe.'²⁰

Historian Maurice Meisner on the Yan'an period

The history and experiences of the Yenan [Yan'an] decade, upon which the victory of 1949 was based, served to reinforce the Maoist belief in the primacy of moral over material forces, of men over machines, the conviction that the truly creative revolutionary forces reside more in the countryside than the cities, and the view that ideological-moral solidarity is more important than artificial unity that might be provided or imposed by any formal bureaucratic organization. More importantly, victory came on the basis of a massive popular social revolution that involved the active and meaningful support and participation of tens of millions of peasants.

DID YOU KNOW?

The iconic image of Yan'an was a Ming-era pagoda that stood on the top of a hill overlooking the city. The pagoda would become a revolutionary landmark.



↑ **Source 5.09** *New Spring in Yan'an*, early 1970s.

← **Source 5.10** Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 50.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When was the Rectification Campaign at Yan'an launched?
- 2 What are two or more reasons Mao felt the CCP required rectification?
- 3 Briefly explain the role of 'struggle sessions' during the Rectification Campaign.
- 4 What virtues were celebrated as the Yan'an Way? Why were these values important?
- 5 What did Mao think of orthodox Marxist 'dogma'? Why?
- 6 What role did Chen Boda play in the Rectification Campaign?
- 7 Give three or more examples that illustrate the progress of the CCP in the Yan'an Soviet period.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 5.09 and 5.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline how the Yan'an Soviet offered progress and support to common people.
- 2 Explain the importance of the Yan'an period in the development of Mao's revolutionary ideas.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of the Yan'an Soviet as a contribution to the Chinese Revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss the following:

- Define the Yan'an Way.
- What was significant about this tradition?
- In what ways did Mao Zedong Thought differ from orthodox Marxism–Leninism? In what ways was it similar?

THE XIAN INCIDENT AND THE SECOND UNITED FRONT

Mao Zedong: 'Jiang is stubborn, but fundamentally he is a gangster.'



↑ Zhang Xueliang.

ZHANG'S TRUCE WITH THE RED ARMY

Back in 1931, when the Japanese overran Manchuria, Nationalist troops under the command of Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang fell back to China. Jiang Jieshi had them garrisoned at the Shaanxi city of Xi'an (Sian).

In 1935, Jiang sent orders to Zhang to commence a Sixth Extermination Campaign, but this time against the Yan'an Soviet. General Zhang was not pleased with this assignment. He and his men had little interest in fighting Communists—they wanted to resist the Japanese occupying their homeland. In the coming months, Zhang's troops made a few half-hearted skirmishes along the Yan'an Soviet border, and even held some 'fake battles' to keep up the appearance of hostilities.

At the Seventh Comintern Congress of August 1935, a resolution was passed urging all Communist parties to seek alliances with other leftist groups to resist anti-Soviet Fascist forces—which, in the Asian context, meant Japan. The CCP made contact with a number of popular resistance groups. Mao made overtures to General Zhang. Communist agitators secretly worked among the Manchurian troops, feeding them slogans such as:

- 'Immediate war with Japan; stop fighting the Communists'
- 'Chinese must not fight Chinese.'²¹

When they did exchange fire, Red Army soldiers treated Zhang's wounded and released any officers they captured, having first discussed their hopes for a united anti-Japanese front.

By January 1936, Zhang had negotiated a truce with the CCP. Trade between Yan'an and Xi'an was allowed, while liaison officers aided communication between the two armies.²² As the year went on a number of declarations were issued by Yan'an urging the Guomindang to drop the civil war and join in a united front, but with no result.

THE XI'AN INCIDENT **KEY DEVELOPMENT**

Meanwhile Jiang's Extermination Campaign was getting nowhere. So, on 3 December 1936, the Generalissimo flew into Xi'an to discipline his supposed Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Bandit Extermination (Zhang Xueliang) and his disobedient northern troops. Zhang was ordered to resume the anti-Communist offensive or be transferred elsewhere.

Instead, Zhang changed the course of Nationalist policy by forcing a united front upon Jiang. At dawn on 12 December, a division of General Zhang's troops attacked the luxurious temple where Jiang Jieshi was staying. Jiang fled and hid in a cave in the nearby hills, but was soon found and placed under arrest.

Jiang was beside himself with rage, and reminded the arresting soldiers that he was their commander-in-chief. He was given a polite bow and told, 'You are also our prisoner'.²³ Zhang Xueliang sent word of his bold actions to the Communists. Zhou Enlai promptly made his way to Xi'an for talks. The CCP could not believe their luck—their arch-nemesis had unexpectedly fallen into their hands!

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang fled from his pursuers at Xi'an in such a rush that he left behind his shoes and his false teeth. He was arrested in his nightshirt.

The Communist leaders discussed what they should do next:

- some proposed giving Jiang a public trial, followed by imprisonment or execution
- others suggested treating Jiang leniently, as a gesture of generosity towards the Nationalists.

Zhou Enlai recalled: 'We didn't sleep for a week trying to decide'.²⁴

Stalin then intervened, much to Mao's disgust. The Chinese Communists were told to 'try to solve the incident peacefully'. However, what the CCP did not know was that Stalin had been finalising a treaty agreement with Nationalist China—and he favoured Jiang as the recognised leader of the nation.

A SECOND UNITED FRONT KEY DEVELOPMENT

Understandably, the Nationalist government at Nanjing was in a panic. Leading generals were urging airstrikes on Xi'an. Soong Meiling and her adviser, W.H. Donald, who had worked closely with the Young Marshall in the past, hoped for a peaceful outcome and flew to Xi'an. Other GMD figures including Dai Li and T.V. Soong joined them.

Talks with Soong, Jiang and Zhou were polite and fruitful. In the end, Jiang was released on condition that he:

- ended his anti-Communist campaigns
- agreed to negotiate terms for a Second United Front.

The Generalissimo flew back to Nanjing on 25 December and was welcomed as a patriotic hero. The public expected a new anti-Japanese agreement to emerge soon afterwards. The Communists, too, were seen to have put the interests of the nation before the ambitions of their party. The loser in the affair was Zhang Xueliang. The Young Marshall returned to Nanjing as a sign of goodwill, but was arrested, tried and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. This was later extended to an indefinite sentence of house arrest at Jiang's pleasure.

CONFLICT WITH JAPAN

It took nine months of formal negotiations to arrange the Second United Front. The agreement was hurried along after Japan launched a full-scale invasion on 7 July 1937.

Mao declared that the Red Army, under the command of Zhu De and Peng Dehuai, would head towards Japanese positions on 20 August 1937, with or without an agreement with the Nationalists. When the Japanese attacked Shanghai on 13 August, Jiang told one of his assistants to 'Go and tell Zhou Enlai ... They need not wait any more'.²⁵

On 22 September, the Second United Front was formally declared. The Yan'an Soviet was made an 'autonomous region' of the Nationalist Republic, and the Red Army was redesignated the **Eighth Route Army** of the Nationalist Armed Forces. Communist generals remained in command but overall strategy was directed by the Guomindang High Command. A second Communist army was approved shortly after. The New Fourth Army was based below the Yangzi River and made up of Jiangxi guerrillas and recent recruits.

DID YOU KNOW?

W.H. Donald was an Australian adviser to the Nationalists, who was known in international circles as 'Donald of China'. He could not speak Chinese and would not eat the local food: 'Never touch the stuff! It ruins my stomach.' A British journalist described Donald as 'a red-faced, serious man with a large, sensible nose'.

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

Imagine you are a reporter preparing a radio story on the Xi'an Incident in 1936. Record a series of short interviews with key figures in the drama.

Suggested interviewees: Jiang Jieshi, Zhang Xueliang, Soong Meiling, Mao Zedong, a Manchurian soldier, Josef Stalin, Zhou Enlai and W.H. Donald.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why was General Zhang Xueliang reluctant to launch an extermination campaign against Yan'an?
- 2 When was Jiang arrested at Xi'an? What did Zhang hope to achieve by this action?
- 3 Who was the 'loser' in the Xi'an Incident?
- 4 What changes resulted from the Second United Front?
- 5 Which party benefited more from the formation of the Second United Front: the CCP or the GMD? Explain your answer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Zhang Xueliang was taken to Taiwan when the Nationalists fled mainland China in 1949. He remained under house arrest until 1991. Chinese President Jiang Zemin named him 'a hero for eternity'. Zhang died at the age of 100: he said the secret of his long life was not worrying, and getting a good night's sleep.

Eighth Route Army the Communist Red Army that fought alongside the Nationalists against the Japanese after the Second United Front

ACTIVITY

KEY DEVELOPMENT

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did the Second Sino-Japanese War begin?
- 2 Briefly explain Jiang's logic of 'trading space for time'.
- 3 List three or more ways the war with Japan impacted negatively on ordinary Chinese people.

Marco Polo Bridge incident

on 7 July 1937 Japanese forces came into conflict with Chinese troops, sparking the second Sino-Japanese War

THE SECOND SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Jiang Jieshi: 'All we can do now is to resist to the bitter end.'

On 7 July 1937, a skirmish broke out between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beiping (Beijing). The Japanese claimed that Chinese troops had fired on their men while on military exercise. A Japanese soldier was missing, presumed captured or killed.

Japan demanded the withdrawal of Chinese forces from the area and an apology. Much to their surprise they got neither. The Chinese stood their ground—Jiang sent reinforcements to Beiping. Japan used the **Marco Polo Bridge incident** as an excuse for launching a full-scale invasion. Troops from Manchukuo moved in to pound the Chinese. Beiping fell on 28 July and Tianjin on 30 July. The Chinese withdrew south as invading forces advanced in strength, sweeping into the Yangzi region and making landings on the coast. The Japanese threw all they had into the offensive, including using aerial bombing to great effect. As Prince Takamatsu, brother of the Japanese emperor, explained: 'We're really going to smash China so that it will be ten years before it can stand straight again'.²⁶

TRADING SPACE FOR TIME

A second front opened at Shanghai on 13 August. Jiang sent in his best units to defend the city, and said it must be held at all costs. Jiang's order to hold Shanghai was a fine patriotic intention—but it left his commanders with little room to move. The Nationalists suffered staggering losses: 250,000 troops were killed or wounded, which was almost 60 per cent of Jiang's best soldiers.²⁷

The civilian population also suffered terribly from bombing. One of the best-known photographs of that era was taken after one such bombing raid: a lone baby sits screaming on an empty railway platform with smoke and wreckage strewn in the background.

On 15 August, the Nanjing government declared a War of Self-Defence. Jiang and his generals were well aware that the Chinese army could not match Japan blow for blow, so they planned to draw the invaders into a long war of attrition. There was little point in trying to defeat such a superior foe.²⁸ Nationalist China would 'trade space for time' and eventually outlast the enemy.

THE CHINESE RETREAT

The Chinese armed forces fought bravely during the first two months of the war. However, faced with the large, disciplined and well-equipped Japanese army, retreat was only a matter of time. Unfortunately, retreat soon turned into rout: Shanghai was lost in November 1937 and Nanjing on 13 December 1937. There had been little preparation for a strategic withdrawal in the event of invasion:

- wounded soldiers lay without proper treatment while they waited for transport
- hundreds of thousands of refugees created further chaos as they congested roads and railway lines
- bombers and fighter planes attacked civilian and military targets alike.

An American Red Cross volunteer said the moans of wounded soldiers sounded like 'the wind in a pine forest'.²⁹ It was a humanitarian tragedy.



Source 5.11 A Chinese child left at a Shanghai railway station after the Japanese bombing during the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937.

DID YOU KNOW?

In December 1938, Wang Jingwei defected to the Japanese. In 1940 he was appointed head of the collaborationist Nationalist government at Nanjing.

JAPANESE ATROCITIES AT NANJING

In an incident known infamously as the **Rape of Nanjing**, the Japanese Imperial Army unleashed a reign of terror that went on for seven weeks. People were reportedly set alight, buried alive, beheaded and machine-gunned. Two Japanese lieutenants even had a competition to see who could be the first to sever 100 heads. According to some estimates, up to 300,000 civilians were killed. Tens of thousands of Chinese women and girls were raped. Historian Iris Chang describes the Rape of Nanjing as ‘the Forgotten Holocaust of World War II’.³⁰

Much of Nanjing was left in ruins, and piles of bodies were seen in numerous locations. The Japanese inflicted many horrors on the Chinese people during their occupation. Some Japanese soldiers sent photographs of their exploits at Nanjing to be developed in Shanghai. These images were leaked to the press and shocked the world. Many showed prisoners being used as live targets in bayonet practice.³¹

The Japanese hoped for a peace settlement after their destruction of Nanjing, provided that Jiang would come to terms. However, the Generalissimo was a staunch patriot, and was fixed on a policy of no surrender. He declared, ‘Wherever I go is the Government and the centre of resistance. I am the State.’³²

The Nationalist government first re-established itself at Wuhan where it decided to make a stand while it prepared for a transfer to **Chongqing**, which could be more easily defended. Trenches, bunkers and other defences were built around Wuhan. The Soviet Union provided 800 planes and pilots.

To delay a Japanese advance after Nanjing, Jiang ordered the dykes (or flood walls) of the Yellow River to be blown up on 7 June 1938. The river, nicknamed ‘China’s Sorrow’, lived up to its name as:

- crops in three provinces were ruined
- eleven cities were flooded
- 4000 villages were flooded
- 3–5 million people were left homeless and became refugees
- an estimated 500,000 people drowned.

The flooding kept the Japanese advance bogged down for three months, but ‘Chiang’s [Jiang’s] government had committed one of the grossest acts of violence against its own people’.³³ The loss of life was a terrible price to pay for a strategic advantage that only delayed the inevitable. After a desperate two-month battle, fought with great courage by the Chinese, Wuhan was lost on 25 December 1938.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1938, Japanese newspapers reported that the last line of Chinese defence at Wuhan were 5000 orangutans that had been specially trained to throw grenades and operate machine guns.

Rape of Nanjing atrocities committed by the Japanese between December 1937 and January 1938 after capturing the city of Nanjing. About 300,000 civilians were killed and 20,000 women and girls were raped

Chongqing a major port city on the Yangzi River in Sichuan which served as the Nationalist capital during the War of Resistance against Japan

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 5.12 and 5.13 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe how Nationalist China responded in its conflict with Japan.
- 2 Explain the impact of Japanese military aggression on China.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of the Sino-Japanese War in destabilising Nationalist China. Use evidence to support your response.



Source 5.12 A GMD anti-Japanese poster from about 1937: (clockwise from top right) ‘Everybody must hate the enemy; defences must be constructed step-by-step; the enemy must be exterminated; fortifications must be strengthened’.



Source 5.13 Japanese soldiers using Chinese prisoners as live targets for a bayonet drill during the Rape of Nanjing.

IMPACT OF THE WAR

Zhou Enlai: 'The first day of the anti-Japanese war will mean the beginning of the end for Jiang Jieshi.'

CHONGQING AND 'FREE CHINA'

On 20 November 1937, the Nationalist government moved to Chongqing in the Sichuan mountains. People from across the nation came to the new capital of 'Free China', and around 2000 businesses moved there to escape the Japanese. Dai Li and Big Ears Du worked at smuggling goods into Nationalist territory through Japanese blockades.

The move to Chongqing provided a relatively safe haven for Jiang's government, but the invasion deprived the Nationalists of their power bases in central and coastal China. They had lost the rail network, the main centres of industry and China's most fertile farmland.³⁴ China was again politically fragmented, as the Japanese fostered further collaborationist governments (and the CCP survived in Yan'an).

The government suffered reduced income from income tax and customs tariffs—which dropped from 67 per cent to 6.3 per cent. The Nationalist government began printing more banknotes to meet its costs,³⁵ which worked in the short-term but later had serious consequences. Printing more banknotes caused hyperinflation—when prices rise more than 50 per cent in a month. This wiped out wealth, alienated the upper classes, and affected the livelihoods of ordinary people. Literally cartloads of paper money were needed to buy basic goods. Prices rose on average 237 per cent between 1942 and 1944. Costs increased spectacularly by another 251 per cent from January to August 1945.³⁶ The wartime inflation destroyed the economy.³⁷

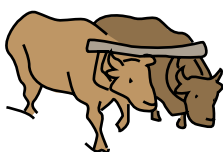
THE INFLATIONARY SPIRAL, 1937–1948

	NOTES ISSUED (MILLIONS OF CHINESE \$)	PRICE INDEX (COST OF LIVING)
1937	2,060	100
1938	2,740	176
1939	4,770	323
1940	8,440	724
1941	15,810	1,980
1942	35,100	6,620
1943	75,400	22,800
1944	189,500	75,500
1945	1,031,900	249,100
1946	3,726,100	627,210
1947	33,188,500	10,340,000
1948	374,762,200	287,700,000

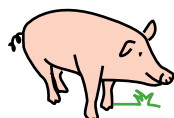
← **Source 5.14** Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People's Republic* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 59.

PURCHASING POWER OF 100 CHINESE DOLLARS

1937: oxen



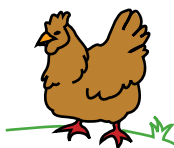
1939: pig



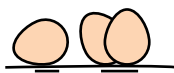
1941: sack of flour



1943: hen



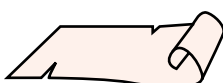
1945: eggs



1947: piece of coal



1949: sheet of paper



CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT

The reputation of the Nationalist government was damaged by its conduct during the 1940s. This was not just for economic reasons, as the war also made the government's other failings more apparent.

- There was widespread corruption among government and army officers.
- Up to 30 per cent of aid from foreign governments ended up on the blackmarket.
- Some members of the government, particularly the Soong family, made vast fortunes on speculation and insider trading.
- Chaos and negligence were noted often in observations of the time.³⁸

When students or intellectuals voiced criticism, the secret police made it known that speaking up was dangerous for their health. Dai Li—who was Jiang's self-proclaimed 'claws and teeth'—kept up his campaign against subversive (or rebellious) groups and individuals at Chongqing. Restrictions on the press and free speech also grew tighter during the war. The peasants in areas under Nationalist jurisdiction suffered under heavy taxes that sometimes took between 70 and 90 per cent of their crops.³⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

A small number of American fighter pilots worked as mercenaries for Jiang Jieshi during World War II. Known as the Flying Tigers, they proved very effective. For every enemy plane they shot down Jiang promised his Tigers a \$500 bonus.

DID YOU KNOW?

Corruption and inflation under the Nationalist government in the late 1940s led to a popular joke pairing 'Chiang Kai-shek' and 'Cash My Cheque'.

THE HENAN FAMINE

Theodore White: *'We knew that there was a fury, as cold and relentless as death itself, in the peasants of Henan.'*

In 1943, US journalist Theodore White and photographer Harrison Forman travelled from Chongqing to Henan to investigate rumours of mass hunger, death and disease, and witnessed these horrors firsthand. White wrote that, 'Famine and flood are China's sorrow'.⁴⁰

A series of misfortunes had contributed to this humanitarian disaster in China, including:

- forced grain requisitions by both Japanese and Nationalist troops
- intentional flooding of the Yellow River in 1938
- corrupt local officials
- severe drought in the spring of 1942
- inadequate assistance by the Nationalist government.

Four million people abandoned their homes and set out for neighbouring provinces in a desperate search for food. An estimated 2 million to 3 million people died of hunger or disease. White and Forman were appalled by what they witnessed:

- dogs feasting on corpses
- masses of miserable and sick children
- evidence of cannibalism
- people eating food substitutes, such as corn husks or bark
- countless dead bodies along the roadside.

There were thousands and thousands of starving people choking the railway lines: '... dreamwalkers whose unseeing eyes were a thousand years old with suffering'.⁴¹ White published a damning report for *Time* magazine in March 1943, and Forman's images shocked the world. Their efforts pressured Jiang's government into action—although for many people this was too late.

The suffering of the Henanese people in 1942–1943 has been called 'China's forgotten famine',⁴² but at the time Theodore White claimed that: 'It was the greatest disaster of the war in China'.⁴³

DID YOU KNOW?

Whereas US President Roosevelt supported Jiang's government, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill thought that including China as one of the 'Big Four' allies was a joke.

↓ Winston Churchill.



FOREIGN RELATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

China lost substantial territory in 1937–1939, during the initial phase of the Japanese invasion. The Sino-Japanese War then settled into a stalemate, with neither side winning. According to Jiang, he was 'saving the nation by the winding path'—deliberately extending and wearing down the enemy. China's resistance kept over 1 million Imperial Japanese troops in the field when they could have been deployed elsewhere.

Jiang had hoped that eventual victory would come with help from the League of Nations. During one interview Jiang shouted, 'We are fighting the battle of the world. Intervene for Christ's sake!'⁴⁴ Hitler had withdrawn his military advisers from China after forging closer links with Japan.

Then, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the US entered World War II. The Americans gave the Nationalists much-needed supplies, advice and equipment. At first, the supplies and equipment were brought in from Burma, then an airlift program was established after the road was cut by a Japanese offensive. US President Roosevelt considered Jiang's government to be one of the 'Big Four' powers of the free world and a valued US ally. Roosevelt gave Jiang generous Lend-Lease aid that did not have to be repaid—provided it was used in the war against Japan.

However, it soon became clear that Jiang was stockpiling much of the equipment for future campaigns against the Communists. He also held back his best troops.⁴⁵

JIANG'S MILITARY BLUNDERS

The Generalissimo's chief American adviser was General Joseph Stilwell, known as 'Vinegar Joe' for his sour manner.

Stilwell knew China well, was respectful of its customs and spoke Mandarin fluently. He was a man who spoke his mind—the reports he sent his superiors on the Guomindang leadership were far from positive. However, Nationalist generals seemed to ignore Stilwell's advice.

Stilwell was offended by the misuse of military supplies and stockpiling for expected anti-Communist campaigns. According to historian David Rooney, Jiang 'was double-dealing on a colossal scale' in using Lend-Lease material for his own ends.⁴⁶ Stilwell also disagreed with the policy of pursuing a stalemate, and described the Nationalist war effort after 1938 as 'practically zero'.⁴⁷

Although there was logic to Jiang's tactic of giving up territory to buy time, it would not bring quick victory. By not actively taking part in a war of resistance, the Generalissimo was:

- ruining the morale of his soldiers
- appearing to his people to be a weak leader.⁴⁸

Stilwell claimed that the Chinese could not 'get the idea of the offensive into their heads'.⁴⁹ He also found the treatment of soldiers who were forced (or conscripted) into the army appalling, as officers:

- beat their men
- did not give them enough supplies.

Nor were wounded soldiers cared for adequately. In late 1937, Chinese journalist Du Zhongyuan wrote, 'what was saddest was that when our side withdrew, a lot of our seriously wounded brothers had nobody to look after them. Some were crawling by the roadside, others shot themselves'.⁵⁰

Conscripts were roped together naked, so they could not escape—and up to half of those rounded up for service died from hunger, thirst, exposure or disease before they even reached the military training camps.⁵¹ Deaths from mistreatment or disease totalled 1.5 million. The conscripts were often very poor and therefore unhealthy to begin with, whereas the wealthy could pay to avoid service.

Soldiers' pay was delivered in lump sums to divisional commanders for distribution. However, many commanders kept the names of men on their rosters who had died or deserted—so that they could pocket the remaining pay. This meant that a division of 10,000 might have only had 5000–7000 men in actual service.⁵² As Stilwell reported: 'The Chinese soldier is excellent material, wasted and betrayed by stupid leadership'.⁵³

Jiang knew his commanding officers were incompetent. He once said, 'I have to lie awake at night, thinking what foolish things they may do'.⁵⁴ Jiang made matters worse by constantly interfering in the chain of command and issuing orders based on poor intelligence. According to Stilwell, 'Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] is directly responsible for much of the confusion that normally exists in his command'.⁵⁵

Relations between Stilwell and Jiang became increasingly strained. The matter came to a head after Japan's Ichigo ('Number 1') Offensive, which began in April 1944. Japanese forces swept into central and southern China to strike at newly built airfields. Several large cities were also taken. Stilwell was furious with the poorly coordinated Chinese defence, as he had warned Jiang that such an attack was likely.

In September 1944, Stilwell passed on an order to Jiang from President Roosevelt, directing him to grant Stilwell operational command of Chinese forces. Jiang responded by demanding that Stilwell be recalled to America on account of their irreconcilable differences. On 29 October Stilwell was replaced by General Albert Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer was more to Jiang's liking but did not secure any change in the Nationalist war effort. Jiang got what he wanted, but Stilwell's recall damaged US–China relations. As *New York Times* correspondent Brooks Anderson reported:

The decision to relieve General Stilwell represents the political triumph of a moribund [failing], anti-democratic regime that is more concerned with maintaining its political supremacy than in driving the Japanese out of China.⁵⁶

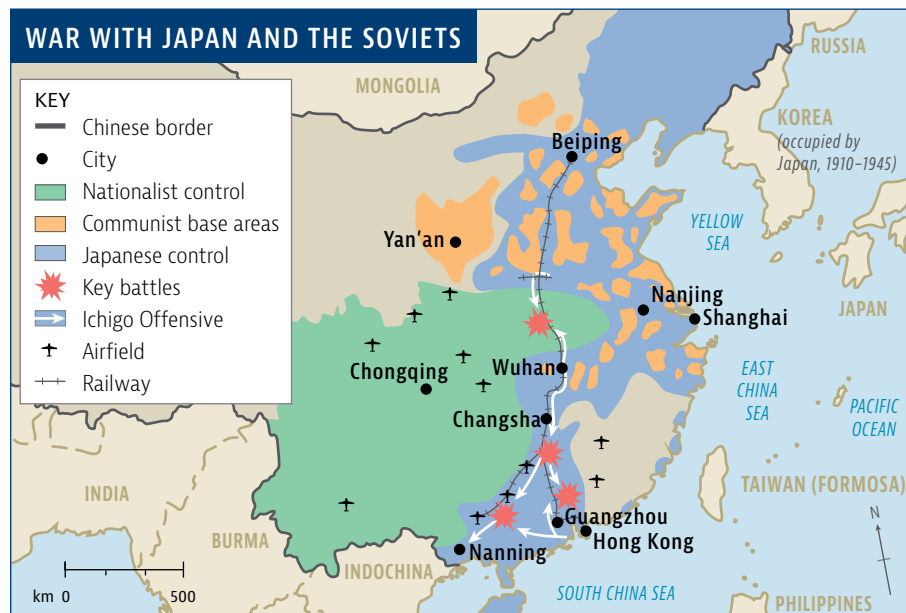


Source 5.15 Generalissimo and Madame Jiang Jieshi meet with General Joseph W. Stilwell, the commander of the China Expeditionary Forces.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1944, General Stilwell believed he would be put in charge of Nationalist troops, and wrote this poem about it:

*I've waited long for vengeance
At last I've had my chance,
I've looked the Peanut [Jiang]
in the eye
And kicked him in the pants ...
I know I've still to suffer,
And run a weary race,
But oh! The blessed pleasure!
I've wrecked the Peanut's face.*



Source 5.16

New Fourth Army the Communist armed forces established from remnants of Jiangxi Soviet guerrillas in 1937, following the formation of the Second United Front

END OF THE UNITED FRONT

In late 1940, the Communist **New Fourth Army** was ordered by the Nationalist high command to move north of the Yangzi River. A deadline for the completion of this order was set at 31 December. By 4 January 1941, the bulk of the Fourth Army troops had moved out of the disputed area, but members of the high command, support staff, nurses, political commissars and a small protection force of 5000 soldiers remained in camp.

Without warning, Nationalist troops launched a devastating attack, and all but the commanders, nurses and female cadres were massacred. The surviving high-ranking officers were imprisoned and the women raped. Hearing this news, Mao sent a cabled message to Chongqing: 'Those who play with fire ought to be careful ... the whole people of the whole country will throw you into the gutter'.⁵⁷

Thus the Second United Front came to an end. Jiang ordered a blockade of Yan'an and denied foreign military aid to the Communists.

THE CCP AND WAR WITH JAPAN

For the most part, the war with Japan was an advantage to the CCP. The Nationalists bore the brunt of Japanese invasion, while the Communists were largely left alone. There was no strategic reason for the invaders to take the remote, dusty regions of Shaanxi. Other Communist-occupied areas also remained free, apart from the occasional bombing raid or retaliatory attack.

Despite this, the Communists took every opportunity to be seen as patriots in the war of national defence, as they:

- kept up guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese
- disrupted supply and communication lines
- picked off stray soldiers
- pulled up railway tracks
- disarmed isolated battalions.

In late 1940, the Communist Eighth Route Army made an ill-fated venture into large-scale warfare with its Hundred Regiments Offensive. Mao did not approve. The army lost 22,000 men, while the Japanese lost only 4000. The Japanese responded with blood-chilling ferocity. General Okamura ordered an attack on regions where Communist guerrillas were thought to be operating. It was known as the 'three alls campaign':

- burn all
- kill all
- destroy all.

Whole villages were destroyed—every building, animal and person. However, such devastation only inflamed resentment towards the Japanese and drove poor and embittered peasants into the arms of the Communists.⁵⁸

After the losses of the Hundred Regiments, the CCP concentrated on guerrilla fighting and expanding Communist territory and influence. The keys to expansion were land reform—which resumed after the collapse of the Second United Front—and patriotic appeal. As Edwin Moise argues: 'The Party was functioning very much as a nationalist organisation; indeed it was struggling for nationalist goals more vigorously and more competently than the Guomindang'.⁵⁹

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly outline how each of the following developments impacted Nationalist China during the war with Japan:
 - inflation
 - corruption
 - military failures
 - political repression
 - American aid and advice
 - conscription.
- 2 What were General Stilwell's chief complaints regarding China's war effort?
- 3 What led to the collapse of the Second United Front?
- 4 How did the CCP respond to the war with Japan?

THE STORY OF WOOD FAIRY

Sidney Rittenberg was an American who first came to China as a translator with the US Army. He developed a deep interest in China, and decided to stay on. Rittenberg first worked for the United Nations, and later travelled to Yan'an. He went on to join the CCP—and was one of the few foreigners to do so. Soon after his arrival in China, he experienced firsthand the terrible injustices faced by many ordinary Chinese. Rittenberg tells the story of Li Ruishan and his daughter Li Muxian ('Wood Fairy'), who inspired his desire to help the Chinese people.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Read the story of Wood Fairy online (revolutionarymovie.com/woodfairy.html) and then discuss these questions in small groups:

- 1 Describe the tragedy that Li Ruishan and his wife reported to Rittenberg.
- 2 Explain Rittenberg's reaction to the 'justice' they received.
- 3 What aspects of ordinary people's lives under the Nationalist government does this story illustrate?

THE DIXIE MISSION

General Patrick Hurley: 'Yahoo!'

In July 1944, the USA sent diplomats and military officers to Yan'an on the so-called **Dixie Mission**. (The nickname 'Dixie Mission' came from the likeness between rebel CCP territory and the 'Dixie' states of the southern rebels in the American Civil War.) The mission had two aims:

- an evaluation of the Communists as a force in the war against Japan (which Stilwell particularly wanted)
- a settlement between the Guomindang and the Communists.

The members of the Dixie Mission were impressed with the organisation, discipline and morale at Yan'an. The mission also produced damning reports comparing the Communists and Nationalists: 'the Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Chiang's [Jiang's] but theirs'.⁶⁰ The Guomindang clearly needed to improve its governance and carry out significant reforms if it hoped to prove that the US assessment was wrong.

HURLEY'S FAILED NEGOTIATIONS

In November 1944, President Roosevelt sent a personal emissary to Yan'an: General Patrick Hurley. Hurley was a loud, vain, cowboy-like character from Oklahoma. As he got out of the plane in Yan'an he gave a rousing Native American war cry—'Yahoo!' Mao thought Hurley was a 'clown'.

Hurley's grasp of Chinese politics was flawed. He believed there was little difference between the basic principles of the Nationalists and the CCP, and thus no major

Dixie Mission the 1944 visit by American observers and diplomats to the Yan'an Soviet

📖 **Source 5.17** Soldiers reading a sign, painted in English and Chinese, urging Sino-American friendship and calling for increased hope that General Marshall will end civil war in north-east China.



➔ **Source 5.18** Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 399.

DID YOU KNOW?

General Patrick Hurley is said to have called Mao Zedong 'Moose Dung' and Jiang Jieshi 'Mr Shek'.

↓ General Patrick Hurley.



DID YOU KNOW?

When Mao met with Japanese diplomats in the 1970s, they apologised for the conduct of their armed forces during WWII. Thinking of the trouble Japan had caused his Nationalist enemies, Mao suggested it might be better for him to thank them instead of accept their apology.

DID YOU KNOW?

When the Soviet Union left Manchuria, its armed forces took nearly all of the region's factory equipment with them. This set China's economic development back several years.

obstacle to their reaching agreement. Hurley was determined to support Jiang, as he believed that many US State Department agents were pro-Communist. Hurley worked with Mao to draft a five-point agreement for Nationalist–Communist cooperation. Hurley took the plan to Jiang, but the Generalissimo refused to sign, and demanded a number of amendments. Hurley's representatives came back to Yan'an to renegotiate—but Mao was furious:

Mao on the CCP–GMD negotiations

General Hurley agreed that the terms were eminently fair ... The Generalissimo has refused these terms ... If the United States wishes to continue to prop up the rotten shell that is Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi], that is her privilege ... We are not like Chiang Kai-shek. No nation needs to prop us up. We can stand erect and walk on our own feet like free men.

In another outburst, Mao yelled: 'Back him as long as you want. But remember one thing. China is whose China? It sure as hell is not Chiang Kai-shek's; it belongs to the Chinese people. The day is coming when you will not be able to prop him up any longer.'⁶¹ No agreement was forthcoming.

JAPAN SURRENDERS

Jiang expected the USA to launch an assault on China in a bid to secure air bases for an attack on Japan, but this never eventuated. On 6 August 1945, the USA dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. On 9 August, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The atomic bombs brought the Pacific War to a sudden close—far sooner than most expected. On 14 August, Japan signed an unconditional surrender. The Sino-Japanese War had devastated China:

- 3 million Chinese soldiers were killed
- 18 million civilians were killed
- 95 million people became refugees
- many Chinese cities and towns were destroyed.

China desperately needed to recover from the war. Jiang's GMD seemed well placed to return to national government as Nationalist armies:

- were three times bigger than Communist armies
- were equipped with American weapons and vehicles.

Although the CCP controlled more territory, the US used the Guomindang to handle the surrender of Japanese forces. The US forces also airlifted Nationalist soldiers into major cities in central China, while American Marines secured the coastal ports until Jiang's men arrived.

However, the fate of the nation was still to be decided.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the purpose of the US 'Dixie Mission'?
- 2 Briefly outline the chief findings of the US inspection tour of Yan'an.
- 3 Why did General Hurley fail to negotiate a peace deal between the CCP and the GMD?
- 4 Why did the war with Japan end sooner than Jiang Jieshi expected?
- 5 What were two or more advantages held by the GMD at the end of the war with Japan?

THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mao Zedong: ‘China is whose China? It sure as hell is not Jiang Jieshi’s.’

From August to October 1945, Hurley tried to arrange a peace agreement between the Communists and Nationalists. Mao and Zhou flew to Chongqing for talks, but the negotiations made little headway.

In the background, a race for territory and Japanese arms was underway—particularly in the north. On 8 August—just two days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima—the Soviet Union sent troops to Manchuria and began disarming the Japanese. The CCP also moved rapidly into the region. With the cooperation of their Soviet allies, the CCP had also accepted the surrender of Japanese forces—and gained valuable Japanese armaments in the process.⁶²

This grab for arms and territory went against an agreement made between the major powers at Yalta in early 1945. Jiang Jieshi was greatly alarmed, and asked the Russians to remain in Manchuria until he could send in troops. US forces subsequently airlifted Nationalist forces into major Manchurian cities. The Communists, under General Lin Biao (Lin Piao), fell back to the countryside. A master of guerrilla warfare, Lin said it was no cause for alarm. His men would consolidate their support in rural areas, surround the cities and ‘sit them to death’.⁶³

In late 1945, US President Harry Truman sent General George Marshall to China as his special ambassador. Marshall brought the Nationalists and Communists together for further talks, as he hoped to avoid civil war through the formation of a coalition government.

On 10 January 1946, a ceasefire was signed—but all it did was give the Communists time to strengthen their hold in the Manchurian countryside. By May the two sides were again at war.

LAND AND MEN

The Nationalists were in a position of strength, in both troop numbers and equipment, and made military gains in the first phase of the civil war. They charged through northern China and Manchuria, taking major cities and railways. Even Yan’an was lost in March 1947.

However, Mao was apparently unmoved. He said: ‘We will give Jiang Yan’an. He will give us China.’⁶⁴ Mao thought that keeping towns for their own sake was unwise, even revolutionary landmarks such as Yan’an. According to Mao: ‘It is after all only caves. Empty cities don’t matter. The aim is to destroy the enemy’s army.’⁶⁵ The Red Army retreated from its positions in an orderly manner, reverted to guerrilla tactics and focused on wearing down Nationalist forces. A song reminded Communist troops of their objectives:

Keep men, lose land, land can be taken again;
Keep land, lose men, land and men both lost.⁶⁶

By contrast, the Nationalists seemed to specialise in keeping land and losing men, and Jiang’s army was soon overstretched. Nationalist troops:

- had spent long periods sitting around in towns and cities
- were unsure of their fighting prowess
- were faced with an army that refused to fight openly and struck when least expected.



↑ General George Marshall.



Source 5.19 Mao Zedong on horseback before a battle in 1947.

People's Liberation Army (PLA) the Communist armed forces, formally established in May 1946. Known previously as the Red Army

Mao used himself as bait to lure Nationalist forces into pursuit and ambush. Speaking of the Nationalist commander Hu Zongnan, who took Yan'an, Mao said: 'Hu came in like a fist. We forced him to open like a hand; now we are cutting off the fingers one by one.'⁶⁷

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

On 1 May 1946, the Communist forces were officially renamed the **People's Liberation Army (PLA)**. It was a suitable name, as the difference between the Nationalist and Communist troops was striking. Historian Lucien Bianco argues that almost 'every major area of the Nationalist military weakness was an area of Red Army strength'.⁶⁸

The Reds were highly mobile whereas the Nationalists were stuck in towns. The bravery and discipline of Communist soldiers led Edgar Snow's wife Helen to describe them as 'Prince Valiants in straw sandals'. Many small victories in the guerrilla campaign reinforced Communist confidence. 'Conscription, a tragedy in the government controlled areas', Bianco relates, 'was an honour in Liberated Areas'.⁶⁹

PEASANTS

Peasants joined the Communist cause largely because of land reform, which became more radical and violent during the Civil War. In 1947, the new Land Law took away all rights of landlords, empowering peasant associations to redistribute land.

In fury, many peasants struck out at landlords—who symbolised the old order—and joined the 'people's war' against Jiang.⁷⁰ Rural people supplied the PLA with food, shelter, intelligence and recruits. An example of Jiang's predicament was when Manchurian peasants removed railway tracks and left Nationalist troops in charge of empty stations.

THE NATIONALISTS SURRENDER

In many ways, the Nationalists had lost the fight before the war began. The morale of Jiang's troops was low after a long period of half-hearted resistance to the Japanese. Nationalist troops were dejected by the 'Three Don't Cares':

1. Don't care to fight.
2. Don't care about the people.
3. Don't care about myself.⁷¹

According to journalist Jack Belden, 'Throughout the Japanese war and the civil war that followed, this army was continuously beaten because it had no soul'.⁷² Corruption had reduced the quality of military personnel and affected the whole government system. The Nationalists seemed incapable of dealing with the crippling inflation, and middle-class Chinese who had supported the government for many years began to desert it.

In April and May 1947, the People's Liberation Army under Lin Biao and Liu Bocheng launched a series of spectacular offensives. Their forces were strengthened with arms abandoned by retreating Nationalists (which led Mao to joke after the war that Jiang Jieshi had been his 'supply officer').

By 1948, guerrilla fighting was no longer required. The PLA surrounded cities and towns that could no longer be reinforced or provisioned. Nationalist troops surrendered in greater and greater numbers—sometimes entire divisions gave themselves up. About 327,000 prisoners were taken after one battle. Many Nationalist soldiers chose to join the Communists—those that did not want to join were allowed to go home, with their travel costs paid.

On 31 January 1949, triumphant PLA troops marched into Beiping, many of them riding on American-made tanks and jeeps they had captured from the Nationalists. Residents in many cities were surprised to find that PLA troops insisted on paying for goods and treated civilians well. Businesses were encouraged to carry on as normal. The PLA posted guards at factories and shopping districts to ensure no looting occurred.

Just days earlier, on 21 January, Jiang had resigned as president. He fled to Taiwan, leaving his vice-president, Li Zongren (Li Tsung-jen), to negotiate peace talks with the Communists. When Li refused to accept the terms of unconditional surrender, the Communist offensive resumed.

The PLA swept south of the Yangzi River, and captured the Nationalist capital of Nanjing on 23 April. Over the following months, PLA forces took control of all but China's most remote regions. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong addressed a jubilant crowd in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China. In his address, Mao declared that China 'will never again be an insulted nation. We have stood up.'⁷³



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the CCP respond to the challenge of fighting a larger, better equipped enemy after the end of the war with Japan?
- 2 Briefly explain the ideas and tactics expressed in the PLA song:
 - Keep men, lose land, land can be taken again;
 - Keep land, lose men, land and men both lost.
- 3 Make a short table comparing the following during the Chinese Civil War:
 - Communist strengths
 - Nationalist weaknesses
- 4 Why did Mao joke: 'Jiang Jieshi was my "supply officer"'?
- 5 When did Mao declare the founding of the People's Republic of China?

DID YOU KNOW?

When Jiang Jieshi left for Taiwan, he took with him all of China's gold reserves, along with crates of priceless antiques from the Imperial Forbidden City.

 **Source 5.20** The People's Liberation Army marching into Beiping, 1949.

ACTIVITY



HISTORICAL SOURCES

John Service was a diplomat from the US State Department who came to Yan'an as part of the 'Dixie Mission'. Interviewed in 1977, he recalled his impressions of the Chinese Communists and frustrations working with the GMD government.

John Service

We finally got up to Yen'an [Yan'an] on July 22, 1944 ... Part of the thing that dazzled us—dazzled us is too strong a word—was the difference in attitude in Yen'an [Yan'an]. Chungking [Chongqing] was simply waiting for the end of the war to come ... Here up in Yen'an [Yan'an]—they had nothing, and they were poor as anything, off in the boondocks—the whole atmosphere was just full of confidence and enthusiasm. They were absolutely sure that they were winning. As the Communists always say, the situation is excellent. ... Everything is positive, everything is good, we're going to win, we are on the winning road. We hadn't expected this. They obviously expected, as we got to talk to them more, expected to be very important in the post-war era, expected to share power, at least, with the Kuomintang [Guomindang]. They were quite confident that, 'The Kuomintang [Guomindang] can never whip us, can never take away these territories.' ...

People would drop in to see you. It was all very informal ... People were living fairly close together. Mao [Zedong] might drop by for a chat in the evening ... or we could go over and see them almost at any time or on very short notice ... you could call over to the headquarters and say, 'Can I come on over?' 'Sure.' If you came, it might be a 'Stay for lunch' sort of thing. It was all a very congenial, friendly, frank sort of an atmosphere. Of course, there were things they didn't tell us, but we didn't know what they were ... the confidence that we ran into, the difference in the morale, esprit, this was something that hit us right away. The ways things got done. If you asked for things, yes, they said they'd do it, and it was done, promptly, in fact, efficiently. In [Chungqing] nothing was efficient. Nothing seemed to work and everything took a long time.

 **Source 5.21** John S. Service, 'State Department Duty in China, The McCarthy Era, and After, 1933–1977', an oral history conducted 1977–1978 by Rosemary Levenson, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.

Using Source 5.21 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline key differences between the Communists and Nationalists, as observed by the 'Dixie Mission'.
- 2 Explain how the Yan'an Way contributed to the CCP victory in the Civil War.
- 3 Evaluate the contribution of the CCP in challenging the Nationalists. Use evidence to support your response.

ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Without a People's Army the people have nothing.' How did Mao and the CCP use the Red Army to mobilise Chinese society and challenge the existing order?
- 'The Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Jiang Jieshi's but theirs.' What were the reasons for the success of the CCP and the failure of the GMD by 1949?
- 'All we can do now is resist to the bitter end.' To what extent did the Second Sino-Japanese War cause the downfall of Nationalist China?
- 'We Communists are like seeds and the people are like the soil.' How did the revolutionary practices established during the Yan'an Soviet era lay the foundation for the Communist victory of 1949?
- The Nationalist army was 'continuously beaten because it had no soul'. Why did the Nationalists lose the Civil War, despite having advantages in troop numbers and equipment?

CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Manchuria was annexed by Japan in 1931 and a puppet regime named Manchukuo was established. In the face of Japan's superior military, Jiang ordered his troops to withdraw and appealed to the League of Nations. This proved ineffective.
- In 1937, Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China's northern, central and seaboard territories. After some initial resistance, Nationalist forces retreated. The GMD established a new capital at Chongqing.
- The Japanese committed appalling atrocities against the Chinese people, including the Rape of Nanjing and its Three All's strategy.
- The Nationalist government revealed its flaws during the war with Japan, and its integrity was undermined by inflation, corruption, repression of critics and military incompetence.
- General Zhang Xueliang pressured the reluctant Jiang into a Second United Front with the CCP against the Japanese, following the Xian Incident.
- The CCP Yan'an Soviet saw the development of policies that brought benefits to the local people. Despite poor conditions, Yan'an grew into a successful community. The Communist government was free from corruption and confident in its leadership and strategies. Land reform brought support from the peasantry.
- The Rectification Campaign established Mao as the dominant ideological theorist and undisputed leader of the CCP.
- The values and revolutionary traditions that first emerged on the Long March were celebrated and formalised as the Yan'an Way.
- The 'Dixie Mission'—a US observation team—travelled to Yan'an to evaluate the Communist government and Red Army. They were very impressed. The Americans noted that the Nationalist Chongqing government offered a poor contrast to the Yan'an Soviet.
- Civil war broke out less than a year after the war with Japan. US efforts to negotiate a peaceful transition to a coalition government were unsuccessful.
- The Nationalists held considerable advantages in the early stages of the war. However, by guerilla warfare, greater discipline, popular support and high morale the Communists gained the upper hand by 1947–1948. Corruption, inflation and poor strategy destabilised the Nationalists.
- The CCP achieved victory in 1949, and declared the founding of the People's Republic of China.

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

Write two letters or perform a three-minute skit that reflects the differing perspectives of either of these groups and their experiences during the Chinese Civil War:

- two peasant farmers, one living under Communist rule, the other under GMD rule
- a Long March veteran PLA soldier and a Nationalist army conscript (c. 1948)
- two university students travelling to Yan'an to attend the University of Japanese Resistance. They are debating the merits and flaws of China's leading political parties.



SECTION B

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the consequences of revolution?
- How did the new regime consolidate its power?
- What were the experiences of those who lived through the revolution?
- To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved or compromised?¹

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

'Go all out, aim high, and achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results.'

FOUR PESTS



AVERAGE CHINESE PERSON'S LIFE EXPECTANCY

1975 = 63 YEARS

1957 = 57 YEARS

1949 = 35 YEARS

¹ Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

MAO ZEDONG

'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.'



Red guards

650,000

KILLED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION 1966–1968

'You can't eat poetry.'

PENG DEHUAI

Jiang Qing



'If it's not spicy, it's not revolutionary!'

MAO ZEDONG

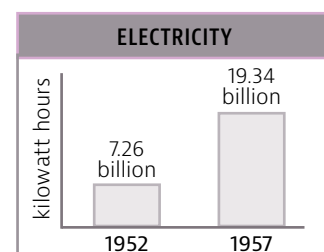
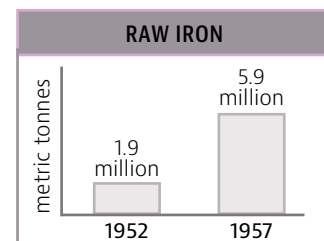
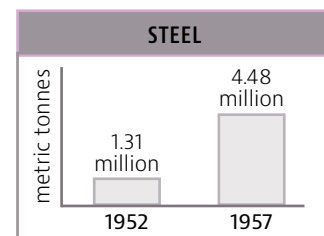
'We will never again be an insulted nation. We have stood up.'

MAO ZEDONG

THE BACKYARD STEEL CAMPAIGN



THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN



PRODUCTION OUTPUT 1952–1957

Mao Zedong and Lin Biao



30–40 MILLION DEATHS FROM STARVATION DURING THE THREE BAD YEARS FAMINE

1.5 MILLION DEATHS IN THE CLEANSING THE CLASS RANKS CAMPAIGN

EXPERIENCES OF REVOLUTION

Note: These fictional characters are based on historical research.



Duan Shizhen, soldier in Yuan Shikai's Beiyang Army, c. 1915:

'The army made the revolution and the army rules the provinces. How can Sun Yixian's so-called 'people's party' rule China? The Chinese respect strength! The future of the Republic is with President Yuan. That said, we won't stand for another emperor!'



Zhang Jun, officer in the Nationalist army, c. 1934:

'The Generalissimo has got it right. China needs a strong leader and the people need discipline. The Japanese are menacing in the north, but the Communists eat away at us from within. We must be rid of them and unite the nation. Right conduct, clean living, decency and self-respect are what the people need. I urge all patriots to rally behind Jiang Jieshi, the army and the Nationalist government!'



Gao Qiangguo, peasant, c. 1948:

'Jiang Jieshi and his lot are a bunch of bandits and jackals! They steal away our sons for their bandit army and tax us to death. The Japanese are worse—rape, burn, kill! But not the Red Army—it's a people's liberation army. I've sent my youngest off to join the "people's war". Since the Communists came, our village has really turned over! We've taken the land from the rich and had a say in who gets what. We're learning to read. Widows have been taken in by the Women's Association. I believe in Chairman Mao. He's the head of our government.'



Li Ming, student, May Fourth Movement c. 1919:

'Down with imperialism! Down with Japan! Down with warlordism! Why has the West betrayed China? The Chinese people must somehow find strength and unite. The nation is being sold out and carved up! My hope is for a new way forward through Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy. Mr. Confucius? Bah! Away with him!'



John Davies, delegate of the US 'Dixie Mission', c. 1944:

'The Communists sure are tough folks! We could really use them to fight the Japs. They run a tight ship with their government too! The Nationalists really need to pull themselves together or else the Reds will sweep across the country. And trying to get 'em to work together is darn near impossible. Who knows how this mess will play out?'



Wang Xiuying, intellectual, Anti-Rightist campaign c. 1957:

'Mao called for "blooming and contending" and I took him at his word. I was nervous at first; the Party has not been kind to intellectuals. But it seemed like things were different this time as more and more people spoke out. I said some things about my colleagues about wanting to focus on our research rather than political study. I want to work and to build a New China. That seems fair and reasonable, doesn't it? Well, I was wrong. I've been branded a Rightist. Tomorrow I face another "struggle" in front of the whole faculty. I'm so ashamed. I'll probably lose my job. My husband says he'll "draw a line". I'm so worried what the future will bring. I'll never speak my mind again!'



Hu Xiaolong, CCP cadre, Great Leap Forward c. 1959:

'Go all-out, aim high, and achieve greater and more economical results in building socialism! This is what I've been encouraging. And see the result! The peasants have come together and are building the bridge to communism. The Commune is the ladder to Heaven on Earth. The People's Communes are great! Day and night my brigades smelt steel and send up Sputniks! Nothing can hold back the Chinese people. A bumper harvest is on the way and everyone has everything they need. Why don't you go to the canteen and eat a nice big bowl of noodles and pork? There's plenty for all. These are great days!'



Feng Guiying, peasant, Great Famine c. 1960:

'We're starving! There's no grain. It was all wasted or taken away. My husband is dead and my children are dying. We haven't had anything nutritious to eat for weeks, maybe months. The Commune canteen stopped serving anything besides hot water long ago. My husband scrounged some weeds and corn-husks, but we all got sick from that. And now he's dead. The children cry but I'm too weak to look for more to eat. My legs have swollen and my teeth are loose. Everyone in the village is starving! So many have died.'



Deng Dongfeng, 'rebel' factory worker, c. Jan 1967:

'The factory cadres used to say, "Do this, do that"; they were really rude and made sure they got the first pick of any special goods sent to the factory. Well not anymore! We've exposed all snake spirits and cow demons! It's the workers who do the talking now. And guess what we say? Those in authority taking the capitalist road must be overthrown! Down with counter-revolutionary revisionists! Seize power! Chairman Mao trusts in the proletarian masses, and it's by our daring that victory will be achieved in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution! Ten thousand years of life to Chairman Mao!'



Chen Xiaofei, Red Guard, c. June 1966:

'Chairman Mao is the red sun shining in my heart! Tomorrow my friends and I will go to Tiananmen and be reviewed by the Chairman. I know this will be the greatest day of my life! It's been great since school finished. Good fun! We've been making revolution in a big way! The rough boys really beat up our head teacher, which scared me a little, but the world belongs to us now. It's right to rebel! Not to rebel is revisionism!'



Tang Qiang, 'sent down' youth, c. 1972:

'It's so boring here! We're meant to "learn revolutionary experience" but I can barely understand the local dialect. The farmers hate us and I hate farming! What's the point? As a Red Guard I was a fearless Monkey King, but now I know we've been used like cannon fodder. Did Chairman Mao betray us? I heard the rumours of Lin Biao's fall ... what the hell is going on? The Party is a load of crock!'

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Consider the perspectives portrayed here, then discuss the following as a class or in small groups:

- Which person's experience do you connect or empathise with the most? Why?
- Identify one or more historically significant events or developments that impacted on each person's experience.
- Select the person whose experience most highlights to you the ways that revolutionary ideas were achieved or compromised. Be prepared to justify your response.

OCTOBER 1949–1976



24–27 September 1962 Socialist Education Movement launched
 14–16 August 1959 Peng Dehuai condemned
 5–28 May 1958 Great Leap Forward launched
 27 February 1957 Mao's speech invigorates Hundred Flowers campaign
 1 January 1953 First Five-Year Plan
 1 February 1952 Five-Antis (*wufan*)
 7 December 1951 Three-Antis (*sanfan*)
 1 May 1950 Marriage Law

1949

20–21 SEPTEMBER 1949

People's Political Consultative Conference drafts the preliminary constitution of the PRC

16 DECEMBER 1949

Mao arrives in Moscow

KEY EVENT

1950

1 MAY 1950

Marriage Law

28 JUNE 1950

Agrarian Reform Law (*fanshen*)

8 OCTOBER 1950

Mao approves Chinese intervention in the Korean War

1951

KEY EVENT

7 DECEMBER 1951

Launch of Three-Antis movement (*sanfan*)

1952

KEY EVENT

1 FEBRUARY 1952

Beginning of Five-Antis movement (*wufan*)

1 JANUARY 1953

First Five-Year Plan begins

KEY EVENT

1953

16 DECEMBER 1953

CCP Central Committee passes resolution on formation of Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives

1954

31 MARCH 1954

Gao Gang purged from CCP

1955

30 JULY 1955

The High Tide begins

1956

15 JANUARY 1956

Rally in Beijing celebrates joint state-private ownership of industries

25 FEBRUARY 1956

Khrushchev denounces Stalin at Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow

KEY EVENT

1957

27 FEBRUARY 1957

Mao's speech, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People', invigorates Hundred Flowers campaign

1 MAY 1957

Widespread 'blooming' and 'contending' unfolds

8 JUNE 1957

End of Hundred Flowers campaign and launch of Anti-Rightist campaign

4 OCTOBER 1957

USSR launches Sputnik satellite

1958

KEY EVENT

29 APRIL 1958

Founding of first People's Commune

5–28 MAY 1958

Great Leap Forward formally launched at Eighth Party Congress

1959

APRIL 1959

Liu Shaoqi appointed President of People's Republic of China. Great Leap Forward policies scaled back

JULY–AUGUST 1959

Severe drought across China: 'Three Bad Years' of famine begin

14 JULY–16 AUGUST 1959

Peng Dehuai condemned as 'anti-Party element'. Great Leap Forward reaffirmed at Lushan Plenum

KEY EVENT

30 SEPTEMBER 1959

Khrushchev receives hostile reception during visit to China

1962

KEY EVENT

JANUARY 1962

7000 Cadres Conference

24–27 SEPTEMBER 1962

Tenth Plenum launches Socialist Education Movement

29 SEPTEMBER 1962

Jiang Qing's first official public appearance

1963

2 MARCH 1963

'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign launched



TIMELINE

—4–18 May 1966
May 16 Circular

—16 July 1966
Mao's Good Swim

—1–24 April 1969
Ninth Party Congress

—13 September 1971
Fall of Lin Biao

—9 September 1976
Mao Zedong dies

1964

MAY 1964

Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong made available for PLA use

JULY 1964

China cuts diplomatic relations with the USSR

1965

3 JANUARY 1965

Liu Shaoqi reconfirmed as President

10 NOVEMBER 1965

Yao Wenyan publishes critical review of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*

1966

2–20 FEBRUARY 1966

Jiang Qing leads the 'Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces'

12 FEBRUARY 1966

Peng Zhen's Five-Man Group offers its 'February Outline Report' on Wu Han issue

4–18 MAY 1966

KEY EVENT

Central Committee releases 'May 16 Circular' and forms Cultural Revolution Small Group

24 MAY 1966

Nie Yuanzi puts up her big-character poster: 'What Are You up to in the Cultural Revolution?'

16 JULY 1966

KEY EVENT

Mao's Good Swim



1–8 AUGUST 1966

Central Committee releases the Sixteen Points

5 AUGUST 1966

Mao puts up 'My First Big Character Poster: Bombard the Headquarters!'

18 AUGUST 1966

First of eight Red Guard mass rallies in Tiananmen Square

1967

14 JANUARY 1967

Rebels overthrow Shanghai municipal authorities. January Storm begins

10 MARCH 1967

'Three-in-one revolutionary committees' directed to assume authority

1968

31 OCTOBER 1968

Liu Shaoqi expelled from the CCP

1969

KEY EVENT

1–24 APRIL 1969

Ninth Party Congress

1970

23 AUGUST 1970

Lin Biao's ally, Chen Boda, arrested and purged following the Lushan Plenum

1971

6 APRIL 1971

US table-tennis team visits China

13 SEPTEMBER 1971

KEY EVENT

Fall of Lin Biao

1972

21 FEBRUARY 1972

President Nixon arrives in Beijing

1973

29 MARCH 1973

Deng Xiaoping resumes duties as Vice-Premier

1974

1 JANUARY 1974

'Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao' campaign launched

1976

8 JANUARY 1976

Zhou Enlai dies

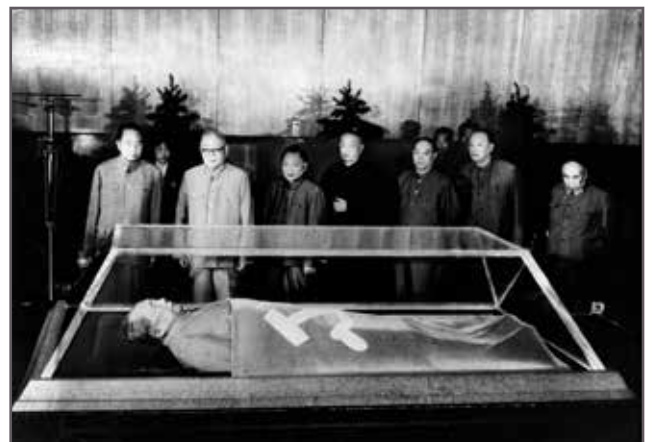
7 FEBRUARY 1976

Hua Guofeng appointed Acting Premier

9 SEPTEMBER 1976

KEY EVENT

Mao Zedong dies



THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(1949–1957)



Source 6.01 'A hundred times vigilant.' A Chinese propaganda poster celebrating the People's Liberation Army.

CHAPTER 6

‘Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people ... The right to vote belongs only to the people and not to reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, this is the people’s democratic dictatorship.’

—Mao Zedong

With the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese Communists took on the challenge of bringing stability to a nation torn by decades of war and economic turmoil.

Despite this, the early period of the People’s Republic was remarkably successful. In the space of three years the government revived the economy and established a new social and political order. But although they were making improvements, the CCP government was hostile to any dissent. A series of mass campaigns was used to repress people who were seen as socially and politically unreliable.

The CCP adopted a Soviet-style Five-Year Plan in a bid to expand the economy and create a socialist society. This achieved rapid gains in heavy industry, although China’s agricultural sector struggled to keep pace.

By the mid-1950s, the CCP faced several challenges. To overcome them, Mao Zedong launched the Hundred Flowers campaign to put the government back on track and ease tensions in Chinese society. However, Mao was shocked by the subsequent outpouring of dissatisfaction, and ultimately turned on those who criticised the Party.

The Anti-Rightist campaign that followed silenced popular dissent, but caused great suffering and setbacks in China’s intellectual circles.

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did the Chinese Communist Party respond to its immediate challenges and consolidate its authority?
- What were the key features of China’s political system as the People’s Republic? What were the ideological foundations of the PRC?
- Why did the People’s Republic of China become involved in an international conflict on the Korean peninsula? What were the consequences of the Korean War for China?
- How were mass campaigns used to both consolidate the power of the new regime and achieve its broader revolutionary agenda? How were different social groups impacted by these campaigns?
- What improvements and advancements were made in general health and women’s rights?
- What were the key features of the First Five-Year Plan? What were the successes and limitations of the plan?
- What did the Gao Gang Affair reveal about tensions in the CCP leadership? What aspect of Mao’s approach to politics emerged during the affair?
- Why did Mao encourage the Hundred Flowers campaign?
- What were the consequences of the Hundred Flowers campaign?



THE NEW ORDER

Mao Zedong: 'Our constitution is of a new socialist type, different from any of the bourgeois type.'

A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM

KEY DEVELOPMENT

On 20–21 September 1949, the CCP held a conference in Beijing to draft a constitution to outline the new political order of the People's Republic of China. The subsequent laws were a clear appeal to national unity. Eight 'democratic parties', including the Democratic League and Guomindang Revolutionary Committee, would govern alongside the Communists. Eleven of the twenty-four ministers in the new government were non-Communists. Historian Jonathan Fenby argues that this amounted to 'window dressing; the non-Communist politicians were known as "flower vases"—there for decoration'.¹ The CCP remained the dominant authority. In 1954, a formal constitution was drawn up and the first National People's Congress was held. This constitution formally established the processes and structures of government that continue to this day.

← **Source 6.03** Chairman Mao proclaims the founding of the People's Republic of China.

KEY EVENTS

1 May 1950

Marriage Law

28 June 1950

Agrarian Reform Law (*fanshen*)

8 October 1950

Mao approves Chinese intervention in the Korean War

7 December 1951

Launch of Three-Antis movement (*sanfan*)

1 February 1952

Beginning of Five-Antis movement (*wufan*)

1 January 1953

First Five-Year Plan begins

31 March 1954

Gao Gang purged from CCP

30 July 1955

The High Tide begins

27 February 1957

Mao's speech, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People', invigorates Hundred Flowers campaign

8 June 1957

End of Hundred Flowers campaign and launch of Anti-Rightist campaign



↑ **Source 6.02** 'The Founding of the Nation'. Mao Zedong announces the birth of the People's Republic of China, 1 October 1949.

DID YOU KNOW?

When workmen placed the new Communist symbols on the Gate of Heavenly Peace at Tiananmen Square, they put the old Republican emblems in a storeroom. In that storeroom, they found the emblems of China's dynasties that had also been forgotten in dusty storage.

DID YOU KNOW?

On the eve of the capture of Beijing in 1949, Mao remarked: 'Today we're heading into the capital to take the *gan kao* ['big test': highest Imperial exam], no wonder everyone is nervous ... All of us have to make the grade'.²

NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS AND STATE COUNCIL

The National People's Congress (NPC), a parliament of sorts, was the end result of a multi-tiered process:

1. Local assemblies elected county representatives.
2. The county representatives then chose representatives for the provincial level.
3. The provincial body then elected delegates for municipal assemblies.
4. The municipal assemblies then decided who would sit in the NPC.

A Standing Committee presided over matters in the Congress. The NPC elected Mao head of state, or President. The new government, called the State Council, was a cabinet made up of ministries. It was headed by Premier Zhou Enlai, who also served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Provincial, county and municipal governments implemented policies at the lower levels.

DID YOU KNOW?

Soong Qingling, the widow of Sun Yixian, was a non-Communist Vice-Chairperson of the People's Republic.



← Source 6.04

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Chinese Communist Party, with Mao as Chairman, provided the core personnel of government and was the real seat of power. Technically, the CCP was not the government, but the Party was interwoven with the state. The CCP had a centralised, hierarchical structure. The Communist National Party Congress, which met irregularly, represented delegates from lower-level Party bodies from across the nation, including:

- six regional committees
- twenty-nine provincial committees
- around 2500 county and city committees.

The Party Congress—which is not to be confused with the National Congress—voted in a Central Committee that would debate and suggest amendments to major policies.

plenum formal meeting of the CCP Central Committee

DID YOU KNOW?

The four small yellow stars on the PRC flag and insignia represent the four main classes: peasants, workers, small businessmen and loyal industrialists. The large star represents

the leadership of the Communist Party.

The red in the background represents communism, but is also traditionally the Chinese colour for happiness.



 People's Republic of China insignia.

Meetings of the Central Committee were called **plenums** or 'plenary sessions'. The Central Committee also selected the members of the higher-ranking Politburo, which met more regularly and had fewer members.

An elite group of around five men made up the Standing Committee of the Politburo—a powerful and dominant body that guided other members of the Politburo. In the early 1950s, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun (Ch'en Yun) and Liu Shaoqi were all members of the Standing Committee. The final Communist organisation was the Secretariat. It was the administrative arm of the Central Committee, and supervised and facilitated communication between higher and lower committees. Deng Xiaoping was the Secretary-General of the Secretariat. All government functions were carried out under close Party direction and major policies originated from the Politburo.³

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

In the new government, the military had close ties to the Party and state. The People's Liberation Army was closely supervised by the Military Affairs Committee (which was under the Politburo). Leading figures in the military, such as Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao, held key positions in both the Party and the government. Historian Rowan Callick highlights the significance of the Party's relationship to the PLA that continues to this day: 'It is not the army of the government, or of China more generally, but of the CCP'.⁴

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP

In his 1940 work *On New Democracy*, Mao spoke of China undergoing revolution in its 'bourgeois-democratic' phase in transition to socialism.⁵ However, this transitional stage certainly did not require a capitalist liberal democracy. Nor was China a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', like the Soviet Union. After 1949, Mao said that state power, in theory, would be exercised through a **people's democratic dictatorship** of the four 'revolutionary classes':

1. peasantry
2. proletariat (workers)
3. petite-bourgeoisie (lower-middle class; often small business owners)
4. national capitalists (managerial middle class; 'loyal industrialists').

Regardless of class, everyone was guided by the Communist Party. It was a relationship symbolised by the four stars on the flag of the People's Republic. Mao did not see any contradiction in the idea of a 'democratic dictatorship'. According to Mao:

Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people ... The right to vote belongs only to the people and not to reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, this is the people's democratic dictatorship.⁶

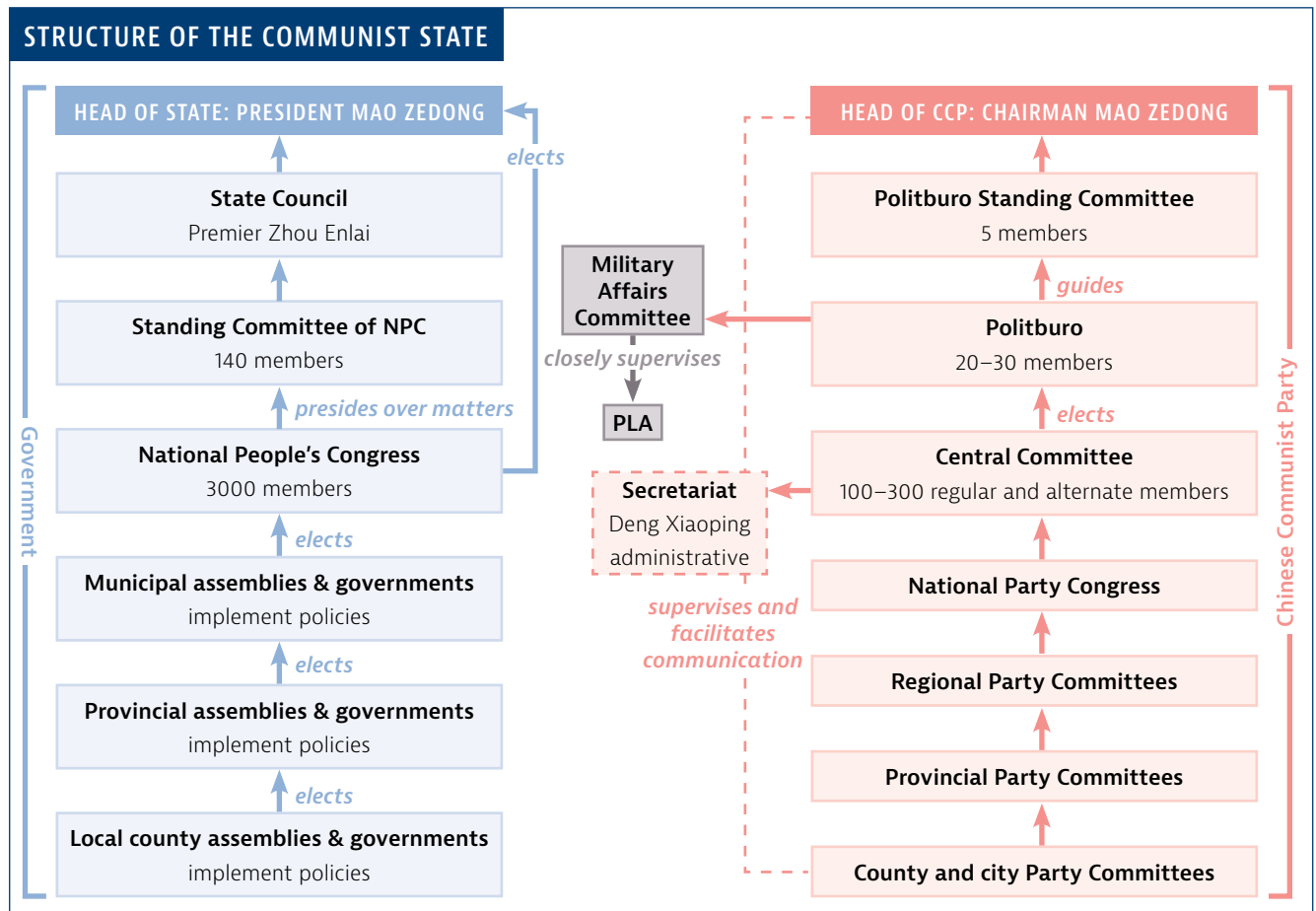
In the People's Republic, the 'new democratic' coalition of revolutionary classes upheld a dictatorship over 'reactionaries' and 'bad elements'. As the Party of the proletariat (or working class), the Communists claimed the right to administer and guide the new society to socialism.

people's democratic dictatorship rule by the four revolutionary classes: peasantry, proletariat, petit-bourgeoisie and national capitalists. Proclaimed with the founding of the PRC

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why does historian Jonathan Fenby describe the inclusion of non-Communist ministers in the early PRC government as 'window dressing'?
- 2 Who was Premier of the People's Republic? What role did he play?
- 3 Who was President of the People's Republic? What was his role?
- 4 Explain three or more ways in which the CCP was the dominant authority in the PRC.
- 5 Briefly explain the symbolism of the PRC flag as a representation of a 'people's democratic dictatorship'.



CONSOLIDATING COMMUNIST POWER

Mao Zedong: 'The Chinese revolution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous.'

The first few years of the new regime were guided by practical considerations. The key areas for attention included:

- setting up an effective administration
- maintaining law and order
- reviving the economy.⁷

Reconstruction and consolidation were pressing concerns, but reliable and effective administrators were hard to find. Although the Communists had governed the Liberated Areas during the Civil War, the 4.5 million members of the CCP made up less than 1 per cent of the Chinese population.⁸ Ruling one of the world's largest and most populous nations was a different prospect to running a soviet community.

At first, civil servants who had served under the Guomindang were encouraged to stay at their posts. They were promised decent salaries and urged to work for a new China. Many accepted the offer. Educated Chinese people living overseas were encouraged to come back and help rebuild the homeland. Many people in the West gave up good careers to contribute to the new society without any understanding of Communist policies or outlook. Many would come to deeply regret this decision.⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

Many PLA soldiers and officers had not set foot in a big city before 1949. Some found modern conveniences confusing. City dwellers spoke with amusement at seeing soldiers washing rice in Western toilets, thinking they were sinks, and looking horrified when they pulled the 'more water chain' and their meal flushed away. Others were frustrated in their attempts to light cigarettes on lightbulbs.

bureaucratic capitalists

businessmen and industrialists whose close ties to the Japanese or GMD led them to be denounced under the PRC

WORKING WITH NATIONAL CAPITALISTS

To ease their transition to power, the Communists expressed their willingness to use the resources and expertise of ‘national capitalists’—industrialists who were willing to give support to the CCP. Mao hoped to keep the economy stable, and offered China’s small but influential managerial middle class the opportunity to work with the new government. Many were compensated for factories or equipment taken by the Communist authorities.

However, such favourable treatment was not extended to all the urban elite. Some businesspeople were denounced as **bureaucratic capitalists** if they:

- had worked too closely with the former GMD government
- had collaborated with Japanese authorities
- were suspected of being hostile to the CCP.

The property of these ‘bureaucratic capitalists’ was confiscated by the state. Despite this approach, the Communists tried to retain the managers of most enterprises. For example, one deputy manager at a Beijing factory trembled before the arrival of an inspection team of Communist officials. Yet after a tour of the factory and some brief questions about production methods, a CCP official told him: ‘You seem to know what you are doing. You are in charge.’¹⁰ The banking sector, transport industries, electricity and gas suppliers were all brought under direct government regulation. Assets and industries controlled by foreign powers were also nationalised—apart from assets controlled by the USSR.¹¹

NEW CURRENCY

Financial stability—which the Nationalist government had been unable to reach—was achieved with commendable speed. In May 1949, a new ‘people’s currency’ was introduced, called the *yuan* or *renminbi*.

The government enforced strict control over currency exchange, and decreased the amount of paper money in circulation by nationalising all banks. A simple but effective pay system was introduced, with wages based on the price of five basic items:

- flour
- cotton cloth
- coal
- oil
- rice.

Price controls were also brought in, which meant that wages stayed in line with the basic cost of living and were less likely to lead to inflation.¹² Taxes were also reformed and made fairer. This eased financial pressure on people with little money and increased government revenue from 6.5 billion yuan in 1950 to 13.3 billion yuan in 1951.¹³

The rampant inflation of the Nationalist years—which had reached 85,000 per cent in 1949—was brought down to 15 per cent by 1951.¹⁴

THE ROLE OF THE ARMY

While Communist influence was being applied in urban areas, the military brought remote rural areas under central control. By 1951 the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) had enforced Communist power over all outlying areas of the old Qing empire, including Tibet, Hainan and the far northern province of Xinjiang (with the exception of Outer Mongolia).

DID YOU KNOW?

The PRC has a number of autonomous regions, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia. ‘Autonomy’ has been granted where a particular minority dominates a region. Such peoples may use their own language in local government and in schools. Non-Han minorities make up around 10 per cent of the PRC population but are well represented in the media and public events.

The PLA also played a major role in the governance of China during the early 1950s. Political commissars, who continued to carry out propaganda work, were officers in the PLA. Many others with positions in the civilian government also held posts in the army.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Briefly explain how each of these factors was used by the CCP to consolidate its authority in the early years of the PRC:
 - former GMD civil servants
 - returned Chinese emigrants
 - national capitalists
 - nationalisation of key industries.
 - currency reform
 - tax reform
 - the PLA
- According to Communist authorities, what was the difference between 'national capitalists' and 'bureaucratic capitalists'?

THE KOREAN WAR KEY DEVELOPMENT

Zhou Enlai: 'The Chinese people absolutely will not tolerate foreign aggression, nor will they ... tolerate seeing their neighbours invaded by imperialists.'

Before the People's Republic was even one year old, it was drawn into an international war in Korea. This was a costly conflict at a time when China desperately needed to focus on reconstruction—the war made this task even more difficult. The war would also affect domestic social and political campaigns by heightening fear of spies and 'counter-revolutionary' influences. However, the Korean War ultimately showed that the Chinese Communist government was a new force in international politics.

NORTH KOREAN AMBITIONS

After Japan was defeated in 1945 at the end of World War II, Korea was divided at the **38th parallel**. There was a Communist government in the north, under Kim Il-sung, and an American-backed government in the south. Kim hoped to match Mao's success and unite Korea under Communist rule. The armed forces of the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea were strengthened by Soviet military equipment. Further reassurance to the North Koreans came on 12 January 1950, when US Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced that South Korea and Taiwan were not within the 'defensive perimeter' of the United States' international interests.¹⁵

In 1949, Kim had raised the possibility of waging war against South Korea and Josef Stalin had largely approved of the idea. However, Stalin had warned Kim: 'If you should get kicked in the teeth, I shall not lift a finger. You have to ask Mao for all the help.'¹⁶ Stalin also said that the question of war in Korea must be decided by the Chinese and Korean comrades.

Despite Stalin making it clear that China would have to bail Kim out if he got into trouble, Mao was left out of the negotiations. In May 1950, Kim flew to Beijing and



 The North Korean and South Korean flags.

38th parallel a line of latitude (like the equator) that marks the approximate border between North Korea and South Korea

DID YOU KNOW?

In protest at the PRC not having a seat on the United Nations, the Soviet representative to the UN was absent when the Security Council voted on whether to allow the US to intervene in Korea. He was therefore ironically unable to use his right of veto to defeat the resolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

The residents of Seoul suffered terribly during the Korean War. The city was reduced to rubble and changed hands three times. The civilian population fell from 1.5 million to 200,000. General MacArthur said: 'After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children and everything, I vomited'.



Source 6.05 During a rally to collect the signatures of volunteers to fight in the Korean War, Beijing university students shouted slogans such as 'Go to Korea!', 'Resist America!' and 'Defend our country!'

lose face to suffer embarrassment and loss of prestige

told Mao that Stalin approved of his forthcoming campaign. Mao gave his support—although Kim conveniently failed to mention that Stalin would not 'lift a finger' in the East. Nor did Kim give Mao a detailed briefing. For his part, Mao did not foresee that Chinese troops would need to fight on the Korean peninsula.

Meanwhile, Mao was focused on his own plans. He intended to demobilise PLA troops in the north and use them to invade Taiwan—the island stronghold where Jiang Jieshi and the remnants of the GMD had fled in late 1949.

NORTH INVADES SOUTH

On 25 June 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel. Within weeks they had pushed back the South Korean Army and taken almost the entire Korean peninsula. The southern capital, Seoul, fell in just three days. US President Harry Truman was quick to react. He decided that a Communist victory in Korea could not be tolerated and secured the United Nations' backing for intervention.

On 15 September, the American military and their Western allies under the command of General Douglas MacArthur launched a spectacular counter-offensive. MacArthur's troops routed the North Koreans, swept past the 38th parallel and captured the northern capital Pyongyang. As they continued their advance towards the Chinese border, Kim Il-sung begged Mao for help.

Mao and his comrades were alarmed. They did not want to see their Communist ally fall to US 'imperialism'. Nor did they want a hostile government installed in North Korea, which bordered China's industrial heartland in Manchuria. A hastily convened meeting of the top CCP leaders debated what to do. General Lin Biao and China's leading economist, Chen Yun, urged caution. The People's Republic could hardly afford a costly war when economic reconstruction was such a pressing priority. However, Mao, Premier Zhou Enlai and General Zhu De felt that intervention was necessary. Urgent communications were made to the USSR—and Stalin agreed to involve the Soviet air force.

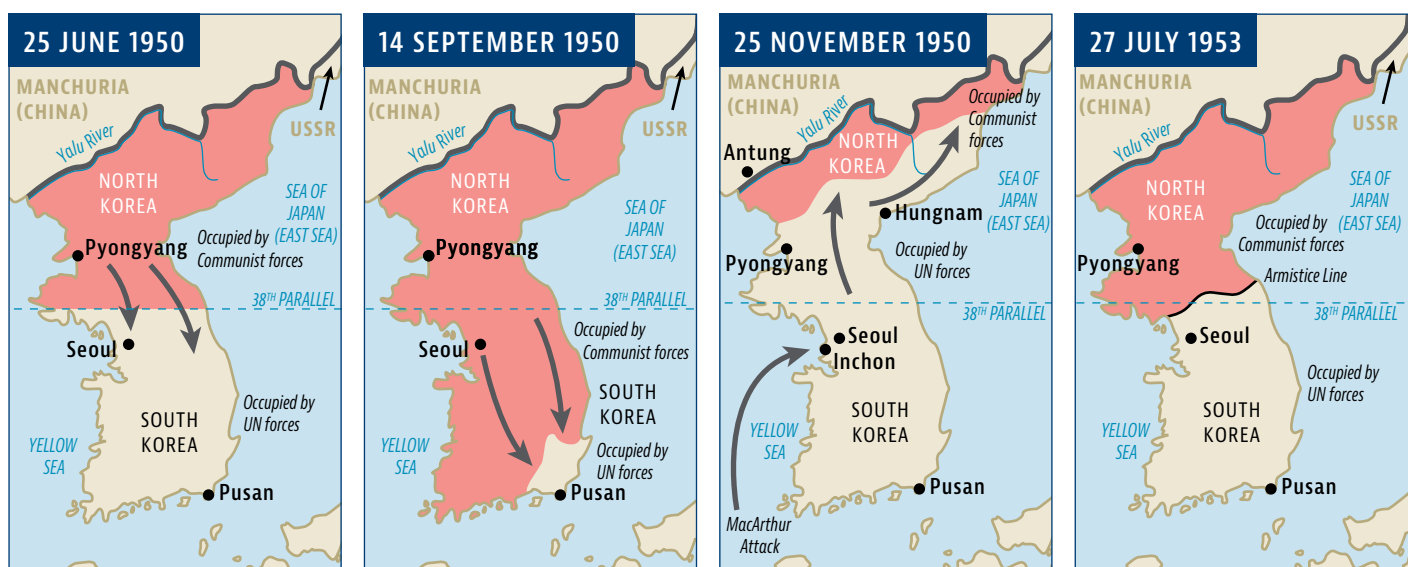
CHINA JOINS THE WAR

Earlier, Mao had warned Kim Il-sung: 'Your enemy is not an easy one. Don't forget, you are fighting the chief imperialist. Be prepared for the worst.'¹⁷ Mao barely slept for days as the decision to oppose America was debated. Lin Biao claimed he was ill and refused to lead the campaign. General Peng Dehuai, a tough, no-nonsense veteran of the Long March, was called in to command the 'People's Volunteers', as the Chinese expeditionary force was named.

Meanwhile, Zhou Enlai warned the Americans to halt their advance. MacArthur ignored the warning, apparently oblivious to the 2 million Chinese troops amassing across the Yalu River, which marked the border between China and Korea. At this point, Stalin withdrew his promise of Soviet air support, claiming his forces were not 'properly prepared'.¹⁸ The Chinese now had two choices:

- continue alone without Soviet air cover
- **lose face** by withdrawing their offer of support to Kim.

The Chinese decided to honour their commitment to the Korean Communists. On 8 October 1950, Mao officially approved the campaign and on 15 October the People's Volunteers crossed the Yalu River.



Source 6.06 Maps of the Korean War, showing changes in the area controlled by Communist and UN forces.

STALEMATE AND CEASEFIRE

American reconnaissance failed to determine the strength of Chinese forces in North Korea, and estimated that 10,000 troops had crossed the border. In reality, Peng Dehuai had 350,000 troops ready, with more on the way. Unaware of the true number of Chinese troops, General MacArthur confidently declared that he would 'get the boys home by Christmas' and continued to move as quickly as he could towards the Yalu River.

On 25 November, the Chinese slammed 200,000 troops into the US forces and, by sheer weight of numbers, forced them into a headlong retreat south. In seven weeks, North Korea was retaken and, in January, Seoul was recaptured by the Communists. However, the success of the People's Volunteers came at a huge price as:

- the temperature had dropped to -30°C
- Chinese soldiers suffered greatly from exposure
- inferior firepower and lack of air cover led to an appalling loss of Chinese troops.

By the end of the war, 900,000 Chinese soldiers were out of action, missing, wounded or killed.¹⁹ Among the 500,000 deaths was Mao's oldest son, Anying. The Americans and their allies had 157,000 men out of action, 54,000 of whom had been killed.

By January 1951, UN forces had launched an effective counterattack and fought the Chinese to a bloody stalemate at the 38th parallel. MacArthur wanted to use nuclear weapons against the Chinese. However, this was unacceptable to President Truman, who sacked MacArthur and installed General Matthew Ridgway in his place. An uneasy ceasefire was called in July 1951, although it was not until 27 July 1953 that a formal armistice was signed. Today the North Korea–South Korean border remains heavily guarded and buffered by a demilitarised zone. Tensions still run high and incidents and incursions have killed hundreds of soldiers from both sides.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao did not hear about the death of his son Anying for three months. When Peng Dehuai accidentally let the news slip during a meeting with Mao, the Chairman was visibly shaken and silent for some time. Then he lit a cigarette and said: 'In revolutionary war, you always pay a price. Anying was one of thousands ... you shouldn't take it as something special just because he was my son.' Mao Anying was buried alongside other common soldiers in Korea.

embargo an international ban on countries trading with a particular country

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Western Christian missionaries were expelled from China during the Korean War, accused of being 'spies'.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War had great repercussions for China's new regime. In 1951, the USA successfully sponsored a UN resolution that declared China to be the aggressor in Korea. An economic **embargo** was enforced, which set back the economy significantly. The PRC was excluded from the United Nations until the 1970s, and 'China' was represented by Jiang's Republic of China (ROC), based in Taiwan.

During the Korean War, America vowed to support Taiwan in the event of any future Communist aggression. This put an end to China's plans to invade Taiwan from the mainland, and made the People's Republic more reliant on Soviet support.

Meanwhile, land reform and political movements that had been proceeding with moderation, were dramatically intensified. The Chinese were whipped up into a virtual frenzy, with a campaign to 'Resist America, Aid Korea'. The Chinese press spread rumours of American atrocities, such as the use of germ warfare and the testing of atomic weapons in Nevada on Chinese prisoners of war. 'In this superheated atmosphere', historian Philip Short argues, 'the campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries burned white-hot'.²⁰

The Korean War cost the People's Republic dearly, and Mao admitted later that the war was a mistake: '100 per cent wrong'.²¹ As well as the huge number of casualties, a vast amount of money was needed to finance the war. In 1952, Mao said: 'Last year what we spent on the war to resist US aggression and aid Korea more or less equalled our expenditures for national reconstruction'.²² Yet the Korean War was also a great boost to Chinese morale. Mao's forces had taken on the 'biggest imperialist' and not been beaten. China had, at last, 'stood up'.

EARLY YEARS OF THE PRC

CCP establishes hierarchical and authoritarian political system

PRC governs as a people's democratic dictatorship

Practical measures are introduced to consolidate power

The PLA asserts Communist authority in outlying regions

The Korean War leads to escalation of mass campaigns, significant economic costs, greater reliance on the USSR

Heightened national morale for China

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did the Korean War begin?
- 2 Who was largely responsible for starting the conflict?
- 3 Briefly explain why China became involved in the war.
- 4 Explain Stalin's actions in the lead up to the conflict.
- 5 Who commanded China's Volunteer Forces during the Korean War?
- 6 How many casualties resulted from the war for:
 - China
 - USA?
- 7 How did the Korean War influence domestic political campaigns in China?
- 8 How did the Korean War affect China's international relations?
- 9 When did the fighting cease? When was the Korean War armistice signed?
- 10 The war was fought to a stalemate at the 38th parallel and cost China dearly. Were there any gains for China from this conflict?

FANSHEN AND LAND REFORM

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mao Zedong: 'The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly—the peasants keep clear accounts.'

AGRARIAN REFORM LAW

Land reform had long been a focus of the Chinese Communist movement, and many peasants considered it to be the fundamental element of the revolution. With the founding of the People's Republic, the CCP formalised this ideal into policy through the *Agrarian Reform Law* of 28 June 1950. Thousands of Party cadres (Party officials) were sent out to the countryside to organise a nationwide campaign to redistribute land and denounce landlords. The key principle underpinning this revolution in the villages was *fanshen*, or 'turning over'. Work teams of Communist activists established Peasants' Associations that helped to identify the 'reactionaries' and 'counter-revolutionaries' in their local area. One activist recalled:

A CCP cadre's account of the land reform campaign

So the first thing to do is to find out exactly who's who in the village and how the village works: who profits, who suffers. You generally choose to live with the poorest peasant you can find and you live with him—not eating or sleeping any better than he does. You do that until he sees you really mean it—until he gives you his confidence.

Cadres then tried to get the peasants to understand that the exploitative landlords were to blame for their poverty.

Agrarian Reform Law enacted in 1950, the law instituted radical land reform in the PRC through People's Tribunals and the judging of landlords

fanshen 'to turn over'; an agricultural term from using a plough or hoe to renew soil, but developed political connotations in PRC land reform and social campaigns

← **Source 6.07** Cited in John Robottom, *Modern China* (London: Longman, 1967), 121.

SPEAK BITTERNESS

Once the landlords had been identified, meetings were held so that everyone in the village could denounce the landlords. These were called 'Speak Bitterness' meetings, and were an opportunity to 'stand up' by publicly expressing indignation after years of being mistreated and exploited. The Speak Bitterness meetings were emotionally charged—many people making accusations wept or screamed out in anger, as did the spectators.

After the peasants had 'spoken bitter', a People's Tribunal decided the fate of the accused person. If a landlord was judged a 'local despot' (tyrant), his property would be shared out. If a landlord was particularly despised—or had collaborated with the Japanese—he would get a beating. Some landlords were executed. At the beginning of *fanshen*, landlords who were considered to be fair in their dealings with peasants were treated leniently and given enough land to support themselves. Some landlords were forced to:

- pay higher taxes
- give their tenants cheap rent
- cancel debts.²³

The Agrarian Reform Law allowed landlords to keep land cultivated by their immediate family, as well as any rented land or fields farmed by hired hands, as long as this was not more than half of their landholdings.²⁴

DID YOU KNOW?

After 1949, the traditional Chinese greeting, 'Brother, have you eaten?' changed to 'Comrade, have you *fanshen*ed?'



Source 6.08 A landlord, bound and guarded, kneels before a People's Tribunal.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What law formalised the land reform movement? When was it introduced?
- 2 Briefly define and explain the following as they relate to the land reform movement:
 - *fanshen*
 - Speak Bitterness
 - People's Tribunal.
- 3 Why did land reform escalate and turn so violent?
- 4 Approximately how many landlords were killed in the land reform campaign?
- 5 How did land reform influence the relationship between the Communist government and the peasants?

LAND REFORM ESCALATES

Two factors led to the radical intensification of the land reform mass campaign.

First, once the class struggle and passions of rural people had been unleashed, they were harder to contain than the Communists had anticipated. *Fanshen* was based on a moderate approach to dealing with the larger and wealthy landowners, and aimed to protect the more productive farms to ensure that food supplies were not disrupted. However, local People's Tribunals did not always take this into account, and their bitterness could be excessive. As a peasant named Qiu Quanqiang recalled: 'The People's Tribunals were ferocious!'²⁵

Second, once the Korean War got underway, fear of counter-revolutionary influences meant that attitudes towards landlords hardened. A wave of executions swept the countryside. It is difficult to determine the exact number of deaths. Although the figure of 1 million is often cited, historian Jasper Becker argues that 2 million to 5 million landlords may have been executed.²⁶

Mao lent his full support to the judgements and punishments of the People's Tribunals. The aim was to destroy the traditional rural order, dominated by the political and social standing of the landlords, so that a socialist order could emerge in its place.

Land reform also brought much support to the new regime. One important aspect was to have the peasants carry out the agrarian reform themselves. Historian Philip Short explains that 'peasants who killed with their bare hands the landlords who oppressed them were wedded to the new revolutionary order in a way that passive spectators could never be'.²⁷ In this way, the land reform movement both:

- fulfilled an essential revolutionary ideal for the peasants
- actively involved the peasants in the revolutionary movement.

According to historian Frank Dikötter, the land reforms were 'a pact sealed in blood between the Party and the poor'.²⁸ The peasants were now complicit in making the new society—including its expressions of revolutionary violence.

MASS CAMPAIGNS

Mao Zedong: 'We definitely have no benevolent policies towards the reactionaries or the counter-revolutionary activities of the reactionary classes.'

THOUGHT REFORM KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mirroring the hardened approach towards landlords, three mass campaigns began in the early 1950s targeting 'subversive' groups in urban areas. These campaigns were:

- Thought Reform
- *sanfan*, or the Three Antis
- *wufan*, or the Five Antis.

The Thought Reform campaign (*sixiang gaizao*) began in September 1951 and focused on intellectuals. University professors, teachers, writers and other educated people were called on to:

- correct their 'bourgeois' attitudes by criticising themselves
- admit that they had 'incorrect' thoughts.

Intellectuals were required to attend mass meetings, where they were put into small groups for intense discussion. Thought Reform involved reading Marxist texts and making lengthy self-criticisms. Part of this process was writing your autobiography—usually with repeated editing. Essentially, this involved admitting to every one of your 'bourgeois' habits. As the process went on, intellectuals were called before 'struggle sessions' where they reported on their progress and were judged by Communist cadres, their peers and groups of workers or students. Those considered to be insufficiently reformed were sent for 're-education'—which meant hard labour in the countryside. Most were subjected to months of self-criticism and 'struggle'.

PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS

One feature of the Thought Reform movement was highly publicised denunciations of well-known intellectuals. Although the famed language reformer Hu Shi (Hu Shin) lived in Taiwan—where he had been Foreign Affairs Minister under Jiang Jieshi—his followers and his ideas were attacked with menace. In 1953, Liang Shuming (Liang Shu-ming), a member of the Democratic League Party, received a verbal hammering from Mao during a government meeting. When Liang voiced concerns about CCP policies in rural areas, Mao snatched the microphone and snarled: 'I suppose you think you are very beautiful ... but to me you stink'.²⁹ For the next hour, Mao outlined why intellectuals such as Liang were in need of rectification:

Mao's criticism of Liang Shuming

There are two ways of killing people: one is to kill with a gun and the other with a pen. The way which is most artfully disguised and draws no blood is to kill with the pen. That is the kind of murderer you are. Liang Shuming is utterly reactionary ... What service did you do, Liang Shuming? In all your life, what service have you ever done for the people? Not the slightest, not the least bit.

In 1955, Mao personally initiated a campaign against Communist literary theorist and writer Hu Feng, who had criticised the politicisation of popular culture. Hu was accused of heading an anti-Party conspiracy, arrested, and imprisoned until 1979.³⁰ Historian Maurice Meisner argues that the Communists saw their campaign as 'educational' rather than vindictive. It was designed to produce 'correct thoughts' that would, in turn, bring about correct political and social behaviours.

Thought Reform helped some people to understand themselves in a new way.³¹ However, it was a traumatic and psychologically taxing experience that was mostly used as punishment.³² Some people later referred to it as a 'carefully cultivated Auschwitz of the mind'.³³ Thought Reform scared China's intellectual classes into submission, but preserved their skills and knowledge for the service of the new society.

SANFAN: THE THREE ANTIS KEY DEVELOPMENT

A **Three Antis campaign** (*sanfan*) against 'corruption, waste and bureaucratism' was launched in 1951. This was carried out alongside Thought Reform.

Sanfan aimed to uncover politically unreliable government officials and corrupt Party cadres. Public servants who had worked for the Guomindang were kept under close scrutiny. Mao declared: 'We need to have a good clean up ... which will thoroughly uncover all cases of corruption whether major, medium or minor, and aim the main

DID YOU KNOW?

In the early 1950s, the Communists launched a terror campaign against 'bandits and gangsters' in the cities. In Guangzhou, 130,000 people were executed. In what might be considered payback for the White Terror of 1927, over 28,000 gangsters were killed in Shanghai, including the leaders of the infamous Green Gang. However, Big Ears Du survived, having already fled to Hong Kong.

KEY GROUP

◀ **Source 6.09** Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 454.

Three Antis campaign the *sanfan* campaign by Communists launched in 1951 against politically unreliable government officials and corrupt party cadres. It targeted 'corruption, waste and bureaucratism'

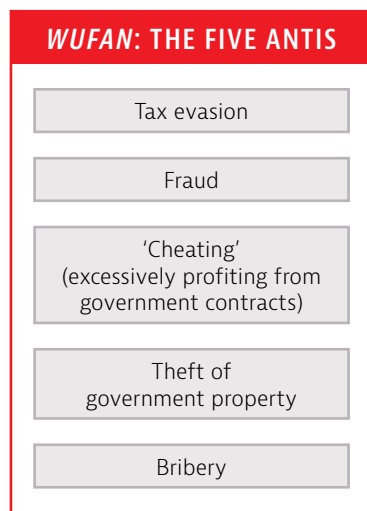
SANFAN: THE THREE ANTIS

Corruption

Waste

Bureaucratism

blows at the most corrupt, while following the policy of educating and remoulding the medium and minor embezzlers so that they will not relapse'.³⁴



Five Antis known as *wufan*, the 1952 campaign targeted tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property, cheating on government contracts and bribery, particularly among businessmen and industrialists

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Anti campaigns, Communist activists encouraged 'tiger-hunting teams' to arrest suspects and bring them before mass meetings.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hangzhou building in which businessmen were questioned during the *sanfan* and *wufan* movements had a banner across its door: 'Without a confession, no tiger can leave'.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 1950s, people could deposit anonymous accusations into special government letterboxes on the street. It was a very efficient way for authorities to gather intelligence on who might be exhibiting 'reactionary' ways, engaging in 'counter-revolution' or acting like a 'bad element'.

WUFAN: THE FIVE ANTIS

KEY DEVELOPMENT

In 1952, the Three Antis were expanded into the **Five Antis**, *wufan*, which targeted tax evasion, fraud, 'cheating' (excessively profiting from government contracts), theft of government property and bribery.

Businessmen and industrialists who had previously been reassured of their place in the People's Republic suddenly became the target of *wufan*. Historian Jack Gray describes the campaign as 'an opportunity to pulverize China's capitalists politically'.³⁵ Mao believed that it was the 'sugar coated bullets' of bourgeois capitalists that brought about the corruption of Communist cadres and government officials.

During the *wufan* campaign, 450,000 businesses were investigated.³⁶ Fines were handed out and some businessmen were imprisoned. Between 1952 and 1953, most factories became joint ventures between private owners and the state, as heavy fines took their toll on China's industrialists. Historian Ross Terrill argues that the Chinese Communists did not need to destroy the bourgeoisie, as they were easily subdued by the new order: 'Many capitalists simply turned red when the heat went on, silently, like lobsters put in hot water'.³⁷

PURGES AND EXECUTIONS

One feature of the Land Reform, Thought Reform and the Antis movements was the use of mass campaigns to mobilise ordinary people. This became an ongoing characteristic of the People's Republic:

- cadres were encouraged to report on their comrades
- workers informed on their bosses
- neighbours kept an eye on each other.

Few people were tried in a formal court. Instead, people suspected of any of the Antis were brought before a mass meeting of workers and Party activists. Suspects were 'struggled' against and made to confess their crimes. A struggle could go on for days before a satisfactory confession was given. A punishment was then decided. In some cases, managers and officials were removed from their positions and sentenced to hard labour. Some were executed.

However, it was more common that people who were found guilty were shamed through public denunciation and were given large fines. The experience was often harrowing, as the humiliation of 'losing face' and the pressures of 'struggle sessions' were too much for some. Zhou Qingli, the wife of a well-to-do Shanghai businessman, recalled: 'So many wealthy people committed suicide at this time. They could not stand the idea of a public trial'.³⁸

HOUSEHOLD AND WORKPLACE REGISTRATION

As soon as the CCP came to power, structures were put in place for applying Party influence among everyday people through compulsory registration of both:

- household (*hukuo*)
- workplace (*danwei*).

Employees in all industries were required to be a member of their *danwei* or work unit, which responded to government directives.

Street committees coordinated local initiatives, and were another important driver of mass campaigns. Party cadres encouraged people to watch their neighbours and work colleagues for 'reactionary' and 'counter-revolutionary' tendencies. A culture of spying and informing was encouraged, and children were even told to report on their parents.

Involvement in meetings and campaigns was virtually compulsory because not attending would make people suspicious. Fear of public humiliation was a traditional feature of Chinese culture, and it was used by the CCP to make sure people conformed politically and socially. However, where Soviet Russia needed a large political policing organisation to monitor and expose would-be and actual counter-revolutionaries, China did not; the people did it themselves.

danwei a work unit, usually structured around one's place of employment or residence, which provided the first link between ordinary people and the Communist Party

CLASS LABELS

As well as being registered for a particular household and work unit, each Chinese person was given a class label or *chengfen* that reflected their occupation and family background. The *chengfen* class labels divided people into 'good', 'middle' and 'bad' categories, depending on how committed they were to the revolution.³⁹

SPEAK FRANKNESS

In the new society, the principle of *fanshen* or 'turning over' was not limited to the countryside, nor was it concerned only with changing the economic and social makeup of a village. 'Turning over' also applied to attitudes and behaviour.

In urban areas, people took part in 'Speak Frankness' meetings, which involved publicly expressing their sorrow at the wrongs they had committed in the past and begging for forgiveness. These meetings were similar to 'struggle sessions'. Street committees played an important role in organising these meetings and pressuring individuals to take part—especially if they were considered to be lacking in revolutionary zeal.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Who was a target of the following mass campaigns?
 - land reform (*fanshen*)
 - Thought Reform
 - Three Antis (*sanfan*)
 - Five Antis (*wufan*)
- What similarities did these campaigns share? How did they differ?
- Define the following terms:
 - hukuo*
 - danwei*
 - chengfen*.
- How did these measures encourage conformity and consolidate the power of the CCP in the PRC?
- Explain how the mass campaigns impacted on the everyday lives of those affected.

CLASS LABELS

GOOD CLASSES

- CCP cadres
- Soldiers
- Industrial workers
- Revolutionary martyrs
- Poor and lower-middle-class peasants

MIDDLE CLASSES

- Middle-class peasants
- Petite-bourgeoisie (e.g. shopkeepers)
- Intellectuals and professionals

BAD CLASSES

- Rich peasants
- Landlords
- capitalists

ACTIVITY



Source 6.10 'Family members, relatives and friends of criminal secret agents, you must supervise and urge criminals to register and turn over a new leaf!', c. 1950.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 6.08 (page 156) and 6.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe what appears to be happening in the scenes depicted.
- 2 Explain how different groups of people responded to the challenges and changes in everyday life in the early years of the People's Republic.
- 3 Evaluate the significance of mass campaigns in the consolidation of Communist authority in the PRC. Use evidence to support your response.

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- What key challenges confronted the CCP in its consolidation of power in the period 1949–1953?
- Explain the importance of mass campaigns as a feature of life in the People's Republic.
- How did Thought Reform and the Antis campaigns lead to changes in political, social and economic conditions in the PRC?
- Explain the importance of the Korean War as a challenge to the new Chinese regime.
- Discuss the revolutionary experiences of one of the following social groups and their response to the challenges and changes in everyday life in the new society:
 - » landlords and peasants
 - » business owners and workers
 - » intellectuals.

KEY GROUP

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

Mao Zedong: 'Women hold up half the sky.'

THE MARRIAGE LAW

The Communist government brought about significant benefits in the social and economic standing of women. In May 1950, the new government passed its first piece of major legislation—the **Marriage Law**. This law:

- gave women the same legal rights as men
- banned customs such as arranged marriages, child marriages, polygamy and footbinding
- permitted women to choose their own partners
- permitted women to divorce abusive husbands.

Further laws guaranteed women the right to equal pay, maternity benefits and, in some cases, work-based childcare. Women's rights were enshrined in Article 48 of the Constitution.

Marriage Law the first key legislation implemented by the government of the PRC in May 1950, granting a range of legal, economic and social rights to Chinese women

Article 48 of the PRC Constitution

Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The state protects the rights and interests of women, applies the principle of equal pay for equal work to men and women alike and trains and selects cadres from among women.

◀ **Source 6.11** Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 181.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

As a young man during the New Culture Movement, Mao Zedong wrote a number of articles explaining the importance of women's rights.

◀ **Source 6.12** 'Registration of marriage by free choice'.

WOMEN AND WORK

The new regime provided greater opportunities for women to join the workforce and be involved in Party campaigns through street committees or by holding positions of responsibility in government organisations. The writer Han Suyin heard the following radio announcement in the early 1950s: 'It is better for a woman to have big hands and big feet. Big feet are beautiful, big hands are capable hands. A white skin is sickly.'⁴⁰ Women were now being assured of their useful roles in society, rather than being judged on their appearance.

There was also a dedicated national body for women's rights: the All-China Women's Federation. The Federation was founded in 1949 and quickly gained a membership of 76 million. It celebrated women's contributions to society and advocated for policies to improve women's daily lives. The Federation had offices in every level of government and published its own magazine: *Women of China*. Despite the emphasis the Federation placed on the role of the Communist Party in freeing women from male domination, it had progressive political figures in its membership, such as honorary President Soong Qingling (who was Sun Yixian's widow).

However, despite campaigns to implement the Marriage Law and provide support to women, the traditional view of what constituted 'women's work' stayed much the same. Housework was still considered the responsibility of women. Efforts to improve women's rights had limited success in rural areas, where traditional patriarchal (male-dominated) attitudes remained strong. Still, Chinese women were better off than they had been under the old regime. As one writer wryly observed, China's women had risen to the status of second-class citizens.⁴¹



 A Chinese sign urging people not to spit in public.

CLEANLINESS DRIVES

The *danwei*-level street committees played an important role in social welfare. Their main role was explaining government decrees and organising mass meetings. However, the heads of the committees also:

- mediated in family and neighbourhood disputes
- organised rubbish collections and fire prevention
- distributed welfare to the needy
- organised local recreational activities.

In a spectacular drive to improve cleanliness in the new society, people were mobilised to clean the laneways, their household belongings and what seemed like every inch of urban living space. Throngs of residents would be seen in the street scrubbing, polishing and sweeping. Street committee officials visited each household to inspect housework. Keeping up to standard largely remained the burden of women.

PUBLIC HEALTH

In the early 1950s, many advances were made in public healthcare. Mass inoculations prevented diseases that had affected China for centuries:

- Outbreaks of cholera, smallpox and typhus dropped dramatically.
- Education campaigns discouraged spitting—thus reducing the spread of tuberculosis.
- Urinating in public was discouraged—which improved sanitation in urban areas.
- A national campaign was used to educate midwives on sterile birthing techniques.

The government's efforts in preventing disease led to an increase in life expectancy—a significant measure of national health—from 36 years in 1950 to 57 years by 1957.⁴² Cases of sexually transmitted diseases also dropped dramatically from 1949 after brothels were closed and sex workers were trained for other occupations. Opium addicts were put into rehabilitation programs and people selling opium were severely punished.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Use Sources 6.13–6.17 and your own knowledge to copy and complete this table about Communist rule in the early 1950s.

	MAURICE MEISNER	JOHN KING FAIRBANK	JOSEPH W. ESHERICK	JUNG CHANG & JON HALLIDAY	FRANK DIKÖTTER
Actions taken by the CCP in the early years of the People's Republic					
Key descriptions of life in the early years of the PRC					
Historians' overall assessment of early CCP rule: Positive, Negative or Neutral					
Compare and contrast how three of these historians have explained the continuities and changes that emerged in the People's Republic.					

Maurice Meisner

The new regime was authoritarian and often repressive, but the cities were governed honestly and efficiently for the first time in modern Chinese history.

↑ **Source 6.13** Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 97.

John King Fairbank

Here was a dedicated government that really cleaned things up—not only the drains and streets but also the beggars, prostitutes, and petty criminals, all of whom were rounded up for reconditioning.

↑ **Source 6.14** John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 279.

Joseph W. Esherick

Most Chinese did not experience the success of the revolution and the coming to power of the CCP as some form of personal liberation. It was a new world, in many respects, and for most it was a better world. But the PRC ushered in a better world in part because the CCP brought order and discipline to their environment, and this was probably as important to many as was any sense of liberation.

↑ **Source 6.15** Joseph W. Esherick, 'Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution', in *Twentieth Century China: New Approaches*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (London: Routledge, 2003), 42.

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday

Once the state was secure, Mao began systematic terrorisation of the population, to induce long-term conformity and obedience ... Mao intended most of the population—children and adults alike—to witness violence and killing. His aim was to scare and brutalise the entire population.

↑ **Source 6.16** Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 336–338.

Frank Dikötter

The Chinese Communist Party refers to its victory in 1949 as a 'liberation.' The term brings to mind jubilant crowds taking to the streets to celebrate their newly won freedom, but in China the story of liberation and the revolution that followed is not one of peace, liberty and justice. It is first and foremost a history of calculated terror and systematic violence ... The first decade of Maoism was one of the worst tyrannies in the history of the twentieth century, sending to an early grave at least 5 million civilians and bringing misery to countless more.

↑ **Source 6.17** Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xi, xv.

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 What was the first major piece of legislation passed by the PRC?
- 2 List three or more signs of progress for women in the early years of the People's Republic.
- 3 Despite the benefits they received, what challenges remained for women?
- 4 Explain three areas where gains in general health and wellbeing were achieved by the PRC.

MAO IN MOSCOW

Josef Stalin: *'You're a winner now, and winners are always right. That's the rule.'*

When the CCP came to power, Mao said that China would seek an alliance with the Soviet Union. On 16 December 1949, Mao made his first trip abroad, taking a train to Moscow. Mao was nervous during the journey—and at one stage became ill and almost fainted during a stop in Siberia. Meeting Stalin was a big deal for Mao—Stalin had a strong personality and was the leading figure of the international Marxist movement. Members of the Soviet Politburo lined up to meet Mao, and a lavish welcome was staged at the Kremlin.

Tough negotiations

At their first meeting, Mao announced that he was seeking 'Something that doesn't just look good, but tastes good'.⁴³ The head of the KGB, Laverntiy Beria, giggled when this was translated—as he thought Mao was referring to something sexual. Stalin asked for clarification. Mao gave none, but Stalin knew what was being hinted at: Mao wanted a new diplomatic agreement to replace the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty signed by Jiang Jieshi in 1945.



Stalin told Mao: 'You're a winner now, and winners are always right. That's the rule.'⁴⁴ However, Stalin was a tough and cunning negotiator. Although Mao was staying in a comfortable chalet just outside Moscow, Stalin refused to take his telephone calls and repeatedly cancelled meetings. Weeks went by and Mao became annoyed at Big Brother's stubbornness. Stalin finally relented, and in January 1950, Zhou Enlai joined Mao to negotiate the terms of a new treaty.

A sweet and sour treaty

On 14 February 1950, the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was signed, but it didn't all go China's way. The treaty was both a sweet and sour deal. Under the terms of the treaty, the USSR:

- loaned China US\$300 million—to be paid in instalments over five years
- offered experts and machinery to help develop Chinese industries
- agreed to support China if it came under military threat.

However, the 'mutual assistance' also came at a price, as the Soviets:

- obtained the right to mine minerals in the Chinese province of Xinjiang
- kept control over Outer Mongolia—a region that was historically claimed by the Chinese
- had strict conditions on the money loaned to China, with steep repayments.

Despite these harsh conditions, the alliance strengthened the socialist bloc at a time when international tensions were mounting. In 1949, Mao had declared: 'The Chinese people must lean either to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism. There can be no exception. There can be no sitting on the fence; there is no third path.' On Mao's return to China he announced that there was 'eternal and indestructible friendship' between the Chinese and Soviet peoples.⁴⁵

However, after the death of Stalin in 1953, Sino-Soviet relations would become increasingly strained and Mao would forge his own distinctive 'third path' to socialism.

Source 6.18 'Great meeting', 1951.

THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Liu Shaoqi: 'The Soviet road is the road all humanity will eventually take.'

By 1953, the government of the PRC had:

- carried out initial social and political campaigns
- brought inflation down to manageable levels
- ensured military control of the nation.

On 1 October 1953, the People's Republic had its fourth anniversary. On that day, the Chinese government announced the beginning of 'the general line for the transition to socialism'. China would use the USSR as its model for further development, particularly for industrial production. Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi declared: 'The Soviet road is the road all humanity will eventually take. To bypass this road is impossible'.⁴⁶

Just as Stalin had done in the USSR, the Chinese government drew up a **Five-Year Plan** to guide China into a new era of economic progress from 1953 to 1957. However, the Party was still debating different elements of the plan—and its exact content was not made public until 1955.

PRIORITY INDUSTRIES

Priority was given to **heavy industry**, which received 89 per cent of the government's budgeted capital for the production sector. **Manufacturing industries** received just 11 per cent of the capital.⁴⁷ Very little investment was put aside for agriculture. The centre of the Five-Year Plan was the construction of 700 new industrial enterprises, including oil refineries, petrochemical and metallurgical plants, coal mines and power stations. Transport infrastructure was also to be built, including railways and new bridges and railways. The Soviet Union played a key role in the Five-Year Plan—over 10,000 Soviet engineers and advisers helped build the new industrial plants and install Soviet-made machinery. About 28,000 Chinese went to the USSR for training.⁴⁸

Five-Year Plan a Stalin-inspired centralised economic model based on investment in heavy industry

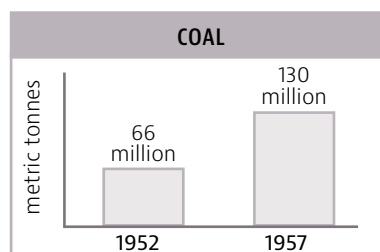
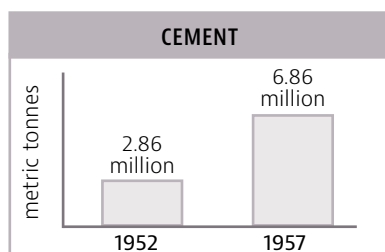
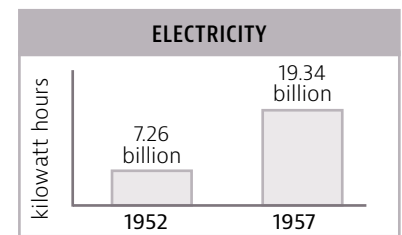
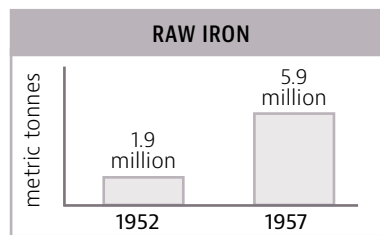
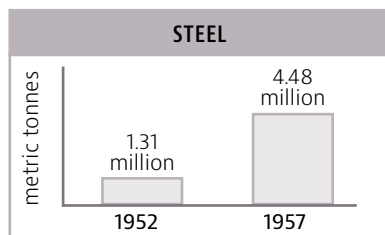


Source 6.19 'Study the advanced production experience of the Soviet Union, struggle for the industrialization of our country', 1953.

heavy industry steel and iron works (metallurgy), mining, concrete, electrical supplies, oil and petroleum, machinery parts

manufacturing industries everyday goods, consumables

PRODUCTION OUTPUT, FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN (1952–1957)



Source 6.20 Schools Council History Project, *The Rise of Communist China* (UK: Holmes McDougall, 1977), 46.

PRODUCTION QUOTAS

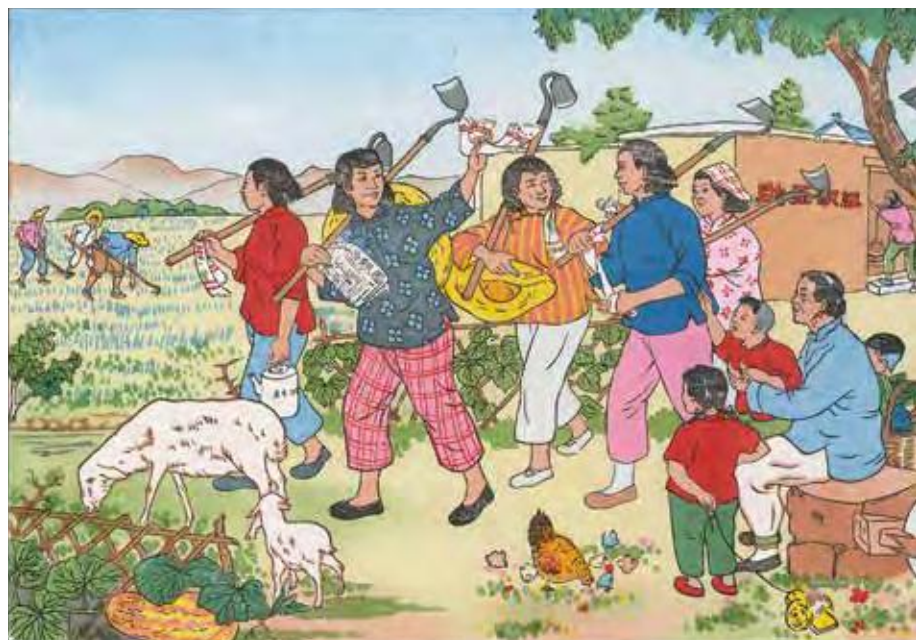
The Chinese Five-Year Plan followed the Stalinist model—it set production quotas and regulated them through a central administration. Targets were set by a State Planning Commission, and the heads of industrial enterprises were required to meet the targets. The First Five-Year Plan was quite successful. It met or exceeded most of its industrial targets, and laid the basis for further economic advances. The plan achieved a very respectable increase of 10 to 16 per cent in overall annual production.⁴⁹ For the first time, China was able to produce its own trucks, aircraft, cars and ships. Even starting from a low base after the war years, the plan, as historian Jonathan Spence puts it, ‘was still a formidable achievement’.⁵⁰

LOAN REPAYMENTS

While the Chinese appreciated the Soviet technical assistance, the Russian investment loans were of dubious value—they were actually more beneficial to the Soviet Union than China. By 1955, the repayments on the loan were so steep that China was repaying more than it was receiving in Soviet aid. Soviet capital was limited, and accounted for about 3 per cent of total investment. Most of the costs for the Five-Year Plan came from the Chinese, financed largely by agricultural exports. And although Soviet investment brought impressive gains in heavy industry, growth in overall farming production—which was vital to China’s large population and grain trade—was only 4 per cent a year.⁵¹

STAGED COLLECTIVISATION

Although China followed the Soviet model for their industrial planning, the Chinese were more original in their rural policies. The USSR had collectivised agriculture as a way to improve efficiency and increase government income. But the practices they used to force Russian peasants into collective farming brought about much suffering.



Source 6.21 A women’s Mutual Aid Team on a communal farm.

The Chinese Communists wanted to have collective farming too, but they approached it in a gradual and persuasive manner.

- Peasants were encouraged to form Mutual Aid Teams—six to ten families shared tools, draught animals and labour during the peak harvest and planting times.
- When teams were established, they were encouraged to form cooperatives, either:
 - » 'lower' Agricultural Producers Cooperatives—twenty to forty households
 - » 'higher' Agricultural Producers Cooperatives—100–300 families.

In lower cooperatives, peasants would receive a payment for the remainder of their work once they had met the government grain quota—which was about a quarter of their harvest. This quota was measured by the amount of land they owned and the labour they contributed. Thus people with more land received a higher annual payment. In lower cooperatives, peasants kept their titles of ownership to their plots of land.

In higher cooperatives, land ownership became collective—and farmers were paid only for their labour. Higher cooperatives were larger in size than most villages, and coordinated by full-time administrators.

AGRICULTURAL STAGNATION

The greater concentration of workers in a cooperative meant that excess labour could be used to clear land and carry out small-scale irrigation works, such as new dams and ditches. Although the Chinese gave limited funds to developing the agricultural sector—which might seem strange given how important farming was—they assumed that the 'socialist technique' that came with collective farming would bring great benefits and balance out the lack of funds. It was also assumed that:

- farmers would take on superior production methods
- the size of harvests would increase.

However, peasants were reluctant to give up their land, so the shift from Mutual Aid Teams to cooperatives was met with resistance in some areas. The government had also decided to fund its industrialisation drive by setting two key measures:

- high grain taxes
- low fixed prices.

Many peasants felt they were being exploited by this tactic. Grain yields were expected to increase significantly, but grew by just 2 to 3 per cent annually. Other crops, such as soybeans and cotton, experienced a decline. This meant that grain production was only just keeping pace with population growth of 2.2 per cent—and the surplus that was intended to fund industry did not exist.⁵²

Furthermore, peasants were allowed to maintain some land for their own use, as long as these plots did not exceed 5 per cent of collective farmland. Peasants tended these plots with great care and used them to grow vegetables. They then used the income from selling the vegetables to raise poultry and pigs. This meant that peasants were eating better than before and more meat was available for urban markets.

However, peasants were keener on farming their private plots than they were on collective farming. This lack of growth of the agricultural sector slowed down the industrial progress of the Five-Year Plan. As historian Craig Dietrich explains, China's leaders began an earnest debate among themselves: 'Did they prescribe the wrong medicine, or was the dose too small? Should they go backward or forward?'⁵³

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Where did the model for the PRC's First Five-Year Plan originate?
- 2 From what years was the Five-Year Plan projected to run?
- 3 What was the priority industry of the Plan?
- 4 List three further key features of the Five-Year Plan.
- 5 Briefly outline how the People's Republic aimed to collectivise agriculture in stages.
- 6 Briefly describe the following regarding the Five-Year Plan:
 - achievements
 - limitations.

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss why the First Five-Year Plan and the aid received from the USSR might be described as 'sweet and sour'.

GAO GANG AND THE HIGH TIDE OF 1955

Mao Zedong: 'We must guide the movement forward boldly and must not fear dragons ahead and tigers behind.'

COLLECTIVISATION DEBATES

KEY GROUP

The speed and extent of collective farming was a hot topic in upper Party meetings throughout the Five-Year Plan. To Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi and economist Chen Yun—who was the architect of the Plan—there was no sense pushing for collectivisation until industry could provide the machinery needed to modernise farming further. In 1953 and 1955, Liu Shaoqi even authorised the disbanding of several Agricultural Cooperatives. Liu explained that there should be 'no collectivisation without mechanisation'.⁵⁴

However, Mao did not agree with Liu. Mao believed that if the peasants were left to farm as they pleased, their 'spontaneous tendencies towards capitalism' would undermine efforts to introduce socialist policies. Furthermore, Mao and his closest allies were not concerned by a lack of modern tools or tractors. As shown earlier at Yan'an, revolutionary zeal could overcome any material deficiencies. Mao also preferred a faster approach to collectivisation, rather than making gradual progress.

THE GAO GANG AFFAIR

➔ Gao Gang.



Gao Gang (Kao Kang) was one of Mao's key allies during the collectivisation debates. Gao's career had flourished in the early years of the PRC. As the top CCP official in Manchuria, Gao had supervised the building of many new industrial enterprises there. He also played an important diplomatic role by encouraging closer relations between China and the USSR. In late 1952, Mao called Gao to Beijing and appointed him head of the State Planning Commission.

However, Gao's political advance would come to a dramatic end in the first major political purge of the CCP in the era of the People's Republic.

In private, Mao complained to Gao that Liu Shaoqi was not enthusiastic about collectivisation. Gao misunderstood the conversation, and took it as a sign that he should conspire against Vice-Chairman Liu. By 1953, Gao had drawn another leading official into his conspiracy against Liu and sounded out backing from high-ranking military commanders.

But Gao's plotting was reported to Mao, who was extremely unhappy. According to Mao, Gao Gang's actions were a 'sinister wind' blowing among Party leaders.⁵⁵

At a Politburo meeting on 24 December 1953, Mao scolded Gao for creating divisions in the Party. With Mao's blessing, Liu then unleashed a scathing attack against Gao and accused him of running an 'independent kingdom' in Manchuria. Gao begged to see Mao, but was refused an audience. He was arrested, imprisoned and, on 31 March 1954, purged from the Party. Gao committed suicide a few months later.

The men who had reported Gao's plotting to Mao were either promoted or cleared of any wrongdoing; Mao was clearly pleased with their loyalty. The way these events unfolded showed Mao's emerging Imperial-style of leadership. He was prepared to play his comrades off against each other in order to strengthen his own authority. The Gao Gang Affair set a dangerous precedent for intrigue at the top of the CCP hierarchy.⁵⁶ Mao had also given a warning that even those in high positions of authority relied upon his continuing favour to remain in power.



Source 6.22 (Left to right) Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Yang Shangkun and Gao Gang in 1953.

THE HIGH TIDE OF COLLECTIVISATION

By early 1955, a majority of the CCP Politburo agreed that Agricultural Cooperatives could only be implemented carefully and gradually. However, Mao did not share this view. He told one critic of collectivisation: 'Your mind needs to be shelled with artillery'.⁵⁷ Mao was not satisfied with the Party leadership, and appealed directly to provincial cadres. In July 1955 he delivered a speech on 'The Question of Agricultural Cooperation'. Mao criticised those who failed to embrace the 'high tide' of socialism.

Mao's criticism of CCP officials during the high tide

An upsurge in the new, socialist mass movement is imminent throughout the countryside. But some of our comrades, tottering along like a woman with bound feet, are complaining all the time, 'You're going too fast, much too fast' ... on no account should we allow these comrades to use the Soviet experience as a cover for their idea of moving at a snail's pace.

'Dragons ahead' and 'tigers behind' were not to be feared, Mao declared. Mao's appeal to the Party had an electrifying effect and placed the initiative firmly back in his hands. Provincial officials launched an all-out drive to bring as many peasants as they could into higher Agricultural Cooperatives. Mao hoped that half of the rural workforce might be collectivised by the end of 1957, but the cadres were keen to do even better. They praised the virtues of collective farming and put pressure on peasants who expressed caution. By December 1956, about 97 per cent of the peasantry had joined the cooperatives. Mao was overjoyed, and told his secretary that he hadn't been as happy since the defeat of Jiang Jieshi.⁵⁸

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

Using any social media medium of your choice, create a fictional response to either the Gao Gang Affair or the High Tide of 1955. Try to demonstrate how someone from that era reacted to one or both of these developments.

THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

From 1949, the PRC sought close economic and diplomatic ties with the USSR

Emulating the USSR, China implemented a Five-Year Plan, with priority given to heavy industry

The State Planning Commission set high production quotas

The USSR provided funding and advisers

Farming was collectivised in stages, from Mutual Aid Teams to higher Agricultural Cooperatives

Heavy industry made significant gains, but agricultural production lagged

The extent and pace of collectivisation was debated among the Party leadership. Mao decided to encourage further socialist approaches in the High Tide of 1955.

Source 6.23 Cited in Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin-Viking, 1999), 127.

DID YOU KNOW?

A joke popular in the CCP in 1955 shows how different leaders approached the task of convincing businessmen to accept socialist policies. Asked 'How would you make a cat eat chili?' Liu Shaoqi said, 'You get somebody to hold the cat, stuff the chili pepper in its mouth, and push it down with a chopstick'. This would not do, Mao said. Persuasion, not force, was needed. Zhou Enlai said, 'I would starve the cat. Then I would wrap a chili in a slice of meat. If the cat is sufficiently hungry, it will swallow it whole.' Again, Mao disagreed: 'One must not use deceit. Never fool the people.' The Chairman then offered his own answer: 'You rub the pepper on to the cat's backside. When it starts to burn, the cat will lick it off—and be happy to be permitted to do so!'

cult of personality the emergence of an overly heroic image and worship of a leader through the use of propaganda and other means, such as mass rallies and rituals

NATIONALISATION OF INDUSTRY

The so-called 'Little Leap' in the countryside was echoed by a similar drive for further socialist measures in the cities. In late 1955, Mao asked a delegation of businessmen how socialism might be extended into industry. The industrialists enthusiastically said that what remained of the private sector should be nationalised as soon as possible.⁵⁹ The Five-Antis (*wufan*) movement had evidently provided enough 'pepper' that most business people were keen to do whatever they were asked.

It was an extraordinary tactic. It meant that the state was not obliged to force industry to nationalise by law, but was able to achieve it through persuasion (along with some thinly veiled intimidation). In late 1955, Mao declared that by the end of 1957 all private enterprises would be taken over by joint state-private ownership. Mao's vision was completed by mid-January 1956—less than a month later. On 15 January, a rally at Beijing's Tiananmen Square was attended by 200,000 people to celebrate the triumph of socialism over capitalist private enterprise. There were odd scenes of businessmen leaping for joy and enthusiastically embracing as they handed over the deeds to their factories and firms. Similar scenes followed in other cities.

PROBLEMS AND DEBATES

Although the 1955 High Tide was satisfying for Mao, the successes of the First Five-Year Plan brought new problems:

- Central planning required a large bureaucracy—which meant that revolutionary sentiment might get lost.
- Many of the comrades were 'tottering' on 'bound feet' (they lacked enthusiasm) rather than showing a knack for hard work.
- Mao began to doubt the merits of Soviet-style economic planning.

Mao needed something new. He was excited by the extraordinary 'leap' towards further socialist developments in the High Tide campaign, and called for a rapid increase in the production of grain and cotton. According to Mao, collective farming could achieve this increase if it was done 'more, faster, better and more economically'.

Mao's ideas were acknowledged by the Central Committee—but given a lukewarm reception by the rest of the Politburo. Premier Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi worried about the impact of collectivisation. Grain harvests were down and peasant handicrafts were suffering. Despite this, Mao maintained that all that was needed to increase grain and cotton production was an infusion of Yan'an-style energy.

THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS

Further unpleasant surprises came in 1956, with popular uprisings against Communist regimes in Hungary and Poland. However, the biggest shock came on 25 February when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced the crimes of deceased Soviet leader Josef Stalin, particularly his **cult of personality**.

Deng Xiaoping and Zhu De were among those gathered in Moscow as guests for the Twentieth Party Congress. The Chinese Communists had been given no warning of Khrushchev's speech. Mao was particularly displeased, as he feared that Stalin's flaws might be measured against his own.

Mao was proved right. At the Eighth Party Congress in September 1956, the CCP moved to limit the emergence of a cult of personality in the People's Republic. Direct references to Mao Zedong Thought as the CCP's guiding doctrine were dropped from the CCP constitution. A new leadership team emerged, headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

On the surface, Mao seemed to accept these changes. He declared that he would move to the 'second line' of leadership where he would consider broader policy questions, leaving the 'first line' of day-to-day administration to Liu and Deng. The Congress also saw Zhou Enlai offer a critical analysis of the recent rapid pace of collectivisation. It appeared the 'High Tide' would soon fade away—which was a personal setback for Mao.

Events would show that Mao did not agree with the views of the Party leadership. He now had three challenges:

- developing an original Maoist-style approach to socio-economic development
- avoiding the emergence of popular dissatisfaction with socialist policies (a so-called 'Hungarian situation')
- preserving 'revolutionary' virtues while governing through an increasingly centralised and bureaucratic administration.

Mao was already thinking about a surprising tactic that he hoped would resolve his anxieties.



Source 6.24 Mao Zedong (left) with Deng Xiaoping.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly outline how different leaders in the CCP viewed the pace and extent of collectivisation:
 - Mao Zedong
 - Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai
- 2 What did the Gao Gang Affair reveal about Mao's leadership style?
- 3 By 1956 what had Mao achieved through the High Tide regarding:
 - collectivisation of agriculture
 - nationalisation of industry?
- 4 What changes emerged in the CCP following the Eighth Party Congress regarding:
 - leadership
 - ideology
 - economic planning?

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- What challenges emerged for the Chinese Communist Party during the First Five-Year Plan?
- Explain how Mao Zedong attempted to change the economy and political system of the new society in the period up to 1956.
- How were everyday people impacted by the policies of the Five-Year Plan?
- Explain how internal disagreements created challenges for the CCP in the early years of the PRC.
- Explain how the policies of the Five-Year Plan were used by the Chinese Communists to consolidate their power.
- How did the limitations of the Five-Year Plan reflect a compromise of revolutionary ideals for some in the CCP?
- What changes emerged in Chinese society because of the First Five-Year Plan?

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS CAMPAIGN

Mao Zedong: 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.'

Mao responded to the broad challenges of 1956 with a campaign to encourage greater freedom of expression among intellectuals. He believed the benefits would be twofold, as:

- intellectuals could help to make the Party more responsive to popular sentiment
- people could express social grievances through discussion rather than protest.

In January 1956, Zhou Enlai gave a speech to non-Party academics in which he attempted to clarify the problematic class status of China's intellectuals. According to Zhou: 'The overwhelming majority of intellectuals have become government workers in the cause of socialism and are already part of the working class'.⁶⁰

At this time, the government was concerned that China had a shortage of technical expertise—a serious obstacle to industrial development. Creative thinking was essential for scientific innovation, and it needed to be encouraged. Zhou's speech promised a more understanding relationship between the Communists and intellectuals.

Mao tried to popularise Zhou's idea. In May, he revived the classical expression, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend'. This expression was interpreted to mean that the Communists valued freedom of speech and wanted to encourage a variety of opinions. Mao hoped that public debate would both:

- shake up the Party bureaucracy
- 'vaccinate' the masses against the sort of suppressed discontent that had recently troubled Eastern Europe.⁶¹

INITIAL RESISTANCE

However, little had come of Mao's efforts by the end of 1956. Most intellectuals were wary of the sudden call to state their views freely. Many feared arrest, as was the fate of Hu Feng in 1955. One Democratic League minister noted: 'During the past year, not many flowers bloomed and few schools of thought contended in the academic and ideological fields ... the basic cause lies in the fact that the higher intellectuals are still suspicious'.⁶²

Apart from Mao and Zhou, most Party leaders were reluctant to unleash popular criticism. The mayor of Beijing, Peng Zhen, did his best to dampen the movement. He kept a tight hold over reports in official newspapers, such as the *People's Daily*. Liu Shaoqi also tried to rein in Mao's campaign, but Mao remained determined to see his Communist garden bloom with more variety. Mao said that even Jiang Jieshi's works and the ideas of Liang Shuming—who had been condemned during the 1951 Thought Reform movement—should be open to public discussion. Critical intellectuals were not to be feared. As Mao put it: 'If they have something to fart about, let them fart! If it's out, then one can decide whether it smells bad or good ... If the people think their farts stink, they will be isolated.'⁶³ The hesitation of other Communists only fuelled Mao's desire to push his ideas more vigorously.

People's Daily the chief national newspaper of the PRC

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao often referred to body functions in his political speeches, as he liked the 'earthiness' of such things. He once said: 'My farts are socialist farts. They are fragrant.' This language, particularly when used in important meetings, was intended to shock those with 'bourgeois sensibilities', but it was quite acceptable to peasants and soldiers. Mao was thus using his personal habits as an expression of his political 'purity'.

ON CONTRADICTIONS

On 27 February 1957, Mao reinvigorated the **Hundred Flowers campaign** with a speech to the Supreme State Conference. This was a gathering of Communists, as well as scientists, academics, writers and delegates of the democratic parties.

It was significant that Mao chose to address a non-Party forum, as it showed his frustration with his CCP comrades. Mao's speech was titled 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People', and it was his way of explaining the nature of social conflict in a post-capitalist society.



Although class conflict had ceased, Mao argued that 'contradictions among the people' were still bound to occur. Such contradictions were different from class conflict. They could (and should) be resolved peacefully among the people by the Maoist approach of unity–criticism–unity (which was a direct reference to the techniques of the 1942 Rectification movement). Mao believed that greater consensus would be achieved by a process of debate and criticism.⁶⁴ Contradictions were only harmful if they were ignored and allowed to aggravate the people—as had happened in Eastern Europe. In Mao's

Hundred Flowers campaign a brief period of debate and critical discussion amongst students and intellectuals in early-to-mid-1957, encouraged by Mao Zedong

Source 6.25 'The happy life Chairman Mao gave us', 1954.

view there was no harm in contradictions: 'They are just contradictions, that's all. The world is full of contradictions.'⁶⁵

Mao's campaign for critics to voice their opinions slowly gathered momentum. By April, Mao had won over his colleagues, who were reassured that the forthcoming rectification by popular means would be 'a gentle breeze and a fine rain'. The new period of rectification would see 'Comradely heart-to-heart talks in the form of conversations'.⁶⁶

Mao also made a three-week train journey through eastern China where he encouraged non-Party intellectuals and did his best to ease the concerns of provincial cadres. The enthusiastic welcome he received at carefully stage-managed meetings with workers and peasants gave him a sense that the people were fully supportive of his measures.⁶⁷ This was mass line on a mass scale. On 13 April 1957, the *People's Daily*—which had previously been silent on the issue—released an editorial promoting the Hundred Flowers. It was now widely known that Mao was seeking criticism from outside the Party—and the first critics began to speak up.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the last Hundred Flowers posters at Beijing University read, 'Intelligent friends! Everybody has been cheated! ... Even after the Emperor had ordered the Party to mend its ways, the mandarins of all degrees are nevertheless still in place, everything remains just as before.'

BLOOMING AND CONTENDING

By May 1957, signs of lively 'blooming and contending' were appearing. This critical 'fine rain' of criticism soon grew into a heavy downpour of resentment. Dissatisfaction with the new regime flooded in through public meetings, in letters to the press and on large wall posters at universities and public buildings.

- Academics called out meddling by Communist officials in intellectual matters and objected to wasting valuable research time on political meetings.
- The 'work style' of Party cadres was said to be no better than that of corrupt GMD bureaucrats or Imperial scholar-officials.
- People expressed frustration at the CCP's monopoly on political power.
- One young academic stated that the government treated him and his colleagues like 'dog shit one moment and 10,000 ounces of gold the next'.⁶⁸
- One critic said the PRC constitution was only good for toilet paper.

Even Mao was criticised for his 'arbitrary and reckless character'.⁶⁹ On several occasions, the Communists were accused of betraying their socialist ideals—which was a particularly stinging denunciation. The Hundred Flowers campaign mainly involved students and academics, but workers went on strike in some cities. Students rioted at some universities, and popular unrest was mounting.

'POISONOUS WEEDS'

Mao was shocked at the criticism unleashed by the Hundred Flowers campaign. Although he had expected criticism, he had assumed that it would be constructive and would single out practices and individuals *within* the Communist administration—not the system itself.⁷⁰ According to historian Rana Mitter, Mao had hoped for 'moderate criticism of the details, rather than the fundamentals, of life in the new China'.⁷¹ Many lower-level members of the Party were also appalled.

➡ **Source 6.26** Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 214–215.

Sidney Rittenberg recalling the Hundred Flowers campaign

While the intellectuals were protesting ... nearly everyone else was smoldering on the sidelines ... such critics of the Party didn't seem to be heroes crying out for intellectual freedom ... they seemed to be selfish and ungrateful eggheads and city slickers ... I thought the critics were wrong ... and misguided.

Mao soon made it known that critical talk had gone beyond acceptable boundaries. On 8 June 1957, an editorial in the *People's Daily* announced that denunciations of the Party would no longer be tolerated. This signalled the end of the Hundred Flowers movement. Mao's speech, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions', was published by the paper on 19 June with significant revisions. Mao now made a distinction between 'non-antagonistic' contradictions and 'antagonistic' contradictions:

- non-antagonistic contradictions were beneficial and could be resolved peacefully
- antagonistic contradictions were bourgeois, dangerously anti-revolutionary and would not be tolerated.

Mao explained that this was like 'distinguishing between fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds'. Ideas that were contrary to socialism, divisive, critical of the democratic dictatorship or the Communist Party were 'poisonous'. As Mao it: 'Any word or deed at variance with socialism is completely wrong'.⁷²

THE ANTI-RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN

After just five weeks, the cultivation of 'flowers' turned into the pulling of 'weeds'. Deng Xiaoping was appointed to direct an Anti-Rightist campaign. As a result, tens of thousands of academics and students were put through harsh 'struggle' and 'self-criticism' meetings. Institutions that employed intellectuals were given a quota—they had to expose 5 per cent of their staff as Rightists. If they failed to do so, the leadership of the institution would be suspected of Rightist leanings.

Denunciations and self-criticism were just the beginning of the campaign. Between 300,000 and 400,000 'Rightists' were sent to the countryside for 're-education through labour' in prison camps. Their terms of labour could be up to ten or even twenty years. As had happened to her at Yan'an, the outspoken feminist writer Ding Ling came under target. She was exiled to a labour farm in the far north-east. Many thousands lost their jobs or were demoted to positions far below their qualifications. People whose partners were judged as Rightists were urged to 'draw a line' between themselves and their spouse, and seek a divorce. About 40 per cent of the Guomindang Revolutionary Committee and Democratic League parties were found guilty of following an 'anti-Communist, anti-people, anti-socialist bourgeois line'. Their influence declined even further. The prospect of professional ruin and the pressure of self-criticism led to many suicides. People exercising early in the morning at Beijing's Summer Palace gardens often found bodies hanging from trees and floating in the lake.⁷³

The Anti-Rightist campaign ruined countless lives. It damaged China's higher education system and discredited people with technical expertise. This would have tragic consequences for economic planning during the Great Leap Forward.

DID YOU KNOW?

A seventeen-year-old girl was sent to a Manchurian labour camp for 're-education' after she was heard saying, 'American-made shoe polish is really good'.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which social group was encouraged to speak freely in the Hundred Flowers campaign?
- 2 What classical expression did Mao revive to encourage the campaign?
- 3 List three or more of the criticisms that were made of the CCP during the Hundred Flowers campaign.
- 4 How long did the Hundred Flowers campaign last? Why?
- 5 What punitive campaign followed the Hundred Flowers campaign? How many 'Rightists' were sentenced to hard labour during this campaign?

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain why Mao Zedong launched the Hundred Flowers campaign.
- How did the Hundred Flowers campaign undermine the revolutionary ideals of the new regime?
- Explain the impact of the Hundred Flowers campaign within the PRC.
- Explain Mao Zedong's role in the Hundred Flowers campaign.



THE HUNDRED FLOWERS: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

It's a trap!

The Hundred Flowers campaign has been presented as a cunning trick that Mao used to expose his critics. Michael Lynch argues that 'Mao's apparent mellowing was an act. He had not really become more tolerant; he was engaged in a ruse.'⁷⁴ The speed with which the movement was brought to an end, Lynch contends, supports this contention. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday agree that Mao had 'cooked up a devious plan ... Mao was setting a trap.'⁷⁵ Mao admitted that he did set a trap of sorts, but explained that his motives were honest:

Mao on the Hundred Flowers

The purpose was to let demons and devils, ghosts and monsters 'air views freely' and let poisonous weeds sprout and grow in profusion so that the people, now shocked to find these ugly things still existing in the world, would take action to wipe them out ... The Communist Party foresaw this inevitable class struggle. Some say this was a secret scheme. We say it was open.

➔ **Source 6.27** Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 109.

DID YOU KNOW?

After the Hundred Flowers campaign, Mao distrusted intellectuals for the rest of his life. He was fond of saying: 'Peasants have dirty hands and cow shit-sodden feet, but they are much cleaner than intellectuals'.

More complex intentions

Other historians highlight the mixed and ambiguous influences on the Hundred Flowers campaign. Alan Lawrence is sceptical of Mao's portrayal of the Hundred Flowers as an intentional trap: 'It implies that the Communist Party knew what it was doing: that it was in control all along'⁷⁶ Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, recalls that, 'Mao of course was shocked. He had never intended that any of the criticisms be directed against him. He had never meant the Party as an institution to come under attack ... Mao had grossly miscalculated.'⁷⁷ Like Lawrence, Maurice Meisner believes that Mao's motives were complicated and uncertain. Mao's claim that he had set a trap was issued later as an explanation and defence. A number of subtle factors were at play at the time:

- Mao's desire to use public criticism to rectify the Communist bureaucracy and release popular tensions
- Mao's genuine surprise at the extent of popular dissatisfaction
- the backdated revisions to Mao's speech on 'contradictions'

Historian Jasper Becker points out that some of the CCP officials who came under attack in the Anti-Rightist campaign were those who had opposed Mao's collectivisation drive.⁷⁸ According to Jonathan Spence, 'It was ... a muddled and inconclusive movement that grew out of conflicting attitudes in the CCP leadership.'⁷⁹ The Hundred Flowers campaign—regardless of intent—went a long way towards silencing those who dissented from Chairman Mao's 'revolutionary' line. It was 'an extraordinary response to the challenges the CCP was facing', according to Jonathan Fenby, one that demonstrated Mao's 'naiveté—and then his utter ruthlessness'.⁸⁰

Philip Short on the Hundred Flowers

The 'Hundred Flowers' was the most ambitious attempt ever undertaken in any communist country to combine a totalitarian system with democratic checks and balances. Even Mao was unsure what it would produce. 'Let's try it and see what it's like,' he said at one point. 'If we acquire a taste for it, there will be no more worries.' What would happen if the Party did not 'acquire a taste for' being criticised was left discreetly unsaid ... As the torrent of popular anger, mistrust and bitterness swelled, Mao began to have second thoughts ... What had started as an attempt to bridge the gap between the Party and the people ... was turned on its head. It became a trap ... for the hundreds of thousands of loyal citizens who had taken the Party at its word.

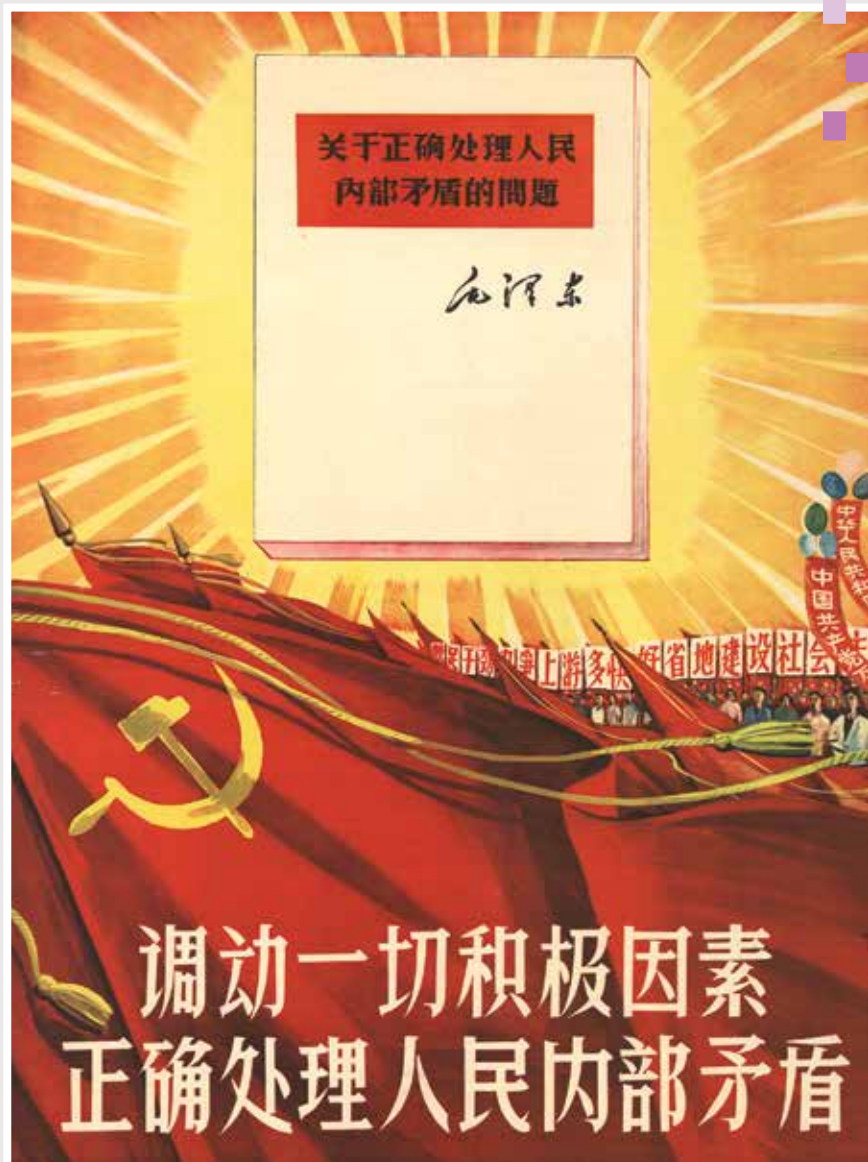
↑ **Source 6.28** Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 464, 466, 469.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss your perspective of the following:

- What was the purpose of the Hundred Flowers campaign?
- Was it a trap?
- Was Mao genuinely shocked by the result?
- Was the Hundred Flowers campaign bound to end in tragedy?
- What did the Hundred Flowers campaign reveal about the nature of the new regime?



↑ **Source 6.29** 'Bring every positive factor in to play, correctly handle contradictions among the people', 1958.

ACTIVITY



CREATIVE TASK

Taking the persona of an intellectual, business owner, landlord or former Guomindang civil servant, write a diary entry, letter to a close relative or an extract from a self-criticism that highlights your experiences of one of the political campaigns in the early years of the People's Republic.

HISTORICAL SOURCES: THE HUNDRED FLOWERS CAMPAIGN

Wu Ningkun (1920–2019) was a professor of English literature. He attended university in the USA but returned to China in 1951 to take up a teaching position in Beijing. He was labelled a Rightist and sentenced to hard labour following the Hundred Flowers campaign.

... intellectuals and members of 'democratic' parties ... were urged to 'air their views without reserve' ... We all applauded the courageous decision taken by the Party ... The *People's Daily* and other newspapers in Beijing carried numerous articles by well-known intellectuals criticizing Party officials and even the guidelines of the Party itself ... many people poured out their hearts in hopes of helping the Party and its members mend their ways ... Freedom of speech was having its day; that day was short ... [Mao] let it be known at a later date that all this had been a premeditated plot ... to ensnare his critics into a trap ... I fell into the trap ... According to later government statistics, more than half a million people were labeled rightists. There were no figures for those who had been denounced but spared the label, nor of those who had been driven to insanity or suicide. The 'hundred flowers' ended in a mass intellectual castration that was to plague the nation for decades to come.

 **Source 6.30** Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 51–52, 68.

Sidney Rittenberg (1921–2019) was an American member of the CCP who held a prominent position as a 'foreign expert' in the Broadcast Administration of the People's Republic. Here he recalls the Hundred Flowers campaign.

Mao said let a hundred flowers bloom in the fields of art and literature, let a hundred schools of thought contend in academia, but the intellectuals turned it into politics ... So they began saying and writing things like 'Why should the Communist Party always rule? Why shouldn't there be a multi-Party system?' ... It was done with great artistry. I mean when Mao was conspiratorial, he was a master. He let everybody talk—unchallenged, unhindered—and everybody felt this is great. What a fabulous day! And then an editorial appears on the front page of the *People's Daily*, with no warning, saying 'Why is this?' Bang! From that day on, it was hammers down on the critics. And they were classified as Rightists and hauled up before big public meetings ... this was the campaign, 'to clean out anti-socialist elements', not from the Party so much but among the intellectuals ... intellectuals talk too much, they raise too many questions ... I took part in hassling these people. And they were all innocent and good people. I think that is the most serious mistake I ever made.

 **Source 6.31** Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in *The Revolutionary* (Stourwater Pictures, 2012).

Using Sources 6.30 and 6.31 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Explain the response of intellectuals to the Hundred Flowers campaign.
- 2 Explain the consequences of the Hundred Flowers campaign.
- 3 Analyse Mao Zedong's intentions during the Hundred Flowers campaign. Use evidence to support your response.

CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Soon after the founding of the People's Republic, the Communists implemented an effective but authoritarian political system. The government structure mirrored the hierarchical nature of the Party and all key positions were held by top Communists.
- The PLA played a key role in the consolidation of authority in the PRC. The army was under direct command of the Party.
- Ideologically, the PRC was a people's democratic dictatorship of the four 'revolutionary classes'.
- A series of pragmatic policies helped to rapidly stabilise the economy and fix problems such as inflation. Civil servants and business owners were urged to stay in their roles.
- In 1950, China was drawn into a costly and devastating war in Korea. The People's Republic fought US-led forces to a stalemate. Communist China was internationally isolated and, as a result, forced to rely upon the Soviet Union.
- Improvements and progress were made in general health and women's rights.
- A series of mass campaigns used popular pressure and the threat of violence to make considerable social and economic changes. Landlords, businesspeople and intellectuals were targets of different campaigns. Forms of compulsory registration and class classifications created further measures of control.
- A Soviet-style Five-Year Plan outlined the focus for economic expansion from 1953–1957. Impressive gains were made in heavy industry. The government attempted to improve agriculture by staged collectivisation, which had mixed results.
- Debate over the issues of collectivisation provided the context for the first political crisis of the PRC: the Gao Gang Affair.
- The Hundred Flowers campaign was encouraged by Mao for a variety of reasons. The Party leadership was displeased with the result and brought in an Anti-Rightist campaign to silence critics.

ACTIVITY

REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCES

Create a table like the one below to compare the experiences of different social groups and their responses to challenges and changes of everyday life in the PRC. Note where specific campaigns, policies or developments caused changes in their lives. Continue to add to your table as you read later chapters.

SOCIAL GROUP	POLICIES OR CAMPAIGNS	RESPONSES OR CONSEQUENCES	EVIDENCE: QUOTATIONS, STATISTICS, DATES, EXAMPLES
Peasants			
Landlords			
Women			
Intellectuals			
Business owners			
Communist Party cadres			
Students			



THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

(1958–1964)

‘Go all out and aim high!’

—Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong was undoubtedly a brilliant revolutionary, but he was also an erratic and volatile statesman. He demonstrated his extraordinary influence over the People’s Republic in 1958 with the launch of the Great Leap Forward. This was a bold and radically new attempt to overcome China’s economic backwardness and advance socialist development through experimentation, revolutionary fanaticism and collective effort.

Unfortunately, the Great Leap Forward was a catastrophic failure that ended with poor production results and a devastating famine. As disaster loomed, officials made efforts to reduce the more radical impulses of the Great Leap Forward.

When Marshal Peng Dehuai asked critical questions at the Lushan Plenum, Mao reacted with fury. The Party was then forced to choose between:

- breaking with Mao
- compromising their immediate concerns.

The Party decided to back Chairman Mao—and the already disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward were made much worse.

China’s long march towards a revolutionary new society took a further twist in the late 1950s and early 1960s as relations between the PRC and the USSR became increasingly strained. Although both countries had been close, with a comradely pact of socialist solidarity, this relationship was strained as Mao and Khrushchev found themselves in dispute over a range of issues. This culminated in an end to formal diplomatic relations by 1964.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the key influences and ideological foundations of the Great Leap Forward?
- What were the key policies and approaches of the Great Leap Forward?
- Why did the campaigns of the Great Leap Forward have such damaging consequences?
- Why did Marshal Peng Dehuai’s actions at the Lushan Plenum fail to moderate the emerging disaster?
- What was the impact of the Three Bad Years famine?
- What were the causes and consequences of the rift in Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations?

KEY EVENTS

- 4 October 1957**
USSR launches Sputnik satellite
- 29 April 1958**
Founding of first People’s Commune
- 5–28 May 1958**
Great Leap Forward formally launched at Eighth Party Congress
- July–August 1959**
Severe drought across China: ‘Three Bad Years’ of famine begins
- 14 July–16 August 1959**
Peng Dehuai condemned as ‘anti-Party element’. Great Leap Forward reaffirmed at Lushan Plenum

CHAPTER 7



Source 7.01 'Prosperity brought by the dragon and the phoenix' by Jiang Mi, 1959.

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mao Zedong: 'I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation, it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever.'

FIVE-YEAR PLANS

By mid-1957, the Soviet-style First Five-Year Plan was coming to an end. A second Five-Year Plan was drawn up and approved by government economists.

However, while the results of the first plan were quite good overall, the ongoing suitability of the Stalinist model was questioned.

- Agriculture was not achieving the surplus needed to increase exports or sustain the growing population.
- Mao felt that planning had become overcentralised—he detested the highly bureaucratised state agencies.
- The direction of collectivisation was unresolved. Several contradictory policies were put forward, but not clearly endorsed.

The Central Committee gave cautious approval to reducing the number of collective farms and approved the proposals set out in the Second Five-Year Plan. The Central Committee also acknowledged 'in principle' that the more radical degree of collectivisation Mao wanted could be achieved.

DID YOU KNOW?

The PRC's first population census was completed in 1953. While the population had been thought to be around 450 million, the census revealed the true figure was closer to 582 million.

THE EAST WIND PREVAILS OVER THE WEST WIND

The catalyst for policy change came from an unusual direction. On 4 October 1957, the USSR launched the satellite *Sputnik*, which led to a wave of euphoria in socialist countries around the world. It was Soviet Russia, not America, that made the first major step in space exploration. Mao noted with glee that the United States 'hadn't even launched a potato'.¹

In the wake of *Sputnik*, Soviet leader Khrushchev declared that in fifteen years the USSR would overtake the USA in the production of electric power, steel, coal, iron and oil. In November, Mao went to Moscow to attend celebrations marking the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. At a gathering of world Communist leaders Mao gave a rousing speech in which he declared that 'the east wind prevails over the west wind'.

Emboldened, Mao told fellow Communist delegates that in fifteen years China would produce more steel than Great Britain. Mao returned to Beijing buoyed with revolutionary optimism, determined to inspire the Chinese people 'to get to heaven in a single leap'. On 12 December 1957, a conference of China's economic planners repeated Mao's declaration that China would beat Britain's steel output. Although it was not identified just how this goal would be reached, Mao felt there was an urgent need for an alternative and more original path to socialist development.

SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS

Mao set out on a four-month tour of provincial China to 'seek truth from facts'. He met with adoring crowds, and local officials carefully stage-managed his visits. However, Mao believed he was genuinely in touch with popular feeling. He was particularly

interested in the outcome of a campaign that had encouraged millions of peasants to complete massive water conservation projects. A great number of irrigation ditches, canals and reservoirs had been built, far exceeding official targets. These projects had been built by hand, as there was often no machinery available. Other huge engineering feats were undertaken, such as the expansion of Tiananmen Square.

Mao's imagination was sparked by the potential of the Chinese people to achieve great things using their collective will. He spoke with renewed enthusiasm of the Yan'an days when human endeavour triumphed over seemingly impossible odds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many children born in 1958 and 1959 were given names that reflected the goals of the Great Leap Forward. Popular choices made by new parents were Chaomei ('Overtake America') and Chaoying ('Surpass England').

THE VIRTUE OF BACKWARDNESS

In early 1958, Mao lobbied for a renewal of revolutionary virtue in economics at meetings of policy-making bodies. Between trips to different provinces, Mao gave speeches to the Supreme State Conference and the National People's Congress, as well as at gatherings of central and provincial Party leaders.

One of Mao's recurring themes was his contempt for bureaucratic and 'expert' planners. As Mao saw it, regulations held back the 'productive forces' of the masses. In typical fashion, he blurred the line between pragmatism and idealism as he simultaneously:

- praised creative thinking and mass enthusiasm
- warned against false reporting of production targets and rash implementation of new ideas.

Mao didn't see this as a problem—a love of contradictions was his trademark.²

There were strong ideological assumptions behind Mao's thoughts. However, unlike orthodox Marxist thinkers, Mao believed that backwardness was a virtue in revolutionary progress. China's low level of economic development would not slow the transformation of a socialist society, as a Communist society could emerge before its economic structures were fully realised. According to Mao, the Chinese people were particularly suited to this socialist transformation:

China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities; they are, first of all, poor, and secondly blank. That may seem a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.³

SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENT

Mao once said: 'If you are too realistic you can't write poetry'.⁴ It is true that the Great Leap Forward would be driven by **utopianism**, irrationality and a lack of sensible policies. However, the ideas that Mao and his close supporters explored in 1958 were not illogical or invalid.⁵ Mao spoke of an economy that would 'walk on two legs' through 'simultaneous development'. This meant that heavy industry would continue to receive capital investment, but rural areas would also acquire small-scale industries that could generate their own capital.

A vast resource lay in the peasants, whose labour was untapped outside the planting and harvest seasons. If their work was organised more efficiently, the countryside would make better use of its massive population. New labour-intensive projects would:

- produce more goods
- improve rural infrastructure
- encourage collective values.

utopianism visionary schemes for producing perfection in social or political conditions. Often used to describe unachievable ideals, the term was popularised by Thomas More's 1516 book, *Utopia*

DID YOU KNOW?

In the autumn of 1958, a popular peasant song went:

*Communism is paradise,
The People's Communes are the
bridge to it.
Communism is heaven,
The Commune is the ladder.
If we build that ladder,
We can climb the heights.*

Great Leap Forward a series of campaigns encouraged by Mao Zedong that attempted to achieve vast economic output and improvement through revolutionary enthusiasm

 **Source 7.02** Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Sydney: Hale & Remonger, 1995), 285.

General Line the principles that guided the Great Leap Forward. The General Line was framed by the slogans 'go all out' and 'aim high' to achieve 'greater, faster, better, and more economical results'

 **Source 7.03** Cited in Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 56.

Just like Yan'an during the Civil War, cooperatives would engage in the small-scale production of goods required by rural communities. Local know-how and innovation could make use of lower-grade raw materials that heavy industrial enterprises could not. Far from requiring heavy investment, these measures would actually produce their own capital. Funding for agriculture could therefore remain fairly low.

A further result would be a 'technical revolution', where common people would learn basic scientific knowledge and skills in the course of their everyday work. In this way, the masses would become 'socialist-conscious, cultured labourers', and reduce the need for an elite class of experts.⁶

LAUNCHING THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

The official launch of the **Great Leap Forward** took place at the Eighth Party Congress of 5–23 May 1958.

The Great Leap Forward was a declaration of revolutionary intent rather than a detailed economic blueprint. Mao argued for the need to 'let the people explode'.⁷ The production targets set out in the Second Five-Year Plan were revised upwards and the slogans of the High Tide were stated again: 'Go all out, aim high, and achieve greater, faster, better, and more economical results in the building of socialism'. Mao encouraged a greater degree of collective organisation in the countryside. Mao's utopian thinking was clearly evident in his address to the Congress:

Mao's address to the Eighth Party Congress

I once asked some comrades whether we live in heaven or on earth. They all shook their heads and said we live on earth. When we look at the stars from earth, they are in heaven. But if there are people in the stars, when they look at us, wouldn't they think we are in heaven? Therefore I say that we live in heaven as well as earth.

Historian Philip Short describes Mao at this time as being 'on an adrenalin high pumped up by the limitless vista of a bright Communist future in which nothing would be able to withstand the concerted efforts of 600 million people'.⁸

Mao was full of energy and repeatedly spoke in the coming months of 'going all out' and 'aiming high'. These ideals, along with the slogan 'achieving greater, faster, better, and more economical results', would form the **General Line** of the Great Leap Forward.

Many provincial officials were frustrated at the lack of development in rural areas, and they were inspired by Mao's General Line. Party idealists loved the idea of China leaping ahead of its capitalist rivals—and many were keen on the radical Maoist innovations needed to achieve it.⁹ Echoing the Chairman's visionary pronouncements, Central Committee delegate Xie Fuzhi proclaimed:

Xie Fuzhi on the Great Leap Foreword

We are supernatural. Maybe we are supernaturals of the second order. Maybe on another planet there are people who are brighter than we are, in which case we are of the second order, but if we are brighter than they are we are supernaturals of the first order.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What international development inspired Mao to declare that China would overtake Britain in steel production?
- 2 Identify two or more further influences on the decision to launch the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 What development in the Chinese countryside led Mao to believe in the great potential of the People's Republic?
- 4 Briefly explain how, according to Mao, 'simultaneous development' justified low investment in agriculture.
- 5 What slogan from the 1955 High Tide was revived in the Great Leap Forward?

PEOPLE'S COMMUNES

Mao Zedong: 'Let the people explode!'

The basis of the Great Leap Forward came about spontaneously, although it did match up with the idea that rural communities should become more efficient with their labour.

Earlier, on 29 April 1958, several Agricultural Cooperatives in Henan Province had merged into one large organisation because of labour shortages during the water conservation campaigns. The organisation called itself the Sputnik Commune. Several other regions followed this example.

While Mao was touring Shandong Province in August 1958, he saw a banner that read: *People's Commune*. It was the first time Mao had heard the term—and he liked it very much. A reporter overheard him remark: 'The people's commune is great!' The next day Mao's declaration appeared on the front page of every newspaper, just like a ruling from an emperor.¹⁰

BIGGER AND MORE SOCIALIST

The movement to establish People's Communes spread quickly. From 17–30 August 1958, Mao called a meeting of the Politburo and secured approval for the idea.

By the end of 1958, 740,000 Agricultural Cooperatives were reorganised into 26,000 People's Communes.¹¹ An editorial in the *People's Daily* in September 1958 stated that: 'The main features of the people's commune are that it is bigger and more socialist'.¹²

The communes were much bigger than cooperatives, as they:

- averaged 5000 households
- had populations of up to 100,000 people.

However, the significance of the communes was not just their size. People's Communes were also more socialistic in what they did and how they went about it.

- Private plots were replaced by the complete collective ownership and farming of land.
- Smaller fields were combined into much larger ones and tilled by hundreds or even thousands of people at a time.
- Tools and livestock became collective property.
- Wages were paid in *work points* rather than money. The work points could be exchanged for everyday items.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, people were encouraged to use hand tools rather than machines, as using your hands was considered virtuous.

People's Commune represented an extreme form of collectivisation. Private land ownership was abolished and people worked in exchange for work points. Socialist aspects of the Communes included communal kitchens, nurseries and Happiness Homes for the elderly

work points each category of worker (e.g. young males, elderly people etc.) received the same number of work points regardless of actual hours worked; you could not earn more points by working harder

ACTIVITY



Source 7.04 'Go all out and aim high. The East leaps forward, the West is worried'.

Source 7.05 'The communes are big, the people are numerous, the natural resources abundant, it is easy to develop a diversified economy—People's Communes are good', 1960.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 7.04 and 7.05 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Identify the ways the Great Leap Forward aimed to achieve economic success.
- 2 Explain how the People's Communes were used to realise Mao's revolutionary ideals during the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 Evaluate the changes the Great Leap Forward brought to life in the Chinese countryside. Use evidence to support your response.

FROM SOCIALISM TO COMMUNISM

Communes were organised along military lines, with units of ten to twenty brigades made up of a dozen or so smaller units called work teams. The 'troops' of the work teams marched in military formation as they set off to 'battle' nature—that is, go to work.

The most optimistic Party cadres claimed that communes were not just a way to develop from socialism to communism in the future—they were an emerging Communist society in the present. The People's Communes had a number of socialist features.

- Communes were military in function as each trained and armed its own militia.
- Large nurseries allowed parents more time to work in the fields.
- Communal kitchens and eating halls fostered collective spirit and reduced the number of people required for cooking meals.
- Elderly people were brought together and cared for in 'Happiness Homes'.

Some people even wondered whether the nuclear family was coming to an end.

Administration of public welfare, schooling, local defence, farming and small industry were all the responsibility of the commune. It was claimed that more formal state functions would soon be unnecessary as each commune owned its own means of production.

Historians critical of Mao's intention argue that the communes really allowed for the Communist Party to govern the peasants more harshly than ever. According to John King Fairbank: 'The state had become the ultimate landlord'.¹³ More scathingly, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday argue that, 'The aim was to make slave driving more efficient'.¹⁴

Whatever the aims of the CCP leadership, many ordinary people were genuinely enthusiastic for the People's Communes. This popular excitement was an important factor in the early successes of the Great Leap Forward. Many peasants and workers felt they were building a prosperous future with their own hands. It was 'an exciting experience', recalled Li Zhisui. 'Something big was happening in the Chinese countryside, something new and never seen before'.¹⁵ A peasant named Zhao Tongmin had fond memories of working in his commune:

Peasant Zhao Tongmin recalls the start of the Great Leap Forward

Those were the days. Whenever I sit at home and think about it I feel happy again ... What was so great? The fact that so many people came together. Their discipline was marvellous. Everyone came to work on time and all joined in with a will. No line divided village from village, people from here and people from there! ... Those were great days! Great days!

A translator for Beijing's national radio service, Sidney Rittenberg, was exhilarated to engage in voluntary manual work alongside his colleagues during the Great Leap Forward. He recalled: 'I felt the thrill of being one of the people who didn't just talk about changing the world, but actually did something about it'.¹⁶

BACKYARD STEEL PRODUCTION

Mao was whipping up a frenzy of enthusiasm to achieve his great vision of an ideologically pure and prosperous new society. However, it was clear that the steel industry would struggle to meet the proposed targets. A campaign to build 'backyard' steel furnaces was introduced to boost steel production. It no longer seemed wise to invest heavily in large steel mills when smaller ones could be established cheaply at a much greater rate.

However, Mao asked, 'If these small backyard steel furnaces can really produce so much steel, why do foreigners build such gigantic steel mills? Are foreigners really so stupid?'¹⁷ On a visit to Anhui province—which was governed by a particularly fanatical Maoist—Mao was given a tour of some backyard steelworks and shown their steel. To Mao's untrained eye, it looked like good steel, although it may have been produced elsewhere, at a modern furnace. Mao was impressed and his doubts were eased.

People from all walks of life made backyard steel with furnaces built from homemade mud bricks. Everyone competed to produce the most steel. Peasants in the People's Communes were especially hardworking. There were even small steel mills in the grounds of **Zhongnanhai**, the compound in Beijing that housed leading CCP officials and their families.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, the Dazhai Commune in northern China was held up as the model for all others to imitate. Dazhai peasants were said to have turned great tracts of barren land into fertile fields through collective effort. Peasants and workers were urged to 'learn from Dazhai'. It later emerged that Dazhai had been generously aided by the army and the government.

 **Source 7.06** William Hinton, *Shenfan* (London: Picador, 1983), 205, 217.

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to backyard steel, peasants were shown how to identify surface deposits of uranium. Backyard smelters were used to refine the ore into functional grade uranium. While this caused a good deal of pollution, backyard uranium smelters made a significant contribution to China's emerging nuclear power industry.

Zhongnanhai the compound in Beijing that holds the residences of high-ranking CCP officials



 **Source 7.07** Backyard steel smelters.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the film of Yu Hua's novel *To Live*, the main character saves his ancient puppet set from being melted down for steel by offering to perform shows for the people working the backyard smelters.

 **Source 7.08** William Hinton, *Shenfan* (London: Picador, 1983), 216.

The drive to make steel soon became manic. People tended smelters night and day and virtual forests of smoking chimneys sprang up across the country. Vast woodlands were destroyed for fuel. The search for scrap metal became a further obsession as woks, tools, doorknobs, nails, bicycles and wagon wheels were all melted down. 'The country looked as though it had been picked clean by iron-eating ants', writes Harrison Salisbury.¹⁸ Privately, some people felt that melting metal to make more metal was rather silly, while others delighted in the collective competition to make the most steel, which they referred to as 'send up Sputniks' or 'launch a satellite'.

COMMUNAL KITCHENS

While the peasants made steel and tilled the fields, they were encouraged to eat as much as they liked at communal kitchens. Acting troupes, puppeteers and musicians provided entertainment for those working the furnaces. One commune official, Wang Wende, spoke with great enthusiasm about the food and entertainment provided:

Wang Wende describes communal meals

We all ate well during the smelting drive—bread and noodles at midnight for all hands. Huge pots next to every furnace provided the noodles. Who can ever forget it? And then there were the skits, the drama teams, the films! All the barriers between the people broke down ... We ate a lot of meat. It was considered revolutionary then to eat meat. If you didn't eat meat it wouldn't do ... People even vied with each other to see who could eat the most.

While the generous meals served by the commune kitchens were enjoyable and satisfying, they were setting a dangerous precedent, as:

- the peasants were consuming food reserves that had yet to be replenished
- the push to make steel was taking men away from farm work.

In the end, the steel campaign failed. Despite their best intentions and revolutionary enthusiasm, ordinary people with homemade furnaces were not metallurgists. The quality of backyard steel and iron was extremely poor: full of impurities and brittle 'like cattle droppings'. Also, backyard mud furnaces tended to wash away in the rain. Ultimately, the quantity over quality approach was flawed.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 True or false: Mao created the People's Commune model.
- 2 What did Mao say regarding the People's Communes?
- 3 Identify three or more ways the communes were 'bigger and more socialist' than cooperatives.
- 4 Why did Maoists believe the People's Communes indicated a progression from socialism towards the realisation of communism?
- 5 Briefly explain the function of backyard steel production and communal kitchens during the Great Leap Forward.

EXPERIMENTS AND STATISTICS

Kang Sheng: ‘What is science? Science is simply acting daringly. There is nothing mysterious about it ... just act recklessly and it will be alright.’

LYSENKOISM

The weather in 1958 was exceptionally good and a bumper grain crop was ready for harvest. To increase yields further, farmers were encouraged to use methods based on the theories of Soviet **agronomist** Trofim Lysenko. Lysenko basically denied the accepted foundations of ecological and biological science, such as genetics. Instead, he claimed that the characteristics of plants and animals are acquired from the immediate environment or from direct descendants. According to Lysenko, if the seeds of fruit trees were stored in very cold conditions, they could then be planted in snowy regions with positive results.

Lysenkoist theories adopted by the Chinese included close planting and deep ploughing. It was believed that:

- close planting would lead to greater yields, as seedlings of the same plant type would not compete with each other
- deep ploughing would bring previously untouched fertile soil to the surface and encourage larger root systems.

But in practice, deep ploughing made topsoil barren (or infertile) by mixing it with clay and sand brought up from the depths—sometimes three metres below the usual ploughing level. Close planting of rice restricted the amount of wind that passed through the crops, which resulted in poor quality rice and lower yields. Because of the Lysenkoist belief that crops would grow anywhere if they were looked after, huge areas were sown with crops unsuited to that region.

The Great Leap Forward was driven by a disregard for past experience and ‘expert’ advice with a commitment to strive for extraordinary results (plus a disregard for common sense). The General Line called for innovation and the supremacy of human will over material difficulties and even reality. As one of Mao’s close associates, Kang Sheng, explained in 1958, ‘We should be like Marx, entitled to talk nonsense. What is science? Science is simply acting daringly. There is nothing mysterious about it ... just act recklessly and it will be alright.’¹⁹

Lysenkoism the theories of Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko, adopted by the Chinese with enthusiasm during the Great Leap Forward

agronomist an expert in the science of soil management and crop production

DID YOU KNOW?

So-called innovations based on Lysenkoism included a corn-rice hybrid and cows that produced only cream. These were some of the more ‘plausible’ claims. Other ‘innovations’ were a cotton plant crossed with a tomato plant to produce red cotton. There was even talk of a breed of rabbit that was nearly the size of a cow, and the successful cross-breeding of cows with pigs.

DID YOU KNOW?

One British biologist offered a cutting assessment of Lysenko’s scientific knowledge: ‘To talk to Lysenko was like trying to explain differential calculus to a man who did not know his 12-times table’.

THE FOUR PESTS CAMPAIGN

A further example of reckless nonsense during the Great Leap Forward was the campaign to rid China of the Four Pests: flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows. People spent hours killing as many of these creatures as they could, working in teams and inventing clever traps. However, the campaign to get rid of sparrows had unexpected consequences: crop damage from sparrows was reduced—but locusts and other insects had a free run on newly planted fields.

THE FOUR PESTS



ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 7.09 and 7.10 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the features of the Great Leap Forward campaigns depicted in the sources.
- 2 Explain how mass enthusiasm was used during the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 Evaluate the extent to which the Great Leap Forward achieved the CCP's revolutionary ideals. Use evidence to support your response.

➡ **Source 7.09** 'The commune's canteen is powerful, the dishes are deliciously made. You eat like you wish, production ambitions are rising.'



'Everybody comes to beat sparrows.' **Source 7.10** ↑

MANIPULATING STATISTICS

Historian Ross Terrill points out that Mao's treatment of numbers reinforced the unrealistic nature of the Great Leap Forward.²⁰ Mao was often imprecise in his estimates, in the same way that the Chinese phrase 'ten thousand years' describes an infinitely long time rather than a literal period of time. Mao would say that something might come about in five or twenty or forty years. When reviewing targets for steel production, Mao said: 'Let's just double it! Why dilly-dally?'²¹

Jung Chang describes Mao as having a 'disregard for reality, which might have been interesting in a poet, but in a political leader with absolute power was quite another thing'.²² On one occasion, Mao said that economics was like playing the game *mahjong*: to advance your position, all you had to do was double the stakes.

However, it was misinformation that led to most of the disasters. Many of the country's best statisticians had been purged during the Hundred Flowers campaign. Furthermore, centralised planning and statistical monitoring were dropped in favour of empowering the communes.²³

The production of grain was not tied to set quotas. Instead, the cadres in charge of the People's Communes were simply told to produce as much grain as possible. At mass rallies, representatives from different communes vowed to achieve spectacular grain harvests. Whereas a one-acre field might normally produce one tonne of grain or rice, commune activists pledged to harvest fifteen to thirty tonnes. Amid gongs, drums, singing and fanfare, work teams launched competitive drives to over-fulfil their preposterously high targets. 'Good News Reporting Stations' took the place of proper accounting.

The central authorities were only told about plentiful harvests, not poor ones. The false sense of success was boosted by 'show fields' that were set aside for officials to inspect. These fields contained rice or grain recently transplanted from other fields, and gave the impression of incredibly high yields per acre. Commune officials inflated the grain figures to fulfil their quotas. 'With each repetition', Jasper Becker argues, 'the lies became more and more fantastic, a ghastly parody of Chinese Whispers'.²⁴

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, mathematics students demonstrated their revolutionary disregard for 'bourgeois specialists' and 'expert' knowledge by deliberately calculating equations incorrectly and putting decimal points in the wrong places.

SCEPTICS AND DENIERS

However, not all reports about grain harvests were taken at face value. Economist Chen Yun doubted the accuracy of many claims. One of Mao's secretaries, Tian Jiaying (T'ien Chia-ying), was also sceptical, and accused the provincial officials of acting irresponsibly: 'In the past, our Party has always sought truth from facts, but this isn't what we're doing now. People are telling lies, boasting ... This is ridiculous. It is shameful.'²⁵

Voices of reason, such as Tian's, were shouted down by the multitude of Maoist fanatics and idealists, who were unable—or unwilling—to acknowledge reality. Similarly, cadres who raised questions or urged caution were liable to be struggled against as 'deniers' who were 'casting aspersions on the excellent situation'.²⁶ Jung Chang recalled: 'It was a time when telling fantasies to oneself as well as others, and believing them, was practised to an incredible degree'.²⁷ Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, stated that: 'Everyone was hurrying to jump on the utopian bandwagon ... everyone was caught in the grip of this utopian hysteria ... The excitement was contagious'.²⁸

Mao also came to believe the slogans and inflated reports. It seems Mao heard and saw only what he wanted to—that the Great Leap Forward was a tremendous success.²⁹

FALSE SURPLUS

The government negotiated export sales to fund heavy industry, based on faulty statistics that indicated a large grain surplus. There was a lively debate in the *People's Daily* about how China might deal with its apparent 'abundance' of food. Nations with close ties to China, such as Albania, North Vietnam and North Korea, even received shipments of free grain.³⁰

Good weather and enthusiasm had increased grain harvests:

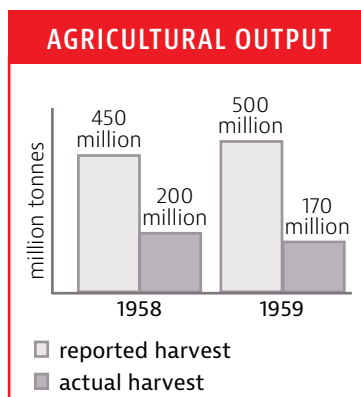
- 1957: 195 million tonnes
- 1958: 200 million tonnes—but reported as 450 million tonnes
- 1959: 170 million tonnes—but reported as 500 million tonnes.

It was obvious that the Great Leap Forward had produced a dangerously false surplus.

Grain production fell due to poor management and because peasants had run out of enthusiasm. Apart from revolutionary idealism, there was no incentive to put in extra effort. The 'work points' system allocated the same rewards to everyone doing the same job, regardless of how much each person worked. Even enthusiastic workers could not keep up the feverish pace required.

The central authorities imposed high grain levies after receiving glowing reports about bountiful harvests. Around 30 per cent of the harvest had already been collected by the state, and this rose to about 90 per cent.³¹ Provincial officials did their best to collect and send in as much grain and rice as they could. But as many communes had already consumed their stores of food, grain requisitioning meant that the peasants had nothing to eat. Disaster was looming.

➡ Source 7.12



DID YOU KNOW?

A 1958 propaganda photo shows a field where the crop was so dense it supported the weight of four children. It was later revealed that a hidden wooden platform held the children up.



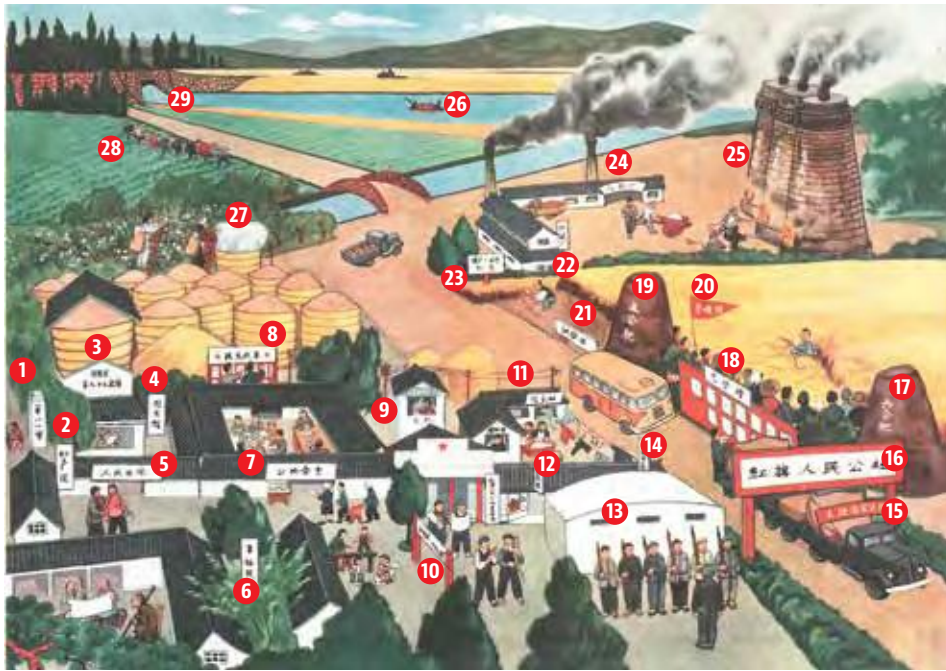
↑ Source 7.11 The propaganda photo from 1958.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly explain two or more Lysenkoist innovations carried out in the Great Leap Forward.
- 2 List the Four Pests targeted in the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 Manipulation of statistics was a major contribution to the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward. How did each of these factors play a role in the belief there was a massive grain surplus?
 - Mao's attitude to numbers
 - decentralised economic planning
 - Good News Reporting Stations
 - show fields
 - popular pressure
 - declining mass enthusiasm.
- 4 What was the reported harvest in 1958? What was the actual harvest?
- 5 What was the reported harvest in 1959? What was the actual harvest?

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD: A PEOPLE'S COMMUNE



Source 7.13

'The People's Communes are Good' by Rui Guangting. This source is a poster from 1958 produced for Chinese schools to showcase the ideal People's Commune.

Features of the source to note:

1. Primary school
2. Maternity clinic
3. Grain storage (note abundant harvest)
4. Library
5. General hospital ('People's Hospital')
6. Happiness Home (for elderly people)
7. Communal kitchen and canteen
8. Noticeboard outlining breakthroughs in production

9. Electricity station
10. Kindergarten and nursery
11. Communal laundry
12. General store/shop
13. People's Militia
14. 'People's Cinema'
15. Delivery of harvest for export. Slogan: 'Help the Country to Develop'
16. 'Red Flag People's Commune'
17. Fertiliser

18. Honour board to celebrate great achievements
19. Fertiliser
20. Delegation of visitors from another commune being shown field and harvest
21. Agricultural experimentation
22. Concrete factory
23. Slogan encouraging increased crop yields: 'Increase the production by 100,000 jin' (50,000 kg).
24. Fertiliser factory
25. Large 'backyard' steel production
26. Fishing boat
27. Cotton picking
28. Rice farming by work team
29. Water conservation project (canal)

THE END OF THE GREAT LEAP?

Mao Zedong: 'I am absolutely no good at construction, and I don't understand industrial planning.'

THE WUHAN PLENUM

A Central Committee plenum was held at Wuhan from 28 November to 10 December 1958. One of the topics for discussion was: 'Some Questions Concerning People's Communes'. The Party had realised there were problems in rural areas, and was seeking to rein in the more radical aspects of the Great Leap Forward.

The plenum agreed that the General Line was right, but that implementation of the grain levies had been hasty and careless. Rather than 450 million tonnes, it was decided that a harvest of 370 million tonnes was more 'realistic'. The reduced levies meant that:

- production quotas were reduced and communes were made more accountable
- some private markets were allowed to reopen

- families were allowed more time to tend their own small vegetable plots
- food was no longer provided in communal kitchens.

Investigative teams were sent out from Beijing to assess the effects of the Great Leap. However, the plenum essentially tinkered with the Great Leap Forward rather than made major changes.

PRESIDENT LIU SHAOQI

At the Wuhan Plenum, it was announced that Mao Zedong would stay on as CCP Chairman but would stand down as China's President. Mao was apparently satisfied with his achievements and wanted to spend more time on developing policies rather than day-to-day administration. The Party went to some lengths to reassure the general public that Mao had not been demoted.

Liu Shaoqi was appointed the new head of state, and became President in April 1959. In early 1959, Liu was the dominant figure in high-level meetings that had recommended measures to moderate the Great Leap Forward. Mao was present at the meetings that decided on a 'judicious trimming' of policies.³²

It seemed the Great Leap Forward was being quietly wound down. However, the economic situation continued to deteriorate. Fields were not being farmed effectively because peasants were investing their labour in backyard steel production. In addition, famine was breaking out in several provinces.

FACT-FINDING MISSIONS

The Great Leap Forward was not going at all well—and Mao wanted to know why. He told one of his bodyguards: 'Something has gone wrong in the countryside. I must find out what it is.'³³ He said to the governor of Henan that, 'all my plans are messed up'.³⁴

Leading Communists decided to travel to various regions and investigate problems. Mao went to Manchuria to see how large steel plants operated. He learned that good steel can only be made in professional refineries with good sources of fuel. However, he did not order an end to backyard steel production, as he felt that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people should not be dampened.³⁵

In June, Mao visited his old home village of Shaoshan, in Hunan. It was the first time he had been back in thirty-two years. Mao chatted with villagers, saw his family home and took a swim in the local reservoir. He heard some complaints but was also told that the People's Communes were 'really good'. This was what he wanted to hear: the Great Leap Forward needed adjustments but was a fine ideal overall.

Like Mao, Marshal Peng Dehuai made a trip to his home village, which was also in Hunan and not far from Shaoshan. By contrast, Peng was appalled by what he found. The villagers were hungry and living in squalor. Elderly residents of the local Happiness Home shivered on flimsy bamboo mats. Children in the kindergarten were crying with cold and hunger.

Peng shouted, 'What sort of Happiness is this?'³⁶ He gave 400 yuan from his own pocket to buy bedding for the kindergarten and the elderly home. He assured the villagers that he would tell his fellow leaders in Beijing of their plight.

From April to June, Peng made a diplomatic visit to the USSR, where he allegedly shared his misgivings about the Great Leap with Khrushchev.



Source 7.14 Chairman Mao Zedong with teachers and students of the Shaoshan School in 1959.

THE LUSHAN PLENUM TURNING POINT

In July 1959, the leading figures of the CCP gathered at Lushan for a Central Committee plenum. Before the plenum, Peng Dehuai had tried to meet with Mao. Mao was not available, so Peng wrote his concerns in a private letter.³⁷

Peng was a no-nonsense, straight-talking soldier—not a person to try to gain favour with Mao. Peng and Mao had known each other a long time and affectionately called each ‘old’ (*lao*), as is the Chinese custom among friends. Lao Mao and Lao Peng had also had many disagreements.

However, Mao took Peng’s letter as a personal insult. On 16 July he submitted ‘Comrade Peng Dehuai’s Statement of Opinions’ as a formal document to the Politburo and called for comment. While Peng’s letter outlined some of the Party’s recent achievements, it also expressed concern at ‘winds of exaggeration’ brought by ‘petty-bourgeois fanaticism’. Peng also criticised ‘hasty and excessive’ socialist transformation. He did not mention famine, but argued that there were serious faults in the Great Leap Forward.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao sent his trusted bodyguards on secret fact-finding missions, usually to their home villages. However, deciding what to report back was a dilemma. As one guard said: ‘On one hand Mao wanted to discover the truth, but on the other hand he could not tolerate anyone who dared to tell the truth’.

 **Source 7.15** Cited in Stanley Karnow, *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution* (New York, 1972), 117–119.

politics in command

a common Maoist slogan that champions ideology over all other considerations

Peng Dehuai’s ‘Statement of Opinions’

Bewitched by the achievements of the Great Leap Forward and the passion of the mass movement, some leftist tendencies emerged ... In the view of some comrades, putting *politics in command* could be a substitute for everything ... But putting politics in command is no substitute for economic principles, much less for economic measures.

Peng was clearly refuting Mao’s frequent claim that ‘politics should be in command’. According to historian Lee Feigon: ‘Peng had told the emperor he had no clothes. When Mao insisted that he was, metaphorically, well clothed—as others had been telling him on his tours of the countryside—few besides Peng cared to contradict him.’³⁸ Mao was in danger of losing face, particularly in light of Khrushchev’s speech on 14 July that criticised the People’s Communes in China. Mao suspected that Peng had colluded with Khrushchev—which was a dangerous move, given the fate of Gao Gang in 1954.

Lushan Plenum a significant meeting of the CCP Central Committee in July–August 1959, which saw the downfall of Peng Dehuai and the reaffirmation of the Great Leap Forward

DID YOU KNOW?

Peng Dehuai wrote a poem at the end of his tour of Hunan:

*The millet is scattered all
over the ground,
The leaves of the sweet
potatoes are withered,
The young and strong have
gone to make iron,
To harvest the grain there
are children and old women.
How shall we get through
next year?
I shall agitate and speak
out on behalf of the People.*

MAO SILENCES HIS CRITICS

Mao opened the **Lushan Plenum** with a generally positive review of the situation: ‘The achievements are tremendous, the problems are numerous, the experience is rich, and the future is bright’.³⁹ The delegates then broke into small groups for discussion and debate.

Mao gave no indication of his thoughts about Peng’s letter. Central Committee members ‘were misinterpreting his silence now, reading it as approval when in fact Mao was becoming more and more disgruntled’.⁴⁰ Peng remained critical of the Great Leap Forward and won over several comrades to his views. Others were soon offering similar assessments, and it seemed that the Party leadership was on the verge of abandoning the Great Leap policy.

However, Mao took all these assessments as an attack on his leadership. On 23 July 1959, he began his counter-offensive, after having lured his enemies ‘in deep’. Mao addressed the Central Committee with an air of nonchalance: ‘You have talked so much. Now allow me to talk for an hour or so, will you? I have taken sleeping-pills three times and still couldn’t sleep.’⁴¹ Peng sat ashen-faced in the back row of the auditorium as Mao

launched a scathing attack and scolded his comrades for their wavering revolutionary zeal. Mao was a master of political intrigue, and simultaneously blamed himself and excused himself for the failures of the Great Leap Forward.

Mao's self-criticism at Lushan Plenum

KEY SOURCE

Everybody has shortcomings. Even Confucius made mistakes. So did Marx ... I have seen Lenin's manuscripts, which are filled with changes. He, too, made mistakes ... I devoted myself mainly to revolution. I am absolutely no good at construction, and I don't understand industrial planning ... I should take primary responsibility for 1958 and 1959. It is I who am to blame.

 **Source 7.16** Cited in Stanley Karnow, *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution* (New York, 1972), 121.

Although Mao took 'primary responsibility', he also blamed others for not pointing out that his ideas were ill-founded or weren't working: 'I do not claim to have invented the people's communes, only to have proposed them'.⁴² All comrades needed to share some responsibility, and if they had a problem, they best speak up: 'You must all analyse your responsibility. If you have to shit—shit! If you have to fart—fart! You will feel much better for it.' The tension among delegates was excruciating, but Mao was only getting started:

Mao's criticism of Party leaders at Lushan

We are under attack from within and outside the Party. The majority of comrades need to strengthen their backbones. Why are they not strong? Just because for a time there were too few vegetables, too few hair-grips, no soap, a lack of balance in the economy and tension in the market, everyone became tense ... in the first part of the night you might be tense, but once you take your sleeping pills the tension will go away for the rest of the night.

 **Source 7.17** Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 411.

PENG CONFRONTS MAO

Mao made it clear that he wasn't going to take criticism lightly: 'I won't attack you, but if you attack me I for sure will attack you!'⁴³ Over the following days, relations between Mao and Peng deteriorated further. Harrison Salisbury relates one confrontation:

Peng Dehuai and Mao Zedong argue at Lushan

Peng said that if the 5 billion yuan uselessly spent for backyard steel had been put into consumer goods it would have made a pile higher than Mount Lu. Mao interrupted to say: 'Not so high as Mount Lu.' 'OK' retorted Peng, 'a little bit lower.'

 **Source 7.18** Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng, a Dual Biography* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1992), 179.

Peng asked Mao, 'Do you hear the people outside? They are not crying "Long live Chairman Mao," but "We're hungry. We want food." What did we fight the war for?'⁴⁴ Peng bluntly reminded Mao that people can't eat poetry. Both men screamed obscenities and insulted each other's mothers.

Mao eventually presented the Politburo with a stark choice: if they didn't want to follow his leadership, he would go back to the countryside, raise another Red Army and overthrow the government. In the end, no one took up Mao's offer to voice further objections or back Peng Dehuai. All sided with Mao.

On 16 August, the Central Committee released a document condemning Peng Dehuai as an 'anti-Party element' and reaffirmed the General Line of the Great Leap Forward. Peng was replaced as defence minister by the loyal Maoist Lin Biao. A new Anti-Rightist Campaign was carried out to silence and punish any other 'little Peng Dehuais' in the Party or government.

PENG DEHUI, 1898–1974



↑ Peng Dehuai.

Peng Dehuai: 'The Chairman talks all the time about more, faster, better, and more economical results. That is annoying. What does he want with chanting these liturgies all the time?'

Peng Dehuai came from a poor peasant background. His family was only able to afford to pay for his schooling until Peng was ten years old—after that he was forced to work as a manual labourer. His family experienced such hardship that at one stage Peng and his brothers had to beg for food.

As a young man Peng joined the ranks of the local warlord army. He displayed talent as a soldier and received several promotions, furthering his skills by taking officer training courses. Peng's army was co-opted into the Nationalist military and he served during the Northern Expedition.

In 1927, Peng deserted to the Communists and joined the Red Army. He led CCP forces in attacks on towns in Hunan after the Shanghai Massacre, but was later forced to seek shelter with Mao and Zhu at Jinggangshan.

Peng became one of the leading Communist military commanders. He demonstrated his leadership during the campaigns to defend the Jiangxi Soviet from Nationalist encirclement. Peng was also a veteran of the Long March and one of the critics of Otto Braun who backed Mao at Zunyi. He served as deputy commander of the Eighth Route Army during the Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War. Peng commanded Chinese forces in the Korean War after Lin Biao refused the post.

Peng was short-tempered and known for speaking his mind. He did not seek to gain through his high-ranking position, and found the luxurious living quarters of some of his leading comrades distasteful. As Minister of Defence and Politburo member, Peng's blunt manner of speaking sometimes caused friction among the CCP leadership. This created a crisis at the 1959 Lushan Plenum when Peng criticised the widespread hunger caused by the unrealistic policies of the Great Leap Forward. Peng's views were taken personally by Mao, who in response raged at his old friend. Peng was dismissed and replaced by Lin Biao.

Peng kept his membership of the Party, but played no role in politics after Lushan. He suffered terribly during the Cultural Revolution. Peng was purged from the CCP in December 1966 and beaten more than 130 times by Red Guards. In November 1974, he died in a prison hospital from maltreatment. Peng's reputation was rehabilitated posthumously in 1978. Deng Xiaoping spoke highly of the former marshal following Peng's rehabilitation:

Deng Xiaoping on Peng Dehuai

He was courageous in battle, open and straightforward, incorruptible and impeccable, and strict towards himself. He cared about the masses, and was never concerned about his own advantage. He was never afraid of difficulties, neither of carrying heavy loads. In his revolutionary work, he was diligent, honest, and he had an utmost sense of responsibility.

➔ **Source 7.19** Cited in Jurgens Domes, *Peng Te-huai: The Man and the Image* (London: Hurst & Company, 1985), 127–128.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LUSHAN

The Lushan proceedings were of great significance. Mao made it very clear that he had the utmost authority. No longer would the Politburo openly challenge his views. According to historian Harrison Salisbury, 'Mao had turned his band of brothers into a claqué [a group of people hired to clap a performance], clapping hands and nodding heads like mechanical dolls'.⁴⁵ One Communist official, Wang Bingnan (Wang Ping-nan), later recalled:

After Lushan the whole Party shut up. We were afraid to speak out. It stifled democracy. People didn't tell Mao their honest opinions. They were afraid. This led straight to the terrible times of the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁶

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the key decisions made at the Wuhan Plenum in late 1958?
- 2 What did Mao learn on his fact-finding missions to Manchuria and Shaoshan?
- 3 How did Peng Dehuai react to what he observed during the visit to his home village?
- 4 How did Mao react to concerns raised by Peng in his letter at the Lushan Plenum?
- 5 Why was the Lushan Plenum a significant turning point for the Chinese Communist Party?

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain why Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward.
- Explain how the policies of the Great Leap Forward changed the lives of China's peasants.
- Explain how the revolutionary ideas of Mao Zedong influenced the Great Leap Forward.
- Outline how leaders in the CCP were forced to compromise their ideals during the Great Leap Forward.
- Discuss the intentions of the CCP during the Great Leap Forward.
- Explain challenges that emerged for the CCP during the Great Leap Forward.
- Outline the key policies of the Great Leap Forward and their significance.
- Discuss the conditions that led some leaders in the CCP to question the Great Leap Forward at the Wuhan and Lushan plenums.

THE THREE BAD YEARS FAMINE KEY DEVELOPMENT

Mao Zedong: 'Even if there's a collapse that'll be alright. The worst that will happen is that the whole world will get a big laugh out of it.'

After the 1959 Lushan Plenum, any retreat from the radical economics of the Great Leap Forward would have been a loss of face for Mao.⁴⁷ Policies that had been marked as failures were now vigorously defended. The People's Communes were revived, as were Lysenkoist farming practices.

Grain targets were set at 270 million tonnes, which was lower than previously proposed but still far above the actual harvest of 170 million. There was even a push to create communes in urban areas. People began to sell personal items before the government could claim them as public property.

The Great Leap Forward continued for another year after Lushan. The result, according to historian John King Fairbank, was 'an all-time first-class manmade famine ... The [Great Leap Forward] had played itself out as a Mao-made catastrophe'.⁴⁸ Conditions in several regions were made more difficult by flood, drought and locust plagues.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the famine, many city people were forced to eat chlorella. High in protein, chlorella is a slimy, green fungus-like substance usually grown in urine. Although it was washed thoroughly before being eaten, it is still said to have tasted disgusting.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are no photographs of famine victims from the Great Leap Forward. Images that are often used to illustrate the suffering of famine in twentieth century China, such as those below, are usually of the 1942–1943 Henan famine.

Three Bad Years the worst years of famine (1959–1961) following implementation of the Great Leap Forward

Source 7.20 A victim of famine in China eating bark.



Source 7.21 A victim of famine in China.



A MAO-MADE FAMINE

The suffering of rural people was further exacerbated by the whims of Chairman Mao, who insisted on upholding the General Line of the Great Leap Forward. 'It was grotesque', says Sidney Rittenberg, 'in that Mao was an adventurer who didn't hesitate to embark on adventures with hundreds of thousands of people's lives at stake'.⁴⁹ One of the worst famines in Chinese history would soon claim many more lives than the 'hundreds of thousands' Rittenberg spoke about.

As the situation deteriorated, officials continued to report to the central authorities that everything was fine, and tried to prevent news of the famine from leaking. Public security bureaus intercepted mail and entire villages were placed under lockdown. People who tried to escape were arrested and imprisoned for 'vagrancy'.⁵⁰ No one would admit what was happening—until Mao said so, there was no famine.

Some commune officials did their best to help the people under their care. However, other commune officials—especially the fanatic Maoists—extracted as much grain for the government as possible. One official said: 'It is not that there is no food. There is plenty of grain, but 90 per cent of the people have ideological problems.'⁵¹ Some regional CCP cadres even tortured peasants who refused to toil in the fields or hand over their remaining food.

Up to 30 million people died of starvation during the **Three Bad Years** of 1959, 1960 and 1961.⁵² It became a common sight in cities to see people who were suffering from malnutrition.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAMINE

The famine brought unparalleled social upheaval and suffering in country areas. People were forced to eat anything they could to fill their stomachs, including sawdust, grass, bark and soil. One prisoner recalled the crime of a fellow inmate:

One day a group of people came into our camp. They were all peasants. So I said to one, 'What are you in for?' He says, 'For ruining public property.' I said, 'What did you do?' He said, 'I ate the bark off trees.' When I heard that I felt very bad.⁵³

Cannibalism was widespread. Neighbours ate each others' children so that they did not have to eat their own. Jasper Becker describes at some length the 'famine culture' that justified desperate practices such as 'swap child, make food'.⁵⁴ Husbands sold their wives and daughters into prostitution. Thousands of children were abandoned or orphaned. Some children were left in holes by the side of the road, deep enough so they could not climb out and follow after their families, but in view of passers-by who, it was hoped, might adopt them.

It is difficult to confirm the number of casualties resulting from the Chinese famine, as the government kept poor records and did not acknowledge the disaster until after Mao's death. Some sources indicate a death toll as high as 80 million,⁵⁵ although estimates of 20 to 30 million are more commonly accepted. According to historian Frank Dikötter, 'at least 45 million people died unnecessarily between 1958 and 1962', and it might have been even worse than that.⁵⁶ Jasper Becker is the leading Western expert on the Chinese famine; he concludes that while up to 40 million may have died, 30 million is the most 'reliable figure'. He adds that: 'From a moral perspective', debate over death statistics 'is meaningless ... In terms of sheer numbers, no other event comes close to this'.⁵⁷

China's famine was extraordinarily widespread. To a large extent, the famine was caused by flawed government policy. To show sympathy with those suffering, Mao adopted a

vegetarian diet: 'Everyone is starving. I can't eat meat.'⁵⁸ However, Mao often seemed breathtakingly callous. Towards the end of 1959 he reportedly said: 'Even if there's a collapse that'll be alright. The worst that will happen is that the whole world will get a big laugh out of it.'⁵⁹ On another occasion he said: 'Working like this, with all these projects, half of China may well have to die. If not half, one-third, or one-tenth—50 million—die.'⁶⁰

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did developments at the Lushan Plenum impact on the policies of the Great Leap Forward?
- 2 How did different Communist officials respond to the emerging famine crisis?
- 3 Approximately how many people died in the Three Bad Years famine?
- 4 Note three examples that indicate extreme social distress because of the famine.
- 5 How did Mao supposedly react to the famine?

DISCUSSION

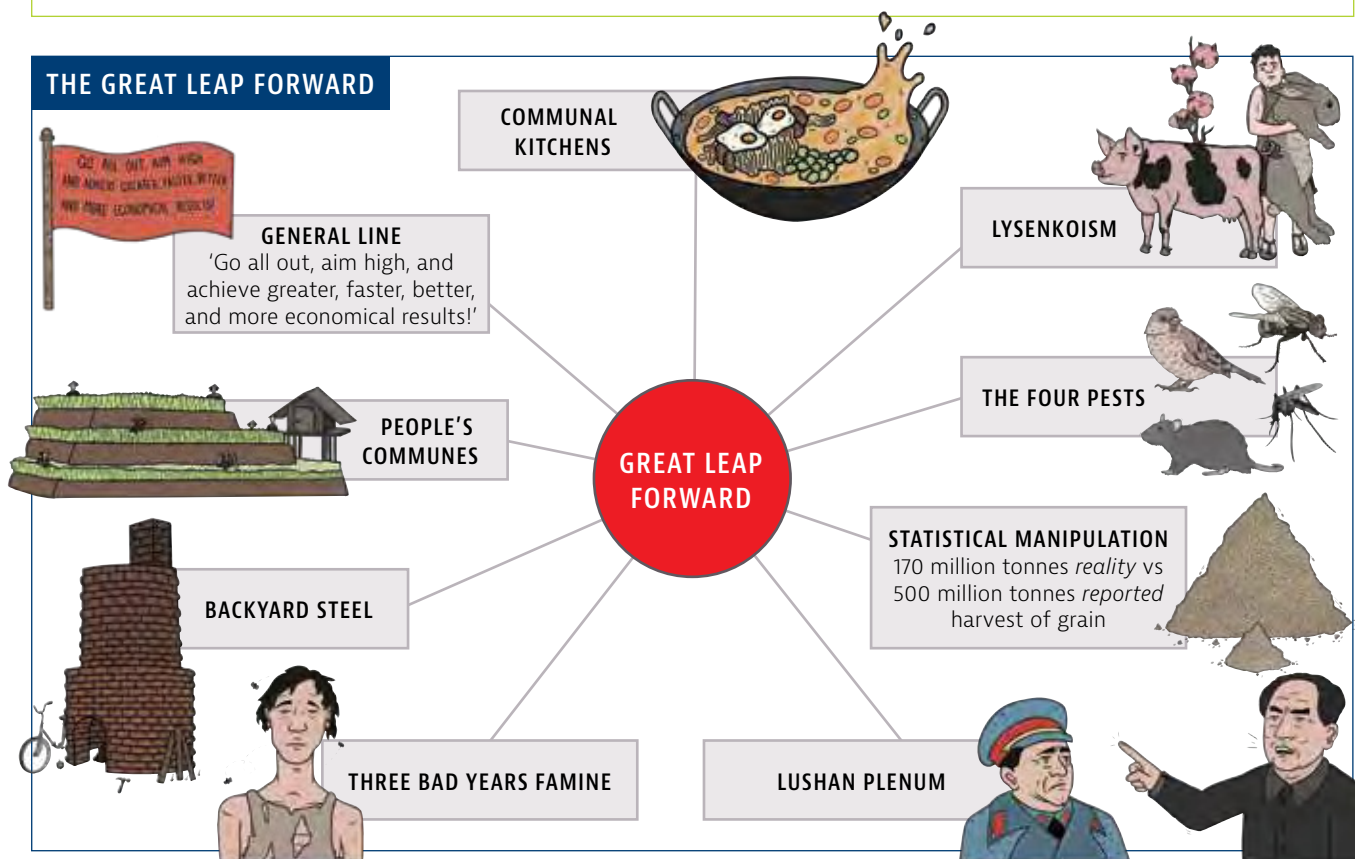
In small groups or as a class, discuss the following questions.

- Who was most to blame for the post-Great Leap Forward famine? Why?
- What challenges confronted those in the CCP who tried to question or moderate the Great Leap Forward?
- Why does Becker emphasise that debating the Three Bad Years statistics is 'meaningless'?
- China had experienced many famines prior to the Great Leap Forward. What made the Three Bad Years famine different?

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the Three Bad Years famine emerged from the Great Leap Forward.
- Outline the role of Mao Zedong in contributing to the failures of the Great Leap Forward.
- Explain how the conditions of everyday life were impacted by the Three Bad Years famine.
- Explain why the consequences of the Great Leap Forward brought the CCP a crisis in revolutionary ideals.



WAS MAO REALLY A MONSTER? HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Mao's suggestion that the collapse of the Chinese economy would be a cause for amusement, and his flippant remarks regarding the death of 50 million people, are anecdotes from Jung Chang and Jon Halliday's book *Mao: The Unknown Story*. Chang and Halliday offer these quotes to suggest that Mao knew millions would perish because of his policies, and that he deliberately allowed the tragedy to unfold.

Other historians—while not denying the disaster that followed the Great Leap Forward, and Mao's responsibility for much of it—have been critical of Chang and Halliday's scholarship.⁶¹ They argue that Mao sometimes spoke crudely to get a reaction and was known for his use of poetic symbolism, irony and humour (often in bad taste). He could also be intentionally vague, contradictory and misleading. In other words, Mao didn't always intend to be taken literally.⁶² If his comments are taken out of context then their meaning can change—sometimes quite considerably.

When read in full, Mao's speech at a Politburo meeting at Wuchang on 21 November 1958 might suggest a different interpretation:

Mao's speech, 21 November 1958

Do not pursue vanity, and get a disaster. We should reduce the amount of our task. On the waterworks, the whole nation accomplished 50 billion cubic metres of earth last winter and this spring, but for this winter and next spring, the plan is 190 billion, three times more. There are various other tasks, steel, iron, copper, aluminium, coal, transport, machinery, chemicals; how much labour and financial resources are needed? Working like this, I am afraid that half of China may well have to die. If not half, one-third, or one-tenth - 50 million deaths. 50 million deaths, if you are not fired, at least I will be. Should we do so much? It is OK if you really want to, but the principle is no death. If you insist, I cannot stop you, but I should not be killed when people die. Next year's plan is to produce 30 million tons of steel, should we plan so much? Can we do it? How many people must work for it? Will people die? We should lower our tone in this meeting, cool the air down ... There is a risk of breaking down.

Historian Mobo Gao argues that Mao's intention was 'to warn his audience of the dangers of overwork and overenthusiasm in the Great Leap Forward' rather than dismiss the death of millions.⁶³ In a similar manner, Sidney Rittenberg believes that Mao was exaggerating the potential number of deaths for effect, 'to try to bring unruly comrades into line'.⁶⁴

➔ **Source 7.22** Cited in Jin Xiaoding, 'A critique of Jung Chang and Jon Halliday,' in Gregor Benton and Lin Chun (eds), *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Routledge, 2010), 154.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

In small groups or as a class, discuss the following questions:

- Was the intention of the Great Leap Forward to cause mass suffering?
- Do you think Mao genuinely believed that up to 50 million Chinese people would have to die in order to achieve the Great Leap Forward?
- Chang and Halliday imply that Mao's policy failures were effectively state-sanctioned mass murder. To what extent do you agree?
- How might Mao's personal style and language usage create challenges for historians? How might his contemporaries have found his choice of words or language challenging?

MAO'S POLICY FAILURES: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In private, Mao voiced concern at the way his policies were implemented. He could not understand why things were not working out during the Great Leap Forward. But rather than blaming himself, he got angry with his subordinates and fellow leaders. The following views reflect on Mao's policies and how they were carried out.

Maurice Meisner, American historian

Since the Great Leap was 'utopian' in nature from the beginning, it is generally assumed that failure in the end was inevitable. But a fair historical evaluation of the Great Leap in general and communization in particular does demand that one take into consideration the vast [inconsistencies] between what was intended and what was done, the striking differences between what originally were basic rational (and perhaps 'possible') Maoist policies of socio-economic change and the largely irrational fashion in which Maoists attempted to implement these policies.

↑ **Source 7.23** Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 250–251.

Li Zhisui, Mao's doctor

Mao was a great philosopher, a great soldier, and a great politician, but he was a terrible economist. He had a penchant [liking or habit] for grandiose schemes. He lost touch with the people, forgot the work style that he himself promoted—seeking truth from facts, humility, attention to details. This was the source of the country's economic problems ... Mao was a complex and often contradictory man. As the emperor, he believed in his own infallibility. If wrong decisions were made, wrong policies introduced, the fault lay not with him but with the information provided to him. The emperor could not be wrong, but he could be deceived.

↑ **Source 7.24** Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 296, 307.

Sidney Rittenberg, American Communist and CCP volunteer

I think there was a drastic change, really a drastic change [in Mao after he came to power]. I want to say fatal change really because my main impressions of Mao—before coming to power—was that he was one of the best listeners I had ever spoken with. He focused his whole being on you. What you were saying was the most important thing to him. He now became imperious [arrogant]. He tended to penalize people who stood up against him on issues. He became someone who liked to hold forth and wasn't a particularly good listener.

↑ **Source 7.25** Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in *As It Happened: Mao—A Life* (SBS, 2006).

Rebecca Karl, American historian

Mao dared to propose and activate a revolutionary project calling every convention into question so as to remake the world. Recalling Mao's challenge is to recall a time when many things seemed possible; it is to remember possibility against pressure to concede to the world as it now appears.

↑ **Source 7.26** Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), x.



↑ Mao Zedong.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 7.23–7.26 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Compare how the sources describe Mao's leadership.
- 2 Draw up a table listing Mao's positive and negative personality traits.
- 3 Describe the changes and continuities in Mao's leadership before and after the founding of the People's Republic.
- 4 Evaluate the complexities of Mao Zedong's character in shaping the Chinese Revolution. Use details from the sources and further evidence to support your response.

THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

Mao Zedong: 'The Soviet Union may attack Stalin, but we will not. Not only that, we will continue to support him.'

RISING TENSIONS

DID YOU KNOW?

The emerging disdain of the Chinese towards the Soviet leadership was shown in an exchange between Soviet Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan and Marshal Peng Dehuai in 1956. Speaking of the Stalin era, Mikoyan explained: 'If we had spoken out, we would have been killed!' Peng replied, 'What kind of Communist is it that fears death?'

➔ **Source 7.27** Cited in Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Ringwood: Pelican Books, 1971), 434.

An important influence on Chinese politics in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the increasingly strained relationship between China and the Soviet Union.

Stalin and the Comintern had caused many difficulties for the CCP. Despite this, Mao continued to publicly support Stalin as the foremost leader of world communism. But in private, Mao resented Stalin, deeply and personally.

After Stalin's death in 1953, Mao welcomed Nikita Khrushchev's leadership of the USSR, but he never showed Khrushchev the respect he had showed Stalin. Mao considered himself to be the world's top Communist statesman—but Khrushchev did not agree. Tensions increased in February 1956 after Khrushchev denounced Stalin. The CCP was forced to make a hasty re-evaluation and in April 1956, the Chinese Communists offered their own assessment of Stalin.

Chinese Communists' on Stalin's leadership and legacy

Some people consider that Stalin was wrong in everything. This is a grave misconception. Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist, yet at the same time a Marxist-Leninist who committed several gross errors without realizing they were errors. We should view Stalin from a historical standpoint, make a proper all-round analysis to see where he was right and where he was wrong, and draw useful lessons therefrom.

Mao concluded that Stalin's achievements outweighed his mistakes seven to three.⁶⁵ He could be viewed critically, but should not be condemned outright. Mao was clearly indicating a determination to break with the Khrushchev-Soviet line.

NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY

In October 1957, Khrushchev offered Mao a token of socialist solidarity—assistance in developing nuclear weapons. Mao readily agreed. But the Soviet leaders were dismayed by Mao's lack of concern about nuclear war. Mao claimed: 'The atom bomb is nothing to be afraid of. China has many people. They cannot be bombed out of existence. If someone else can drop an atomic bomb, I can too. The death of ten or twenty million people is nothing to be afraid of.'⁶⁶ On many occasions, Mao stated that the atom bomb was nothing more than a 'paper tiger which the US reactionaries use to scare people'. Mao's statements about nuclear war worried the Russians.

MAO AND KHRUSHCHEV'S DISPUTES

Khrushchev visited Beijing in July 1958. He wanted to negotiate an agreement for joint Soviet–Chinese long-wave radio stations on the Chinese coast. However, Mao was not impressed, and snapped, 'We don't want you here ... we're not ever going to let anyone use our land for their purposes again'.⁶⁷ Khrushchev had difficulty making sense of Mao: 'I was never exactly sure that I understood what he meant'.⁶⁸



➔ **Source 7.28** Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1954, Mao told a Finnish diplomat: 'If the US had atom bombs so powerful that ... they would make a hole right through the earth, that would hardly mean anything to the universe as a whole, though it might be a major event for the solar system'.

In August 1958, the Chinese Communists launched heavy artillery bombardments against the Nationalist-occupied islands in the Taiwan Strait. Mao and his comrades were deliberately stirring up trouble with Taiwan to provoke the United States, and make things difficult for the Soviet Union, which was currently in diplomatic talks with the US. The US made a substantial show of force in the Taiwan Strait, but Moscow offered only lukewarm support to Beijing during the crisis.⁶⁹

Khrushchev was also annoyed by Mao's claims regarding the People's Communes. Khrushchev is said to have told a delegation of Chinese Communists: 'It's impossible to *leap* into communism'.⁷⁰ By now, Khrushchev was convinced that Mao was intent on wasting Soviet aid on foolish schemes.⁷¹

THE SOVIETS WITHDRAW SUPPORT

In mid-1959, relations between China and the USSR turned bitter.

On 20 June, a week after Peng Dehuai returned from Russia, Moscow informed Beijing that the Soviet Union was backing out of its promise to supply China with technology to build nuclear weapons. In late September, Khrushchev visited Beijing and tried to repair the Sino-Soviet relationship. The Chinese would have none of it. Khrushchev received neither an honour guard at the airport nor a welcoming speech.⁷² A number of Chinese officials were openly rude to their guest. The visit was cut from seven days to three.

By early 1960, both sides were trading insults and accusations.

- Mao accused the Soviet leadership of 'emasculating, betraying and revising' revolutionary Marxism.
- Khrushchev called Mao 'an ultra-leftist, an ultra-dogmatist, and a left deviationist'.⁷³

Russian technical personnel were abruptly recalled from China in July 1960. The loss of Soviet scientists and engineers was a shock—and worsened the economic difficulties of the Great Leap Forward.⁷⁴ Many factories, bridges and infrastructure projects were left half-finished. Mao complained: 'The Russians have landed us in the shit'.⁷⁵

Despite the withdrawal of Soviet assistance, the People's Republic managed to develop nuclear technology. On 16 October 1964, China detonated its first atomic bomb. There were celebrations throughout China. The detonation was auspiciously timed, as the code-name for the bomb was '596'—a reference to June 1959, the date Khrushchev withdrew support for the Chinese nuclear program.

REVISIONISM AND THE END OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Diplomatic efforts in the early 1960s failed to bridge the widening gap between the People's Republic and the Soviet Union. The Chinese increasingly accused the Soviet government of following a **revisionist** line, and by July 1964 Mao was claiming that 'The Soviet Union today is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie'.⁷⁶

Despite having a socialist economy, the privileges maintained by the Soviet Communist Party had created real class inequality. According to Mao, the USSR was on the 'capitalist road'. The fear that China was following a similar path would play a leading role in the Cultural Revolution of the mid-to-late-1960s.

On 14 July 1964, China ended its formal diplomatic relations with the USSR. Mao often assessed the Chinese Revolution and CCP policies in the context of global developments—and in the 1960s, the hostility between Moscow and Beijing was central.⁷⁷

DID YOU KNOW?

On his 1958 visit to China, Khrushchev was received by Mao in his swimming pool. While Mao cheerfully invited the Soviet leader to have a swim, it was clearly a thinly veiled diplomatic insult. Khrushchev, who could not swim, joined Mao in the pool; he bobbed around in a pair of floaties while interpreters did their best to help from the sidelines. Li Zhisui said, 'The Chairman was deliberately playing the role of emperor, treating Khrushchev like the barbarian come to pay tribute'.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the essential difference in how Mao viewed Khrushchev compared to his view of Stalin?
- 2 List three or more developments that lead to increasing tensions between the People's Republic of China and the USSR.
- 3 Briefly explain what Mao meant when he accused Soviet leaders of 'revisionism' and 'following the capitalist road'. Why was this of significance for China?

revisionist people accused of betraying the Marxist–Leninist–Stalinist model of communism

ACTIVITY



HISTORICAL SOURCES

British diplomat Percy Cradock on the Great Leap Forward

In 1958 Mao made one of his periodic attempts 'to get to heaven in a single leap'. He tried to project China forward into prosperity and communism by way of the People's Communes and a mass drive for productivity. Numbers and enthusiasm were seen as the key; with them everything could be accomplished. The venture began with millions of men deployed on massive irrigation and land improvement projects; it rapidly developed into a rush for production at all costs and in all sectors. Not just in agriculture. Peasants, workers and students were exhorted [encouraged] to produce iron and steel in backyard furnaces ... Lacking ore and pig iron to feed the furnaces, they melted down their agricultural tools and cooking utensils. But the metal produced proved useless. Much of the breakneck irrigation and planting went badly wrong and ruined the soil. The normal economy was disrupted, routine agricultural tasks were neglected, often including the harvest, and famines inevitably followed. There was a great loss of life and a sharp fall in the national morale.

 **Source 7.29** Percy Cradock, *Experiences of China* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1994), 25-26.

Using Sources 7.29 and 7.30 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Explain how Mao proposed to achieve modernisation and a Communist society through the Great Leap Forward.
- 2 Explain how rural families were affected by the policies of the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 Evaluate the extent to which the Great Leap Forward was a failure. Use further evidence to support your response.

 **Source 7.30** Cited in Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine 1958-1962* (New York: FSG Books, 2012), 39-40.

Yu Dehong, a former secretary to a leading CCP cadre in Xinyang county, Henan province, recalling his experience of the famine

On our way to inspect agricultural production ... we passed through the Qingshiqiao brigade [a sub-branch of a People's Commune] and thought to stay there for the night. The brigade leader was extremely flustered, and we told him, 'Don't go to any trouble, just cook something simple for us.' Finally around 9:30 that night he brought us porridge made with a few chunks of pumpkin. The brigade leader said, 'There's no way I can hide the truth anymore: if you hadn't come, we wouldn't have prepared even pumpkin. The communal kitchen has been closed for days, and we had to search all through the village just to find a couple of little pumpkins.'

... We saw two elm trees that had been chopped down and stripped of their bark, and some people were still there chewing on bark as they peeled it away.

... This was the situation less than one month after the autumn harvest. Not long afterward, all the communal kitchens were shut down ... all the roots and tree bark had been consumed. After that, massive starvation deaths occurred. I went back twice to my home village ... there were dead bodies everywhere, at least 100 corpses lying out in the open with no one burying them. Among the reed ponds along the river embankment I saw another 100 or so corpses.

... How many people actually died in Xinyang? ... where my home was located suffered a fatality rate of 52 per cent. My home production team totalled 75 people, of whom 38 people died in two or three months during the winter of 1959, including six members of my own family.

HISTORICAL INQUIRY

Research and write an historical inquiry on one of the topics below (or use an inquiry question of your own). Your inquiry should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence, a conclusion and an annotated bibliography that reflects further reading. You might like to compose a series of sub-questions and use these as headings to guide your research.

- Was a revolutionary new society more difficult for the CCP to manage than a revolutionary movement?
- To what extent did ideology and experimentation lead to hardships in the new society?
- 'If you're too realistic you can't write poetry.' How was the Great Leap Forward influenced by Mao's belief that human will could overcome material conditions?
- In what ways did the Great Leap Forward offer an exciting sense that China was on the verge of a revolutionary breakthrough?
- How did a breakdown between the basic ideals and the implementation of the Great Leap lead to disaster?

CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- As the First Five-Year Plan was coming to an end, Mao was considering alternatives to the Soviet economic model. Inspired by the advances of the Soviet space program, he declared that China would overtake Britain in steel production in fifteen years time, which would be a huge achievement (if carried out).
- Large-scale water conservation projects were completed using mass labour and little machinery. These gave hope that the Chinese people could achieve greatness by sheer numbers and revolutionary commitment.
- Mao theorised that 'simultaneous development' would allow the Chinese economy to extract capital from agriculture with little investment and develop heavy industry at the same time.
- The Great Leap Forward was officially launched in May 1958. It was a series of broad revolutionary principles and intentions rather than a centrally coordinated economic plan. The call to 'Go all out, aim high, and achieve greater, faster, better, and more economical results' formed the General Line of the movement.
- The drive to establish People's Communes was a fundamental element of the Great Leap Forward. Communes were essentially larger and more socialist Agricultural Cooperatives. Communes made farming and rural society 'collectivised'—fully state-owned and directed.
- China tried to harness its huge population to boost the economic output of the People's Republic through a series of mass campaigns. These were sometimes ill-founded, such as backyard steel production and Lysenkoist farming experiments.
- Provincial cadres were under pressure to achieve high revolutionary standards—without having clear instructions—and they encouraged the People's Communes to set unrealistic production quotas.
- Revolutionary euphoria, poor use of statistics and mass denial led to a massive shortfall between the actual grain surplus and the recorded grain surplus.
- The dangerously low food supply was worsened by generous meals served in collective kitchens, wastage and a decline in popular commitment. The situation was heightened by environmental disasters.
- Famine was emerging by 1959. A series of high-level Party meetings (Wuhan and Lushan plenums) were called to review and modify the key programs of the Great Leap Forward.
- Marshal Peng Dehuai offered a critical analysis of the Great Leap Forward at the Lushan Plenum, but Mao took this as a personal and political attack. Peng was purged from his positions and the Great Leap Forward was reaffirmed, and continued for another year.
- The Three Bad Years famine saw 30 to 40 million people die of hunger and disease. People experienced extraordinary suffering and social dislocation. However, the PRC government denied the existence of the famine until Mao agreed to change policies and ease restrictions.
- Personality clashes and ideological disputes between Mao and Khrushchev saw a deterioration in diplomatic relations between the PRC and the USSR. The breakdown continued until formal diplomatic relations were broken off entirely.
- The Sino-Soviet dispute impacted on China's economic growth and military security, and on ideological and political developments within the CCP.

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

Select a photograph or propaganda poster depicting people in the People's Republic before, during or after the Great Leap Forward. Annotate the image with speech or thought bubbles to show a conversation between the people depicted, expressing their beliefs and attitudes about the Great Leap Forward.



RECOVERY AND RETREAT

(1961-1965)



Source 8.01 'Great Communist Warrior-Lei Feng.'

CHAPTER 8

‘Never forget class struggle. From now on we must talk about this every year, every month, every day.’

—Mao Zedong

KEY EVENTS

- January 1962**
7000 Cadres Conference
- 24–27 September 1962**
Tenth Plenum launches Socialist Education Movement
- 29 September 1962**
Jiang Qing’s first official public appearance
- 2 March 1963**
‘Learn from Lei Feng’ campaign launched
- May 1964**
Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong made available for PLA use
- 3 January 1965**
Liu Shaoqi reconfirmed as President
- 10 November 1965**
Yao Wenyuan publishes critical review of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*
- 2–20 February 1966**
Jiang Qing leads the ‘Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces’
- 12 February 1966**
Peng Zhen’s Five-Man Group offers its ‘February Outline Report’ on Wu Han issue

After 1961, President Liu Shaoqi and General Secretary Deng Xiaoping introduced measures to relieve the devastating consequences of the Great Leap Forward. Conditions in urban and rural areas soon improved.

However, Mao was not pleased with all aspects of the recovery program, and saw some of Liu’s economic policies as a threat to the ideal of continuous revolutionary struggle. These concerns were reinforced by corruption among provincial CCP cadres. Mao also felt sidelined from political decision-making during this time.

Between 1962 and 1965, conflicting policies emerging from the Socialist Education Movement reflected the contest between Liuist and Maoist approaches. When these unfolded in an unsatisfactory manner, Mao concluded that an ideological crisis was emerging in the Party—the revolution had been hijacked by those following the ‘capitalist road’.

Mao and his close associates turned to the PLA as a model of socialist virtue that ordinary Chinese could aspire to. The military was also indoctrinated with Mao’s ‘thoughts’ with the compilation of the *Little Red Book*. These ideological initiatives masked a complex and subtle campaign for political influence. Although it was not immediately clear, what looked like literary criticism was actually the opening move of the Cultural Revolution.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What policies and approaches were applied by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping to relieve the Three Bad Years famine?
- To what extent did the Socialist Education Movement address problems within the CCP and broader Chinese society?
- Why did Mao believe there was an emerging ideological crisis within the CCP after 1961?
- What was the role of Lin Biao in reforming the PLA in the early-to-mid-1960s?
- How did the ‘Learn From the PLA’ and ‘Learn from Lei Feng’ campaigns influence Chinese society?
- What was the role of Jiang Qing in cultural and political developments after 1962?
- What was the significance of the literary-political debate over Wu Han’s *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* in the lead up to the Cultural Revolution?

POST-GREAT LEAP RECOVERY

Liu Shaoqi: 'The period of revolutionary storm and stress is past; let's get down to practical work.'



 Liu Shaoqi.

DID YOU KNOW?

Party leaders made a show of solidarity with ordinary people suffering shortages in the early 1960s. They set an example of self-sufficiency by growing vegetables in the grounds of the CCP compound in Beijing. Zhu De had great success with his pumpkins. Liu Shaoqi and his bodyguards tended a plot of kidney beans.

LIU SHAOQI ENDS THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

By late 1960, the revived Great Leap Forward had failed. President Liu Shaoqi made efforts to revive the economy and help China recover from the famine. Meanwhile, Mao had less influence in day-to-day politics.

Several Communist leaders travelled to different regions to inspect conditions for themselves. Liu Shaoqi went to his home village in Hunan and was deeply troubled by the tales of suffering he heard. Moved to tears, Liu said: 'I am shocked to see my fellow-villagers are leading such a harsh life ... I feel responsible for causing so much suffering to you, and I must apologise'.¹ Chen Yun, the chief economist under the First Five-Year Plan, made an intensive study of the countryside near Shanghai.²

Mao was not pleased. According to Mao, Chen's report 'paints a very dark picture showing not one trace of light'.³ Yet when Liu returned to Beijing, he told his fellow leaders, 'We cannot go on like this'. Liu was keen to hear Chen's recommendations for increasing production and improving the morale of ordinary people. A retreat from the practices of the Great Leap Forward was called for.

SAVE YOURSELF PRODUCTION

There were still communes after the Great Leap Forward, but they shrank to about half the size. Farming was managed in work units of around thirty people, rather than brigades of hundreds or thousands. Work units resembled the village groupings of the past.

These changes boosted peasants' motivation, as they could now see a direct reward for their labour. Private plots were permitted, as were markets for produce and handicrafts.⁴ The communal food kitchens were closed. PLA units were mobilised to distribute food in those provinces hit hardest by famine, and a 'household responsibility system' gave out land to individual families.

The household responsibility system was remarkably effective—by the end of 1962, grain production had risen from 6 million to 10 million tonnes.⁵ A clue to its success lies in the nickname the peasants of Hunan gave the system: 'Save yourself production'.⁶ Higher wages were introduced for efficient and hardworking employees in heavy industry and manufacturing. In the period 1963–1965, heavy industrial production grew by 17 per cent and light industry by 27 per cent.

Grain harvests gradually recovered to pre-Great Leap Forward levels. Premier Zhou Enlai authorised grain imports from Australia and Canada to make up for shortfalls.⁷ The authority of lower-level officials was also strengthened. Cadres were instructed to supervise and pay strict attention to the accurate reporting of production figures. In this way, the bureaucratic precision of the CCP played an important role in putting the economy back in order.⁸ Deng Xiaoping summed up the pragmatic approach of the post-Great Leap Forward recovery policies: 'White cat, black cat—either will do as long as it catches mice'.⁹

THE 7000 CADRES CONFERENCE

In January 1962, a Central Committee conference was called to review the policies of the previous few years. More than 7000 CCP cadres attended from across China. Under President Liu's guidance, the Central Committee endorsed the 'Three Privates and One Guarantee':

- The Three Privates—peasants could continue to:
 - » farm their small plots
 - » produce handicrafts
 - » sell their products at free markets
- The One Guarantee—it was essential to meet government production quotas.

Cadres at the conference also discussed who or what was responsible for the famine. According to Liu, the conference was an opportunity to acknowledge the failings of the past and move forward with cautious optimism. The troubles of 1958–1960 could be attributed '30 per cent to natural calamities, 70 per cent to human failings'.¹⁰ The audience gasped as Liu spoke of the 'man-made disaster' in which primary responsibility lay with the 'Party Centre'. Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen (P'eng Chen) was even more blunt in his assessment: the Politburo, including Mao and Liu, was specifically at fault.¹¹ Much to the surprise of the assembled cadres, Mao Zedong offered a self-criticism:

Any mistakes that the Centre has made ought to be my direct responsibility, and I also have an indirect share of the blame because I am Chairman of the Central Committee. I don't want other people to shirk their responsibility. There are some other comrades who also bear responsibility, but the person primarily responsible should be me.¹²

As he had at Lushan in 1959, Mao stressed that the Party's failings were collective and must be admitted by all. However, Mao was also annoyed at the overly confident and bureaucratic manner of the rank-and-file cadres overseeing the current policies:

Those of you ... who are afraid of taking responsibility, who do not allow people to speak, who think you are tigers, and nobody will dare to touch your arse—whoever has this attitude, ten out of ten of you will fail ... You think that nobody will really dare to touch the arses of tigers like you? They damn well will!¹³

MAO'S WARNING TO CORRUPT CADRES

One by-product of the famine was corruption. Provincial officials had used their positions to benefit their own families during the famine, and had distanced themselves from common people. The revival of centralised economic measures had also strengthened bureaucratic practices. Mao believed the Party was in danger of becoming 'modern equivalents of the mandarins [scholar-officials] of old, who valued their procedures and political connection more than the welfare of the people'.¹⁴ Mao grumbled that many cadres 'complain all day long and watch plays at night, they eat three full meals a day—and fart; that's what Marxism–Leninism means to them'.¹⁵ Mao found the 7000 Cadres Conference a distasteful experience. However, his concerns were not taken up by the rest of the Party leadership.

Marshal Lin Biao was one of the few leading Communists to show his devotion to Mao's instructions: 'The thoughts of the Chairman are always correct. If we encounter any problem, any difficulty, it is because we have not followed the instructions of the Chairman closely enough.' Mao was pleased by Lin's address: 'What a good speech Vice-Chairman Lin has made. Lin Biao's words are always so clear and direct. They are simply superb! Why can't the other Party leaders be so perceptive?'¹⁶ However, other Party leaders were less enthusiastic about Mao's thoughts.

7000 Cadres Conference a meeting of the CCP Central Committee in January 1962 that endorsed the post-Great Leap Forward recovery policies of Liu, Deng and Chen. At the conference, Mao expressed concerns about corruption within the Communist Party

DID YOU KNOW?

At the 7000 Cadres Conference, Liu Shaoqi said: 'People do not have enough food, clothes or other essentials ... agricultural output, far from rising in 1959, 1960 and 1961, dropped not a little, but tremendously ... There is not only no Great Leap Forward, but a great deal of falling backward.'

↓ Lin Biao.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 1966, Mao said 'Deng Xiaoping never came to consult me, from 1959 to the present he has never consulted me over anything at all'. Deng, who was hard of hearing, was known to sit as far from Mao as possible during meetings. This allowed him to claim that he 'hadn't heard' Mao's instructions.

In the following months, Mao complained that he was being treated like 'a dead ancestor'—much respected, but not consulted.¹⁷ Mao left Beijing for the lakeside city of Hangzhou, where he spent the spring and summer. Matters of state were left entirely under the direction of Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai. The moderate economic policies of renewal continued, and it was thought that these would remain in place for some time.

Speaking of the hasty policies of the Great Leap Forward compared with restrained approaches, Deng Xiaoping remarked: 'A donkey is certainly slow, but at least it rarely has an accident'.¹⁸ Mao was so infuriated with the current policies that he stopped reading the *People's Daily*.¹⁹ Ideology—the so-called 'colour of the cat'—was of great significance to Mao. Ideas shaped actions—and actions changed the world. Mao warned the leadership: 'Those who pay no attention to politics and are busy with their work all day long will become economists who have gone astray and are dangerous'.²⁰

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who was primarily responsible for the shift away from Great Leap Forward-style policies after late 1960?
- 2 List three of the approaches that assisted with the recovery from the Great Leap Forward.
- 3 Explain two or more examples that demonstrate how these approaches were effective.
- 4 What did the CCP leadership decide at the 7000 Cadres Conference regarding:
 - the economy
 - the Great Leap Forward?
- 5 When Mao spoke of 'tigers' at the 7000 Cadres Conference, what attitudes and practices was he referring to?
- 6 What did Mao mean when he complained that he was being treated like a 'dead ancestor'?

KEY MOVEMENT

THE SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT

'FOUR CLEAN-UPS'

Collection of communal grain

Distribution of work points

Accounting procedures

Care of public property

Socialist Education Movement

a series of campaigns in the early-to-mid-1960s aimed at stamping out corruption among Communist officials and encouraging socialist values in the wider society

Mao Zedong: 'Never forget class struggle. From now on we must talk about this every year, every month, every day.'

The Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee was held on 24–27 September 1962, and addressed:

- concerns with corruption within the Communist bureaucracy
- how to infuse Maoist revolutionary values into the economic recovery program.

Liu Shaoqi and Chen Yun spoke favourably of the current policies. However, Mao questioned the revolutionary vitality of the Party rank-and-file, just as he had at the 7000 Cadres Conference. He called for a rigorous campaign against the 'revisionist' and 'capitalist' tendencies emerging in the People's Republic. Mao urged his comrades to 'Never forget class struggle. From now on we must think about this every year, every month, every day'.²¹

The Tenth Plenum endorsed a new campaign, called the **Socialist Education Movement**. The movement was designed to encourage socialist values throughout the countryside and stamp out corruption among provincial officials. The focus was on improving the administration of the 'Four Clean-Ups': collection of communal grain, distribution of work points, accounting procedures and care of public property.

Mao hoped that peasants could supervise officials administering the Clean-Ups. Party cadres were urged to work alongside the peasants and follow the ‘mass-line’ leadership style.²² However, many cadres resisted Mao’s praise of class struggle and rural toil. According to historian Immanuel Hsü, most officials found the Socialist Education Movement ‘a hardship to be endured rather than an experience to be cherished’.²³

CORRUPTION AND THE ‘TEN POINTS’ DIRECTIVES

In February 1963, the CCP leadership gathered to define the instructions for carrying out the Socialist Education Movement. However, Mao continued to insist on the approach he had advocated at the Tenth Plenum: ‘Once we grasp class struggle, miracles can happen’.²⁴

The leadership conference passed a resolution, drafted by Mao, known as the Early Ten Points. Associations of poor peasants would be mobilised to rectify wayward cadres, and thus play a central role in exposing and passing judgement on corrupt officials. However, the movement struggled to make much headway.

In September, Deng Xiaoping updated the directives, and his ‘Later Ten Points’ differed from Mao’s original instructions. Work teams of reliable officials would travel to regions suspected of corrupt practices, carefully observe local conditions, and guide peasants in appropriate action. Deng’s instructions made no reference to ‘class struggle’. Deng hoped the Later Ten Points would mentor regional administration towards improvement without disrupting agricultural work.

Despite the Later Ten Points, cadres continued to dodge the anti-corruption initiatives. Liu Shaoqi sent his wife, Wang Guangmei (Wang Kuang-mei), on an undercover investigation of the campaign. Wang travelled in disguise and spoke with peasants from different communes. She was appalled by the corruption she encountered. Wang found that complaints by ordinary people were routinely stifled. Some cadres were using commune materials and the labour of the villagers to build comfortable houses for themselves. Once Beijing authorities heard what Wang had found, Liu decided to enforce stricter controls.

MAO AND LIU’S DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Liu drafted a third series of instructions in September 1964, called the ‘Revised Later Ten Points’. These instructions authorised larger work teams to investigate peasants’ complaints, and to take over if local cadres would not reform. The result was a sweeping purge of regional Party organisations.²⁵

The Revised Later Ten Points caused great upheaval; as one cadre recalled: ‘All hell broke loose’.²⁶ Five million cadres were punished, and the purge threatened to affect day-to-day farm work. The ‘human wave’ of work teams often acted in a dictatorial manner, and took over many of the responsibilities that Mao had assigned to peasant associations. Mao was not happy.

Although weeding out corruption was a good thing, President Liu’s approach failed to address broader capitalist tendencies in the countryside.²⁷ While Liu and Mao agreed that Party corruption needed to be stamped out, they had different views on how to deal with it.

- Mao wanted to unleash the masses against **revisionism** and stamp out capitalist attitudes.
- Liu saw the struggle as an internal Party matter. He aimed to make the Communist bureaucracy more reliable and capable of implementing orthodox Marxist economics.²⁸

DID YOU KNOW?

The different titles of Head of the CCP and Head of State in the PRC are usually translated in English as ‘Chairman’ and ‘President’. However, in Chinese the words are the same: *zhuxi*. Titles are a matter of face (or prestige) in China. Did Mao dislike that there was another *zhuxi* in the People’s Republic?

revisionism a lapse in proper ideological practice and the corruption of ideals



ACTIVITY

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain how the Socialist Education Movement responded to challenges identified by the CCP after the Great Leap Forward.
- Explain why Mao Zedong saw the results of the Socialist Education Movement as a compromise of revolutionary ideals.
- Explain why Mao Zedong believed that the CCP was facing an ideological crisis in the early- to mid-1960s.

DID YOU KNOW?

Such was Mao's frustration in 1964 that during one meeting he waved a copy of the PRC constitution and his Party membership card. It was a dramatic gesture of his right to attend meetings and be listened to.

According to historian Gao Wenqian: 'Two diametrically opposed views of how to implement policy in China were now out in the open for all to see'. Mao, 'the populist', sought a mass campaign, while Liu, 'the consummate Leninist', placed his trust in Party-directed work teams.²⁹

MAO'S FRUSTRATION WITH THE PARTY

The Socialist Education Movement did not address Mao's concerns with the Party and its current leadership. Passive resistance was undermining Maoist ideals and the common people were denied the opportunity to 'touch the tigers' arses'.

According to historian Immanuel Hsü, 'Mao became convinced that it was not his policies that were wrong; rather—it was those in high Party positions who were distorting and diluting their implementation'.³⁰ Mao became more agitated and outspoken towards the Party leadership in late 1964. During a November meeting, Mao snarled at Liu, 'Let's do the handover now. You be Chairman. You be First Emperor.'³¹ After another meeting the same month, Mao exploded: 'Someone is shitting on my head!'³²

Around this time, Mao began to talk of 'leaders taking the capitalist road'. Mao claimed, 'There are at least two factions in our Party. One is the socialist faction, the other is the capitalist faction.'³³ Liu and Deng treated Mao's outbursts as the grumblings of an irritable old man.³⁴ This was a major underestimation of Mao's ambitions. The failure of the Socialist Education Movement would inspire Mao to look beyond the Party to achieve his vision—and the result was a campaign of cataclysmic proportions.



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly explain the focus of the Socialist Education Movement.
- 2 The Ten Points directives were the instructions issued by the Central Committee about the Socialist Education Movement. Briefly outline the main emphasis, the differences and who was responsible for drafting these instructions:
 - Early Ten Points
 - Later Ten Points
 - Revised Later Ten Points.
- 3 What were the causes of Mao's frustrations with the Socialist Education Movement and the CCP leadership by 1964?

EMULATION CAMPAIGNS

Lin Biao: 'Follow the example set by Comrade Lei Feng and be Chairman Mao's good fighters.'

LIN BIAO AND THE *LITTLE RED BOOK*

Several campaigns centred on the military were carried out at the same time as the Socialist Education Movement. Marshal Lin Biao was the driving force behind these efforts to strengthen Mao Zedong Thought within the PLA and increase popular adulation of the Chairman. Lin demonstrated his commitment with a short compilation of Mao's

famous writings—*Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (*Hongbaoshu*, popularly known as the *Little Red Book*)—which was first published in May 1964.

The *Little Red Book* was issued to every soldier, and served as the basis for intense daily study. In his foreword, Lin urged all soldiers to ‘Study Chairman Mao’s writings, follow his teachings and act according to his instructions and be his good fighters’. However, not all top military figures approved of Lin’s efforts. General Luo Ruiqing (Lo Jui-ching) thought the prescribed study sessions were pointless exercises in memorisation, with no practical benefit.³⁵

Later, the *Little Red Book* was widely distributed, and became the chief text used in schools. It would play an iconic role in the Cultural Revolution as ‘a weapon of mass instruction’.³⁶ In September 1966 it was released for mass readership, and a billion copies were distributed by the end of the year. During the course of the Cultural Revolution more than 40 billion copies of Mao’s writings were printed—enough to provide each Chinese man, woman and child with fifteen copies.³⁷

LEARN FROM THE PLA

The PLA was reformed and politicised under Lin’s direction.

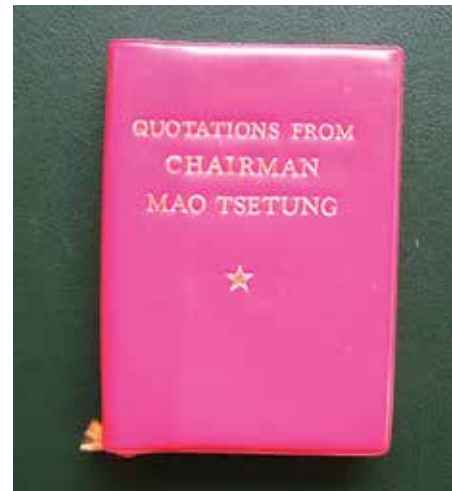
- Commissars were appointed to all levels of the military to oversee political study.
- Army uniforms no longer showed the rank of the wearer.
- Soviet-style uniforms were abandoned, with both soldiers and officers wearing khaki fatigues (although officers had four pockets on their tunics).
- The PLA resumed involvement in wider society through political bureaus in schools, factories and other large workplaces.
- The PLA took on a greater role in popular political education, sponsoring arts festivals, performances and literature.³⁸

On 1 February 1964, an editorial in the *People’s Daily* announced Mao’s directive to ‘Learn from the People’s Liberation Army’. Although it wasn’t immediately obvious, Mao was shifting the base of correct revolutionary virtue from the Party to the military. The Learn from the PLA campaign depicted members of the military as virtuous socialist heroes—the model that all Chinese should emulate.³⁹

LEARN FROM LEI FENG

The emulation campaigns also featured individual soldiers as model revolutionaries. The most celebrated hero of the PLA was a truck driver named Lei Feng. Lei came from a very poor family. He was orphaned at an early age and suffered at the hands of many people, particularly landlords. Lei’s fortunes improved once the Communist Party came to power. The Peasants’ Association in Lei’s village gave him welfare and he was able to go to school. He joined the Communist Youth League and later worked as a bulldozer operator.

Lei gained respect as a model worker. His life-long dream was fulfilled when he was accepted into the PLA, which trained him as a truck driver. Lei was virtuous, selfless and caring towards ordinary people and his comrades. He would get up early to assist with chores at the local commune and would mend his fellow soldiers’ uniforms while they slept. He insisted that others wear his coat in cold weather. He feared no hardship and put up with many discomforts: ‘I’d rather steel myself in the storm of hard and



↑ Mao’s *Little Red Book* (*Hongbaoshu*).

DID YOU KNOW?

Lin Biao had several phobias, including light, wind and water. The sound of running water gave him instant diarrhoea. Lin’s wife, Ye Qun, fed him steamed buns dipped in water so he could avoid the trauma of drinking. Even paintings of rivers or lakes made him nervous! Ye Qun would ask guests to walk slowly in her husband’s presence to avoid creating a breeze. In direct sunlight, Lin would sweat profusely from nerves.

↓ Lei Feng.



arduous struggle than spend my days peacefully and tranquilly'.⁴⁰ Lei saved his wages and donated generously to emergency relief funds or construction projects. When not on duty, Lei helped comrade soldiers with their studies and volunteered at the local school. Above all, Lei Feng was dedicated to Mao Zedong Thought. Each night he would study Mao's works and during the day carried a satchel of articles (his 'mobile library') in case he had time for further study.

➡ **Source 8.02** Chen Kuangsheng, *Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Fighter* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), 60.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 'Learn from Lei Feng Day', Chinese schools and community groups clean up parks and other facilities in memory of Lei.

➡ **Source 8.03** 'Uncle Lei Feng tells revolutionary stories', 1965.

Extract from Lei Feng's diary

To me Chairman Mao's works are like food, weapons and the steering wheel of a vehicle. To live you must have food, to fight you must have a weapon, to drive a vehicle you must have a steering wheel, and to work for revolution you must read Chairman Mao's works.

Lei never sought recognition for his good deeds. When asked for his name and regiment by strangers he would answer: 'My name is Liberation Army and I live in China'. On 15 August 1962, Lei Feng was guiding another driver as he parked a truck when the driver hit a power pole. The pole fell and struck Lei's head. He died soon after.



Lei Feng had recorded all his deeds and his great love of the Party in his diary, which was published after his death. It was soon made an essential text for study in schools. Mao coined the slogan 'Learn from Lei Feng' to popularise Lei's example.

Some people suspected that Lei Feng's virtues were too good to be true—and they were later proved correct. Lei was a real person, but his diary was largely a work of fiction produced by the propaganda arm of the PLA.⁴¹

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the book compiled by Lin Biao? What was the purpose of this text?
- 2 Briefly explain the purpose of the 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaigns.
- 3 How were ordinary people expected to respond to the 'learn from' campaigns?

LIN BIAO, 1907–1971

KEY INDIVIDUAL

Lin Biao: 'Comrade Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era. He has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism with genius, creatively and comprehensively and has brought it to a higher and completely new stage.'

Early life and military career

As a young man, Lin Biao was more interested in student politics than his formal education. In 1925, in his final year of school, he joined the youth branch of the CCP. In 1926, Lin enrolled in the Huangpu Military Academy. He rose to the rank of battalion commander in the Nationalist Army during the Northern Expedition. Lin fought for the Communists during the Nanchang Uprising and fled to the Jiangxi rural bases of Mao and Zhu.

Lin Biao was one of the most important military commanders during the Jiangxi Soviet era. Troops under his command were famed for their fighting prowess and their ability to use guerrilla strategies. According to historian Edgar Snow, Lin's force 'became the most dreaded section of the Red Army. Chiefly due to Lin's extraordinary talent as a tactician, it destroyed, defeated or outmanoeuvred every government force sent against it and was never broken in battle.'⁴²

Lin became a committed supporter of Mao Zedong during the Jiangxi years, and was a veteran of the Long March. He continued to prove his worth as a battlefield commander once the Yan'an Soviet was established, and was head of the Yan'an Red Army training academy. Lin led a number of successful campaigns against the Nationalists in Manchuria and northern China during the Civil War.

Political role in the PRC

After 1949, Lin was recognised as one of the ten PLA marshals. He ranked third in this seniority, below Zhu De and Peng Dehuai. Lin was a staunch Maoist, and in 1959 he replaced Peng Dehuai as Defence Minister following the inter-Party crisis at the Lushan Plenum. Lin and Peng had previously clashed over the question of modernising the PLA and adopting Soviet-style structures.

During the Socialist Education Movement, Lin compiled Mao's quotes into the *Little Red Book* and sponsored the major emulation campaigns, such as 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng'. Lin Biao rose to prominence

during the Cultural Revolution, and was one of the people behind the growth of the cult of Mao. At the Ninth Party Congress of 1969, Lin became Vice-Chairman of the Party, and was designated Mao's chosen successor and 'closest comrade'.



↑ Lin Biao.

Downfall

However, Lin fell from favour after 1970, as Mao began to doubt the power that had been given to military officials. He lost further influence when Premier Zhou and Mao pushed forward with plans to end China's diplomatic isolation from the West. Lin was opposed to talks with the USA—but his concerns were ignored. He suffered from several physical and psychological ailments that became worse as he grew older, and he was increasingly ill after 1970. Lin died in mysterious circumstances in 1971, allegedly while fleeing to the Soviet Union following an ill-fated coup initiated by his son 'Tiger' Lin Ligu.

KEY POINTS

- Lin Biao was one of the leading PLA commanders, specialising in guerrilla warfare.
- His achievements were recognised by the prestigious title of Marshal.
- He was a committed Maoist, ideologically and politically.
- He replaced Peng Dehuai as Defence Minister following the Lushan Plenum.
- He compiled the *Little Red Book*.
- He encouraged the PLA emulation campaigns during the Socialist Education Movement.
- He was a radicalising influence in the Cultural Revolution and helped expand Mao's cult of personality to new levels.
- He was designated Mao's 'closest comrade' at the height of the Cultural Revolution.
- He fell from influence after 1970.
- He died in mysterious circumstances in 1971, allegedly in the midst of an attempted coup.

ART AND POLITICS

Mao Zedong: 'The Jiaqing Emperor dismissed Hai Rui from office. We dismissed Peng Dehuai from office. Peng Dehuai is indeed Hai Rui.'

THE RISE OF JIANG QING

On 29 September 1962, Mao's fourth wife Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch'ing) made her first official public appearance, during a visit by President Sukarno of Indonesia. Jiang had been excluded from politics since the Yan'an days. Her sudden appearance in photographs on the front page of the *People's Daily* came two days after the Tenth Plenum, which launched the Socialist Education Movement. This was not a coincidence.



Source 8.04 Jiang Qing applauding performers of her revolutionary model operas.

Source 8.05 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 405.

Mao turned to Jiang Qing for support in his struggles within the Party. Jiang's ambition, fanaticism and resentment of the CCP establishment would be very useful. Mao suggested that Jiang investigate culture, and find out to what extent writers and artists promoted socialist values. Jiang was appointed to the Ministry of Culture as Mao's personal observer. This suited Jiang, as she once had a career acting in film and theatre.

Jiang took up residence in Shanghai, where she formed a close working relationship with the city's leading Maoist writers and politicians. Jiang spent much of her time reviewing plays and visiting the rehearsals of opera troupes. She was fond of telling people: 'I am just a plain soldier, a sentry of the Chairman patrolling on the ideological battlefield. I am keeping watch and will report what I find.'⁴³

Jiang was introduced to the ultra-radical thinkers Zhang Chunqiao (Chang Ch'un-chiao) and Yao Wenyuan (Yao Wenyuan). These two writers developed a close allegiance to Jiang and fuelled her interest in leftist ideas. As Mao's cultural investigator, Jiang concluded that 'feudal' and 'reactionary' values were at the forefront of popular Chinese culture.

Mao on one of Jiang Qing's reports into operas and plays, 12 December 1963

We have established a socialist foundation in our economy, but the superstructure—literature and art—has not changed so much. Dead people are still in control of literature and the arts ... We have to study this problem. Even Party members are enthusiastically promoting feudal and capitalist art but ignoring socialist art. This is absurd.

On another occasion Mao suggested that the Ministry for Culture should change its name to the 'Ministry of Gifted Scholars and Beautiful Ladies'. 'The sheer scale of the ideological rot', writes historian Frank Dikötter, 'was highlighted during the Socialist Education Campaign'.⁴⁴ It was common to find all sorts of reactionary works for sale in bookstalls outside railway stations and markets. According to CCP assessments, these included books that were 'feudal, superstitious, Confucian, preposterous and pornographic'.

PENG ZHEN AND BEIJING OPERA

Traditional Chinese opera came under the scrutiny of Mao and Jiang in 1963. The Ghost Drama genre—in which the spirits of wronged people return to haunt their persecutors—was labelled ‘superstitious’ and subsequently banned.⁴⁵ Jiang had less success bringing the Beijing arts community under her control. Mayor Peng Zhen was the leading arts patron of the city. He intervened when Jiang suggested that the top Beijing opera troupe abandon its usual repertoire and develop a piece that she had created. Peng instructed the singers and musicians to ignore Jiang and continue with their traditional work.⁴⁶ This would later have grim consequences for Peng Zhen, as Jiang Qing was notorious for holding grudges.

DID YOU KNOW?

During her acting career, one of Jiang Qing’s favourite roles was the character of Nora in Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House*. Nora is a housewife who leaves her husband after coming to question traditional expectations of women.

HAI RUI DISMISSED FROM OFFICE

Mao’s view that the arts provided a forum for dissenters was correct. In the years after the Great Leap Forward, several writers made indirect criticisms of the government’s policies through historical **allegories** (symbolic stories). A group of writers—Wu Han, Deng Tuo and Liao Mosha—using the combined pen-name **Three-Family Village**, suggested that Mao had lost touch with reality and was prone to ‘great empty talk’.⁴⁷

Wu Han was a historian and the deputy mayor of Beijing. In June 1959 he published a short story in the *People’s Daily* about a Ming dynasty scholar-official who was dismissed from office by Emperor Jiaqing. The hero of Wu’s story, Hai Rui, bravely spoke out at the injustices suffered by peasants and the arbitrary ways of the Son of Heaven (emperor): ‘You think that you alone are right; you refuse to accept criticism; and your mistakes are many’.⁴⁸ The story caused little debate, but in January 1961 he developed it into a play: ***Hai Rui Dismissed from Office***. The play extended Wu’s previous themes and showed Hai Rui being punished for granting land to poor peasants. Hai Rui was now more outspoken about the emperor:

Extract from ‘Hai Rui Dismissed from Office’

In your early years you may have done a few good deeds. But now? The country has been dissatisfied with you for a long time, a fact known by all officials ... you have become bewitched; so bent on dictatorial ways, you have become dogmatic and biased.

allegories the treatment of one subject under the guise of another; a symbolic representation

Three-Family Village refers to the residence of a Song dynasty official who was unfairly dismissed from office but still criticised Imperial policy

Hai Rui Dismissed from Office

a play written in 1961 by Beijing’s deputy mayor, Wu Han. It was taken to be an allegorical criticism of Mao’s dismissal of Peng Dehuai. Debate over Wu Han’s play proved to be the opening phase of the Cultural Revolution

 **Source 8.06** Cited in Frank Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution: A People’s History 1962–1976* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2016), 47–48.

There were many critical articles in the Beijing newspapers. Although the articles often claimed to be historical commentaries, it suggests that the ideas had support among higher authorities, including Mayor Peng Zhen.⁴⁹ Peng Zhen was also known to support President Liu’s policies. In 1962, Mao remarked caustically, ‘the use of novels for anti-Party activity is a great invention’.⁵⁰ He was increasingly irritated by the veiled critiques of Wu Han and Three-Family Village.

By 1965, Mao decided to challenge the literary-political criticisms, especially Wu Han’s *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. At the urging of Jiang Qing, he had come to view Wu’s play as an allegory for the dismissal of Peng Dehuai. The arbitrary and unheeding emperor in the play represented Mao—a metaphor that any educated Chinese person could see. It is likely that Mao saw debate over the play as a good way to expose his enemies.⁵¹ In this way, culture would be the first battleground in a much broader political and social movement.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao affectionately called General Luo Ruiqing 'Luo the Tall', because of his height. On one occasion, Mao told an associate: 'As soon as Luo the Tall steps closer, I feel very safe'.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao loved traditional Chinese opera and was deeply moved by it. He was known to sob and blow his nose loudly during a performance.

February Outline Report an assessment of the Wu Han affair, released in early 1966 by Peng Zhen, mayor of Beijing, and his Five-Man Cultural Revolution Group (an investigative commission)

Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces led by Jiang Qing, the group investigated and advised on cultural matters on behalf of the PLA. Formed at the behest of Lin Biao in February 1966, the forum refuted the February Outline Report

AN ACADEMIC OR POLITICAL MATTER?

Mao travelled to Shanghai and met with Jiang and her associates, Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao. Under the direction of Mao and Jiang, Yao Wenyuan spent the next months drafting a scathing review of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Yao's diatribe dismissed Wu's work as a 'poisonous weed'. It was a reflection of 'the struggle of the capitalist class against the dictatorship of the proletariat ... Its influence is great and its poison widespread. If we do not clean it up, it will harm the people's cause.'⁵²

At a Politburo in January 1965, a 'Five-Man Group' chaired by Peng Zhen was appointed to investigate ways of carrying out a 'cultural revolution', at Mao's urging. At the top of the list of tasks for the Five-Man Group was an investigation of Wu Han.

This put Peng Zhen in a difficult spot. Wu Han was his deputy, so if Peng criticised his deputy he was attacking his own supporters. Wu was also Peng's friend. Mao was evidently testing his loyalty. Peng proceeded with caution and deliberately delayed his investigation. Little had come of it by late 1965. Peng Zhen's officials also refused to pass on Yao's critical review for publication in the *People's Daily*.

However, on 10 November 1965 Mao got around Peng by having Yao's review published in the Shanghai paper *Liberation Army Daily*. Peng was furious, and protested that a regional Party committee had undercut his investigation, and that Wu Han, a high-ranking official, had been smeared without Beijing's approval.⁵³ Peng was not aware of Mao's involvement.

Zhou Enlai called Peng to tell him of Mao's role and urged him to go ahead and publish the article. Peng eventually put the review on page five of the 30 November issue of the *People's Daily*, under the heading 'Academic Discussions'. An editorial that accompanied the review spoke of 'the freedom to criticize as well as the freedom to counter-criticize'.⁵⁴ Peng continued to argue at Party meetings that Wu Han's play was a literary matter rather than a political question.

THE FEBRUARY OUTLINE REPORT

Wu Han offered a self-criticism on 30 December 1965 and admitted his play showed an incorrect ideological outlook—but the matter was far from resolved. Mao continued to press Peng Zhen and his Five-Man Group to offer a clear judgement. On 12 February 1966, the group released its **February Outline Report**. The report concluded that the Wu Han problem was largely a matter of literary debate that should be resolved by 'seeking truth from facts'. Yao Wenyuan was reprimanded for 'treating a purely academic question in political terms'.⁵⁵ When Peng Zhen personally gave Mao a copy of the report, the Chairman waved it away and said: 'You people work it out. I don't need to see it.'⁵⁶ The Politburo backed the report, but Mao's refusal to read it showed his disapproval.⁵⁷ Shortly after, Mao remarked to his doctor: 'Reactionaries don't fall down unless you hit them hard'.⁵⁸

JIANG'S FORUM ON LITERATURE AND ART

Meanwhile, as Peng Zhen's report was being presented, Lin Biao invited Jiang Qing to head a **Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces**. Lin told fellow military leaders, 'Comrade Jiang is very sharp politically on issues of art and literature ... From now on, all army documents on the arts will cross her desk'.⁵⁹

Jiang relished her new role as chief cultural attaché to the PLA. Jiang's Forum, which met from 2–20 February, produced a document flatly denying the findings of the February Outline Report. The Forum also called for a 'Great Socialist Cultural Revolution' that would do away with feudal and revisionist ideas.⁶⁰

Just what this meant was not clear, and for a while both Jiang Qing and Peng Zhen's reports were in circulation. However, those with keen political insight sensed that trouble was brewing. Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping stopped playing cards with Wu Han, and Liu Shaoqi distanced himself from his friend Peng Zhen.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What area of Chinese life did Mao encourage Jiang Qing to investigate? What were her findings?
- 2 Briefly outline how the Three-Family Village writers and Wu Han's *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* criticised contemporary Chinese politics through the use of literary devices. Who was the likely patron of these writers?
- 3 Why did Mao choose Peng Zhen to head the investigation of the Wu Han affair?
- 4 What did Peng's February Outline Report find out about *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*?
- 5 What did Jiang Qing's 'Forum on Work in Literature and Art' report about *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*?

PENG ZHEN, 1902–1997

Peng Zhen: 'We are historical materialists. We are not indiscriminately opposed to staging historical plays. When we oppose putting on plays about people of the past, we are opposing those plays about people of the past which laud feudalism or capitalism, which prettify the exploiting classes.'

Peng was a member of the CCP from 1923, and worked alongside Liu Shaoqi as an underground labour agitator in urban areas. He was imprisoned several times because of his revolutionary work. He had a number of leadership and administrative positions in the CCP, notably in the Civil War and in northern China during the War of Resistance against Japan.

After 1949, Peng became mayor and head of the Party organisation in Beijing—roles with great influence. He also served on the Politburo, where he opposed some of Mao's major campaigns. He tried to limit the Hundred Flowers campaign and offered a frank assessment of the Politburo's failings following the Great Leap Forward.

Peng supported (or tolerated) the 'political commentary by literary-historical allegory' genre that became popular in the early 1960s. In 1965, he led a five-man investigative group to examine the cultural, ideological and political implications of Wu Han's play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Peng's subsequent February Outline Report ruled that the controversy was largely a literary debate. After that, he became a major target of the Cultural Revolution. He was the first member of the Politburo to fall victim to the campaign—he was purged in May 1966 and spent the next decade in prison. Peng was rehabilitated in December 1978 and went on to hold several high-ranking positions under Deng Xiaoping.



↑ Peng Zhen.

JIANG QING, 1914–1991

Jiang Qing: *'I was Mao's dog. Whoever he told me to bite, I bit.'*

↓ Jiang Qing.



Early life

Jiang Qing was a Shanghai actress who became very influential in the CCP. Born Li Yunhe, she had a difficult upbringing. Her parents often argued, then separated when she was quite young, and her father died when she was twelve. Jiang attended drama school and became involved with radical political circles during her studies.

In 1933, Jiang became a member of the CCP Youth League, and was arrested for her political activism. She pursued a career as a professional actress, acting under the name Lan Ping. Jiang performed in plays and films, and had relationships with several actors and directors from the Shanghai film scene. After the Japanese invasion of China, Jiang became a patriot with a desire for social justice. She left her stage and film career to 'join the revolution'.

Yan'an and marriage to Mao

In August 1937, Jiang arrived in Yan'an and gained a position in the film office of the CCP Propaganda Department. She performed in political plays and worked as a drama instructor. Jiang began a relationship with Mao shortly after her arrival in Yan'an, and in November 1938 she became his fourth wife. Mao gave her the name Jiang Qing ('Blue River'), and they had one daughter, Li Na. The Party leadership agreed to the marriage provided that Jiang kept out of politics. This arrangement lasted until the early 1960s, when Mao encouraged his wife to play a greater public and political role—especially in investigating popular culture and creative arts.

Cultural Revolution

Jiang went on to become one of the driving forces behind the radicalism of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With fellow radicals Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen, Jiang encouraged the Red Guard movement. She sat on several important committees, such as the Central Cultural Revolution Committee.

Jiang was the patron of the eight revolutionary model operas. These were an innovative blend of socialist themes, dance, contemporary music and performance techniques from traditional Chinese opera. The arts were strictly censored during Cultural Revolution, and Jiang had great influence over what was accepted and what was censored.

She was ruthless and cunning in her political dealings. Her denunciations of former foes and political rivals—and anyone she thought had slighted her—ruined many lives. Jiang led the attacks on Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Her hatred of Zhou Enlai led to Red Guards torturing and killing Zhou's adopted son and daughter, on her orders. Jiang gained a place on the CCP Politburo in 1969, and her prominent role in politics inspired many young Chinese women to become activists.

End of the Gang of Four

Jiang Qing was ambitious, and hoped to gain the leadership after Mao's death in 1976. She believed that her reputation as Madame Mao and her influence with state propaganda bodies shored up her position. However, Jiang and her close associates were arrested less than a month after Mao died. They were imprisoned and eventually tried. As the leading figure in the so-called Gang of Four, Jiang's cross-examination was the central drama of the trial—which was televised and watched with great interest in China. She was found guilty, blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and sentenced to death (although this was later commuted to life imprisonment). In 1991, Jiang committed suicide in her cell. She continues to be vilified as the 'White-Boned Demon' in the official CCP press.



↑ Mao and Jiang Qing.

KEY POINTS

- Shanghai actress who became involved in radical politics.
- Came to Yan'an and started a relationship with Mao. They were married, but the CCP only agreed to the marriage if Jiang stayed out of politics.
- Began investigating cultural matters on Mao's behalf.
- A radicalising influence during the Cultural Revolution, and responsible for denouncing many people.
- Sponsored the Eight Revolutionary Model Opera genre.
- Fell from power after Mao's death. Arrested and tried as leader of the Gang of Four.

EVE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Mao Zedong: 'Capitalist roaders are power-holders who follow the capitalist road ... They do not take the socialist road, but they now hold power.'

On 3 January 1965, Liu Shaoqi was reconfirmed as President—and it was widely assumed that he was Mao's chosen successor. Newspaper headlines at the time proclaimed: 'Chairman Mao and Chairman Liu are both our beloved leaders'.⁶¹ Portraits of Liu and Mao were hung side by side. Most senior figures in the CCP believed the Wu Han affair would not go any further after the February Outline Report. However, Liu had no idea that Mao intended to rectify the Party—right to the very top.

THE FALL OF LUO RUIQING

The purge of General Luo Ruiqing hinted further fallout among the Party elite. Luo was a close associate of Deng Xiaoping, but was detested by Lin Biao; their rivalry dated back to the Lushan Plenum. Luo had made no secret of his contempt for Lin's insistence on the *Little Red Book* as an essential training tool for the PLA.

In December 1965, General Luo was subjected to an intense criticism at a Central Committee meeting. By March 1966 he was facing accusations of 'treason'. Under pressure, Luo jumped from a fourth-storey window in a suicide attempt—he survived, but broke both legs. Mao snorted when told the news: 'How pathetic'.⁶² On 16 May 1966, General Luo Ruiqing was formally relieved of all duties. His downfall strengthened Lin Biao's authority in the PLA.

Despite Luo's downfall, President Liu Shaoqi felt no threat to his authority, despite the growing influence of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing, and the unresolved Party dispute over the Wu Han affair. In March 1966, Liu Shaoqi left on a month-long diplomatic tour of Burma, Afghanistan and Pakistan. As soon as he was gone, Mao started an extraordinary revolutionary movement against revisionist influences in both the Party establishment and broader society.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the purge of General Luo Ruiqing impact Chinese politics?
- 2 What indications were there that Liu Shaoqi believed he was not facing any immediate political challenges in early 1966?

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Director Zhang Yimou's film *To Live* (Madman Cinema, 1994), based on Yu Hua's novel of the same name, is a story of one family's life during three decades of the Chinese Revolution. Xu Fugui and his wife Jiazhen experience both the joy of 'a quiet life together' and terrible tragedy. Set in snapshot periods from the late 1940s through to the early 1970s, the film depicts the lives of everyday people under Communist rule. Watch the film then, as a class, in small groups or with your peers, discuss the following.

- How does the film portray the political, social and economic disruptions to ordinary life under Communist rule?
- What aspects of 'normal' family life continue throughout the different periods?
- What parts of the film were useful in your study of revolutionary China? Explain your response.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Extract from historian Chen Guangsheng's CCP-endorsed biography of Lei Feng

When he first read Chairman Mao's works Lei Feng found them very difficult. Some of the essays seemed quite beyond him—he could not understand them all. Refusing to give up, he would read them over and over again ... Even after his comrades had gone to sleep, he would sit by his bed and continue reading. He made a point, in fact, of never going to bed until he had read one essay from beginning to end. And every time he had finished one he would be infused with a feeling of deep strength. He wrote in his diary:

'I have come to understand a lot of truths through studying Chairman Mao's works. With an enlightened mind I work harder and stronger, and all the time I feel as if I can work on without ever getting tired.'

It was this inexhaustible energy that gave Lei Feng his firm determination and great courage in overcoming every difficulty.

📖 **Source 8.07** Chen Kuang-sheng, *Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Fighter* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), 30–31.

➡ **Source 8.08** 'Study Lei Feng's fine example—diligently study Marxism–Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought.'



Using Sources 8.07 and 8.08 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the revolutionary ideals that the 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign tried to encourage.
- 2 Explain the role of Lin Biao during the Socialist Education Movement and early phase of the Cultural Revolution.
- 3 Analyse the extent to which the Socialist Education Movement compromised or fulfilled Maoist revolutionary ideals. Use evidence to support your response.

CHAPTER 8 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- From 1961 President Liu Shaoqi introduced a range of policies to address the famine crisis. These included reducing the size of People's Communes and allowing peasants to concentrate on farming their own family plots. The government imported grain and mobilised the PLA to assist with famine relief.
- In 1962, the 7000 Cadres Conference endorsed these approaches. Liu also offered an analysis of what caused the failure of the Great Leap Forward, saying 70 per cent of the failure was caused by human error. Mao offered a self-criticism too, but also warned the delegates about becoming overly bureaucratic and removed from the people.
- Mao was concerned with corruption among provincial cadres and a perceived degeneration of socialist values in Chinese society. This led to the Socialist Education Movement.
- The Socialist Education Movement struggled to achieve its intentions. Mao, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi each put forward sets of instructions (the Ten Points directives). These reflected the different approaches and agendas within the Party leadership.
- Mao expressed his disappointment at the ideological degeneration of the CCP. He also felt increasingly excluded from political influence after 1961.
- Lin Biao directed the indoctrination of Mao Zedong Thought throughout the PLA. The study and memorisation of the *Little Red Book* was introduced alongside regular military training.
- Mao celebrated the PLA as virtuous socialist heroes that ordinary Chinese should try to be like. Soldiers, such as Lei Feng, were the popular examples to follow. The 'Learn from the PLA' campaign increased the role of the military in popular education. This was a subtle corrosion of the Party's prestige.
- Mao's wife Jiang Qing made her first public appearance since the Yan'an days. Jiang was also appointed by Mao to investigate cultural matters.
- After the Great Leap Forward, criticism of Mao was expressed in obscure literary analysis and historical fiction. Writers such as the Three-Family Village group probably had the backing of influential figures in the CCP, such as Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen.
- Wu Han's play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* caused a rift in the top CCP hierarchy after Mao and his close supporters interpreted it as a commentary on Mao's leadership style. Peng Zhen was appointed to investigate the matter. His eventual findings, called the February Outline Report, reported that the controversy surrounding the play was a literary matter, not a political issue.
- Jiang Qing produced an analysis of the Hai Rui affair that contradicted the February Outline Report. By early 1966, the Wu Han affair was still unresolved.
- The purge of General Luo Ruiqing increased Lin Biao's influence in the PLA, but President Liu Shaoqi did not foresee further political turmoil in the immediate future.

ACTIVITY

CREATIVE TASK

Taking the perspective of Jiang Qing or one of her radical associates, write a critique of China's literary and cultural establishment during early-to-mid-1960s. Try to use the language and expressions that were typical of the time.



THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1966–1969)

‘Marxism consists of thousands of truths, but they all boil down to one sentence, “It is right to rebel”.’

—Mao Zedong

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was one of the most profound political and social upheavals of the twentieth century. In part, it was a theatrical and brutal political comeback by Mao Zedong. Mao believed that his vision for a socialist society was being undermined by revisionist attitudes—and this belief played a decisive role in the Cultural Revolution.

Mao turned to the Red Guards and Rebels, and encouraged them to rise up against authority and smash the Four Olds: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. Chinese society was subsequently turned upside down by rampaging teenagers, and many people suffered terribly.

However, millions of Chinese willingly participated in the campaigns, as people with grievances or ambitions took the opportunity to make ‘revolution in a big way’. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was complex and confusing. There were political twists and turns that used strategies similar to guerrilla warfare. Appalling cultural destruction and censorship took place at the same time as artistic innovation. Many people were persecuted, but many people—especially young people—experienced gender equity, empowerment and autonomy for the first time. By 1967, the revolutionary onslaught was descending into chaos, and Mao called for a return to order. The Ninth Party Congress in 1969 marked the formal end to the Cultural Revolution with a so-called ‘congress of victory and unity’. However, the nature of this victory was uncertain.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why did Mao Zedong launch the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution?
- What was the significance of key developments in the Cultural Revolution?
- What were the key revolutionary experiences of the Red Guards? What was the impact of Red Guard violence on teachers, academics and intellectuals?
- What were the consequences of the Four Olds Campaign?
- How did the cult of Mao influence everyday life during the Cultural Revolution?
- What was the role and significance of Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution?
- What was the impact of the Cultural Revolution on established Communist authorities and CCP cadres?
- How did Mao and Zhou Enlai restore social and political order after 1967?
- What changes and continuities were apparent by the Ninth Party Congress?

KEY EVENTS

- 4–18 May 1966**
Central Committee releases ‘May 16 Circular’ and forms Cultural Revolution Small Group
- 24 May 1966**
Nie Yuanzi puts up her big-character poster: ‘What are You Up To in the Cultural Revolution?’
- 16 July 1966**
Mao’s Good Swim
- 1–8 August 1966**
Central Committee releases the Sixteen Points
- 18 August 1966**
First of eight Red Guard mass rallies in Tiananmen Square
- 14 January 1967**
Rebels overthrow Shanghai municipal authorities. January Storm begins
- 31 October 1968**
Liu Shaoqi expelled from the CCP
- 1–24 April 1969**
Ninth Party Congress

CHAPTER 9



Source 9.01 'The Reddest, Reddest, Red Sun in Our Heart, Chairman Mao, and Us Together', Zhejiang Workers, Farmers and Soldiers Art Academy collective, 1968.



 **Source 9.02** Lin Biao (left) and Mao.

May 16 Circular a statement produced in mid-1966 which declared the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

 **Source 9.03** Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/cc_gpcr.htm

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 9.03 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe the problems facing the CCP in May 1966.
- 2 According to Mao and his radical supporters, what actions needed to be taken to resolve these concerns?
- 3 Analyse the developments that led to the May 16 Circular. Use evidence to support your response.

LAUNCHING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

TURNING POINT

Mao Zedong: 'I call upon the local provinces for a rebellion and an attack on the centre.'

THE MAY 16 CIRCULAR

Mao convened several Politburo meetings while Liu Shaoqi was away on his diplomatic tour. The Chairman's thoughts on the Wu Han matter were now clear—he demanded that the Party leadership withdraw the February Outline Report and dissolve Peng Zhen's Five-Man Group. Mao spoke of 'scholar tyrants' (Wu Han) being protected by a 'Party tyrant' (Peng Zhen). Mao claimed: 'For a long time I have begged the local authorities to rebel against the Central Committee if those in power have not done their job ... I call upon the local provinces for a rebellion and an attack on the centre'.¹

Liu Shaoqi returned to China in late April to face a political storm of dizzying complexity. Mao stayed at his Hangzhou summer retreat, while the Central Committee met in Beijing from 4–18 May. The radical faction within the Party was clearly gaining influence.

- Lin Biao accused Peng Zhen of planning a military coup.
- Kang Sheng (head of the secret police) and Zhang Chunqiao spoke on Mao's behalf.
- On 16 May the radicals released a document drafted by Mao: the 'May 16 Circular'.²

The **May 16 Circular** announced the end of Peng Zhen's Five-Man Group and the formation of a new Cultural Revolution Small Group. This new body was headed by Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao and Kang Sheng. The May 16 Circular made it clear that the Cultural Revolution was very much political.

May 16 Circular, 1966

KEY SOURCE

The so-called February Outline Report by the 'Group of Five' ... is a reflection of bourgeois ideology in the Party; it is out and out revisionism. Far from being a minor issue, the struggle against this revisionist line is an issue of prime importance ...

The whole Party must follow Comrade Mao Zedong's instructions, hold high the great banner of proletarian Cultural Revolution, thoroughly expose the reactionary bourgeois stand of those so-called academic authorities who oppose the Party and socialism, thoroughly criticise and repudiate reactionary bourgeois ideas in the sphere of academic work, education, journalism, literature and art and publishing, and seize the leadership in these cultural spheres ...

Those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party ... are a bunch of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Some of them we have already seen through, others we have not.

Some are still trusted by us and are being trained as our successors ... Party committees at all levels must pay full attention to this matter.

Mao used a clever strategy with the May 16 Circular—he did not directly name who was the target of the Cultural Revolution. However, his reference to ‘successors’ and a Chinese Khrushchev suggested that Liu Shaoqi was in trouble. Liu, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai agreed with the denunciation of Peng Zhen. Peng no longer appeared in public and was demoted from the Politburo.

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

What was Mao seeking through the Cultural Revolution? According to historian Simon Leys: ‘The “Cultural Revolution” had nothing revolutionary about it except the name, and nothing cultural about it except the first tactical excuse. It was a power struggle fought at the top between a handful of men and behind the smokescreen of fictitious [invented] mass movement.’³

A key factor in the Cultural Revolution was the political struggle between the Liuist and Maoist factions of the Party. However, historian Jonathan Spence argues that: ‘This movement defies simple classification, for embedded within it were many impulses at once feeding and impeding each other’.⁴ These complexities can be understood by looking at Mao’s fascination with Chinese literary traditions and history. According to his doctor: ‘Mao read history more than Marx when preparing for political battle’.⁵ Historian Ross Terrill sees Mao’s identification with the literary figure Monkey King as particularly insightful.

Historian Ross Terrill

The Cultural Revolution reflected Mao’s evolution from a Marxist to the ‘Monkey King’ of one of his favourite novels, *Journey to the West*. The novel’s hero is a monkey with a red behind called Sun who performs fantastic feats. He steals and eats peaches of immortality in the gardens of paradise, he storms the gates of hell in order to remove his name from a cosmic blacklist, he covers thousands of miles in one leap, and reaching the world’s outer boundary, pisses on the base of a pillar to show his disrespectful spirit.

When threatened, Monkey King plucks hairs from his body and cries ‘Change!’—the hairs then magically transform into an army of little monkeys who fight alongside their king. In 1966, Mao told a Western journalist: ‘We’ve been Monkey King upsetting heaven. We’ve thrown away the heavenly rule book. Remember this, never take a heavenly rule book too seriously—one must go by one’s own revolutionary rules’.⁶

Another influence on the Cultural Revolution was Mao’s sense of his own mortality. He had turned seventy-three in 1966, and knew that the end of his life was not far away. He mused that Confucius had died aged seventy-three, and said, ‘I will soon be seeing Marx’.⁷ Mao had lost hope with the Party establishment, and wanted to pass his ideals on to a younger generation of revolutionaries. According to historian Jonathan Fenby, Mao was ‘seeking immortality by identifying himself with symbols that would live on after him’.⁸ Historian Robert Jay Lifton sees this as a quest by Mao to achieve ‘revolutionary immortality’: a symbolic transcendence of death.⁹ Mao was mortal, but his legacy could have a profound impact that would allow his revolutionary vision to live on.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao enjoyed breaking with tradition. When he celebrated Tibetan New Year on one occasion, he was told that it was customary to throw cake at the ceiling as an offering to Buddha. Mao grinned as he threw one piece of cake at the ceiling and another on the ground.

 **Source 9.04** Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time: The Epic Saga of the People’s Republic: From the Communist Victory to Tiananmen Square and Beyond* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), 90.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 List three or more key decisions that were declared in the May 16 Circular.
- 2 Who was demoted from the Politburo following the May 16 Circular?
- 3 Using the historical interpretations suggested below, briefly outline some of the influences that shaped Mao’s decision to initiate the Cultural Revolution:
 - Simon Leys: political factors
 - Ross Terrill: historical and literary inspiration
 - Jonathan Fenby and Robert Jay Lifton: revolutionary immortality and ideology.

THE RED GUARDS

KEY GROUP

Mao Zedong: 'Marxism consists of thousands of truths, but they all boil down to one sentence, "It is right to rebel."'

NIE YUANZI'S BIG-CHARACTER POSTER

In March 1966, Mao declared to the Politburo: 'We must overcome the king of hell and liberate the little devils. We need more Suns [monkey kings] ... to go and disrupt the heavenly palace.'¹⁰ The shock troops of the Cultural Revolution who would upset heaven—or 'Mao's arse kickers'¹¹—emerged soon after the May 16 Circular.

Several days before the Circular was issued, Kang Sheng—the head of China's secret police—contacted a radical young academic at Beijing University named Nie Yuanzi (Nie Yuan-tzu). Kang assured Nie that any activism she carried out in support of the Cultural Revolution would be given 'high level backing'.¹²

The May 16 Circular generated a great deal of excitement and discussion among students and young academics. On 24 May, Nie Yuanzi put up a **big-character poster** (or *dazibao*) headed: 'What are you up to in the Cultural Revolution?' Nie denounced the head of Beijing University, Lu Ping (Lu P'ing), who was an associate of Peng Zhen, and accused him of obstructing student discussions and political meetings.

Nie Yuanzi, 'What are you up to in the Cultural Revolution?'

At present, the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit which manifests their boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party, anti-socialist gang, are making vigorous and great cultural revolution ... But here in Beijing University the masses are being kept immobilised, the atmosphere is one of great indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? Something fishy is going on.

The university administration responded with a counter-campaign of posters ridiculing Nie's claims. However, on 1 June, Nie received the 'high level backing' she was promised. The *People's Daily*, now edited by Chen Boda, reprinted Nie's poster—along with a personal endorsement from Mao. Provincial papers followed Beijing's example, as did national radio programs.

In triumph, Nie proclaimed: 'Chairman Mao has said that I am the first red banner—so anyone who opposes me opposes Chairman Mao'.¹³ On 3 June Lu Ping was dismissed from Beijing University. Mao was delighted: 'A single *dazibao* at Beijing University ignited the conflagration of the Cultural Revolution!'¹⁴

STUDENT RADICALISM ESCALATES

Grassroots student radicalism went into overdrive. Lin Biao had been fanning the flames of Maoist fanaticism by making sensational claims about the importance of Mao Zedong Thought. For example, 'Chairman Mao is a genius ... One sentence of his surpasses 10,000 of ours'.¹⁵ Students from universities and middle (secondary) schools echoed such sentiments in thousands of *dazibao* plastered around their campuses—over 65,000 posters went up at Beijing University alone.¹⁶ The students expressed a deep yearning to rise up against the repressive Party and educational establishment:

big-character poster (*dazibao*)
large wall-mounted posters featuring oversized Chinese characters that communicate political messages and public declarations. *Dazibao* had been used since the Imperial era but became particularly widespread during the Cultural Revolution.

➔ **Source 9.05** Cited in Jaap van Ginneken, *The Rise and Fall of Lin Biao* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1976), 37–38, 70–71.

⬇ Revolutionary figurines.



‘Since we want rebellion, the matter has been taken out of your hands! We are going to make the air thick with the pungent smell of explosives. Toss them over, grenades and ... bombs together, and start a big fight!’¹⁷

RED GUARDS

In May 1966, students of a middle school attached to Beijing University used the term ‘Red Guards’ to describe their group—the name caught on, and was soon in common use among student activists. Student radicalism was encouraged further by Chen Boda’s provocative *People’s Daily* editorials. According to Chen, ‘Chairman Mao is the red sun in our hearts ... Whoever dares to oppose him shall be obliterated’.¹⁸ On 8 June 1966, Chen’s editorial urged loyal Maoists to ‘Sweep away all the Freaks and Monsters’ and praised Red Guard big-character posters. In the same article, Chen denounced ‘scholarly authorities’ and ‘venerable masters’. On 18 June, the government postponed university entrance examinations and suspended middle-school classes to allow more time for Red Guard activities. Not every student was thrilled to have their education disrupted.

Mr Lin recalls the Cultural Revolution

When the Cultural Revolution started in June 1966, I was nineteen years old. My classmates and I just finished the courses of high school and were preparing for the national college entrance exam. Actually we did not have a clear idea of what the Cultural Revolution was and what it would mean to us. We were a bit disappointed when we heard that ... the national college entrance exam was cancelled and we would not have a college education.

However, other students delighted in an increasing sense of their own importance and believed that their actions were truly ‘revolutionary’. This was an expression of both political activism and teenage rebellion—which many students found liberating and entertaining. According to one former Red Guard: ‘We were free to do as we pleased, nobody checked on us, and we controlled ourselves ... I thought that what we were doing was important; therefore I enjoyed myself fully. It was a great deal of fun!’¹⁹ Although the Cultural Revolution was initiated by Mao, historian Rana Mitter notes that it ‘also had widespread support: it was a genuinely mass political movement which left many youths feeling as if they had the best days of their lives’.²⁰

RITUAL VIOLENCE

By mid-June, Red Guards were becoming violent. They developed rituals that would become typical features of the Cultural Revolution. Students at Beijing University seized members of the administration, placed dunce (fool) caps on their heads, splattered them with ink, ripped their clothes and made them kneel while being kicked and punched. The Red Guards then marched their victims around the campus so that other students could jeer at them. An associate of Nie Yuanzi said: ‘A red terror spread over the campus ... and the revolutionary teachers and students were filled with joy’.²¹

However, the escalating turmoil in schools and universities was not fun for Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Beijing was descending into chaos—and they did not know what to do about it. Mao remained at Hangzhou, far from the capital. Liu phoned Mao for advice and asked him to return to Beijing. He then visited him in person.



 **Source 9.06** Big-character posters (*dazibao*) in Beijing University, *China Pictorial*, November 1967.

 **Source 9.07** Mr Lin, interview with author (4 February 2009).

DID YOU KNOW?

In his 1967 foreword to the second edition of *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, Lin Biao wrote: ‘Comrade Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist–Leninist of our era. He has inherited, defended and developed Marxism–Leninism with genius ... and has brought it to a higher and completely new stage ... Once Mao Zedong’s thought is grasped by the broad masses, it becomes an inexhaustible source of strength and a spiritual atom bomb of infinite power.’



ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What action was taken by Nie Yuanzi in response to the May 16 Circular? What were the consequences of this action?
- 2 Describe three or more actions or reactions of the Red Guards to the Cultural Revolution in May–June 1966.
- 3 How did Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping respond to the Red Guard movement?

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the work teams sent to rein in the Red Guards was led by Liu Shaoqi's wife, Wang Guangmei. She would later pay dearly for her actions.

Liu explained that he was unfamiliar with a 'cultural revolution', but the Chairman gave no counsel. Mao remarked to his doctor, 'Let them handle the problems of the movement by themselves. I need a rest.'²²

WORK TEAMS RESTORE ORDER

Inevitably, Liu and Deng responded to the student unrest—much to the relief of school administrators. Work teams of Party activists arrived on university campuses to restrain the Red Guards and restore order. This approach was successful at first, but there was still underlying tension.

Mao wrote to Jiang Qing: 'Every day I read documents and other materials with great interest. Great chaos will lead to great disorder. The cycle appears every seven or eight years. The demons and monsters will come out by themselves.'²³

It seemed that Liu had no idea that Mao was trying to destroy him politically. Mao was furious with Liu's work teams as they were restricting his mass revolutionary movement. He was also by now well rested, and ready, as former diplomat Percy Craddock puts it, 'to get back into the swim of things'.²⁴

MAO'S GOOD SWIM AND THE SIXTEEN POINTS

Mao Zedong: 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is a revolution that touched the souls of the people.'

THE GOOD SWIM

Historian Richard Kraus states that, 'The Cultural Revolution's politics were self-consciously theatrical',²⁵ and no one could beat Mao when it came to grand theatrical gestures. On 16 July 1966, Mao took a swim down the Yangzi River at Wuhan, accompanied by much fanfare. Mao's 'Good Swim' was like an Imperial pageant, and it prompted an enthusiastic response from ordinary people. Over 10,000 spectators lined the riverbanks to cheer the Chairman, and the occasion was celebrated and widely covered in the press. An editorial in the *Beijing Review* summed up 'The Most Excellent News'.

 **Source 9.08** Cited in Colin Mackerras et. al., *China in Revolution 1850–1976: History Through Documents* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 158.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cynics have noted that all Mao had to do to swim such an impressive distance was to float on his fat belly—the strong current of the Yangzi did the rest!

Beijing Review editorial, July 1966

Chairman Mao, the most respected and beloved leader of the Chinese people, had a good swim in the Yangzi ... He was in the water for sixty-five minutes and covered a distance of nearly fifteen kilometres downstream. As the good news spread through the country, it was greeted with unprecedented enthusiasm. People expressed the heartfelt wish for a long, long life for their venerated and beloved leader, and their determination to follow forever the revolutionary road charted by Chairman Mao advancing through the tempestuous storms of class struggle.

Although the swim reflected Mao's established personality cult, historian John King Fairbank argues that there was genuine popular delight in the novelty of Mao's Good Swim: 'Since rural Chinese generally could not swim, and few adventurers had ever tried the Yangtze [Yangzi], this was like news that Queen Elizabeth II had swum the Channel. He was obviously a paragon [the very best] of athleticism, capable of superhuman feats.'²⁶ The symbolism of the swim was also clear to all: the great 'helmsman' Mao Zedong was in fine health and more ready than ever to steer China through revolutionary waters.

THE SIXTEEN POINTS

On 18 July 1966, Mao returned to Beijing—but he did not notify Liu Shaoqi. At first, he refused to see the President, choosing instead to meet with Kang Sheng and Chen Boda—who were both members of Cultural Revolution Small Group. On 25 July, Mao ordered the work teams to withdraw from universities.

On 1–8 August, a plenum of the Central Committee met to review Mao's ideological and political program. The plenum produced a document known as the **Sixteen Points**, which summed up the new 'decision concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'. Its main instructions are summarised below.

The Sixteen Points

KEY SOURCE

- At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road.
- Since the Cultural Revolution is a revolution, it inevitably meets with resistance ... It tempers the proletariat and other working people and especially the younger generation, teaches them lessons and gives them experience.
- Put daring above everything else, boldly arouse the masses.
- Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative ... Make the fullest use of big-character posters and great debates ... and expose all the ghosts and monsters.
- When there is debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.
- In certain schools ... some persons in charge have organised counterattacks against the masses ... This is an error ... and absolutely impermissible.
- The period of schooling should be shortened. Courses should be fewer and better.
- Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses.
- The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is bound to achieve brilliant victory under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party headed by Comrade Mao Zedong.

The Sixteen Points used the same tactic as the May 16 Circular—it did not specifically name who was at fault. President Liu Shaoqi was not directly named as a 'capitalist roader' or 'revisionist', but his influence was clearly diminishing. Liu offered a self-criticism but insisted that he still didn't know what he should do or what he was meant to do. The plenum appointed Lin Biao first Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee, which made him second in charge under Mao. From this time on, Mao called Lin Biao his 'closest comrade-in-arms'.²⁷ Meanwhile, Liu Shaoqi was demoted to eighth position in the Politburo hierarchy.



Source 9.09 Mao Zedong swims in the Yangzi River at Wuhan.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, discuss the beliefs and attitudes towards Chairman Mao, as indicated by the popular reaction in China to the 'Good Swim'.

Sixteen Points a directive released by the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee in August 1966, outlining the nature and goals of the Cultural Revolution

Source 9.10 'Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' in *Peking Review*, vol. 9 (12 August 1966).

MAO'S BIG-CHARACTER POSTER

On 5 August, tensions at the plenum increased further when Mao pinned his own big-character poster on the door to the Central Committee meeting room. Mao's poster was titled, 'My First Big-Character Poster: Bombard the Headquarters!' It was reprinted in all major newspapers the next day.

 **Source 9.11** Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 211.

Mao, 'My First Big Character Poster: Bombard the Headquarters!', 1966

China's first Marxist-Leninist big-character poster [by Nie Yuanzi] and Commentator's article on it in are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the central down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the great cultural revolution of the proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing from their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How poisonous!

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Describe the popular reaction to Mao's Good Swim.
- 2 What were the intentions of Mao's Good Swim?
- 3 Briefly explain how the Sixteen Points offered guidance in the following matters:
 - the political objectives of the Cultural Revolution
 - the social changes and experiences the Cultural Revolution intended to convey (especially to young people)
 - the tactics that activists were encouraged to use
 - educational suggestions
 - cultural matters.
- 4 How did Mao refer to Lin Biao at this time?
- 5 What action did Mao take on 5 August 1966 that mirrored the behaviour of the Red Guards?

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 9.10 and 9.11 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the criticisms Mao made of leading figures in the Chinese Communist Party in the mid-1960s.
- 2 Explain the conditions in Chinese society that led Mao to launch the Cultural Revolution.
- 3 Analyse what Mao hoped to achieve with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

RALLIES, GHOSTS AND MONSTERS

Jiang Qing: 'The more brutal, the more revolutionary.'

RED GUARD RALLIES

Massive rallies were organised to 'boldly arouse the masses' to cultural revolutionary action. The first rally was held on 18 August 1966 in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, and was attended by over a million Red Guards. Seven more rallies were held in the months that followed.

People attending the rallies waved their copies of the *Little Red Book*, performed the 'loyalty dance', chanted slogans and sang revolutionary songs in honour of their beloved Chairman Mao.

The highlight was Mao's appearance on the balcony of the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Mao wore a khaki uniform favoured by the Red Guards and waved to the surging masses of young people. At the first rally, a girl was granted the honour of pinning a Red Guard armband on Mao (see page 235). The crowd went wild—this was seen as Mao giving his blessing to the movement. Around 10 million young people from across China came to Beijing during the Cultural Revolution to be 'reviewed' by Chairman Mao in this manner. The PLA drilled them on how to behave, and they were given free accommodation and transport.

Many former Red Guards remember the 1966 rallies with excitement. Mr Lin said, 'The atmosphere was thrilling. We were so excited that we wept and kept shouting, "Long live Chairman Mao!" when we saw Mao Zedong and other leaders.'²⁸ Red Guards often broke into hysterical tears of joy when they saw Mao—the rallies were the climax of their revolutionary experience.

Mao said that the Cultural Revolution was to be a 'great revolution that touches the people to their very souls'. Many Red Guards were swept up by the emotional experience. Afterwards, one wrote to a friend: 'I saw our most, most, most, most dearly beloved leader, Chairman Mao! Comrades, I have seen Chairman Mao! Today I am so happy my heart is about to burst ... I have decided to make today my birthday. Today, I start a new life!'²⁹



DID YOU KNOW?

Many people were allowed to shake Mao's hand and be photographed with him at the Tiananmen Square rallies. Afterwards, they were swamped by hundreds of other young people who wanted to shake the hands that had shaken Mao's hand.

Source 9.12 Chairman Mao Zedong is surrounded by admiring young people following a mass rally celebrating the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

'LINKING UP'

A further important experience for Red Guards—a sort of Long March—was travelling by free transport to revolutionary sites such as Jiangxi, Yan'an, Zunyi or Mao's birthplace at Shaoshan. The trip to Beijing was a highlight for provincial youths. In Beijing, empty schools became makeshift dormitories and free meals were provided to young pilgrims. The revolutionary tourists called their travels 'linking up' and 'exchanging experiences'. Mrs Fan was one of millions who took up this opportunity:

Mrs Fan recalls her Red Guard experiences

For teenagers it was popular to 'link-up', which was when students cut class and travelled across the country to meet other young activists and propagate Mao Zedong Thought. I did it also. All of us teenagers were on the train, crammed in with no seats. But we didn't need to pay any ticket fee. It was called 'Physical Struggle'.

Source 9.13 Mrs Fan, interview with author, translated by Rachel Fan (13 February 2009).

Young people made new friends from across China, traded Mao badges, took a handful of soil from Yan'an as a souvenir, and saw different parts of their country for the first time. For many, this was the best time of their lives. They also realised the

incredible poverty that country people endured. Li Nanyang recalled, 'Walking through the countryside had an impact on my whole life. I saw China through different eyes. I realised how insignificant I was.'³⁰

SNAKE SPIRITS AND COW DEMONS

After the first Red Guard rally, a wave of enthusiasm and extreme violence swept through the streets of Beijing and other major cities.³¹ Lin Biao called on young people to destroy the Four Olds: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits.

The Red Guards responded by attacking their teachers, lecturers and academics. Many teachers were put through brutal 'struggle sessions'. Red Guards hung large signs around their victims' necks with their real name crossed out and replaced with an insulting name. The names, which often had demonic or monstrous associations, showed that those being 'struggled against' were symbolically no longer human—and thus not worthy of compassion:

- 'black gang element'
- 'snake-spirit'
- 'cow-demon'
- 'freak'
- 'capitalist roader'
- 'evil wind'
- 'counter-revolutionary revisionist'
- 'lickspittle running dog of imperialism and capitalism'.

Intellectuals were denounced as the 'stinking Ninth Category' of society.³² Red Guards forced their victims to wear tall paper caps, ripped their clothes and cut their hair into ridiculous styles. Li Zhensheng recalled at one 'struggle session' that the crowd decided the victim 'didn't look monstrous enough', so ink was smeared on his face, while at another struggle a man with a hairstyle similar to Mao's had it 'shaved into a ghost head'.³³

 **Source 9.14** Young people from north-eastern China carry a banner as they march into Beijing during the Cultural Revolution.



RITUAL HUMILIATIONS

Red Guards made their victims hold their arms out behind them in the 'jet' or 'airplane' position for hours on end—often while kneeling on broken glass or hot coals.³⁴ Some of those being denounced had to balance precariously on rickety chairs or tables. Others were made to walk all day along a set route through their city while wearing a sign and banging a gong. Between struggles, 'cow-demons' and 'snake spirits' were kept in makeshift cells called 'cow sheds'.

The rituals and language of the Red Guard movement were significant. Historian Edwin Moise suggests that 'Mao's followers, not having been told exactly who or what they were struggling against, had to conjure pictures of the enemy from their imaginations'.³⁵ The crude language of the big-character posters was an assertion of proletarian identity, youthful brashness and a deliberate break from the refined language of past public discussion.³⁶

Dazibao were intended to shock. Wei Yang Chao, who grew up during the Cultural Revolution, recalled: 'The streets and alleys of Beijing now rang with the sound of children's voices shouting vitriolic slogans'.³⁷ Historian Rana Mitter argues that language divorced from reality and meaning, 'particularly in relation to terms that contained value judgments, was one that also ended up abandoning responsibility'.

The language of violence promoted actual violence and contributed to the ‘moral nullity’ of the Cultural Revolution.³⁸ According to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday: ‘Red Guards tramping down the street, the bonfires of destruction, and the screams of the victims being set upon—these were the sights and sounds of the summer nights of 1966’.³⁹

RED GUARD VIOLENCE

‘Struggle’ meant physical harm as well as humiliation. The Red Guards used clubs and leather belts to beat people, sometimes killing them or leaving them with permanent injuries. Middle-school students inflicted particularly horrific tortures on their teachers. The headmistress of a girls’ school was made to carry heavy bricks around the campus, had boiling water poured over her, and was beaten with belts and sticks studded with nails. She died of her injuries. A former teacher recalled the tragedies that occurred at his school:

On the athletic field, every few days, several teachers would be taken out and shot in public ... Some teachers were buried alive. On the roof over there, four teachers were ordered to sit on a pack of explosives and to light it themselves. A tremendous sound, and nobody could be seen—only legs and arms were in the trees and over the roof.⁴⁰

The exhaustion and stigma of being denounced caused countless suicides.⁴¹ One such victim was the noted writer Lao She. Lao’s clothes were so caked with blood after being beaten all day that his wife had to cut them from him. The following day he was meant to return to his workplace for further struggles. Instead, he drowned himself in a lake near the Forbidden City. Security Minister Xie Fuzhi (Hsieh Fu-chih) instructed his police to not interfere in Red Guard activities: ‘Should Red Guards who kill people be punished? My view is that if people are killed, they are killed; it’s no business of ours.’⁴²

DID YOU KNOW?

When Beijing opera singer Yun Yanming was struggled against by Red Guards, she was paraded around town wearing a string of old shoes and a sign saying ‘I am a big worn shoe’—a common Chinese term for a prostitute.

DID YOU KNOW?

‘I will kill you!’ was a popular and common battle cry among the Red Guards.

DID YOU KNOW?

Red Guards in Beijing forced their teachers to sing the following song:

*‘I’m bad, I’m the
people’s enemy.
I have committed a crime
and I deserve to die.
Please smash me, smash me.
I’m bad.’*

THE CHAIRMAN AND SONG BINBIN

At the rally on 18 August 1966, a girl named Song Binbin pinned an armband on Mao. When she told Mao her name, he asked her if *bin* meant *educated and gentle*. When Song replied that it did, the Chairman replied, ‘Be violent!’ After that, Song Binbin changed her name to Be Violent, while her school was renamed The Red Violent School.

At least, this is how Jung Chang and Jon Halliday relate the story.⁴³ But when Song Binbin was interviewed in the documentary *Morning Sun*, she claimed that Mao had instead told her, ‘Be militant’. Song was upset that her experience of meeting the Chairman had been used by others to suggest that she herself was violent and brutal, or to promote revolutionary violence: ‘My name and my image were hijacked. I was furious because I lost control over my identity, but I was also sad because people suffered because of what that name stood for.’⁴⁴

In 2014, Song Binbin told a Chinese newspaper that it was time for former Red Guards to come to terms with what they had done: ‘I hope that all those who did wrong during the Cultural Revolution and hurt teachers and classmates will face up to themselves and do soul searching in order to seek forgiveness and achieve reconciliation’.⁴⁵ Her statement drew a mixed response: some readers praised her for being candid; others argued that Song had downplayed her role in the movement.

Mao Zedong: ‘Be violent!’



Source 9.15 Song Binbin pinning a Red Guard armband on Chairman Mao, 18 August 1966.

DID YOU KNOW?

Speaking about the Cultural Revolution in her village, one woman said that, 'seeking revenge afterwards is very common in China, and that's why people beat their victims down so hard: because they're afraid that if they can rise again they might take revenge. So you feel you need to totally demolish them.'

➔ **Source 9.16** Mo Bo, 'I was a teenage Red Guard,' *New Internationalist* (April 1987), 8.

➔ **Source 9.17** A rally in Red Guard Square, Harbin, August 1966. Provincial Party Secretary Ren Zhongyi has his face smeared with black ink and is forced to wear a dunce cap and a placard around his neck. The placard reads 'black gang element'.

DID YOU KNOW?

When one young person was asked to explain the meaning of Red Guard activism, they replied: 'Do you really want to know what the Cultural Revolution is? It is a feast of criticism.'

ASSESSING THE BRUTALITY

How do we make sense of the violence and enthusiasm of the young people who embraced the Cultural Revolution? Historian Jonathan Spence suggests that young Chinese were genuinely frustrated with their lack of opportunities. Youth unemployment was a major concern in the mid-1960s. 'They were repressed, angry, and aware of their powerlessness.'⁴⁶ Historian Jonathan Fenby shares this view. He argues that the movement grew because it was 'responding to social and human elements that had little to do with ideology'.⁴⁷ The Cultural Revolution gave young people the right to vent their social grievances—a right they had previously been denied. Mo Bo, a former Red Guard, believes that many young Chinese people were attracted to the movement for its novelty and for the opportunity to lash out at authorities.

Mo Bo recalls his time as a Red Guard

We all enjoyed having no classes and degrading the teachers ... In the past our teachers had been intimidating. Now the situation was reversed ... This kind of experience was so intoxicating that some of us went off our heads. But like most of the Red Guards I never appreciated the beating-people-up business. The farthest we went was when the most unpopular teacher was made to kneel down and confess his 'crimes' to the students. One student hit the teacher's heel with a brick—I couldn't bear to look. This student was one of the rough boys who would call their fathers 'bastards' and perform badly on exams. Chairman Mao gave them the chance to get their own back—at least that was how I understood it then and it is how I understand it now.



Red Guards were under great pressure to be violent. Some Red Guards were uncomfortable with the violence or sympathised with those being struggled against, but had to do their best to hide it. Yang Rae recalled the day when her class turned on their teacher:

Red Guard Yang Rae

The other kids started beating her up. We were in a very small room. Should I also beat her? I was fifteen years old and I thought I was being tested. I felt that I had to charge forth. I didn't want to be a cowardly deserter. I could've chosen not to join in, but that required a greater courage; the strength of conscience. Later I thought, what if I didn't join in? I was a traitor, but so what if they thought that? Now I have to take responsibility for it.

Another former Red Guard, Ken Ling, writes that teenage rebels used Maoist rhetoric for their own advantage.

Red Guard Ken Ling

... mutual exploitation had become the real basis of the relationship between the central authorities and us ... Our basic premise was that we were the future masters of the country. Only after this basic premise was destroyed by Mao Zedong were we to come to realize too late that Mao had used us more than we did him.

Another expression of autonomy, unseen since the Communists had come to power, was the thousands of self-published Red Guard newspapers. These unofficial newspapers gave young people a unique forum to express their views.⁴⁸ Both the self-published Red Guard press and the middle-school students who lashed out at their teachers were beyond the immediate control of central figures such as Mao or Jiang Qing.

Mao was responsible for unleashing the Red Guards—but he was surprised at their excesses, and had probably not expected the degree of turmoil that unfolded.⁴⁹

← **Source 9.18** Yang Rae, interviewed in *Morning Sun* (documentary by Long Bow Group, screened on BBC, 2003).

↗ **Source 9.19** Cited in Dahpon Ho, 'Omnipotent God-Emperor or Simply the Spark on a Tinderbox? The Primacy of Mao in the Cultural Revolution Historiography', *orpheus.ucsd.edu/chinesehistory/cr/dahpon.htm*

ACTIVITY**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1 When was the first Red Guard mass rally held and how many people attended?
- 2 List three typical features of these rallies.
- 3 Briefly describe what the experience of 'linking-up' involved for Red Guards.

ACTIVITY**HISTORICAL SOURCES**

The following big-character poster was written by a group of Beijing middle-school Red Guards. In November 1966, it was chosen by the journal *Red Flag* as a commendable example of Cultural Revolution activism.

Big-character poster by Red Guards, Beijing, 1966

Revolution is rebellion, and rebellion is the soul of Mao Zedong's thought ... to make revolution—in a word, daring to rebel—is the most fundamental and most precious quality of proletarian revolutionaries ... Not to rebel is revisionism, pure and simple!

... You say we are too arrogant? 'Arrogant' is just what we want to be ... We are bent on striking down not only the reactionaries in our school, but the reactionaries all over the world. Revolutionaries take it as their task to transform the world. How can we not be 'arrogant'?

You say we are too crude? Crude is just what we want to be. How can we be soft and clinging towards revisionism or go in for great moderation? To be moderate toward the enemy is to be cruel to the revolution! You say we are going too far? ... Well, we are going to strike you down to the earth and keep you down!

... A revolutionary is a 'monkey king' ... whose supernatural powers are far-reaching and whose magic is omnipotent precisely because he has the great and invincible thought of Mao Zedong. We are ... 'displaying our supernatural powers' and using our 'magic' in order to turn the old world upside down, smash it to pieces, create chaos, and make a tremendous mess—and the bigger the better!

... We are bent on creating a tremendous proletarian uproar, and on carving out a new proletarian world! Long live the revolutionary rebel spirit of the proletariat!

← **Source 9.20**

Cited in Patricia Buckley Ebrey ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, revised edition, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 450.

CONTINUED ...

ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

A former Red Guard recounts the experiences of one of her friends:

Li Nanyang, former Red Guard

I had a good friend who came from a workers' family. She told me at first she could not bring herself to beat people. But to be accepted by the other Red Guards she felt that she'd have to be as revolutionary as they were. She said, 'So I followed their example and started beating people.' She told me that once she started beating people she became addicted to it. 'I got quite a high from it. The people you beat up didn't dare fight back. You felt so heroic.' I can't remember her exact words, but it was something like 'You felt so incredibly strong, people were afraid of you, you had this awe inspiring prowess.' She told me, 'Do you know how bad it got? I wouldn't stop beating someone till my arms hurt.' I thought, this is really scary. Because she was actually very nice and we had been friends for a long time. She wasn't a bad person yet she could do something like this.

◀ **Source 9.21** Li Nanyang, interviewed in *Morning Sun* (documentary by Long Bow Group, screened on BBC, 2003).

Yang Rae, a former Red Guard, recalled a scene she encountered as a youth:

Yang Rae, former Red Guard

On this day I saw a teacher in the fountain, a middle-aged man. His clothes were muddy. Blood was steaming down his head, as a number of students were throwing bricks at him. He tried to dodge the bricks. While he did so, without noticing it, he crawled in the fountain, round and round, like an animal. This teacher survived ... [others were] not so fortunate.

◀ **Source 9.22** Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 118.

Using Sources 9.20–9.23 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Describe how young people responded to the Cultural Revolution.
- 2 Explain the role of the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution.
- 3 Analyse the changes to everyday life experienced by students and Red Guards during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

CREATIVE TASK

Create your own big-character poster (*dazibao*) reflecting the intentions and nature of the Cultural Revolution. Use the stylistic qualities, language and expressions of the era.

➡ **Source 9.23** 'Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought—thoroughly smash the rotting counter-revolutionary revisionist line in literature and art' (1967).



THE FOUR OLDS CAMPAIGN

Lin Biao: 'The revolutionary torrents of the masses are washing away all the sludge and filth left over from the old society.'

SOCIAL CHANGES

The Red Guard movement profoundly changed social relationships in China. In the past, young people would not stand up to their elders or other traditional figures of authority. Now it was 'right to rebel'.

Girls also played a major role in the movement, which led to them breaking traditional expectations. 'Linking-up' gave all young people extraordinary freedom from parental supervision—but especially girls. Jiang Qing and Nie Yuanzi represented inspiring examples of women taking greater public roles in leadership.⁵⁰ One feature of Red Guard politics was an insistence on gender equality. Young women would often quote Mao to advance their position: 'Times have changed. Men and women are the same. What men can do women can also do.'⁵¹

CULTURAL DESTRUCTION

The campaign against the Four Olds—old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits—also changed everyday life and culture dramatically in a destructive way. Red Guards raided museums and private residences and smashed or defaced anything considered 'reactionary', 'old', 'foreign' or associated with 'Confucius and Co'—including artworks, musical instruments, fine porcelain, libraries, ancient temples, gravestones and Western clothing.⁵² Even the grave of Confucius was vandalised.

However, some places were protected. The Forbidden City was closed on Zhou Enlai's orders and soldiers patrolled its perimeter. Some other sites were declared 'state property'; others had their relics stored in guarded warehouses.⁵³

Nien Cheng recounted the destruction unleashed on her most precious belongings by Red Guards:

Nien Cheng describes the actions of Red Guards

Mounting the stairs, I was astonished to see several Red Guards taking pieces of my porcelain collection out of their padded boxes. One young man had arranged a set of four K'ang Hsi winecups in a row on the floor and was stepping on them. I was just in time to hear the crunch of delicate porcelain under the sole of his shoe. The sound pierced my heart. I leapt forward and caught his leg just as he raised his foot to crush the next cup ... With his faced flushed in anger, the young man waved his fist, threatening me with a severe beating ... I picked up one of the remaining winecups and cradled it in my palm. Holding my hand out, I said, 'This winecup is nearly three hundred years old ... No one in this world can make another winecup like this one again. This is part of our cultural heritage.' ... The young man whose revolutionary work I had interrupted said angrily, 'You shut up! These things belong to the old culture. They are the useless toys of the feudal Emperors and the modern capitalist class and have no significance to us ... The old culture must be destroyed to make way for the new socialist culture.'



◀ **Source 9.24** Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 96–97.

DID YOU KNOW?

Leaders of the Cultural Revolution did not necessarily reject 'bourgeois' possessions for themselves—some profited from Red Guard raids of private homes. Kang Sheng gave raiding parties lists of the artworks he wanted them to collect. Rare books were preserved for Mao's library. Jiang Qing allegedly paid a small sum for an expensive jewellery collection.

THE CULT OF MAO

Maoist slogan: 'Father is close, Mother is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao.'

EVERYDAY LIFE

DID YOU KNOW?

For a brief period during the Cultural Revolution, traffic lights were changed so that red meant 'go' and green meant 'stop'. However, they were soon changed back after an increase in accidents.

↓ Mao badge, c. 1968.



The cult of Mao reached new heights during the Cultural Revolution, and extended into everyday life. People were discouraged from wearing all sorts of 'bourgeois' clothing and accessories, including:

- jewellery
- perfume
- fitted trousers
- high heels
- silk
- skirts
- sunglasses
- cosmetics
- blue jeans.

People who ignored the revolutionary fashion police were likely to be harassed by Red Guards, given an impromptu haircut, or have their clothing cut or ripped from them.

All sorts of things became unacceptable. Chess was too Russian, and spring mattresses were 'too soft'. Children were encouraged to trample grass and knock down flowers to prove their hatred of bourgeois values. Keeping pets and cultivating pot plants was frowned upon.

Portraits of Mao were everywhere—an estimated 2.2 billion Mao portraits were produced,⁵⁴ which meant three portraits for every person in China! So many Mao badges were minted that the Chinese aviation industry ran out of aluminium. Mao complained, 'Give me back my aeroplanes!' and called for a reduction in badge production.⁵⁵

Businesses changed their names from things like 'Delicious Aroma' (restaurant), 'Comfort' (shoes), 'Happy Homes' (furniture) or 'Good Fortune and Longevity' (men's hats) to Maoist slogans like 'East is Red', 'Defend Mao Zedong' and 'Permanent Revolution'.⁵⁶ Loudspeakers on street corners broadcast the Thoughts of Mao throughout the day (and sometimes at night). Telephone operators answered the phone with 'Long Live Chairman Mao!'

EVERYDAY USE OF MAO QUOTES

At the height of the Cultural Revolution, people were expected to have a brief conversation beginning with a Mao quote when buying goods at a shop. Different quotes were expected from different social classes. This table lists some of the most commonly used quotes.⁵⁷

CUSTOMERS	SALES CLERK SAYS ...	CUSTOMER RESPONSE ...
WORKERS	Vigorously grasp revolution ...	... energetically promote production.
SOLDIERS	One should support the army ...	... and cherish the people.
PEASANTS	Grasp revolution ...	... promote production.
STUDENTS	Study well ...	... make progress everyday.
CADRES	Serve the people ...	... entirely, thoroughly.
HOUSEWIVES	Be industrious and thrifty in managing a household ...	... build the country through thrift and hard work.
ELDERLY PEOPLE	Let us respectfully wish Chairman Mao eternal life without end!	... Eternal life without end!

NEW RITUALS AND MAO WORSHIP

As the Cultural Revolution became increasingly radical, people were encouraged to show an extraordinary reverence and devotion to Mao. Mao's full title was extended to 'Great Helmsman, Great Leader, Great Supreme Commander, Great Teacher, Chairman Mao'. Mao's disciples would bellow, 'Mao Zhuxi, wansui! Wansui!' ('Ten thousand years of life to Chairman Mao!')—which was the same blessing given to the god-emperors of Imperial China.⁵⁸

People thought that Mao and Mao's Thoughts were blessed with divine power, just like the Sons of Heaven. They bowed to Mao's image when they got up in the morning, and before they went to bed in the evening—a ritual known as 'receiving instructions and reporting to the Chairman'.⁵⁹ Mao was often shown in portraits as a disembodied head, radiating light and beaming down upon the revolutionary masses.

People looked to the *Little Red Book* for the answers to all their problems:

- athletes quoted Mao as they trained
- peasants used Mao's Thought to grow better crops
- workers checked their *Little Red Book* when trying to get machines to run more efficiently
- doctors performed operations with a scalpel in one hand and their *Little Red Book* in the other.

The Thoughts of Chairman Mao could heal the sick, allow the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.⁶⁰ There were even reports that Mao's Thoughts raised a man from the dead!⁶¹

Mao even intruded into everyday family relations—according to a popular slogan of the time, 'Father is close, Mother is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao'.⁶² People whose family members had been denounced by Red Guards were pressured to 'draw a line' and cut off contact with the accused. Some Red Guards even pinned their Mao badges on their skin so that the Chairman would be 'close to their heart'.⁶³

Extreme devotion to Mao was part of everyday life during the Cultural Revolution, and most people at least agreed to going along with it. Li Zhensheng writes: 'Mao was more than a leader. He was our saviour. And everyone had to believe—or pretend to ... it was all a bit crazy to me.'⁶⁴



Source 9.25 'The sunlight of Mao Zedong Thought illuminates the road of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,' 1966.

DID YOU KNOW?

One day in 1967, the Pakistani foreign minister gave Mao a case of mangoes. The next day, Mao gave the mangoes to Beijing factory workers as a show of support for the proletariat. The workers were delighted by the fruit—which was a rarity in northern China. They displayed the mangoes in a glass case. When the fruit started to go bad, the workers boiled it up in a pot and each reverently took a sip of the mango water. Much like holy relics, wax replicas of the mangos were made and sent on tours of the country. 'Mango mania' gripped China as millions flocked to see Mao's mangoes, while images of the fruit appeared on all sorts of everyday items.

Additional Resource This website gives an interactive example of how people would consult the *Little Red Book* for guidance in everyday life during the Cultural Revolution. 'Ask the Chairman for the Answers to Your Problems': www.morningsun.org/living/what.html

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly outline how the Cultural Revolution challenged traditional social expectations and gender roles.
- 2 Identify the Four Olds.
- 3 List five examples of changes to everyday life that occurred during the Cultural Revolution.
- 4 Describe three examples of extreme or bizarre behaviour observed during the period.
- 5 Describe three ways in which Mao came to be treated as an emperor or religious figure during the Cultural Revolution.

THE EIGHT REVOLUTIONARY MODEL OPERAS

Jiang Qing: 'To act is to fight.'

Many historians claim that China was turned into an artistic wasteland through censorship and fanaticism during the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁵ Many writers and artists who survived the revolutionary onslaught were too scared to create anything new. Jiang Qing was the driving force behind the radicalisation of popular culture—as only plays, dance pieces, books and films that had her approval could be officially published. Supposedly just 124 novels were published during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁶

The East Is Red

However, Jiang Qing was a keen patron of musical theatre—an artform that China's Communists had already reinterpreted. In 1964, the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC was celebrated with a singing and dancing spectacular called *The East Is Red*. The show was staged and filmed in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, and featured dancers, singers, acrobats, a narrator and many inspiring anthems. The show told the story of China's revolution and its bright Communist future.

Jiang took a greater hand in developing revolutionary performances after her appointment to the Ministry of Culture. She was determined that China's performing arts supported the government's socialist world view.⁶⁷ Tales of common soldiers, workers and peasants were rarely told in high art, with the stage given over to ghosts, concubines and emperors. It was Jiang's belief that China's superstructure (values and culture) needed to reflect more accurately its base (economic foundations), otherwise the former might corrupt the latter.⁶⁸



Revolutionary model pieces

A revolutionary new style of opera emerged under Jiang's patronage. In all, eight 'revolutionary model pieces' were developed:

- *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*
- *Shajiabang*
- *The Legend of the Red Lantern*
- *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment*
- *The White-Haired Girl*
- *On the Docks*
- *Sparks amid the Reeds*
- *Red Detachment of Women*.

The model pieces recounted tales of Red Army military campaigns, stories of proletarian heroes and exploited heroines, and tales of class struggle and revolutionary valour. Strong female protagonists featured in some performances, which emphasised the feminist themes of the era. 'The message was that women, too, could be revolutionaries.'⁶⁹

To modern viewers, the revolutionary model pieces probably look like Communist kitsch, but contemporary audiences enjoyed the performances.⁷⁰ Many of the tunes were familiar, and the acrobatic stunts were thrilling.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist anthem *The East Is Red* became the unofficial Chinese national song. This was because the author of the official anthem had been denounced.

*The east is red, the sun is rising
China has brought forth a Mao Zedong.
He works for the people's welfare.
Hurrah, He is the people's great saviour.
Chairman Mao loves the people,
He is our guide,
To build a new China,
Hurrah, he leads us forward!
The Communist Party is like the sun,
Wherever it shines, it is bright.
Wherever there is a Communist Party,
Hurrah, there the people are liberated!*

◀ **Source 9.26** Modern revolutionary ballet: *Red Detachment of Women* (1972).

Peng Zhen's opposition

Jiang's fiery personality brought her into conflict with other Communist art patrons, particularly Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen. Jiang was upset that Peng didn't take her artistic concerns seriously. On one occasion she asked Peng to look over some opera scores; he snatched the music and stormed off, muttering to a companion, 'She wants this, she wants that. Doesn't she realize the mayor of Beijing has other things to do besides help her with her games?'⁷¹

When Peng heard that Jiang's works were praised at an Opera Festival in Beijing as 'revolutionary model pieces', he exclaimed, 'What the hell are these models? I'm head of the arts in this place, and I know nothing of models.'⁷² However, what Peng had seriously underestimated was that Jiang Qing was Mao's wife. He would come to pay for this oversight dearly.

Liu Shaoqi also preferred more traditional works: 'The novels and plays of today are in most cases also not as good as those of the feudal era. Therefore, plays about "emperors, and princes, generals and ministers, gifted scholars and beauties" should be performed'. However, Mao gave his approval to the revolutionary model pieces. Of *Red Detachment of Women* he said, 'The orientation is right. It has been successfully revolutionized, and artistically it is also good.'⁷³

DID YOU KNOW?

Deng Xiaoping hated Jiang's revolutionary operas. After watching one performance, he scoffed: 'You just see a bunch of people running to and fro on the stage. Not a trace of art.' Deng was still unimpressed after seeing *Red Detachment of Women*: 'After a week's work, people want to go to the theatre to relax. Instead, with this thing, you go to the theatre and find yourself on a battlefield.'

Reappraising Maoist cultural innovation

It is often joked that China was a nation of '800-million people watching eight shows' during the Cultural Revolution. Historian Paul Clark has questioned this assumption. Clark argues that there was a dynamic cultural dimension to the Cultural Revolution: 'Instead of simply a period of madness, the Cultural Revolution was also a time of considerable creative energy, official and unofficial'.⁷⁴

The revolutionary model works were an innovative synthesis that combined Western ballet, European instrumentation and Chinese styles. According to Clark, 'a great deal more was being created, enjoyed, or resisted than hackneyed jokes about 800 million people limited to eight model performances'.⁷⁵

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

With a partner or in small groups, discuss what Paul Clark's views about Chinese revolutionary artistic trends might add to traditional accounts of the Cultural Revolution, which tend to characterise the period as culturally barren. Why do the actions of the Red Guards and the political battles of the Cultural Revolution overshadow other aspects of the era?

CREATIVE TASK

View an excerpt from one of the eight revolutionary model performances listed on page 246, such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*. After viewing a few scenes, give a verbal or written review of the performance from the point of view of a *People's Daily* reporter at the time. What messages are conveyed through the dancing, music, stories and costumes? In your review, use phrases appropriate to the era of the Cultural Revolution.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The producers of the documentary *Morning Sun* have developed a website that features interactive resources on some of the themes from the Cultural Revolution. Some are recommended below:

- Jiang Qing's own critical reviews of films: www.morningsun.org/smash/jq_films.html
- Extracts from *The East Is Red*: www.morningsun.org/east/eir.html

SEIZE POWER! THE JANUARY STORM AND FALL OF LIU SHAOQI

Mao Zedong: 'Have no fear of chaos. The more chaos you dish up the better. Disorder and chaos are always a good thing. They clarify things. But never use weapons.'

A NEW ORDER

The political strategies of the Cultural Revolution reflected the ingenuity of Mao's guerrilla past, and his delight in poetic and theatrical gestures. Mao launched a baffling series of manoeuvres to undermine perceived threats to his revolutionary vision. But no one in the Party leadership had any idea of the degree of turmoil the Chairman had unleashed, and none suspected they were 'being led up a mountain and into a volcano'.⁷⁶ In typical style, it appears that Mao had no clear plan for how the Cultural Revolution might proceed, or when it would end. According to historian Jonathan Spence, it seems to have 'been a case of allowing theory to grow out of practice, as he [Mao] had always interpreted the revolutionary process to be'.⁷⁷

Mao and his associates soon directed the fury of the Red Guards at those in the upper levels of the Party. On 15 September 1966, Lin Biao urged Red Guards to 'focus on denouncing those power-holders inside the Party pursuing a capitalist road'.⁷⁸ After that, Red Guards literally 'bombarded the headquarters' of provincial Party offices, seized cadres and put them through 'struggles' at denunciation rallies.

At his seventy-third birthday in December 1966, Mao proposed a toast to 'the unfolding of all-round civil war'.⁷⁹ The Politburo virtually ceased to function after February 1967. Only Mao, Zhou Enlai, and the members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group were still active in political matters.

↓ **Source 9.27** Wang Guangmei during her struggle session at Beijing University.



DENUNCIATION OF LIU SHAOQI AND WANG GUANGMEI

On 23 October 1966, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were called before the Central Committee to deliver self-criticisms. Soon, posters denouncing Liu and Deng appeared throughout Beijing. Liu no longer appeared in public or attended to presidential duties—he instead remained at home in the Zhongnanhai compound.

On 1 January 1967, Zhongnanhai clerical staff burst into Liu's home and subjected him to a verbal struggle. Meanwhile Liu's wife, Wang Guangmei, was also a target. On 6 January, Wang received a phone call informing her that her daughter was in hospital after a car accident. However, the call was a hoax. When Wang arrived to see her daughter, she was seized by a group of Red Guards and taken to a denunciation rally.⁸⁰ Wang endured many more struggles in the coming months. One of the most humiliating struggles occurred in April 1967 at Beijing University. Wang was made to wear a tight-fitting qipao dress, high heels and a necklace of ping-pong balls—a symbolic condemnation of the 'bourgeois' clothing she wore in 1963 when greeting President Sukarno. A Red Guard described Wang's refusal to cooperate as 'the ugly performance of a bitch struggling in the water'.⁸¹



DENUNCIATION OF PARTY LEADERS

By mid-1967 Red Guards had set up camp outside Zhongnanhai and blasted the compound with loudspeakers.⁸² Urged on by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing, the militant students hauled out many leading figures of the Chinese Communist movement to repent before the ‘revolutionary masses’: Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, He Long, Liu Bochong, Chen Yi and Peng Zhen were all struggled against. Peng Zhen endured more than 200 denunciation meetings. Peng Dehuai was assaulted 135 times by Red Guards: half the bones in his body were broken and he suffered permanent liver damage.⁸³ Some leaders, such as Zhu De, were spared physical torment at Mao’s personal insistence. The denunciations were a disturbing experience, and the families of Party leaders also suffered dreadfully. Red Guards threw Deng Xiaoping’s son out of a second-storey window and left him a paraplegic.

Premier Zhou Enlai appeared to be immune from the chaos, and managed to keep a semblance of government organisation intact. Although he went along with much of the purging, he also personally intervened and ‘rescued’ individuals he needed.⁸⁴ When Foreign Minister Chen Yi was being beaten, Zhou arrived at the meeting, took Chen by the arm and led him away.⁸⁵ Chen Yi was a fiery old cadre who refused to be bullied by the Red Guards. Chen scolded them that if they were so keen on ‘fighting’, then perhaps a trip to Vietnam would be to their liking. On another occasion he told them to ‘cool down’ and wrap wet towels around their heads.⁸⁶

FACTIONAL INFIGHTING

Perhaps the Red Guards really did need to ‘cool down’. The Red Guard movement had been troubled by small competing groups (or factions) within it. The first factions involved children of the Party elite who challenged the views of working-class children who wanted stronger attacks on the Communist establishment.

Towards the end of 1966, factionalism had become incredibly complex and caused vicious fighting.⁸⁷ The Red Guards pledged to ‘die fighting for Chairman Mao’. And die they did—by their thousands. By 1967, bloody battles were being fought with fists, knives, slingshots, homemade spears, clubs and even ‘tanks’—everyday vehicles fitted with armour plating. Campus buildings were barricaded and turned into fortresses. Red Guards raided PLA arms depots and began shooting at each other. Fighting in Chongqing even involved the use of anti-aircraft guns and heavy artillery.⁸⁸ One Red Guard battle involved more than 10,000 combatants.

Source 9.28 ‘Long live the victory of the proletarian revolutionary line with chairman Mao as its representative! Long live the victory of the proletarian revolution!’ with (left to right) Kang Sheng, Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Chen Boda and Jiang Qing in about 1966.

DID YOU KNOW?

Consignments of Chinese guns being sent by rail to North Vietnam were seized by Red Guards and used in their battles.

DID YOU KNOW?

The two largest Rebel-Red Guard factions in Wuhan had ridiculously long names: ‘The Wuhan Area Proletarian Revolutionary Liaison Centre of Mao Zedong Thought Million Heroic Troops’ fought for supremacy against the ‘Mao Zedong Thought Fighting Team’s Wuhan Workers General Headquarters’.

Red Guards who were captured by their enemies were tortured and imprisoned in ‘reformatories’. In 1967, it was reported that victorious Red Guards in Guangxi province ate the bodies of their victims.⁸⁹ Cannibalism was an extreme expression of an extreme period—the revolution was literally devouring its own children. It is estimated that 650,000 people died in the fighting of 1966–1968.⁹⁰ Many students were by now scared of the violence and weary of endless sloganeering, and chose to spend much of their time at home.⁹¹

REBEL WORKERS

From November 1966, workers were urged to join the Cultural Revolution. This led to further social radicalisation and greater assaults on established authority. Militant office and factory workers formed ‘Rebel’ groups and challenged the Party committees in their workplaces. Workers who had been disadvantaged under the old system gained a new voice as *Rebels*, as one former distillery worker recalled:

KEY GROUP

Rebels workers’ organisations formed to carry out the Cultural Revolution

➔ **Source 9.29** Jonathan Unger, ‘The Social Conflicts Underpinning China’s Cultural Revolution Turmoil,’ in *Agora*, vol. 44 no.3 (2009): 6.

Rebel worker on the benefits of the Cultural Revolution

Before the Cultural Revolution there were hidden problems. When our leadership said something was one, not two, it had to be accepted as one, not two. We could say nothing in response but just had to work more. You could only talk about good things and never about the bad things. In the Cultural Revolution, people talked about anything, without restrictions. People said things they dared not say before. Many things were exposed ... It raised people’s thinking ... The Rebel faction was made up of ordinary small people, people without any power. They felt wronged. You’d been under your supervisor, and there was nowhere to vent your dissatisfaction. It wasn’t that I personally felt any anger, but when you joined the Rebel faction you felt better. When we talked with each other, we could feel a sense of relief.

Like the Red Guards, Rebel organisations were rife with factional infighting. ‘Revolutionary Rebels’ who wanted to overturn existing Party structures were opposed by ‘Proletarian Rebels’ who wanted only limited change.⁹²

↓ **Source 9.30** A Red Guard in Shanghai during the Shanghai People’s Commune. February 1967.

THE SHANGHAI PEOPLE’S COMMUNE

Rebel workers were ultimately responsible for the most fundamental shake-up of the Communist Party apparatus. In January 1967, the radical Red Rebels faction in Shanghai was battling the ‘conservative’ Scarlet Guards faction, which supported established Party committees.⁹³

During the fighting, Zhang Chunqiao—who was Jiang Qing’s associate—came to Shanghai and encouraged the Red Rebels to ‘seize power’. In mid-January 1967, the Rebels toppled the authorities and on 5 February 1967 a Shanghai People’s Commune was proclaimed. The Rebels claimed that the Shanghai Commune was a direct form of people’s democracy.

By this time, the Rebels had fractured into 700 different sub-factions.⁹⁴ Under the slogan ‘Seize Power!’, radicals in provinces and cities throughout China copied what had been done in Shanghai. This became known as the ‘January Storm’.

The January Storm led to ‘a bewildering situation in which varieties of radical groups, not coordinated by any central leadership, struggled with Party leaders and with each other’.⁹⁵ The Communist Party almost stopped functioning as a national organisation. Authority remained with the Cultural Revolution Committee, the central government ministries under Zhou—although they were under constant barrage—and the PLA.



RESTORING ORDER

According to historian Philip Short, Mao had ‘looked into the abyss—and he did not like what he saw’.⁹⁶ On 14 January 1967, Mao and Zhou told the military to restore order. In February, free travel for Red Guards and Rebels was withdrawn. New guidelines were issued: prior approval from the central government was needed before any regional authorities could be overthrown.⁹⁷ This was followed on 10 March by a directive that **three-in-one revolutionary committees** of soldiers, radical Party cadres and Rebels should assume leadership of all institutions. Zhang Chunqiao was told that the Shanghai Commune needed to conform to the new directives.

Mao scoffed at Shanghai radicals who imagined an end to ‘heads’ of government. He said: ‘This is extreme anarchism, it is most reactionary ... In reality there will still always be heads’.⁹⁸ The new committees filled the void left by the ‘heads’ of the now-decimated Party ranks and gave a new structure of governance.⁹⁹ Military men dominated the committees as most people followed their orders.

The three-in-one committees faced difficulties as they came to power:

- factional fighting continued in some regions for the next eighteen months
- thousands were killed in clashes between rival factions and the PLA
- armed fighting in Wuhan in April–July 1967 was particularly violent.

Mao admitted, ‘Some people say there is no civil war in China. But I think there is a civil war.’¹⁰⁰ Jiang Qing continued to stir popular action among workers with the slogan: ‘To stop production is revolution itself!’¹⁰¹ Her revolutionary rhetoric had real economic consequences—with a sharp decline in industrial output.

Foreign relations were also severely strained. Red Guards caused trouble in Hong Kong, while a number of foreign embassies were besieged and ransacked. On the night of 22 August 1967, the British consulate in Beijing was burned to the ground.

WORKER-PEASANT MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT TEAMS

On 6 April 1967, Mao told a delegation of Red Guard leaders: ‘Have no fear of chaos. The more chaos you dish up the better. Disorder and chaos are always a good thing. They clarify things. But never use weapons.’¹⁰² Mao still believed in the validity of radical mass action, but he was tired of the violent student factionalism. He could not understand why his calls to cease fighting were ignored.

Mao recommended guiding the Cultural Revolution to a more stable course by sending Worker–Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams into schools and universities. However, when Mao sent a group of workers to take leadership of Beijing University on 29 July 1968, they were shot at by student radicals. Five workers were killed—and Mao was furious.¹⁰³

The next day Mao summoned five prominent Red Guard leaders to a meeting. When one of the students complained that a ‘black hand’ was trying to undermine their movement, Mao snapped, ‘I am that black hand!’¹⁰⁴ Mao spoke of his great displeasure and criticised their ‘mad fratricidal combats’.¹⁰⁵ With tears in his eyes, Mao told the Red Guards: ‘You have let me down, and what is more, you have disappointed the workers, peasants, and soldiers of China’.¹⁰⁶ Sidney Rittenberg recalled one of the final Red Guard rallies: Mao turned away after surveying the sea of fanatic youngsters and ‘looked absolutely miserable’.¹⁰⁷

three-in-one revolutionary committees the authorities established at the height of the Cultural Revolution to lead in place of Party organisation. Consisted of radical cadres, soldiers and rebels

DID YOU KNOW?

Two of the Rebel factions in Wuhan were called ‘Wonderful’ and ‘Fart’. When one decreed, ‘Our seizing of power is wonderful’, the other declared, ‘Wonderful? What a load of fart!’

THE EXPULSION OF LIU SHAOQI

In October 1967, classes in schools and universities resumed. Meanwhile, the campaign against Liu Shaoqi had intensified. On 13 January 1967, Mao met with Liu for the last time. Mao advised him to 'read some books' and look after his health.¹⁰⁸ On 1 April 1967, President Liu's official fall from grace was made public—the *People's Daily* named him as China's 'biggest capitalist roader'.

From July, Liu was held in solitary confinement between struggle rallies. By August he was being physically abused. On 31 October 1968, he was formally stripped of his positions and expelled from the Party. He was already broken emotionally and physically. His prison guards reported that he 'brushed his teeth with a comb, put his socks on over his shoes and his underpants outside his trousers'.¹⁰⁹ Liu was also denied sleeping pills and his diabetes medication.

Liu was given enough medical treatment to keep him alive until the Ninth Party Congress on 1–24 April 1969.¹¹⁰ The Congress restored the reference to Mao Zedong Thought in the PRC constitution. The Congress also clarified key positions in the Party:

- Mao was re-elected Chair of the Central Committee and the Party
- Lin Biao became Vice-Chairman, and Mao's successor
- Jiang Qing joined the Politburo
- the wives of Lin Biao, Kang Sheng and Zhou Enlai joined the Politburo.¹¹¹

Liu Shaoqi was still in prison and did not attend the Congress. However, the Congress made its final judgement on the 'number one person in authority taking the capitalist road'. Liu was accused of heading an anti-Party conspiracy and denounced as a 'renegade, traitor and scab'. The delegates passed a resolution 'to expel Liu Shaoqi from the Party, once and for all'.¹¹²

On 12 November 1969, Liu died of pneumonia in a prison cell, wrapped in a filthy thin blanket. His death was not publicly announced during Mao's lifetime.

Deng Xiaoping, who had been declared China's 'number two Khrushchev', was viewed as less guilty than Liu. He kept his Party membership, but was removed from all his positions. He was sent to do labour reform in a provincial tractor workshop.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Briefly describe what happened to the following people during the Cultural Revolution:
 - Wang Guangmei
 - Zhu De
 - Peng Dehuai
 - Deng Xiaoping
 - Liu Shaoqi
- 2 What did the Red Guards pledge to do?
- 3 How many people died during the factional fighting of 1966–1968?
- 4 What organisations resembled the Red Guards, but were instead formed for workers to engage in the Cultural Revolution?
- 5 What was the slogan of the Shanghai People's Commune and January Storm?
- 6 Explain the role these organisations played in restoring order:
 - three-in-one revolutionary committees
 - People's Liberation Army
 - Worker–Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams.

CHINA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION

MAIN REVOLUTIONARY FORCES



RED GUARDS



REBEL WORKERS



JIANG QING'S GANG OF FOUR



LIN BIAO

MAIN TARGETS OF THE REVOLUTION



INTELLECTUALS
AND TEACHERS

LIU SHAOQI



CULTURE



CUSTOMS

FOUR OLDS

CCP CADRES



DENG XIAOPING



PENG ZHEN



IDEAS



HABITS

INFLUENCES

BIG CHARACTER POSTERS



LITTLE RED
BOOK



'HAI RUI DISMISSED
FROM OFFICE'

TURNING POINTS



MAY 16 CIRCULAR

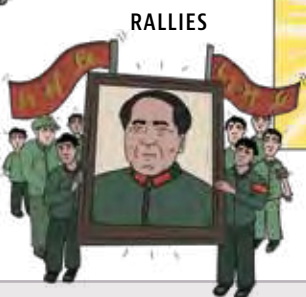
MAO'S GOOD SWIM



EXPERIENCES



STRUGGLE
SESSIONS



RALLIES



CULT OF MAO



JANUARY STORM



THE SIXTEEN POINTS

LIU SHAOQI, 1898–1969

KEY INDIVIDUAL



↑ Liu Shaoqi.

Liu Shaoqi: 'There is no such thing as a perfect leader either in the past or present, in China or elsewhere. If there is one, he is only pretending, like a pig inserting scallions [spring onions] into its nose in an effort to look like an elephant.'

Early life

Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-ch'i) was a Marxist theorist and a significant leader in the Chinese Communist Party. Like Mao, Liu was from a Hunanese peasant family. As a young man, he moved to Shanghai to study; he was drawn to socialist activism around this time. In 1921, the Comintern offered him a scholarship to study in Moscow, and he joined the Moscow branch of the CCP.

Labour activism and revolutionary work

Liu returned to China in 1922 and started working as a labour activist. His focus was organising railway and mine workers. Liu led strikes in Shanghai, Guangzhou and the Hubei area. His activism boosted the working-class militancy of the anti-imperialist movements, such as the 1925 May Thirtieth Incident. In recognition of his activism, Liu was elected Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Labour, and in 1927 he gained a place on the CCP Central Committee.

Liu went into hiding after the Shanghai Massacre, emerging at times to encourage strike activity and unionise workers. He worked closely with Zhou Enlai during this era. Liu was a military commissar during the Long March and the Civil War, and a close ally of Mao Zedong from the Yan'an days. During the Rectification campaigns he often gave lectures on Maoist revolutionary theory. By 1945 he was ranked third in the Party hierarchy, behind Mao and Zhu De.

Leadership in the PRC

After 1949, Liu was Vice-Chairman of the CCP and ranked second in the Politburo after Mao. He was also Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Liu was one of the leading theorists in the Chinese Communist movement. One of his books, a short text called *How to Be a Good Communist*, was required reading for all cadres and became popular among everyday readers.

Liu believed that the best way to run a political campaign was through organisation and formal processes, and he tended to favour Soviet-style approaches to economic planning. He became President of the PRC in 1959, after the Wuhan Plenum. Although he was expected to be Mao's successor, Liu fell out of favour with Mao during the recovery from the Great Leap Forward. Liu was responsible for winding back the practices of the Great Leap Forward, and used the CCP organisation to tackle problems of internal corruption. These actions put Mao offside—and the Chairman came to resent Liu's policies and influence.

↓ Liu Shaoqi and Mao.



Downfall

Liu Shaoqi was the main target of the Cultural Revolution, although this was not clear at first, and he soon fell from power:

- in 1967, Liu was removed from his positions
- in 1968, he was expelled from the Party
- in 1969 at the Ninth Party Congress, he was formally denounced and expelled 'once and for all'!

Liu Shaoqi and his family were subject to harassment and 'struggle' by both Red Guards and Rebels. Liu was often beaten during his denunciations.

Liu died in November 1969 from pneumonia and mistreatment. His wife, Wang Guangmei, and his children were not told until after Mao died in 1976. Liu Shaoqi was officially rehabilitated in 1980. Official memorial services were held in his honour throughout China. Today Liu is recognised in the PRC as 'a great Marxist and a great Proletarian revolutionary statesman and Proletarian theorist, one of the main leaders of the Party and the country, one of the founders of the state, and an important member of the first generation of the Party's leading group'.¹¹³



↑ Wang Guangmei and Liu Shaoqi in 1949.

KEY POINTS

- Liu was a leading labour activist and strike organiser in the early years of the Party.
- Liu rose in the ranks of the CCP leadership. He was a close ally of Mao and held the third-top position in the Party by the mid-1940s.
- He assisted in directing the Rectification campaigns.
- He served as Vice-Chairman of the CCP and Chairman of the NPC after the founding of the People's Republic.
- Liu became President in 1958 and was designated Mao's successor in 1961.
- He wrote influential works on Marxist theory and organisation.
- He was a leading figure in the post-Great Leap Forward recovery program.
- He lost favour with Mao during the Socialist Education Movement.
- Liu was targeted as 'China's Number One Khrushchev' and the 'biggest revisionist and capitalist roader' in the Cultural Revolution.
- He was purged from the Party in late 1968, and died in prison in 1969.

THE 'VICTORY' OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Mao Zedong: 'The job of the Great Cultural Revolution is not yet finished.'

THE NINTH PARTY CONGRESS KEY DEVELOPMENT

The Ninth Party Congress in 1969 was said to be the triumphant end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It was a so-called 'congress of unity and a congress of victory'. However, despite the Maoist hype, the Congress was a 'transitional' stage, rather than an ending.¹¹⁴ The Cultural Revolution Small Group was dissolved, and changes to the CCP leadership were apparent, as:

- veteran Party delegates were outnumbered by new comrades
- military men made up about 66 per cent of the Congress
- 70 to 80 per cent of regional Party cadres had been purged since 1966
- only nine out of twenty-three Politburo members retained their posts.¹¹⁵

According to historian Lee Feigon, Mao managed to 'infuse the government with a group of women and workers who, unlike their predecessors, looked, talked, and thought like the people they represented'.¹¹⁶ By the Ninth Congress, those in authority who were 'following the capitalist road' had been exposed and removed from power.

However, Mao did not outline a clear strategy for shaping the new society. He looked annoyed while giving his report, particularly when delegates leapt from their seats and shouted, 'Long live Chairman Mao!' For all the talk of unity and victory at the Ninth Party Congress, the nature of the triumph was hard to define. Mao conceded that 'the job of the Great Cultural Revolution is not yet finished'.¹¹⁷

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERIOD

Although the Ninth Congress declared that the Cultural Revolution was a success, those who had suffered during that era held bitter memories. Deng Xiaoping's son, Pufang, concluded: 'The Cultural Revolution was not just a disaster for the Party, for the country, but for the whole people. We were all victims, people of several generations. One hundred million people were its victims.'¹¹⁸ The post-Mao Chinese leadership affirmed that the Cultural Revolution was 'ten years of calamities'—a break in China's correct socialist development.

The general consensus among Western historians is that the movement produced little more than terror and suffering, leaving the People's Republic 'a vast prison of the mind' behind the bars of radical Maoist ideology.¹¹⁹ However, some scholars have questioned these assumptions and pointed to a number of positive legacies. Lee Feigon argues, 'The decade dominated by the Cultural Revolution left an enduring legacy of social justice, feminist ideals, and even many democratic principles that still resonate with many Chinese'.¹²⁰ Rebecca Karl also emphasises the democratic and empowering elements of the movement (see Source 9.31).

Despite its failure to protect individual rights and lack of formal voting procedures, historian Richard Kraus sees the Cultural Revolution as 'China's greatest experiment in participatory democracy'.¹²¹

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Describe the key decisions of the Ninth Party Congress regarding:

- Mao Zedong Thought
- Lin Biao
- Jiang Qing
- Liu Shaoqi
- The Cultural Revolution Small Group
- Membership of the Politburo
- The purpose of the Cultural Revolution

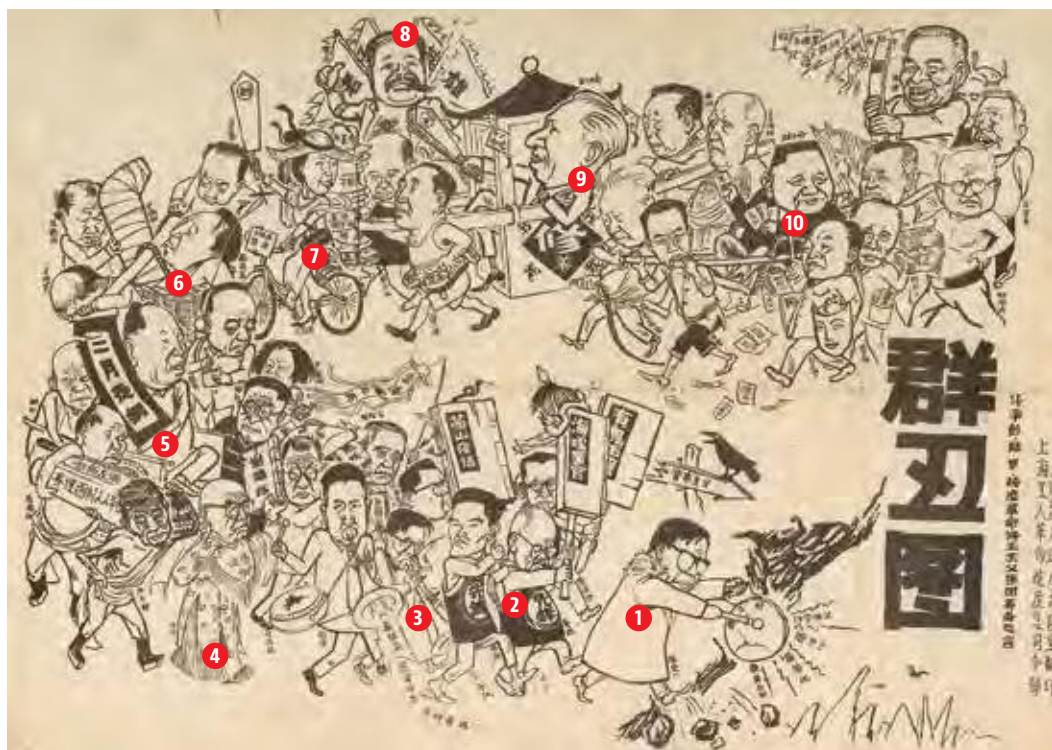
 **Source 9.31** Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 139.

Historian Rebecca Karl

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was an inspiration for many ... The idea and image of a people, apparently set free from constraint to practise mass politics, appealed to those, who were increasingly disaffected from the routines of life ... The perceived imaginative and creative exuberance [excitement and energy] of the Cultural Revolution—particularly in its early days—tapped into burgeoning desires everywhere for common people to seize politics from the dead hands of faraway bureaucrats.

Features of the source to note:

1. Lu Dingyi (陆定一), beating a drum. Lu was Minister of Culture and Head of the CCP Propaganda Department.
2. Wu Han (吴晗) and the other two members of the Three Family Village (a writers group who criticised Mao).
3. Vice-ministers of culture Xia Yan (夏衍) and Zhou Yang (周扬) blowing trumpets.
4. Playwright Tian Han (田汉), wearing a Beijing opera costume.
5. Mayor of Beijing Peng Zhen (彭真), riding a cart.
6. General Luo Ruiqing, carried in a basket due to his broken legs.
7. Wang Guangmei (Liu Shaoqi's wife), wearing 'bourgeois' attire and riding a bicycle.
8. General He Long.
9. Former president Liu Shaoqi and 10. General Secretary Deng Xiaoping, carried in sedan chairs by their supporters.



↑ Source 9.32 'A Crowd of Clowns', 1967.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Read one or more of the following memoirs, then discuss and compare them with your class or peers. Pay particular attention to the writer's experience of the Cultural Revolution.

Gao Yuan, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1987). Gao was a young middle-school student from a small regional town who became a Red Guard. He participated in many of the campaigns of the period.

Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (London: HarperCollins, 1991). Chang was the daughter of high-ranking CCP officials. She and her family suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution.

Ma Bo, *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995). Ma travelled to Mongolia as a Red Guard, where he experienced hardship.

Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (London: HarperCollins, 1993). From an upper-middle class background, Nien was a former employee of British Shell who was arrested and imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution.

Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993). Wu returned to China in the early 1950s and took up work as a professor of English. He was persecuted during the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 and continued to suffer hardships in the 1960s and 1970s.

Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). Yang's parents were CCP officials who worked in the Department for Foreign Affairs. Yang became a committed Red Guard. She later regretted many of her actions and spent a number of years living and working in the countryside.

Wei Yang Chao, *Red Fire: Growing Up During the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (USA: Avant Press, 2017). Wei Yang Chao's family were denounced and humiliated during the Cultural Revolution. He witnessed many aspects of the movement, but was unable to join the Red Guards.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES



↑ **Source 9.33** 'The renegade, traitor and scab Liu Shaoqi must forever be expelled from the Party!', 1968.



↑ **Source 9.34** Red Guard big-character poster (*dazibao*) depicting Liu Shaoqi as a capitalist in Confucian robes.

Using Sources 9.33 and 9.34 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the reasons why Liu Shaoqi was viewed negatively during the Cultural Revolution.
- 2 Explain what happened to Liu Shaoqi and other 'revisionists' during the Cultural Revolution.
- 3 Evaluate the impact of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution on the Chinese Communist Party up to 1969. Use evidence to support your response.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain why Mao Zedong initiated the Cultural Revolution.
- How did CCP Cadres respond to the Cultural Revolution? How were they challenged by it?
- Explain the role of Liu Shaoqi in opposing and falling victim to the Cultural Revolution.
- How did Jiang Qing influence the Cultural Revolution?
- Explain the significant experiences of students and Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.
- Explain the importance of the *Little Red Book* and the cult of Mao during the Cultural Revolution.
- Outline the experiences and consequences of the Cultural Revolution for intellectuals and teachers.

CHAPTER 9 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- In May 1966, Mao Zedong initiated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This was a complex and multi-faceted campaign that sought to rejuvenate socialist values and mobilise Chinese society against the CCP establishment. Different influences and evolving intentions shaped the Cultural Revolution.
- At Mao's urging the Central Committee endorsed the May 16 Circular. This declared that Peng Zhen's investigation into the Wu Han affair (the February Outline Report) had failed to expose 'bourgeois' and 'revisionist' influences in the CCP leadership. Radical Maoists, such as Jiang Qing, were given authority to encourage mass activism with the Cultural Revolution Small Group.
- Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping tried to moderate the Red Guard movement by sending Work Teams to schools and campuses.
- Students responded with enthusiasm to the ideals of the May 16 Circular. Student radicals began forming groups called Red Guards, which declared their support for Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Lacking definite guidance, the Red Guards attacked teachers and academics as they were the most recognisable authorities to challenge.
- In July 1966, Mao took a 'Good Swim' down the Yangzi River. This was a brilliant theatrical political stunt that delighted everyday Chinese and indicated that the Chairman intended to return to authority.
- In early August a CCP Plenum produced the Sixteen Points, which outlined the instructions and intentions of the Cultural Revolution. Lin Bao was declared Mao's 'closest comrade and successor', while Liu Shaoqi was demoted. Mao showed with his big-character poster that he wanted to fix the CCP leadership: 'Bombard the Headquarters!'
- A number of experiences and developments influenced the Red Guard movement. Huge rallies 'aroused the masses'; travelling to revolutionary sites and 'linking up' provided exciting opportunities for young people; and brutal and callous violence featured prominently in the movement. Red Guard 'struggle sessions' often involved ritualistic humiliations against their victims.
- The campaign against the Four Olds (old ideas, culture, customs and habits) led to unprecedented destruction of historical and cultural sites and artefacts.
- The cult of Mao grew and influenced everyday life with Maoist rituals and widespread propaganda. The *Little Red Book* was adopted as a text for all to consult, study and memorise.
- Jiang Qing gained considerable influence in cultural spheres. Works judged by Jiang as 'bourgeois', 'revisionist' or 'capitalist' were censored. Jiang sponsored the development of eight 'revolutionary model pieces', which offered a synthesis of influences and presented engaging Communist narratives.
- By 1967, CCP leaders were being targeted by Red Guards. A number of high-ranking Communists were put through 'struggle sessions'. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were accused of being the leading revisionist capitalist roaders. Liu was later denounced as a 'renegade, traitor and scab' and expelled from the Party. He died in prison in October 1969.
- The Red Guard movement descended into factionalism. Different groups, all committing themselves to 'die fighting to defend Chairman Mao', fought among each other in increasingly violent confrontations.
- Workers joined the Cultural Revolution as Rebels. Much like the Red Guards, the Rebels attacked Party and workplace authorities. They were also divided by factionalism. The high point of Rebel and Red Guard activism came with the Shanghai People's Commune. In the 'January Storm' that followed, radicals toppled provincial and city authorities from power.
- The radical movement to 'seize power' was short-lived. Mao and Zhou Enlai ordered the PLA to restore order. 'Three-in-one Revolutionary Committees' were encouraged as an alternative model of authority from the CCP. Worker-Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams took control of schools and university campuses to guide the Red Guards away from factionalism and fighting.
- The Ninth Party Congress was celebrated as a 'congress of victory and unity' and declared the victory of the Cultural Revolution. However, the nature of the victory was ill-defined, as Mao declared that the Cultural Revolution was 'unfinished'.

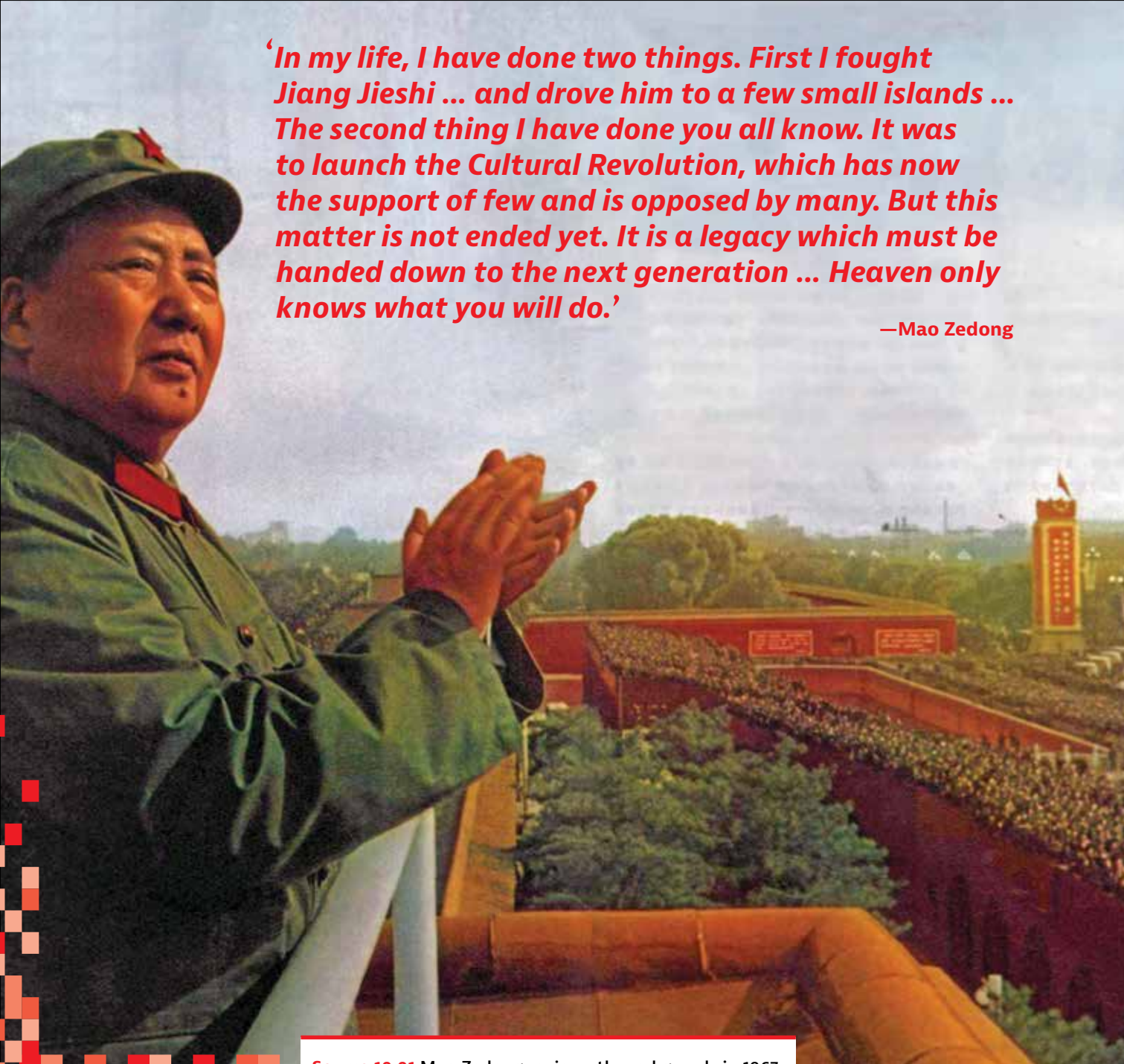


THE LAST EMPEROR

(1968–1976)

‘In my life, I have done two things. First I fought Jiang Jieshi ... and drove him to a few small islands ... The second thing I have done you all know. It was to launch the Cultural Revolution, which has now the support of few and is opposed by many. But this matter is not ended yet. It is a legacy which must be handed down to the next generation ... Heaven only knows what you will do.’

—Mao Zedong



Source 10.01 Mao Zedong reviews the red guards in 1967.

CHAPTER 10

Mao said that his two great accomplishments were the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the defeat of Jiang Jieshi. The Communist victory in the Civil War was an undisputed triumph, but the outcomes of the Cultural Revolution were less certain. Red Guard leader Nie Yuanzi later reflected on the unintended consequences:

Back then the eight hundred million people all shared the same brain. That is, Mao's brain. But through the Cultural Revolution, individuals found their own brain and were able to think independently. That was the greatest revolution and the biggest benefit.

These new understandings developed as order was restored. Young urban people were sent 'Up to the Mountains, and Down to the Countryside' to gain an understanding of rural life. However, most young people resented the experience.

By the early-to-mid-1970s, many Chinese people had become disillusioned with the Party leadership, and only pretended to follow its propaganda initiatives. The Party's credibility was damaged further by the fall of Lin Biao. As the Chairman entered his twilight years, an uneasy balance between moderate and radical influences in the CCP emerged.

Meanwhile, developments in the countryside demonstrated some of the more beneficial policies of the Cultural Revolution. Life in farming communities was improved by initiatives in rural healthcare, education and local industries. However, the Cleansing the Class Ranks campaign also saw some of the worst violence of the period. The death of Mao Zedong in 1976—accompanied by signs that the Mandate of Heaven was passing—marked the end of the first extraordinary chapter in the tale of China's Communist dynasty.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the consequences of the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' movement?
- In what ways did life in the countryside improve during the later years of the Cultural Revolution?
- What were the consequences of the 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' campaign?
- What were the significant aspects of Mao's personality and day-to-day life after the founding of the PRC?
- What led to the downfall of Lin Biao? How did ordinary people react to this news?
- What was significant about US President Richard Nixon's visit to China?
- What factors and personalities influenced Chinese politics in the early-to-mid-1970s?
- What were the immediate political consequences of the deaths of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in 1976?

KEY EVENTS

- **25 August 1970**
Lin Biao's ally, Chen Boda, arrested and purged following the Lushan Plenum
- **10 April 1971**
US table-tennis team visits China
- **13 September 1971**
Fall of Lin Biao
- **21 February 1972**
President Nixon arrives in Beijing
- **1 January 1974**
'Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao' campaign launched
- **8 January 1976**
Zhou Enlai dies
- **7 February 1976**
Hua Guofeng appointed Acting Premier
- **9 September 1976**
Mao Zedong dies

UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, DOWN TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Ma Bo: 'In 1968, a raging tide of youth, a raging tide of hot blood, a raging tide of innocence surged toward the countryside, the mountains, and the vast wilderness.'

KEY GROUP

The Cultural Revolution profoundly disrupted the schooling of many young Chinese people. Something new was needed to find useful work for this generation, and to continue their 'revolutionary education'.

Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside a CCP campaign in early 1968 that sent urban youths to live and work in rural areas

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao remarked that too much education makes a person stupid and that reading too many books was a bad thing. He told one delegation of young people: 'Rather than keeping your eyes open and listening to boring lectures, it is better to get some refreshing sleep. You don't have to listen to nonsense, you can rest your brain instead.'

➔ **Source 10.02** Cited in C.K. Macdonald, *Modern China* (Tonbridge: Basil Blackman, 1985), 51.

That 'something new' was the *Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside* movement. From 1968, this policy sent millions of young people to live with peasants in provincial villages.

Mao hoped the experience would give young people a deeper understanding of the revolution, and an appreciation for how common people lived: 'All people who have had some education ought to be very happy to work in the countryside if they get the chance. In our vast rural areas there is plenty of room for them to develop their talents to the full.'¹

Between 1968 and 1972, about 17 million young people were 'sent down to the villages'. Some went voluntarily—but others had to be forced. Liang Heng recalled the varied motivations of those leaving their homes in the cities:

Liang Heng describes the 'Up to the Mountains' campaign

The young people signed up with excitement for many reasons. Some went because they wanted to get away from home, others because they longed for something fresh and because there was nothing to do at school. Above all they went because Chairman Mao told them to go. They were told that the peasants were waiting to give them a warm welcome. Later, after the first groups had sent back reports of what things were really like, nobody wanted to go any more, but by then they no longer had any choice in the matter. I for one was really pleased to go, although I knew we were going to an extremely poor area. I imagined how we would plough, plant and eat what we grew and be able to respect ourselves again.

CULTURE SHOCK

Many young people got a shock when they arrived at their destinations. Ma Bo described the first political meeting he attended with local people in Inner Mongolia:

Ma Bo recalls his time in the countryside

All those newspaper reports we'd read about student workers being greeted as heroes were a real crock [lie] ... for the minute the meeting was called to order, the poor and lower-middle class herdsmen began to giggle, goof off, brag, hold spitting contests, or stretch out to catch up on their sleep, clutching the grimmest 'Little Red Books' I'd ever seen. Once again the newspapers had fed us a crock.

Jung Chang was mind-numbingly bored by the uneducated village women and resented their narrow-mindedness: 'I knew their restricted horizon was not their fault, but nonetheless I found their conversations unbearable ... I did not try to get to know them, or to get on with them.'²

➔ **Source 10.03** Ma Bo, *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 12.

Many peasants were equally unimpressed with the kids from the city: ‘Chairman Mao said we were supposed to learn from the peasants, but the peasants didn’t want anything to do with us. We couldn’t understand their accents anyway. They thought we were lazy. They blamed us for eating all their food without earning it.’³ Urban students were extra mouths to feed—and they were not much good at farmwork. The harsh conditions of rural China made going to the countryside a trying experience for most urban youth.

Mr Lin recalls his time in the countryside:

In August 1968, we were sent to the mountainous area ‘to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants,’ as Chairman Mao called it. It was a tough time for us. The hardships we suffered were beyond words. I went to a mountain village. There was no electricity there. We used kerosene lamps. Every month we had to carry the unhulled rice down to the foot of the mountain to be processed and then carry the rice up to the mountain. It took about two hours each way. Mosquitoes were rampant. I got malaria, which almost killed me. In summer time, when we came out of the paddy rice field, our legs would be covered with leeches. In winter time, we had to break the ice with bare feet and step into the freezing muddy field. However, we did learn a lot. We would never have known the hardship of farmers if we had not settled down in the countryside. We need to improve the life of farmers.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the later years of the Cultural Revolution, an army recruit from north China named Zhang Tieshan drew a big zero on his university entrance exam paper. He added this explanation: ‘To make revolution, one need not answer the above questions’. Zhang became an instant hero throughout China, as he was seen to symbolise the spirit of the Cultural Revolution.

REFLECTION AND CRITICAL THINKING

Young people sent to the countryside and mountains came to realise the bleakness of peasant life. This led many to ask critical questions about the new Communist society. According to Liang Heng: ‘The peasants’ day-to-day life was miserably cruel. Where was the “Liberation” from suffering that the Revolution was meant to have given them?’⁴

Many former Red Guards came to see themselves as a ‘lost generation’, and resented the way they were being treated: ‘If intellectuals were deemed to be the “stinking old ninths,” members of the lowest social caste, then we were “stinking old tenths,” since we were even lower on the social ladder ... Life was bitter—bitter and meaningless’.⁵

Chairman Mao’s ‘little soldiers’ had been cast down into the wilderness from the top of the revolutionary hierarchy. However, the remote regions of China did give students space to think independently and expand their intellectual horizons. When they were not working, students discussed their experiences and read banned literature.⁶

MAY SEVENTH SCHOOLS

The ‘Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside’ movement took place at the same time as a rural education program for urban Party cadres called **May Seventh cadre schools**. These were essentially farms and industrial enterprises where cadres would carry out heavy labour for six to thirty-six months.⁷ Up to a third of staff from some Party organisations attended at any one time.

Mao believed the ‘students’ of the May Seventh schools would:

- appreciate the toil of ordinary people by working with their hands rather than their heads
- enrich their life experience by spending time in the countryside.

However, few CCP officials enjoyed their time doing hard manual labour.

Source 10.05 ‘Walk the road of the May 7 cadre schools to persevere in continuing the revolution’, 1976.



KEY GROUP

May Seventh cadre schools labour camps for Communist officials, founded during the Cultural Revolution. Study of Mao Zedong Thought was combined with rigorous physical work

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 10.04 and 10.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Compare and contrast the poster (Source 10.06) with the experiences of Mr Lin (Source 10.04) during the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' movement.
- 2 Referring to both sources, explain the experiences and challenges faced by young Chinese people sent to rural areas by the Communist Party in the late 1960s.
- 3 Analyse the consequences of the Cultural Revolution for students and Red Guards. Use evidence to support your response.

➔ **Source 10.06** 'Educated youth must go to the countryside to receive re-education from the poor and lower-middle peasants!', 1969.

Mao had hoped for positive outcomes from the May Seventh schools. Chinese-Australian historian Mobo Gao argues the schools were 'intended to create new subjectivity' as the 'social elite would experience physical labour so that they would be able to understand and empathize with the reality of life of the majority of the people. It was meant to be an approach to a new way of governing and governance.'⁸ The May Seventh schools were meant to keep city officials humble and remind them of the values of the Yan'an days.



IMPROVEMENTS IN RURAL LIFE

KEY GROUP

During the early 1970s, the Maoist leadership also improved the educational needs of ordinary country people. Although schooling in urban areas was disrupted during the Cultural Revolution, the number of schools in village areas increased considerably—particularly where there had been few schools in the past. In 1976, there were fifteen times more rural junior-middle schools than there had been in 1965.⁹ The national education system aimed to give a limited education to a greater number of people. This benefited some students and disadvantaged others, as it resulted in:

- higher enrolments in primary schools
- reductions in the length of middle-school and college courses.¹⁰

Historian Mobo Gao recalls attending a 2007 lecture on the Cultural Revolution by Chinese historian Sun Ge. When Sun finished her talk, a student in the audience asked, 'What is your family background?' Sun explained that she was the daughter of intellectuals who suffered during the Cultural Revolution. The student replied, 'So no wonder. My father used to be the production team head in my village. He still recalls the Cultural Revolution with fond memories because that was his most brilliant years. Those were years when the farmers felt proud and elated.'¹¹ As old Party structures came under strain during the Cultural Revolution, the election of village leaders became more independent. The peasantry gained greater political autonomy and were able to participate in economic and social decisions.¹²

Increased government investment in the agricultural sector boosted production, as did support for local, small-scale enterprises. Rural industries produced farm

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao scorned the Ministry of Health, which he accused of serving only the urban middle class and the Party elite. He dubbed the health profession the 'Ministry of Urban Gentlemen's Health'.

tools, chemical fertiliser, pesticides, irrigation equipment, cement and parts for motors. Regional machinery companies gave rural people greater access to basic tractors and diesel pumps during the later years of the Cultural Revolution—which increased farmers' efficiency.¹³

'BAREFOOT DOCTORS'

Barefoot doctors were another initiative during the Cultural Revolution. They were everyday people who were trained in basic medicine and sent to the countryside to treat peasants. Barefoot doctors were not the greatest medical practitioners—but they did help diagnose and treat minor ailments and common diseases. More serious problems were referred to clinics.¹⁴

Barefoot doctors were cheap to train, and most were dedicated idealists who really cared for their patients. Through this scheme, millions of peasants received semi-regular health checks. Also, the price and availability of basic medicines improved during the Cultural Revolution. Historian Mobo Gao argues that the scheme provided a 'fairly effective healthcare system' in areas not previously catered for.¹⁵ In Mao's view: 'The type of doctor we need in the villages doesn't have to be so talented. They'd still be better than witch-doctors. Besides, this is the only type of doctor the villages can afford.'¹⁶

Mao had a poor understanding of modern medicine and preferred traditional approaches. He criticised the Chinese medical profession for researching exotic ailments rather than common complaints. However, Mao's preference had some positive outcomes, as traditional Chinese medicine—including acupuncture—and modern medical procedures were combined during the Cultural Revolution with good results.¹⁷ Because of efforts by the Communist government, the average Chinese person's life expectancy increased dramatically:

- 1949: 35 years
- 1957: 57 years
- 1975: 63 years.

While the great political battles of the Cultural Revolution were waged in the cities, and involved students, intellectuals and workers, real social and economic gains were made in the countryside by the peasantry.¹⁸

'CLEANSING THE CLASS RANKS'

Most villages were not touched by the upheavals of 1966–1967, which took place in cities and larger towns. However, violence spread to the countryside in 1967–1968 with the 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' movement.

This was first major campaign launched by the new Revolutionary Committees. It targeted anyone seen as an opponent of the new authorities, regardless of whether their opposition was real or imagined. Those at fault were broadly defined as 'bad people'. As Zhou Enlai explained: 'The bad people you have to drag out aren't just capitalist roaders, but bad people inside your ranks as well'.¹⁹

The initial focus of the movement was members of local governments and cadres. Family histories and personal files were investigated; the interrogations that followed were intense and often violent. Local disputes were inflamed by rumours about conspiracies and 'hidden enemies'. In particular, 'class enemies' and former landlords came under attack.

Barefoot doctors a rudimentary healthcare scheme introduced during the Cultural Revolution where ordinary people were trained in basic medicine and sent to the countryside to treat peasants



Source 10.07 A 'barefoot doctor' using acupuncture to treat a brigade worker.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Cleansing the Class Ranks movement, people living in Hong Kong were shocked when they saw hundreds of bloated bodies floating down the Pearl River from mainland China.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF CHAIRMAN MAO

Mao Zedong: 'I graduated from the University of Outlaws.'

The last emperor?

After Mao Zedong became leader of the People's Republic, his everyday life became like that of an emperor. He lived in an updated Forbidden City in the Zhongnanhai compound, with bodyguards, secretaries and other personal attendants at his call. The Chairman was kept under close watch by special service troops and was subject to the highest levels of security. This meant that he was largely cut off from everyday people.

His food came from special secure farms, and was checked for poison by a personal taster before being served. He preferred Hunanese cuisine cooked with plenty of pepper and chilli, particularly stewed pork. When he challenged dinner guests to try the hottest dishes, Mao would explain, 'If it's not spicy, it's not revolutionary!'²⁰

Ordinary Chinese people often treated Mao like an emperor, such as wishing him 10,000 years of life. One peasant claimed: 'Chairman Mao had wealth and greatness written all over his face. He had the look of a real emperor, but he was better than an emperor. No emperor ever saved the poor.'²¹ Historian W.J.F. Jenner argues that this was a natural reaction born out of tradition, as the 'nature of the culture required an emperor ... China cannot manage without an emperor'.²² According to Jenner's argument, the legacy of emperors was part of Chinese culture and the people readily accepted the rule of an autocratic leader who had absolute power. Over time Mao became used to thinking and acting like a modern-day Son of Heaven.

Mao's manners

Mao could be very abrupt in his manner and would explode in anger if things were not to his liking. Visiting officials, colleagues and his personal staff found him unpredictable and difficult to read.²³ For his part, Mao stopped caring what others thought about him. The Chairman was notorious for commenting aloud on people's appearances:

- 'She is already more than seventy years old!'
- 'He's very tall!'
- 'All are young!'

DID YOU KNOW?

Like many of the emperors before him, Mao was paranoid about conspiracies. He had reason to be—officials had secretly installed listening devices in his train so that they could respond quickly to his desires. Mao purged several staff when he became aware of the listening devices.

Mao made no effort to hide his crude peasant manners, even flaunting them among more cultured colleagues. He exhibited his 'rural personal habits' as 'an expression of political purity'.²⁴ Mao was known to:

- slurp his soup loudly and burp after dinner, even in the presence of foreign dignitaries²⁵
- fart unashamedly and loudly in the presence of others
- encourage his bodyguards to fart because he found it very funny.

Mao contemplated metaphysics and philosophy as he grew older. He would ask visitors, 'What will Beijing be like 10,000 years from now?'²⁶ Some found his poetic manner of expression confusing, yet others saw it as a mark of his brilliance. His bold calligraphy was said to reflect his personality. Historian Harrison Salisbury suggests Mao's grand ventures and 'distance' from reality were caused by his addiction to sleeping pills and other drugs: 'The taint of opium could be suspected in the dreamlike quality of Mao's speculations and ideas, remote from reality, his boundless flights of fancy that were transmuted in one form or another into domestic or foreign policy'.²⁷

Literary and historical influences

Mao had no desire for costly personal possessions; his bed quilt was patched, and he preferred wearing the same old shoes and suits. Mao's chief interest was reading. His bedroom, which doubled as a study, was lined with books. The other feature was a huge bed in which the Chairman would sprawl, surrounded by his favourite literary works. Mao was drawn to tales of emperors, rebels and famous generals. He knew Chinese history intimately, and historical records were likely to have had a far greater influence on his thinking than drugs.

Mao was particularly fond of drawing parallels between himself and Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BCE), with whom he felt an affinity. Mao even boasted that he had outdone Qin in terms of brutality.²⁸ Reflecting on the Anti-Rightist Campaign, Mao asked, 'So what's the big deal about Qin Shi Huang? He only buried 460 Confucians alive; well, we've buried 46,000 ... We're a hundred times greater than Qin Shi Huang.'²⁹ Mao noted that Emperor Qin had also made significant contributions to Chinese civilisation. Mao was mindful of his own place in China's history. At the time of the Lushan Plenum, Peng Dehuai said that Mao exemplified the spirit of China's Imperial leaders: 'The first emperor of any dynasty was always severe and brilliant'.³⁰

Mao identified with rebellious characters from Chinese literature, especially the peasant rebel turned emperor, Liu Bang, and the Monkey King from *Journey to the West*. Once, while talking about the contradictory nature of his personality, Mao said that he had 'the air of a king and the wiles of a monkey'.³¹

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao hated protocol and ritual, and preferred to do things differently each time. While on retreat in the countryside, Mao would make a point of going for walks in the hills and always returning by a different route.

Mao's concubines

The Saturday night dance party was the high point of Zhongnanhai entertainment. Bands would play as Chinese leaders and their colleagues danced the night away. Zhou Enlai was reputed to be the best dancer. The dances also provided Mao with the opportunity to indulge in a more depraved Imperial habit: meeting and seducing young women. The attendants who served on Mao's train were another source of his girlfriends.³² One of Mao's favourite concubines, Zhang Yufeng (Chang Yu-feng), rose up the ranks from servicing cabins to attending to the Chairman in his bedroom.

Mao took a Daoist approach in his indulgences with women, 'justifying his libertine ways [lacking restraint or moral principles] as gathering *yin*, the female essence, to replenish his *yang*, in a millennial tradition of conserving male potency and health'.³³ Mao would sometimes sleep with three or more women at one time.³⁴ Mao's doctor Li Zhisui was 'nauseated' by Mao's sexual habits: 'Mao's sexual indulgences, his Daoist illusions, his sully of so many naïve and innocent young women, were almost more than I could bear'.³⁵

Mao dismissed much of Dr Li's advice. He once boasted to a visitor: 'I only follow half of what the doctor says and I expect him to follow me in the other half'.³⁶ Mao was a chainsmoker and his personal hygiene was irregular at best. The Chairman's teeth were green and black, as he preferred to rinse his mouth with tea rather than use a toothbrush.³⁷ He said: 'A tiger never brushes his teeth'. Mao loved to swim and spent much of his time in pools built specially for his use. That was the only time he had a bath. During winter he preferred to be rubbed down with a hot towel.

Without hair, without sky

In a 1970 interview with American journalist Edgar Snow, Mao described himself as '*Hé shang dǎ sǎn*' ('a monk holding an umbrella'). Mao's interpreter was a young woman unfamiliar with the works of Confucius; she translated this wrongly as 'a lonely monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella'.³⁸ At the time, Snow thought Mao was speaking of his commitment to simplicity and self-denial. However, '*Hé shang dǎ sǎn*' was only half of an ancient couplet, the other being '*wú fǎ wú tiān*' ('without hair, without sky'). This is the equivalent of 'without law, without god'. The phrase is also a pun, as the Chinese words for 'hair' and 'law' are similar. What Mao intended to say was that he was a law unto himself—a rebel or outlaw not bound by earthly or divine principles. 'I insist on being myself!' he once told his chief bodyguard.³⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao loved to swim in fast-flowing rivers and rough ocean surf. This was a cause of great concern for his bodyguards. After one vigorous 'battle' against raging waves, Mao declared: 'That's what I call a worthy opponent!'

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Read about Mao's private life, then discuss the following points as a class or in small groups.

- 1 Mao's secretary described the Cultural Revolution as 'Karl Marx plus Emperor Qin'. To what extent can the Cultural Revolution be seen as a combination of Imperial and Communist influences?
- 2 Which description fits Mao Zedong best: 'a lonely monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella' or 'a monk holding an umbrella without hair, without sky'? Justify your thoughts.
- 3 Which aspects of Mao's character do you find surprising, contradictory, interesting or shocking?

Richard Curt Kraus describes Western views of the Cultural Revolution

China is stuck with Mao, for better or worse, as more dilemmas arise about how to deal with the Cultural Revolution. Beyond China, the West has yet to come to terms with the Cultural Revolution. As the West wrestles with China's rise in the international community, the Cultural Revolution remains a useful and perhaps irresistible propaganda point. An imagined Western moral superiority is clarified by a typical and mistaken Cultural Revolution narrative ... Kicking Mao's corpse strengthens the position of globalism, proves that socialism does not work, and reveals China as unstable and dangerous ... Western reporters sometimes quickly identify almost anyone of a certain age as a "Cultural Revolution survivor." ... Everyone becomes a victim ... It feeds a myth of holocaust and valorizes a Western self-perception as China's saviours ... [which is] strengthened by an influential series of memoirs from recent exiles. Typically a youth from a privileged family gets caught up in a Maoist storm but is rescued by a scholarship to a Western university ... These memoirs are often very informative, well-written, and beloved by many readers ... But these memoirs subtly flatter Western readers' sense of superiority as they oversimplify China.

The result, as documented by Chinese-American historian Yang Su, was collective killings that resulted in approximately 1.5 million deaths.⁴⁰ These executions were carried out by peasants or village militia—sometimes using farm implements and torture—and were often incredibly brutal. Sometimes whole families were killed,⁴¹ and there were instances of cannibalism.

Some people used the campaign to settle old scores with their personal enemies, and many victims were ordinary people with no immediate connection to political activity. Rather than Red Guards, the Cleansing the Class Ranks movement saw 'neighbours killing neighbours'.⁴² The province of Guangxi was affected by a wave of mass killings. In July–August 1967, more than 3600 people were killed in eleven days. Children and the elderly were among the victims, and 176 whole households were exterminated.⁴³ Many of the deaths were shockingly gruesome. What made the movement even more terrifying was that anyone could be a victim.

Local cadres were warned by officials against being too violent, and there was no directive endorsing mass killing. The PLA was sent to some regions to intervene and restore order,⁴⁴ but local hatreds were beyond Beijing's control. As historian Yang Su puts it: "The tragedy of collective killings during the Cultural Revolution was rooted in this paradox of state sponsorship and state failure".⁴⁵

The Cleansing the Class Ranks purges were less visible than the actions of the Red Guard movement and lacked their theatrics, but were still 'the most violent aspect of the Cultural Revolution'.⁴⁶

 **Source 10.08** Richard Curt Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 116–117.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How many young people were sent to live in the countryside during the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' campaign?
- 2 List three aspects of this experience that led many young people to question their revolutionary idealism.
- 3 Briefly explain the intentions of the 'Up to the Mountains' movement and the May Seventh cadre schools.
- 4 Outline three or more ways that the lives of peasants improved in the later years of the Cultural Revolution.
- 5 Briefly explain the consequences of the 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' movement.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Using Kraus' interpretation (Source 10.08) and your own knowledge, discuss the challenges historians face in making a balanced evaluation of the Cultural Revolution.

DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups, then with the rest of your class. In each case, find at least one piece of evidence to support your viewpoint.

- What positive developments were there for different groups of Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution?
- To what extent were the 'educational' aims of the May Seventh cadre schools and 'Up to the Mountains' movement a success? What were the unintended outcomes of these campaigns?
- To what extent does the term 'lost generation' accurately describe the people who grew up during the Cultural Revolution?
- More people died during the 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' movement, so why do you think most accounts of the Cultural Revolution pay more attention to campaigns by the Red Guard?

THE FALL OF LIN BIAO

TURNING POINT

Lin Biao: ‘Some people are creating trouble ... They are ambitious conspirators.’

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS

The unity of the Ninth Party Congress was short-lived. Party factions started bickering with each other, which gave Mao further headaches, and maybe even heartache.

Lin Biao wanted to strengthen his privileged place at the Chairman’s court—despite being Mao’s successor and closest comrade. Lin had good reason to doubt his position. Mao was relying more on Zhou Enlai during the period of Party restructure and rebuilding. Mao had also begun to question the authority he had entrusted to Lin and the army. In Mao’s view, the military had been too harsh in its treatment of cadres during the 1966–1969 purges.⁴⁷

In March 1970, Mao shared his views on constitutional questions with fellow leading Communists. These ideas formed the agenda for the forthcoming Fourth National People’s Congress. Mao wanted to revise the constitution to abolish the post of President, which had been vacant since the dismissal of Liu Shaoqi. Mao did not want the position himself and felt it was not essential for a revolutionary state.⁴⁸

No one objected to the proposal, and the matter seemed settled when the Politburo and Central Committee gave their approval. However, on 11 April 1970, Lin Biao phoned several other leaders and suggested the presidency be retained and filled by Mao. A hastily convened Politburo backed Lin’s proposal—but Mao rejected it. Mao explained: ‘I cannot do this job again; this suggestion is inappropriate’.⁴⁹ Mao had told Lin on six previous occasions that he saw no need for the presidency. Mao’s refusal in April was intended to be final, and the matter was resolved—or so he thought.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lin Biao once told his wife that he aspired to be ‘Engels to Marx, Stalin to Lenin, and Jiang Jieshi to Sun Yixian’.

THE LUSHAN PLENUM

On 23 August 1970, a Central Committee plenum convened at Lushan to review the constitutional matters discussed earlier in the year. The meeting exposed the ongoing intrigue and fighting among the leadership factions.

Towards the end of the first day, Lin again proposed that the office of President be retained, and that it should be held by Mao. Lin was trying to flatter Mao and carry out his wishes by going beyond Mao’s publicly stated position. This tactic was known as ‘working toward the Chairman’ and was often used by Mao’s associates. However, Lin was also trying to secure his own authority. If Mao rejected the post but was convinced that the office should be retained, Lin would be the likely candidate.⁵⁰

Lin had made a serious blunder, forgetting that Mao was a guerrilla tactician in both war and politics. Mao said that the Party could retain the post if it wanted—but he would not be President. The Party could not force Mao to take on the role and Lin couldn’t nominate himself as President, as that would have been an insult to the Chairman. Thus the presidential issue was finished.

THE FALL OF CHEN BODA

Further factional struggles took place around the issue of Mao’s ideological brilliance. Lin proposed that the constitution recognise that Mao had developed Marxism–Leninism ‘with

DID YOU KNOW?

The Chen Boda episode is an example of what the Chinese call 'killing a chicken to frighten the monkeys'. According to folklore, a man once had a group of monkeys. He was troubled by their increasingly mischievous ways, so he gathered them together and killed a chicken in their presence. He warned them, 'If you don't behave, you will share the fate of the chicken'. After that, the monkeys did as they were told.

DID YOU KNOW?

Chen Boda later described the experience of being denounced at Lushan as like being 'hit on the head with an atom bomb'.

genius, creativity and comprehensively'.⁵¹ This phrase featured in Lin Biao's foreword to the *Little Red Book*, but Mao wanted to delete it from the old constitution.

Zhang Chunqiao knew Mao's view on the matter, and opposed Lin's amendment. Chen Boda, who was conspiring with Lin, then dropped a bombshell. He declared that a 'certain person' objecting to the term 'genius' in the constitution was heading a campaign to discredit Mao Zedong Thought. Chen named Zhang as the guilty party, and accused 'certain counter-revolutionaries' of being 'delighted' that Mao had rejected the presidency. 'That caused pandemonium', writes historian Philip Short.⁵²

On 25 August 1970, Mao called a full meeting of the Central Committee and subjected Chen Boda to withering criticism. Chen was denounced for 'rumour-mongering', 'launching a surprise attack' and 'trying to blast Lushan to pieces'.⁵³ Chen had been Mao's speechwriter and ideological partner since the Yan'an days. But despite this he was charged with being an 'anti-Party element, sham Marxist, careerist and plotter'.⁵⁴ Chen was taken away and imprisoned. Mao knew that a direct attack on Lin Biao would cause trouble with the military, so he allowed Chen to take a metaphorical 'bullet' for Lin. But Lin was by no means out of the firing line.

THE DEMISE OF LIN BIAO

Mao spent the rest of 1970 and early 1971 undermining Lin Biao by:

- purging military officials immediately below Lin
- appointing men he trusted to strategic roles in the military
- securing control of the armed forces in the Beijing region.

Lin knew he had fallen from Mao's favour. He became chronically depressed and troubled by his mental health. In March 1971, his credibility was ruined when he refused to make a self-criticism.⁵⁵

PROJECT 571

However, not all of Lin Biao's supporters were prepared to accept his fall. Lin's son, Lin Ligu (Lin Li-kuo; known to family and friends as 'Tiger'), was a high-ranking officer in the air force and had friends with access to military equipment.

It is quite clear that Tiger Lin hated Mao:

Today he [Mao] uses this force to attack that force; tomorrow he uses that force to attack this force. Today he uses sweet words and honeyed talk to those whom he entices, and tomorrow he puts them to death for some fabricated crime ... He is paranoid and a sadist.⁵⁶

Lin Ligu mocked Mao's apparent Imperial manner: 'He is not a true Marxist-Leninist. Rather he is the greatest feudal tyrant in Chinese history ... wrapping himself in the guise of a Marxist-Leninist and behaving like the First Emperor'.⁵⁷

Tiger Lin recruited a number of fellow officers and conspired to kill Mao Zedong. (It is even possible he had the support of Moscow.) Tiger's plan was called 'Project 571'—in Chinese, these numbers sound similar to 'armed uprising'. In the code words of Project 571:

- 'joint fleet' described the conspirators
- 'the Chief' was Lin Biao
- **B-52** was Chairman Mao.

Elaborate schemes were drawn up for bringing down 'B-52'. From August to mid-September 1971 Mao was touring several provinces by train. The 'joint fleet' decided

B-52 an American bomber that can drop explosives from great heights

the best plan was to attack the Chairman's train. This could involve fighter-bomber strikes, flamethrower attacks, exploding fuel depots, detonating a bridge as Mao's train crossed—or shooting Mao with a pistol.

However, Project 571 failed to launch. Word got out that Mao's security was at risk and his train raced safely back to Beijing. Meanwhile, Tiger flew a small jet to the seaside resort of Beidaiha, where his parents and sister were staying. He arrived on 13 September, and planned to bundle up his family and fly to Guangzhou, where he hoped to establish a rival Party headquarters.⁵⁸

As Tiger was explaining the plan to his family, his sister Doudou—who detested him—suspected that her father was being kidnapped. At 10 pm, Doudou told the CCP security police about Tiger's plan—and a mad dash for the airport began.

THE DEATH OF LIN BIAO

Tiger, Lin Biao, Lin's wife and several associates sped away in an armoured limousine, pursued by PLA officers in a convoy of jeeps. Zhou Enlai issued orders to halt air flights out of Beidaiha. The Lins scrambled into Tiger's partly refuelled jet and took off in a northerly direction with minutes to spare. His destination had changed to the USSR, as it was closer than Guangzhou.

Mao was asked whether the PLA should shoot down Lin's jet. Mao replied: 'Rain will fall, widows will remarry. What can we do? Let them go.'⁵⁹ According to his doctor, 'Mao's face collapsed when Zhou Enlai told him that Lin Biao had fled'.⁶⁰ Over the next few weeks Mao fell into a deep depression. Around 2 am on 13 September 1971, the jet carrying Lin Biao and his followers ran out of fuel and crashed in Outer Mongolia. Everyone on board was killed. When Mao was told of Lin's fate, he said: 'That's what you get for running away'.⁶¹

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIN'S DOWNFALL

Lin Biao's death was not made public straight away. Despite this, denunciations of Lin began to circulate among Party officials. Lin's absence at key rallies made it clear that something was wrong. By 1972, the press was regularly alluding to the purge of 'a swindler of the Liu Shaoqi type', while Zhou Enlai made indirect references to a 'renegade and a traitor'. The 'traitor' was finally named and exposed in August 1973, at the Tenth Party Congress—although by then many people had guessed it was Lin.

Lin Biao's fall shocked senior officials. It also had a profound effect on how the leaders of the Cultural Revolution—and Party members in general—were viewed by everyday people. Historian Frederick Teiwes argues that it 'had a disorienting effect among ordinary Communists and cadres, intellectuals, and social groups more broadly'.⁶² How could a man who had been so close to Mao turn out to be a criminal and backstabber?

The Lin Biao affair undermined the credibility of the Party in the eyes of the people. Many people were disillusioned after decades of Maoist propaganda. According to one peasant: 'I had felt faithful to Mao, but that Lin Biao stuff affected my thinking'. A young student sent down to the countryside recalled that when 'Liu Shaoqi was dragged down we'd been very supportive ... But the Lin Biao affair provided us with a major lesson. We came to see that the leaders up there could say that something is round; tomorrow, that it's flat. We lost faith in the system'.⁶³

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Which of these statements about the 1970 Lushan Plenum are true?
 - Lin Biao was promoted by Mao.
 - Lin Biao and Chen Boda were plotting against Mao.
 - The issue of whether there should be a President and obscure ideological references revealed factional infighting.
 - Mao Zedong was reinstated as President of the PRC.
- Which significant figure in CCP was purged following the Lushan Plenum?
- Who was largely responsible for Project 571?
- How did Mao react to the literal and metaphorical fall of Lin Biao?
- What were the consequences of the Lin Biao affair for everyday people?

'PING-PONG DIPLOMACY' AND PRESIDENT NIXON

Richard Nixon: *'We do not want 800,000,000 living in angry isolation. We want contact.'*

DID YOU KNOW?

The only country in the European socialist bloc that remained on good terms with China after the Sino-Soviet split was Albania. Thus the biggest and smallest Communist nations developed a close partnership. Few Westerners were seen in China from the mid-1960s to early 1970s, so it was usually assumed that anyone of European appearance must be Albanian.

↓ Statue of 'Ping-Pong Mao'.



Soon after his 1969 election, US President Richard Nixon raised the possibility of opening ambassadorial talks with the PRC. Nixon hoped to undermine the influence of the USSR, and put pressure on North Vietnam.

In 1970, Mao and Zhou Enlai began to show interest in Nixon's plans. Increasing tensions between China and the Soviet Union in late 1969 made the possibility of communication with the United States a useful strategy. The Chinese leadership was looking for:

- greater flexibility in its diplomacy
- increased international standing.

US support was crucial if the PRC was to replace Jiang Jieshi's Republic of China (Taiwan) as the Chinese representative to the United Nations Security Council. However, easing US-China relations was not straightforward, as the two nations had been bitter enemies since the Korean War. The Chinese therefore needed to approach the US through unusual channels.

Edgar Snow

On 1 October 1970, US journalist Edgar Snow was photographed alongside Mao during a parade at Tiananmen Square. This was an extraordinary honour, especially for a foreigner who happened to be American. However, the symbolism was missed by the Americans. US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger later remarked, 'Unfortunately, what they conveyed was so oblique that [we] ... completely missed the point'.⁶⁴

Mao hinted to Snow that he was open to the idea of a visit by Nixon, and was pleased that Nixon had been elected US President. Mao mistakenly believed that Snow was a CIA secret agent. Snow was actually a socialist—and gave no such 'report' to Washington.

Ping-pong diplomacy

The game of 'ping-pong' opened US-China relations, which is how it came to be known as 'ping-pong diplomacy'. In March–April 1971, China's top table-tennis team travelled to Japan for an international competition. One day a member of the US team missed his ride to the venue and decided—much to the shock of those on board—to catch a lift on the Chinese bus.

Overcoming their surprise and limited English, some of the Chinese players started talking to the young American. In turn, he mentioned that he would love to travel to China. The comment was reported to political minders, and eventually reached Mao and Zhou.

On 10 April 1971, China invited the US table-tennis team to China for a series of exhibition matches.⁶⁵ The US team was honoured with a reception in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, hosted by Zhou Enlai. Zhou declared that the tour marked a 'recommencement of our friendship'. The visit made front-page news in the USA, and was received warmly by the American public.

A flurry of communications was exchanged between the Chinese leadership and a small group of US officials trusted by Nixon. In July 1971, Kissinger made a secret visit to China and held negotiations with Zhou Enlai. On 15 July 1971, Nixon announced Kissinger's diplomatic triumph on US television: Nixon would become the first US President to visit China.

Relations improved further on 25 October 1971, when China gained a seat on the UN Security Council at the expense of Taiwan.⁶⁶ Chinese efforts to make contact with the USA also formed the backdrop to the Lin Biao affair, as Lin was against negotiating with 'imperialists'. Lin was unable to oppose the change in diplomacy, which showed his declining influence in the Party.

Nixon's visit to China

On 21 February 1972, President Nixon arrived in Beijing for what he described as 'the week that changed the world'. Mao had been unwell, and had to practise standing up and sitting down in the week before the visit. According to historian Jonathan Fenby: 'The meeting was an Imperial audience, not a negotiation.'⁶⁷

The Americans paid Mao many compliments: they praised his written accomplishments and pointed out that his leadership had 'moved a nation'. In return, Mao said that one of Nixon's books was 'not bad'. Mao joked with Nixon, 'I voted for you during your election' and said that he liked negotiating with 'rightists' as they tended to be straightforward in their dealings.⁶⁸

Kissinger later wrote about Mao, 'I have met no one ... who so distilled raw, concentrated will power'.⁶⁹ Mao signalled an end to the audience when he was pressed to discuss finer points of diplomacy: 'Those questions are not questions to be discussed in my place. They should be discussed with the premier [Zhou]. I discuss the philosophical questions.'⁷⁰ The talks had nonetheless gone on for over an hour—which was much longer than expected.

The Shanghai Communiqué

In the days that followed, Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger hammered out a formal joint diplomatic statement while Nixon and his wife went sightseeing. The joint statement was the *Shanghai Communiqué*, released on 28 September 1972. It outlined the American and Chinese positions on issues such as Taiwan and proposed further Sino-US cultural and diplomatic exchanges.

It was a historic moment that marked the normalisation of relations between the PRC and the international community. In September 1972, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka also re-established diplomatic relations with China. By the end of the year, a further nineteen nations had restored or established diplomatic contact with Beijing. Australia established relations with China in December 1972 and, in November 1973, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited Beijing.

Although it took some years for the full economic benefits of China's new international relations to bloom, the first step had been taken. The Shanghai Communiqué also ensured that China would not face a military threat from two superpowers. Easing diplomatic tensions also reflected a trend towards political moderation—a stark contrast to the Cultural Revolution. It was therefore while Mao was Chairman that important historical steps were taken to modernise China.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Henry Kissinger told President Nixon that he had negotiated the first visit to China by a US President, Nixon opened his best bottle of brandy and said, 'Henry, let us drink to generations to come who may have a better chance to live in peace because of what we have done'.



Source 10.09 President Nixon meeting Mao Zedong in February 1972.

Shanghai Communiqué issued on 28 February 1972, following President Nixon's visit to China, the Communiqué outlined the respective positions of China and the US on a range of issues (including Taiwan). It marked the start of normalised Sino-American relations

DID YOU KNOW?

During a visit by Kissinger in 1973, Mao jokingly offered an unusual commodity for export: 'What we have in excess is women. Let them go to your place. They will create disasters. That way you can lessen our burdens.'

MAO'S LAST YEARS

Chen Yun: 'Had Mao died in 1956, his achievements would have been immortal. Had he died in 1966, he would still have been a great man. But he died in 1976. Alas, what can one say?'

DID YOU KNOW?

A famous painting of Mao as a young man, *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan*, was once hung in the press room at the Vatican, not far from a portrait of the Pope. It is not clear whether it was a case of mistaken identity—as Mao's robes looked like a priest's garb—or whether the painting was a gift that was put on display. It was on display for around six weeks.

While Nixon's visit cheered Mao immensely, the Lin Biao fiasco created several leadership problems. There were vacancies to fill after the purge of Lin's associates and, because of Mao's age, many would-be successors were jostling for attention. The veteran Communist leaders were starting to fade.

- Kang Sheng and Zhou Enlai were diagnosed with terminal bladder cancer.
- Mao was having trouble with his heart, sight and breathing. He was later diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease—which leads to an inability to swallow or breathe.

As the health of Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou deteriorated, the PRC adopted more moderate policies. However, at the same time, Jiang Qing was encouraging campaigns that periodically lurched the PRC into radical politics.

WANG HONGWEN AND THE RETURN OF DENG XIAOPING

Meanwhile, back in September 1972, a former cotton-mill security guard named Wang Hongwen (Wang Hung-wen) had been summoned to Beijing to meet Mao. Wang was given a long list of revolutionary books to read, and was groomed for an important future. Wang was a protégé of Jiang Qing.

In 1973, Jiang's ambitions were boosted prior to the Tenth Party Congress of 24–28 August, when the young radical Wang Hongwen was appointed second Vice-Chairman of the CCP—immediately below Zhou and Mao.

However, Mao didn't let radicals have all the authority. In early February 1973, Deng Xiaoping was granted permission to return to Beijing. By the end of March he had resumed duties as Vice-Premier with authority to manage foreign affairs.

THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS, 1973

The Tenth Party Congress was notable for its appointment of both radicals and rehabilitated veteran cadres; it reflected Mao's tendency to pit one side against the other.

- Some officials purged during 1966–1969 were welcomed back.
- Military representation on the Central Committee was halved.
- Deng Xiaoping was reappointed to the Central Committee.
- Wang Hongwen and Zhou Enlai delivered the key reports to the Congress.

The theme of the Congress was reaffirming the Cultural Revolution and criticising Lin Biao.

Behind the political manoeuvres, Zhou's practical policies for restoring the economy gained prominence. With the help of Deng Xiaoping, Zhou had outlined a **Four Modernisations** program to improve 'agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology'.⁷¹

In January 1975, the Four Modernisations program was given full approval. Deng gave the keynote speech that announced the new policy. By this time, Deng was Vice-Premier of the State Council and Vice-Chairman of the CCP, as well as Chief of Staff to the PLA. From February 1975, Deng chaired Politburo meetings. Although Mao was increasingly frail his mind was sharp, and he saw in Deng 'a person of extraordinary ability'.⁷² Meanwhile, Wang Hongwen had fallen from Mao's favour after conspiring with Jiang's radicals.

Four Modernisations

an outline of areas for improvement—national defence, agriculture, industry and science—drafted by Zhou Enlai and promoted by Deng Xiaoping. First introduced in 1975

'CRITICISE CONFUCIUS AND LIN BIAO'

However, the radicals opposed Premier Zhou's moderate policies. Immediately after the Tenth Party Congress, Mao's wife Jiang Qing led a campaign to 'Criticise Confucius'. Jiang tried to discredit Premier Zhou by associating Zhou with Confucius (the Duke of Zhou was a heroic figure in Confucian writing). Zhou and his supporters hit back with their own propaganda, and by early 1974 the campaign had turned into *Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao*. The campaign was muddled and lacked enthusiasm, and fizzled out by the middle of the year.⁷³

Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan continued to snipe at Deng and Zhou's program into 1975. Zhang warned young Chinese against falling for bourgeois incentives; true proletarians should resist the equivalent of 'stinky tofu, which smells awful, but tastes great'.⁷⁴

Mao offered only lukewarm support to their efforts and grew suspicious of Jiang Qing's ambitions. Rumour had it that Jiang Qing had taken to comparing herself to Empress Wu Zetian—one of few women to rule in the Imperial era. Mao scrawled, 'Shit! Wide of the mark!' in the margins of a speech Jiang wrote to oppose the Four Modernisations.⁷⁵ In mid-1974, Mao grew tired of their infighting and warned Jiang and her associates not to act as a *Gang of Four*.

Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping had frustrated Jiang's influence in the Politburo by using 'steamroller methods'—he swamped the radicals with paperwork and moved discussions of documents along promptly.⁷⁶

DEATH OF PREMIER ZHOU

On 8 January 1976, Zhou Enlai died of cancer. The death of Premier Zhou plunged China into mourning. Jan Wong, a Chinese-Canadian then studying in Beijing, said: 'I had never seen such universal grief. It seemed everyone was weeping, men and women, old people and children ... Bus drivers, street sweepers and shop clerks all went about their chores with swollen red eyes.'⁷⁷ Ordinary Chinese people saw Premier Zhou as a symbol of moderation and restraint. Many people wore white flowers and laid wreaths in Zhou's honour at Tiananmen Square. Millions lined the streets as his body was taken for cremation.

Despite his long and prestigious service to the Communist Party and the People's Republic, Zhou was not given a public memorial service. Deng delivered the eulogy at the funeral—it was his last public address for some time. Many people hoped that Deng Xiaoping would carry on Zhou's legacy—but their hopes were soon dashed.

Mao was afraid that Deng would use his authority to push the moderate agenda further and 'settle accounts' with the Cultural Revolution. After Zhou's funeral, Mao told Deng to stop work. There was no public announcement but the *People's Daily* featured an article on 'unrepentant' power-holders taking the 'capitalist road'.⁷⁸

THE RISE OF HUA GUOFENG

On 7 February 1976, Mao appointed Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng) as Acting Premier, much to everyone's surprise. Mao's body was failing, but he made a smart choice in bringing the relatively unknown Hua into the leadership team. Hua represented safe middle ground—he was not tied to the radicals or to Deng's moderates. Despite this, conflict between the factions continued.

Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao confused mass campaign in 1974 which was in essence a smokescreen for mutual criticisms between Jiang Qing's radicals and Zhou Enlai's moderates

Gang of Four the radical Maoist faction of the CCP that rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, consisting of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen

DID YOU KNOW?

Richard Nixon once offered this assessment of Mao and Zhou: 'Without Chairman Mao, no revolutionary fire would be set in China; without Zhou Enlai, everyone would have died in that fire'.

The official display of mourning for Zhou Enlai was low-key; however, a spontaneous protest movement broke out as emotions among ordinary people intensified. Between 29 March and 4 April 1976, large numbers of people came to Tiananmen Square to lay wreaths for Zhou. The mounds of white paper flowers grew to an astonishing height. People wrote poetry that criticised Mao Zedong and Jiang's Gang of Four. One example declared that the reign of 'Emperor Qin' had come to an end. By 5 April, hundreds of thousands of mourners gathered at Tiananmen Square.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the CCP at the time, the 1976 Tiananmen protests were conducted by 'a handful of class enemies', 'a few bad elements, sporting crew cuts', and a 'bad element wearing spectacles'.

The radicals convinced Mao that the protest was actually a movement in support of Deng Xiaoping, so police and security forces removed the wreaths. The next day thousands of enraged people scuffled with the police. On the evening of 6 April, an announcement on Tiananmen Square's loudspeakers warned protestors to leave, and most did. At 9.30 pm, spotlights came on—and 10,000 club-wielding militiamen dispersed those who remained.

On 7 April, the Politburo named Hua Guofeng as Premier and Vice-Chairman of the Party. Hua's position as Mao's successor was strengthened after the Chairman gave him a handwritten note that read, 'With you in charge, I am at ease'.⁷⁹ To the delight of the radicals, Deng Xiaoping was relieved of all his posts, although he did keep his Party membership. Deng fled to Guangzhou and went into hiding.

On 28 July, one of the worst earthquakes of the century hit the mining city of Tangshan. The city was almost wiped out. The official death toll was 242,000, but some sources suggest the real figure was close to 650,000. According to historian James Palmer, 'The 23 seconds of the earthquake were probably the most concentrated instant of destruction humanity has ever known'.⁸⁰ Many Tangshan residents thought they were victims of a nuclear attack.

For those who believed in omens, the mammoth quake was a sure sign that the Mandate of Heaven was passing.

THE DEATH OF MAO ZEDONG

A number of CCP leaders died in 1976, including eighty-nine-year-old Zhu De. In early September 1976, Mao suffered a severe heart attack, and he passed away on 9 September. He was widely mourned, although the expressions of grief were more restrained than they had been for Zhou Enlai. A public memorial service was attended by a million people and Mao was laid to rest in a crystal coffin inside a mausoleum in Tiananmen Square.



Source 10.10 Chairman Mao Zedong being mourned at his funeral, Beijing, 1976.

There was much unease about what would happen next, especially as Jiang Qing held considerable influence in the CCP. With the support of key PLA marshals, Hua Guofeng moved against the Gang of Four. On 6 October 1976, Jiang Qing and her cronies were arrested and imprisoned. There was much celebration at the news.

Li Zhensheng recalls the popular reactions to the arrest of Jiang Qing

The fall of the Gang of Four meant that the Cultural Revolution was over, the madness at an end ... After ten years of fear and uncertainty, a spontaneous sense of joy overcame us all. We all laughed and clapped one another on the back ... Many people, including myself, got pretty drunk.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many people celebrated the arrest of the Gang of Four with a meal featuring three male crabs and a female crab.

 **Source 10.11** Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier* (New York: Phaidon, 2003), 255.

Chairman Hua Guofeng pledged to honour ‘whatever policies’ and ‘whatever instructions’ were passed on to him by Mao. He was replaced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Deng’s revolutionary modernisation program, which was very different to Mao’s, would see China rise to the status of an economic powerhouse. However, that is another story.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- How did Richard Nixon describe the significance of his visit to China?
- China’s politics in the early-to-mid-1970s were noted for the competing radical and moderate influences. Compile a list of which leaders represented each of these approaches:
 - moderates
 - radicals.
- What key program was proposed by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping in 1975?
- What political campaign did Jiang Qing encourage after the Tenth Party Congress?
- Briefly describe how everyday people reacted to the death of Zhou Enlai.
- ‘With you in charge, I am at ease.’ Who did this refer to?
- What natural disaster preceded the death of Mao? How did many people interpret this?
- What happened to Jiang Qing’s Gang of Four soon after Mao’s funeral? How did people generally respond to this news?

THE TRIAL OF THE GANG OF FOUR

In November 1980, the Gang of Four—Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen—was brought to trial. Peng Zhen led the investigation and compiled the charges against the radicals. The trial was quite a spectacle and excerpts were broadcast each night on Chinese and Western television.

While the other defendants stayed silent, Jiang gave one of the great performances of her career. During one session, Jiang shouted across the courtroom: ‘It is more glorious to have my head chopped off than to yield to accusers. I dare you to sentence me to death in front of one million people in Tiananmen Square!’⁸¹

Jiang Qing: ‘I am prepared to die!’

The judges chorused back, ‘Shut up, Jiang Qing! Shut up!’ Explaining her role in the Cultural Revolution, Madam Mao declared, ‘I was Mao’s dog. Whoever he told me to bite, I bit!’

The court found the Gang of Four guilty. Jiang was sentenced to death, although her sentence was later changed to life imprisonment ‘to see how she behaved’. Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen also received life sentences, while Yao Wenyuan got twenty years. On 14 May 1991, Jiang Qing committed suicide in custody.

MAO ZEDONG, 1893–1976

KEY INDIVIDUAL

Mao Zedong: 'Hé shàng dǎ sǎn, wú fǎ wú tiān.'

Early life

Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) was born to a successful Hunanese peasant family, but had greater ambitions than farming. Mao's father agreed to send his eldest son to school so that he could work in the family business. However, Mao rebelled against his father and never returned to the farm. He also left behind a wife from an arranged marriage that had taken place when he was fourteen.

From 1911 to 1918, Mao lived in Changsha, the capital of Hunan. He considered a range of different studies but eventually trained to be a teacher. For six months in 1911, Mao served as a soldier in the Republican army. Mao read a great deal while at Changsha: Chinese classics, as well as the leading Western political and philosophical works of the era. He formed study circles to explore the key ideas of the May Fourth era. He was also the leading member of a group that enjoyed rigorous physical exercise.

Mao moved to Beijing after completing his studies, and worked as a library assistant under Li Dazhao. He became involved in radical political discussion groups—and was particularly keen on anarchism and Marxism. However, because of his lowly position and poor pay, Mao was back in Hunan by the end of the year, where he worked as a primary school teacher. He published radical journals such as the *Xiang River Review*, and wrote articles in support of women's rights, as well as commentaries on current issues and political philosophies.

Involvement in the CCP

In 1920, Mao married Yang Kaihui—the daughter of his philosophy teacher. In July 1921, he was the Hunan representative at the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai. Mao returned to Hunan and worked as a Communist labour organiser. He encouraged unions and revolutionary agitation among local workers and students, and showed talent as a strike organiser. By 1923, Mao had been elected to one of the nine seats on the CCP Central Committee. With the formation of the United Front in 1923, he was given positions within GMD organisations, and headed a school for rural activists called the Farmers' Movement Training Institute.

In early 1927, Mao wrote a controversial assessment of peasant-based revolution: *Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. In 1925, a strike Mao was leading was suppressed by the governing Hunan warlord, so he moved south to Guangzhou where he was appointed secretary of the GMD Propaganda Department.

Revolutionary guerrilla

After the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927, Mao led a band of Communist guerrillas in the Autumn Harvest Uprising in Hunan. The uprising was not successful, and Mao and his surviving followers took refuge in the Jinggangshan region.

Joined by Zhu De, Mao built up his band of Communist fighters and relocated to Ruijin in Jiangxi province, where the Jiangxi Soviet was established in 1929. Mao developed his revolutionary guerrilla theories and, in November 1931, was appointed Chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet. At this time, leadership of the Party was in the hands of the Comintern-backed Twenty-eight Bolsheviks.

Mao married He Zizhen during the Jiangxi period, his previous wife having been killed by Nationalist troops in 1930.

Jiang Jieshi's campaigns to encircle and exterminate Communist bases led to the 1934–1935 Long March. In January 1935, at Zunyi during the Long March, Mao criticised the policies and tactics of the Party leadership. He steadily increased his sway over the Party from then on.

Yan'an Soviet and Civil War

Led by Mao, the survivors of the Long March founded the Yan'an Soviet in remote Shaanxi. Just as at Jiangxi, progressive social and economic policies were carried out, and military discipline was enforced. Mao consolidated his position as Communist leader and theoretician at Yan'an through the Rectification campaigns.

In 1939, Mao divorced He Zizhen and married his fourth wife, Jiang Qing—a radical Shanghai actress. He Zizhen was sent to the USSR for medical and psychiatric treatment. The Yan'an Soviet grew during the 1940s. After World War II, the Communist Red Army defeated the better-equipped but unmotivated Nationalist Army. Mao's guerrilla tactics played an important role in the Communists' victory in the Civil War.

People's Republic

In October 1949, Mao founded the People's Republic of China. Under the new regime, Mao was President of China (head of state) and Chairman of the CCP. His policies and political ideas profoundly shaped the People's Republic. Mao was largely responsible for—or played a key role in—many of the campaigns and important events of the 1950s:

- the Korean War
- Thought Reform
- the Anti campaigns
- the Gao Gang Affair
- the 1955 High Tide
- the Hundred Flowers campaign
- the Anti-Rightist campaign.

In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward—a bold series of radical social and economic policies that ended in disaster and famine. After purging those who criticised his policies following the 1959 Lushan Plenum—notably Marshal Peng Dehuai—Mao handed over presidency of the PRC to Liu Shaoqi.

However, the policies of the Communist leadership in the years following the Great Leap Forward were not to Mao's liking, and he was concerned by corruption and the degeneration of socialist values. In 1966, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and others, Mao purged the Communist Party and plunged China into what is often called the Ten Lost Years. From this time until his death in 1976, Chairman Mao Zedong was deemed to be the source of all revolutionary wisdom and leadership in China.

Legacy

According to the official Chinese Communist assessment, Mao was 70 per cent right and 30 per cent wrong. He had failings—but was ultimately a great revolutionary. For others, Mao is one of the most tyrannical figures of the twentieth century. According to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday: 'This is the greatest mass murderer in history, a man we calculate killed at least 70 million people and was prepared to let many, many more die if necessary, to pursue his mad policies'.⁸²

So was Mao just mad and bad? Historian Philip Short questions the usefulness of making a monster of Mao and simplifying his essence and the events around him: 'Do we really gain in understanding by denying his complexity, his genius and reducing him to a one-dimensional caricature? Mao was ... the reverse of a one-dimensional man.'⁸³

Making sense of Mao is central to understanding the history of revolutionary China. His rule was an extraordinary record of both triumph and tragedy. He was a gifted poet, a revolutionary of profound genius, a moderniser, champion of the poor, a man of crude habits, a monstrous Imperial tyrant, and a Monkey King who defied the Heavenly principles. In his own words, Mao was 'without hair, without sky'.

Mao is still a potent symbol for those who believe 'it is right to rebel'. His portrait over the Gate of Heavenly Peace at the entrance to the Forbidden City is a reminder of his unique contribution to modern China.

KEY POINTS

- Mao was typical of many Chinese of the May Fourth generation. He was keenly interested in issues of the day and looked to radical new ideologies to expand his intellectual horizons.
- He joined the CCP, attending the founding of the Party as a minor delegate representing Hunan.
- Mao worked as a labour agitator and strike leader during the First United Front. He wrote a controversial assessment of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry: *Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan*.
- He led the Autumn Harvest Uprising following the Shanghai Massacre. When this failed, he fled to the remote Jinggang mountains and established the Red Army with Zhu De.
- As Chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet, Mao implemented significant reforms and developed successful guerrilla warfare strategies for the Red Army.
- The Long March saw Mao gain authority after the Zunyi Conference removed the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks from influence.
- Mao consolidated his political power and reputation as a revolutionary theorist during the Yan'an Soviet period.
- He held enormous influence as Chairman of the CCP and President of the PRC.
- He shaped many policies and developments of the 1950s and 1960s—sometimes with disastrous consequences. The most significant were the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution.
- Mao was a complex and controversial leader. Historians have struggled to assess his legacy.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL SOURCES

Sidney Rittenberg on Mao as a 'great criminal' and 'great hero'

I think he was a great historic leader and a great historic criminal—both parts. And I think the reason I say criminal is he claimed to himself the right to conduct these enormous social experiments that involved upturning the lives of hundreds of millions of people when he himself did not know what the outcome was going to be. He thought it was OK for him to experiment like that. And I think that was criminal because it created famines in which tens of millions died, and it created the Cultural Revolution, in which nobody knows how many died ... But he kept trying ... He was a great hero and great criminal all rolled up into one; he was a genius whose genius got completely out of control.

Source 10.12 Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in the documentary *The Revolutionary* (Stourwater Pictures, 2012).

Mao's former bodyguard Li Yinqiao

The most outstanding trait in Mao's character ... was his readiness to take on a challenge ... Mao, as far as I know, never admitted to feeling overwhelmed by his adversaries, nor retreated in the face of heavy odds against him. Whatever he did, he never quit, short of total victory ... His contempt for ... [enemies and opponents] originated in his confidence in his own strength and his conviction that they were doomed. Such confidence and conviction often prompted him to do extraordinary things ... When offered or offering a challenge, Mao never showed any hesitation but rather, the confidence to win. He was astonishingly tough and was just as astonishingly wilful. When his wilfulness turned out to be a source of misjudgement, he could still rally a large force around him and sustain its morale with his self-confidence and his unbending will. All his life Mao was a winner, not in terms of specific political issues but rather, as a man who revealed his heroic nature whenever he was confronted with a challenge.

Source 10.13 Quan Yanchi, *Mao Zedong: Man, Not God* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2002), 13, 28.

Using Sources 10.12 and 10.13 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Discuss why Mao Zedong might be considered 'a great hero and great criminal'.
- 2 Explain how Mao's personality influenced key policies in the People's Republic of China.
- 3 Analyse the contribution of Mao Zedong in changing and influencing Chinese society. Use evidence to support your response.

EXTENDED RESPONSES

Write a 250–350-word extended response on one of the topics below. Your response should include a clear contention, arguments supported by relevant evidence and a clear conclusion.

- Explain the consequences of the Cultural Revolution in rural areas after 1967.
- Outline the ways in which students and Red Guards responded to the challenges and changes of everyday life in the later years of the Cultural Revolution.
- Discuss how the rise and fall of Lin Biao reflected the key turning points in the Cultural Revolution.
- Explain how events in China from 1968 to 1976 represented the compromise or achievement of revolutionary ideals.
- Explain the role of three significant individuals and their influence on Chinese society up to 1976.

CHAPTER 10 REVIEW

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- The 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' movement dispersed China's radicalised youth to rural areas. The aim was to further their 'revolutionary experiences'. Most found their time in the countryside very challenging.
- Improvements were seen in rural areas during the later years of the Cultural Revolution. 'Sent down' youths provided the teachers and medical personal for initiatives in village healthcare and education. Farmers also gained greater access to basic machinery and had more say over their daily lives.
- 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' resulted in waves of mass killings in the countryside. Over 1 million people died as local disputes escalated beyond efforts by the 'three-in-one' committees to consolidate their authority.
- The life and personality of Mao Zedong had a significant influence on the nature of politics in the new society. In many ways, Mao's daily life and behaviour was that of an emperor.
- Complex political intrigue and debates over obscure ideological questions form the background to the fall of Lin Biao. Lin had lost influence with Mao. Lin's son attempted a coup, but it failed and Lin Biao and his family were forced to flee in a jet. The jet crashed, killing all onboard. Many people were disillusioned to learn that Mao's supposed 'closest comrade and successor' could come to such an end.
- China's diplomatic relations with the West gradually normalised in the early 1970s. This led to US President Richard Nixon visiting China in 1972.
- Politically, China alternated between radical campaigns encouraged by Jiang Qing, and moderate policies pushed by Zhou Enlai. Deng Xiaoping resumed duties as Zhou's health failed. The radicals were encouraged by the rise of their protégé Wang Hongwen.
- As Mao's health worsened, Hua Guofeng (a minor political figure) was designated Mao's successor. Hua represented a safe, middle ground between the moderates and the radicals. Deng Xiaoping fell from influence after the death of Zhou Enlai.
- Mao Zedong died in September 1976. Less than a month later, Jiang Qing's Gang of Four was arrested. Mao left an extraordinary and complex legacy. His influence on modern China was profound, but his leadership and life saw both triumphs and tragedies.

ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION

Reflect on your study of the Chinese Revolution, then discuss the following with your peers, in small groups or as a class.

- What three stories, anecdotes, facts or topics interested you the most during your study of China? Why?
- Why is the study of the triumphs and tragedies of revolutionary China an important historical topic?
- To what extent did ordinary people—rather than significant individuals—drive and respond to the Cultural Revolution?
- 'The Cultural Revolution proved that Mao's legacy was one of suffering and destruction.' To what extent do you agree?
- What did the experiences of Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Chen Boda, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing demonstrate about the nature of politics in the People's Republic?



CONTINUITY AND CHANGES IN CHINESE SOCIETY, 1912–1976

MILITARY

MILITARISTS

Military strength was the decisive factor in wielding political influence during the early Republic. Rebellious New Army units brought down the Qing; Yuan Shikai held authority by military strength; Sun Yixian failed to secure an effective military force.

NORTHERN EXPEDITION

Jiang Jieshi commanded the military campaign that ended the rule of warlords and united China under his Nationalist government.

COMMUNIST UPRISINGS

A series of campaigns against urban areas by Communist forces failed. This led to many people retreating to rural areas. Mao and Zhu De founded the Red Army and developed successful guerrilla strategies.

JAPANESE ENCROACHMENT

Japan annexed Manchuria in 1931. Japan seized more and more territory in northern China before launching an all-out invasion in 1937.

THE LONG MARCH

The lead up to the Long March and its turning points were based on military strategy.

SINO-JAPANESE WAR

China's second war with Japan had devastating consequences for the Chinese people. Millions were killed, wounded or displaced. Jiang's forces retreated to fight a war of attrition, which undermined the GMD's patriotic appeal.

CHINESE CIVIL WAR

The US Dixie Mission assessed the CCP as a more viable political and military force than the Nationalist regime. These differences proved significant, as the Communists won against overwhelming odds.

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

The PLA played a key role in consolidating CCP power.

OUTLYING REGIONS

Outlying regions of the People's Republic, such as Xinjiang and Tibet, were brought under central rule by the PLA in the 1950s.

KOREAN WAR

In 1950, China was drawn into the Korean War in support of North Korea against US-led UN forces. The Chinese military fought to a standstill at the 38th parallel.

US RAPPROCHEMENT

The international standing and security of the PRC improved after relations between the PRC and the USA were normalised in 1971–1972. The PRC gained a seat on the UN Security Council.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL

CONFUCIAN VALUES

The teachings of Confucius had a profound influence on Chinese society and values. Traditionally, a conservative and hierarchical structure dominated society. This underpinned patriarchal practices and other inequalities.

NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

Confucian values were criticised by a generation of younger scholars during the Warlord era. Many different ideologies were considered in a quest for new models and insights into national identity.

JIANGXI AND YAN'AN SOVIET EXPERIMENTS

Under Mao's leadership, the CCP trialled a range of progressive social policies such as initiatives in education and women's rights.

NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

Jiang Jieshi attempted to renew Confucian values to improve Chinese social and moral behaviour. The campaign made little progress.

MASS CAMPAIGNS

Fanshen ('speak bitterness') saw denunciations of landlords. Cleanliness drives improved sanitation. Thought Reform and the Three-Antis and Five-Antis movements consolidated Communist authority over potentially subversive elements.

STARVATION

About 30–40 million people starved to death in the Three Bad Years famine that followed the Great Leap Forward.

CIVIC VIRTUES

The Socialist Education Movement encouraged virtue through the campaigns Learn from the PLA and Learn from Lei Feng.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Marriage Law of 1950 gave women the same legal rights as men and banned arranged marriages, child marriages and polygamy.

FOUR OLDS

Old ideas, old culture, old customs and old values were targeted during the Cultural Revolution.

FACTIONAL CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

Red Guard and Rebel violence degenerated almost into a civil war during the Cultural Revolution. The 'Cleansing the Class Ranks' movement resulted in the deaths of over 1 million people.

HEALTH

'Barefoot doctors' helped provide basic medical attention in villages. Mass inoculations increased life expectancy.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people were central to the Cultural Revolution, as Red Guards and as participants in the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' movement.

EDUCATION

Literacy levels improved through mass campaigns after the founding of the PRC. High school and higher education were profoundly disrupted during the Cultural Revolution. Access to primary education in rural areas improved in the early 1970s.

CULT OF MAO

The worship of Mao and his ideas created a cult of personality that came to resemble a religion. Many of the beliefs resembled those that were seen in Imperial times.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC
REPUBLICAN DEMOCRACY FAILS The Xinhai Revolution toppled the autocratic Qing dynasty from power and established a republican government. President Yuan Shikai soon resorted to authoritarian rule and declared himself emperor.	YUAN'S LIMITED PROGRESS Some economic reforms were carried out by Yuan's government, such as currency and farming initiatives. The early Republican government relied heavily on foreign capital, namely Yuan's Reorganisation Loan.
WARLORD ERA Yuan's death led to the breakdown of central authority and the rise of regional militarists. Sun Yixian struggled to maintain the Republican revolutionary movement in this era.	
MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT Thousands of young Chinese protested against imperialism and the unfair treatment of China at the Paris Peace Conference. This was a radicalising experience for many.	NATIONALIST MODERNISATIONS The Nationalist government improved transport and urban services. Jiang's government was undermined by inflation and excessive taxation.
NEW PARTIES The influence of the Comintern resulted in the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and reorganisation of the Guomindang.	COMMUNIST LAND REFORMS The CCP introduced land and tax reforms at Yan'an. This provided more equitable economic relations in the countryside and gained the Party support among the peasants.
WHITE TERROR The Shanghai Massacre brought the GMD-CCP United Front to a bloody end. This marked the beginning of a struggle for power and influence that lasted decades.	
THE LONG MARCH This was essentially a forced retreat; however, the March also saw the emergence of Mao Zedong as the most influential leader in the CCP after the Zunyi Conference.	NATIONAL CAPITALISTS Pragmatic policies designed to stabilise the economy were initially pursued after the founding of the PRC. 'National capitalists' were urged to continue managing businesses.
RECTIFICATION Mao's political and ideological dominance within the CCP was established in the early 1940s through the Rectification campaigns.	LAND REFORM The Agrarian Reform Law (1950) gave peasants the right to redistribute land. This intensified during the Korean War.
CHINESE FASCISM As pressures on the Nationalist government increased, Jiang Jieshi looked more to the Fascist model for his leadership approach. This alienated many from the Nationalist regime.	FIVE-YEAR PLAN Inspired by the USSR, China adopted a Five-Year Plan (1953–1957) focusing on heavy industry. Agriculture was collectivised in stages, from Mutual Aid Teams to Higher Cooperatives.
CENTRALISATION With the founding of the PRC, China became a centralised, hierarchical system dominated by the Communist Party.	HIGH TIDE Industry was nationalised and agriculture further during the High Tide of 1955.
INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION Isolated from the West following the Korean War, the People's Republic established close ties with the USSR in the 1950s.	GREAT LEAP FORWARD The Great Leap Forward (1958–1961) introduced People's Communes, Work Teams, backyard steel smelters and odd farming experiments. The Great Leap Forward ultimately led to widespread famine.
MAO'S PURGES The first major purge in the CCP came in 1953–1954 with the Gao Gang Affair. Peng Dehuai was purged after the Lushan Plenum (1959). The fall of Lin Biao (1971) caused confusion and disillusionment.	
HUNDRED FLOWERS Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1957, encouraging intellectuals to criticise the Party. Mao was surprised by the fierceness of the criticism that emerged, and then launched the Anti-Rightist campaign.	
SINO-SOVIET SPLIT In the period 1956–1964, relations between the PRC and USSR deteriorated, with accusations of 'revisionism' and mutual criticism.	RETREAT AND RECOVERY Pragmatic measures were introduced so the economy recovered from the Great Leap Forward. Communes were reduced in size and peasants were encouraged to take up a small amount of farmland for their own use.
CULTURAL REVOLUTION The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution encouraged popular attacks on the CCP establishment and brought down President Liu Shaoqi.	AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENTS Industrial production was disrupted during the Cultural Revolution; however, increased state expenditure in rural areas, particularly small-scale industries, improved agricultural production during the early 1970s.
RADICALS VERSUS MODERATES China's politics during Mao's final years saw an uneasy balance between radical and moderate factions of the CCP.	
THE LAST EMPEROR? In many ways Mao's leadership style came to resemble that of an emperor. However, Mao also contributed many significant advances to modern China. His legacy was a complex one.	

SECTION C

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GLOSSARY

38th parallel

A line of latitude (like the equator) that marks the approximate border between North Korea and South Korea.

7000 Cadres Conference

A meeting of the CCP Central Committee in January 1962 that endorsed the post-GLF recovery policies of Liu, Deng and Chen. At the conference, Mao expressed concerns about corruption within the Communist Party.

A

Agrarian Reform Law

Enacted in 1950, the law instituted radical land reform in the PRC through People's Tribunals and the judging of landlords.

agronomist

An expert in the science of soil management and crop production.

allegories

The treatment of one subject under the guise of another; a symbolic representation.

Autumn Harvest Uprising

An unsuccessful military campaign launched in September 1927 by Communist forces against urban centres (Changsha) in Hunan. Led by Mao Zedong.

B

Baihua

The 'everyday' style of writing made popular in literature and media during the New Culture movement by Hu Shi, Lu Xun and others.

baliff

A person employed by another to collect taxes and rents.

bandit extermination campaigns

A series of five military campaigns from 1931–1934 against Communist strongholds in rural areas. The fifth campaign, coordinated by General von Seeckt, proved successful and forced the CCP on the Long March.

barefoot doctors

A rudimentary healthcare scheme introduced during the Cultural Revolution whereby ordinary people were trained in basic medicine and sent to the countryside to treat peasants.

BCE

'Before the Common Era'—previously referred to as BC (before Christ).

Beiyang Army

'Northern Ocean Army'. This New Army was the largest, best equipped and most advanced of the Qing's military forces. Based near Beijing, its troops were committed to their commander, General Yuan Shikai.

big-character poster (*dazibao*)

Large wall-mounted posters featuring oversized Chinese characters that communicate political messages and public declarations. *Dazibao* had been used since the Imperial era but became particularly widespread in the Cultural Revolution.

Blue Shirts

A secret organisation whose members swore loyalty to Jiang Jieshi and carried out assassinations to advance his cause.

Bolsheviks

The Russian Communist party led by Vladimir Lenin until his death in 1924. Josef Stalin headed the party by the late 1920s.

border regions

Another name for the Shaan-Gan-Ning (Yan'an) Soviet. Refers to the manner in which Soviet territory crossed over several provincial borders.

bourgeoisie

Wealthy middle-upper classes who own factories.

Buddhism

A religious tradition based on the teachings of Siddhartha (Buddha) and his disciples. Through the teaching of the 'four noble truths,' Buddhists strive for compassion, insight through meditation and, ultimately, enlightenment. Buddhism came to China from India in the first century CE.

'bureaucratic capitalists'

Businessmen and industrialists whose close ties to the Japanese or GMD led them to be denounced under the PRC.

C

cadres

Communist Party officials or activists.

capitalism

An economic system based on free-market principles, in which individuals are encouraged to seek prosperity and private capital (or wealth). In theory, the government plays a limited role in the economy in a capitalist system, and allows the marketplace to decide on prices, salaries and conditions. Individuals and corporations are encouraged to trade goods, services, labour and land.

CE

'Common Era'—previously referred to as AD (*Anno Domini*, after the birth of Christ).

Central Committee

The central coordinating body of the Chinese Communist Party. Members of the higher Politburo and Standing Committee are drawn from the Central Committee.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

The ruling party of the People's Republic of China that exercises supreme political authority. The party was founded after Marxist ideas spread to China with the May Fourth movement of 1919.

Chongqing

A major port city on the Yangzi River in Sichuan which served as the Nationalist capital during the War of Resistance against Japan.

Comintern

A Soviet (Russian) organisation that supported and organised communist and left-wing parties worldwide. Short for 'Communist Internationale.'

Commissar

A political adviser to the military. Under guidance from the Comintern, the Nationalist and Communist armed forces had commissars.

Communism

A political and economic doctrine that aims to replace all private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and collective control of the means of production—such as agriculture, natural resources and manufacturing.

Confucianism

A philosophical school of thought and ethics founded by Confucius, emphasising virtuous and respectful (filial) relationships within society, adherence to a strict social hierarchy and submission to authority.

Conservative

Someone resistant to change and reform; a supporter of past traditions. Extreme conservatives are described as reactionary.

coup

The seizure of political power by threat or force.

Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao

Confused mass campaign in 1974 which was in essence a smokescreen for mutual criticisms between Jiang Qing's radicals and Zhou Enlai's moderates.

cult of personality

The emergence of an overly heroic image and worship of a leader through the use of propaganda and other means, such as mass rallies and rituals.

Cultural Revolution

The campaign launched by Mao Zedong in 1966 to rectify the Communist Party, which he and others felt was 'following the capitalist road.' The 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' finally drew to a close in 1976 after the death of Mao.

D

danwei

A work unit, usually structured around one's place of employment or residence, which provided the first link between ordinary people and the Communist Party.

Daoism

A philosophical and religious tradition, founded by Laozi, based on the teaching of 'the Way' or 'Dao,' emphasising renunciation, acceptance and harmony with the natural and given state of the world.

Dazhai

A rural commune celebrated in the People's Republic as a model of successful socialist development.

democratic centralism

A disciplined, hierarchical party model favoured by Lenin; ordinary members could debate issues and make suggestions, but once the party leadership made a decision everyone had to accept it.

'democratic parties'

The non-CCP political parties permitted in Mao's PRC, including the GMD Revolutionary Committee and Democratic League.

Dixie Mission

The 1944 visit by American observers and diplomats to the Yan'an Soviet.

Double Tenth

The uprising by New Army soldiers which eventually brought down the Qing Dynasty. It began on 10 October 1911 (tenth day of tenth month) in the city of Wuhan.

Dowager Empress

The title given to the mother of the ruling emperor or the widow of the previous emperor.

dynasty

A series of rulers from the same family.

E

Eighth Route Army

The Communist Red Army that fought alongside the Nationalists against the Japanese after the Second United Front.

elite

A class or group which enjoys superior social, intellectual or economic status over others.

embargo

An international ban on countries trading with a particular country.

émigré

A person who has left their country for economic or political reasons.

F

factions (left and right)

The left faction of the GMD was more radical and favoured continued cooperation with the CCP; the right faction was more conservative and had close ties with the military. Many of the right faction were suspicious of the Communists.

fanshen

'To turn over; an agricultural term from using a plough or hoe to renew soil, but developed political connotations in PRC land reform and social campaigns.

fascism

Extreme right-wing ideology based on centralised authoritarian rule, militarism, adherence to nationalistic values and suppression of opponents.

February Outline Report

An assessment of the Wu Han affair, released in early 1966 by Peng Zhen, mayor of Beijing, and his Five Man Cultural Revolution Group (an investigative commission.) The report concluded that the debate over *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* was a literary rather than a political matter.

fifth column

A subversive group within an organisation that appears to be loyal but quietly works towards its own interests, or to those of an enemy group.

filial piety

Confucian virtue of respect for your parents, ancestors and people of higher social standing.

Five-Year Plan

A Stalin-inspired centralised economic model based on investment in heavy industry.

Five Antis Campaign

Known as *wufan*, the 1952 campaign targeted tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property, cheating on government contracts and bribery, particularly among businessmen and industrialists.

Flying Tigers

Jiang Jieshi's air force, staffed by American mercenary pilots.

Forbidden City

The Imperial residence in Beijing. A vast complex of palaces and courtyards where the emperor and his retinue lived.

Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces

Led by Jiang Qing, the group investigated and advised on cultural matters on behalf of the PLA. Formed at the behest of Lin Biao in February 1966, the forum refuted the February Outline Report.

Four Modernisations

An outline of areas for improvement—national defence, agriculture, industry and science—drafted by Zhou Enlai and promoted by Deng Xiaoping. First introduced in 1975.

G

Gang of Four

The radical Maoist faction of the CCP which rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, consisting of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen.

General Line

The principles that guided the Great Leap Forward. The General Line was framed by the slogans 'go all out' and 'aim high' to achieve 'greater, faster, better, and more economical results'.

German concessions

German-controlled areas and infrastructure.

Guangzhou Commune

The Communist workers' uprising in the southern city of Guangzhou (Canton) in December 1927.

Great Leap Forward (GLF)

A series of campaigns encouraged by Mao Zedong that attempted to achieve vast economic output and improvement through revolutionary enthusiasm. Launched at the Eighth Party Congress and carried out between 1958 and 1961, the GLF included the smelting of steel in backyard furnaces, extreme collectivisation of agriculture through People's Communes and experimentation based on the theories of Trofim Lysenko. Statistical misinformation and mismanagement of agriculture led to a terrible famine which claimed around thirty-million lives.

Green Gang

A Shanghai criminal syndicate headed by 'Big Ears Du' and 'Pock-marked Huang'; responsible for many deaths during the Shanghai Massacre of 1927.

guerrilla tactics

Unconventional warfare. Guerrilla fighters travel light, avoid direct confrontation with better-equipped and larger forces, rely on the support of local people and generally harass their enemy in order to wear them down. They tend to strike when least expected.

Guandong Army

A Japanese military force stationed in Manchuria to protect Japanese interests in Manchuria and the north of China. It was one of Japan's largest and most prestigious military units.

Guizhou

A province in south-west China. Capital: Guiyang.

Guomindang (GMD)

GMD, National People's Party, or 'Nationalists'. Formerly the Tongmenghui, the GMD was the reorganised political party led by Sun Yixian and Song Jiaoren that engaged in parliamentary politics in the republican period.

H

Hai Rui Dismissed from Office

A play written in 1961 by Beijing's deputy mayor, Wu Han. It was taken to be an allegorical criticism of Mao's dismissal of Peng Dehuai. Debate over Wu Han's play proved to be the opening phase of the Cultural Revolution.

heavy industry

Steel and iron works (metallurgy), mining, concrete, electrical supplies, oil and petroleum, machinery parts.

Huangpu Military Academy

The officer training institute of the Guomindang Nationalist Revolutionary Army, based at Guangzhou and founded under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi in May 1924.

Hunan

A province in south-central China. Capital: Changsha.

Hundred Flowers Campaign

A brief period of debate and critical discussion amongst students and intellectuals in early-to-mid-1957, encouraged by Mao Zedong.

I

Imperial

The period where the Chinese empire was ruled by dynastic emperors (monarchs).

Imperial Court

The inner government and circle of advisers who served the Chinese emperor. Imperial (royal) rule in China should not be confused with imperialism.

imperialism

Extension of control and dominion over other territories; political or economic control exercised by powerful states over others.

J

January Storm

The period during the winter of 1967 in which radical Rebel and Red Guard groups made attempts – many successful – to overthrow the leadership of party committees, government departments and other organisations. The slogan of the January Storm was ‘seize power!’ The most dramatic power seizure was the toppling of the Shanghai city government and proclamation of the Shanghai People’s Commune.

Jiangxi

A province in south-east China. Capital: Nanchang.

Jiangxi Soviet

A Communist community based around the town of Ruijin, established in 1928. Led by Chairman Mao, the soviet was abandoned at the start of the Long March following Jiang’s Fifth Bandit Encirclement and Extermination Campaign.

Jinggangshan

The Jinggang mountain range in remote Jiangxi-Hunan, where Mao Zedong and Zhu De established a Communist base after the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1927.

L

left-wing

Espousing progressive or liberal views; in favour of a strong public sector and welfare state. The term originated in the French National Assembly (1789–91), where the nobles sat to the president’s right and the commoners to the left.

li

A traditional Chinese measurement of distance. One *li* is about half a kilometre; however, a *li* also takes into account the effort involved in travel, such as going uphill or covering difficult terrain.

Li Lisan line

The Communist policy of directing military campaigns against urban centres; proposed by Li Lisan in mid-1930.

Long March

The year-long 12,000 kilometre journey made by the Chinese Communists when they fled their Jiangxi Soviet in October 1934. Many great difficulties were faced during the Long March including the Battle of Xiang River, capturing the Luding Bridge at Dadu, crossing the Great Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands, and numerous attacks by Nationalist forces. Of the 100,000 Communists who set out on the Long March, about 8000 survived. After the Zunyi Conference, Mao Zedong assumed leadership of the march. The Long Marchers eventually made their way to Shaanxi, where a new soviet was established at Yan’an.

lose face

To suffer embarrassment and loss of prestige.

Lushan Plenum

A significant meeting of the CCP Central Committee in July–August 1959, which saw the downfall of Peng Dehuai and the reaffirmation of the Great Leap Forward.

Lysenkoism

The theories of Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko, adopted by the Chinese with enthusiasm during the Great Leap Forward. Lysenko claimed to have refuted genetics, proposing that the characteristics of living things are acquired rather than inherited. This resulted in experimentation with deep ploughing and close planting of crops, radical pest extermination and unconventional cross-breeding of livestock. The approach had disastrous consequences.

M

Manchukuo

Translated as ‘land of the Manchus,’ Manchukuo was the Japanese protectorate established over Manchuria in 1931.

Mandate of Heaven

The mystical authority through which an Imperial dynasty claimed its right to rule. Heaven, in the Chinese sense, was the divine force which governed all things in the world. If an emperor ruled wisely and honoured his duties, the Mandate of Heaven would grant him a prosperous reign. If he failed in his duties, Heaven would be displeased and give signs—such as a succession of natural disasters—that the dynasty should come to an end.

manufacturing industries

Everyday goods, consumables.

Maoist virtues

Diligence, courage, selflessness, struggle and self-sacrifice.

Mao Zedong Thought

The revolutionary ideology of Mao Zedong, emphasising a greater role for the peasantry, mass line leadership (‘from the people, to the people’), continuous revolution, practical application of Marxism to Chinese conditions (the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism), correct revolutionary consciousness and the celebration of Yan’an Virtues.

Marco Polo Bridge incident

On 7 July 1937 Japanese forces came into conflict with Chinese troops, sparking the second Sino-Japanese War.

Marriage Law

The first key legislation implemented by the government of the PRC in May 1950, granting a range of legal, economic and social rights to Chinese women.

Marxism

The economic and political theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, holding that human actions and institutions are economically determined and that class struggle is needed to create historical change. The working class (proletariat) is alienated from the means of production, which is dominated and controlled by the merchant, middle and upper classes (the bourgeoisie.) According to Marxism, capitalism will ultimately be superseded by communism.

Marxism-Leninism

The modification of Marxism by Vladimir Lenin, in which imperialism by propertied classes was seen as the highest form of capitalism. According to Marxist-Leninists the three main social groups in nineteenth century Britain were: the proletariat (working class), the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the landlord class. Lenin advocated a proletarian revolution (driven largely by urban workers) and a ‘vanguard’ party – a professional, elite group that would guide the working class to revolutionary consciousness.

mass line

Mao’s notion of correct leadership. Cadres should listen to ordinary people and their concerns, then develop policies to address these needs.

May 16 Circular

A statement produced in mid-1966 which declared the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

May 30 Atrocious Incident

On 30 May 1925, British troops fired on protesting Chinese workers in Shanghai and Guangzhou, thus inflaming nationalist sentiment and increasing support for the CCP among workers.

May Fourth Movement

The Chinese anti-imperialist demonstration movement sparked by the conditions set out in the Treaty of Versailles, 1919. Students outraged at the unjust treatment of China protested first at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, and later across the nation. The movement resulted in a period of questioning and intellectual inquiry.

May Seventh cadre schools

Labour camps for Communist officials, founded during the Cultural Revolution. Study of Mao Zedong Thought was combined with rigorous physical work.

Military Bureau of Statistics

Political police force that uncovered and arrested opposition and critics of Jiang's regime.

Mukden incident

The outbreak of fighting between Japanese and Chinese troops on 18 September 1931, leading to Japan's invasion of Manchuria.

N

national capitalists

Businessmen willing to support the Communists; tolerated in Mao's PRC.

National Congress

The national parliament or elected consultative body of the PRC.

New Army

Military units developed in the late-Qing New Government period. New Army soldiers were trained and equipped in a modern military manner, and tended to be loyal to their commanding officers rather than to the Qing government.

New Culture Movement

The period of intellectual questioning and political radicalism that emerged towards the end of WWI. Intellectuals such as Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Li Dazhou and Chen Duxiu re-examined Chinese traditions (such as Confucianism) and incorporated everyday written language (baihua) into literary works. They explored the applicability of different political ideas, such as anarchism and Marxism, to China. The New Culture movement inspired and grew into the May Fourth movement.

New Fourth Army

The Communist armed forces established from remnants of Jiangxi Soviet guerrillas in 1937, following the formation of the Second United Front.

'New Government' (Xinzheng)

A period of reform and institutional change initiated by the Qing in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion (1901–09.) It involved modernising education, political institutions and the military.

New Life Movement

A Guomindang campaign launched in 1934 to instill virtuousness and correct behaviour. Influenced by Confucian, Christian and fascist ideals.

New Youth

The revolutionary journal, founded and edited by Chen Duxiu in 1915, that provided a forum for new ideas during the New Culture and May Fourth movements.

Northern Expedition

The military campaign waged by the Nationalist Revolutionary Army in 1926–1928 that defeated warlord militarists and reunited China; led by Jiang Jieshi.

O

Opium

Addictive narcotic.

orthodox

Traditional; adhering to strict interpretations or beliefs.

P

peasants

Farmers; rural labourers.

People's Commune

Represented an extreme form of collectivisation. Private land ownership was abolished and people worked in exchange for work points. Socialist aspects of the Communes included communal kitchens, nurseries and Happiness Homes for the elderly.

People's Daily

The chief national newspaper of the PRC.

people's democratic dictatorship

Rule by the four revolutionary classes: peasantry, proletariat, petit-bourgeoisie and national capitalists. Proclaimed with the founding of the PRC.

People's Liberation Army (PLA)

The Communist armed forces, formally established in May 1946. Known previously as the Red Army.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

Government established by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party in 1949. Still the official name for China.

plenum

A formal meeting of the CCP Communist Central Committee.

Politburo

'Political bureau': the top-level leadership group of the Communist Party Central Committee.

politics in command

A common Maoist slogan that champions ideology over all other considerations.

positional warfare

Military fighting carried out in a regular manner along established positions.

proletariat

Industrial working class (factory workers).

provincial

Pertaining to provinces.

purge

Removing a person or group from an organisation by threat or violent force.

Puritanism

A Christian tradition based on ideals of moral purity and frugal living. Methodist Christianity was influenced by Puritan ideals.

Q

Qing

The Qing royal dynasty (1644–1912), China's last Imperial regime.

queue

A hairstyle comprising a long plait and shaved forehead; all Chinese men were required to wear the queue during the Qing era.

R

radical

Favouring extreme or revolutionary ideas or practices. The opposite of reactionary.

Rape of Nanjing

Atrocities committed by the Japanese between December 1937 and January 1938 after capturing the city of Nanjing. Three-hundred-thousand civilians were killed and 20 000 women and girls were raped.

reactionary

Extremely conservative or opposed to change.

Rebels

Workers' organisations formed to carry out the Cultural Revolution.

Red Guards

Students from universities and high schools who declared loyalty to Chairman Mao and enacted a range of campaigns during the Cultural Revolution. Red Guards harassed, denounced and in some cases killed teachers, party officials and others in positions of authority. They also led campaigns to destroy the Four Olds (old ideas, culture, customs and habits), participated in mass rallies at Beijing and travelled throughout China to 'exchange experiences' with their peers.

regent

Someone who administers a state because the reigning monarch is either a minor, absent or incapacitated.

republic

Representative democracy in which the head of state is not a monarch.

revisionism

A lapse in proper ideological practice and the corruption of ideals.

revisionist

People accused of betraying the Marxist–Leninist–Stalinist model of communism.

right-wing

Conservative or reactionary; espousing individualism, capitalism and a limited role for government.

S

Sanfan

See Three Antis.

Sanminzhuyi

Sun Yixian's 'Three Principles of the People': Democracy, Nationalism and People's Livelihood.

Self-Strengthening Movement

A reform movement of the late Qing era. Self-Strengtheners believed in gaining knowledge of Western military technology and engineering while at the same time maintaining Confucian institutions and prioritising philosophical study.

Shaan-Gan-Ning Soviet

The full title of the Yan'an Soviet, taken from the names of the three provinces involved: Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia.

Shaanxi

A province of north-central China. Capital: Xi'an.

Shanghai Communiqué

Issued on 28 February 1972, following President Nixon's visit to China, the Communiqué outlined the respective positions of China and the US on a range of issues (including Taiwan.) It marked the start of normalised Sino-American relations.

Shanghai People's Commune

At the height of the 1967 January Storm of the Cultural Revolution, the Shanghai municipal government and party organisation were overthrown by radical 'Red Rebels' workers' group. Encouraged by Zhang Chunqiao, the Rebels founded a Shanghai People's Commune on 5 February 1967, which, taking its inspiration from the Paris Commune of 1848, was proclaimed a direct revolutionary form of democratic governance. The Shanghai People's Commune lasted less than a month, as three-in-one revolutionary committees superseded previous power seizures by the end of February.

Sino

Chinese.

Sixteen Points

A directive released by the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee in August 1966, outlining the nature and goals of the Cultural Revolution.

socialism

Ideology that calls for the equal distribution of wealth by the state. The basis of socialism is a society built on fair and equitable political, social and economic structures. Revolutionary socialism argues that this can only be achieved the overthrow of capitalism; reformist socialism argues that such changes can come gradually and without undue conflict.

Socialist Education Movement

A series of campaigns in the early-to-mid-1960s aimed at stamping out corruption amongst Communist officials and encouraging socialist values in the wider society. The movement included a range of anti-corruption measures outlined in ten-point directives and the 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaigns.

soviet

In the Chinese context, a Communist rural base or community. The term was borrowed from Russia, where it denoted a workers' and soldiers' council.

spheres of influence

In the Chinese context, territories dominated by Western powers and Japan. Though the spheres were not officially colonies, controlling nations would use them to dominate trade and to establish infrastructure and enterprises in China.

state council

The government ministries of the PRC, headed by Premier Zhou Enlai until 1976.

Sun-Joffe Declaration

A joint statement presented in early 1923 on behalf of the Guomindang and Comintern by Sun Yixian and Adolph Joffe. It outlined the groups' respective positions on key revolutionary ideologies (chiefly Marxism) and the goals of the forthcoming alliance (United Front) between the GMD and CCP. Sun and Joffe identified 'national independence' and 'national unity' as the key ideals to work towards.

T

tenant farmers

Farmers who rent their land.

Thought Reform

A mass campaign of the early 1950s, in which intellectuals were made to read Marxist texts, engage in self-criticisms and make public declarations of their ideological shortcomings. Liang Shuming and the followers of Hu Shi were denounced.

Three Antis Campaign

The *sanfan* campaign by Communists launched in 1951 against politically unreliable government officials and corrupt party cadres. It targeted 'corruption, waste and bureaucratism.'

Three Bad Years

The worst years of famine (1959–1961) following implementation of the Great Leap Forward.

Three-Family Village

Refers to the residence of a Song dynasty official who was unfairly dismissed from office but still criticised Imperial policy.

three-in-one revolutionary committees

The authorities established at the height of the Cultural Revolution to lead in place of Party organisation. Consisted of radical cadres, soldiers and rebels.

Three Principles of the People

Sun Yixian's revolutionary ideology based around the ideals of Democracy, Nationalism and People's Livelihood.

three-thirds

The principle underpinning local government during the Yan'an era: one-third of members should be from the CCP, one-third from other revolutionary groups and one-third could be anyone apart from Japanese collaborators, supporters of Jiang Jieshi or exploitative landlords.

Tiananmen incident

The violent dispersal of mass protests at Tiananmen Square in April 1976. Protestors mourned the death of Zhou Enlai and were critical of Jiang Qing's Gang of Four and Chairman Mao. The CCP blamed Deng Xiaoping for the disorder.

Tongmenghui

'Revolutionary Alliance'—an anti-Qing revolutionary organisation founded by Sun Yixian and based around his Three Principles.

Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance

An agreement made between the PRC and the Soviet Union in 1950, pledging mutual economic and military support.

Treaty of Versailles

The post-WWI peace agreement, reached in 1919, which imposed harsh measures on Germany. Having joined the Allied war effort in 1917, China expected to recover German concessions in China. Chinese interests, however, were ignored and Japan was rewarded instead.

Twenty-One Demands

In January 1915, Japan demanded a number of economic rights in Manchuria and northern China. When President Yuan Shikai accepted the demands, popular protests broke out.

U

United Front

The terms of agreement and periods of cooperation between the Guomindang and CCP. The First United Front (1924–27), a three-way alliance between the GMD, CCP and Comintern, was brought to an end shortly after the White Terror. The Second United Front (1936–1941), a military alliance against Japanese occupying forces, was a result of the Xi'an Incident and came to an end after Nationalist forces attacked the New Fourth Army for failing to obey orders.

Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside

A CCP campaign in early 1968 which sent urban youths to live and work in rural areas.

utopianism

Visionary schemes for producing perfection in social or political conditions. Often used to describe unachievable ideals, the term was popularised by Sir Thomas More's 1516 book, *Utopia*.

V

vernacular

Everyday language used by ordinary people.

W

warlord

A leader who controls a particular region by military might.

Western powers

The leading nations of the West in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

White Terror

The term 'White Terror' comes from the Russian Revolution where the forces that opposed the Communist 'Reds' during the Russian Civil War were known as 'Whites'. Chinese Communists used the term to imply that Jiang Jieshi and his allies were 'counter-revolutionary'.

work points

Each category of worker (e.g. young males, elderly people etc.) received the same number of work points regardless of actual hours worked; you could not earn more points by working harder.

Wufan

See Five Antis.

Wuhan Uprising

See Double Tenth.

X

Xi'an Incident

The dramatic arrest of Jiang Jieshi by Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang in December 1936, resulting in the Second United Front between the GMD and CCP (against the Japanese.)

Xinhai

The Chinese people refer to the events that brought down the Qing as the Xinhai Revolution, a term that comes from the name of the given to the year 1911 in the traditional Chinese calendar.

Y

Yan'an

A town in the remote mountainous region of Shaanxi which provided the base for the Yan'an CCP Soviet after the Long March.

Yan'an Way

The policies, revolutionary ideals and mass mobilisation campaigns carried out by the Communists during the Yan'an Soviet era, particularly during the 1940s.

Yuan

Government bureaus of the Nationalist government.

Yuan

The currency of the PRC. The term, which translates as 'institution,' was also used to denote the five main bureaus of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government – Executive, Legislative, Control, Judicial and Examination.

Z

Zhengfeng

The Maoist Rectification campaigns of the 1940s.

Zhongguo

Translating as 'Middle Kingdom' or 'Central Kingdom,' the term by which the Chinese refer to their realm.

Zhongnanhai

The compound in Beijing which holds the residences of high-ranking CCP officials.

INDEX

A

absolute rule 18–19
 Acheson, Dean 151
 Agrarian Reform Law 155
 Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives 167, 168, 169, 184, 185
 agriculture *see* peasants
 All-China Women's Federation 161
 Anti-Bolshevik League 81
 Anti-Rightist campaign 145, 175, 263
 art and politics 216–20, 242–3
 artisans 15
 Autumn Harvest Uprising 72

B

backwardness as virtue 183
 backyard steel production 187–8, 193
 baihua 45
 bailiffs 15
 bandit extermination campaigns 77, 96
 banking 80, 85
 barefoot doctors 261
 base and superstructure (Marxism) 50
 Beijing dialect 10
 Beijing Opera 217
 Beijing University 44, 46, 51, 228–9, 244, 247
 Beiyang Army 30, 42
 big-character posters 228, 229, 232, 234
 Blue Shirts 89
 Bo Gu
 and Jiangxi Soviet 76, 79
 and Long March 96, 97, 100, 102, 108
 as Twenty-eight Bolsheviks member 74
 Bocheng, Liu 103
 Bolsheviks 56
 border regions (Yan'an Soviet) 117
 Borodin, Mikhail 56, 57, 59, 66, 67, 68
 bourgeoisie 50
 Boxer Rebellion 22, 42
 Braun, Otto (Li De) 96, 97, 99, 100
 Britain and Opium War 21
 Buddhism 12
 bureaucratic capitalists 150

C

cadres 115, 209–10, 211, 259–60, 261, 264
 Cai Yuanpei 44
 cannibalism 45, 198, 246, 264
 Capital (Marx) 48
 capitalism 49, 50
 CC Clique 82, 89
 Chen Boda 120, 226, 228, 229, 231, 265–6
 Chen Duxiu
 and CCP in crisis 72, 73
 and CCP's founding 51, 52–3
 and New Culture Movement 44, 45, 46
 and United Front 55
 and White Terror 66, 67
 Chen Guofu 82, 90
 Chen Jieru (Jennie) 71, 90
 Chen Jiongming 54, 56, 57
 Chen Jitang 98
 Chen Lifu 82, 90
 Chen Yi 245
 Chen Yun 148, 152, 168, 191, 208, 210
chengfen class labels 159
 China Mutual Progress Association 66

Chinese Civil War 78, 91, 113, 120, 133–5, 274
 Chinese civilisation 8–9
 Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
 art and politics 216–20, 242–3
 Central Committee 74, 147–8
 Chinese Civil War 78, 91, 113, 120, 133–5, 274
 in crisis 62, 72–4
 and Dixie Mission 131–2
 emulation campaigns 212–14, 215
 founding of 35, 51–3
 growth of 120–1
 Jiangxi Soviet 38, 75–81, 95, 97, 215
 Mao's Rectification Campaign 112, 118–21, 173, 274
 Military Affairs Committee 148
 and New Life Movement 89
 new order in PRC 146–8
 Politburo 73, 148
 power consolidated 149–51
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 113, 130, 132
 Second United Front 123, 130
 Socialist Education Movement 210–12, 216
 State Council 68, 82, 147
 and Sun Yixian's death 58–9
 United Front 26, 54–7, 58, 59, 62, 67–8, 90
 and White Terror 66–8
 and Xi'an Incident 122–3
 Yan'an Soviet 108, 113, 115–21, 122, 123, 131–2, 133, 274
 Zhang Xueliang's truce with 122
 see also Cultural Revolution; Great Leap Forward (Second Five-Year Plan); Long March; People's Republic of China (PRC)
 Chinese currency 150
 Chinese sovereignty 85, 96, 113
 Chinese Soviet Republic 76
 Chongqing, Sichuan 125, 126, 127, 245
 Cixi, Dowager Empress 17, 22–3, 30, 42
 class conflict 50, 173
 class labels 159
 cleanliness drives 162
 Cleansing the Class Ranks 261–4
 climate of China 7, 9–10
 collectivisation 166–70, 171, 182, 185–8
 Comintern
 and CCP in crisis 62, 72, 73, 74
 and CCP's founding 51, 53
 Liu Shaoqi's scholarship 250
 and Long March 96
 and Sun Yixian 26
 and United Front 55–6
 and White Terror 66, 67, 68
 commissars 76
 communal kitchens 188, 193, 208
 communications infrastructure 84
 communism, definition 49
 communist agitators 64
The Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels) 48
 Confucianism
 criticism of 271
 and Cultural Revolution 239
 Middle Kingdom era 5, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 22
 and New Culture Movement 44, 45

and New Life Movement 87, 88, 89
 and Yuan Shikai 39
 constitution of PRC 146, 171, 248, 265–6
 construction, modernisation of 84
 contradictions among people 173, 174
 cooperatives 167, 168, 169, 184, 185
 corruption 62, 86–7, 127, 134, 209–11
 criminal networks 66, 90
 Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao 271
 cult of personality 170–1
 cultural destruction 239
 Cultural Revolution
 cult of Mao 240–1
 eve of 221
 Four Olds campaign 223, 224, 239
 January Storm and Liu Shaoqi's fall 244–8
 and Jiang Qing 220, 221, 226, 239, 242–3, 245, 247, 248, 275
 launch of 226–7, 275
 Little Red Book 213, 215, 221, 241
 Mao's Good Swim 230–1
 Nie Yuanzi's big character poster 228, 232
 Red Guards 220, 223, 229–30, 232–41, 244–7, 251, 259
 revolutionary model operas 242–3
 Sixteen Points 231
 'victory' of 252–3
 Cultural Revolution Small Group 226, 231, 244, 252
 culture shock 258–9
 currency 150

D

Dai Li 89, 123, 126, 127
 danwei 159
 Daoism 12
 Dazhai Commune 187
dazibao 228, 229, 232, 234
 democratic centralism 56
 Democratic League 146, 175
 Deng Pufang 252
 Deng Tuo 217
 Deng Xiaoping
 after Zhou Enlai's death 271, 272
 and Anti-Rightist campaign 175
 and art and politics 219, 243
 CCP Chairman position 273
 and collectivisation 170, 171
 and Cultural Revolution 220, 227, 229, 230, 244, 245, 248
 Four Modernisations 102, 270–1
 and Jiangxi Soviet 80
 and new order in PRC 148
 on Peng Dehuai 196
 and post-Great Leap recovery 208, 210
 and Socialist Education Movement 211, 212
 deniers and sceptics 191
 denunciations 157, 158, 175, 244–5, 251
 dialectical materialism 50
 dialects 10
 Ding Ling 46, 119, 175
 Dixie Mission 131–2
 Donald, W.H. 88, 123
 Double Tenth (Wuhan Uprising) 29–30, 42
 Du Yuesheng 66, 88, 126, 157
 Duan Qirui 54
 dynasties 8

E

The East is Red (film and song) 242
 economic change in Yan'an Soviet 116–17
 economic relations in Marxism 50
 education 80, 260
 see also literacy; students
 Eighth Party Congress 170–1, 184
 Eighth Route Army 123
 elite 13, 16
 emulation campaigns 212–14, 215
 encirclement campaigns 96–7
 Engels, Friedrich 48
 ethnic diversity 10
 everyday writing 45
 executions 158, 264

F

Family Clique 82
 famine 127, 193, 197–9, 208, 209
fanshen 155–6, 159
 Farmers' Movement Training Institute 72, 274
 farming *see* peasants
 fascism 89
 fashion and modernisation 85
 February Outline Report 218, 219, 221, 226
 feminists 28–9, 46, 119
 Feng Yuxiang 40, 68
 filial piety 11, 13
 financial sector 85
 financial stability in PRC 150
 First All-China Congress 75–6
 First Five-Year Plan 145, 165–7, 169, 170
 see also Great Leap Forward (Second Five-Year Plan)
 First National Congress 51–2, 53
 Five Antis 156, 158, 170
 Five-Man Group 218, 226
 five relationships 11
 five virtues 11
 foot-binding 17–18, 20, 28
 Forbidden City 4, 19, 135, 239, 275
 foreign powers
 and Chinese sovereignty restored 85
 imperialist claims over China 21, 22, 24, 47, 51, 56
 and warlords 40, 54
 Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces 218–19
 Four Clean-Ups 210, 211
 Four Modernisations 102, 270–1
 Four Noble Truths 12
 Four Olds campaign 223, 234, 239
 Four Pests campaign 189
 'Free China' 126
 Futian Purges 81

G

Galen, Vasily 56, 57, 64, 67
 Gang of Four 220, 271, 272, 273
 Gao Gang 106, 108, 168–9
geming 19
 gender equity and Jiangxi Soviet 80
 General Line 184, 189, 192, 195, 198
 geography of China 7, 9
 German concessions 47
 Goodnow, Frank 39
 grain production
 First Five-Year Plan 166, 167
 Great Leap Forward 189, 190, 191, 192–3, 197, 198, 208, 210
 High Tide campaign 170
 Jiangxi Soviet 79

Great Leap Forward (Second Five-Year Plan)
 catalyst for 182–4
 end of 192–7, 250
 experiments and statistics 189–91
 launch of 184, 275
 People's Communes 185–8, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 203, 246–7
 recovery from 208–10
 Sino-Soviet split 180, 202–3
 Three Bad Years 197–9
 Great Snowy Mountains 106, 107
 Green Gang 66–7, 88, 90, 157
 Guandong Army 114
 Guangchang, Battle of 97
 Guangxu, Emperor 22–3
 Guangzhou Commune 73
 Guangzhou government 54
 guerrilla tactics 77, 78, 79, 95, 96, 97, 100, 130, 134, 135, 274
 Guomindang *see* Nationalists (Guomindang (GMD))

H

Hai Rui Dismissed from Office (Wu Han) 217–18, 219, 221, 226
 hairstyles 20, 30, 73, 115
 Han people 10, 18, 20, 21
 Han Suyin 161
 Happiness Homes 186, 193
 He Long 72, 97, 99, 245
 He Zizhen 119, 274
 heavy industry 165, 183, 208
 Henan famine 127
 High Grasslands 107
 High Tide campaign 169–71, 184
 historical materialism 48–9, 50
 Hitler, Adolf 89, 128
 household registration 158–9
 household responsibility system 208
 Hu Feng 157, 172
 Hu Hanmin 58, 59, 83
 Hu Shi 44, 45, 157
 Hu Zongman 134
 Hua Guofeng 271–2, 273
 Huang Jinrong 66
 Huangpu Clique 82
 Huangpu Military Academy 57, 67, 89, 90, 102
 Hundred Days of Reform 22–3, 42
 Hundred Flowers campaign 145, 172–7, 190
 Hurley, Patrick 131–2, 133
 hyperinflation 126

I

Imperial China *see* Middle Kingdom
 industry 165–6, 167, 170, 183, 208
 inflation 85, 126, 150
 intellectuals
 and CCP's founding 51, 52
 and Hundred Flowers campaign 145, 172–7, 190
 New Culture Movement 35, 44–7
 and Red Guards 234
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 127
 Thought Reform and public denunciations 156–7
 Yan'an Soviet 116, 117, 119, 121

J

January Storm 246–7
 Japan
 and Chinese Civil War 133
 as foreign power in China 21, 22, 47

Twenty-one Demands 39, 42
see also Second Sino-Japanese War
 Jiang Jieshi
 and CCP in crisis 74
 and Chinese Civil War 133, 135
 and Dixie Mission 131, 132
 and Hundred Flowers campaign 172
 and Jiangxi Soviet 77
 and Long March 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 108
 Nanjing Decade 62, 82–7, 90–1
 and New Life Movement 87–9
 and Northern Expedition 62, 64, 68, 90
 overview of life 90–1
 resignation 135
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 113–15, 122–30, 132
 and Second United Front 123
 and Soong dynasty 70–1, 82
 and Sun Yixian's death 35, 58, 59
 in Taiwan 152, 154
 and United Front 56, 57
 and White Terror 66, 67, 68
 wives 68, 70–1, 90
 Xi'an Incident 102, 122–3

Jiang Qing
 art and politics 216–19, 242–3
 and Cultural Revolution 220, 221, 226, 239, 242–3, 245, 247, 248, 275
 Gang of Four 220, 271, 272, 273
 marriage to Mao 119, 220, 274
 overview of life 220
 and Wang Hongwen 270
 Jiangxi Soviet 75–81, 95, 97, 215, 274
 Jinggangshan, Jiangxi 75, 78, 79
 Joffe, Adolph 55

K

Kang Sheng
 and Cultural Revolution 226, 228, 231, 239, 248
 and Great Leap Forward 189
 health issues 270
 and Rectification Campaign 120
 Kangxi, Emperor 20
 Karakhan Manifesto 51
 Khrushchev, Nikita 170, 180, 182, 193, 194, 202–3
 Kim Il-sung 151–2
 Kissinger, Henry 268, 269
 Korean War 151–4
 kowtow 19
 Kung, H.H. 70, 85

L

land reform 79, 115–16, 130, 134, 154, 155–6
 landlords 15–16, 67, 79, 115–16, 134, 155–6, 261
 Lao She 235
 Laozi 12
 League of Nations 85, 114, 128
 Learn from the PLA campaign 213
 Lei Feng 206, 213–14
 Lenin, Vladimir 50, 56
 Li Dazhao 44, 46, 51, 52–3, 56, 66, 274
 Li Lisan 73–4, 81
 Li Lisan Line 74
 Li Yuanhong 29–30, 40, 54
 Li Zhisui 187, 191, 201, 203, 263
 Li Zongren 135
 Liang Shuming 157, 172
 Liao Mosha 217
 Liao Zhongkai 58, 59
Liberation Army Daily (newspaper) 218
 life expectancy 261

Lin Biao
 and Chinese Civil War 133, 135
 criticism of 271
 and Cultural Revolution 226, 228, 234, 244,
 245, 248, 275
 fall of 265–7, 269
 and Great Leap Forward's end 195, 209
 and Korean War 152
 and *Little Red Book* 212–13, 266
 and Luo Ruiqing 221
 and Mao 215, 231, 265–7
 and new order in PRC 148
 overview of life 215
 Lin Doudou 267
 Lin Ligu (Tiger Lin) 266–7
 Ling, Ken 237
 linguistic diversity 6, 10
 linking up 233–4, 239
 literacy 10, 45, 116, 117
Little Red Book (Mao) 207, 212–13, 215, 221, 241,
 266
 Liu Bochong 100, 135, 245
 Liu Shaoqi
 and art and politics 217, 219, 221, 243
 CCP positions 148, 193, 275
 and collectivisation 168, 170, 171
 and Cultural Revolution 220, 226, 227, 229–
 30, 231, 244, 245, 248
 and First Five-Year Plan 165
 and Hundred Flowers campaign 172
 overview of life 250–1
 and post-Great Leap recovery 208, 209, 210
 and Socialist Education Movement 210, 211,
 212
 loan repayments to Soviet Russia 166
 Long March
 Battle of Luding Bridge 103–5
 battles, meetings and Mao 99–101
 end of 108–9
 as forced retreat 95, 96–8
 Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands
 106–7
 Long Yu, Dowager Empress 30
 Loushan Pass, Battle of 100
 Lu Ping 228
 Lu Xun 44, 45
 Luding Bridge, Battle of 103–5
 Luo Fu 100
 Luo Ruiqing 213, 221
 Lushan Plenum 180, 194–7, 265, 275
 Lysenkoism 189, 197
 Lytton Commission 114

M

MacArthur, Douglas 152, 153
 Manchu people 8, 10, 18, 20
 Manchukuo 114–15, 124
 Manchuria and Chinese Civil War 133
 Manchurian Incident 114, 122
 Mandarin Chinese 10
 Mandate of Heaven 18–19
 manufacturing industries 165
 Mao Anying 153
 Mao Zedong
 and art and politics 216–18, 221, 243
 big character poster 228, 232
 and CCP in crisis 72, 73, 74
 and Chinese Civil War 133, 134, 135
 and collectivisation 168–70, 182, 185, 187
 cult of 240–1
 death 272–3
 and Dixie Mission 131, 132

at Eighth Party Congress 170–1
 and emulation campaigns 212–14
 at First CCP Congress 51, 52
 and Four Olds campaign 239
 Great Leap Forward 182–4, 193–7, 208, 209–10
 historical interpretations 200–1
 Hundred Flowers campaign 145, 172–7, 190
 Jiangxi Soviet 75–81
 and Korean War 151–2, 153, 154
 and land reform 156
 last years 270–3
 and Li Dazhao 46, 52
 and Lin Biao 215, 231, 265–7
Little Red Book 207, 212–13, 215, 221, 241, 266
 and Liu Shaoqi 248, 250–1
 and Long March 95, 97, 99, 100–9
 and mass campaigns 157–8
 May 16 Circular 226–7, 228
 in Moscow 164
 and New Culture Movement 44
 and new order in PRC 146, 147, 148, 150
 at Ninth Party Congress 252
 overview of life 262–3, 274–5
 Rectification Campaign 112, 118–21, 173, 250,
 274
 and Red Guards 228–30, 232–7, 244, 245, 247
*Report on an Investigation into the Peasant
 Movement in Hunan* 72, 274
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 113, 122, 130
 and Sino-Soviet split 180, 202–3
 Sino-US diplomacy 268–9
 Sixteen Points 231
 Socialist Education Movement 210–12, 216
 statistics and misinformation 190, 191
 swimming 230–1, 263
 Thought 121, 171, 207, 212, 214, 228, 241, 247,
 248, 266
 and Three Bad Years 197–9, 209
 and United Front 56
 Up to the Mountains, Down to the
 Countryside movement 258–64
 wives 119, 216, 220, 274
 and Xi'an Incident 123
 Yan'an Soviet 115, 116, 117
 and Zhou Enlai 102, 263, 265

Mao Zetan 97
 Maoist virtues 119
 Marco Polo Bridge incident 124
 Maring 51–2, 53, 55, 56
 Marriage Law 160–1
 Marshall, George 133
 Marxism 45, 46, 47–50, 51, 118, 120, 157
 Marxism-Leninism 50, 120, 121, 265–6
 mass line 117, 211
 May Fourth Movement 35, 44, 47, 48, 49
 May Seventh cadre schools 259–60
 May 16 Circular 226–7, 228
 May 30 Atrocious Incident 58–9
 Mencius 11
 merchants 15
 Middle Kingdom
 Chinese culture 5, 11–13
 Chinese society 5, 13–16
 land and people 5, 8–10
 Mandate of Heaven 18–19
 as name for China 9
 Qing dynasty's rise and fall 20–3
 women 17–18, 28–9
 Xinhai Revolution 29–31, 39
 Military Bureau of Statistics 89
Minbao (newspaper) 26
 misinformation about statistics 190–1

Mo Bo 236
 modernisation programs 62, 84–5, 91, 113
 Mongol people 8, 10, 18
 Monkey King (fictional character) 227, 263
 Morrison, George 37
 Mussolini, Benito 89
 Mutual Aid teams 166, 167

N

Nanchang Uprising 72, 78, 102
 Nanjing, Japanese occupation of 125
 Nanjing Decade 62, 82–7, 90–1
 national capitalists 148, 150
 National People's Congress (NPC) 147
 nationalisation of industry 150, 170
 nationalism 46, 47
 Nationalist China 62, 82–7, 90–1
 Nationalist Revolutionary Army
 Chinese Civil War 133–4, 135, 274
 Huangpu Military Academy 57, 67, 89, 90, 102
 and Jiangxi Soviet 76, 77
 Northern Expedition 62, 64–5, 68, 90
 Second Sino-Japanese War 115, 123, 130, 132
 White Terror 66, 67
 Xi'an Incident 122
 Nationalists (Guomindang (GMD))
 and Anti-Rightist campaign 175
 and CCP in crisis 72, 73, 74
 Chinese Civil War 78, 91, 113, 120, 133–5, 274
 and Dixie Mission 131–2
 formation of 35, 37
 Futian Purges 81
 left faction 58, 67, 68
 Nanjing Decade 62, 82–7, 90–1
 New Life Movement 62, 87–9
 and Northern Expedition 64, 90
 and PRC's new political system 146
 right faction 58, 68
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 113, 114–15,
 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132
 Second United Front 123, 130
 and Sun Yixian's death 58, 59
 United Front 26, 54–7, 58, 59, 62, 67–8, 90
 and White Terror 66, 67, 68
 and Xi'an Incident 122–3
 and Yuan Shikai 26, 37–8
 see also Long March
 New Army 29–30, 42
 New Culture Movement 35, 44–7
 New Fourth Army 130
 New Government reforms 23
 New Life Movement 62, 87–9
 New Youth (journal) 45, 46
 Nie Yuanzi 228, 232, 239
 Nien Cheng 239
 Ninth Party Congress 223, 248, 252
 Nixon, Richard 102, 268–9
 North Korea 151–3
 Northern Expedition 62, 64–5, 68, 90
 nuclear technology 202, 203

O

officials 16
 Okamura, Yasuji 130
 operas 217, 220, 242–3
 opium 21, 66, 80, 88, 117, 162
 Opium War 21

P

peasants
 agriculture's reliance on 13
 and CCP in crisis 72, 73

- and CCP's founding 52
 - Chinese Civil War 134
 - Cleansing the Class Ranks 264
 - collectivisation 166–70, 171, 182, 185–8
 - and Great Leap Forward 183–4
 - and Jiangxi Soviet 79
 - land reform 79, 115–16, 130, 134, 154, 155–6
 - life of 13–14
 - and Northern Expedition 64
 - and people's democratic dictatorship 148
 - rebellions in 19th century 22
 - rural life improvements 260–1
 - save yourself production 208
 - and Second Sino-Japanese War 127
 - and Socialist Education Movement 211
 - taxation of 85–6
 - Three Bad Years 198
 - and United Front 56
 - Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside movement 259
 - Worker-Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams 247
 - Yan'an Soviet 115–16, 117, 120–1
 - see also* Red Army
 - Peng Dehuai
 - and CCP in crisis 74, 75
 - and Cultural Revolution 245
 - and Korean War 152, 153
 - and Long March 97, 100
 - at Lushan Plenum 180, 193–5, 275
 - on Mao 263
 - and new order in PRC 148
 - overview of life 196
 - and Second Sino-Japanese War 123
 - and Wu Han 217
 - and Zhu De 78
 - Peng Zhen
 - and art and politics 217, 218, 219
 - and Cultural Revolution 226, 243, 245
 - and Gang of Four's trial 273
 - and Hundred Flowers campaign 172
 - and post-Great Leap recovery 209
 - People's Communes 185–8, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 203, 246–7
 - People's Daily (newspaper) 172, 173, 174, 185, 191, 210, 213, 216, 217, 218, 228, 229, 248, 271
 - people's democratic dictatorship 148
 - People's Liberation Army (PLA)
 - Chinese Civil War 134, 135
 - Cleansing the Class Ranks 264
 - Cultural Revolution 233, 246
 - Korean War 152
 - Learn from the PLA campaign 213
 - Lin Biao's position 215, 221
 - literature and arts 218–19
 - and Mao Zedong Thought 207, 212
 - and new order in PRC 148, 150–1
 - post-Great Leap Forward 208
 - Zhu De's position 78
 - People's Republic of China (PRC)
 - Communist power consolidated 149–51
 - constitution 146, 171, 248, 265–6
 - ethnic diversity in 10
 - fanshen* and law reform 155–6
 - First Five-Year Plan 145, 165–7, 169, 170
 - Gao Gang and high tide of 1955 168–71
 - Hundred Flowers campaign 145, 172–7, 190
 - Korean War 151–4
 - and Long March 109
 - mass campaigns 156–9
 - new order in 146–9
 - proclamation of 135, 146
 - women's rights and social campaigns 160–2
 - Zhou Enlai as premier 102
 - People's Tribunals 155, 156
 - petite-bourgeoisie 148
 - political change in Yan'an Soviet 117
 - Political Study Clique 82
 - politics and art 216–20, 242–3
 - politics in command 194
 - population growth 14, 182
 - positional warfare 96
 - production quotas 166
 - Project 571 266–7
 - proletariat 50
 - see also* workers
 - provinces 6, 10, 36, 38, 83, 85–6
 - Pu Yi, Emperor 23, 30, 31, 114
 - public health 162
 - purges 81, 119, 158, 211, 264
 - Puritanism 87
- Q**
- Qianlong, Emperor 20
 - Qin Shi Huang, Emperor 263
 - Qing dynasty *see* Middle Kingdom
 - Qiu Jin 28–9, 46
 - Qu Qiubai 72, 73, 97
 - queue (hairstyle) 20, 30, 115
- R**
- railway network 37, 38, 165
 - Rape of Nanjing 125
 - Rebel workers 223, 246, 247, 251
 - Rectification Campaign (*zhengfeng*) 112, 118–121, 173, 250, 274
 - Red Army
 - and CCP in crisis 74
 - Chinese Civil War 133, 274
 - Jiangxi Soviet 75, 76–7, 78, 79, 81
 - renaming of 134
 - Second Sino-Japanese War 123
 - Yan'an Soviet 115, 116, 117, 120–1
 - Zhang Xueliang's truce with 122
 - see also* Long March
 - Red Guards 220, 223, 229–30, 232–41, 244–7, 251, 259
 - reforms under Qing dynasty 23
 - Reorganisation Loan (1913) 38
 - Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan* (Mao) 72, 274
 - Republic of China (on mainland)
 - CCP founded 35, 51–3
 - flag 37
 - New Culture Movement 35, 44–7
 - and Sun Yixian's death 57–9
 - United Front 26, 54–7, 58, 59, 62, 67–8, 90
 - and Yuan Shikai 36–43
 - Republic of China (Taiwan) 151, 152, 154, 203, 268, 269
 - Revive China Society 24, 25
 - revolution experiences 140–1
 - Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui) 26, 28, 29, 30, 35, 37
 - revolutionary consciousness 50
 - revolutionary model operas 242–3
 - rice production 9, 14, 189, 190, 191
 - Ridgway, Matthew 153
 - Rittenberg, Sidney 121, 131, 174, 187, 198, 201, 247
 - Roosevelt, Franklin D. 128, 129, 131
 - Roy, Mahendranath 67–8
 - Ruijin, Jiangxi 75–6, 79
 - rural life improvements 260–1
 - Russia *see* Soviet Russia
- S**
- sanfan* 156, 157–8
 - Sanminzhuyi* *see* Three Principles of the People
 - save yourself production 208
 - sceptics and deniers 191
 - scholar-gentry 16
 - schools 260
 - scorched-earth policy 97
 - Second Five-Year Plan *see* Great Leap Forward (Second Five-Year Plan)
 - Second Revolution 38
 - Second Sino-Japanese War
 - conflict prior to 96, 114–15, 116, 117, 122, 123
 - Dixie Mission 131–2
 - events of 115, 124–5
 - impact of 91, 113, 126–30
 - Second United Front 123, 130
 - Seeckt, Hans von 96–7
 - self-criticisms 157, 175, 195, 209, 218, 231, 244, 266
 - Self-Strengthening Movement 22
 - 7000 Cadres Conference 209
 - Shanghai Communiqué 269
 - Shanghai Massacre 66–7, 90, 102
 - Shanghai People's Commune 246–7
 - Sino-Soviet split 180, 202–3
 - Sixteen Points 231
 - Sneevliet, Hendricus *see* Maring
 - Snow, Edgar 116, 263, 268
 - social change and CCP 80, 116
 - socialism 49, 50, 148, 164, 165, 169–70, 174, 184, 185–6
 - Socialist Education Movement 210–12, 216
 - soldiers in Chinese society 15
 - Son of Heaven 18–19
 - Song Binbin 235
 - Song Jiaoren 37–8
 - Soong, Charlie 70
 - Soong, T.V. 64, 70, 85, 123
 - Soong Ailing 70
 - Soong dynasty 70–1, 82, 127
 - Soong Meiling 68, 70, 71, 87, 88, 90, 123
 - Soong Qingling 70, 147, 161
 - South Korea 151–3
 - Soviet Russia
 - and CCP in crisis 72, 73, 74
 - and CCP's founding 51, 52, 53
 - and Chinese Civil War 133
 - and First Five-Year Plan 165, 166
 - and Korean War 151–2, 154
 - Nationalists guided by 35
 - and New Culture Movement 45
 - and Second Sino-Japanese War 125
 - split from China 180, 202–3
 - Sputnik* 182
 - and Sun Yixian's death 58, 59
 - and United Front 55–6, 57
 - and White Terror 67–8
 - Speak Bitterness meetings 155
 - Speak Frankness meetings 159
 - Sputnik* Commune 185
 - Sputnik* satellite 182
 - Stalin, Josef
 - and CCP in crisis 72, 73
 - cult of personality 170
 - Five-Year Plan model 165, 166, 182
 - and Korean War 151–2
 - and Long March 97
 - and Sino-Soviet split 202
 - and White Terror 67, 68
 - and Xi'an Incident 123
 - statistics and misinformation 190–1

steel production 187–8, 193
 Stilwell, Joseph (Joe) 70, 113, 128, 129, 131
 street committees 159, 161, 162
 strikes 47, 59, 65, 66, 102, 250
 struggle sessions 119, 157, 158, 159, 175, 234, 244, 251
 students
 Cultural Revolution 228–9
 Hundred Flowers campaign 145, 172–7, 190
 Middle Kingdom era 26, 29
 New Culture Movement 44, 47
 and New Life Movement 89
 Red Guards 220, 223, 229–30, 232–41, 244–7, 251, 259
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 114, 127
 and Sun Yixian's death 59
 Yan'an Soviet 116
 Sun Chuanfang 64
 Sun Yixian
 death 35, 57–9
 and Jiang Jieshi 64, 82, 90
 revolutionary life 5, 24–6, 30, 31
 and Soviet Russia 53
 Three Principles of the People 25, 26, 56, 64, 113
 and United Front 54–6
 widow 70
 and Yuan Shikai 35, 37, 38, 39
 Sun-Joffe Declaration 55

T
 Taiping Rebellion 22, 24, 103
 Taiwan 151, 152, 154, 203, 268, 269
 Takamatsu, Prince 124
 tax 85–6, 126, 127
 tax reform 116, 150
 Ten Points directives 211
 tenant farmers 14
 Tenth Party Congress 270
 38th parallel 151
 Thought Reform 156–7, 172
 Three Antis 156, 157–8
 Three Bad Years 197–9, 208, 209
 Three Principles of the People 25, 26, 56, 64, 113
 Three Privates and One Guarantee 209
 three subordinations 17
 Three-Family Village 217
 three-in-one revolutionary committees 247
 three-thirds principle 117
 Tian Jiaying 191
 Tiananmen Square 47, 135, 170, 183, 232, 271, 272
 Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance) 26, 28, 29, 30, 35, 37
 townspeople 15
 tradespeople 15
 transport infrastructure 84, 165
 see also railway network
 Treaty of Versailles 47, 51, 54
 Trotsky, Leon 56, 72, 90
 Truman, Harry 133, 152, 153
 Twenty-eight Bolsheviks (Returned Students' Clique) 74, 75–6, 79, 100, 119
 Twenty-one Demands 39, 42

U
 United Front 26, 54–7, 58, 59, 62, 67–8, 90
 United Nations 152, 154, 268, 269
 United States
 Chinese Civil War 133
 diplomatic relations with China 102, 215, 268–9

Dixie Mission 131–2
 imperial claims on China 21
 Korean War 151, 152–3, 154
 and Sino-Soviet split 203
 World War II 113, 128
 unskilled workers 15
 Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside movement 258–64

V
 Voitinsky, Grigory 51, 52

W
 Wang Bingnan 197
 Wang Guangmei 211, 244, 251
 Wang Hongwen 220, 270, 271, 272, 273
 Wang Jiaxiang 99, 100
 Wang Jingwei
 and Nanjing Decade 83
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 124
 and Sun Yixian's death 58, 59
 and United Front 56
 and White Terror 66, 67, 68
 Wang Ming 74, 76, 79, 102, 119
 Wang Wende 188
 War of Resistance *see* Second Sino-Japanese War
 Warlords 40, 47, 54, 56, 64, 73, 76
 water conservation projects 183
 Wedemeyer, Albert 129
 White Terror 66–8
 Wilson, Woodrow 47
 women
 foot-binding 17–18, 20, 28
 and Four Olds campaign 239
 Middle Kingdom era 17–18
 and New Life Movement 88
 revolutionary feminists 28–9, 46, 119
 rights and social change 80, 116, 160–2
 work points 185, 191, 210
 Worker-Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams 247
 workers
 and CCP in crisis 73
 and CCP's founding 52
 and Northern Expedition 64
 and people's democratic dictatorship 148
 Rebels 223, 246, 247, 251
 and Sun Yixian's death 59
 and United Front 56
 unskilled 15
 and White Terror 66–7
 see also Red Army
 workplace registration 158–9
 World War I 47, 51
 World War II 70, 91, 113, 128, 132
 written language 10, 45
 Wu Han 217–18, 219, 221, 226
 Wu Peifu 64
 wufan 156, 158, 170
 Wuhan, Japanese occupation of 125
 Wuhan Plenum 192–3
 Wuhan Uprising (Double Tenth) 29–30, 42

X
 Xi'an Incident 102, 122–3
 Xiang River, Battle of 99
 Xie Fei 107
 Xie Fuzhi 184, 235
 Xinhai Revolution 29–31, 39

Y
 Yan'an Soviet 108, 113, 115–21, 122, 123, 131–2, 133, 274
 Yang Chengwu 103
 Yang Rae 236–7
 Yao Wenxuan 216, 218, 220, 271, 272, 273
 Yi people 10, 103
 yin and yang 12
 Yuan (government bureaus) 82
 Yuan Shikai
 and Imperial China 5, 22, 23, 26, 30–1
 overview of life 42–3
 and Republic of China 34–40

Z
 Zhang Chunqiao
 art and politics 216, 218
 and Cultural Revolution 226, 246, 247, 266
 in Gang of Four 220, 271, 272, 273
 Zhang Guotao 103, 106, 108
 Zhang Xueliang 102, 114, 122, 123
 Zhang Yufeng 263
 Zhang Zuolin 64, 66
 Zhao Tongmin 187
 zhengfeng (Rectification Campaign) 112, 118–121, 173, 250, 274
 Zhongguo 9
 Zhongnanhai 187, 244, 245, 262, 263
 Zhou Enlai
 and art and politics 218
 and CCP in crisis 72
 and Chinese Civil War 133
 on Cleansing the Class Ranks 261
 and Cultural Revolution 220, 227, 239, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248
 Four Modernisations 102, 270–1
 health issues and death 270, 271, 272
 and High Tide campaign 170, 171
 and Hundred Flowers campaign 172
 and Jiangxi Soviet 79
 and Korean War 152
 and Lin Biao 267
 and Long March 96, 97, 100, 101, 108
 and Mao 102, 263, 265
 and new order in PRC 147, 148
 overview of life 102
 and post-Great Leap recovery 208, 210
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 123
 and Second United Front 123
 Sino-US diplomacy 215, 268–9
 and United Front 57
 and White Terror 66, 67, 68
 and Xi'an Incident 122, 123
 and Yan'an Soviet 121
 and Zhu De 78
 Zhu De
 and CCP in crisis 72, 74
 and CCP's founding 51–2
 and Cultural Revolution 245
 death 272
 at Eighth Party Congress 170
 and Jiangxi Soviet 75, 76, 77, 80
 and Korean War 152
 and Long March 97, 100, 108
 and new order in PRC 148
 overview of life 78
 and Rectification Campaign 118
 and Second Sino-Japanese War 123
 Zunyi Conference 100