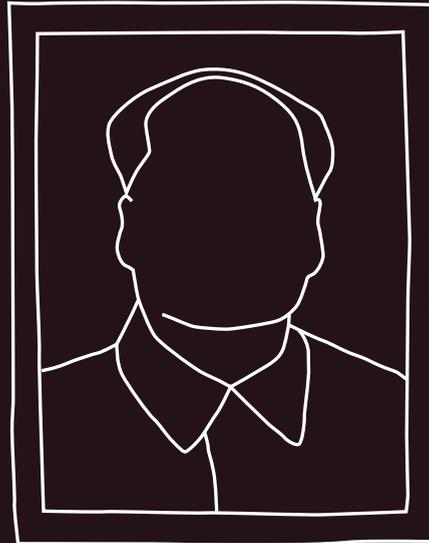




NELSON  
MODERNHISTORY

# CHINA AND REVOLUTION



CHRIS GATES AND ELIZABETH MORGAN

SERIES EDITOR: TONY TAYLOR



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“A revolution is an insurrection,  
an act of violence by which  
one class overthrows another.”

Mao Zedong

**China and Revolution**  
**1st Edition**  
**Chris Gates and Elizabeth Morgan**

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Cover images (main and inset): Getty Images  
Permissions researcher: Debbie Gallagher  
Production controller: Julie McArthur  
Typeset by: MPS Limited

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**National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

Gates, Chris, author.

China and revolution / Chris Gates, Elizabeth Morgan ; Tony Taylor (series editor).

9780170244145 (paperback)

Nelson modern history.

Includes index.

For secondary school age.

Revolutions--China--History--Textbooks.

China--History--Textbooks.

China--Politics and government--Textbooks.

Morgan, Elizabeth, author.

Taylor, Tony, 1943- editor.

951

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331 Rosedale Road, Albany, North Shore 0632, NZ

For learning solutions, visit [cengage.com.au](http://cengage.com.au)

Printed in Singapore by 1010 Printing International Limited.

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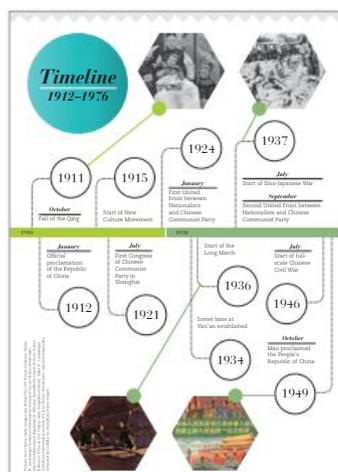
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# ABOUT THE SERIES

## Using China and Revolution

*China and Revolution* has been developed especially for senior secondary students of History and is part of the Nelson Modern History series. Each book in the series is based on the understanding that History is an interpretive study of the past by which you also come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.

Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends on the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and the historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past. The activities and tasks in *China and Revolution* have been written to ensure that you develop the skills and attributes you need in senior History subjects.



### ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE

is a bird's-eye view of the topic and summarises the major developments of the period.

Norman Bethune and the CCP



**Questions**

- 1 Research Norman Bethune's views and his role in the Chinese Communist Party.
- 2 Is the image as left an accurate depiction of his function at that time in China?
- 3 Research other foreigners who were pro-CCP, such as Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow. Make a chart in which you outline their views of, their roles and influence on the CCP, both within China and overseas.
- 4 How does Bethune's role in China compare to that of other foreigners present in China in the 1930s?

**SOURCE 312** 'Time is Life', 1935, a CCP propaganda poster showing the image of Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, who worked with the CCP in the 1930s.

### SOURCE STUDIES

of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently throughout the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

**KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS**

**MAO ZEDONG (1893–1976)**

**Chiang-Kai-Shek** Mao Zedong, Mao was leader of the Communist Party in China that overthrew Jiang Jieshi and the Nationalists. He established the PRC.

**KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

**Communist interpretations**

The Soviet Marxist view is highly critical of Mao and his brand of Marxism. The Soviet Union criticised Mao for his use of the peasantry rather than the working proletariat in China's revolution, and this eventually led to a rift in Sino-Soviet relations in the 1960s. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin referred to Mao as a 'vulgar communist' – red on the surface and white inside – treating him with disdain when Mao visited Moscow in 1950.

The Communist-Maoist view is expressed through primary sources including official CCP government

**KEY DOCUMENTS**

Twenty-one Demands, 18 January 1915

The set of seven demands was made by Japan to China. Japan took advantage of the opportunity created by the onset of war in 1914 and its status as an Allied power to demand special privileges that would give Japan regional ascendancy over China.

New Youth, 1915

The literary journal founded by influential scholar Chen Duxiu as part of the New Culture Movement provided a forum for discussion and new ideas, particularly those of Western origin. In the journal, Chen

### KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, KEY DOCUMENTS

feature brief biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**The battle for supremacy: 1945–1949**

China's desperate battle for national survival against an external threat ended following the surrender of Japan in September 1945. Unfortunately, though, the legacy of Japanese occupation was a China divided into three parts: Mao Zedong's 'Red China', the territory being embraced by the Japanese, and Jiang Jieshi's 'Free China'. The US government attempted to avert this division, even arranging for Mao to fly to Chungking to meet with Jiang, however, both the Nationalists and Communists viewed their former ally as the enemy. In many ways, the Nationalist forces had already lost the fight. Morale was low, they were battle weary and struggled with the loss of many soldiers, and their government was unable to effectively equip them in the face of intense inflation. The Red Army on the other hand, had emerged stronger after the war, initially engaging in guerrilla tactics.

It then launched a series of spectacular advances against the Nationalists in 1948–49. The Nationalists were defeated, Jiang Jieshi and the remnants of the Guomindang fled to Taiwan in January 1949, and on 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China.

**INQUIRY QUESTIONS**

- What were the similarities and differences between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang in the period between 1945 and 1949?
- Why did the Communists win the Chinese Civil War?

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- What were the similarities and differences between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang in the period between 1945 and 1949?
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### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

are listed at the start of the chapter. These questions provide a focus for you as you read each chapter.

### CHAPTER INTRODUCTIONS

provide a context to the issues that are addressed.

**Liu Hulan (1922–1947)**

The case of Liu Hulan is a classic example of propaganda used by the CCP to promote its cause during the civil war period and beyond. She was born in 1922 in the village of Yunshou and joined the Communist Party at the age of 14. She was actively involved in collecting support for the CCP in her local area and ultimately became secretary of the All-China Women's Federation. According to official party records, Liu became a martyr for the party and, consequently a role model for those loyal to the Communist regime because of her actions during an attack on her village by Guomindang forces in January 1947. Guomindang troops confiscated the village harvest and gathered all the villagers into the town hall, demanding that CCP members surrender. When no-one came forward, a GMD informer identified Liu and several others as party members. Perhaps because of her youth, the GMD commander tried to convince Liu to identify other party members, but when she refused he ordered that villagers already identified be decapitated in front of the girl. Given one further chance to renounce fellow villagers, Liu apparently had farewell to her friends and family and then robotically 'gave herself' to the decapitation knife.



**Questions**

- 1 What actions of Liu Hulan can be regarded as heroic?
- 2 How might the CCP have used the story of Liu to promote its ideology in China?
- 3 In what ways might the actions of Liu be seen as a representation of the virtues that Mao articulated during the 'Great Leap Forward'?



### SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS

are biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

### The Blue Shirts

The Blue Shirts Society, also known as the Society of the Practice of the Three Principles of the People, was a fascist, or extreme right-wing and authoritarian, movement that emerged in China in 1926 and held considerable influence until 1947. With its most important members drawn from the military elite of the Whompi Military Academy, the founders of this group hoped to solve China's internal and external crises by reviving the notion of a revolutionary spirit. Its key aim was to check the political activities of all political enemies of the Nationalist government. This group served as a method of control in China, and Miles Lampson, the British ambassador to China at the time, believed the actions of the Blue Shirts were directed by Jiang Jieshi himself.

All through the development of the Blue Shirts, the ideological influences of fascism, of Hitler's Stormtroopers... became required reading for the 'inner ring' people, the elite security guard round Jiang Jieshi.

WF Evans, 'Fascism' in China: The Blue Shirts Society 1923-37, *Science & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1959, pp. 425-43

**Questions**

- 1 Why was it so important for the Blue Shirts, particularly those who surrounded Jiang Jieshi, to understand the ideology of fascism?
- 2 In what ways would the creation of the Blue Shirts Society have assisted Jiang to control life in China?
- 3 How might the existence of the Blue Shirts have contributed to the perception of Jiang as a dictator?

### THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

**One Teaching**

Comrade Mao got carried away when he launched the Great Leap Forward, but didn't see what he was getting into. We must be fair on these questions and not give the impression that only one individual made mistakes while everybody else was correct, because it doesn't tally with the facts.

—Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (1958-1982), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1984

**Chen Ting-fu**

It is hard for people to judge him, so one can only deplore the magnitude of Mao Zedong's twentieth-century Chinese history... Mao studied the Soviet Union, had the Chinese communist revolution, questioned the rigidity of the Nationalist Party, and constructed an unparalleled centralized party-state system... Even though the situation of China today is an inseparable part of the world economic system, we can still see there the continuation of the political system of Mao's era.

—Chen Ting-fu, *Long Cheng and an Inhabitant: Mao: The Chinese Story—A reader, memoirs and a critique* (Cheng and Chong, Bennett-Curry China Vol. 52, no. 1, 2007), p. 104

**Frank Dikötter**

We know that Mao was the key architect of the Great Leap Forward, and that he was the main responsibility for the catastrophe that followed. He had to work hard to push through his vision, bargaining, spilling, gouging, occasionally torturing or persecuting his colleagues... Unlike Stalin, he did not manage to make one a dogmatist to bear these accusations, but he did have the power to remove them from office, terminating their careers... and the many privileges which came with high position in the party.

—Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2010), p. 17

**Questions**

- 1 Compare the three sources. In your own words, by quoting from the extracts, make clear your views on the three different historical interpretations, focusing on the key contribution of each one.
- 2 Deng Xiaoping was a senior member of the CPC throughout the Mao era and was Chinese premier after Mao's death. How might this affect Deng's interpretation? Use the source in your answer.

**MAO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE LONG MARCH**

No one that the Long March is the first of its kind ever needed in history.

The Long March is also a metaphor. It is precious to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, and that the hardships and their hardships, long marches and his life, are perfect metaphors.

The Long March is also an agitation corps. It achieves to approximately two hundred million people of eastern provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation.

The Long March is also a seedling machine, it has sown many seeds in eastern provinces which will grow, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in the future.

To sum up, the Long March ended our victory and the enemy's defeat.

Mao Zedong, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1967, p. 204

**INFORMATION BOXES** contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.

**HISTORIAN BOXES** introduce key historians and schools of interpretation as a way of making historiography clearer.

**DIAGRAMS AND TALKING SOURCES** are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events.

**Chapter summary**

- Jiang Jieshi was adopted by members of his own party who were concerned by the threat from Japan, and was not selected until he agreed to a Second United Front with the Communists Party to fight against Japan.
- Japan invaded China following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which marked the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War.
- Despite aid from the United States, Jiang's armies were not effective in the war against Japan.
- Jiang moved his government to Chungking following the loss of Nanjing to the Japanese.
- The Japanese forces were brutal in their treatment of the Chinese.
- China continued to suffer from a corrupt, inefficient government and was beset with financial problems.
- The Communists Party made use of the Japanese threat to fight effectively and also won a propaganda war, which consolidated its strength and popularity with the Chinese people.

**Weblinks**

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://www.nelson.com.au/links>

**Further resources**

- James M. Bennett, *First Aid in China: The Story of the Sun Yat-sen*, Viking Press, New York, 1938
- John Hunter Burt Foster, *China and Japan in War 1937-1945: The Politics of Collaboration*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1972
- Jiang Chang (or Jun Haidun), *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005
- Chung-ling Kung, *Reminiscences*, in *Modern China, 1912-1949*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994
- Chen Jia, *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*, New Norton/Broadbent, New York, 1960
- John K. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1850-1949*, Pinter, London, 1988
- Kathleen Gray, *The Abolition of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution*, Twenty-First Century Books, Minneapolis, 2009
- Jack Gray, *Redburn and Revolution: China from the 1820s to the 1860s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960
- Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965
- Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1966
- Henry McHenry, *The Modern History of China*, Wadsworth and Nicholson, London, 1975
- Rana Hiteshi, *China War with Japan 1937-1945*, Allen Lane, London, 2013
- Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1990
- Thorburn H White & Amanda Jacoby, *Thunder of China*, William Skene, New York, 1946



**CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES** conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter's content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.

**CONCLUSION**

*China and Revolution*

**CHINA AFTER MAO**

After Mao's death in 1976, there was a power struggle between the Gang of Four, whose leading figure was Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and the rehabilitation Deng Xiaoping and Mao designated successor, Hua Guofeng. Despite the considerable power wielded by the Gang of Four, their powerbase was in Shanghai and they lacked the support of many of the Politburo members. When their bid for power failed, they were purged and executed. The Gang of Four's rule was a horrendous time for the country.

As a Politburo member in September 1976, Hua Guofeng was named as the new chairman of the Central Committee. He had to deal with the country's economic crisis, the support of the Politburo, and the rigidity of the Gang of Four's policies. Hua Guofeng's policies were pragmatic, including Deng. With the support of the Politburo, he was able to implement his policies, which would end the Gang of Four's rule and bring about a new era of reform and opening up.

**DENG'S SECOND REV**

China's first reform and opening up was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. He had become vice-chairman of the Central Committee in 1976. He initiated economic development and a method of Deng's reform would change everything about China, which would allow for the science and technology, and national industry. China's first reform and opening up was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. He had become vice-chairman of the Central Committee in 1976. He initiated economic development and a method of Deng's reform would change everything about China, which would allow for the science and technology, and national industry. China's first reform and opening up was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. He had become vice-chairman of the Central Committee in 1976. He initiated economic development and a method of Deng's reform would change everything about China, which would allow for the science and technology, and national industry.

**THE CONCLUSION** summarises the topic and includes a series of activities to consolidate your knowledge of it. More importantly, these final tasks will help you build an understanding and interpretation of this period in history.

**Beyond this book**

The Nelson Modern History series includes numerous titles on a range of topics covered in senior History courses around Australia. For further information about the series visit: [www.nelsonsecondary.com.au](http://www.nelsonsecondary.com.au).

## SERIES EDITOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Studying modern world history is a fascinating and exciting activity for several reasons. The first of these is our closeness to the modern past. All of us who live today are in direct contact with recent and contemporary history. For example, teachers who use this book might have had grandparents who experienced, in different ways, the events of the Second World War. Students who read this book will probably have grandparents who lived through the Swinging Sixties in Australia. Other students who come from more recently arrived migrant families will have stories to tell about significant historical events from their former homeland.

And when it comes to topicality, the study of modern history is also the study of events that directly affect the way we live today. For instance, the work of 18th-century Scottish philosopher Adam Smith is still being used by 21st-century politicians to underpin their economic policies. Further, the activities of feminist and civil rights activists in the 1960s have altered the way the international community and contemporary societies deal with their citizens. And the shadow of two world wars still impinges upon the collective memories of dozens of nations, often leading to confusion between commemoration of the past, celebration of long-ago endeavours and what this book is about, the pursuit of investigative history.

The study of the modern past is exciting too because when it comes to investigating the late 19th, the 20th and the 21st centuries we can use graphic visual and auditory evidence that brings us close to a fuller realisation of how life was lived then and how the people we are researching looked and sounded. While these new sources of evidence can and do bring a freshness to our understanding of the past, they also demand new techniques of historical investigation.

Finally, the study of modern history, which is, to use historian Pieter Geyl's term, 'an argument without end', is often more intense than other forms of history because of our closeness to the events. This means that, even though conclusions may be passionately expressed, a carefully tempered and dispassionate approach to studying controversial events needs to be employed in the formulation of an historical explanation.

Having said all of that, enjoy your study of modern history.

Tony Taylor  
Series editor

## AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the amazing things about being an educator is that we get to learn new things all the time and, for me, this book is a celebration of that gift of learning. While onerous at times, I enjoyed the research needed to complete my chapters of this book as well as the opportunity to rethink my teaching practice. It is my fervent hope that this enjoyment is conveyed to the students and teachers who use this book.

My grateful thanks to the brilliant team at Cengage and, in particular, to my co-author Chris Gates, who proved to be a patient and supportive learning colleague. Special thanks to my wonderful friends and family who made do with hastily prepared dinners, my lack of time to catch up for coffee, and a mother who was often preoccupied and hunched over her laptop or a book.

I dedicate this book to all my Year 12 History students at Nossal High School, especially the first cohort in 2013, who loved talking about all things Chinese, allowed me to trial information and activities on them and who never lost their passion for this amazing subject – you are missed!

Elizabeth Morgan

I would like to firstly acknowledge and thank my co-author Elizabeth Morgan, whose experience, talent and enthusiasm for all things Chinese has made the writing of this textbook so much easier and more pleasurable. Also of huge significance is the intellect and leadership of our publisher, Michael Spurr, who has been nothing but patient and supportive throughout the process. Finally, there is no doubt that I could not have given such time and energy to this project without the love and support of my family and in particular of my wife, Emma.

Chris Gates



# CHINA AND REVOLUTION

Written records of Chinese history cover some 3000 years. For much of this period, China had a common language and strong cultural heritage, a succession of emperors whom its people believed were divine beings, and an imperial system with a clear social hierarchy that applauded hard work and valued education. This supposed tranquillity, however, did not continue into the 20th century. This century of Chinese history was dominated by civil war, invasion and revolution, which recast the place of China in the world.

During the 19th century, after many years of peace, the Qing dynasty, which had been established by Manchurian invaders in 1664, suffered a series of humiliating defeats. No longer the impervious 'Middle Kingdom', the Chinese state was weakened by unequal treaties and foreign control of its vast wealth and resources and by the corruption of its Qing rulers. In 1911, a revolution erupted, which culminated in the abdication of the last Qing emperor, the young boy Pu Yi.

Into the power vacuum left by the deposed Qing emperor stepped leaders with competing visions for China's future. Would-be emperor Yuan Shikai challenged the republican and democratic aspirations of the revolutionary Sun Yixian, while regional warlords established personal 'kingdoms'. After Yuan's death in 1916, the Guomindang, or Nationalist Party, resurrected Sun's hopes and sought to rule the nation. The First World War complicated the political landscape; the Treaty of Versailles increased Japanese influence and control of Chinese territory. Young intellectuals were attracted to the theories of Karl Marx and to the Russian revolution of 1917, and grew restless. The resulting protests led to the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921.

The 1920s and 1930s were dominated by civil war, fought between the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong and the Guomindang led by Jiang Jieshi, and Japanese invasion. While the Communists and the Nationalists called truces in their civil war in order to fight the warlords during the 1920s and then the Japanese in the 1930s and early 1940s, their competing visions for China's future meant that their cooperation was always limited and conditional. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the civil war entered its final phase. Bloody and divisive, this long civil war ended with Communist victory in 1949.

Under the leadership of Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong between 1949 and 1976, China underwent a revolutionary transformation. Guided by Mao's reinterpretation of the Marxist–Leninist revolutionary philosophy, China sought to establish itself as an equal of the Western powers. This Great Leap Forward resulted in devastating famine, political upheaval and the radical and disastrous dislocation of all aspects of social life as the nation purged itself of all those the Communists believed to be counter-revolutionary. Nonetheless, the nation mourned the loss of Mao on his death in 1976.

Following Mao's death, China, under Communist leadership, has continued its path of economic and social transformation although with a modified ideological vision. This new path, built on the foundations of Mao's initiatives has positioned China as a dominant economic and political global power.

◀ Revolutionary statues at the mausoleum of Mao Zedong in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China

## KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

### CHEN BODA (1904–1989)

(Wade–Giles: Chen Po-ta) Chen was Mao's political secretary before becoming the deputy director of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda department. He worked closely with Mao to compile the *Little Red Book*. Chen was one of the most influential leaders of the Cultural Revolution and was a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in 1966–70. Chen was imprisoned after the fall of Lin Biao but was later released due to ill health.

### DENG XIAOPING (1904–1997)

(Wade–Giles: Teng Hsiao-ping) The son of a peasant, Deng studied in Moscow from 1926 to 1927 and was one of the members of the Long March. He was a military leader during the civil war and after 1949 became an important figure in the economic restructuring of China. He became general secretary of the CCP's Central Committee in 1956, but was denounced at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. He was purged twice, but regained popularity to become leader of the People's Republic of China from 1978 to 1992.

### PENG DEHUI (1898–1974)

(Wade–Giles: P'eng Te-huai) Peng came from a poor peasant background, and as a boy joined a warlord army and later led a band of peasant

rebels. Although crude and lacking in education, Peng's talent and ability meant that he quickly rose through the CCP ranks. He commanded the Third Army during the Long March and was deputy commander of the Eighth Route Army during the war with Japan and throughout the civil war. Peng went on to command the Chinese army in the Korean War and was appointed minister of defence in 1954. At the Lushan Conference in 1959, Peng spoke out against the policies of the Great Leap Forward, resulting in his dismissal and eventual arrest and imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution. He died in a prison hospital in 1974.

### JIANG JIESHI (1887–1975)



(Wade–Giles: Chiang Kai-shek) Jiang was leader of the Chinese Nationalist Party or Guomindang and the president of the Republic of China until his death in 1975. He acquired the title of *Generalissimo* because of his military background.

### JIANG QING (1914–1991)

(Wade–Giles: Chiang Ching) A former Shanghai actress, Jiang was the leader of the Gang of Four and the third wife of Chairman Mao. From the early

1960s she had enormous power and influence and was a key instigator and leader of the Cultural Revolution, sitting on the Central Cultural Revolution Committee. After Mao's death in 1976, she was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. She committed suicide in 1991.

### LEI FENG (1940–1962)

(Wade–Giles: Lei Feng) A soldier of the People's Liberation Army of China. After his death, Lei was characterised in a mass propaganda campaign as a selfless and modest person who was devoted to the Communist Party, Chairman Mao and the people of China.

### LIN BIAO (1907–1971)



(Wade–Giles: Lin Piao) People's Liberation Army leader and heir apparent to the Chairman's position as leader of China, he controlled several bureaus and departments of the Chinese government thanks to his apparent unshakable loyalty and his ability to survive purges. In 1970 he supposedly plotted to kill Mao, but was discovered and died in a plane crash while trying to flee the country.

Left and right: Corbis/Bettmann

## LIU SHAOQI (1898–1969)

(Wade–Giles: Liu Shao-chi) Liu was Chairman of the People's Republic of China and China's head of state from 27 April 1959 to 31 October 1968, during which time he implemented policies of economic reconstruction in China after the failure of Mao's Great Leap Forward. Liu was purged during the Cultural Revolution because of his perceived 'rightist' viewpoints. Mao viewed Liu as a threat to his power. He disappeared from public life in 1968 and was labelled China's premier 'capitalist roader' and a traitor. He died in prison in late 1969.

## MAO ZEDONG (1893–1976)

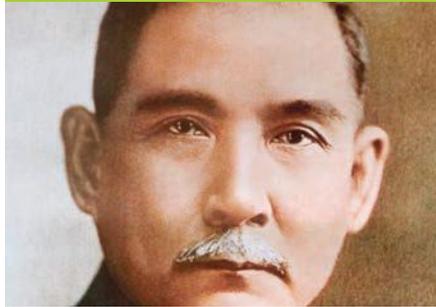


(Wade–Giles: Mao Tse-tung) Mao was leader of the Communist Party in China that overthrew Jiang Jieshi and the Nationalists. He established the People's Republic of China and was CCP Chairman from 1949 until his death in 1976.

## JOSEPH STILWELL (1883–1946)

Stilwell was a US Army general who acted as chief of staff to Jiang Jieshi between 1942 and 1944. In this role he had effective command of Chinese Nationalist forces in the war against Japan.

## SUN YIXIAN (1866–1925)



(Wade–Giles: Sun Yat-sen) Known as the 'father of the revolution', Sun provided a revolutionary ideology with his Three Principles. Sun united revolutionary groups in 1905 under the name of the Tongmenghui and was named first provisional president of the Republic of China in 1911.

## YUAN SHIKAI (1859–1916)

(Wade–Giles: Yuan Shih-kai) A military officer during the Qing dynasty, Yuan went on to become the second provisional president of the Republic of China in 1912. He proclaimed himself emperor before his death in 1916.

## ALBERT COADY WEDEMEYER (1897–1989)

US General Wedemeyer was chief of staff to Jiang Jieshi following the departure of General Stilwell.

## ZHOU ENLAI (1898–1976)



(Wade–Giles: Chou En-lai) Zhou was the first prime minister of the

People's Republic of China. He served under Mao Zedong and was instrumental in consolidating the Communist Party's rise to power, forming foreign policy and developing the Chinese economy. Zhou also served as foreign minister, advocating peaceful existence with the West after the Korean War. Despite his association with the 'capitalist roaders' after the Great Leap Forward, Zhou managed to largely avoid the purges of the Cultural Revolution era due to his close support for Mao and his capabilities as a statesman.

## ZHU DE (1886–1976)



(Wade–Giles: Chu Te) Known for his prowess as a great military leader, Zhu founded the Chinese Communist Party Army, which became known as the Red Army.

## SECOND UNITED FRONT

An alliance between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party during the Sino-Japanese War. It resulted in the suspension of civil war hostilities to create a unified opposition to Japanese invasion.

This page, clockwise from top: Getty Images/Fotosearch; Pictures from History; Getty Images/George Silk/The LIFE Images Collection; Corbis/Bettmann

## EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY

This army was led by Communist General Zhu De, but was under the control of the Nationalist government during the Second United Front. Its work in fighting against the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War and the goodwill it engendered with the Chinese people helped to increase support for the Communist Party at this time.

## 28 BOLSHEVIKS

The collective title given to Russian-educated Chinese students. On their return to China, they exerted considerable influence over the ideological direction of the Chinese Communist Party.

## BLUE SHIRTS SOCIETY

A secret society founded by members of the Whampoa Military Academy who sought to influence politics and the role of the military in China. Its members adhered to the ideology of fascism and pledged to support Jiang Jieshi.

## CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP)

Established in 1921 in Shanghai, the CCP evolved around Maoist ideology to ensure it suited the specific needs of China. It founded the People's Republic of China in 1949, following the defeat of the Nationalist government under Jiang Jieshi.

## COMINTERN

The Communist International, established in 1919. The purpose of

the Comintern was the promotion of world revolution and it functioned chiefly as an organ of Soviet control over the international communist movement. Members of the Comintern acted as advisers to the CCP.

## GANG OF FOUR

A group of four radical CCP leaders who were fanatically loyal to Mao Zedong; they rose to power during the era of the Cultural Revolution, overseeing many of Mao's radical political and social measures. They were eventually deposed and imprisoned after Mao's death in 1976.

## GUOMINDANG (GMD)

(Wade-Giles: Kuomintang) Also known as the Nationalists or the Chinese Nationalist Party, this political party was founded in 1912 by Sun Yixian and later led by Jiang Jieshi. It was the official government of China until its defeat by the CCP in 1949.

## JIANGXI SOVIET

After leaving the Jinggangshan Mountains, Mao Zedong and Zhu De established a soviet in the area around the town of Ruijin in November 1931. The soviet became the Chinese Soviet government headquarters.

## NEW FOURTH ARMY

A Chinese Communist Party military force led by Ye Ting, which fought the Japanese near Shanghai.

## NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

In February 1934, Jiang Jieshi sought to re-establish traditional and highly conservative values within China as a way of offering opposition to the growing popularity of communism. The New Life Movement attempted to control the way of life of the Chinese people at all levels and made use of dictatorial rules that were widely resented.

## PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (PLA)

Established in 1927, the PLA, more commonly referred to as the Red Army, was the principal military force of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1949, following Communist victory, the PLA became the military force of the People's Republic of China.

## RED ARMY

Otherwise known as the Chinese Communist Party Army or People's Liberation Army, this group was initially formed and led by General Zhu De.

## RED GUARDS

Groups of high-school and university students who were from 'red' family backgrounds or who had proved themselves to be firm revolutionaries. They were Mao's loyal supporters and the pioneers of the Cultural Revolution.

## TONGMENGHUI

Sun Yixian founded this secret society in 1905 with the aim of uniting all revolutionary groups in China that sought to remove the Qing.

## Communist interpretations

The Soviet Marxist view is highly critical of Mao and his 'brand' of Marxism. The Soviet Union criticised Mao for his use of the peasantry rather than the working proletariat in China's revolution, and this eventually led to a rift in Sino-Soviet relations in the 1960s. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin referred to Mao as a 'radish communist' – red on the surface and white inside – treating him with disdain when Mao visited Moscow in 1950.

The Communist–Maoist view is expressed through primary sources including official CCP government documents, publications and propaganda. It is highly supportive of Mao's leadership and is often expressed in a fanatical, cult-like manner. The Maoist view is that Mao improved on Marxism, adapting it successfully to 'Chinese conditions'. Developed during the 1950s and 1960s, Mao Zedong's ideas were taken up as the official political and military guiding ideology of the CCP and PLA, particularly during the period of the Cultural Revolution.

Western Communist sympathisers, often referred to as 'naive sinophiles', championed this view on their return to the West from visits to Communist China. During their time in China, these Westerners (usually engineers, government officials and journalists) were exposed to CCP propaganda and given 'guided tours' of the country where they were shown only the best of the new Communist state. They returned with an image of a Communist utopia and set about refuting the Cold War argument that

China was ruled by a cruel, dictatorial government and was a threat to international security.

## Encirclement Campaigns

A series of five campaigns launched by the Nationalist Government against the CCP between the late 1920s and mid 1930s, with the goal of isolating and destroying the developing Chinese Red Army.

## Fascism

A form of right-wing radical authoritarian nationalism that rose to prominence in Europe under Hitler and Mussolini, but was also highly attractive to Jiang Jieshi as a way of advancing his leadership.

## Four Olds

A Cultural Revolution maxim referring to 'old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits'. According to the propaganda, these remnants of the old society interfered with the creation of a modern, socialist society.

## Imperialism

A term primarily used to describe Western political and economic dominance in the 19th and 20th centuries and which suggests the extension of authority and control of one state or people over another in the quest for power and resources.

## Li Lisan Line

A term used to describe the strategy implemented by Li Lisan, a Chinese revolutionary and official in the CCP. The strategy followed established Marxist–Leninist doctrine in its encouragement of large-scale worker uprisings in urban centres.

## Literature of the wounded, or scar literature

Literature based on memoirs of and interviews with the 'victims' of the Mao years. Although much of this kind of work is well researched and a useful addition to the historical record, it has been highly criticised by historians as lacking academic referencing. 'Scar literature' such as Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* sets out to discredit Mao and his government and has therefore been criticised as too one-sided.

## Mandate of Heaven

The Chinese believed that their emperors were chosen for them by divine powers and as such were expected to be good rulers who cared for their country and its people. Consequently, if the ruler was considered to be cruel or ineffective, then it was believed that they should lose their right to rule.

## Maoism

An adaptation of Marxism–Leninism by Mao Zedong; it aimed to create a political ideology that Mao believed suited the specific needs of China. In Maoism, Mao Zedong offered political, social, economic and military theories, and policies that stressed the importance of the peasant.

## Marxism–Leninism

A political and economic ideology in which Vladimir Lenin adapted the ideas of Karl Marx. It was this ideology that drove the Russian Revolution and subsequent new society under the Communist regime.

### Nationalist Decade (1927–37)

Also referred to as the Nanjing Decade, the period of rule during which Jiang Jieshi declared Nanjing to be the capital city of the Nationalist government in China.

### Open Door Policy

A policy of the United States that stated China should be open to all nations that wished to trade with it. This policy did not include the consent of the Chinese, and was another form of imperialism.

### Revisionist interpretations

The revisionist view of Mao's China began after Mao's death, during Deng Xiaoping's leadership of China and particularly since the end of the Cold War in 1991. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, historians have shifted their view to a more balanced appraisal of China's history in the 20th century.

Deng Xiaoping needed to diminish Mao's image, which had developed into a cult during the Cultural Revolution. He therefore allowed criticism of Mao and the admission that Mao had made mistakes, but his great achievements as leader of the revolution and the CCP were still recognised. There was a gradual and subtle reappraisal of Mao and his policies by Chinese academics and journalists during the Deng era.

In the West, historians also began to re-evaluate China's modern history in the post-Cold War era.

### Sanfan

A campaign started in the winter of 1951 against the 'three antis' of corruption, waste and bureaucracy.

### Sinocentrism

The notion that China was the cultural centre of the world.

### Three Alls Policy

This policy was used by the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War and was believed to be in retaliation for the Hundred Regiments Offensive (December 1940), which was led by Communist army troops. Under the guidelines of this policy the Japanese were instructed to destroy everything in their path, using the slogan 'kill all, burn all, loot all'.

### Three Principles

Sun Yixian's general principles for the rule of China, usually translated as nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood.

### Three-Thirds System

The guiding principle for the local government in Yan'an, this system was based on the idea that representative members should come from three areas: one-third CCP members, one-third members of other revolutionary groups, and one-third who could be anyone else other than exploitative landlords and supporters of Jiang Jieshi or the Japanese.

### Western liberal 'Cold War' interpretations

Western historians have traditionally tended to view Chinese history as highly influenced by the West and its own history. In other words, what took place in China in the 20th century was the direct result of Western-driven influences, such as the ideas of Marxism and democracy, conflicts such as world wars, and economic factors such as the exploitation of China by Western imperialists. All of these jolted China into modernisation from its antiquated isolationist past.

In particular, Western liberal historians writing during the Cold War era believed that 20th-century Chinese history was shaped by Japanese occupation between 1937 and 1945, the influence of the Soviet Union throughout the early revolutionary period and much of Mao's time in power, and the hegemony (political influence or control) of the United States that dominated the evolution of the Chinese Nationalist government under Jiang Jieshi, and has continued to influence PRC foreign relations policy to the present day.

This view grew from the West's fear of the spread of communism and its desire to contain communism at any cost. American and British historians in particular have posited, not surprisingly, an anti-communist view that is damning of Mao and his government.

### Wufan

A campaign launched in 1952 against the 'five antis' of tax evasion, theft of government property, industrial sabotage, bribery and fraud.

### Yan'an Way

While in Yan'an (1935–45), Mao consolidated his control of the CCP and formulated his political ideology, which became known as Mao Zedong Thought. During this time, Mao also ensured the discipline of his followers through the use of rectification campaigns and propaganda.

### **Twenty-one Demands, 18 January 1915**

This set of secret demands was made by Japan to China. Japan took advantage of the opportunity created by the onset of war in 1914 and its status as an Allied power to demand special privileges that would give Japan regional ascendancy over China.

### **New Youth, 1915**

This literary journal founded by influential scholar Chen Duxiu as part of the New Culture Movement provided a forum for discussion and new ideas, particularly those of Western origin. In the journal, Chen and others exhorted young Chinese intellectuals to take up the task of rejuvenating China.

### **Treaty of Versailles, 1919**

The peace treaty that Germany was forced to sign in June 1919 following its defeat in the First World War. Japan used the opportunity to request that the major powers allow it to take control of Chinese territory previously held by Germany, based on a wartime alliance.

### **Sun-Joffe Declaration, January 1923**

A joint statement by Sun Yixian and Soviet representative Adolph Joffe in Shanghai, which pledged Soviet assistance for China's unification, outlined the guidelines for Soviet aid to China and offered a declaration for cooperation between the Comintern, CCP and GMD in China. As a direct consequence, the First United Front was formed between the CCP and the GMD.

### **'Three Principles of the People', 1923**

Ultimately published in his 1923 book *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, but articulated much earlier, Sun Yixian's revolutionary ideology was based on the ideas of nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood.

### **Report on an investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan, 1927**

This report was written by Mao Zedong while in his role as Director of the Peasant Department of the CCP. It is in this document that Mao outlines the significance of the peasants as revolutionaries.

### **Three Rules and Eight Points for Attention, October 1928**

Mao Zedong's guidelines on warfare for the Red Army. This guide emphasised the discipline of the armed forces and the fair treatment of civilians and their property.

### **'Be concerned with the well-being of the masses', January 1934**

In this key speech Mao Zedong recognised the importance of winning over the masses, the peasants and the workers to the revolutionary cause. Mao flags the need to redistribute land as well as the more fundamental needs of the masses, such as food, shelter and clothing, to ensure the success of the revolution.

### **'The people's democratic dictatorship', 1940**

In this speech marking the 28th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, Mao Zedong outlined his ideas about the future organisation of society and responded to the criticisms of his opponents.

### **'On New Democracy', January 1940**

An essay written by Mao Zedong while in Yan'an in which he outlined his ideology on how to best govern China and allow it to move forward.

### **Proclamation of the Central People's Government of the PRC, 1 October 1949**

Document in which, as chairman of the CCP, Mao formally announced the inauguration of the People's Republic of China and proclaimed the formation of the new Central People's Government of the PRC.

### **'On the struggle against the "Three Evils" and the "Five Evils"', November 1951 – March 1952**

Directive drafted for the Central Committee of the CCP in 1951, which initiated the movement against the 'three evils'; the struggle against corruption, waste and bureaucracy of government departments and state enterprises. The movement against the 'five evils', launched in 1952, was the struggle against bribery, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts and theft of economic information among owners of private industrial and commercial enterprises.

**‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People’, 27 February 1957**

Speech made at the 11th Session of the Supreme State Council in which Mao attempted to reinvigorate the call to ‘Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend’. It was later heavily revised and published as an editorial in the *People’s Daily* in June 1957, bringing an end to the widespread criticism of Mao and the CCP, and beginning the anti-rightist campaign.

**The Sixteen Points: guidelines for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 8 August 1966**

The Central Committee of the CCP passed the ‘Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ that would later be commonly known as the ‘Sixteen Points’. It defined the character and future direction of the Cultural Revolution and expanded it from a student-led movement to a nationwide mass campaign that was embraced by soldiers, workers and peasants.

# TRANSLITERATION OF CHINESE CHARACTERS INTO ROMAN ALPHABET

There are two different methods of converting Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet. You will note as you study this course that different references spell the names of Chinese people and places differently. The two methods of spelling are called Wade–Giles, an older system devised by the British in the 19th century, and Pinyin, a more modern system introduced by the Chinese government in the 1950s and still in common use in China today. This textbook uses the modern method of Pinyin spelling for all names. In the case of extracts, the original form used by the author has been kept.

Below is a list of some of the main people and places mentioned in this book showing both forms of transliteration. Also note that the Chinese family name appears first, before the given name.

## Pinyin

Beijing  
Chen Boda  
Chongqing  
Cixi  
Deng Xiaoping  
Gao Gang  
Guangdong  
Guangxu  
Guangzhou  
Guomindang (GMD)  
Hai Rui  
Henan  
Hua Guofeng  
Huangpu  
Jiang Jieshi  
Jiang Qing  
Jiangxi  
Kang Sheng  
Li Dazhao  
Li Lisan

## Wade–Giles

Peking  
Chen Po-ta  
Chungking  
Tzu-Hsi  
Teng Hsiao-ping  
Kao Kang  
Kuang-hsu  
Kuantung  
Kuangchou  
Kuomintang (KMT)  
Hai Jui  
Honan  
Hua Kuo-feng  
Whampoa  
Chiang Kai-shek  
Chiang Ching  
Kiangsi  
Kang Shang  
Li Ta-chao  
Li Li-san

## Pinyin

Lin Biao  
Liu Shaoqi  
Mao Zedong  
Nanjing  
Peng Dehuai  
Peng Zhen  
Pu Yi  
Qing  
Ruijin  
Shandong  
Song Jiaoren  
Soong Meiling  
Sun Yixian  
Tongmenghui  
Yanan  
Yangzi River  
Yuan Shikai  
Zhang Guotao  
Zhou Enlai  
Zhu De

## Wade–Giles

Lin Piao  
Liu Shao-chi  
Mao Tse-tung  
Nanking  
P'eng Te-huai  
P'eng Chen  
Pu-i  
Ching  
Juichin  
Shantung  
Sung Chiao-jen  
Sung Mei-ling  
Sun Yat-sen  
Tungmenghui  
Yenan  
Yangtze River  
Yuan Shih-kai  
Chang Kuo-tao  
Chou En-lai  
Chu Te



# CHAPTER ONE

## *Behind the wall, 1911–1927*

For almost 3000 years, the people of China were unified under the rule of an emperor. This is a remarkable achievement, given that no other civilisation on Earth held such a large population, occupying such a vast territory under the one regime, and for so long a period. This period was marked by the rise and fall of ancient dynasties from the Xia in 2000 BCE to the Qing (1644–1911).

China saw itself as the centre of the universe and able to meet its own needs. It therefore regarded contact with an ‘inferior’ outside world as unproductive and undesirable. Emperor Shihuang (221–207 BCE) was so determined to protect China from invasion that he gave orders for a great wall to be built, and even today the Great Wall of China is testimony to his desire and that of the emperors who followed to keep the rest of the world out of China. Westerners call this phenomenon ‘sinocentrism’, the belief that China was the cultural centre of the world. China remained basically unchanged until the 19th century, when the Qing dynasty began to decline under Western pressure. Unfortunately for the Chinese, their land was rich in resources and not even a wall could keep these new ‘barbarians’ out. In 1911, protests against this foreign domination of China led to a mutiny of troops stationed in the city of Wuhan in central China. Their actions sparked a revolution, which resulted in the abdication of the last Qing emperor, Pu Yi, on 12 February 1912. The years that followed were marked by disunity, fragmentation and suffering caused by both internal and external threats until China was ultimately unified under a Communist government in 1949.

◀ The Forbidden City in Beijing was the imperial palace of the Chinese emperors until the end of the Qing dynasty.

### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + What crises confronted the Qing regime at the beginning of the 20th century and how did it respond?
- + What was the impact of the fall of the Qing on China?
- + What was the impact of foreign influence on China?
- + How did these events influence the development of the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party?

# *The Middle Kingdom and the genesis of revolution*

By the start of the 20th century, the Qing dynasty was in decline. Their unwillingness to modernise, corruption and the intervention of Western powers all contributed to the fall of China's last dynasty.

## CHINA UNDER THE QING

The Qing, or Manchu, dynasty (1644–1911) was the last of the imperial dynasties of China. The Qing, who originally came from north-eastern China, had established their dynasty by conquest. The reigns of the first three Manchu emperors, which lasted for 133 years, were a time of peace and prosperity. The empire's population grew from 150 million to 450 million;

many of the non-Chinese minorities within the empire were **sinocised** and an integrated national economy was established. During the reign of Emperor Qianglong (1735–99), the influence of the West on China was felt for the first time. In particular, Great Britain was interested in trading with China for silk and tea. But given China's lack of interest in their products, the British began exporting opium to China, with devastating results.

### sinocise

To make Chinese in character or bring under Chinese influence

Many Chinese became addicted to opium, and land that had previously been used for food began to be used to produce opium.

Furthermore, a large amount of Chinese money left the country in payment for the opium. When the Qing, in an attempt to rid their country of the scourge of opium, moved to abolish the opium trade, the

**Opium Wars** broke out. The defeat of the Chinese by Europeans in the Opium Wars resulted in a series of humiliating treaties that gave the Europeans access to ports and forced the empire into trading relations with the West. While this period marked the beginning of the decline of the Qing, their ability to rule successfully was also affected by a series of young, inexperienced emperors; in particular, Empress Cixi, whose opposition to reform, and political meddling, had a

significant negative effect on China. In her final act of destruction, she placed two-year-old Pu Yi on the throne in 1908, which further weakened the government.

### Opium Wars

Two wars that resulted from an imbalance of trade between Western nations and China. Both Britain (1839–42) and France (1856–60) sought to increase their commercial influence in China by flooding the country with opium. The Chinese vigorously opposed their attempts, but losses in both wars resulted in humiliating treaties



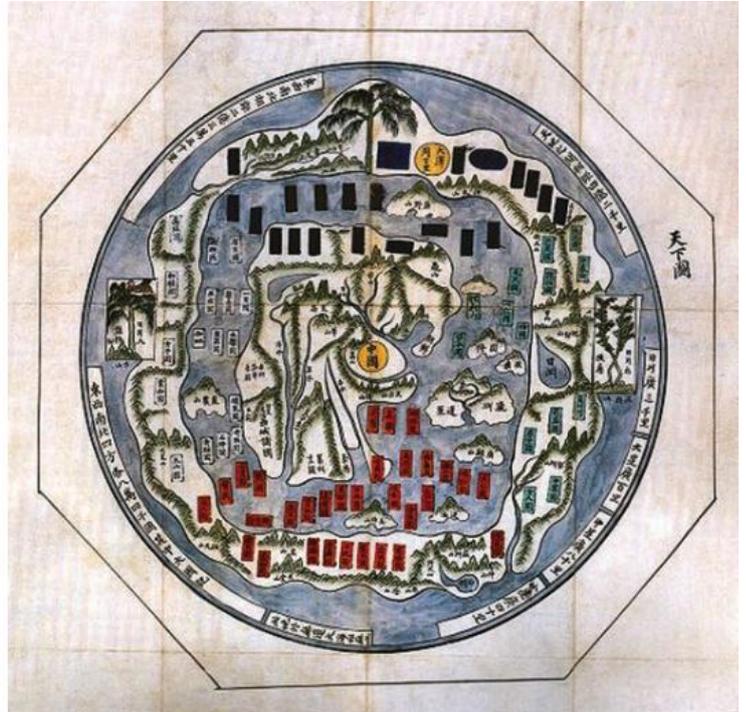
**SOURCE 1.1** 1908 portrait of the Dowager Empress Cixi

Alamy/Glasshouse Images



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 1.2** Pu Yi (right), the last Qing emperor, ascended the throne at the age of two.



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 1.3** The Chinese word for China is *Zhongguo*, meaning 'Middle Kingdom' or 'Central Nation' and, for the most part, China viewed non-Chinese peoples as uncivilised barbarians. This 17th-century map illustrates the notion of the Middle Kingdom. China is in the centre with the rest of the world placed around it.



## FROM THE QING TO A REPUBLIC

1644	Qing dynasty established
1861–1908	Rule of Dowager Empress Cixi
1898	China forced to lease territories to France, Russia, Germany and Britain
1899	Boxer Rebellion began
1900	Foreign troops brought in to quell Boxer Rebellion
1901	Boxer Protocol signed
1904–05	Russo-Japanese war fought in north-east China (Manchuria) – Japan seized control
1908	Pu Yi became emperor of China
1911	Wuhan Uprising
1912	Republic of China proclaimed and abdication of Pu Yi

## FAILING THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

### Mandate of Heaven

The Chinese believed that their emperors were chosen for them by divine powers and as such were expected to be good rulers who cared for their country and its people. Consequently, it was believed that if the ruler was considered to be cruel or ineffective, they should lose their right to rule

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The weakening of the Qing dynasty and the apparent humiliation of the unequal treaties imposed on China were, in the eyes of the Chinese people, seen as the Emperors' inability to protect the people or fulfil their **Mandate of Heaven**. This led to increasing domestic disorder fuelled by the Chinese belief that the Qing were not deserving of their right to rule. As a consequence, a spate of rebellions against the Qing erupted in China, with the most notable of these being the Taiping (1850–64), the Nian (1851–68), the Muslim (1855–78) and the Boxer (1899–1900) rebellions. These rebellions resulted in the loss of several million lives, and had a devastating impact on China's economy. Combined with natural disasters, such as regular flooding of China's major rivers, and famine, the lives of the Chinese were precarious at best and served to further highlight the inadequacies of the Qing.

### The Boxer Rebellion

The Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1900 can be regarded as a watershed event that contributed to the decline of the Qing and increased 'foreign' influence in China. The causes of the rebellion included the animosity of the Chinese towards foreigners because of the privileges they enjoyed and the increasing prominence of Christian missionaries. Floods and famines in northern China were blamed on the *fengshui* or balance of the region being disrupted by the 'dragon's vein' or Western rail and telegraph lines. Missionaries and their converts became the targets of an uprising led by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, known in the West as 'Boxers'. This religious sect practised forms of *gongfu*, or martial arts, which they believed made them impervious to firearms. The Qing foolishly tried to use them as a way of driving the foreign presence from northern China, and their official sanction allowed the movement to spread rapidly, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of foreigners and tens of thousands of Chinese Christians. In 1900, the Boxers entered Beijing and laid siege to the foreign legation district. The Qing compounded the problem by declaring war on all foreign powers. International condemnation followed quickly and an international force relieved the legation siege on 14 August, looted Beijing and forced the imperial family to flee. After this humiliation, the Qing court had no option but to sign what was to be the last of the infamous 'unequal treaties', the Boxer Protocol, which served to establish a permanent presence of foreign troops in the capital.



Alamy/World History Archive

**SOURCE 1.4** During the Boxer Rebellion, an international force was established to relieve the diplomats and others held by the Boxers in the foreign legation district of Beijing. This force included soldiers from Japan, Russia, France, the United States, Germany, Austria–Hungary, Italy and the British Empire, including troops from India and Australia. This illustration by the Japanese artist Torajiro Kasai shows Japanese and British forces attacking the Forbidden City, the seat of the Qing emperor.

## The fall of the Qing dynasty

### 'A troublesome egg to hatch'



Library of Congress

**SOURCE 1.5** 'A troublesome egg to hatch', 1901, a satirical illustration by JS Pughe on the European powers' attempts to exploit China as the United States and Japan look on.

### Downfall of the Qing

**TABLE 1.1** The downfall of the Qing cannot be attributed to a single factor or event. Rather it was the result of a range of internal and external factors.

Long-term causes	<p><b>Impact of foreign imperialism</b></p> <p>China suffered humiliation due to numerous war losses and the inability to control foreign intrusion. War losses resulted in the creation of treaty ports, which meant that the Qing dynasty lost the ability to restrict where foreign nations could go to trade. Foreign nations created concessions in major cities where they resided with their own laws and police force. Within these areas, spheres of influence were created where a certain foreign nation had exclusive trade rights, and a great deal of political and economic influence.</p>
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*continued*

*continued***TABLE 1.1** *Continued*

	<p><b>Insular nature of China</b> Cixi was not able to grasp the opportunities Western countries had to offer China in terms of military and technological advancements.</p> <p><b>Bureaucracy of the imperial system</b> The bureaucrats gained their positions either through bribery or by passing Confucian-based exams, which led to narrow thinking and lack of skill. These bureaucrats were often corrupt and highly conservative, and therefore were not willing to allow any changes that could affect them negatively.</p> <p><b>Qing – an ethnic minority from Manchuria</b> Many Chinese did not like being ruled by the Qing, an ethnic group they regarded as ‘inferior’. They also resented restrictions the Qing placed on marriage between Han and Manchu Chinese.</p> <p><b>Ideals were under pressure</b> Retaining the support of the people required the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ to remain in power. The Qing relied on Confucian values of loyalty and obedience to the emperor to maintain control, and the introduction of Western ideas such as democracy and human rights shook up these structures.</p> <p><b>Issues with the peasantry</b> Peasants constituted the majority of the Chinese population. A bad season could leave them to starve or force them to sell off their children, while a good season would allow them to pay off debts to the landlords, who in some cases, were collecting taxes up to 10 years in advance.</p>
<b>Short-term causes</b>	<p><b>Increasing revolutionary movement</b> Sun Yixian and his Tongmenghui had advocated revolution as the only answer to China’s problems. There had been several unsuccessful revolts, but the Qing were unable to completely repress them.</p> <p><b>Lack of action on reforms</b> The promised reforms following the failure of the Boxer Rebellion were half-hearted and delayed, and actually whet the appetite for more reforms rather than satisfied it.</p> <p><b>Death of Cixi</b> Cixi was the last strong ruler of the Qing dynasty. She ignored many of the long-term causes, but her strength kept the dynasty going. Her death led to a lack of control over the empire.</p>
<b>Triggers</b>	<p><b>Wuhan Uprising</b> On 10 October 1911, a revolutionary group preparing bombs had one accidentally explode. Police discovered lists of revolutionaries at the scene. Feeling as if they had nothing to lose, a local regiment mutinied, and the province was eventually seized. This started a chain reaction and soon China was in turmoil.</p> <p><b>Yuan Shikai’s shifting allegiance</b> Pu Yi called in the commander of the New Army, Yuan Shikai, in order to suppress the rebels. Yuan worked to quell the uprising, but later negotiated a deal with Sun Yixian and the emperor’s minders, and did not take his forces into Wuhan. Pu Yi abdicated and Sun offered the presidency of the new republic to Yuan.</p>

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continued

### Historian Immanuel Hsu on the failing of Qing rule

The ultimate failing of Qing rule lay in its incapacity to adequately cope with the Western impact by initiating far reaching reform in order to swiftly transform China into a modern state ... They could not successfully innovate an alternative to revolution in creative response to contemporary challenge. Indeed, political mismanagement, domestic rebellion and foreign humiliation had so degraded the Qing dynasty that its impending fall appeared evident ... after 268 years, the Manchu dynasty lost its 'Mandate of Heaven' and reached what the Chinese call its 'preordained finale'.

Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, London, 1983, pp. 444–5

### Questions

- 1 How did foreign nations successfully humiliate the Qing? Which Western nations were represented?
- 2 Explain the difference between the long- and short-term causes and the triggers that brought about the downfall of the Qing.
- 3 Select one cause or trigger and write a paragraph to explain how it contributed to the downfall of the Qing.

## THE WUHAN UPRISING AND FALL OF THE QING

The catalyst for the fall of the Qing dynasty and, ultimately, the creation of the Republic of China occurred in 1911 during the Wuhan Uprising. This uprising, also known as the **Double Tenth**, began when a bomb exploded accidentally. Qing police arrived to investigate and subsequently discovered incriminating lists of revolutionaries within the New Army who supported Sun Yixian's **Three Principles**. Rather than face arrest and execution, these military revolutionaries then staged a coup and the army took over the city in less than a day. This small revolt ultimately spread and allowed many provinces to declare their allegiance to the rebellion. Within six weeks, 15 provinces had seceded. Sun Yixian, known as the 'father of the revolution', actually played no direct part in the uprising as he was overseas trying to raise support for his cause. Ultimately the people declared their independence from the Qing, and the six-year-old emperor, Pu Yi, was forced to abdicate, ending 2000 years of almost unbroken imperial rule.

On 12 February 1912, the imperial palace made the following announcement on behalf of the emperor:

“ It is now evident that the majority of the people are in favour of a Republic. From the preference that is in the people's hearts the will of Heaven is discernible. How could we oppose the desires of millions for the glory of one family? Therefore we, the Empress Dowager and the Emperor, hereby vest the sovereignty in the people. Let Yuan Shikai organise with full powers a Provisional Republic and confer with the Republicans as to the methods of union that will assure peace to the Empire, thus forming a great Republic by the union of Manchus, Chinese, Mongols, Mohammedans and Tibetans.

Myra Roper, *China in Revolution 1911–1949*, Edward Arnold, London, 1971, pp. 22–3

#### Double Tenth

Another name for the Wuhan Uprising because it began on the tenth day of the tenth month:  
10 October

#### Three Principles

Political ideology offered by Sun Yixian, which focused on nationalism, democracy and socialism, or the people's livelihood



## Sun Yixian (1866–1925)

Born into a farming family in 1866, Sun Yixian became one of China's earliest Western-trained intellectuals when, at the age of 13, he joined his older brother in Hawaii and was educated there. Sun grew up in Guangdong province and was perhaps influenced by its long history of contact with foreigners and the fact that this was also a place steeped in anti-Manchu sentiment.

Sun moved on to a missionary-founded school known as Oahu College after he graduated from high school, but was sent home by his brother to ensure that he would not be baptised a Christian. Once back in China, Sun desecrated a temple in his village by breaking off the arm of an idol and was sent to Hong Kong to avoid the subsequent repercussions. Once in Hong Kong, Sun attended medical school and was baptised in 1884.

In Hong Kong, Sun noticed the structure of the British colony and wished for a similar system of government in his own country; however, he believed that the only way to improve life in China for its people was to remove the existing regime and replace it with a republic. In 1894, he formed a secret revolutionary organisation, the Revive China Society, whose objectives were to overthrow the Manchus, restore China to the Chinese and establish a republican government.

Following an attempted overthrow of the Manchu in 1895, Sun fled to exile in Japan. In 1896, Sun was kidnapped by Manchu officials and was to be returned to China for execution, but he was rescued by friends from Hong Kong. He quickly became a figure of international interest.

Sun made use of his notoriety, writing his theory of revolution, 'The Three Principles of the People'. He also drew up his plans for a constitution, adding ideas about censorship and examination branches for the government to those of Western democracies of the day. Furthermore, Sun travelled overseas extensively, seeking money from Chinese communities abroad to fund mutinies and uprisings in China.

Sun formed the **Tongmenghui**, or Revolutionary Alliance, in 1905, and organised 10 failed uprisings. Ironically, the man regarded as the 'father of the revolution' was not even in China at the time of the Double Tenth, or 1911 Wuhan Uprising. He returned from the United States on 1 January 1912 to become provisional president of the new Republic of China, but with the intention of keeping the peace in China, later stepped aside from the presidency to allow Yuan Shikai, a highly influential Manchu general, to take the role.

Sun and his loyal followers formed the Nationalist Party, or **Guomindang**, which was later outlawed, necessitating yet another exile from his beloved China. He became president of the Nationalist government of China in Canton in 1923 and died in 1925.



Getty Images/Fotosearch

### Tongmenghui

Sun Yixian founded this secret society in 1905 with an aim to unite all revolutionary groups in China who sought to remove the Qing

### Guomindang

The political party founded in 1911 by Sun Yixian; it governed China under Jiang Jieshi from 1928 until 1949 when the Communists took power

## The Three Principles

Sun Yixian first outlined his vision for a new China in a speech entitled 'The Three Principles of the People' in 1905. Sun used this speech to outline the three key components of his political doctrine, which included the protection of the Chinese, the rights of the people and the wellbeing of the people. Later these three ideas were translated to the more regularly used principles of nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood. For the Chinese, Sun's ideas offered hope as they called for the removal of the Qing to allow the people to rule themselves, free from the domination of foreign nations. He proposed a republic with an elected president, which would ensure the rights of the people, along with a fairer taxation system and an improvement in the welfare of the working people.

This excerpt from the manifesto of Sun Yixian was delivered on 5 January 1912, following his election as president of a provisional government:

We have borne our grievance for two hundred and sixty-seven years with patience and forbearance ... oppressed beyond human endurance, we deemed our unalienable right ... to deliver ourselves ... from the yoke to which we have for so long been subjected ...

The manifesto continues with the promise that:

We will remodel the laws, revise the civil, criminal, commercial and mining codes, reform the finances, abolish restrictions on trade and commerce and ensure religious toleration and the cultivation of better relations with foreign peoples and governments ... it is our earnest hope that those foreign nationals who have been steadfast in their sympathy will bind more firmly the bonds of friendship between us ... and will aid the consummation of the plans, which we are about to undertake.

Manifesto of Sun Yixian, 5 January 1912, in Kathlyn Gay, *The Aftermath of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution*, Twenty-First Century Books, Minneapolis, 2009, p. 15

### Questions

- 1 What factors influenced Sun Yixian's view on the needs of China?
- 2 How did Sun fuel the revolutionary situation in China at the beginning of the 20th century?
- 3 Why is Sun Yixian regarded as the father of the revolution?
- 4 What action taken by the Qing indicated the threat Sun posed to them?

## *The struggle to govern China*

The abdication from the throne by the boy emperor Pu Yi left a power vacuum that needed to be filled. Initially it appeared the hopes held by Sun Yixian for a republic might be fulfilled; however, the actions of Yuan Shikai, who sought to promote himself rather than the needs of China, created further internal conflict.



## THE FLEDGLING REPUBLIC

Sun Yixian was named the provisional president of the new Republic of China on 1 January 1912, because of his role as chief ideologue of the revolutionary movement and his opposition to the Qing dynasty. Not long after, following a bid for the presidency by a former Qing general, Yuan Shikai, Sun stepped down from the role to ensure peace for China and in the naive belief that Shikai also had China's best interests at heart. Under Yuan, the new government made few changes despite issuing many laws, and appeared to seek to reform the political, social and economic systems already in place. It was soon clear that Yuan actually sought to destroy the fledgling **republic** and create a dictatorship with himself as the new emperor of China. Yuan's bid for power was unsuccessful and he died in 1916; some say of a broken heart. Thus, despite the fall of the Qing and the subsequent hopes of the people for the future, it would appear that the new government was no more able to strengthen and stabilise China than its former emperors had been, as the problems were deeply rooted.

### republic

A form of government in which sovereignty resides in the people



Getty Images/Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone

**SOURCE 1.6** Sun Yixian and other revolutionaries at the declaration of the Republic of China in 1911



Alamy/AF Fotografie

**SOURCE 1.7** Yuan Shikai, the president of the Chinese republic established at the fall of the Qing

## Twenty-one Demands

Following an ultimatum by the Japanese government, Yuan Shikai, as president of the Chinese republic, signed a series of agreements between his country and Japan on 25 May 1915 in return for financial aid. The document, known as the Twenty-one Demands because of the number of claims made by the Japanese government, demanded special privileges in China relating to access to harbours, control of railway and mining in Shandong province and the granting of special concessions in Manchuria. Yuan accepted all demands except for one seeking to use advisers to control Chinese political, financial and police affairs. The Twenty-one Demands contributed significantly to increased anti-Japanese sentiment throughout China.

### Question

- 1 Explain the significance of the Twenty-one Demands in humiliating the Chinese and allowing the Japanese to gain power in China.

## Yuan Shikai as leader of China

### Historian Immanuel Hsu

Most of his followers devoted themselves to the overthrow of the Manchus and the establishment of the Republic: few paid attention to the more important task of democratic reconstruction and the problem of people's livelihood ... 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 [and] paved the way for future warlordism and attempts to revive the imperial system – by Yuan in 1915.

Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, London, 1983, p. 475

### Diplomat Paul Reinsch

His personal rule, his unscrupulous advancement to power, with the incidental corruption and cold-blooded executions that marked it, and his bitter personal feeling against all political opponents – these were not qualities that make for stable parliamentary government.

Paul S Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, 1922 (reprint), Forgotten Books, London, 2013, pp. 2–3

### Author Han Suyin

For the sake of unity, Sun, early offered to resign and give his own position of President to Yuan ... Yuan's personal ambitions satisfied, Sun felt he might work for the good of the people. Sun thought that a democratically convened cabinet, a National Assembly, universal franchise, would be safeguards against

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attempts by Yuan to become dictator ... He was soon to learn, at his cost. He had not dreamed that Yuan would pack the National Assembly, would fake votes, would get a soldier with a gun to stand behind each representation so as to assure himself a favourable yes ...

Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree*, Academy Chicago Publishing, Chicago, 1985, p. 258

### Questions

- 1 Explain how Yuan Shikai gained control of the government of China from Sun Yixian.
- 2 How did Yuan Shikai's desire for self-advancement compromise his ability to lead China effectively?
- 3 In what ways did Yuan Shikai compromise the ideals of Sun Yixian and the fledgling republic?

## THE BIRTH OF THE GUOMINDANG

Following his resignation as president, Sun Yixian was excluded from the government of the fledgling republic. Concerned about Yuan's presidency and disappointed that he was unable to push his proposed changes forward, Sun formed a new rival political party known as the National People's Party, or Guomindang (GMD). This party was the product of a merger of the Tongmenghui and other groups who opposed Shikai in the hope that they could increase their political influence. When an election for parliament was held in 1913, the GMD, headed by Song Jiaroen, opposed Yuan, and the Nationalists won a majority in the legislature with Song announced as leader of the parliament. Unfortunately, he was assassinated in March 1913 and the party was outlawed by Yuan Shikai and his followers. Sun vowed to overthrow Yuan, and with the support of pro-GMD governors in the south of China attempted a second revolution. The plan appeared doomed from the outset because of lack of funds, and because the troops were outnumbered by Yuan's forces and there was little support from local Chinese, who did not understand Yuan's manipulative, corrupt regime. By September 1913, the revolutionary capital of Nanjing had been captured, forcing Sun and other rebels to flee to Japan.

## ANARCHY UNDER THE WARLORDS

Following the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916 came a 12-year-period known as the Warlord Era, marked by political fragmentation in a land governed by a virtually powerless national government. The central government of China in reality only controlled a small area around Beijing. Hundreds of warlords, most of whom were interested only in power and wealth rather than the needs of the people, imposed high taxes, governed with great severity and made use of the peasants to fight in their personal armies. These armies were poorly paid, and their members further exacerbated the plight of the Chinese people by plundering crops. The warlords clearly held great power, a fact that was not lost on foreign powers, some of which provided financial backing to the warlords and conducted business and peace treaties with them.

## Perspectives on life under the warlords

### First National Congress of the Guomindang

The warlords have now become so arrogant and so unprincipled that like knives and swords hacking cattle and fish they hack the people to pieces ... the warlords conspire with foreign imperialists; and the so-called republican government, controlled by the warlords, abuses the authority of government to serve the pleasure of foreign powers.

Declaration by the First National Congress of the Guomindang, 1924

### Historian Gwendda Milston

The warlords were not all evil men solely interested in wealth and power and prepared to use any kind of brutal force to get it. Some genuinely wanted reform and good government but were obliged to tax heavily and spend money on armaments rather than social needs to protect their territory from predatory neighbours.

Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, Cassell, Australia, 1978, p. 291

### Historian Charles Patrick FitzGerald

These generals ... were only interested in money. They supported or betrayed the government for money; they warred upon each other to secure richer revenues, they organised the opium trade, sold official posts, taxed the people for years in advance, squeezed the merchants, and finally, immensely rich, allowed, for a last payment, their troops to be defeated, and retired to the safety and ease of the foreign concessions in Shanghai or the British colony of Hong Kong.

CP FitzGerald, *The Birth of Communist China*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964, p. 51

### Mao Zedong

The Revolution started by Dr Sun Yat-Sen has had both its successes and its failures. Was not the Revolution of 1911 a success? Didn't it send the emperor packing? Yet it was a failure in the sense that while it sent the emperor packing it left China under imperialist and feudal oppression, so that the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary task remained unaccomplished.

Mao Zedong, *Collected Writings of Chairman Mao – Politics and Tactics*, Shawn Connors (ed.), translated by Foreign Language Press, El Paso Norte Press, Texas, 2009, p. 185

### Sun Yixian

The real trouble is China is not an independent country. She is the victim of foreign countries. If the foreign countries leave us alone, China will have her affairs in shape within six months. The Peking Government could not stand twenty-four hours without the backing it receives from foreign governments.

Interview given by Sun Yixian in 1923 and published in *The New York Times*, cited in Lyon Sharman, *Sun Yat-Sen: His Life and Its Meaning – A Critical Biography*, Stanford University Press, California, 1968, pp. 251–2

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## Questions

- 1 Identify four key warlords of the period and conduct research to evaluate their impact on the lives of the Chinese who lived under their control. Summarise the results of your research in a table.
- 2 Explain why historians and others differ in their assessment of the warlords.
- 3 In what ways did the actions of the warlords increase the desire of political parties and the Chinese people for change?
- 4 Drawing on your research and the sources above, write an extended paragraph in which you explain how the Warlord Era affected the political situation in China.

## ANOTHER WAY FOR CHINA: THE GROWTH OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

With China's government affected by factionalism and a lack of a clear ideological direction, the way became clear for the growth of a new party that would meet the needs of China's young intellectuals. Dismayed by what they perceived to be poor treatment of China by foreign powers and buoyed by the changes brought about in Russia after its revolution in 1917, a new movement began, growing in influence and voice.



### THE FOUNDATIONS OF OPPOSING IDEOLOGIES

1866		Sun Yixian born into a poor rural family
1893		Mao Zedong born into a peasant family in Hunan
1905		Sun Yixian established the Tongmenghui
1916–28		Warlord Era – warlords control much of China
1917	OCTOBER	Successful Communist revolution in Russia
1919		May Fourth Movement
1921		Chinese Communist Party (CCP) formed in Shanghai
1923–25		Sun Yixian revived the Guomindang and refined his Three Principles
1924		First United Front formed between the Guomindang and the Communist Party
1925		Sun Yixian died of cancer
1927	APRIL	Shanghai Massacre of Communists ended the First United Front Communists staged Nanchang Uprising and Autumn Harvest Uprising, then retreated to Jinggangshan region
1928	OCTOBER	Jiang Jieshi became chairman of the Nationalist Party
1929	JANUARY	Mao Zedong and Zhu De moved Communist forces from Jinggangshan
	FEBRUARY	Communist base established at Ruijin in Jiangxi province, known as the Jiangxi Soviet

## THE IMPACT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

It is hard to believe that a war in Europe could have a significant negative impact on an Asian country of China's size and history, yet this is indeed the case. When war broke out in 1914, Japan became an ally of the Triple Entente (Great Britain, France and Russia). In a bid to increase their empire, the Japanese capitalised on Germany's preoccupation with the war in Europe by issuing an ultimatum that Germany transfer its leased territory and economic privileges in the Chinese province of Shandong to Japan. The Japanese seized German settlements and naval bases in the city of Qingdao and also took over coalmines and a German-built railway line.

The Chinese, despite an original decision to remain neutral, ultimately were induced to enter the war on the side of the British, French and Russians by promises such as the suspension of the indemnity payments incurred after the Boxer Rebellion and a promised revision of foreign tariffs. Unable to send military forces to Europe, China began assistance in August 1917 by sending approximately 200 000 workers to serve as labourers to both France and Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). These valuable labourers served behind the lines where they dug trenches, provided non-military aid and constructed barracks, which allowed the Allied troops to remain at the front in combat roles. Unknown to Chinese officials, the Japanese, fearing the Chinese participation in any peace treaties following the war, sought to block their entry to the war; however, their qualms were appeased by secret promises by the French, Russians and British that they would aid Japan in achieving their Shandong interests.

## THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

After the end of the First World War in 1918, the Chinese expected to be treated favourably at the Paris Peace Conference that followed. Both the Nationalist and Guomindang governments sent representatives, and it was the hope of the Chinese that territorial disputes such as that between China and Japan could be solved. The Chinese wanted an end to the unequal treaties that had been imposed on them for decades and a release from the Twenty-one Demands imposed in 1915 by the Japanese.

However, the conference did not address China's grievances. The Chinese delegates were treated poorly and were not invited to the inner council when the main powers decided the issue. Indeed, the delegation was kept waiting for some weeks before it was told what had been agreed. As a consequence, the Chinese delegation – much to the surprise of the conference – refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

Back in China, news of the poor treatment of the delegates and the decision to allow the Japanese to maintain control over Shandong province evoked a dramatic response. Students at Beijing University held a 'National Shame Day' on 4 May 1919 to mark the anniversary of Japan's Twenty-one Demands. Students protested against the control of the warlords who assisted foreigners and the rights granted to foreigners in their country. Outrage and shame at China's betrayal at the Treaty of Versailles proved the impetus to a surge of Chinese nationalism with widespread and vocal reaction. About 3000 students assembled in Tiananmen Square from where they marched to the foreign legations, expressing their view that Japan's actions violated China's territorial integrity and also that inept government officials had failed to serve China's best interests.



Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

Protest and unrest spread quickly, with students from high schools joining their university colleagues, and strikes and demonstrations occurring across the country. In an unprecedented show of unity, the press and the public supported the outrage of China's youth with many factories shutting down, students ending their studies in Japan and traders boycotting Japanese goods.

**SOURCE 1.8** Students at Peking University marching with banners during the May Fourth demonstrations in 1919

## The impact of the May Fourth Movement

### Chen Duxiu – ‘Call to Youth’

In 1915, Chen Duxiu attacked traditionalism in a journal aptly named *New Youth*. In his article ‘Call to Youth’, first seen in Shanghai, Chen urged young people to break with conservative traditions and to be scientific, progressive and independent. He offered six principles as a guide:

- 1 Be independent, not servile
- 2 Be progressive, not conservative
- 3 Be aggressive, not retiring
- 4 Be cosmopolitan, not isolationist
- 5 Be utilitarian, not formalistic
- 6 Be scientific, not imaginative

Cited in Ssu-Yu Teng and John Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839–1923*, Atheneum, New York, 1979, p. 241

### Diplomat Paul Reinsch, an American missionary in China between 1913 and 1919, on the Treaty of Versailles

Probably nowhere else in the world had expectations of America's leadership at Paris been raised so high as in China ... it sickened and disheartened me to think how the Chinese people would receive this blow which meant the blasting of their hopes and the destruction of their confidence in the equity of nations.

Cited in Roger Pelissier, *The Awakening of China 1793–1949*, Putnam, 1966, p. 276

### Historian Lucien Bianco

The May Fourth Movement was a kind of Chinese Enlightenment ... it was a ground-clearing exercise [which] foreshadowed and paved the way for 1949 ... 1919 was more important than 1911 ... [it] called into question the very basis of Chinese society.

Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution 1915–1949*, Stanford University Press, California, 1971, pp. 27–8

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### Li Dazhao, an early convert to Marxism and chief librarian at Beijing University

Henceforth, all that one sees around him will be the triumphant banner of Bolshevism, and all that one hears around him will be the Bolshevism song of victory. The bell is rung for humanitarianism! The dawn of freedom has arrived! See the world tomorrow; it will assuredly belong to the red flag! The revolution in Russia is but the first fallen leaf warning the world of the approach of autumn.

Cited in Ssu-Yu Teng and John Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839–1923*, pp. 248–9

### Mao Zedong

Mao indicates he was more radical as a result of the May Fourth Movement:

After the May Fourth Movement, I had devoted most of my time to student political activities, and I was editor of the Hunan students' newspaper ... in the Winter of 1920, I organised workers politically for the first time, and began to be guided by ... Marxist theory and the history of the Russian Revolution. During my second visit to Beijing, I had read much about events in Russia, and eagerly sought out what little Communist literature was then available in Chinese ... by the Summer of 1920, I had become in theory and to some extent in action, a Marxist.

Cited in Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, rev., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 179–81

### Historian Michael Lynch

It was no accident that China's literary and intellectual renaissance reached its high point in the 1920s – the worst years of warlord rule. The humiliation of the nation at the hands of warlords and foreigners gave the Chinese a common sense of grievance ... [it provided] a cause around which the Chinese could unite.

Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People's Republic 1900–1949*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996, p. 32

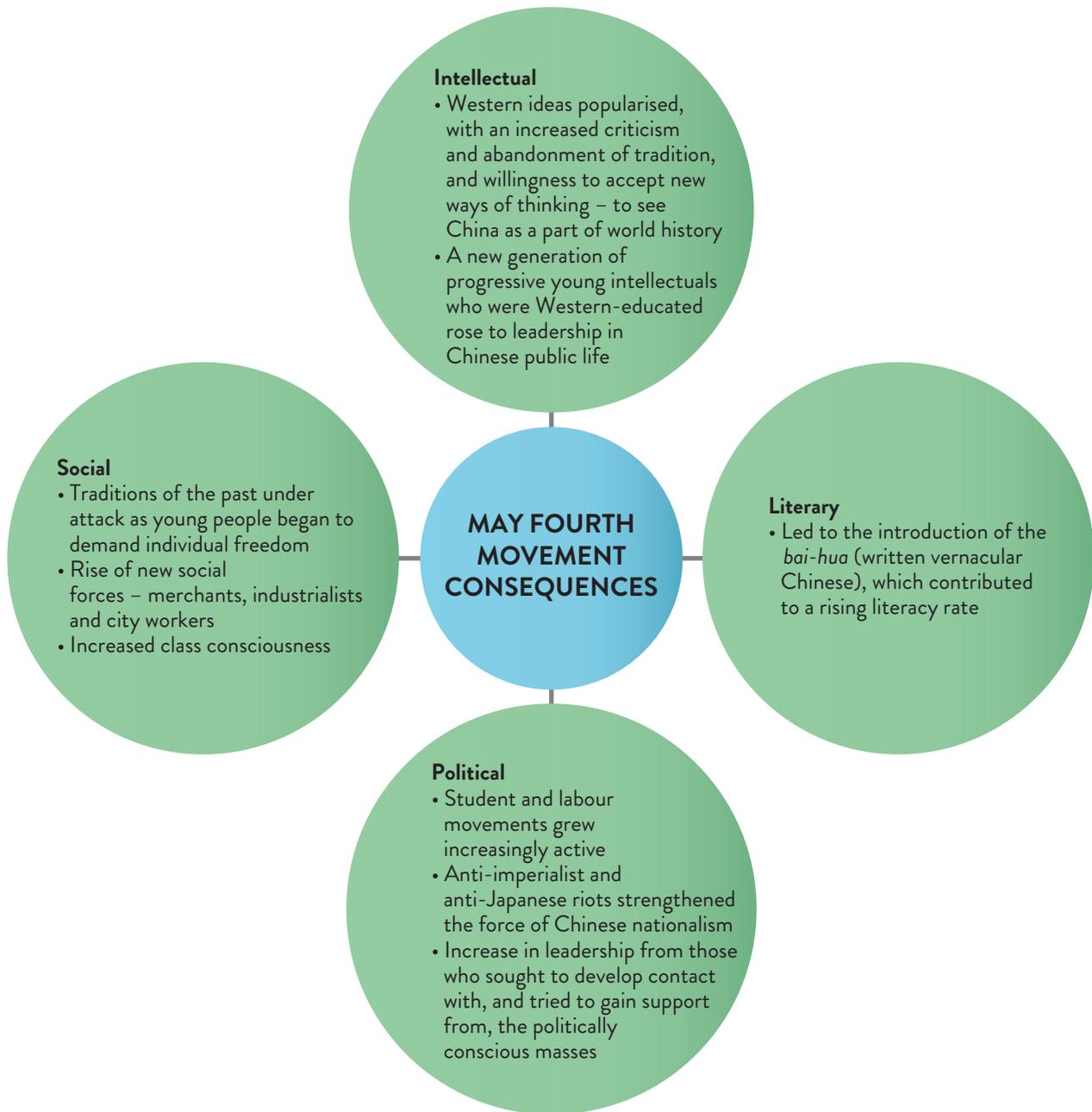
### Li Dazhao praising communist ideals in *New Youth*

All those dregs of history which can impede the progress of the new movement – such as emperors ... warlords, bureaucrats, militarism and capitalism – will certainly be destroyed ... all that one sees around him will be the triumphant banner of Bolshevism ... the bell is rung for humanitarianism! The dawn of freedom has arrived! See the world of tomorrow; it assuredly will belong to the red flag.

Cited in Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution*, Shakespeare Head Press, NSW, 1988, p. 99

### Questions

- 1 Given China's policy of isolationism, why did it enter the Great War?
- 2 Explain the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the Chinese and how it might have influenced their views of the West.
- 3 How and why did the Russian Revolution influence the Chinese?
- 4 In what ways did the growth of the intellectual in China contribute to the creation of the Communist Party?



**SOURCE 1.9** The disturbances of the May Fourth Movement can be seen as the first popular mass movement in Chinese history, and focused attention on a growing unity among the Chinese in their desire for nationalism. They also gave a sense of direction to those who sought to regenerate China by ridding it of foreigners and provided radical thinkers with the opportunity to adopt Marxist theories of how a popular uprising against the ruling classes could rid the nation of imperialism.

### Communism

A theory or system of social organisation based on the holding of all property in common, with actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state

.....

## *Founding the Communist Party*

To understand how the Chinese Communist Party came into being, it is important to trace its ideological roots. Three key events – the New Culture Movement of 1915, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the May Fourth Movement of 1919 – profoundly influenced young Westernised Chinese and led to the creation of the **Communist** Party in a Shanghai schoolroom in 1921.

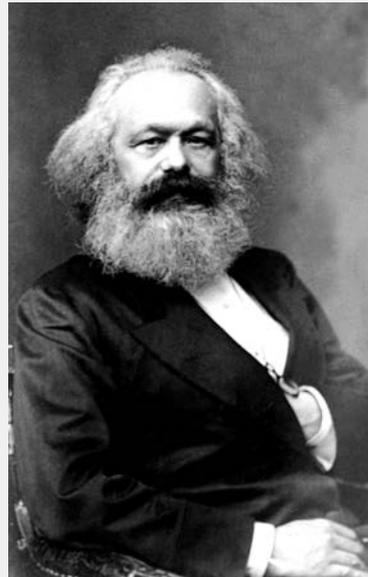
## Marx and Revolutionary Socialism

Ideologically, the origins of the Chinese Communist Party lie in the ideas of the German thinker Karl Marx. Marx argued that societies moved through a series of three interconnected economic and political phases. Each phase was distinct and followed what he saw as a logical sequence; movement from one phase to the next occurred because of the tensions arising from competing class interests. As new social groups emerged, revolutions would trigger the shift to a new phase of development in a process described as a dialectic.

The three phases included:

- 1 **The feudal era:** traditional societies dominated by a monarch and the nobility in which the economic system was largely agricultural.
- 2 **Bourgeois society:** Marx argued that the bourgeoisie, or middle classes, frustrated and restricted by the nature of the feudal era, would seek to assert their own political rights and, through revolutionary processes, limit the power of the monarch and nobility by establishing liberal democratic institutions, such as elected parliaments and governments. Economically bourgeois society was based on the ownership of private property and businesses, such as factories.
- 3 **Communism:** over time, this middle class society would be replaced by socialism, an egalitarian society in which the ownership of property, be it land or factories, the basis of political power in the earlier systems, would be held collectively by the whole society. This change, Marx argued, would result from a revolution initiated by the working class, or proletariat.

Marx himself, as well as many other, mainly Western European, socialists began to see this model as a blueprint for revolutionary change. As a result, political parties representing the working class, such as the Social Democrats in Germany during the late 19th century, framed their political ideas on Marx's theories.



Alamy/Photos 12

**SOURCE 1.10** Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher, social scientist, historian and revolutionary who is regarded as the most influential socialist thinker of the 19th century. His social, economic and political ideas gained rapid acceptance in the socialist movement and his original ideas have often been modified to suit a great variety of political circumstances.

While Karl Marx was the first socialist to predict the inevitability of a socialist society as a direct consequence of the growth of the bourgeoisie and the clash between the 'new ruling class' of society and the proletariat, industrial factory workers' notions of Marxism received little attention in China. However, following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Chinese intellectuals who immersed

### Lenin's Theory of Imperialism

Vladimir Lenin believed the nature of capitalism and its doctrine of maximising profits meant that imperialism is a process that capitalists are forced into in search of greater profits in ever-shrinking and unstable markets

### Bolshevik

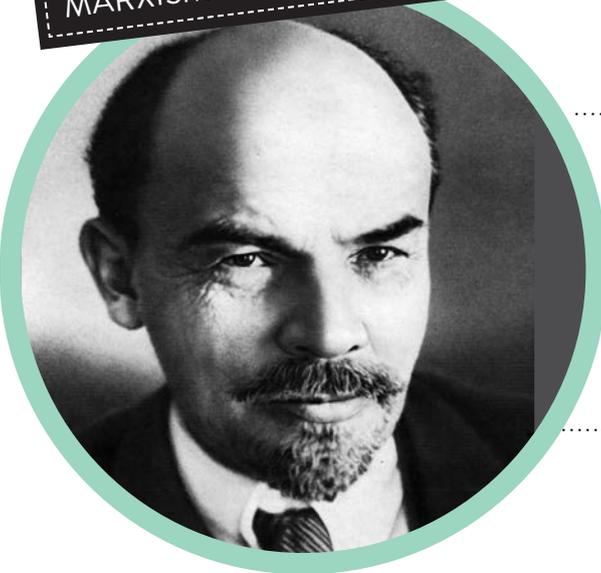
The Bolsheviks were formed in Russia in 1903 following a split in the Social Democratic Party. The party was named by Lenin and literally means 'the majority' in Russian. The Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership came to power in Russia in October 1917

themselves in the philosophies and history of the West were immediately interested in Marx's thinking as it had served as the ideological basis of the Russian Bolsheviks. The fact that the repressed Russians had thrown off the shackles of the capitalist nations of Europe who had also sought to dismember China was suddenly of great interest.

These Chinese thinkers also became interested in the writings and ideas of Lenin, the leader of the Russian Bolsheviks. Further, **Lenin's Theory of Imperialism** as the final stage of capitalism made sense to the disillusioned Chinese who struggled with the decisions made against their country at the Paris Peace Conference. Marx's call for workers to unite and Lenin's attack on 'unequal treaties' appealed to the Chinese who welcomed what they saw as 'scientific' thought and it was believed that this ideology, rooted in historical reality, could save China. By 1920 there were a number of small Marxist study groups in China including the ones organised by Mao Zedong and Li Dazhao. Later that year, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu (a university colleague) and **Bolshevik** representative Gregory Voitinsky began to organise the Chinese Community Party, with their first meeting taking place in Shanghai in July 1921. At this meeting, Chen Duxiu was elected leader of the Party and its total membership was recorded as consisting of 52 members.

### LENIN'S ADAPTATION OF MARXISM IN RUSSIA

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd



*History is a series of class struggles from which the worker will emerge victorious and throw off the rule of capitalists.*

*Party members should adopt a methodical and professional approach to learning the ideology of the Party and acting upon it.*

*Party membership should be confined to those who have been well trained in revolutionary ideas and action.*

*The masses – the workers and Marxist supporters – should be guided by professional revolutionaries who take on leadership roles.*

## Mao Zedong (1893–1976)

Mao was born in Hunan to a prosperous peasant family. He was educated in the Confucian classics and left school at the age of 13 to begin working on the family farm. The young Mao loved to read, particularly novels about Chinese heroes and their battles against corruption and bureaucracy.

In 1911, he secured a place at the Xiangxiang Middle School in Changsha where he first came into contact with the ideology of Sun Yixian's nationalism and, inspired by the events of the Wuhan Uprising against the Qing, went on to enlist in the revolutionary army. Following his discharge from the army in 1913, Mao enrolled to become a teacher, a decision that would allow him access to studies of Chinese feudal culture and writing from the West.

Mao developed a strong interest in political ideology and its importance in shaping a new China. He published an article entitled 'A Study of Physical Culture' in the *New Youth* magazine in 1917 and assisted in establishing the New People's Society in Changsha, which worked to organise its members to focus on the training of the body using physical activities, and the mind through the study of progressive ideas. In 1918, Mao failed entry into Beijing University as a student, but instead began to work as an assistant to Li Dazhao, one of the co-founders of the Communist Party, and delved into the writings of Marx, Engels and other thinkers.

Mao was at the first meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Shanghai and named Secretary of the Hunan Regional Party Committee. Throughout the early 1920s, he worked for the party in a variety of ways; he worked with fellow party members Liu Shaoqi and Li Lisan as a union official to organise a strike of coalminers in Anyuan, became a member of the Guomindang and was elected to the Central Committee of the CCP in 1923. He was also, a delegate to the First National Conference of the Guomindang while serving as acting head of their Central Propaganda Department.

In 1926, Mao was made Secretary of the Peasant Movement Commission for the CCP. In this role, he observed the Peasant Associations and declared them to be 70 per cent the strength of any future revolution. In 1927, while serving as Director of the Peasant Department of the Communist Party, Mao published his iconic 'Report on an investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan'.

Following the Shanghai Massacre of 1927, Mao led the failed Autumn Harvest Uprising and fled to the Jinggangshan Mountains on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces where he was elected to the standing committee of the Politburo established in the Jiangxi Soviet at Ruijin.



### Question

- 1 Create a fact file on Mao Zedong. The file should include quotes, images and key facts about his ideas and influence. Add to this fact file to build a detailed study reference on the thoughts and life of Mao.

## Possible solutions – a joining of forces

Following the creation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, there were now two revolutionary parties in China: the Nationalist Party, also known as the Guomindang (GMD), which formed in 1912 from Sun Yixian's Tongmenghui, and the CCP.

### THE FIRST UNITED FRONT

Between 1923 and 1927, these two groups sought to cooperate in ridding China of imperialist nations and defeating the northern warlords. Their two-party alliance was the creation of the

Comintern (Communist International), a Moscow-based organisation with the goal of garnering international support for the Communist Party in Russia and assisting the fledgling Chinese Communist Party. Russia was deeply concerned about Japanese expansion and believed that a strong and unified China could thwart Japan and support the growth of world communism. It was felt that a combined force of the CCP and the Nationalists could work together to achieve both goals. For their part, the CCP believed they needed to join with the capitalist-class Nationalists to destroy feudalism so that they could become a stronger political force. Further, it was felt that association with Sun's party could provide the Communists with links beyond their small membership of urban workers and intellectuals, and that their numbers would eventually grow large enough to provide the support the Communists would need to seize power. Sun was suspicious of the influence of the Comintern, but he was

#### Sun-Joffe Declaration

In 1923, Sun Yixian and Russian Comintern representative Adolph Joffe signed a joint declaration that guaranteed Russia's support for Sun's plans to unify China. The declaration resulted in the creation of an alliance between the GMD and the CCP, which became known as the First United Front

eager to rebuild his party and conquer the north. He reached an agreement in 1923 with Comintern agent Adolph Joffe, the **Sun-Joffe Declaration**, and in exchange for Soviet assistance Sun agreed to allow the admission of Communists into the GMD.

At this point the CCP membership of 1500 was small compared with the GMD's membership of approximately 50 000, but the CCP was independent and growing rapidly with Soviet aid, and it made sense to Sun that the two groups would have more impact working together. He was also willing to accept CCP members because he felt that all Chinese had the right to take part in his nationalist revolution, and he wanted to capitalise on the CCP ties with workers and peasants. Sun was aware that cooperation with the CCP was the only way to ensure the help of the Soviets. Mikhail Borodin, another Comintern agent, arrived in Guangzhou with a team of political and military advisers who



Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

**SOURCE 1.11** Graduates of the Huangpu, or Whampoa, Military Academy at Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, c. 1927

worked for the next four years to provide money, training, leadership and weapons, and thus transformed the GMD into a powerful, military-like organisation. With this aim in mind, the Nationalists established the Whampoa Military Academy near Guangzhou, which was headed by Sun's keenest supporter, a young Jiang Jieshi.

## Jiang as Red?

It is interesting to note that despite his hatred of the Communist Party in China, for a time Jiang Jieshi was regarded as a Communist with some foreigners labelling him the 'Red General'. This label is misleading, but has as its foundation the fact that Jiang was Sun Yixian's leading military adviser. In 1923, Jiang headed a military mission to the Soviet Union and, using Soviet expertise and money, created the Nationalists' officer training school and the subsequent National Revolutionary Army. Jiang, like the Communist Party, sought to rid China of the foreign imperialists and warlords, but he did not advocate class struggle or a radical social transformation of China.

### The death of Sun Yixian

Sun Yixian died of cancer in March 1925 and his death had two significant consequences. First, it resulted in a struggle for leadership within the Nationalist Party. The Nationalists were factionalised due to concerns about their connections with Russia and the admission of Communists to party membership, resulting in the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai, leader of the left-wing group, in August 1925. Jiang Jieshi made use of his strong military connections to stage a coup in the spring of 1926. Second, Sun was transformed overnight into the legendary hero of Nationalist China. His writings and teachings became revered, with this prestige shared by the Guomindang and taken advantage of by Jiang Jieshi, who consolidated these links through his marriage to Soong Meiling (the youngest sister of Madame Sun Yixian). Soong Meiling brought incalculable political benefits to Jiang due to her emphasis on Christian values and the admiration that she gained from the United States.



**SOURCE 1.12** Mausoleum of Sun Yixian, Nanjing, China

*continued*

continued

### Questions

- 1 Explain the impact of the death of Sun Yixian on Chinese politics.
- 2 In what ways did Jiang Jieshi seek to consolidate his role and power within the Guomindang?
- 3 Why might some historians consider Jiang Jieshi to have had links to the Chinese Communist Party?

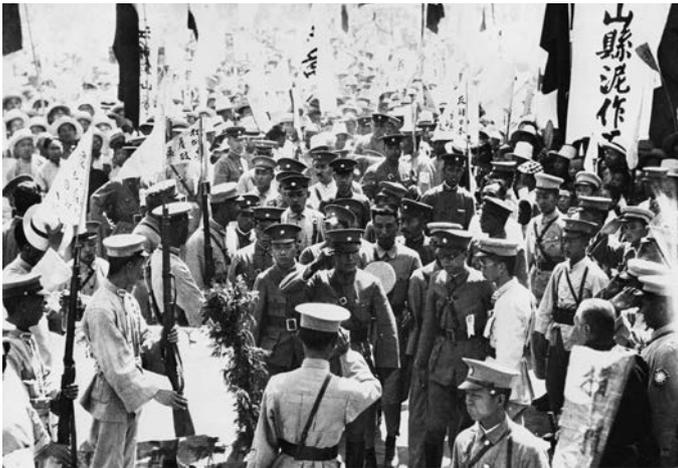
## THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION

Following the death of Sun Yixian, Jiang Jieshi quickly stepped in to take his place, becoming both commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army and leader of the First United Front. In

### Northern Expedition

A military campaign led by Jiang Jieshi in 1926–28, with the objective of reuniting China by defeating local warlords

July 1926, Jiang embarked on the **Northern Expedition**, gathering his troops in the southern city of Guangzhou and sending them north, with the first targets of the expedition being the cities of Wuhan and Nanjing. Initially the campaign was successful; Wuhan was captured in January 1927 and quickly made the Nationalist capital. Gradually, though, the CCP forces made significant contributions; for example, peasants captured Nanchang and Fuzhou with help from undercover agents, sympathisers and agitators using small-scale guerrilla actions, and on 3 January 1927 a Communist-led demonstration forced the British to leave their concession in Jiujiang. As the forces pushed northwards, tensions between the Nationalists and Communists increased due to the success of the CCP in gaining influence over the emerging working class, particularly in cities such as Wuhan, Guangzhou and Shanghai, where party activists stirred the frustration of peasants and workers who had laboured for years in inhumane living and working conditions. While Jiang was the leader of the entire expedition as it advanced, the two fighting columns split and moved in parallel pushes. Jiang's veered to the east and advanced on Nanchang, while the other, mainly directed by left-wing leaders, veered to the west and headed for Wuhan and reached their destination in early 1927, while Jiang entered Shanghai in March 1927.



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 1.13** General Jiang Jieshi, commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army, passing through a crowd of admirers in Hsuechowfu, 1927. General Jiang is saluting, at centre front.



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 1.14** Nationalist troops in Shanghai at the time of the Shanghai Massacre, 1927

## Conflict within the First United Front and the Shanghai Massacre

The United Front was not without its critics. Conservative members of the Nationalists feared the CCP ideology of class struggle and socialism, while many Communists opposed an alliance with a 'party of bourgeoisie'. Secure in Wuhan, the left-wing party leaders challenged Jiang Jieshi's leadership and called for closer cooperation with the Communists and for their capital city to be moved from Guangzhou to Wuhan. Jiang was fearful that they would eventually move against him, and was concerned about Communist influence on his left-wing GMD rivals in Wuhan. Also influenced by advice from businessmen in the eastern cities who were worried about the economic policies of the Communists, Jiang made the fateful decision to abandon the United Front and to purge the GMD of the Communists. On 12 April 1927, Jiang staged a well-planned assault on the Communists, using hired underworld gunmen (the Green Gang) and his own troops. These purges were repeated in every city under Jiang's control; however, in Wuhan, the left wing of the GMD symbolically expelled Jiang from the party.

### Pro-Communist American journalist Edgar Snow on the Shanghai Massacre

On 21st March 1927, the revolutionists called a general strike which closed all the industries of Shanghai ... Five thousand workers were armed, six battalions of revolutionary troops created, the warlord armies withdrew, and a citizens' government proclaimed ... the International Settlement (jointly controlled by Britain, the US and Japan) and the French Concession which adjoined it were never attacked ... otherwise the triumph was complete – and short lived. The Nationalist Army, led by General Pai Chung-hsi, was welcomed to the city by the workers' militia. Then on 12 April the Nationalist Communist coalition abruptly ended when Chiang Kai-shek set up a separate regime in Nanjing ... in the French Concession and the International Settlement, Chiang's envoys had secretly conferred with representatives of the foreign powers. They reached agreements to co-operate against the Chinese Communists and their Russian allies – until then also Chiang's allies. Given large sums of money by Shanghai's bankers, and the blessings of the foreign authorities including guns and armoured cars, Chiang was also helped by powerful Settlement and Concession underworld leaders. They mobilised hundreds of professional gangsters. Installed in the foreigner's armoured cars, and attired in nationalist uniforms, the gangsters carried out a night operation in co-ordination with Chiang's troops, moving in from the rear and other flanks. Taken by complete surprise by troops considered friendly, the militiamen were massacred and their 'citizens' government bloodily destroyed.

Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, rev., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 90

### American lawyer and political activist Paul Linebarger on Jiang's assault on the Communists

At Shanghai, in 1927, Chiang's troops turned suddenly against the Communists and Left groups, quenching the uprising that had taken the city under its flag. This coup was undertaken because Chiang felt that the Communists were outrunning their promises. The Soviet advisors, who had come to help the Nationalists, had professed their concern for China's national struggle, and for the desirability of a fight against imperialism. They had not told Sun himself that he was a mere precursor to the proletarian revolution, nor informed the Nationalists that they were being given the privilege of fighting a war to advance the historical necessity of Nationalist extinction ... Trotsky talked openly in Moscow about overthrowing the Chinese revolutionaries, and hijacking the Chinese revolution with the Chinese

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Communists, while Stalin believed in appeasing the Nationalists longer before discarding them. Of this Chiang was fully aware, and he struck at the sources of Communist power, labour and peasant unions, using a ruthlessness comparable to theirs.

Paul Linebarger, *The China of Chiang Kai-shek* World Peace Foundation, Boston, 1941, pp. 263–4

### Jiang Jieshi's account

That was the darkest and most painful chapter in our [the Nationalists'] history. What almost destroyed the foundation of the Kuomintang ... was the promotion of factionalism within the Kuomintang by Wang Ching-wei and the Communist Party during 1926 and 1927. In view of these developments, the Kuomintang was forced to re-examine its policy of tolerating Communists as members of the party ... the real fact of the matter was that the members of the Chinese Communist Party within the Kuomintang violated their pledge to join the Kuomintang as individuals. Furthermore, they adhered to the theory that the Nationalist Revolution was a democratic revolution of the capitalist class, and that they must take advantage of the development of this revolution to change it into a social revolution of the proletariat. In accordance with their slogan of the class struggle, they regarded the peasants and workers as exclusive instruments of the Communist Party and encouraged production stoppages ... they encouraged our youth to despise and abandon the ancient virtues of our nation, and even denounced the virtues of propriety, righteousness, thrift and humility and reactionary, and treated filial piety, brotherly love, loyalty and obedience with scorn. The situation resembled a raging flood that nearly got out of control.

Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*, Dennis Dobson, London, 1947, pp. 119–21

### Mao Zedong's account

At a critical moment in the progress of the Northern Expedition ... the treacherous and reactionary policies of 'party purge' and massacre adopted by the Guomindang authorities wrecked the national united front – the united front of the Guomindang, the Communist Party and all sections of the people, which embodied the Chinese people's cause of liberation ... unity was replaced by civil war, democracy by dictatorship and a China full of brightness by a China covered in darkness. But the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people were neither cowed nor conquered, nor exterminated. They picked themselves up, wiped off the blood, buried their fallen comrades and went off to battle again.

Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong* (Ebook), Praetorian Press LLC, 2011, p. 99

### The account of Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union

Interestingly, Stalin did not appear concerned by Jiang's betrayal, nor did the Russians remove support for the Nationalists:

The peasant needs an old worn out jade (horse) as long as she is necessary. He does not drive her away. So it is with us. When the Right is of no more use to us, we will drive it away. At present, we need the Right. It has capable people, who still direct the army and lead it against the imperialists. Chiang Kai-shek has perhaps no sympathy for the revolution, but he is leading the army and cannot do otherwise than lead it against the imperialists. Besides this, the people of the Right have relations with the Generals of (warlord) Chang Tso-lin and understand how well to demoralise them and induce them to pass over to the side of the

continued

continued

revolution, bag and baggage without striking a blow. Also they have connections with the rich merchants and can raise money from them. So they have to be utilised to the end, squeezed out like a lemon and then thrown away.

Quoted in Robert C North, *Moscow and the Chinese Communists*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1953, p. 96

## Questions

- 1 What reasons does Jiang Jieshi provide for his act against his former allies?
- 2 Research the Green Gang and their connections to Jiang and the Nationalist Party.
- 3 Consider the origins of the information offered on the Shanghai Massacre. Construct a table like the example below in which you can collate the information about this event.
  - a Consider what reasons are offered by each writer for the massacre.
  - b Consider the background and possible agenda of each writer.
  - c What do we need to know about each source in order to understand the view it offers?
  - d Why is it important for historians to examine events from differing perspectives?

	Snow	Linebarger	Jiang	Mao	Stalin
Facts provided					
Commonalities					
Differences					
Any ideology/bias reflected?					

- 4 Using the information provided in this chapter and your own research, discuss in an extended paragraph the extent to which the Shanghai Massacre was shaped by the preceding events, the influence of individuals, political ideology and broader movements.

## *The CCP in 1927–35: from adversity comes strength*

Between 1927 and 1935, the Chinese Communist Party struggled not only to survive but also to decide on its ideological direction. The Shanghai Massacre resulted in the loss of thousands of party members at the hands of the Nationalists and was followed by violent purges of the Peasant Associations and Communists in rural Hunan and Hubei. At the same time, party policy was largely determined by Moscow and **factionalism** within the CCP led to various leaders vying for power within the party. While the Russians were useful to the CCP by providing organisational expertise, money and their apparently successful model of a proletarian revolution, it was inevitable that tensions arose between China and Russia, as it became apparent that strategies which had been successful for Lenin, such as his emphasis on the role of the industrial worker, were not necessarily useful in China. Following the Shanghai Massacre, Stalin, rather than ordering a strategic retreat, instead ordered that the CCP

### **factionalism**

Conflict between small groups within a larger organisation

should lead the proletariat and peasantry to insurrection. In 1927, the remnants of the CCP attempted insurrections against the Nationalists, such as the Nanchang Uprising (August), the Autumn Harvest Uprising (September) and the Guangzhou Uprising (December), but these were suppressed by loyal GMD troops. The Guangzhou Uprising resulted in the execution of 5000 Communists. Within months, the CCP lost more than half its membership, with estimates indicating that their numbers fell from 58000 to about 10000. At this time, CCP leadership passed to Qu Qiubai (a Moscow-trained intellectual) when Chen Duxiu was made the scapegoat and accused of right-wing opportunism or failure to encourage Moscow's attempt to create a mass movement known as the 'rising wave'.

## The Autumn Harvest Uprising

The aim of the Autumn Harvest Uprising of September 1927 was to capture the city of Changsha, situated in Hunan province. The insurrection was led by Mao Zedong. At this time, Mao's belief that an organised military force be created under an independent Chinese Communist Party banner caused tension between himself and the CCP Central Committee who would later see him as a reckless military adventurer. The uprising failed and Mao was punished by being dismissed from the party's ruling body – the Politburo. Mao felt that the Central Committee were 'advocates of reckless action', who encouraged party members to undertake armed insurrections despite little hope of success. Mao and other survivors fled south from Changsha to the countryside, finding refuge in Jinggangshan – an isolated, mountainous area along the border of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. Here Mao united with local bandits and established a stronghold from which he created a centre of resistance against the Nationalists.

## SURVIVAL OF PERSECUTION – THE CCP AS A 'DISEASE OF THE SOUL'

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the foreign language press both overseas and in China represented Jiang Jieshi as a man concerned by the dangers of the Communists or the 'Red Peril' in China. The headlines did indeed reflect Jiang's obsessive desire to rid China of the Communists and, following his about-face on the First United Front in 1927, it almost seemed that he would succeed. The CCP was fragmented, with its members either executed or exiled to the countryside, much to the delight of Jiang and his business and foreign associates. Ultimately, Jiang's actions led the Communists to make use of the support of the peasants, and with their cooperation came limited tax reductions and land reform in what became known as Soviet bases. These became the foundation of Mao Zedong's sinification of Marxism–Leninism.

## THE JIANGXI SOVIET

Six months after Mao's retreat to Jinggangshan, he was joined by a second Communist force led by Zhu De, a former officer in the Nationalist Revolutionary Army. Zhu called his men, who were

survivors from the failed Nanchang Uprising, the ‘Red Army’, and this was the name he and Mao used to describe their combined forces of approximately 4000 men. In January 1929, Mao and Zhu, along with more bands of renegade Communists who had joined them, made the decision to break out of Jinggangshan and establish themselves near the town of Ruijin in southern Jiangxi. This area was more fertile and the Red Army, which by then numbered about 10 000, quickly grew to over 60 000. Their new settlement became known as the **Jiangxi Soviet**. At its peak, the Jiangxi Soviet trained its soldiers, created propaganda and governed approximately three million people. Mao’s Red Army was still seen by CCP leadership and its ally Moscow as secondary to urban revolutionaries, with Li Lisan, party leader since July 1928, seeing the revolution in the countryside as merely a preliminary stage of the overall socialist revolution. Mao, however, saw the peasants as far more significant and used his time in Jiangxi to develop what would become known as ‘peasant communism’ or the Chinese model of socialism. At the core of Mao’s ideology was the relationship between the party, the peasants and the Red Army.

As early as 1919, Li Dazhao, librarian turned revolutionary, wrote:

“ Our nation is a rural nation and most of the labouring class is made up of peasants. If they are not liberated, our whole nation will not be liberated; their sufferings are the sufferings of our whole nation; their ignorance is the ignorance of our nation ... Go out and develop them and cause them to know liberation. ”

Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-Chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967, p. 81

Mao Zedong also recognised and understood the value of the peasants quite early in his career. As director of the Farmers Movement, Mao worked as a political activist among the peasantry, and one of the distinctive elements of his ideology would be his emphasis on the role of the peasant rural masses rather than the urban proletariat. In his 1927 report on the peasant movement in Hunan, Mao came to the following conclusion:

“ In a short time ... several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm ... a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will hold it back ... they will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry into their graves. Every revolutionary party and every revolutionary comrade will be put to the test to be accepted or rejected as they decide. There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticising? Or to stand in their way and oppose them? Every Chinese is free to choose, but events will force you to make the choice quickly. ”

Mao Zedong, ‘Mao Zedong on the importance of the peasant problem’, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, pp. 23–4



**SOURCE 1.15** Leaders of the Jiangxi Soviet, including Mao

### Jiangxi Soviet

After leaving Jinggangshan, Mao Zedong and Zhu De established a soviet near the town of Ruijin in November 1931, which became the Chinese Soviet government headquarters

Unlike many of his party comrades, particularly those in Shanghai, Mao understood that the peasants made up 80 per cent of China's population and that rural workers numbered at 205 million compared to 54 million urban workers. To Mao it seemed folly to ignore them as they had a long tradition of rebellion and were worse off than any other sector of Chinese society. His belief in the use of the peasantry to supply information and food during the implementation of guerrilla warfare, and in the creative energies of the masses through a decentralised leadership structure that met the needs of the local people, was to form the cornerstone of his ideology.

During his time in Ruijin, Mao ran the soviet along the lines he felt would best ensure the support of the peasants, while developing those socialist practices he saw as vital if communism were to be effective in China. Land was taken from the local landlords with the exception of small landholdings they could cultivate themselves, rents were abolished and landless peasants were provided with land so that they could support themselves. Further, the exploitation of women and children was outlawed; practices such as footbinding, prostitution and child slavery became illegal; and schools and health clinics were established. Other social reforms that increased the popularity of the Communist Party were equal rights for divorce and marriage, a strong discouragement of opium farming (though some was grown and Mao was a user) and the formation of a 'people's bank' with its own currency.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAO'S RED ARMY

The creation of the Red Army was the major innovation of the Jiangxi Soviet. In his establishment of a principled and disciplined army, Mao went against the Chinese tradition that held 'one must not waste good iron making nails, or good men making soldiers'. The entire Red Army was a volunteer force; there was no conscription and captured troops were given a choice between joining the Red Army and a free passage home. Membership was considered to be prestigious by the men who joined it because it was a pathway to an education as political commissars. These commissars were attached to the military divisions, and were in charge of offering instruction that featured party ideology, but which also taught the soldiers how to read. The soldiers also valued the fact that their officers did not wear badges or decorations to signify rank, and were not allowed to beat their subordinates.

In keeping with Mao's views on the role and value of his army, he redefined the role of the soldier. In particular, Mao clearly articulated that the soldiers needed to know and understand the cause for which they were fighting. In order to achieve this, they were ordered to undertake literacy classes and participate in political education. The army remained under the control of the CCP but Mao also considered it vital that its members maintained a good relationship with the peasants and were supported by them. With this view in mind, Mao established rules which ensured that the village people were treated with courtesy, that women were to be respected rather than abused and that the Red Army should be able to successfully live among its people.

The Red Army engaged in guerrilla warfare, using tactics that were summarised by Mao into four simple lines which were easy for the soldiers to recite and remember:

- “
- 1 When the enemy advances, we retreat!
  - 2 When the enemy halts and encamps, we trouble them!
  - 3 When the enemy seeks to avoid battle, we attack!
  - 4 When the enemy retreats, we pursue!
- ”

Cited in Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, rev., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 202

Furthermore, fundamental to the Red Army's strategy were three main rules governing discipline and eight principles introduced by Mao in 1928 which, again, were turned into a tune that the soldiers could easily learn and sing while marching. This was an effective way to both train the men and the Chinese people in Maoist ideology and was, as such, a propaganda tool. These rules ensured the Red Army were held in high regard by civilians, as they were starkly different from the other armies who generally raped and pillaged, as well as destroyed crops and infrastructure. The three main rules were:

- “
- 1 Obey orders in all actions.
  - 2 Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.
  - 3 Turn in everything captured.
- ”

The following eight principles further underlined the behaviour of the Red Army soldier:

- “
- 1 Speak politely.
  - 2 Pay fairly for what is bought.
  - 3 Return everything borrowed.
  - 4 Pay for everything damaged.
  - 5 Don't hit or swear at people.
  - 6 Don't damage crops.
  - 7 Don't take liberties with women.
  - 8 Don't ill-treat captives.
- ”

Mao Zedong, 'On the Re-Issue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention', in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1966, pp. 256–7

## The Futian Purges

It cannot be denied that Mao's work in the Jiangxi Soviet was innovative and highly valued by the men under his control; however, he was often authoritarian and violent during his time there. In October 1930, he instigated a violent purge of the Red Army, punishing those he suspected of being loyal to Li Lisan, the CCP member who was opposed to Mao's peasant-based approach. It is claimed that Mao arrested 4000 soldiers and executed 1000 as members of a supposed anti-Bolshevik clique. In December 1930, the purge escalated when a group of Red Army soldiers freed some of the captured men from the town of Futian and began to display banners reading 'Down with Mao Zedong'. Mao pretended to invite the mutinying officers for a peaceful meeting, but instead arrested all 200 and had them executed.

## Conclusion

A significant factor in the collapse of the Qing Empire was its inability to withstand the military defeats and humiliating retreats imposed on it by European nations and Japan. The last years of the empire were characterised by rebellion and internal division. The peasantry suffered deep poverty, and China had fallen behind the West, economically and technologically. The May

Fourth Movement (or May Fourth Intellectual Revolution) extended from 1919 to 1923, and its consequences were far-reaching and important in Chinese history – it affected politics, changed social practices and impacted on the growth of the intellectual. In the late 1920s, the Nationalists, led by Jiang Jieshi, worked with the Chinese Communist Party to reunify the country during the Northern Expedition, but this period of uneasy cooperation came to an abrupt end when Jiang turned against the Communists, ordering a massacre in 1927. Undaunted, yet inhibited by factionalism within the party, the CCP forces fled Shanghai to regroup in the Jinggangshan Mountains and form the highly effective Jiangxi Soviet in Ruijin. It was here that Mao put into practice some of his theories regarding warfare and the role of the peasantry, proving that Jiang's actions had led to the growth of the CCP rather than crushing it.



## Chapter summary

- + The Qing government was weak, corrupt and under the influence of foreign imperialists.
- + Sun Yixian created an alliance of revolutionary groups known as the Tongmenghui in 1905 and organised 10 failed uprisings.
- + Following the accidental detonation of a bomb in Wuhan, the Qing dynasty was crushed and its boy emperor, Pu Yi, abdicated in 1911.
- + The Republic of China was established with Sun Yixian as provisional president, but he stepped down in favour of Yuan Shikai who did not have China's best interests at heart and proclaimed himself emperor. He was forced to abdicate and died in 1916.
- + Sun Yixian formed the Guomindang (Nationalist Party) in opposition to Yuan Shikai.
- + A period of anarchy known as the Warlord Era fragmented China.
- + A rising number of Chinese intellectuals were drawn to Marxism, which led to the formation of the Chinese Communist Party.
- + Jiang Jieshi became leader of the Guomindang following the death of Sun Yixian.
- + The Communist Party and the Guomindang formed an alliance known as the First United Front and set out to unify China and conquer the warlords.
- + The First United Front was betrayed by the military leader of the Guomindang, Jiang Jieshi.
- + Communist Party members fled, reformed and set up a strong political and military force that challenged the right of the Guomindang to govern China.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

Josh Brooman, *Imperial China: From the First Emperor to Kublai Khan*, Longman, UK, 1991.

Dun J Li (ed.), *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1969.

Patricia Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010.

Jonathan Fenby, *The Dragon Throne: Dynasties of Imperial China*, Quercus, London, 2008.

Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990.

Brian Hook & Denis Twitchett (eds), *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of China*, 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1965.

Myra Roper, *China in Revolution 1911–1949*, Edward Arnold, London, 1971.

### Film

*China Rising* series (1990), Part 1, 'Paradise of Adventurers', Yorkshire Television.

*Puyi, the last Emperor of China* (2009), written and directed by Peter Du Cane.

*Journeys in Time series* (2011), ‘The Revolution of 1911’, CCTV (created to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the revolution).

*The Last Emperor* (1987), directed by Bernardo Bertolucci.



## *Chapter review activities*

- 1 Provide a definition chart for the following key terminology used in this chapter:
  - a Mandate of Heaven
  - b Imperialism
  - c Marxism–Leninism
  - d Three Principles
  - e Twenty-one Demands
  - f Comintern
  - g Northern Expedition
  - h First United Front.
- 2 Create a table with two columns and name them ‘Internal threats’ and ‘External threats’. Use the table to outline the key problems of the Qing dynasty that resulted in its downfall.
- 3 What problems encountered by the Qing continued to be issues for the Chinese following the Double Tenth and the abdication of Pu Yi?
- 4 In what ways did the ideology and actions of Sun Yixian impact on the growth of revolutionary activity in China?
- 5 Create a timeline on which you place the key times and events identified in this chapter. Provide brief annotations to ensure you understand the significance of each event in terms of the growth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Guomindang (GMD).
- 6 Create a research report in which you investigate the inquiry question: What was the significance of the May Fourth Movement and the subsequent New Culture Movement in terms of the creation of a new breed of revolutionaries?
- 7 Why was Mao Zedong regarded as a ‘reckless adventurer’ by senior CCP members?
- 8 What role did Mao see the Red Army playing in the development of the revolution?
- 9 In what ways did Mao’s ideas about his management of the peasantry and the Red Army differ from those of the 28 Bolsheviks and the party executive?
- 10 Explain the significance of the Jiangxi Soviet in the creation of Mao’s ideology.
- 11 What was significant about Mao’s management of his party members in Jinggangshan and the Jiangxi Soviet in terms of the development of Maoism?



- 12 Official orthodoxy of the CCP implies the strong leadership role of Mao from its very beginnings. Is this accurate? Use evidence to support your answer.
- 13 Create a flow chart in which you plot the development of events in China from the downfall of the Qing to the establishment of the Jiangxi Soviet.
- 14 Create your own visual interpretation of the events in China and place against it the growth and development of the CCP and the GMD. This representation should be organic and you can keep adding to it as you learn more about both parties in subsequent chapters.
- 15 Write an essay in response to this statement by historian Lucien Bianco:

“ The May Fourth Movement was a kind of Chinese Enlightenment ... it was a ground-clearing exercise [that] foreshadowed and paved the way for 1949 ... 1919 was more important than 1911: the second attack went beyond the tottering empire ... to a system of thought and social organisation ... [it] called into question the very basis of Chinese society. ”

Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution 1915–1949*,  
Stanford University Press, CA, 1971, pp. 27–8



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Threats from the outside and within, 1928–1937*

In the years following the 1911 revolution it can be argued that China fell largely under the control of notorious warlords and had no effective national government. While the formal institutions of Sun Yixian's constitution were established, the real power during the Nationalist or Nanjing Decade of 1928–37 lay with Jiang Jieshi, who as president dominated the council, cabinet and ministry, and made use of his administration personnel who were all right-wing supporters of the Guomindang (GMD) or personal friends. The Nationalists represented the investing classes and landlords, and as such became the conservative rather than the reformist party China needed. The failure of the Nationalist government to establish firm control of a nation in severe crisis enabled the formation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which posed a serious threat to Jiang Jieshi and the GMD. Initially the two groups joined forces in the First United Front and cooperated successfully to hinder the success of the warlords. However, Jiang's turning on the Communists in a series of massacres known as the 'White Terror' of 1927 led to the fragmentation of this alliance and the re-emergence of the Communists as a party committed to the peasants, land reform and a China for the Chinese, and able to withstand attacks from the Nationalists. The Nanjing government survived threats from within, and there was an expectation that it would gain acceptance from the United States after crushing the Communists. However, the degree of acceptance by the Chinese people was questionable. By 1937, China continued to be beset by internal difficulties and, following the invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese in 1931, increased external crises.

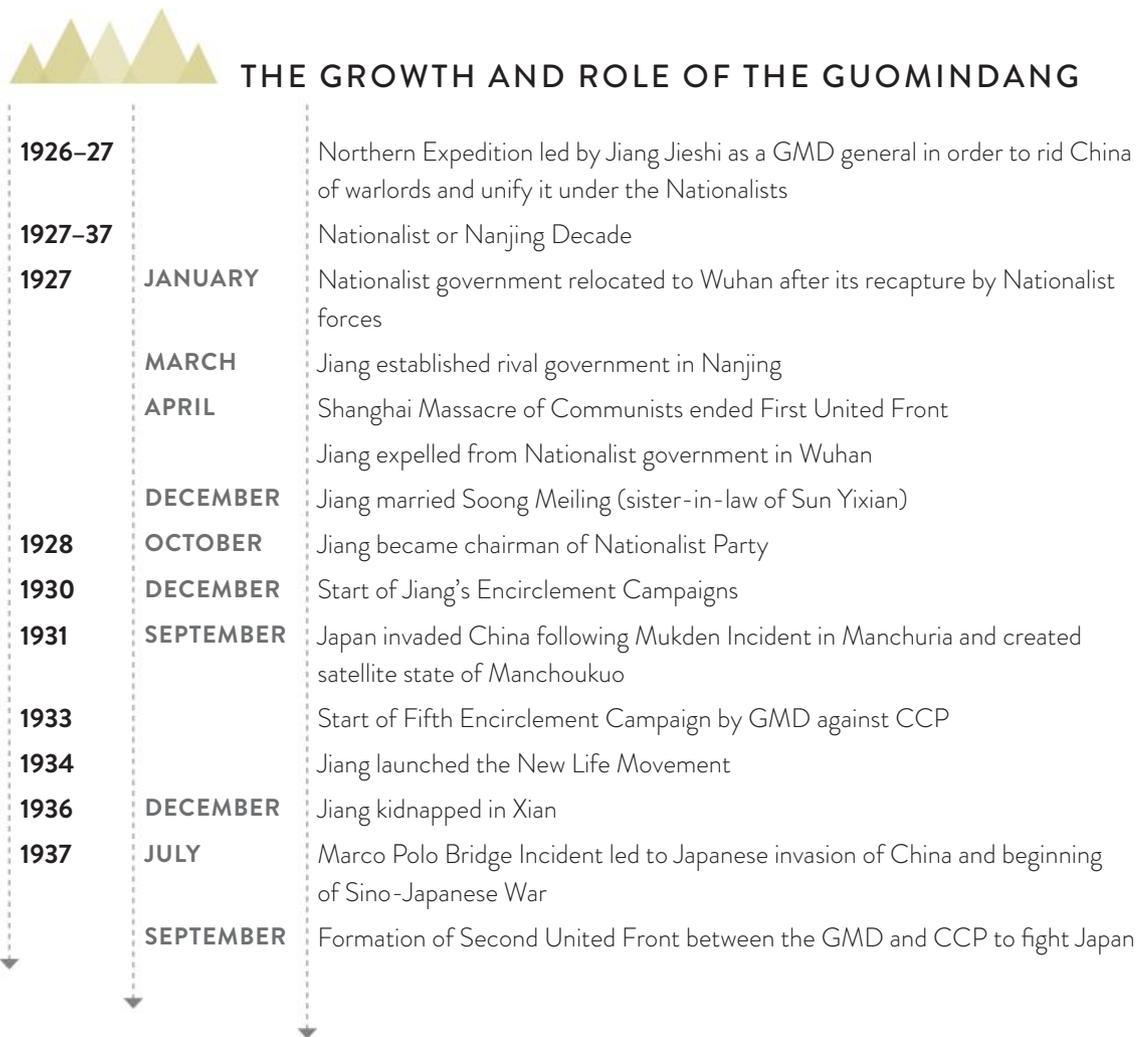
◀ Early portrait of Jiang Jieshi in military uniform, 1935

#### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + How did internal and external threats impact on life in China in 1937?
- + How was China organised under the Guomindang in 1937?
- + What was the role of the Chinese Communist Party in 1937?

## *The Nationalist era*

Between 1928 and 1934, the Nationalist government under Jiang Jieshi only controlled one part of China – the lower Yangzi Valley. The rest was controlled in name only or by warlords, the Japanese or the Communists. For example, Communist forces controlled areas of Jiangxi in 1931–34, and the Japanese had invaded Manchuria in 1931, renaming it Manchoukuo, and administering it as a satellite state. The warlords still held control in several provinces and Jiang moved the capital to Nanjing as it was more centralised. From Nanjing, Jiang began his modernisation process, but it had little or no impact on peasants as his focus was on the cities and gaining foreign support to modernise the Chinese economy. Many historians believe that Jiang did not adopt Sun Yixian's Three Principles as the ideology of his party because he ruled as a dictator and encouraged foreign intrusion into the country rather than repelled it.



## Jiang Jieshi (1887–1975)

Jiang Jieshi was born to a moderately wealthy merchant and landowning family near Shanghai and was educated in the Confucian classics by tutors during his early years. Inspired to pursue a military career, Jiang entered the Paoting Military School in 1906 and in 1907 travelled to Japan to study at a military academy at Tokyo. It was during this time that Jiang met Sun Yixian and joined the Tongmenghui.

After serving in the Japanese Imperial Army, Jiang returned to China in 1911 to fight in the Revolutionary Army against the Qing and assisted in the taking of Shanghai and Hangzhou. He also participated in the failed 'Second Revolution' against Yuan Shikai in 1913 and fled to Japan to escape. Later, Jiang joined the Southern Armies, which supported the Guomindang, and acted as a major-general.

In 1923, following the Sun–Joffe Declaration, Jiang led a military mission to the Soviet Union to study the Red Army with a view to establishing a Guomindang military academy based on the Soviet model. For his knowledge, expertise and loyalty, Jiang was appointed head of Whampoa Military Academy by Sun Yixian and given the task of training officers for the Guomindang. Jiang worked at Whampoa until 1926, when, recognising that the death of Sun Yixian had created a power vacuum, he staged a coup in Guangzhou. Following this, Jiang actively sought to purge Guomindang leadership of Communists and became the commander of the National Revolutionary Army on its Northern Expedition.

In what was to be an audacious and highly significant move, on the successful capture of Shanghai and Nanjing, Jiang split the factionalised Guomindang by forming a rival government in Nanjing. He purged the Communists with the help of the Green Gang, in what has become known as the Shanghai Massacre, and consolidated his role as successor of Sun Yixian by marrying the sister of Sun's widow, Soong Meiling.

Jiang was named chairman of the Nationalist government in China in 1928 and led it until 1949 when the Guomindang was defeated by Communist forces.



Corbis/Bettmann



## LIFE UNDER THE NATIONALISTS

Once he had taken control of the Nationalist government, Jiang Jieshi sought to establish both his credibility as the successor of Sun Yixian and his own ideology.

### The New Life Movement

By 1934, Jiang had developed an ideology that he thought would serve the dual purposes of unifying China amid the dislocation of the civil war against the Communists and the threat of the Japanese, and socially regenerating the Chinese. By emphasising the virtues of integrity, conscientiousness, etiquette and justice, Jiang hoped to create loyal and moral humans. This program was known as the **New Life Movement**. The movement began in 1934 in Nanchang in Jiangxi province and spread across China via Guomindang party

#### New Life Movement

In February 1934, Jiang Jieshi sought to re-establish traditional and highly conservative values within China as a way of offering opposition to the growing popularity of Communism. The movement attempted to control the way of life of the Chinese at all levels and its dictatorial rules were widely resented

### Blue Shirts Society

A secret society founded by members of the Whampoa Military Academy to influence politics and the role of the military in China. Its members adhered to the ideology of fascism and pledged to support Jiang Jieshi

### Generalissimo

The chief commander of an army; a title given to Jiang Jieshi because of his military background and habit of wearing a uniform

organisations, youth groups and then the general public. Jiang made use of a variety of resources such as brochures, films, plays, lectures and images to convey the lessons he felt would strengthen Chinese society and thus prepare the Chinese to solve what he saw as the 'four great needs' of the population: clothing, food, housing and transportation. Jiang made use of the New Life Movement to gain mass support and to provide a philosophical basis for his government in Nanjing. His premise was that China's problems were due to foreign influences; therefore he urged the people to rediscover the Confucian values of duty and honesty, and a sense of shame and propriety.

Interestingly, this movement had its birth at the same time that Jiang was working on his encirclement campaigns to rid the country of the Communists and creating an organisation known informally as the **Blue Shirts Society**. This organisation was fiercely loyal to the **Generalissimo** and used a military and secret-police apparatus to investigate domestic and foreign elements thought to be subversive. The movement made use of campaigns against provocative clothing, spitting and urinating in public, but rather than unifying the country with common goals it instead became a form of harassment and interference in the personal lives of the Chinese.

## The New Life Movement and its impact on the Chinese

### Jiang Jieshi on the New Life Movement, 1934

These virtues must be applied to ordinary life in the matter of food, clothing, shelter and action. The four virtues are the essential principles of the promotion of morality. They form the major rules for dealing with men and human affairs, for cultivating oneself and for the adjustment to one's surroundings. Whoever violates these rules is bound to fail; and a nation which neglects them will not survive ... By observing these virtues, it is hoped that social disorder and individual weakness will be remedied and that people will become more military-minded. If a country cannot defend itself, it has every chance of losing its existence ... As a preliminary, we must acquire the habits of orderliness, cleanliness, simplicity, frugality, promptness and exactness. We must preserve order, emphasise organisation, responsibility and discipline and be ready to die for the country at any moment ...

...If the national spirit is to be revived, there must be recourse to stable foundations. In the four principles of ancient times we have these foundations. *Li* means courtesy; *I* means service towards our fellow men and towards ourselves; *Lien* means honesty and respect for the rights of others; and *Chih*, high-mindedness and honour.

Cited in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd edn, vol. 2, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 341–4

### Historian Jonathan Spence on how the movement affected Chinese women

Chinese women were urged to cultivate the 'four virtues' of chastity, appearance, speech and work, and were told not to be hoodwinked into blindly following feminist ideas ... he left no doubt that Chinese women's central tasks were 'to regulate the household' through chores, sewing, cooking, arranging the furniture

continued

continued

and designing the home and garden. [Strict rules such as] ‘exact dimensions for hemlines to fall below the knee (4 inches) ... and for a blouse worn with trousers to fall below the line of the buttocks (3 inches)’ meant that instead of reviving the nation, [it] gradually trickled away in a stream of trivia.

Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, WW Norton and Company, New York, 1999, p. 357

## Questions

- 1 What were the key aims of the New Life Movement? Consider those expressed openly compared to those that were desired by Jiang Jieshi.
- 2 How useful was the New Life Movement in unifying China under the GMD? Give reasons for your answer, referring to evidence supplied in this chapter and from your own research.
- 3 Consider the purpose of the views expressed by Jiang compared to those of Spence. How do these views on the nature and success of the New Life Movement differ and why?

## The Blue Shirts

The Blue Shirts Society, also known as the Society of the Practice of the Three Principles of the People, was a **fascist**, or extreme right-wing and authoritarian, movement that emerged in China in 1932 and held considerable influence until 1937. With its most important members drawn from the military elite of the Whampoa Military Academy, the founders of this group hoped to solve China’s internal and external crises by reviving the notion of a revolutionary spirit. Its key aim was to check the political activities of all political enemies of the Nationalist government. This group served as a method of control in China, and Miles Lampson, the British ambassador to China at the time, believed the actions of the Blue Shirts were directed by Jiang Jieshi himself.

All through the development of the Blueshirts, the ideological influences of fascism, of Hitler’s Stormtroopers ... became required reading for the ‘inner ring’ people, the elite security guard round Jiang Jieshi.

WF Elkins, “Fascism” in China: The Blue Shirts Society 1932–37’, *Science & Society*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1969, pp. 426–33

### fascism

A political ideology in the form of radical, authoritarian nationalism that came to prominence in early 20th-century Europe. Jiang’s Blue Shirts Society was based on fascist principles

## Questions

- 1 Why was it so important for the Blue Shirts, particularly those who surrounded Jiang Jieshi, to understand the ideology of fascism?
- 2 In what ways would the creation of the Blue Shirts Society have assisted Jiang to control life in China?
- 3 How might the existence of the Blue Shirts have contributed to the perception of Jiang as a dictator?



## Soong Meiling (1898–2003)

Soong Meiling was the youngest daughter of a wealthy Christian industrialist and, perhaps more interestingly, the sister of Sun Yixian's widow. She was educated in the United States and spoke perfect English. Soong first met Jiang Jieshi in 1920; however, her mother was against their marriage as Jiang was already married, a Buddhist and 11 years older than her daughter. She finally agreed when Jiang promised to convert to Christianity and was able to prove that he had divorced his first wife. There has been much debate about Jiang's reasons for the marriage and its success; though childless, it lasted for 48 years. After marrying Jiang in 1927, 'Madam Jiang' used her foreign connections to assist her husband to gain American aid for China, particularly after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Soong played a prominent role in Chinese politics, frequently entertaining foreign guests for her husband and enchanting them with her wit, beauty and intelligent conversation.



The Art Archive/Culver Pictures

**SOURCE 2.1** Soong Meiling and Jiang Jieshi on their wedding day, 1927

## CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT DURING THE NATIONALIST DECADE

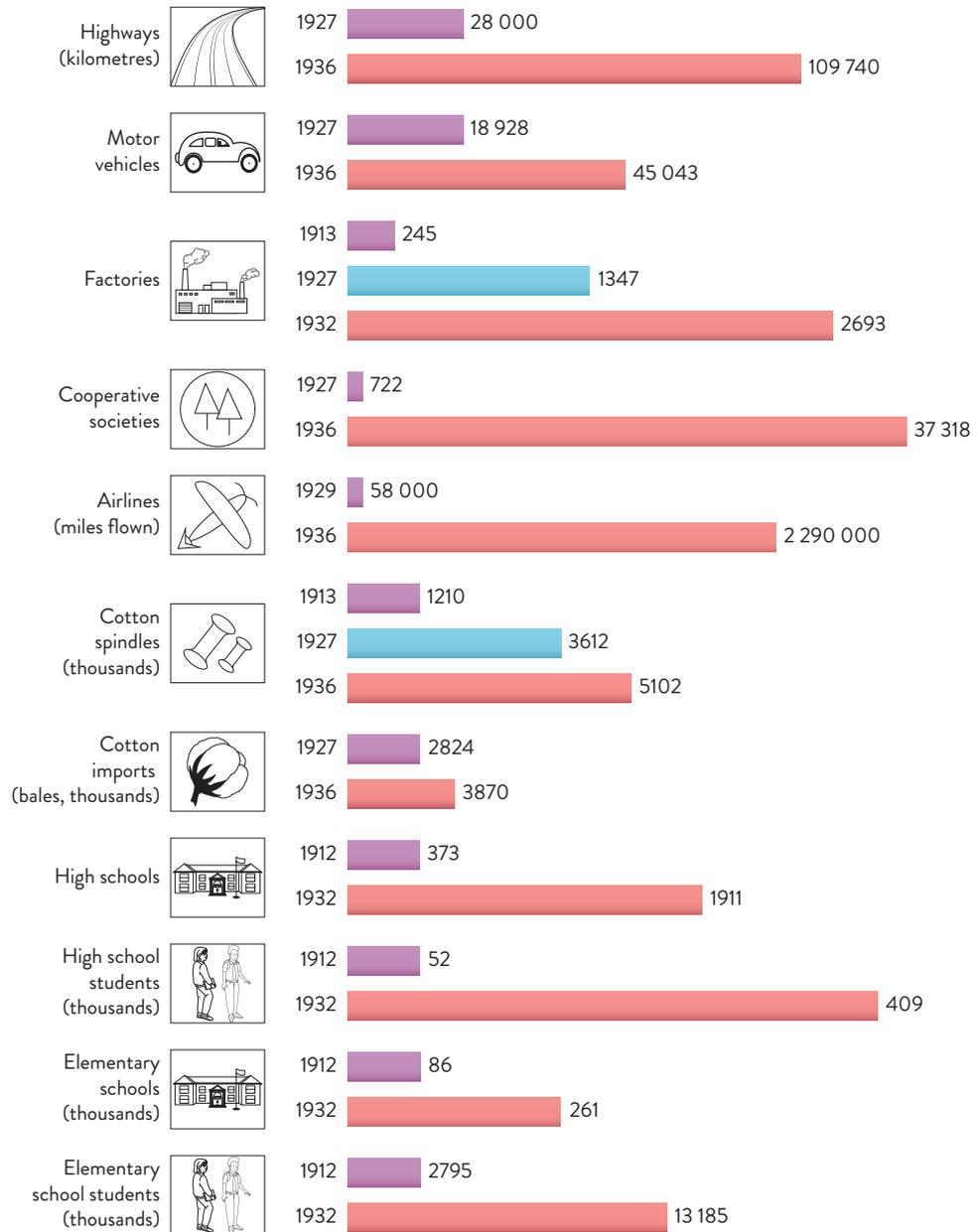
Following the success of the Northern Expedition, Jiang's unification of most of China led to feelings of goodwill and hope, and it was believed that the country could renew itself through economic and modernisation campaigns. While some positive growth occurred, this was funded with foreign loans, and the Nationalist government was beset with ongoing problems and never fulfilled these early hopes.

Jiang's new government was based on five administrative divisions known as the Five Yuan. This in itself was not problematic, but the way in which these were run had a significant impact on how they were perceived by the Chinese. With Jiang, also known by the militaristic title of Generalissimo, as head of the State Council and the various Yuans controlled by warlords, the GMD was quickly seen as 'above the government', or beyond control, which severely limited the democratic nature of the new government.

This lack of democratic legitimacy was compounded further by the growth of Jiang's Blue Shirts Society. Greatly influenced by fascism, its members swore an oath to advance Jiang's leadership through violence and intimidation, and infiltrated the military, police force, banks and bureaucracy. Despite Jiang's denial of the society's existence, it had more than 14 000 members across China by 1935.

**TABLE 2.1** Life under the Guomindang (GMD)

Challenges	Growth under the GMD
<p><b>Regionalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Jiang's government was strong enough to control individual regions but could not impose order across the whole nation.</li> <li>+ The government controlled only five provinces in the Yangzi region. The others were still governed, with varying degrees of cooperation, by provincial strongmen.</li> <li>+ Some regions and provinces began to withhold taxes and supplies from the government.</li> <li>+ Provincial governments imposed their own special taxes, which placed strain on the common people and fostered resentment towards the government.</li> </ul>	<p>Modernisation programs were undertaken, generally funded with foreign assistance. Major modernisation initiatives included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ building of railways, bridges, roads, buses and trams</li> <li>+ expanding the supply of electricity</li> <li>+ building of flood-control levees along major rivers</li> <li>+ standardisation of measurements and weights</li> <li>+ introduction of paper currency and decimal coinage</li> <li>+ establishment of improved tariff agreements with Western powers</li> <li>+ recovery of some foreign concessions such as Hankou and Jiujiang</li> <li>+ expansion of the railway network from 8000 to 13 000 kilometres</li> <li>+ founding of modern airlines, such as Eurasia Aviation Corporation and Chinese National Aviation Corporation</li> <li>+ expansion of telegraph and telephone systems with 4000 kilometres of telephone lines; 14 000 post offices established</li> <li>+ control of the customs service returned to the Chinese for the first time since the Opium Wars.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Insufficient funds due to shortage of tax revenue were addressed by printing more money, but by the 1940s the currency was almost completely devalued.</li> <li>+ Some officials collected taxes in advance. In Sichuan, for example, taxes for 1971 had already been collected by 1933.</li> <li>+ Jiang's rule was based on his financial connections, such as wealthy industrialists, who supported the government for its intolerance of trade unions and Communist agitators.</li> <li>+ Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency was common. In Gansu province during the 1930s, peasants had to pay 44 different taxes and the Control Yuan received 69 500 complaints between 1931 and 1937; 268 officials were found to be at fault and only 13 were sacked.</li> <li>+ Advisers such as TV Soong were trained in the West and had little understanding of or interest in rural China and its financial concerns.</li> <li>+ Following Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the government suffered a loss of 15 per cent of customs revenue, the country's single largest source of income.</li> <li>+ Flooding of the Yangzi River in 1931 resulted in approximately 14 million refugees.</li> <li>+ China suffered from the impact of the Great Depression in the late 1920s and 1930s.</li> </ul>	



**SOURCE 2.2** Economic growth in China before the Japanese invasion

## THE COMMUNISTS AS CHINA'S 'DISEASE OF THE SOUL'

Despite the fact that Jiang Jieshi had actually trained in Russia before taking charge of the Whampoa Military Academy, he quickly made his hatred of the Chinese Communist Party very clear. Jiang swore to rid China of the Communists, declaring them to be a 'disease of the soul' in comparison to the invading Japanese forces whom he believed to be a lesser danger and therefore only a 'disease of the skin'.



## THE GROWTH AND ROLE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

1927	APRIL	Shanghai Massacre of Communists ended First United Front
1928	JUNE–JULY	Sixth Party Congress of the CCP – Li Lisan elected to CCP leadership
1929	JANUARY	Mao Zedong and Zhu De moved Communist forces from Jinggangshan
1929	FEBRUARY	Communist base established at Ruijin in Jiangxi province, known as the Jiangxi Soviet
1929	JULY–AUGUST	Li Lisan Line – CCP forces attempted attacks on urban centres
1930	DECEMBER	Futian Purges. Start of Jiang Jieshi's Encirclement Campaigns
1931	JANUARY	Communist leadership changes, influenced by 28 Bolsheviks and led by Wang Ming and Bo Gu
1931	SEPTEMBER	Japan invaded China following Mukden Incident in Manchuria and created satellite state of Manchoukuo
1933		Start of Fifth Encirclement Campaign by the GMD against the CCP
1934		Start of the Long March after the CCP's Red Army broke through the blockade created by Nationalist forces
1935		End of the Long March in Yan'an
1936	DECEMBER	Soviet established at Yan'an

### THE 28 BOLSHEVIKS

Following the collapse of the First United Front and the Shanghai Massacres, the CCP became increasingly influenced by the 28 Bolsheviks, a group of young, Russian-educated Communists who returned to China from Moscow in the late 1920s. Led by Wang Ming and supported by the Soviet Union Comintern agent Pavel Mif, this group of men opposed Li Lisan's leadership of the CCP. They accused Li of wrongdoing, used him as a scapegoat for failed campaigns such as the attack on the Guomindang stronghold in Nanchang in 1930, and ultimately ousted him from power in November 1930. This pro-Russian group was enormously powerful within the party and was a source of division between Mao Zedong and the party headquarters in Shanghai. While the 28 Bolsheviks saw the Soviets and the Red Army as integral to the revolutionary cause, the group's role in the revolution and, in particular, military tactics created tension. The group was critical of Mao's land distribution policy and was suspicious of his involvement of the peasant associations in this process. It also questioned his guerrilla tactics; however, Mao had seen and proven the value of guerrilla tactics against the larger and better armed Guomindang, and he resented being told how to lead his men by the militarily inexperienced Wang. This tension was further exacerbated when Jiang Jieshi, highly concerned by the growth and strength of the Soviets, set out to destroy the Communist bases through a series of 'extermination' or 'encirclement campaigns'.

#### Comintern

The Communist International, established in 1919, promoted world revolution and functioned chiefly as an organ of Soviet control over the international communist movement. Members of the Comintern acted as advisers to the CCP

## THE ENCIRCLEMENT CAMPAIGNS

Since the Shanghai Massacre of 1927, Jiang Jieshi was determined to rid China of the Communists and he argued that national unity must take precedence over foreign affairs because the external Japanese threat could not be defeated by a divided nation. For Jiang, '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.'

Seeking to rid China of the Communists once and for all, Jiang focused his attention on the Soviet bases, with a particular focus on the Jiangxi Soviet. Between 1930 and 1934, his forces launched five campaigns of 'encirclement'. The first four of these were unsuccessful, although Jiang's forces, numbering around 700 000, greatly outnumbered those of the CCP, which totalled about 150 000; the fifth campaign was more effective. In this fifth campaign, acting on the recommendation of German military advisers, checkpoints were established near the Jiangxi Soviet to restrict the movement of the Red Army. These checkpoints were later expanded to include fortified positions that prevented the Communists from accessing vital food, clothing and other aid.

## THE LONG MARCH

By October 1934, the situation within the Jiangxi Soviet at Ruijin was considered dire. The Communists had lessened their use of guerrilla tactics, instead following the advice of Comintern representative Otto Braun, who urged them to engage the Guomindang in a series of full-scale frontal attacks, which resulted in disastrous defeats. With the Red Army in danger of total destruction, the decision was made to evacuate the base. What followed has become known as the Long March. Exact numbers of those who fled Ruijin are not clear and writers such as pro-Communist American Edgar Snow romanticised some elements of the journey; however, it cannot be disputed that the march was remarkable. In 368 days, CCP forces travelled approximately 10 000 kilometres, crossed 24 major rivers and ten mountain ranges. Of the troops who made up the marchers, 54 per cent were under the age of 24, most were illiterate, and each left Jiangxi with a sewing needle inside their cap and wore a long, sausage-like pouch carrying enough rice for two or three days. The retreating force also carried weapons and supplies, which were borne on men's backs or in horse-drawn carts. The line of marchers stretched for kilometres. There were

only 35 women among the marchers, and they were mostly the wives of high-ranking party members. The Communists often marched at night, and when they were not in danger of immediate attack, they could be identified as a long column of torches. The Communist forces moved slowly due to their numbers and the provisions they took with them, which included typewriters, printing presses, desks, furniture, chests of money and more than two million rounds of ammunition. As they were subjected to constant bombardment from Jiang's air force and repeated attacks from his ground troops, they suffered significant losses and injuries. They were often hungry, sometimes eating grass and woody plants, and during the winter months or when crossing the mountains they suffered terribly from the cold with men frequently freezing to death.



Alamy/World History Archive

**SOURCE 2.3** Mao Zedong addresses followers during the Long March, 1935

Mao Zedong was not initially in charge of the Long March. But in January 1935, at the town of Zunyi, following a disastrous battle at the Xiang River between 25 November and 3 December that resulted in the Red Army being left with only 30 000 troops, Comintern adviser Otto Braun was suspended and military control of the Red Army returned to Mao and brilliant strategist Zhu De. Under Mao's leadership the Red Army began manoeuvres designed to confuse the enemy. It frequently changed direction, split into groups and then reformed. The Long March was redirected from its original destination on the Hunan–Hubei border, instead trekking north to finally reach Shaanxi province, where another Soviet had control of the Yan'an district, in October 1935. Some historians estimate that only about 5000 of the original force that fled Jiangxi completed the journey to Yan'an. The march, despite its great losses, has come to be celebrated as a demonstration of CCP resilience, strength and ingenuity, and as such it is seen as a major event in Communist history and a source of inspiration.

## The rise of the party elite

A significant outcome of the Long March was the rise to prominence of CCP leaders who were to create strong relationships with Mao Zedong and who were destined to play major roles in the Chinese Revolution.

### Zhou Enlai (1898–1976)

Zhou reached the heady heights of acting as first premier of the People's Republic of China from 1949 until his death in 1976. He began his political career studying in Japan and then participated in the May Fourth Movement. Zhou became a Marxist after fleeing to France and worked to establish a European branch of the CCP there. On his return to China, Zhou joined the Political Department of the Whampoa Military Academy and was also the Secretary of the Communist Party of Guandong–Guanxi, but had to escape to save his own life after helping to organise the 1927 Shanghai Uprising during Jiang Jieshi's Northern Expedition. Zhou ultimately found his way to the Jiangxi Soviet in 1931, where he was placed in charge of the logistics of the Communist withdrawal during Jiang's Encirclement Campaign. Zhou's skills as a diplomat and negotiator led to his involvement in the Xian Incident in 1936 and the US-organised peace talks in Chongqing at the end of the Sino-Japanese War.



Getty Images/George Sliw/The LIFE Images Collection

### Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997)

Like Zhou Enlai, Deng's political career began in France in the early 1920s. He joined the Jiangxi Soviet and was a strong supporter of Mao, participating in the Long March and taking on the role of political commissar with the Red Army during the Sino-Japanese War and the subsequent civil war with the Nationalists. Following the creation of the People's Republic of China, Deng rose to importance and played a significant role in the reorganisation of China following the disastrous Great Leap Forward. He was purged



Pictures from History

*continued*

*continued*

during the Cultural Revolution but re-emerged as an influential party member following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and took control of the Party in 1978.

### Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)

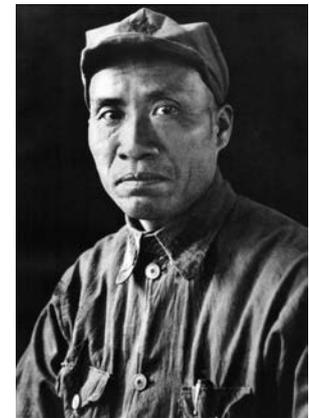
Peng was born in Hunan and deserted the Nationalist Army during the Northern Expedition to join the CCP, fleeing to Jinggangshan to fight with Mao and Zhu De. A ferocious and highly skilled leader, Peng went on to become a Red Army commander and led the unsuccessful attack on Changsha in 1930. A participant in the Long March, Peng enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a soldier, taking the role of Minister of Defence of the People's Republic of China in 1954 until his dismissal in 1959 for opposing Mao's post-revolutionary policies.



The Art Archive/Culver Pictures

### Zhu De (1886–1976)

Known for his wide smile and fighting skills, Zhu began his political career as a member of Sun Yixian's Tongmenghui as a teenager and then trained as a soldier. As a member of the New Army, Zhu participated in the Wuhan Uprising of 1911 and the later revolts against Yuan Shikai. He studied in Europe in the early 1920s and became a communist during this period. On his return to China, Zhu became an officer in the Nationalist army but defected in 1927 and led the Nanchang Uprising. He spent the rest of his career as commander-in-chief of the Red Army and was highly regarded by Mao, leading his troops to victory on many occasions during the Sino-Japanese War and Civil War, and devising and organising the Hundred Regiments Offensive in 1940. In 1949, Zhu was named commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army. He went on to hold significant roles such as Vice-Chairman of the Communist Party (1956–66) and Vice-Chairman of the People's Republic of China (1954–59). A victim of the purges of the Cultural Revolution, Zhu was dismissed in 1969, but with the support of Zhou Enlai was not harmed or imprisoned and was reinstated in 1973. Zhu remained an elder statesman of the party until his death on 6 July 1976.



Pictures from History

### Questions

- 1 Create a table summarising the biographical details of these four party figures. What similarities or differences can you identify in their political and social experiences? Compare these to the experiences of Mao.
- 2 Build a quote bank by collecting quotes from these four figures, and from Mao, as they appear in this textbook. Your quote bank should include date, historical context, the quote itself and your assessment of its significance.

## The hardships of the Long March

### A survivor's account

Treacherous bogs were everywhere which sucked a man down once he stepped off the firmer parts and more quickly if he tried to extricate himself. We could only advance with minute care, stepping on grass clumps ... the advance guard had left a course rope which led meanderingly to the depth of the morass. We proceeded carefully along this rope, fearing that we might break it, for we knew clearly that this was no ordinary rope – but a life-line ... set up by fraternal units at the cost of many good comrades. We advanced along this for four days.

Cited in Dick Wilson, *The Long March, 1935*, Aron, New York, 1971

### Interview with a survivor

Well, we ourselves did not know, at the beginning, that we were actually on the Long March and that it was going to be such a big thing. All we knew was that we were getting out of the bases. We were surrounded and being choked; a million men against us, tanks, aeroplanes ... defeat after defeat ... We thought if we could get to Szechuan all would be well; for Szechuan was not letting Chiang Kaishek come in; the warlords of Szechuan did not want Chiang there ... But we had so much equipment with us; trains of stores, and even bedding and furniture, all sorts of things; and this slowed us down. We were about a hundred thousand in number and very visible, a long, slow caravan.

Interview with a survivor, in Han Suyin, *A Mortal Flower*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1966, pp. 270–2

### Chao Hung Chin

We were in such bad shape that we could not climb the cliff without first having something to eat ... I collected some dry twigs to make a fire and resolutely started roasting my shoes ... after we had baked the shoes for a time, we washed and scraped them clean, then boiled them in a basin. Boiling turned the leather yellow and soft, and its appetising smell made us hungrier than ever ... When the 'shoes' were cooked our squad leader cut them into small bits and distributed them among the men to eat before climbing the cliff the next day.

Account by survivor Chao Hung Chin in Hilda Hookham, *A Short History of China*, Longman, 1969, p. 319

## Questions

The text sources offer different perspectives and information on the Long March.

- 1 How might the background or perspective of each view impact on the information provided or the view expressed?
- 2 As historians, what actions do you need to take to establish the validity of these sources?
- 3 Looking at the sources as a collection, what information can you gain about the Long March?
- 4 Construct a table like the example on page 62, which will allow you to analyse and synthesise the information and opinions contained in these sources.

*continued on p. 62*



**SOURCE 2.4** The route of the Long March, 1934–35

The Long March was actually a series of marches, taken by several branches of the Red Army. While approximately 160 000 Red Army soldiers and CCP cadres and 35 women embarked on the epic journey, it is understood that fewer than 150 000 made it safely to Yan'an. It can be argued that the Long March was a failure as it was a military retreat made with little forward planning and which resulted in the loss of more than 90 per cent of the Red Army. However, the official history of the CCP hailed the Long March as a victory. By portraying it as a tale of inspiring self-sacrifice, heroism and human endeavour, and highlighting Mao's participation once he had seized control from Bolshevik loyalists, the Long March became highly mythologised.

### 1 Jiangxi Soviet

The Third Army group with party members Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Zhu De and Peng Dehuai fled from Jiang Jieshi's Fifth Encirclement Campaign in October 1934. Due to the diplomatic skills of Zhou Enlai, who negotiated with warlord Chen Jitang, the Long Marchers slipped between the blockade, aided by a rearguard who tricked the Guomindang into thinking that they had trapped the entire Red Army.

## 2 Battle of Xiang River

It was three weeks before Jiang's forces realised they had been tricked and they rushed to follow the Communists, finally catching up with them at the Xiang (Hsiang) River on 25 November. As the Red Army moved into Guangxi, Jiang ordered an offensive to stop the marchers at the Xiang River. A terrible five-day battle, which began on 23 November, almost stopped the march, with only about 30 000 marchers surviving. It is estimated that one-third of the Red Army was lost.

## 3 Zunyi Conference

Morale was low when Communist troops arrived in Zunyi, in the south-western province of Guizhou, and they captured the city on 7 January 1935. At a conference from 15 to 18 January, Mao criticised the CCP leadership for the defeat in Jiangxi. He blamed the cumbersome nature of the Red Army and called for a return to guerrilla tactics. Mao was able to gather enough support to establish his dominance of the party, was made chief adviser to Zhou Enlai and was promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee (he was demoted by the 28 Bolsheviks while in Jiangxi). Following this change in leadership, Mao reinstated the use of guerrilla tactics against the Guomindang, and his decision to leave behind most of the heavy equipment meant that the march began to move more quickly. Mao also instituted a new slogan: 'March North to Defeat the Japanese', which reframed the march from a retreat to an attack.

## 4 Battle of Luding Bridge

As the CCP headed north from Zunyi, they had to cross the dangerous Dadu River in Sichuan. In order to do so, the Red Army needed to reach the Luding Bridge and secure it before the Nationalist forces arrived. A vanguard unit marched for three days, and at one point travelled 120 kilometres in 24 hours. The unit arrived on 29 May 1935 to find the bridge defended by a group of enemy troops, who had removed the wooden boards from the bridge to impede a quick crossing. According to official accounts of the event, a group of volunteers led a heroic charge across the bridge, facing a barrage of enemy fire. Ultimately, the Nationalists were defeated and after a few days the main body of the First Red Army was able to cross. This battle heavily influenced perceptions of the CCP as a fighting force, a view assisted by Western pro-CCP journalist Edgar Snow. In comparison, writer Jung Chang and historian Jon Halliday, in their 2005 biography of Mao Zedong, dispute the Communist account of the battle. They identify a survivor known as 'Blacksmith Zhu', who said there was only a small platoon defending the bridge that did not offer much resistance to the Red Army.

## 5 Snowy Mountains

Wearing only cotton clothes and straw sandals, the Red Army crossed the Snowy Mountains of Sichuan. Thousands fell off cliffs or died from the cold. After this crossing, the remaining 10 000 survivors met up with the Fourth Front Army and joined forces to continue the march.

## 6 High Grasslands

Mao's First Front Army met up with Zhang Guotao's Fourth Front Army (of 40 000 men) close to the High Grasslands in Sichuan. The two forces could not agree on strategy, and consequently they split. Mao's First Front Army entered the grasslands in August 1935, aiming to cross and reach Shaanxi province. The terrain of this area was horrific, with muddy pits and dirty water. The troops suffered major shortages of food and fresh water; some of them were forced to search through the faeces of others to find undigested grain. Leather and bones were boiled down as another source of nutrition.

## 7 The end of the Long March

A final battle was fought at Lazikou Pass on 16 September against provincial GMD troops. The Red Army was victorious, and the Long March was declared over on 22 October 1935. Numbers of the troops who began and ended the march are open to speculation, but it is believed that of the original 100 000 marchers only 7000–8000 arrived in Yan'an, and of these many likely did not march all the way from Jiangxi.

continued from p. 59

	A survivor's account	Interview with a survivor	Chao Hung Chin
Facts provided			
Commonalities			
Differences			
Ideology/bias reflected			

- 5 Refer to Source 2.7, a painting depicting Mao at Zunyi. Examine the painting carefully and complete the following:
- What message does the painting convey?
  - How is this message conveyed? Annotate the painting in terms of what you can see and what is implied.
  - Locate another source that supports and/or provides a contrasting view.
- 6 Use the information gathered in your table and your own research to write an essay in which you articulate the role of the Long March in strengthening public perceptions of the CCP.



Getty Images/DeAgostini

**SOURCE 2.5** Mao Zedong with Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao in a celebrated painting of the Long March



Alamy/Glasshouse Images

**SOURCE 2.6** Members of the Red Army crossing the Snowy Mountains during the Long March, 1935



Alamy/Glasshouse Images

**SOURCE 2.7** Red Army Soldiers crossing the Luding footbridge over the Dadu River during the Long March, 1935

**MAO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE LONG MARCH**



Corbis/Bettmann

*We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history.*

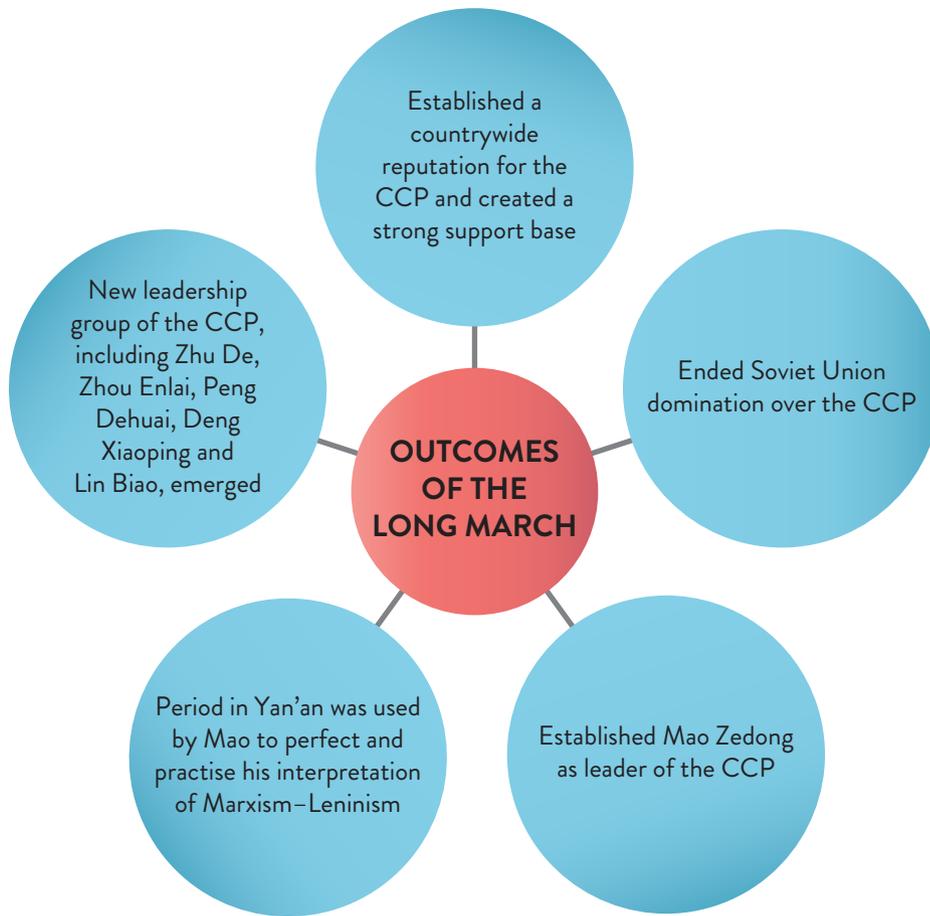
*The Long March is also a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, and that the imperialists and their jackals, Jiang Jieshi and his like, are perfect nonentities.*

*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 many 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 our victory and the enemy's defeat.*

Mao Zedong, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1967, p. 294



**SOURCE 2.8** Outcomes of the Long March



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 2.9** American journalist Edgar Snow, seen here with Mao, was among the first Westerners to visit Yan'an. Snow's *Red Star over China*, published in 1937, remains an influential text on the history of the Chinese Revolution.

## *Yan'an – a safe haven – and the development of Maoism*

When Mao's troops finally arrived in Shanxi province after their epic journey, they joined the local Red Army contingent made up of approximately 7000 men. With the arrival of other units (including those of Zhu De) their total strength swelled to about 30 000 troops. They later relocated to Yan'an where they stayed, safe from the Nationalist army, until 1945. The Long March had been highly significant in establishing Mao's leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and also enabled the

embattled Communists to reach an area beyond the direct control of the Nationalists. From their base at Yan'an, the Communists grew in strength, with Mao able to adapt Marxism–Leninism to Chinese conditions. Mao continued his belief in the importance of the masses, teaching his party cadres to lead the masses by living and working with them, eating their food, and thinking their thoughts. In 1940, he outlined the program of the Chinese Communists for an eventual seizure of power, and his teachings became the central tenets of the CCP doctrine that came to be formalised as Mao Zedong Thought. It can be argued that Mao capitalised on the discontent of the peasants, which went unaddressed by Jiang and his party. The peasants' support of the CCP spread as the Communists captured more land, so that by the time the war with the Japanese ended in 1945, Mao and his party had effectively won what Mao called 'the struggle for the hearts of the people'. Yan'an became known as the Communists' capital, and the years 1936 to 1947 are known as the CCP's Yan'an Period, with the ideology put into practice known as the **Yan'an Way** (see Table 2.2). American journalist Edgar Snow was the first to inform the world about the society formed in the barren 'yellow earth' of northern China.



Mary Evans/Everett Collection

**SOURCE 2.10** Mao (right) and Zhang Guotao (left) at Yan'an in 1937. Zhang had challenged Mao's leadership during the Long March. At Yan'an, as Mao consolidated his authority, Zhang persisted in his own struggle for authority but lost. In 1937, Zhang was purged from the party and joined the Guomindang.

**Yan'an Way**

While in Yan'an (1935–45), Mao consolidated his control of the CCP and formulated his political ideology, which became known as Mao Zedong Thought. Mao also ensured the discipline of his followers through the use of rectification campaigns and propaganda

**TABLE 2.2** Elements of the Yan'an Way

	Practical implementation	Ideological background
<b>Land and tax reforms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ From 1935 to 1937, surplus land was taken from landlords and redistributed to peasants.</li> <li>+ Land distribution was carried out by poor peasants and supported by Red Army soldiers.</li> <li>+ Interest on loans was reduced from 18% to 1.5%.</li> <li>+ Rent limited to no more than 25% of the total harvest value.</li> <li>+ Landlords who had a son in the revolutionary army were given benefits and tax bonuses.</li> <li>+ Landlords were generally left with enough land to support their families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Mao was careful not to unduly antagonise the richer peasants, believing they could be part of the Communist support base and ensuring they supported the fight against the Japanese.</li> <li>+ Mao envisaged the fusion of the communist revolution and the agrarian revolution.</li> </ul>

(continued)

**TABLE 2.2** Elements of the Yan'an Way (*continued*)

	Practical implementation	Ideological background
<b>Social reforms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Women's associations were established.</li> <li>+ Women were allowed to join the army, could be elected to positions of authority, were allowed to divorce and marry, and had access to education. Footbinding was abolished.</li> <li>+ Evening schools were established to improve literacy. Characters were often written on signs at the end of the fields, encouraging the peasants to learn as they worked. The literacy rate increased from 1% in 1936 to 50% by 1943.</li> <li>+ A 'University of Anti-Japanese Resistance' was established.</li> <li>+ A 'Down to the Village' program was developed, which urged party workers to end the division that had long existed in China between 'those who work with their brains and those who work with their brawn'.</li> <li>+ Elections were introduced with men and women over the age of 16 eligible to vote.</li> <li>+ Village cooperatives were established to promote working together for the common good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ It was expected that party officials and intellectuals would also contribute in a physical way to production.</li> <li>+ Mao extrapolated the idea that 'women hold up half the sky'.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Most army units produced 40 per cent of the food they required with land set aside specifically for soldiers.</li> <li>+ Despite the lack of industry, the soviet produced matches, wire, tools, batteries, soap, leather goods and clothing.</li> <li>+ Opium was also produced and exported to Japanese-controlled areas.</li> <li>+ Soldiers not on military duty helped the peasants farm and do everyday work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ It was extremely difficult to build an economy in the undeveloped and remote areas.</li> <li>+ Mao believed that hardship and adversity caused people to become self-sufficient and more confident in their abilities.</li> <li>+ Mao was intent on developing an efficient economic structure.</li> </ul>

	Practical implementation	Ideological background
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Local government was based on the concept of 'three-thirds':               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– one-third of members from the CCP</li> <li>– one-third from other leftist groups</li> <li>– one-third of anyone except Japanese collaborators, landlords and right-wing GMD.</li> </ul> </li> <li>+ Communist cadres were encouraged to help the people, as the soldiers of the Red Army did.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The concept of 'three-thirds' was to promote equality and ownership of ideas and results.</li> <li>+ Mao hoped to develop the policy of 'Mass Line', where Communist cadres listened to the needs of the people and devised solutions to their problems.</li> <li>+ Mao's line was essentially leadership for the people               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 'from the people, to the people'.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## *Threats from beyond – Japan's invasion of China*

The encroachment and subsequent invasion by Japanese forces, first with their seizure of Manchuria in 1931 and later with their full-scale invasion in 1937, meant that the reunification of China would very much depend on the defeat and expulsion of the Japanese. The Japanese invasion was a continuation of their earlier interventions into China, which dated back to 1895 when the Japanese took control of a number of Chinese territories including Formosa (modern Taiwan), the Liaodong Peninsula and the Pescadore Islands. Furthermore, the Japanese took advantage of the outbreak of the First World War to secure further Chinese territory by becoming an ally against Germany; late in 1914 they landed troops on the Shandong Peninsula and seized the German concessions. Their infamous Twenty-one Demands made of Yuan Shikai's government sought, among other concessions, to place Japanese advisers within the Chinese government, to control Fukien province and to exert some control over China's police and military forces. These demands were announced on 7 May 1915, and this day was declared 'Day of National Humiliation' by Yuan's opponents. The demands gained Japan the right to take control of iron and coal industries in central China, to build railways in northern China and to extend economic interests in Manchuria. Later, following the end of the First World War, treaty negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 allowed Japan to keep the Shandong concessions. This act, coupled with Japan's earlier imperialist intentions through their Twenty-one Demands, was seen as the beginning of Japanese encroachment in China.

## The Tanaka Memorial

In 1929, a document, which was allegedly written in 1927 by Japanese politician and general Tanaka Giichi, was published in China. There has been much speculation as to the validity of this document; however, it does accurately characterise the views of the Japanese generals who had sought to create a Japanese empire in East Asia and had certainly been working to achieve this since gaining power in Japan in the early 1930s, first by invading Manchuria for use as a source of raw materials and a base for expansion and then, in 1933, by taking the province of Jehol, north of Beijing.

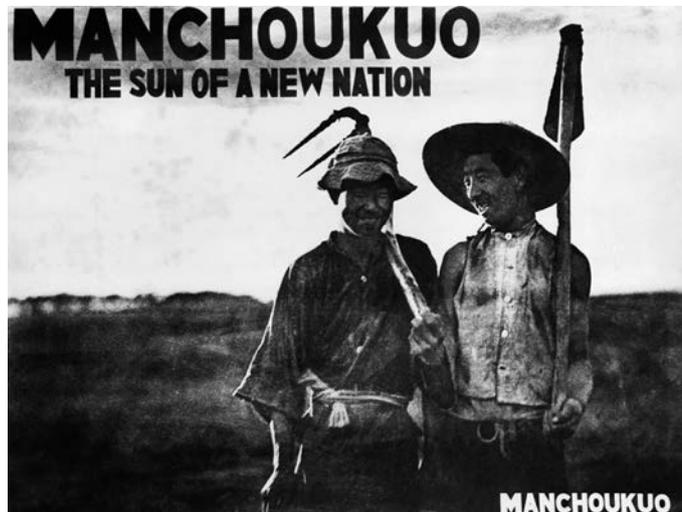
For the sake of self-protection as well as the protection of others, Japan cannot remove the difficulties in Eastern Asia unless she adopts the policy of 'Blood and Iron'. But in carrying out this policy we have to face the United States which has been turned against us by China's policy of fighting poison with poison. In the future if we want to control China, we must first crush the United States just as in the past we had to fight in the Russo-Japanese War. But in order to conquer China, we must first conquer Manchuria and Mongolia. In order to conquer the world, we must first conquer China. If we succeed in conquering China, the rest of the Asiatic countries and the South Sea countries will fear us and surrender to us. Then the world will realise that Eastern Asia is ours and will not dare to violate our rights.

Cited in Dun J Li, *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, Litton Educational Publishing Inc., 1969, p. 186

### Manchoukuo – the puppet state

The Great Depression of 1929 had a serious impact on Japan and on its civilian government. The government had no solution to what was a worldwide issue, and was therefore perceived as weak. Many Japanese admired their strong army and supported the view of senior army generals who argued for a campaign to win new colonies abroad so that the industries there could be exploited for Japan.

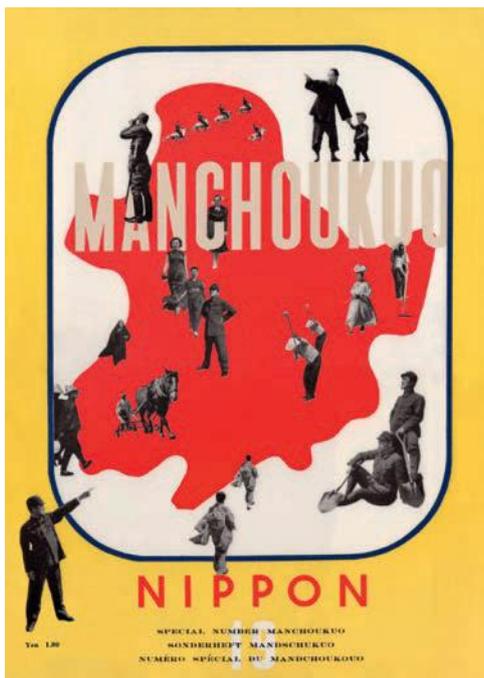
Given its limited size and growing population, Japan was becoming increasingly crowded. Manchuria was seen as a solution which, if seized as part of a Japanese empire, would easily accommodate any excess population as



**SOURCE 2.11** An English-language poster promoting the Japanese puppet state in China called Manchoukuo

*continued*

continued

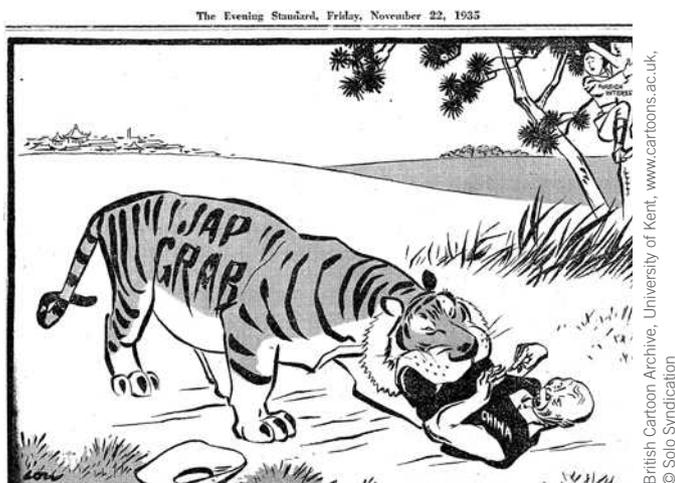


**SOURCE 2.12** The cover of a special issue of the Japanese magazine *Nippon* on 'Manchoukuo', which asserted Japan's benevolent rule in Manchoukuo and the special and harmonious relationship between Japan and the new state. The text stated that 'Japan's assistance toward Manchoukuo is purely that of a friend, there being no such relationship as exists between a principal and a tributary state' (*Nippon* 19, 1939).

on a section of the railway gave the army the excuse it needed to blame the local population of sabotage and to occupy the nearest Manchurian town of Shenyang. Despite being ordered to withdraw immediately by the League of Nations and the agreement of the Japanese government, the army did not listen and it launched a full-scale invasion of Manchuria. By the end of 1931, it had occupied the whole province.

### Questions

- 1 Why did the Japanese seek to create a satellite state in Manchoukuo? Consider practical and ideological reasons.
- 2 What view of Manchoukuo is presented by the Japanese in Sources 2.11 and 2.12?
- 3 How and why might the Chinese have had a different view of Japan's settlement in Manchoukuo?
- 4 What does Source 2.13 imply about the Guomindang's response to the threat of Japan in 1935? Explain why cartoonist David Low has represented foreign interests and why he placed the character representing foreign interests up a tree.



**SOURCE 2.13** 'All li'! I agree! But only up to here!' (OK! I agree! But only up to here!), a British cartoon by David Low, from the *Evening Standard*, 22 November 1935. The writing on the man in the tree says 'foreign interests'.

it offered nearly 200 000 square kilometres. The Japanese gave little thought to the desires of the Chinese government or indeed of the people who inhabited Manchuria, as they had a very low opinion of the Chinese due to their lack of modernisation. It was also believed in Japan that Manchuria was rich in minerals, forests and agricultural land.

The Japanese already had a large army in Manchuria to guard their South Manchuria Railway Company. An explosion

## Comparing the CCP and GMD

As the Communists and Nationalists battled for supremacy in China, their perspectives on how the country should be run, and how its people should be treated, differed markedly on many levels.

### POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

A fundamental difference between the two parties relates to the leadership style of the two leaders and their ideological foundations, with Mao aspiring to follow Communism while Jiang offered authoritarian Nationalism. As a consequence, they appealed to very different groups within Chinese society.

**TABLE 2.3** Political differences between the CCP and GMD

CCP	GMD
+ Maoism – based on Marxism–Leninism	+ Jiang Jieshi formally set up his Nanjing Nationalist government on 18 April 1927.
+ Because the CCP promoted the idea of an equal society, its officers did not wear badges or receive honours.	+ Jiang took the title of Generalissimo as a mark of his political pre-eminence and military standing.
+ It valued the needs and the role of the peasants in creating a new China.	+ Jiang was strongly influenced by Confucianist thought – considered to be outdated at the time.
+ It suffered from factionalism, with Russian influence acting as a barrier to Mao’s ideas about both the role of the peasants as a revolutionary class and fighting methods.	+ Jiang was inspired by Hitler and Mussolini and openly suggested that ‘Fascism is now what China most needs’. In 1932, at the Huangpu Military Academy, a secret brotherhood called the Blue Shirts was founded. They swore an oath to advance Jiang’s supreme leadership by any means, including violence, and infiltrated the military, police, banks and bureaucracy.
+ Mao established the Jiangxi Soviet with himself as chief political commissar. Given the distance from Shanghai and party leadership, this allowed him to disobey orders and ignore calls from the Politburo to change his ways.	+ Bribery and force were commonplace as Jiang played his allies off against one other and authorised campaigns to subdue rebellions.
+ On 12 October 1932, Zhou Enlai replaced Mao as general political commissar.	+ The GMD’s followers were mainly conservatives and businessmen.
+ Mao had ‘no voice at all’ from 1931 to 1934.	+ Conservatives followed the GMD before and after the Shanghai Massacre in 1927.
+ The Central Committee moved from Shanghai to Ruijin, reducing Mao’s influence further until the Long March.	+ Jiang’s approach to leadership, especially through his belief in Confucianism, attracted conservatives.
+ In Jiangxi, the party formed the Communists’ First Workers’ and Peasants Army, showing the importance of the peasants.	+ The working class in urban areas were also supporters of the GMD.
+ Political commissars served alongside officers to spread ideology – embodying Communist ideology with reason, similar to Lenin’s approach.	+ An economic crisis caused by inflation and taxes meant that Jiang began to lose support from the working class and conservatives. He also ignored complaints of corruption.
+ The party’s main support base was the peasants – significant, as peasants made up more than 80 per cent of Chinese society.	
+ Land reform carried out under the protection of the Communist armed forces strengthened ties between the Soviet government and the people, as did the disciplined conduct of Red soldiers.	
+ Mao was pragmatic and went to great lengths to redistribute land to all members of the villages, including rich peasants.	

## MILITARY TACTICS AND ORGANISATION

The army was used in very different ways by both parties. The Red Army consisted of irregular forces, which acted as a resistance movement and employed guerrilla tactics; the Nationalist troops consisted of a standing conscript conventional army, which was used by the GMD in its attempt to create a centralised, modern nation-state. Further, for Mao and the Communists, the men in his Red Army were not only a force battling to win control of China militarily but also a way of reaching the peasants. Jiang's Nationalist forces were used in a more traditional manner, to control both the Chinese population and to rid China of opposition.

**TABLE 2.4** Differences in military tactics and organisation between the CCP and GMD

CCP	GMD
+ The Red Army was composed of volunteers.	+ The GMD used force to conscript soldiers, which upset people and did not increase their support.
+ Captured Nationalist soldiers were offered the choice of returning home, for which they received travel money, or after a period of political training, they could join the Communists.	+ Consisted of large numbers of well-organised forces that used ranking officers to control its men, who were not allowed to make suggestions or voice their opinions.
+ Guerrilla warfare tactics relied on mobility and support of the local populace, with peasants helping to provide shelter, food, local knowledge and intelligence on enemy movements.	+ The party Used traditional fighting methods, frequently attacking CCP forces.
+ Officers were forbidden to beat common soldiers.	+ From 1930 onwards, Jiang Jieshi launched a number of 'bandit extermination campaigns' against the Communists.
+ Soldiers were able to voice concerns, offer criticism or praise officers in large meetings.	+ There was a series of five military campaigns between 1931 and 1934 against the Communists. The Fifth Campaign proved successful, and consequently forced the CCP on the Long March.
+ Every Communist soldier had to memorise and live by the 'Three Main Rules of Discipline'. These rules told them to 'obey all orders in all your actions, do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses, turn in everything captured'. This helped them gain the support of the peasants.	+ The GMD used a tactic called 'buying space to save time', as a long-term response rather than fighting the Japanese.
+ CCP soldiers also followed the 'Eight Points of Attention', which were rules applying to conduct of soldiers towards the people – a perfect way of gaining the support of peasants.	+ Rather than stay to repel the advancing Japanese forces, the Nationalist seat of government was moved west and millions of people were ordered to follow so that they could sustain the industry and infrastructure required by the GMD.
+ Red Army soldiers were instructed not to pillage, rape, kill or destroy property.	
+ The Jiangxi Soviet declared war on Japan on 18 April 1932.	

## TREATMENT OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE

Regardless of political agendas and leadership, of greatest importance to the people of China was the way in which they were treated by each party. In keeping with Mao's policy of using his army as a propaganda tool and the importance of the peasants in creating a Communist China, life under the CCP was significantly better for the peasantry.

**TABLE 2.5** Differences in treatment of the Chinese people by the CCP and the GMD

CCP	GMD
+ Soldiers won the respect of the peasants by performing chores in surrounding communities. These activities earned them the name 'People's Army'.	+ The GMD had little interest in the needs of rural China and instead focused on urban areas.
+ Women were valued as equals and encouraged to participate in decision-making that affected them and their lives. In the Jiangxi Soviet, offices were created for and run by women.	+ It tried to modernise nationalist areas such as transport and radio broadcasting, and reformed banking and currency.
+ Social reforms included reading classes for soldiers and peasants, and campaigns against foot binding, forced marriages and child slavery.	+ GMD soldiers were known to treat civilians poorly; they raped, destroyed property and murdered civilians.
+ Women were granted equal rights in divorce and marriage.	+ Eighty per cent of GMD spending went towards funding the military and paying off debts; therefore few funds were left for meeting the needs of the people.
+ A 'People's Bank' with its own currency and the Red postal service were established.	+ New hospitals were built and flood-control levees were erected.
	+ The people suffered from high taxation, exacerbated by provincial governments that imposed their own 'special taxes' and did not always pass on revenue. In Gansu province, people had to pay 44 different taxes, and in some areas taxes were taken several years in advance.
	+ During the New Life Movement to combat corruption and improve the character of Chinese people, 96 'rules' detailed a wide range of 'offences', such as gambling, walking into the middle of the road, urinating in public, having permed hair and smoking. Young thugs loyal to the Nationalists handed out beatings and intimidated those who didn't follow the rules. However, this achieved very little other than intruding on people's lives.

## *Conclusion*

Life in China during the Nationalist or Nanjing Decade offered little relief for its people. The Nationalist government was established at a time of considerable unrest and dislocation within China: there was a significant threat from the Japanese; the ties created with the Chinese Communist Party had been severed due to the events of the Shanghai Massacre; the CCP remained a threat with bases in the cities and, to a lesser extent, the countryside; and factionalism and power struggles existed within the Guomindang. The Nationalist government made some small inroads into the development of the country's economy such as the foundation of four strong central banks and improvements to communication infrastructure; however, the country also experienced significant economic problems and it can be argued that Jiang Jieshi failed to bring about significant economic and political change.

## *Chapter summary*

- + Factionalism within the GMD led to Jiang Jieshi establishing a rival government in Nanjing.
- + There were problems during the Nanjing Decade, due to Jiang's focus on urban rather than rural concerns, and the corruption and incompetence of his leadership.
- + Jiang and his wife established the New Life Movement in an attempt to unify China under a common cause.
- + China suffered from a rise in fascism and spiralling inflation.
- + Despite threats of invasion from Japan, Jiang focused on attempting to rid China of the CCP.
- + Following a series of five extermination campaigns, the Communists fled and completed the Long March.
- + Following the end of the Long March, the CCP established a highly effective soviet at Yan'an where Mao firmly entrenched himself as leader and perfected his interpretation of Marxism–Leninism.
- + Japan continued to threaten China through its annexation of Manchuria in 1931 and invasion in 1937.

### **Weblinks**

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

Jung Chang & Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005.

Kathlyn Gay, *The Aftermath of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution*, Twenty-First Century Books, Minneapolis, 2009.

Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990.

Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965.

Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, rev., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.

### Film

*As It Happened: Mao – A Life*, SBS, 2006.

*As It Happened: The Long March*, SBS, 2008.

*Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor*, BBC, 1993.

*China Rising Series*, Part 2, ‘Change in Heaven’, Yorkshire Television, 1990.

*China: A Century of Revolution*, Part 1, ‘China in Revolution 1911–1949’, PBS, 1989.

*The Bloody History of China – CIA Cold War Documentary on a Communist Empire*, full-length film, 1967.

*The Red Chapters: The Heroes of Dadu*, SBS, 1999.



## Chapter review activities

- 1 Edgar Snow called Shanghai in the late 1920s and early 1930s a place ‘where trade and commerce are more important than lives and human rights’ (Snow 1972, p. 21). Create a detailed list of policy and practice within the Guomindang during the Nanjing Decade that identifies:
  - a the value of trade and commerce
  - b a lack of emphasis on human rights and the lives of the Chinese people.
- 2 In his reinterpretation of Marxism–Leninism, Mao placed emphasis on the virtues of heroic sacrifice, self-denial, diligence, courage, selflessness and unending struggle. Using the information contained in this chapter and the results of your own research, make a list of examples of CCP actions and events that demonstrate its application of these virtues.
- 3 With reference to the Long March, complete the following questions.
  - a Explain why the route was so twisted and tortuous.
  - b Why did the Communists travel all the way to Yan’an?



- c Read through the views of Mao about his role in the Long March. Write an extended paragraph in which you explain Mao's participation in the march and the consequences of this participation.
- 4 a What were the long- and short-term aims of the Japanese government in its annexation of Manchuria?
- b Why did the Japanese government install former Qing emperor Pu Yi as Emperor of Manchoukuo?
- c How was propaganda used to promote Manchuria and dispel concerns about the way it was 'acquired' by the Japanese?
- d Create an annotated timeline in which you document the ways in which the Japanese sought to gain control of China from the Qing dynasty period to 1937.
- 5 In what ways did life in Yan'an and Mao's implementation of his ideology capitalise on views held by the Chinese Communist Party during the Long March?
- 6 Create a research report in which you research and examine the role of an idea, an individual, a movement and/or an event discussed in this chapter and present your findings. Some possible topics to choose from:
- + The rise to power of Mao Zedong
  - + The significance of Sun Yixian's Three Principles
  - + The rise to power of Jiang Jieshi
  - + The Nationalist Decade
  - + The CCP as a 'disease of the soul'
  - + The significance of the Jiangxi Soviet
  - + The significance of the Long March
  - + The role of Yan'an in the creation and implementation of Maoism.
- You also need to formulate a question to which you will respond and which will guide your research. Possible historical inquiry questions:
- + Was the GMD able to successfully implement Sun Yixian's Three Principles?
  - + What part did propaganda play in the success of the CCP?
  - + How did the corruption of Jiang's Nationalist government impact on its success during the Nationalist Decade?
- 7 Write an essay in response to historian Mark Selden's belief that 'It was the new society created by the CCP which won the party mass support'. Use evidence to support your views.



## CHAPTER THREE

### *The war with Japan, 1937–1945*

Over the centuries, China had led the world in terms of its advances in medicine, technology and science, and yet its inability to deal with European dominance and intrusion caused the downfall of the Qing dynasty. Mao Zedong's fierce nationalism, his desire to rid China of the domination of foreign powers and his willingness to make use of China's greatest resource – the peasants – led the way to the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and of Mao himself. The inability of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist party to rid China of the Japanese further served to consolidate the power of the Communists in the minds of the Chinese people. Jiang's misplaced belief that the conflict with the Communists was more important than the threat of the Japanese affected his ability to lead his country effectively against the real threat of the Japanese. His stance only served to strengthen the power of the Communists in China, despite the assistance and support he received from the United States, which was concerned by the threat Japan posed to the world.

◀ Chinese prisoners of war awaiting execution at the hands of the Japanese Army during the Sino-Japanese war, 1938

#### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + How did the war against the Japanese allow the CCP to expand its influence in China?
- + What was the impact of Jiang Jieshi's wartime policies on his government and on global perceptions of China?

## *Japan's impact on the politics of China*

The Japanese had little respect for their Chinese neighbours, viewing their lack of modernisation as a weakness and therefore – despite both being Asian nations – as a logical victim for their growing imperialism. Not content with trading rights or their satellite state of Manchoukuo, the Japanese invaded China in 1937. This invasion not only significantly affected the Chinese people, but also the policies and reputations of the parties vying for control.



### THE XI'AN INCIDENT

It was evident that the Japanese were keen to expand their hold on China. Encouraged by the ease of their advance into Manchuria, and by Jiang's apparent preoccupation with the Communists, the Japanese began to agitate for the separation of five of China's northern provinces to create another puppet state. While the CCP had called for an alliance to fight the Japanese from 1935, the Nationalists had done little, despite anti-Japanese demonstrations and boycotts seeking to persuade Jiang to stand up to them. Finally in 1936, the Nationalist government rejected a Japanese attempt to impose a set of conditions similar to the infamous Twenty-one Demands of 1915.

On 3 December 1936, Jiang flew into Xi'an, the capital of Shanxi province in central China, and repeated his order that Zhang Xueliang, nicknamed the 'Young Marshal', continue fighting the Communists. Instead, Zhang made the decision to force a united front between the Nationalists and the Communists, and on 12 December his troops attacked the temple where Jiang was staying. The Generalissimo was held under arrest and Zhang sent word to Zhou Enlai and the CCP informing them of his actions. For many Communist leaders the fact that their enemy was held captive was an opportunity to eradicate him and many called for Jiang's execution. Zhou recalled, 'We didn't sleep for a week trying to decide'. Interestingly, Joseph Stalin, Chairman of the Soviet Union, recognised Jiang as the legitimate leader of China and had been negotiating a treaty with the Nationalist government. Believing Jiang's kidnapping was 'a Japanese plot', he ordered the CCP to solve the incident peacefully. As a consequence, negotiations between Jiang Jieshi and Zhou Enlai were relatively peaceful. Realising he was in danger, Jiang acquiesced and he agreed to end hostilities against the Communists, and plans were made for a Second United Front. The Generalissimo returned to Nanjing on 25 December 1936, and Zhang Xueliang, the man had who orchestrated the kidnapping of Jiang, was placed under indefinite house arrest.

### Zhang Xueliang (1901–2001)

Zhang Xueliang was a northern warlord. His nickname, 'Young Marshal', was commonly used to differentiate him from his father, Zhang Zoulin, from whom he 'inherited' his warlord status following his father's murder by the Japanese in 1928. In 1935, Jiang sent orders to Zhang to commence a Sixth Extermination Campaign against the Communists in Yan'an; however, Zhang and his men were close to Manchuria (and therefore the threat of the Japanese) and had little interest in fighting the Communists. Mao recognised Zhang's concerns and sought to form a relationship with him to protect the Communists; he tried to appeal to Zhang, with slogans such as 'Immediate war with Japan, stop fighting the Communists' and 'Chinese must not fight Chinese'. By January 1936, Zhang had negotiated a truce with the Communists and he was no longer a direct threat.

After the Communist victory in 1949, Zhang was held virtual prisoner of the Nationalists in Taipei for 40 years. In the early 1990s, he was permitted to immigrate to Hawaii where he died in 2001.



## THE BEGINNING OF THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Japan had been intensifying its aggression in northern China since the Twenty-one Demands of 1915 and later, in 1931, when it seized Manchuria. It was therefore only a matter of time before open combat between the two countries erupted. What began as a small exchange of gunfire near the Marco Polo Bridge, about 15 kilometres west of Beijing, on 7 July 1937, evolved into a major battle in which the Japanese invaded and captured Beijing and the neighbouring port city of Tianjin, and set off a full-scale war between China and Japan. This Sino-Japanese

## The plot to save China

### Conditions for the release of Jiang Jieshi by the Young Marshal, Zhang Xueliang

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi], surrounded by a group of unworthy advisors, has forfeited the support of the masses of our people. Therefore we have tendered our advice to Marshal Jiang while guaranteeing his safety, in order to stimulate his awakening. The military and civilians of the North West unanimously make the following demands:

- 1 Reorganise the Nanking Government and admit all parties to share the joint responsibility of saving the nation.
- 2 Stop all kinds of civil war.
- 3 Immediately release the patriotic leaders arrested in Shanghai.
- 4 Release all political prisoners throughout the country.
- 5 Emancipate the patriotic movement of the people.
- 6 Safeguard the political freedom of the people to organise and call meetings.
- 7 Actively carry out the will of Dr Sun Yat-sen [Sun Yixian].
- 8 Immediately call a National Salvation Conference.

We only hope to carry out the policies here maintained for the liberation and benefit of the country. As to our merit or guilt, we leave this to the judgement of our fellow countrymen.

Cited in James M Bertram, *Crisis in China: The Story of the Sian Mutiny*, Macmillan, London, 1937

### Statement by the CCP Central Committee on the formation of a united front against the Japanese, July 1937

With the greatest enthusiasm, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China announces to our elders, brothers and sisters all over the country that to save our motherland at a time when it is faced with a most serious crisis and its very fate is at stake, we have reached an understanding with the Kuomintang on the basis of peace, unification and united resistance to foreign aggression and have joined together with them to meet the crisis. This has enormous significance for the future of our great Chinese nation! For, as we all know, with our nation facing extreme peril today, it is only through internal unity that we can defeat Japanese imperialist aggression. Now that the foundation has been laid for national unity and the basis created for the independence, freedom and liberation of our nation, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party salutes the splendid future of our people.

Zhou Enlai, 'Communist Co-operation by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China', *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai*, Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing

### Questions

- 1 What elements of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government were of concern in the mid 1930s?
- 2 What were the aims of Zhang Xueliang and his supporters in kidnapping Jiang?
- 3 What were the outcomes of the kidnapping?
- 4 What reasons did the CCP offer for its support of the Second United Front?

War of 1937–45 brought ruin and suffering to the Chinese. The Japanese had long coveted China's land and resources, were highly ambitious and ferocious fighters with a modern army and, as such, posed a serious threat to China. Further, war with Japan dealt a devastating blow to the Nationalist government's efforts to revive China's struggling economy and centralise its authority. The Nationalists were uprooted from their traditional power base in the urban and industrial centres of eastern China, which made it virtually impossible for Jiang Jieshi to crush the Communist forces who had fled to Shanxi province in northern China. Of even greater significance to China's future, the war offered the Communists an ideal opportunity to expand their influence in northern China so that by war's end, in 1945, they had become a contender for national power.

When war was declared, the Nationalist government called for resistance against the Japanese, proclaiming that 'China is duty bound to defend her territory and her national existence ... We will never surrender any part of our territory. When confronted with aggression we cannot but exercise our natural right of self-defence'. Accordingly, China's initial response was one of patriotic outpouring, which temporarily unified its people in their desire to resist Japanese aggression. It was hoped that such unity might help to finally rid China of the power of the remaining militant warlords and the armed conflict that existed between the Communists and the Nationalists. One Chinese poet was to proclaim, 'Is war so dreadful? Not at all! Our four hundred million people are eagerly looking forward to its arrival ... This is the time that we can liberate ourselves'. During this initial period of high morale and a sense of purpose, patriotic artists, actors and intellectuals visited the interior of China seeking to enthuse and educate through music, public lectures and even street plays. However, as the fighting escalated, this early enthusiasm waned and a growing discontent with the Nationalist government's ineptitude, corruption and increasing censorship began to be felt.

## Strong words from Jiang Jieshi

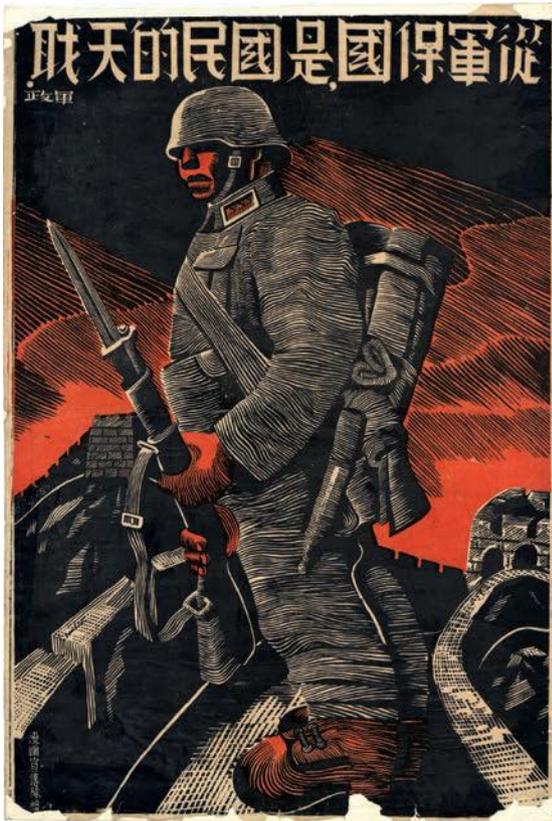
### 'Drive out the invader', Jiang's address to the Chinese armed forces, July 1937

Following recent developments at Lukouchiao, the Japanese have by low and treacherous methods seized our cities, Peiping and Tentsin, and have killed many of our fellow-countrymen. There is no end to the humiliation and insults that they have heaped upon us. To think about it makes the heart sick. Since the Mukden incident on September 18, 1931, the more indignities we have borne the more we have yielded, the more violent has Japanese oppression become ... Now we have reached the point when we can endure it no longer; we will give way no more. The whole nation must rise as one man and fight these Japanese bandits until we have destroyed them, and our own life is secure ... Soldiers! The supreme moment has come. With one heart and purpose advance. Refuse to retreat. Drive out the unspeakable evil invaders and bring about the rebirth of our nation.

Chinese Ministry of Information, *The Collected Wartime Messages of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek: 1937–1945*, Vol. 1, The John Day Company, New York, 1946, pp. 36–40

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Siefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/posters/pc-1937-001.php>

**SOURCE 3.1** 'Joining the army to protect the nation is the people's duty', Chinese Nationalist propaganda poster, 1937



Siefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/posters/pc-1938-005.php>

**SOURCE 3.2** 'As the invasion by the Japanese dwarves does not stop for a day, as the war of resistance of my nation does not stop for a day, I pledge to spill my last drop of blood, to protect the last inch of my soil', Chinese Nationalist propaganda poster, 1937

### Questions

- 1 Write a paragraph in which you explain the events of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and its impact on China.
- 2 Referring to the extract from Jiang's 'Drive out the invader' speech, what does he promise to do and how does he propose to remove China from the threat of Japan?
- 3 Which structure is featured in both posters and what is its significance?
- 4 Why might such posters have been released in 1937?
- 5 What elements of the two posters suggest a willingness to use force?
- 6 What do the Guomindang propaganda posters suggest about the success of the Nationalist government in fighting the Japanese?
- 7 How does the sentiment expressed in the posters compare to what we know of Jiang's policies regarding the Japanese at this time?

## The Second United Front

It took nine months of negotiation to reach a final agreement to form the Second United Front, and these negotiations were actually expedited by the full-scale invasion of China by Japan on 7 July 1937. Both parties benefited publicly from the decision as it appeared they were putting aside their differences for the good of China. The agreement to form the Second United Front ended the civil war that had begun with Jiang's betrayal of the Communists during the Shanghai Massacre in 1927. It also resulted in a new relationship with the Soviet Union, which had called for an alliance as part of its policy to resist the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe. After the Second United Front was announced, the Soviet Union and China signed a non-aggression treaty and the Russians began to send military aid to Jiang.

Under the terms of the agreement, Jiang agreed to expel members of his party who were sympathetic to the Japanese, release political prisoners and allow the CCP to participate in a People's Political Council. In return, the CCP agreed to place the Red Army under the authority of the Nationalist government, to integrate its newly established Shanxi Soviet into the Chinese Republic and end its practice of the confiscation of land from landlords. Highlighting its understanding of the severity of the threat to China, the CCP released a Declaration of Unity in November 1937:

“ At this moment when the national crisis has reached its most serious stage and when the very life of our nation is on the balance, we, to save our fatherland from her impending extinction, have reached an understanding with the Kuomintang, an understanding based on the principle of peaceful unification and joint resistance against foreign aggression ... we have to have unity amongst ourselves before the aggression launched by the Japanese imperialists can be successfully resisted. ”

Cited in Dun J Li, *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*,  
Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1969, pp. 235–6

The Second United Front lasted for four years and during that time the two parties made an effort to coordinate the war against the Japanese. Under Zhu De and Peng Dehuai, units of the Red Army were renamed the **Eighth Route Army** and confronted the Japanese in northern Shanxi alongside Nationalist troops. Another large Red Army force was renamed the **New Fourth Army** and operated in the east in the provinces of Jiangsu, Shandong and Anhui. Mao Zedong and other Communist leaders were elected to serve on the newly created People's Political Council. Leading Communist intellectuals were recruited into the Political Department in the Military Affairs Commission in charge of crucial propaganda work. While the Communists worked with the Nationalists for the good of the country, they did not lose sight of their own political agenda, and used the alliance to maximise their influence among the peasants. A serious disagreement arose between the two groups about who commanded the Communist-led armies, which were rapidly expanding. The Nationalists believed they had control, but Mao maintained that for the CCP to lose control over its military would be suicidal, declaring in 1938, 'Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun', and insisting that the Communists should remain autonomous.

The two parties were unable to resolve their differences of opinion and mutual suspicion. Jiang's concerns about the Communists' control over parts of the east and a desire to limit them to their bases in the north led him to attack the New Fourth Army in January 1941,

### **Eighth Route Army**

Led by Communist general Zhu De, but under the control of the Nationalist government during the Second United Front, its work in fighting against the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War and the goodwill it engendered with the Chinese people helped to increase support for the CCP at this time

### **New Fourth Army**

Created from remnants of Communist troops left in Jiangxi and Fujian at the time of the Long March and led by General Ye Ting, this force of 12 000 officers and soldiers operated behind Japanese lines near Shanghai with great success during the Sino-Japanese War



**SOURCE 3.3** The Japanese invasion in July 1937 divided China essentially into three zones: the Japanese-occupied territories, the Guomindang-controlled areas and the Communist-held regions.

ending the alliance when the army's command failed to comply with an order to move to the north side of the Yangzi River.

## JIANG'S CHONGQING GOVERNMENT

By 1939, Japan occupied most of eastern China, including nearly all of the main cities and their lines of communication such as railways, roads and canals. Japan's key focus was to dominate and exploit the more modern areas of China. The behaviour of the Japanese soldiers, as demonstrated by the Rape of Nanjing, was outrageously brutal. When challenged, the Japanese responded with the Three Alls Policy of 'kill all, burn all, loot all', seeking to destroy both the countryside and its inhabitants. Civilians in the cities suffered terribly from intensive bombing raids.

### The Rape of Nanjing

The Japanese, with their well armed troops and superior air power, were simply too strong. By 1938, they controlled China's main coastal cities and railway lines and the road to the Nationalist capital, Nanjing, was left wide open. Nanjing fell in late December 1937, and the Japanese victors indulged in an orgy of robbery, rape, wanton destruction and random killing, which left the city in ruins and over 200 000 citizens dead.

[The Japanese] slogan was 'Kill all, Burn all, Loot all.' As they moved into an area on their mopping-up campaigns, they killed all young men, destroyed or stole all cattle and broke or made off with all farmers' tools and grain. Their object was to create a no man's land in which nothing could live.

Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, Harper, New York, 1949, p. 57

From the first hours of occupation, the Japanese troops seem to have abandoned all constraints ... the soldiers of the Japanese Central China Area Army embarked on an uninterrupted spree of murder, rape and robbery ... the army seemed determined to reduce Nanjing to utter chaos.

Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival*, Allen Lane, London, 2013, p. 130

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Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 3.4** The Rape of Nanjing occurred between December 1937 and January 1938, and resulted in the brutal and senseless murders and rapes of many thousands of Chinese. It destroyed Nanjing, which had been the Nationalist capital from 1928 to 1937. In this photo, Chinese prisoners are used as live targets in a bayonet drill by their Japanese captors.

Following the loss of Nanjing, Jiang was forced to retreat to Wuhan, and when that city later fell to the Japanese, he re-established his new government a thousand kilometres further up the Yangzi River in the city of Chongqing, which remained China's Nationalist capital until the end of the war in 1945. In doing so, Jiang virtually abandoned eastern China to the Japanese. He made the situation even worse by following a new scorched earth strategy – 'trading space for time' – in the hope of frustrating Japanese offensive operations in the vast interior and of depriving the Japanese of food and supplies. Jiang hoped, rather naively, that the Japanese would ultimately run out of resources and thus leave their scattered forces vulnerable to counter-attack; however, this approach also hurt the local people as practices such as destroying the levees on the Yangzi River on 7 June 1938 resulted in the flooding of huge areas of land. This delayed the Japanese advance by three months but also flooded 4000 villages, making two million people homeless. The government's withdrawal to the interior also quickened the vast migration of urban Chinese, industrial enterprises and universities from Japanese-occupied territories to the hinterland.

For the Chinese, life under Jiang's government was increasingly difficult because its officials continued to be corrupt and silenced any opposition through political repression, which included imprisoning opponents. To exacerbate existing problems, the government at Chongqing lost most of its usual revenue from imports and sought to finance its war costs by printing additional money. This decision resulted in spiralling inflation, which was to peak at 250 per cent. Jiang had ensured that industrial equipment and machinery was packed up and transported to Sichuan; however, the Sichuan industries were insufficient to maintain a modern economy or munitions for the army. Essential items were in very short supply and the government remained focused on the needs of the urban population rather than those of the peasants, who continued to suffer from high rents and taxation.

## THE GMD'S WAR AGAINST JAPAN

After the United States declared war on Japan in 1941, the Guomintang was given military equipment from the American Lend-Lease military supply program for use against the Japanese but it became clear that much of the equipment was being stockpiled for use against the Communists. Jiang Jieshi also withheld his best troops from the fight against the Japanese. Jiang's chief US adviser was General Joseph Stilwell, who was familiar with Chinese culture and spoke fluent Mandarin. Stilwell believed Jiang's policies were destroying the morale of his soldiers. Jiang avoided large-scale assaults against the invading Japanese, preferring to 'trade space for time', and, in doing so, he claimed that he was actually 'saving the nation by a winding path'. Such tactics did little to inspire loyalty among his troops, and they also frustrated and disappointed Nationalist supporters in the United States. Within the Guomintang ranks, desertions were high and morale incredibly low. The troops were battle weary and suffered very high losses. Their suffering was compounded by the GMD's abhorrent conscription practices, its appalling treatment of the local populace, and the actions of corrupt officers who withheld the names of dead soldiers while collecting their pay and sold much-needed medical supplies to the black market.

### Evaluations of the Nationalist war

#### US General David Barr, 16 November 1948

Their military debacles in my opinion can all be attributed to the world's worst leadership and many other morale destroying factors that lead to a complete loss of will to fight.

Cited in US Department of State, *The China White Paper: August 1949*, Vol. 1, Stanford University Press, CA, 1967, p. 358

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### Lucien Bianco

The hyperinflation encouraged corruption and inefficiency, ‘chaos and negligence were noted recurringly in observations of the time’.

Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution 1915–1949*, Stanford University Press, CA, 1971, p. 159

### Memorandum to the US Department of State, 20 June 1944

John Stewart Service, who was an American official stationed in ‘Free China’, wrote in 1944:

‘The Kuomintang has lost its leadership because it has lost touch with and is no longer representative of a nation which ... is becoming more politically conscious and more aware of the Party’s selfish shortcomings. It cannot fight an effective war because this is impossible without greater reliance upon and support by the people ... But the growth of democracy, though basic to China’s continuing war effort, would, to the mind of the Kuomintang’s present leaders, imperil the foundations of the Party’s power because it would mean the conservative cliques would have to give up their closely guarded monopoly (of power) ... Thus are they sacrificing China’s national interests to their own selfish ends.’

US Department of State, *United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period 1944–49*. Cited in Dun J Li, *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1969, pp. 223–4

### US General Joseph Stilwell, 4 March 1943

The Chinese Red Cross is a racket. Stealing and sale of medicine is rampant ... the army gets nothing. Malnutrition and sickness is ruining the army; the high-ups steal the soldier’s food.

Cited in Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911–45*, Grove/Atlantic, Inc., New York, 2007, pp. 3640

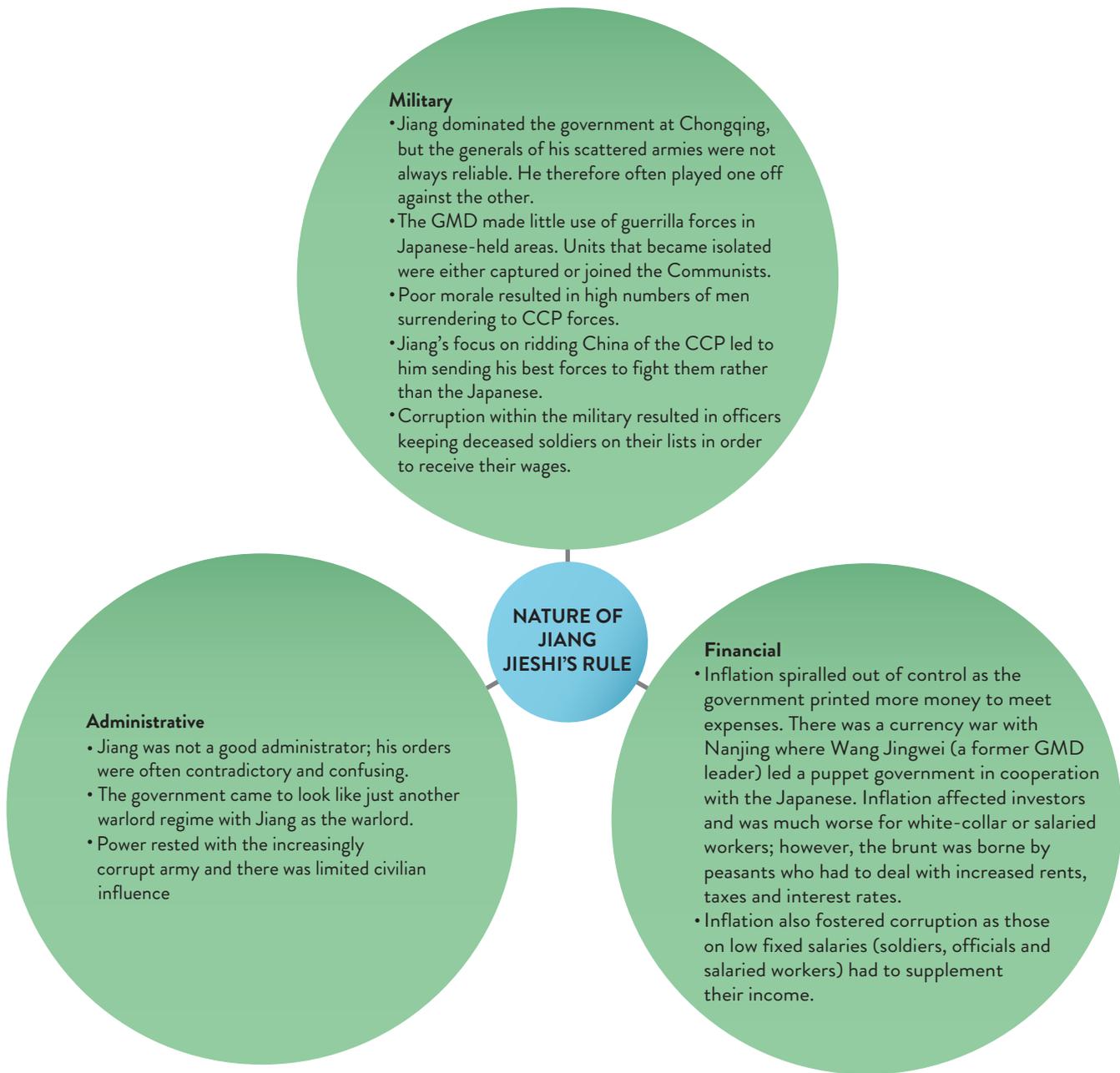
### Du Zhongyuan, former Nationalist soldier

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.

Cited in Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China’s struggle with the modern world*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 155

## Questions

- 1 Explain why the Nationalist government needed to relocate to Chongqing.
- 2 What policy did Jiang Jieshi adopt during this period, which allowed the Japanese to gain further control in China?
- 3 How did the people of China view Jiang’s policy?
- 4 What problems were experienced by the government during the Chongqing period and how did these impact on its ability to defeat the Japanese?



**SOURCE 3.5** The problems of Jiang Jieshi's rule

### Treatment of conscripts to the Nationalist Army

Jiang's pressing need to increase the numbers of his Nationalist forces resulted in the implementation of conscription, or compulsory military service, which many saw as a death sentence. Conscripts were press-ganged into service, and were sometimes roped together naked so they could not escape. Up to half of those forcefully rounded up for service died of hunger, thirst, exposure or disease before they even reached the training camps. Deaths from mistreatment or disease are estimated at 1.5 million.

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### Red Cross report

As President of the Chinese Red Cross, I had the opportunity of visiting with many draftees at reception centres ... in many, the draftees were tied to one another to forestall any possible escape ... they would be immediately whipped if ... they misbehaved ... the food they ate ... [was] inadequate in quantity. Its only function was to prevent them from starving to death. Under cruel treatment like this, many of them died before they could even be sent to the front ... on the highway between Western Hunan and Kwangsi, I saw wild dogs fighting over the bodies of deceased draftees.

Cited in Dun J Li, *The Road to Communism: China since 1912*,  
Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1969, pp. 223–4

### White and Jacoby

So many bought their way out of the draft that village heads could not meet their quotas; in order to supply the requisite units of human flesh, organised bands of racketeers prowled the roads to kidnap wayfarers for sale to village chieftains ... In Chengtu, a black-market recruit, a trussed-and-bound victim ... was sold for ... the equivalent of the purchase price of five sacks of white rice or three pigs. The Chinese did not fear to fight for their country; there was no deficit in patriotism. But they knew what the recruiting camps were like ... Recruits ate even less than the starving soldiers; sometimes they



Photo courtesy of Galerie Arcimboldo

**SOURCE 3.6** Woodblock print from the 'Indignant Tide' series by Li Hua (1907–1994), showing soldiers conscripted for the Nationalist Party's army, c. 1940s, probably commissioned by the Communist Party of China

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got no water. Many of them were stripped naked and left to sleep on bare floors ... dead bodies were allowed to lie for days. In some areas less than twenty percent lived to reach the front. The week that the stories of Belsen and Buchenwald broke in Europe coincided with the height of the conscription drive in China; the doctors who dealt with the conscription camp about Chengtu refused to be excited about German horrors, for descriptions of the Nazi camps, they said, read almost exactly like the recruit centres in which they were working.

Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China*, De Capo Press, New York, 1961, pp. 273–5

### Jack Belden

The basis of all conscription was graft, bribery and influence. Sons of the rich never entered the army; sons of the poor could not escape. An impoverished widow's only son was always drafted; the numerous offspring of the landlord, never.

Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1970 (1949), p. 119

### Questions

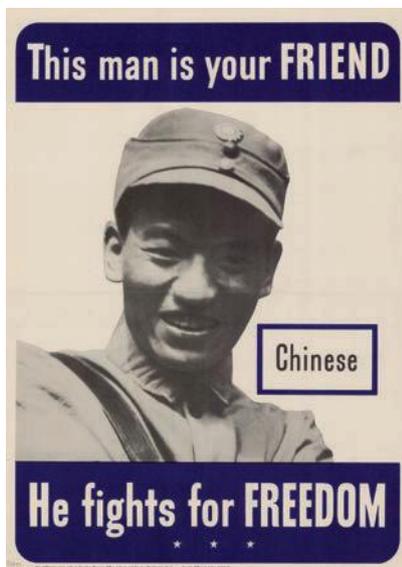
- 1 During the Sino-Japanese War there appears to have been considerable access to China by members of the Western press.
  - a Why do you think this was the case?
  - b What impact did their involvement have on Western perceptions of the events of the war?
  - c How does their involvement influence our knowledge and understanding of life in China during the Sino-Japanese War?
- 2 In what ways would the Nationalist Army's treatment of its conscripts have affected:
  - a the morale of its forces?
  - b perceptions of the GMD?
  - c perceptions of the CCP?

## FOREIGN AID TO CHINA

Jiang Jieshi's strategy of strategic withdrawal was based on the assumption that China and the Chinese people could buy time until military assistance was provided by the Western powers, particularly the United States. During this time Jiang twice rejected peace terms offered by the Japanese.

Western powers recognised Jiang as the legitimate leader of China yet it was felt there was little they could do to assist China's plight. By the time America entered the war, France was occupied by Nazi Germany and the British were preoccupied with war in Europe and North Africa and, after December 1941, were engaged in the defence of Singapore, Malaya and Burma. The Soviet Union alone provided significant military assistance, particularly in the form of aircraft and the pilots to fly them. This Soviet support ended in mid 1941 when the German-led invasion of the Soviet Union commenced.

## Pro-Chinese propaganda from the United States



United States Office of Facts and Figures. This man is your friend : Chinese : he fights for freedom. [Washington, D.C.] UNT Digital Library. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc233/>. Accessed 5 February 2015

**SOURCE 3.7** This propaganda poster was created by the US Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services (1943–45) and was part of a series that included Dutch, Canadian, English, Russian and Australian soldiers.

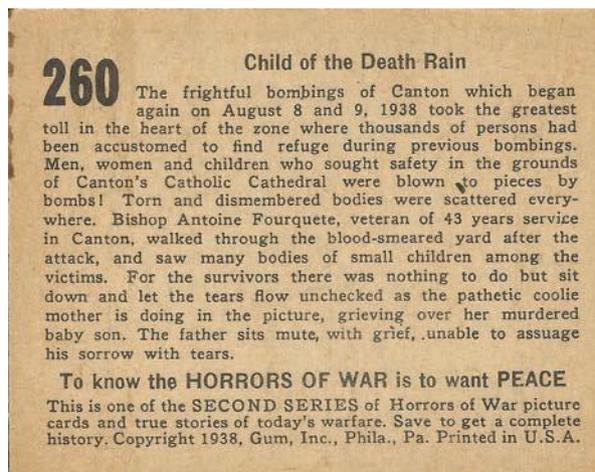


Getty Images/FPG/Hulton Archive

**SOURCE 3.8** Chinese troops are trained in modern warfare by the Y-Force Operations Staff of the American military mission to China (Dixie Mission), 1944. Here, Lieutenant William S Levey and interpreter Captain Shien Pai explain a tactical situation using a large-scale model of the Great Wall of China.



**SOURCE 3.9** This card (front and back) is from a series of trading cards created in the United States in 1938 by Gum Inc., entitled *Horrors of War* (one of the most famous trading card sets). These cards received an endorsement from US President Franklin D Roosevelt. It is alleged he used the cards to show people some of the horrific things that were happening overseas. At the time, the United States was still recovering from the Great Depression and there was little support to get involved in the increasingly unstable environment overseas.



courtesy of Mark Edmunds

continued

continued

## Questions

- 1 What would have been the purpose of the series of posters entitled 'This man is your friend'?
- 2 Why were the Chinese seen as friends of the United States at this time?
- 3 Why would the United States have made use of propaganda to promote the cause of the Chinese during the Sino-Japanese War?
- 4 Why do you think President Roosevelt may have endorsed the 1938 series *Horrors of War*? (Consider the popularity of chewing gum and collectable cards in your response.)

## Joseph Stilwell

General Joseph Stilwell (1883–1946) was a US commander who acted as Jiang Jieshi's chief of staff following the entry of the United States into the Second World War. Stilwell, whose acid tongue earned him the nickname Vinegar Joe, while central to the American relationship with Jiang and the Nationalists, was particularly critical of Jiang, as the source below makes clear.



GENERAL JOSEPH STILWELL

*I have waited long for vengeance,  
At last I've had my chance.  
I've looked the Peanut in the eye  
And kicked him in the pants.<sup>4</sup>*

*CK's [Jiang Jieshi's] ignorance  
and fatuous complacency are  
appalling, the little dummy.  
(15 June 1942)<sup>1</sup>*

*FDR's [Franklin D Roosevelt,  
US President] answer was  
given to Soong to send  
to Peanut [Jiang Jieshi].  
The bastard held it up, &  
apparently got away with it.  
(16 July 1942)<sup>2</sup>*

*I believe he will only continue his  
policy and delay, while grabbing  
for loans and post-war aid, for  
the purpose of maintaining his  
present position, based on one-  
party government, a reactionary  
policy, or the suppression of  
democratic ideas, with the active  
aid of his gestapo.<sup>3</sup>*

Corbis

9780170244145

## The Flying Tigers

Deeply concerned about the Japanese invasion of China and its possible impact on the United States, US President Franklin D Roosevelt offered China money, weapons, soldiers and a modern air force. He requested volunteers from retired US military aviators to travel to China to fly cargo planes and fighters, and to train Nationalist government troops. As a consequence, the 1st American Volunteer Group of the China Air Force, which consisted of three fighter squadrons with about 20 aircraft and was commanded by Lt General Claire Chennault, saw action in China in 1941–42. Nicknamed the Flying Tigers because of the fierce shark faces painted on their planes and their bravery in battle, this group was easily recognisable and did much to assist the Nationalist government. Lt General Chennault reported directly to General Stilwell who was in command of the China–Burma–India theatre of war following US entry into the Second World War. Stilwell frequently criticised Jiang Jieshi and his Nationalist Army's apparent reluctance to fight the Japanese.

Evidence of China's gratitude to the United States and the Flying Tigers for their aid during the Sino-Japanese War can be found in the creation of the Flying Tigers Museum in the former residence of General Stilwell in Chongqing, the former Nationalist capital.



Getty Images/MPI

**SOURCE 3.10** A Chinese Nationalist soldier stands guard over Flying Tiger aircraft.



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 3.11** American pilots wore a patch known as the 'Life Saver' sewn onto the back of their flight jackets. The patch contained explanations in Chinese that the pilot was fighting the Japanese for China and should be assisted in any way possible.

### Questions

- 1 Consider the purpose of these images of the Flying Tigers.
  - a Who would have created them?
  - b Why might they have been produced?
  - c Many similar images are on display at the Flying Tigers Museum. Why might these images be on display at the museum in the former Nationalist capital of Chongqing?
- 2 Use the sources and the information contained in this chapter to make a list of the ways in which the Chinese were supported by the United States.

## THE CCP'S WAR AGAINST JAPAN

Just as Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government, with the aid of the United States, sought to rid China of the Japanese, so too did the Communist Party. Despite the fact that the Japanese focused mainly on seaports and highly populated areas of China, rather than those occupied by the Communists, the CCP used its fight against the Japanese as a tool to enhance its standing within the minds of the people, and it was seen as heroic and more proactive than the GMD.

### Communists, peasants and the Japanese

The CCP exploited the fact that the Nationalist forces were poorly viewed and portrayed themselves as 'moral victors' and 'Prince Valiants in straw sandals' (Helen Snow, wife of Edgar). Communist agitators undermined Jiang's authority with his troops, and even when the Second United Front broke down in 1941 after GMD troops attacked units of the Red Army for not obeying orders, they claimed they were 'martyred patriots' who were intending to obey orders but were given insufficient time to do so. One significant factor in the success of the Communists' response to the Japanese threat and their subsequent control over China was the role of the Red Army. At the beginning of the war, the Communists held approximately 75 000 square kilometres of Chinese territory, which was inhabited by about two million people; by the end of the war in 1945, they controlled 750 000 square kilometres with approximately 95 million Chinese under their control in 19 freed regions. In these freed regions, which became known as **Liberated China**, the Red Army was a highly effective propaganda tool. Red Army soldiers spread Communist ideology by their actions, which were firmly grounded in the Eight Rules of Conduct that had first been established in the Jiangxi Soviet and were strictly enforced. The soldiers were also taught to read and write, which increased literacy and the spread of propaganda. When the Communist forces won an area from the Japanese, they ensured that medical care was provided, schools were established, land rent and interest payments were reduced, and, where possible, Red Army troops assisted the peasants around the villages and in the fields. In this way, they came to be seen as friends of the people and their defenders. (Table 3.1 provides a more detailed overview of the reasons for the CCP's success in its war against the Japanese.)

Jiang's apparent reluctance and Mao's willingness to repel the Japanese from China have been portrayed as central to the Communists' victory. Indeed, the propaganda war was won by the CCP, with many young people at that time going to Yan'an to join the CCP and attend the 'Anti-Japanese University' there. It needs to be remembered, though, that the CCP had a distinct advantage in that the Japanese were not actually interested in the barren, desolate Communist base in Yan'an, but rather the industrial and coastal areas usually held by the GMD. Historian Jack Gray was to observe:

“ The course of the war put Jiang at a disadvantage before public opinion. The Japanese sought to take over the coastal cities and the main communication routes, especially the railways. To do this they had to defeat mainly Nationalist, not Communist forces ... on the other hand, the Japanese had neither the means nor the desire to establish power throughout the rural areas where the Communists were established; these areas were subject only to occasional attacks ... thus although the Nationalist armies bore almost the whole brunt of the attacks, it was the Communist armies which impressed the Chinese public. ”

Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 275

#### Liberated China

Areas of China taken by the CCP from the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War

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Further, Mao himself, despite propaganda to the contrary and while arranging successful guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese, was reported as saying, 'Our fixed policy should be 70 per cent expansions, 20 per cent dealing with the Guomindang and 10 per cent resisting Japan'.

## Norman Bethune and the CCP



Corbis/Swim Ink

**SOURCE 3.12** 'Time is Life', 1975, a CCP propaganda poster showing an image of Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, who worked with the CCP in the late 1930s

### Questions

- 1 Research Norman Bethune's views of and his role in the Chinese Communist Party.
- 2 Is the image at left an accurate depiction of his function at that time in China?
- 3 Research other foreigners who were pro-CCP, such as Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow. Make a chart in which you outline their views of, their roles in and influence on the CCP, both within China and overseas.
- 4 How does Bethune's role in China compare to that of other foreigners present in China in the 1930s?

**TABLE 3.1** Reasons for the success of the Communists during the war with the Japanese

Successful aspect of the CCP	Reasons for this success
Red Army discipline and morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Officers shared the same food and conditions as their men.</li> <li>+ Brutal punishments were not used.</li> <li>+ There was an emphasis on literacy (60–70% of soldiers were literate).</li> <li>+ Political indoctrination produced committed Communists, not just good soldiers.</li> <li>+ The army was truly a national army, with men from all provinces, whereas GMD army units were province based.</li> <li>+ Soldiers were taught to respect peasants and help with harvests.</li> <li>+ Military leadership consisted of talented men such as Lin Biao, Zhu De and Peng Dehuai.</li> </ul>
Popularity and success of the CCP's political, social and economic reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Elections were held in all CCP areas.</li> <li>+ Rents were reduced by 25%.</li> <li>+ Interest rates were pegged at 1.5%.</li> <li>+ Soldiers gave peasants assistance with their crops.</li> <li>+ Women were encouraged to play an active role in society.</li> <li>+ Literacy increased from 1% to 50%.</li> </ul>
Patriotic appeal of the CCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The CCP produced effective anti-Japanese propaganda.</li> <li>+ The Communists took every opportunity to be seen as patriots in the war of national defence.</li> <li>+ The CCP organised effective guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese, e.g. disrupting supply lines, picking off stray soldiers and pulling up railway tracks.</li> <li>+ The Communists emphasised patriotic resistance to the Japanese rather than social revolution – they even gained the support of the small landlords and rich peasants.</li> <li>+ Because they carried on the war against Japan (nationalism) and instituted land reform (socialism), the Communists could claim to be carrying out the principles of Sun Yixian, which gave them a legitimacy that the GMD struggled to match.</li> <li>+ Many recruits were survivors of Japanese atrocities and therefore active participants eager for justice.</li> </ul>
Economic success enabling the Red Army to wage effective campaigns against the Japanese army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Land cultivation doubled.</li> <li>+ A successful cotton-growing industry was established.</li> <li>+ Makeshift factories produced batteries, wire, soap and matches.</li> </ul>

Successful aspect of the CCP	Reasons for this success	
Effective resistance to Japan's military forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ In 1937, Zhu De won a first victory at Pingxing Guan, a strategic pass in Shanxi province. It was not a large-scale battle, but it did humiliate the much-feared and up till then unbeaten Japanese Itagaki Division and gained the CCP a lot of credibility.</li> <li>+ The August 1940 <b>Hundred Regiments Offensive</b>, involving 115 regiments with a combined force of more than 400 000 men, led to hundreds of raids over several months. It succeeded in immobilising the Japanese forces in northern China for some time and won the Communists nationwide acclaim as champions of national resistance. However, this action drew Japanese attention away from the Nationalist forces, allowing them to launch raids against CCP-held territory. As a result, the population of CCP-controlled territory dropped from 45 to 25 million.</li> <li>+ CCP forces reverted to guerrilla activity in the face of the Japanese Three Alls Policy (kill all, burn all, loot all) in the areas occupied by Communist forces from early 1941.</li> <li>+ After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States was at war with Japan. The CCP forces concentrated on consolidating their base areas and they also pursued guerrilla activity and political work behind the Japanese lines.</li> <li>+ A 'Yan'an Spirit' invigorated all aspects of life, encouraging a spirit of optimism and self-sacrifice for a worthwhile cause.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hundred Regiments Offensive</b></p> <p>A major Communist campaign involving the National Revolutionary Army, led by the legendary Peng Dehuai, against the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War</p>

## Perceptions of the CCP during the Sino-Japanese War

### Han Suyin

By the end of 1938, Yan'an, the great Red Base, was more than just a military outpost, it was a shining beacon of fervour and patriotism, attracting students and intellectuals from all over China ... everyone was mobilised for the war of resistance, and all China was ringing with voices demanding full military support ... two mutually antagonistic forces had entered the war against Japan ... the Red Army built up by Mao Tse-tung, steeled by the Long March ... [and] Chiang Kai-shek's government ... an array of bankers, landlords, groups of military men ... and an ever more formidable secret police ... The slogan of the Red guerrilla was: Get to the rear of the enemy, disrupt his lines of communications, organise the masses, make them politically conscious, so that the guerrilla lives among the people as fish in water, and the enemy does not dare to trust anyone.

Han Suyin, *Birdless Summer*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1968, pp. 37–8

*continued*

continued

### Lionel-Max Chassin

This extract provides a comparison of the CCP and GMD during the fight against the Japanese.

In 1944, on paper, the Chinese Army consisted of 324 divisions, 60-odd brigades and 89 so-called guerrilla units of about 2000 men each. This looks formidable on paper, till you go into it closely. Then you find:

- 1 That the average strength per division, instead of 10 000, is not more than 5000
- 2 That the troops are unpaid, unfed, shot with sickness and malnutrition
- 3 That equipment is old, inadequate and unserviceable
- 4 That training is non-existent
- 5 That the officers are job-holders
- 6 That there is no artillery, transport, medical service etc.
- 7 That conscription is so-and-so
- 8 That business is the principal occupation. How else to live?

How could you start to make such an army effective?

I judge the GMD and CCP by what I saw.

Kuomintang: Corruption, chaos, neglect, taxes, words and deeds. Hoarding, black market, trading with the enemy.

Communist program: Reduce taxes, rents, interests, raise production, and standard of living. Participate in government. Practise what they preach.

Lionel-Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest of China: A History of the Civil War 1945–49*, trans. Timothy Osato and Louis Gelas, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1965, p. 264

### Han Suyin

At the end of the war there were still two armies ... but the balance of power had changed in favour of the Red Armies and against Chiang Kai-shek ... Communist trained cadres poured into the enemy rear; from Yen-an mass organisers went into the countryside to form anti-Japanese associations of peasants, students, merchants, women and children, and to create guerrilla detachments of young men and self-defence militia corps of older men and adolescents; 'as fish swimming in the ocean we move about among the people freely, by organising and training the people we automatically eliminate traitors; we rest in the hearts of the people'.

Han Suyin, *Birdless Summer*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1968, pp. 37–8

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### Questions

- 1 What reasons does Chassin offer for the poor performance of the Guomindang?
  - 2 Why would the Communists have been seen as a positive force in China by the people during the Sino-Japanese War?
  - 3 Draw up a table in which you identify each source and provide a dot-point summary of the information contained within it. Use the information to write an extended response in which you articulate the ways in which the ideology and practices of the CCP assisted it in its battle against the Japanese and to win the support of the Chinese people.
-

## The Dixie Mission

In July 1944, the US sent a number of diplomats, known as the United States Army Observation Group, to Yan'an on an inspection tour, which has become known as the Dixie Mission. The mission, initiated by General Joseph Stilwell, was to evaluate the CCP as a force in the war against Japan. It was the first effort made by the United States to establish official relations with the CCP and the People's Liberation Army. The mission lasted until March 1947 and included military and political analysis of the work being done in the area by the Communists. The Dixie Mission was impressed with the organisation, discipline and morale at Yan'an, and expressed concern regarding the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Nationalists. The mission therefore served to highlight the differences between the two political groups in China.

## Conclusion

In October 1935, after the Long March had come to its conclusion, Mao settled its survivors in Shanxi province. He set up CCP headquarters at Yan'an, where the Communist movement grew rapidly for the next 10 years. This growth can be attributed to the inability of the Nationalist government to meet the needs of the people. The war with Japan further served to undermine the Nationalist government while highlighting positive elements of Mao's party. During this period, the Red Army fostered an image of conducting guerrilla warfare in defence of the people and of Communist troops as a seasoned and highly effective fighting force. Mao also used this time in Yan'an to prepare for the development of a new China, creating and implementing his sinification of Marxism–Leninism in what became known as the 'Yan'an Way'. By 1945, the Nationalist regime had lost all the inspiration and sense of purpose it once had. The war against the Japanese had been won, but largely due to US efforts rather than Jiang's forces. By contrast, the Communists could claim some local victories and had built guerrilla bases throughout northern China. Through skilful use of propaganda and the creation of an organisation that sought to meet the needs of the peasants, the Communists increased party membership from 100 000 in 1937 to 1.2 million in 1945.

## Chapter summary

- + Jiang Jieshi was kidnapped by members of his own party who were concerned by the threat from Japan, and was not released until he agreed to a Second United Front with the Communist Party to fight against Japan.
- + Japan invaded China following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which marked the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War.
- + Despite aid from the United States, Jiang's armies were not effective in the war against Japan.
- + Jiang moved his government to Chongqing following the loss of Nanjing to the Japanese.
- + The Japanese forces were brutal in their treatment of the Chinese.
- + China continued to suffer from a corrupt, inefficient government and was beset with financial problems.
- + The Communist Party made use of the Japanese threat to fight effectively and also wage a propaganda war, which consolidated its strength and popularity with the Chinese people.

### Endnotes

- 1 From the diaries of General Joseph Stilwell, 1900–1946
- 2 From the diaries of General Joseph Stilwell, 1900–1946
- 3 From Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911–45*, Grove/Atlantic, Inc., New York, 2007, pp. 36–40
- 4 From Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China*, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 290

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

James M Bertram, *First Act in China: The Story of the Sian Mutiny*, Viking Press, New York, 1938.

John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War 1937–1945: The Politics of Collaboration*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1972.

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### Film

*As it Happened: Mao – A Life*, SBS, 2006.

*Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor*, BBC, 1993.

*China: A Century of Revolution*, Part 1, 'China in Revolution 1911–1949', PBS, 1989.

*Why We Fight* propaganda film series, 'The Battle for China', dir. Frank Capra, 1944.



## Chapter review activities

- 1 What were the aims of the Second United Front?
- 2 In what ways did the Second United Front work to defeat the Japanese?
- 3
  - a Explain why and how China was broken into three main areas of political control during the Sino-Japanese War.
  - b What problems would have been created for the Chinese due to this political situation?
- 4 Refer to the information box about the Rape of Nanjing (page 84–5). What policy adopted by the Japanese would support Mitter's view on the Japanese in Nanjing?
- 5 Complete your own historical inquiry. Use the information provided in this chapter and your own research to address either of these statements:
  - a 'The Sino-Japanese War played a significant role in consolidating the power of the CCP and diminishing that of the GMD.'
  - b 'The CCP war against the Japanese was merely a propaganda tool.'
- 6 In his 'Drive out the invader' speech in 1937, Jiang Jieshi promised his country: 'As Commander-in-Chief, I must carry the entire responsibility for the lives of my soldiers and the safety of the State'. Write an essay in which you discuss the manner in which Jiang carried out this promise and the impact of his actions on China.



里存瑞舍身炸碉堡

Corbis/David Pollack

9780170244145

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The battle for supremacy, 1945–1949*

China's desperate battle for national survival against an external threat ended following the surrender of Japan in September 1945. Unfortunately, though, the legacy of Japanese occupation was a China divided into three parts: Mao Zedong's 'Red China', the territory being evacuated by the Japanese, and Jiang Jieshi's 'Free China'. The US government attempted to assist in solving this issue, even arranging for Mao to fly to Chongqing to meet with Jiang; however, both the Nationalists and Communists moved their forces into the formally occupied areas with great speed, thus beginning their final confrontation – the second phase of the Chinese Civil War.

In many ways, the Nationalist forces had already lost the fight. Morale was low, they were battle weary and struggled with the loss of many soldiers, and their government was unable to effectively equip them in the face of soaring inflation. The Red Army, on the other hand, had emerged stronger after the war. Initially engaging in guerrilla tactics, it then launched a series of spectacular advances against the Nationalists in 1948–49. The Nationalists were defeated. Jiang Jieshi and the remnants of the Guomindang fled to Taiwan in January 1949, and on 1 October that year, Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China.

◀ Chinese propaganda poster depicting Dong Cunrui, who sacrificed his own life in 1949 while detonating explosives blowing up an enemy bunker during the Chinese Civil War

#### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + What were the similarities and differences between the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang in the period between 1945 and 1949?
- + Why did the Communists win the Chinese Civil War?

## *Japanese surrender and its consequences*

The unconditional surrender by Japan, which marked the end of the Sino-Japanese War that had lasted for eight years, was met by waves of jubilation across China as its people poured from their homes and into the streets to celebrate the end of what had been one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of their country. In Chongqing, the Nationalist capital, Jiang Jieshi read his message of victory over the radio and the streets erupted with people, cheering and laughing amid a spectacle of searchlights and firecrackers. In Shanghai, garlands of flowers and crepe paper adorned posters of Jiang. When Nationalist government troops entered the city, they were greeted by vast, waving and cheering crowds. As news of the surrender spread, involuntary exiles who had fled the destruction by the Japanese began to prepare for the long journey back to their homes. The banks of the Yangzi River were full of people searching for boats to float downstream.



### THE FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE GMD AND THE CCP

<b>1945</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>	Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt met in Yalta; Stalin agreed to break non-aggression pact with Japan
	<b>6 AUGUST</b>	Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
	<b>8 AUGUST</b>	Stalin declared war on Japan and Soviet troops poured into Manchuria
	<b>9 AUGUST</b>	Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki
	<b>20 AUGUST</b>	Stalin requested CCP troops to avoid confrontation with the Nationalists following the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty
	<b>21 AUGUST</b>	Japan formally surrendered to the Chinese ending the Sino-Japanese War (Second World War in the Pacific)
	<b>28 AUGUST</b>	Jiang Jieshi and Mao Zedong met in Chongqing for peace talks
	<b>DECEMBER</b>	US General George Marshall sent to China to ensure peace between the GMD and the CCP
<b>1946</b>	<b>APRIL</b>	Soviet troops withdrew from Manchuria after allowing CCP forces to take over the countryside
	<b>MAY</b>	Red Army renamed People's Liberation Army (PLA)
	<b>JUNE</b>	GMD forces pursued the CCP to the northern border of Manchuria but halted their advance after Marshall imposed a ceasefire
	<b>JULY</b>	Jiang ordered new attacks on the CCP; Marshall ordered a stop to all US aid to the GMD
	<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	US President Harry Truman imposed an arms embargo on the GMD
<b>1947</b>	<b>MARCH</b>	GMD forces took Yan'an
<b>1948</b>	<b>JUNE–OCTOBER</b>	Siege of Changchun
	<b>NOVEMBER</b>	PLA won the war in Manchuria after blockading all major cities
<b>1949</b>	<b>JANUARY</b>	PLA took Beijing; Jiang and GMD fled to Taiwan
	<b>APRIL</b>	Nanjing fell to the PLA
	<b>1 JULY</b>	Mao published 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship'
	<b>1 OCTOBER</b>	Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China

The formal surrender ceremony between Japan and China took place in Hunan at the Zhijiang Airfield on 21 August 1945. At this ceremony, Japanese Major General Takeo Imai relinquished a map that indicated the positions of his one million troops in China. Permission was granted for these troops to remain in the country, maintaining their weapons and, ironically, keeping public order until the arrival of Nationalist troops, who were being rushed to all the key cities south of the Great Wall. Under the command of US General Albert Coady Wedemeyer, 80 000 troops were flown to Nanjing to retake the capital, and between 2000 and 4000 troops were flown to Beijing daily. By early November 1945, the last Japanese were being rounded up and disarmed.

What should have been the end to hostilities for the Chinese people was in actual fact just the calm before the storm because Jiang's opposition, the Communists, were not prepared to also surrender their rights to their own country.

### Soviet involvement in China

At a meeting between Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill and Franklin D Roosevelt in Yalta in February 1945, Stalin promised to break his non-aggression pact with Japan in return for concessions that included two months' supply of fuel and food for his army of 1.5 million men, control of the Manchurian seaports of Port Arthur and Dalian, and joint control with China over Manchuria's railways. Roosevelt did not bother to consult with Jiang Jieshi about this decision.

On 8 August, only two days after the destruction of Hiroshima by atomic bomb, the Russians declared war on Japan. Soviet troops poured into Manchuria by crossing the Amur River and entering the country in special armoured trains. They met little resistance from the Japanese and quickly took control of all key strategic points in Manchuria.

## A COUNTRY DIVIDED AGAIN

Jiang Jieshi was ill-prepared for the sudden end of the Second World War. He had expected US troops to land in China in anticipation of a mass invasion of Japan; however, these expectations were not met following the use of the atomic bomb against the Japanese instead. The Japanese surrender forced out into the open the smouldering enmity between the Communists and the Nationalists. During the war with the Japanese, they had few opportunities for outright conflict, but this situation had now changed. Almost immediately, a bitter dispute erupted between Jiang and Mao over who should accept the surrender of Japanese forces across the country and take charge of all Japanese military equipment and supplies. Jiang forbade the Communists from becoming involved, stating that only Nationalist forces could participate in the surrender. Unsurprisingly, the Communists refused to follow such orders and moved quickly to take over areas such as Shanxi, Shandong and Jehol before Nationalist troops could arrive. Likewise, Soviet

troops refused to allow Nationalists to enter Manchuria, preferring their CCP comrades to do so. The Communists were therefore able to take effective control over much of northern China, while the US-assisted Nationalists took over the rest.

## Tension in Manchuria

The Soviet Union's control of Manchuria escalated the already tense situation between the CCP and the GMD. The Communists saw the Russian presence as a way to solidify their early gains in the region; they aimed to link up with the Russian forces and claim the huge belt of territory covering Outer Mongolia and Manchuria. Meanwhile, the Nationalists expected that the land would be handed over to them. Mao ordered that four armed groups, including 100 000 men from the Eighth Route Army under the control of General Lin Biao, move north to meet up with their Soviet counterparts. Stalin, however, was concerned about the continued role of the United States in the area, seeking to ensure its departure from both China and Korea. In order to appease the Americans (who had shown their military might with the atomic bomb), Stalin signed the **Sino-Soviet Treaty**, which recognised Jiang as the leader of a united China, and on 20 August sent a message to Mao requesting that CCP troops avoid confrontation with the Nationalists. In reality, Stalin would not live up to his promise to hand over Manchuria to the GMD, and his troops remained in the region while Lin Biao gathered his forces. Soviet commanders secretly turned over machine guns, tanks, aircraft and artillery captured from the Japanese to the CCP's Red Army, and even supplied the CCP with Japanese prisoners of war who trained them in the use of their former weapons. Further, Lin Biao was given command of 200 000 Chinese soldiers who had served in the Japanese-controlled Manchoukuo and knew the area well. By the end of 1945, and despite the promises made at Chongqing and the Sino-Soviet Treaty, Lin Biao's army had grown to approximately 500 000 and had little intention of either leaving Manchuria or handing it to the Nationalists. In an attempt to help Jiang regain control of Manchuria, the United States organised to transport Nationalist troops to the area, where they clashed with Communist forces under the leadership of Lin Biao. The Nationalists were defeated in October 1948 and Lin Biao's forces moved south to help take Beijing.

### Sino-Soviet Treaty

The treaty of friendship and alliance between Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government and the Soviet Union, signed on 14 August 1945

## CHONGQING – WORKING FOR PEACE

Of great concern to China, and indeed the world, was the prospect of increased Soviet presence, which could result in a divided country consisting of a Russia-dominated north and a US-protected south. With the Sino-Soviet Treaty in hand and Stalin's pledge to turn over Manchuria to the Nationalists, Jiang Jieshi, with the aid of his US advisers, invited his bitter enemy, Mao Zedong, to peace talks.

By the time Jiang and Mao met in the remote town of Chongqing on 28 August, the world had been at peace for two weeks, but in China nearly 100 million of its population of 600 million were refugees, and more than 10 million men, women and children had perished from war and

starvation. China's future was uncertain as the Chinese Communists did not accept Jiang and his Nationalist regime as China's true leaders, nor did Jiang wish to allow the CCP any power (or indeed survival) within what he perceived to be his country.

Chongqing was a fitting place for the meeting – it was the most bombed city in history, as the Japanese had spent years seeking to remove resistance to their troops in the area. Mao was flown to Chongqing on a US Army transport plane in the company of Patrick Hurley, the US ambassador to China, as the US government was keen to see the differences between the two political leaders come to an end, both for the sake of the country and to diminish the power of the Communists whom the Americans perceived as a significant global threat.

Jiang and Mao were suspicious of each other, with Mao refusing to travel in the official car sent for him by Jiang. However, at the formal dinner held to mark the occasion, the two men smiled at each other and raised their glasses in a toast for the Allied victory over Japan and a unified China. At the talks, the Communists sought the creation of a coalition government, the introduction of political and economic reforms, the repeal of what they saw as oppressive and reactionary reforms, and the dismissal of corrupt officials. To appease the United States, the two political leaders met for six weeks, until eventually Mao proclaimed on 18 September, 'We must stop [the civil war] and all parties must unite under the leadership of Chairman Jiang to build a modern China'. Both parties agreed to share power and work together, but in reality both wanted sole control of China. Even while the meetings were taking place, both Communist and Nationalist troops were already involved in skirmishes across the country. Despite the desire of the United States to prevent a civil war, it appeared to be inevitable, with Mao, once safely back in Yan'an, explaining to his comrades that the statement made in Chongqing was a 'mere scrap of paper'.



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 4.1** General Jiang Jieshi toasts Mao over a banquet table during a welcoming party for Mao at Chongqing, c. 1946

## MARSHALL'S MISSION

The United States had a definite agenda in providing aid to China. Rising concern about the spread of communism, fuelled by the spread of Soviet forces into Manchuria, ensured that the Americans continued their support of Jiang Jieshi beyond attempts at reconciliation between the two parties. American marines were provided to secure key parts of China and await the arrival of Nationalist troops at the end of the Sino-Japanese War, and the US government gave the GMD loans totalling US \$500 000.

In a final attempt to end the conflict between the CCP and the GMD diplomatically, US President Harry Truman sent his top military leader, General George Marshall, to China in December 1945. An experienced negotiator, Marshall went on to become Truman's Secretary of



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 4.2** General George Marshall, Jiang Jieshi's wife (Soong Meiling) and Jiang enjoyed a strong personal relationship.

State and launched the famous 'Marshall Plan', which successfully rebuilt war-torn Europe, yet he was unable to convince the two Chinese forces to stand down. Marshall ordered a ceasefire and succeeded in persuading Mao and Jiang to agree on a new truce by the middle of January 1946; however, as was the case after the Chongqing talks, it did not last long. Jiang's best-trained forces took advantage of the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Manchuria in March to attack CCP forces and to ultimately regain much of northern Manchuria. Just as it appeared that the GMD might be victorious, Marshall, who was convinced of the importance of his mission to bring peace to China, called another ceasefire. This time, Jiang complied, as Marshall had threatened to cut off the US supply of both money and weapons. This ceasefire lasted less than a month, and by July 1946 Jiang had launched new attacks. A furious Marshall ordered a stop of US aid.

Marshall went on to spend considerable time with Jiang and his American-educated wife, Soong Meiling, at their summer home, but despite his best efforts, he could not convince the Nationalist leader to halt attacks. Marshall ultimately left China, suffering one of the few defeats of his highly illustrious career.

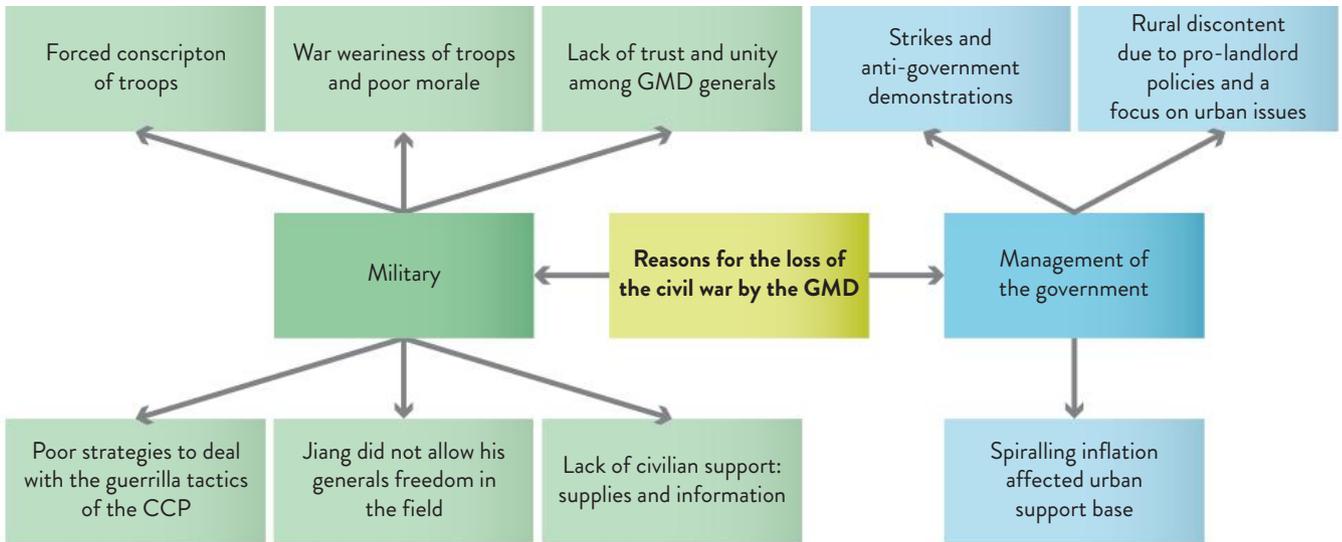
## *Red victory or Nationalist defeat?*

Given the high levels of US support to Jiang Jieshi, his large and well-equipped standing army, and the fact that his government controlled a vast area of China following the end of the Second World War, it seems astonishing that the Communists were the ultimate victors in the Chinese Civil War. While it cannot be denied that the CCP's Red Army was highly disciplined, made skilful use of guerrilla tactics, had the support of the people in terms of supplies, volunteers and intelligence, and regularly made use of equipment that had been abandoned by retreating Nationalist forces (with Mao later claiming that 'Jiang Jieshi was my supply officer'), it is also apparent that the actions of Jiang and his army lost the war for the Nationalists.

In 1946, the Red Army was renamed the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Once again, propaganda was used effectively as the Chinese people very much felt *liberated* not only from the Japanese, but also from the GMD forces when an area was captured by the Communist Party. Throughout the civil war, the Red Army's behaviour, shaped by Mao's Three Rules and Eight



**SOURCE 4.3** Expansion of Communist control, 1945–49



**SOURCE 4.4** Guomindang problems

Points, contrasted significantly with Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist forces in terms of their treatment of the people. Nationalist armies often boarded in civilian houses without permission, tended to be rude and disrespectful towards the civilians and confiscated supplies from the struggling peasantry. In comparison, the Red Army did the opposite, treating people with respect and severely punishing any violation of Mao's rules.

As a consequence, impressed civilians willingly provided supplies and shelter to the Red Army, which greatly assisted the CCP's war efforts. Many villagers and peasants also joined the army, increasing Mao's subsequent ability to combat the Japanese and the Guomindang. Further, the CCP practice of redistributing items confiscated from warlords among the people made them even more popular, and the peasants tended to spread disinformation to the Guomindang when they arrived to pursue the CCP forces, while gathering intelligence for the Red Army.

## Life under the Nationalists during the civil war

### Lloyd Eastman

The war-weary Nationalist troops were poorly led, resulting in massive casualties and mass desertions to the enemy. Other Chinese went over to the communists because of the economic chaos, corruption and political repression that continued to flourish under Jiang's leadership ... Jiang Jieshi himself described his own party as 'Decrepit and degenerate ... this kind of party should long ago have been destroyed and swept away.'

Lloyd E Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution 1937–49*, Stanford University Press, CA, 1984, p. 203

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continued

### Immanuel Hsu

The Nationalists lacked the necessary motivation to initiate social and economic reforms ... paying little attention to agrarian problems. It did not understand the peasants, saw no urgency in solving their problems, and was unsympathetic to their plight.

Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, pp. 642–3

### Jiang Jieshi

In 1947 [by then] the Communists had infiltrated the Government as defeatism was prevalent throughout the country. There were impediments to mobilisation, chaos in schools, social instability, inflation and other financial difficulties. To make matters worse, the Government was subjected to hostile international propaganda and the pressure of intrigues. The morale of both the armed forces and the civilian population was at a low ebb ... in waging war against the Communists' total war, the Government was predestined to failure.

Chiang Kai-shek, *A Summing-up at Seventy: Soviet Russia in China*, Harrap, London, 1957, p. 229

### US Department of State

Their [GMD] military disasters in my opinion can all be blamed on the world's worst leadership ... the complete ineptness of high military leaders and the widespread corruption and dishonesty throughout the Armed Forces, could, in some measure, have been controlled and directed had the above authority and facilities been available. Chinese leaders lack the moral courage to issue and enforce an unpopular decision.

US Department of State compilation,  
*US Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949*, pp. 358–9

### Questions

- 1 What opinion of Jiang Jieshi as a political leader and a military leader is articulated in these sources?
- 2 What reasons does Jiang give to justify the GMD's lack of success during the civil war?
- 3 Make a list of the failings of the Nationalist government that contributed to the inability of the GMD to defeat the CCP.

## COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY: A WEAPON FOR UNITY OF ACTION

Many argue that that CCP was successful because of the loyalty and support of the peasants. It is important to understand how this relationship developed. It was during the Yan'an years that Mao's ideology was both fully developed and embraced by the party. Mao consolidated his personal position within the party and was finally named as the CCP's chairman in 1943. He then spent considerable time formulating its theoretical foundations. Mao's sinofication of Marxism-Leninism, or Maoism, reflects what Mao believed to be the best elements of Russia's Communism, which he adapted and applied to China. Mao wrote extensively on many topics, including the origins of the revolution, his belief in guerrilla warfare, and the United Front. He also placed considerable emphasis on the notion of conformity of political thought and practice, believing that the party leadership needed to be trained in 'the correct style of work' or *zhengfeng* (rectification).



*The process of revolution should be a continuous one, with the people maintaining a constant fervour against 'reactionaries', to avoid stagnation and resist those who could influence the party negatively.*

*Theory and practice go hand in hand; therefore, Chinese ideology should be adjusted to fit the real experiences of the Chinese.*

*The peasants rather than the workers will drive the revolution as they make up the majority of the population and are also the worst off in Chinese society with a long tradition of rebellion.*

*A supportive peasantry would be crucial in waging guerrilla warfare to provide vital supplies and information.*

*The creative energy of the masses are vital. They will still need to be led to revolution but have much to offer in terms of ideas, culture and creativity.*

*Leadership in China should be by the people and taken to the people. Government administration should consist of a decentralised leadership structure that is able to meet local needs.*

*Correct thinking and moral virtues are vital for constructive and positive change.*

Mao firmly believed theory should be practised, so his ideas were given practical application from 1927 in the Jiangxi Soviet, and even more significantly in Yan'an from 1937. Yan'an itself was a barren and desolate place, where the peasants experienced significant poverty due to the poor soil and negligible rainfall. The people of Yan'an welcomed Mao as he valued the peasantry, and the Red Army was trained to work with and respect the peasants. Thus the new Soviet base at Yan'an became the perfect breeding ground for Mao's ideas. He actively sought to create a bond between the people and the party; this was his aim when he spent time talking to the people, trying to find out their real interests and attempting to translate their ideas into practical policies that the people would accept and embrace. The ideological practices of the CCP became known as the 'Yan'an Way' and extolled virtues held by the party to be of value in the survival and continued growth of the Communist Party: struggle, self-sacrifice, diligence, courage and selflessness.

## The Rectification Campaign

During the early 1940s, Mao spent up to 14 hours a day studying Marxism and refining his ideology. On 1 February 1942, he formally launched his *Zhengfeng*, or Rectification Campaign. This campaign was an opportunity to formalise the CCP's ideological independence from the



**SOURCE 4.5** Mao Zedong pictured in his mountain stronghold, Yan'an, 1942

Campaign was beginning to resemble a purge, with many being committed to hard labour or even execution for their political opinions.

Soviet Union; that is, the sinification of Marxism–Leninism, which went beyond Mao's use of the peasants and focused on the benefit of policy born from practical experience. It also became an education campaign for the new members of the party, who were thought to have unorthodox opinions. In Mao's terms, they lacked 'the correct style of work' and needed to be taught 'correct revolutionary consciousness'.

The Rectification Campaign followed a set routine. Mao or another leader would give a lecture to a mass gathering, and then the audience would break up into smaller groups. Participants would be tested on the ideas outlined in the speech. Those who were seen as unorthodox were forced to appear in 'struggle sessions' in front of their peers and explain their mistakes. This was followed by an intense period of studying the writings of Mao, and potentially hard labour as punishment. By 1942, the Rectification

## 'On New Democracy'

Mao published his essay 'On New Democracy' in Yan'an in 1940, in which he indicated that all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes should share political power and unite society against the common enemy – Japan. Mao used this document to outline a policy for a struggle of all classes against the Japanese invasion, and his fusion of communism and nationalism was attractive to many. His official ideology became known as 'Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought' and provided the Yan'an Soviet and Red Army with a clear and cohesive unity of purpose.

Further ideas contained in this document formed the basis for the introduction of the Three-Thirds System to broaden participation in decision making. All village, district and regional organisations were to be made up of one-third CCP members, one-third

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independent ‘progressives’ and one-third ‘middle-of-the-roaders’. By 1944 when the rectification had drawn to a close, the leadership cult and cult of personality surrounding Mao had been firmly established.

### Questions

- 1 Make a list of the elements of Maoism developed during the Yan’an period.
- 2 In what ways did the CCP’s treatment of the peasants contribute to its success during the civil war?



**SOURCE 4.6** Success of the CCP

## CCP successes during the civil war period

### Immanuel Hsu

They [the Nationalist government] failed to see the revolutionary potential of the peasant masses and consequently never attempted to organise them. It was precisely in this area of neglect that the talent of Mao found its highest and most successful expression.

Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, pp. 642–3



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 4.7** The CCP enabled the peasants to seize land and to unleash their anger against their wealthy landlords. These landlords, such as the man in this photo, kneeling before a ‘people’s tribunal’ in an improvised outdoor court, were then subjected to humiliation and beatings at public meetings, and even executed.

**TABLE 4.1** CCP membership rates

Month/year	Membership rate
April 1927	60 000
December 1927	10 000
1928	40 000
1930	122 000
1933	300 000
1936	30 000
1937	40 000
1940	800 000
1941	760 000
1942	735 000
1944	853 000
1945	1 200 000

Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution 1895–1949*, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 276



Getty Images/Jack Wilkes/The LIFE Picture Collection

**SOURCE 4.8** The CCP won many battles during the civil war, such as the capture of the cities of Jinan, Mukden and Changchun in 1948. This success was partly due to the fighting strategies of the Communists, but also because many GMD forces deserted or surrendered due to the corruption of their officers and lack of supplies. GMD soldiers were expected to fight in straw sandals, such as those the soldier is wearing in this photograph.



Robert Capa/Magnum Photos/Snapper Media

**SOURCE 4.9** Peasants assisted the CCP forces to victory by carrying supplies.

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## Questions

- 1 Explain why GMD forces often deserted or surrendered.
- 2 What strategies did the CCP use to gain the support of the peasants?
- 3 Why would CCP membership have been attractive to the peasants?
- 4 How did the peasantry assist the CCP in its battle against the Nationalist forces during the civil war period?

## Liu Hulan (1932–1947)

The story of Liu Hulan is a classic example of propaganda used by the CCP to promote its cause during the civil war period and beyond. She was born in 1932 in the village of Yunzhouxi and joined the Communist Party at the age of 14. She was actively involved in collecting support for the CCP in her local area and ultimately became secretary of the All-China Women's Federation.

According to official party records, Liu became a martyr for the party and, consequently, a role model for those loyal to the Communist regime because of her actions during an attack on her village by Guomindang forces in January 1947. Guomindang troops confiscated the village harvest and gathered all the villagers into the town hall, demanding that CCP members surrender. When no-one came forward, a GMD informer identified Liu and several others as party members. Perhaps because of her youth, the GMD commander tried to convince Liu to identify other party members, but when she refused he ordered that villagers already identified be decapitated in front of the girl. Given one further chance to renounce fellow villagers, Liu apparently bade farewell to her friends and family and then voluntarily 'gave herself' to the decapitation knife.



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/themes/liuhulan.php>

## Questions

- 1 What actions of Liu Hulan can be regarded as heroic?
- 2 How might the CCP have used the story of Liu to promote its ideology in China?
- 3 In what ways might the actions of Liu be seen as a representation of the virtues that Mao articulated during the Yan'an period?

## *The siege of Changchun – a different view of the CCP*

The success of the CCP in forging relationships with the people, and its respectful treatment of them, was heavily promoted by the Communist propaganda machine. However, one battle in particular highlights Mao's lack of pity in his determined pursuit of control over China.

Often discussed in official orthodoxy as one of the Chinese Civil War's decisive victories, the siege of Changchun began in June 1948 and lasted until October that year. CCP General Lin Biao ordered that Changchun be turned into a 'dead city' and that no civilians be allowed to leave it. It was the CCP's belief that the defending commander, General Cheng Tung-kuo (a Nationalist hero in the war against the Japanese), could thus be pressured into surrendering the city in order to save civilian lives. General Cheng, while deeply troubled, did not do so.

Very few shots were fired for the duration of the siege, but at least 160 000 civilians died from starvation as a result of being denied permission to leave the city. CCP soldiers shot any civilians who tried to escape and ignored the pleas of mothers who held aloft starving children on the other side of the barbed-wire barricades. In the first few months of the siege, food could still be purchased at exorbitant prices and gold rings were traded for a biscuit. Approximately 40 000 citizens did survive by eating leather belts, insects, leaves, grass and, according to some reports, the bodies of those who had died. American planes dropped some supplies into the city, but these were quickly eaten by Nationalists troops who later stole what food remained from civilians.

There are no memorials or markers in Changchun to the civilians who were caught in the siege. Chinese textbooks continue to glorify Mao's troops as liberators, and it would appear that historians who seek to publish the truth of the situation are silenced. Zhang Zhenglu, a former lieutenant colonel in the People's Liberation Army wrote a book, *White Snow, Red Blood*, which documented the siege but it was immediately banned in China after its publication in 1989.

### Remembering the siege of Changchun

Jiang Yanyan, 2006

When workers in Changchun started digging trenches for a new irrigation system in ... 2006, they made a gruesome discovery ... Below a metre of earth were thousands of skeletons closely packed together. When they dug deeper, the workers found several more layers of bones, stacked up like firewood. A crowd of local residents ... was taken aback by the sheer size of the burial site. Some thought that the bodies belonged to victims of the Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Nobody except an elderly man realised that they had just stumbled on the remnants of the civil war that had resumed after 1945 between Mao Tse-tung's communists and Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists. In 1948 the communists had laid siege to Changchun for five months, starving out a nationalist garrison stationed inside the city walls. Victory came at a heavy cost. At least 160 000 civilians died of hunger during the blockade. After liberation the communist troops buried many of the bodies in mass graves without so much as a tombstone, a name plate

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or even a simple marker. After decades of propaganda about the peaceful liberation of China, few people remember the victims of the communist party's rise to power.

Jiang Yanyan, 'Thousands of skeletons excavated at a construction site', *Xin Wenhua bao*, 4 June 2006, cited in Frank Dikköter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957*, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2013, p. 3

### Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, 2005

A communist soldier remembered the scene when communist forces entered Changchun after the five-month siege: 'When we entered the city, we were devastated. Many of us wept. We're supposed to be fighting for the poor, but of all these dead here, how many are rich? Which of them are nationalists? Aren't they all poor people?'

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005, p. 326

### Andrew Jacobs, 2009

Unlike in other cities taken by the People's Liberation Army during China's civil war, there were no crowds to greet the victors as they made their triumphant march through the streets of this industrial city in the heart of Manchuria. Even if relieved to learn that hostilities with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army had come to an end, most residents – the ones who had not died during the five-month siege – were simply too weak to go outdoors. 'We were just lying in bed starving to death,' said Zhang Yinghua, now 86, as she recalled the famine that claimed the lives of her brother, her sister and most of her neighbors. 'We couldn't even crawl.'

Andrew Jacobs, 'China is wordless on traumas of communists' rise', *The New York Times*, 1 October 2009

### Meng Qinghua, 2009

'At first we ate rotten sorghum, then corncobs and then the bark off the trees,' said Meng Qinghua, 85. 'After a week of not eating you'd get very sleepy. Once that happened, you would start to die.'

Cited in Andrew Jacobs, 'China is wordless on traumas of communists' rise', *The New York Times*, 1 October 2009

### Zhang Zhenglu, 2009

Changchun was like Hiroshima ... The casualties were about the same. Hiroshima took nine seconds; Changchun took five months.

Cited in Andrew Jacobs, 'China is wordless on traumas of communists' rise', *The New York Times*, 1 October 2009

## Questions

- 1 Why do you think there are no memorials to the events that took place at Changchun and the lives lost there during the civil war?
- 2 What were the aims of Lin Biao in establishing the siege?
- 3 What do the tactics employed by the CCP during the siege tell us about its desire to win the civil war?
- 4 Do you think soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would be proud to remember their involvement in this siege? Give reasons for your answer by quoting from the evidence provided.
- 5 In what ways does information about this siege conflict with views of the actions of the PLA during the civil war?
- 6 Write a paragraph in which you outline the aims and consequences of the siege at Changchun.

Mao's CCP	Jiang's GMD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP reverted to guerrilla tactics; giving up land to save men, then striking at GMD weak points.</li> <li>• Despite land losses, CCP forces doubled to two million and many GMD tanks and artillery pieces were captured.</li> <li>• During 1948–49, CCP forces linked up and headed for Nanjing.</li> <li>• The CCP received logistical support from two million peasants in the area, organised by Deng Xiaoping.</li> <li>• Beijing fell to the CCP in January 1949; Nanjing in April 1949.</li> <li>• On 1 October 1949, Mao declared the People's Republic of China at Tiananmen Square, Beijing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 1946–47, GMD forces captured 165 towns and 173 000 square kilometres of territory.</li> <li>• The GMD occupied more area than it could manage and losses were heavy, amounting to 230 000 men.</li> <li>• In March 1947, GMD forces took Yan'an.</li> <li>• In Manchuria, 500 000 GMD troops were isolated due to CCP General Lin Biao's mobilisation of one million civilian support workers; GMD forces were contained in urban areas.</li> <li>• Approximately 200 000 GMD troops were killed and 300 000 wounded or captured during the battles of 1948–49.</li> <li>• There was little Nationalist resistance, and GMD troops began to surrender en masse.</li> <li>• On 21 January 1949, Jiang resigned and fled to Taiwan.</li> </ul>

**SOURCE 4.10** Decisive moments of the civil war between the CCP and the GMD

### 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship'

In this famous speech of 30 June 1949, in commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao expressed his ideas about how he perceived a Communist government would function. Mao believed that the CCP and the state would act on behalf of the people, but should possess and may use when needed, dictatorial powers against what he termed 'reactionary forces'. This document made it clear that Mao saw dictatorial means as vital to ensure that the government would not collapse into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or other 'degenerate social form'.

## *Founding the People's Republic of China*

Following the CCP's entry into Beijing and Mao's famous proclamation of the People's Republic of China at the Gate of Heavenly Peace on 1 October 1949, a procession that opened with a military parade indicated the might of the CCP. The military presence reviewed on this occasion consisted of 16 400 troops mostly from the mounted cavalry and infantry with representatives

from the navy and airforce, as well as artillery and armoured vehicles. Following in grand procession – which Mao deemed so significant that it was to be repeated twice a year on 1 May and 1 October – were thousands of cheering civilians who marched through Tiananmen Square and then dispersed into the streets.

Tiananmen Square in 1949 was much smaller than it is today. A T-shaped space only 15 metres wide, it was the site already decided on by the CCP leadership to be the capital's new symbolic and political centre where celebrations of national events would take place. Mao was not only physically present to preside over the ceremony but also represented in pictorial form – a painting of the Chairman of the Party appeared only 10 days after the liberation of Beijing by the Red Army.

## Conclusion

Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 following the Communists' triumphant capture of Jiang Jieshi's old capital, Nanjing, in April of that year. Jiang fled to Guangzhou, briefly returned to Chongqing, and then left the mainland altogether, taking up residence in Taiwan where he remained ruler of a Taiwanese Nationalist government until his death in 1975. In his speech in Beijing on 1 October 1949, Mao proclaimed, 'Our work will be written down in the history of mankind', and the sentiment that liberation had achieved was well expressed in the 1965 film *The East Is Red*, a Chinese song and dance epic about the history of the Communist Party's struggle for power.

“ In the new and revived China of today everyone is happy and all the land is beautiful, but in our happiness we cannot forget the bitter misery that went before and the Long March that led at last to liberation. In that China of the past the earth was gloomy and the sky was dark. Our people carried brutal burdens of misfortune and misery; were weighed down with chains, held back by fetters, crushed under the triple tyranny of foreign exploitation, feudalism and corrupt bureaucracy.

As day follows night there comes, in time, an end to darkness. The gunfire of revolution echoes across the land, and angry shouts of students in Beijing clamouring against the partnership of foreign interests and corrupt government, heralds a new day for the Chinese people. Out of this tumult the Communist Party of China is born.

Song lyrics extract from *The East Is Red*, 1965, motion picture, August First Film Studio, China

## Chapter summary

- + The Japanese surrender allowed the CCP to gain control of further Chinese territory.
- + Soviet forces moved quickly to take Manchuria following the Japanese surrender, creating a military incident and allowing the CCP to dominate northern China.
- + Concerned by the threat of the spread of communism, the United States negotiated peace talks between the CCP and the GMD.
- + The peace talks failed and civil war between the GMD and CCP erupted.
- + US military advisers continued to work with the GMD.
- + Mao Zedong consolidated both his leadership and his ideology in the Yan'an Soviet, putting into place practices that formed the foundation of Maoism.
- + The CCP's Red Army was renamed the People's Liberation Army and used the civil war to consolidate its popularity with the Chinese people.
- + Following the CCP victory, Jiang fled to Taiwan and the People's Republic of China was proclaimed on 1 October 1949.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

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### Film

*As it Happened: Mao – A Life*, SBS, 2006.

*Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor*, BBC, 1993.

*China: A Century of Revolution*, Part 1, 'China in Revolution 1911–1949', PBS, 1989.

*To Live*, motion picture directed by Zhang Yimou, Shanghai Film Studio, 1994.



## *Chapter review activities*

- 1 What role did US troops play in the period immediately after the Japanese surrender?
- 2 Explain why the United States was so keen to use its troops in China to assist with the Japanese surrender.
- 3 Explain how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) used the Japanese surrender to its advantage.
- 4 Why did Mao Zedong and Jiang Jieshi agree to participate in the Chongqing peace talks?
- 5 Explain the role of the United States during the Chinese Civil War.
- 6 How did the Soviet Union's entry into Manchuria heighten tension in China and aid the CCP?
- 7 Why do you think the Red Army was renamed the People's Liberation Army?
- 8 In what ways might the people of China have felt 'liberated' when CCP forces reached them?
- 9 Explain the role played by Soong Meiling in foreign politics in China during this period.
- 10 Why do you think US General George Marshall was chosen to work with Jiang Jieshi? Make a list of his military experience and skills before answering this question.
- 11 What do we learn about CCP strategy from the siege of Changchun?
- 12 Create a research report in which you research and examine the role of an idea, an individual, a movement and/or an event.

Some possible topics to choose from:

- + The role of Yan'an in the creation of the ideology of practice of Maoism
- + The role of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) in shaping public opinion of the CCP and GMD during the civil war
- + The significance of foreign aid during the civil war.

To locate an issue for investigation you need to first choose a general topic for your research and by completing preliminary reading formulate a question to which you will respond. You may work with your teacher in this process.

Possible historical inquiry questions:

- + What part did propaganda play in the success of the CCP?
  - + Why did the United States continue to provide aid to the GMD following the end of the Second World War?
  - + How did the CCP's relationship with and use of the peasantry impact on its success in the civil war?
- 13 Write an essay. When considering why the CCP won the civil war, historian Lucien Bianco believes, 'Almost every major area of Nationalist weakness was an area of Red Army strength'. Discuss. Provide evidence to support your views.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The creation of a Communist state, 1949–1957*

In September 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed, ‘the Chinese people, comprising one quarter of humanity, have now stood up ... Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation.’<sup>1</sup> Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) now faced the enormous task of transforming China into a Communist state. Ravaged by years of war, China was in ruins. Almost immediately the urgent task of feeding China’s vast population was undertaken. CCP work teams spread throughout China organising the peasant masses, holding struggle sessions against the hated landlords and redistributing the land into people’s collectives, supervised by cooperatives and worked by production teams. In 1953, boosted by the initial success of the early reforms and victory against the United States in the Korean War, Mao decided to introduce a five-year plan, which would rapidly modernise China’s industry and agriculture, and enable China to defend itself from the capitalist West. By 1957, all of China’s agricultural land was collectivised and its industrial production was booming. Mao’s vision, embodied in his slogan ‘Greater, Faster, Better and More Economical’, seemed to have been realised. But how successful were Mao’s early policies and at what cost to personal freedom and human rights were they achieved? Mao largely forced conformity on the Chinese people using terror tactics and military control. The Chinese people had indeed ‘stood up’, but it had cost millions of lives and resulted in state control of almost every aspect of Chinese society.

◀ Mao Zedong, photographed in 1957, surrounded by a group of women in a mix of modern and traditional dress.

#### INQUIRY QUESTION

- + How did the CCP consolidate its control of China?
- + What impact did this new society have on the people of China?

## *Building a new society*

“ **li** ... The Chinese revolution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous. This must be made clear now in the Party. The comrades must be helped to remain modest, prudent and free from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. The comrades must be helped to preserve the style of plain living and hard struggle. ”

**li**  
Chinese measure of  
distance, approximately  
500 metres

Mao Zedong, 'Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China' (5 March 1949), *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. IV, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1961, p. 347



### BUILDING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

1949	OCTOBER	Proclamation of the People's Republic of China
1950		Introduction of the Agrarian Reform Laws and Marriage Laws
1951		Start of the Antis Campaigns
1953		Introduction of the First Five-Year Plan and beginning of collectivisation of the peasants
1954		Gao Gang and Rao Shushi purged from the CCP
1956		Start of the Hundred Flowers Campaign
1957		End of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and launch of the Anti-Rightist movement

### PROBLEMS FACING THE COMMUNISTS – 'THIS MEANS DIFFICULTIES'

China in 1949 was shattered by decades of internal conflict and war. Its people and economy were devastated, industrial production was almost non-existent and much of China's gold reserves had been taken to Taiwan by the retreating Nationalist army. The country faced rampant inflation, and telecommunications, bridges and railways had been destroyed. Corruption, social disintegration and banditry were endemic. But despite the millions of casualties, disease, hunger and homeless refugees in post-civil war China, the population was increasing by some 15 million people a year.

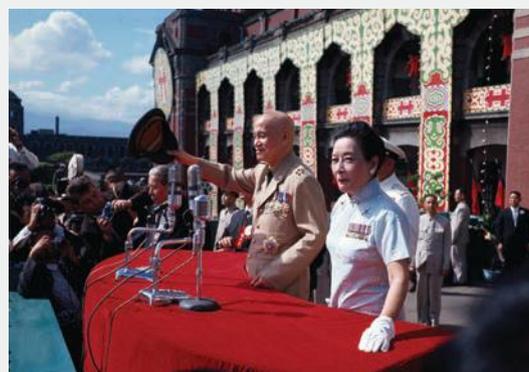
The CCP, whose membership had risen to more than 4.5 million, was therefore faced with feeding a growing population, rebuilding China's economy and infrastructure, and reuniting China and its 500 million people under a single Communist government. Mao foretold in 1949 that the Chinese would need to 'put aside some of the things we know well and be compelled to do things we don't know well. He had said, This means difficulties' – a clear warning of monumental change and struggle if China and the CCP were to overcome the obstacles and successfully establish a Communist state.



SOURCE 5.1 China in 1949

## The Guomintang and Jiang

Following the Communist victory in the civil war in 1949, about two million Guomintang supporters and their leader, Jiang Jieshi, fled mainland China to the large island of Taiwan off China's eastern coast. There the Nationalists continued to function as the Republic of China, as distinct from the People's Republic of China, and claimed to be the legitimate government of mainland China. The Nationalists believed that they would be able to mount an invasion of the mainland from their Taiwanese stronghold and estimated that it would take approximately three years to attain victory. Intermittently the Nationalists supported anti-Communist groups on the mainland, including Muslim Chinese remnants of Nationalist



Getty Images/Manuel Litrani/Paris Match

**SOURCE 5.2** Jiang Jieshi as president of the Republic of China, Taiwan, with his wife, 1969.

*continued*

continued

forces in China's far west during the 1950s and in Tibet. This support did little in the way to advance their campaign to re-establish their authority on the mainland. In the Cold War context, the United States and other Western powers accepted this rather tenuous claim of sovereignty and acknowledged this rather unrealistic self-image. Communist China regarded Taiwan as a rebel province and so claimed authority over the island.

In Taiwan, Jiang and the Guomintang established what was effectively a single-party state, although the constitution embodied democratic principles. The use of martial law to govern the island, first introduced in May 1949, would remain a dominant feature of the government until the 1980s. From the outset, the Guomintang pursued anti-Communist policies in Taiwan, such as conducting a campaign that resulted in the death or execution of 140 000 people believed to be Communist supporters during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Jiang remained ruler of the Republic of China until his death, at 87, in 1975. The Guomintang continues to play a prominent role in Taiwanese politics into the 21st century.

## THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA – 'A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP'

The new government established by the CCP had three distinct but parallel strands: the Communist Party (CCP), the state bureaucracy and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Branches of the CCP existed throughout China at state, provincial, city, district and village level. The party was headed at national level by a Central Committee of 44 members, who in turn were governed by a five-man Politburo that consisted of the most powerful men in China including CCP and PRC Chairman Mao Zedong, Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi and Chinese Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai.

The People's Liberation Army, which was headed by the ageing Zhu De, was controlled by and answerable to the party, not the Chinese government. Thus the CCP was all-powerful and controlled all aspects of Chinese government from national to local level. This would prove essential in the CCP establishing control over China and its people and in implementing its future economic and social plans. In all operations the party set the policy and the government agencies carried it out.<sup>2</sup>

The new Communist government was not without experience, however. For years the CCP had ruled large areas of China, particularly in the north, where it had put into practice its policies and ideology. Mao's basis for political control was his theory of 'New Democracy', which he had written about in 1940.

Mao reflected on his ideas on democracy in 1949 when he wrote 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship' stating:

“ Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people, who enjoy the right of free speech, assembly, association and so on. The right to vote belongs only to the people, not to the reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship. ”

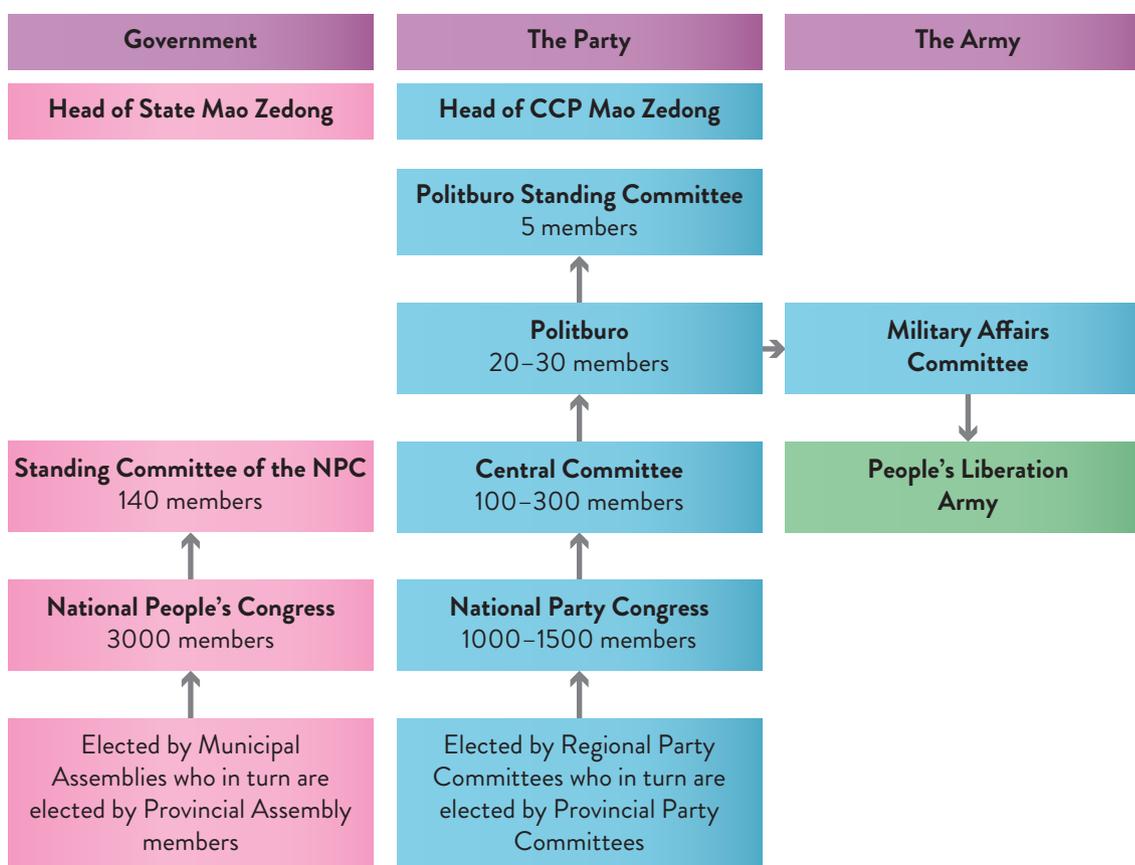
Mao Zedong, 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship' (30 June 1949), *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. IV, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1961, pp. 411–24

The four revolutionary sections of Chinese society would participate in this ‘democratic’ process of Chinese unification: the peasants, the proletariat, patriotic capitalists and the petty bourgeoisie. However, the so-called ‘enemies of the people’, or ‘reactionaries’, would experience dictatorship in the form of re-education, public humiliations and violent purges.

In 1949, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference was convened, initially to act as a provisional assembly to reform China along the lines of Sun Yixian’s Three Principles. The conference was dominated by the CCP but included a handful of representatives from 14 other parties, including peasants and workers’ parties, democrats and left-wing GMD members. The conference featured a ‘Common Program’ that included the new government’s aims and intentions. This was where it was officially stated that China would be a ‘people’s democratic dictatorship’: a democratic coalition under Communist leadership.

In reality, although Mao initially allowed cooperation with other parties, there was no real democracy in China. The CCP dominated all sections of the government and the military. The population could participate in elections, but only at a local or regional level and only for Communist Party-approved candidates who then voted on the party’s behalf at the next level in the electoral structure. Within a few years Mao had banned all other political parties in China.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNIST STATE



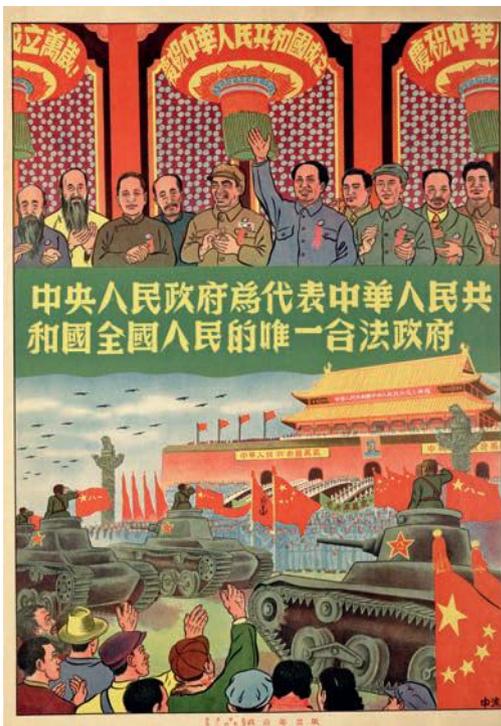
**SOURCE 5.3** The structure of the Communist state. Note that all members of the government are also members of the CCP. The local provincial assembly members are elected by the local county assembly members, who are in turn elected by the local Chinese people. Therefore the Chinese people are only enfranchised in as much as they can vote for CCP members who are running for their local county assembly.

## Establishing the Democratic Dictatorship

### Immanuel Hsu

The coexistence of the four classes endowed the government with a 'democratic' character, while its uncompromising and unyielding attitude toward the counterrevolutionaries gave it the attribute of a 'dictatorship'. A cardinal principle followed by the new government was 'Democratic Centralism', which provided for popularly elected bodies at different levels of government. These assemblies would elect their own representative officials, pending the approval of the higher authorities. The 'election' part of this process was 'democratic', while obedience to higher authorities suggested 'centralism'.

Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 647



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/posters/e11-968.php>

### Questions

- 1 According to historian Immanuel Hsu, how did China's government show characteristics of both democracy and centralism?
- 2 Examine Source 5.4. What features of this poster indicate support for Mao and his government?
- 3 Why does the title of the poster include the words 'the only legitimate government'?

**SOURCE 5.4** The title of this poster is 'The central people's government constitutes the only legitimate government of all the people of the People's Republic of China', 1950. The poster shows the parade on the occasion of the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1 October 1949. Mao stands above, fifth from the right, with members of his first government, including Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi and Gao Gang.

## REUNIFICATION CAMPAIGNS

Mao wanted to reunify China with Tibet and Xinjiang in the west and secure control of Guangdong in the south. The PLA was used to forcibly take control of these regions and make them part of the PRC thus securing China's borders with the Soviet Union and mopping up the last bastions of Nationalist resistance.

In 1950, the Communist government sent an army into Tibet and brutally took control of the region. The annexation of Tibet was justified by the Chinese government on the grounds that Tibet had been part of China since the 13th century. Tibetan forces fought ferociously, but lacking modern weapons and training they were easily defeated by the battle-hardened PLA. In 1951, representatives of the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, signed a 17-point agreement surrendering Tibetan sovereignty over the region to the PRC.

As PLA forces swept west after the conclusion of the civil war in 1949, PLA troops entered the region of Xinjiang. Bordering Soviet-controlled Mongolia, Mao was fearful that this territory would fall under Soviet influence or attempt to declare independence from China. The nationalist military commander in the region surrendered, and Xinjiang became part of the PRC in 1950, having been under warlord control for much of the Nationalist republican era. At the time of the invasion, Xinjiang was mainly populated by the Muslim Uyghurs, a central Asian people, who, like Tibetans, still fight for their human rights and independence from the PRC.

In the south, the province of Guangdong, which had been a Nationalist stronghold and the place of final retreat for many GMD supporters, was invaded by Communist forces in May 1950 as part of the campaign to suppress so-called counter-revolutionaries. There had been rebellions in this region against the new Communist government and Mao was keen to quickly mop up any resistance before it spread. Many counter-revolutionaries were arrested and executed or sent to labour camps. Most of those killed were former GMD officials, businessmen and those who had close dealings with foreign companies.



**SOURCE 5.5** Invading Chinese forces build a bridge across one of Tibet's swift rivers, while an army vehicle and troops are transported across the stream on a rubber raft, 5 December 1950.

## *Social reforms – ‘the more brutal, the more revolutionary’*

Under Mao's leadership, the CCP initiated a revolutionary transformation of traditional Chinese society. As various campaigns unfolded, mobilising the masses, China's people responded with unprecedented enthusiasm and energy. The impact of these social reforms was twofold: first, to liberate and educate the people in order to carry out industrial modernisation and, second, to bring the people together and ‘educate’ them with a common ideology and cause.

### **WOMEN**

Having established order and some degree of unity in China, the CCP set out to improve the welfare and status of women who in the past had in general led a life of subservience and drudgery. Mao and the other leaders of the CCP were quick to recognise that the support of China's female population would be key to the longevity of the revolution and that women could be a major source of manual labour, much needed if China was to successfully modernise under Mao's coming agricultural and industrial plans. Women had already benefited under Communist rule in the areas controlled by Communists during the 1930s and 1940s, and now it was time to broaden these forward-thinking policies China-wide. As Mao stated in 1952, ‘Women hold up half the sky’.

Under Communism, women enjoyed greater power and influence than ever before. In 1949, a national women's rights organisation was established, the All-China Democratic Women's Federation, which quickly gained a membership of around 76 million women. New marriage laws were introduced in April 1950, giving women equal rights under the law. Foot binding, arranged marriages, dowries and bigamy were made illegal and women were given the right to divorce, and equal property rights.



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/gallery/e16-17.php>

**SOURCE 5.6** A Chinese propaganda poster from 1954 promoting the participation and contribution of women to China's industrial development. The text reads, 'We are proud of participating in the founding of our country's industrialisation'.



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 5.7** A female Chinese worker operating a precision machine in a factory in Beijing, 1955

But despite these advances, change, particularly in the rural areas, was slow, as thousands of years of tradition and culture had to be eroded before any tangible gains could be made.

## MASS ORGANISATIONS

Mass organisations such as the All-China Democratic Women's Federation were a key feature of life under CCP rule and proved to be a very effective way of mobilising and controlling huge sections of Chinese society. By 1953, there were 'semi-governmental' bodies with memberships of many millions throughout China. These included the All-China Federation of Democratic Youth, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the All-China Students Federation. In addition to these groups, the Young Pioneers and the Democratic Youth League ensured the participation and indoctrination of some 20 million of China's children and teenagers. Of particular significance is the ease with which these organisations could be used in order to gain mass participation in government-organised demonstrations, parades and campaigns including the Antis Campaigns of the 1950s and Mao's greatest and most ominous display of power and control, the Cultural Revolution, which erupted in 1966 with the mobilisation of China's youth against so-called 'capitalist roaders'.

## HEALTH

Under Mao's government, the general health of the Chinese people was improved. China was rife with disease and a general lack of hygiene resulting in widespread incidences of cholera, tuberculosis and typhoid. The new government quickly set about prevention campaigns, educating the peasants in health and hygiene, and organising local communities to clear up refuse and ensure that there was a ready supply of clean drinking water. Health care was made free under the Communists and

by the 1950s many people, particularly in the cities, had experienced treatment by a doctor for the first time. However, despite the increase in the numbers of doctors trained in Western medicine under the nationalist regime in the 1920s and 1930s, there was a major shortage of doctors in the countryside. This was exacerbated by government attacks on many doctors in the 1950s and 1960s as their high level of education and status in society often made them stand out as members of the 'bureaucratic capitalist class'. Additionally, despite the CCP's seeming concern for the health of its population, promulgated through mass campaigns and propaganda, the government still only committed a tiny 1.5 per cent of total state investment to health care in 1952, preferring to focus its resources on China's economy.

## EDUCATION

Before 1949, the majority of Chinese people received no education whatsoever. Only 20 percent of Chinese children attended a school and usually this was only for a few years, resulting in a very basic level of education. Basic literacy and numeracy were essential if China were to modernise, as large numbers of technicians, engineers and scientists would be needed. Mao also realised the link between literacy and the political indoctrination of the people; if the population could not read then how could they be educated to follow Maoist doctrine? He said:

“ In our country today there are many illiterates and yet the building of socialism cannot wait until illiteracy is eliminated ... In our country today it is not only the many school-age children who have no schools to go to, but also large numbers of young people above that age, to say nothing of adults. ”

Mao Zedong, 'Notes from Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside', *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. V, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1977, p. 271



INTERFOTO/TV-Yesterday

**SOURCE 5.8** 'The Red Sun Warms Generation after Generation' – a propaganda image of Chinese peasant children in a classroom in a people's commune

Under Mao, a national education system was quickly established where all children would attend primary school. New technical schools and universities were also established with a focus on science and engineering, and the Chinese language was standardised and simplified to a new form of Mandarin and the adoption of the Pinyin form of spelling. Despite the urgency and comprehensiveness of the early educational reforms under the Communist government it would take many years before China would have enough well-educated citizens to successfully carry out the transformation of China to a modern socialist society. Even so, by the time of Mao's death in 1976 about 70 per cent of the Chinese population were literate.

## *The Korean War – ‘Resist America, aid Korea’*

The Korean War (1950–53) was a double-edged sword as far as the Communist government was concerned. Despite enormous casualties and massive economic commitment to the war effort, the war against the imperialist Americans and their allies allowed Mao and the CCP to take a hardline approach in China and unite the country behind a successful cause, greatly strengthening the position of the Communist government in China.

### 38th parallel

A popular term referring to latitude 38 degrees north, marking the pre-Korean War boundary between North and South Korea

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In October 1950, US forces crossed over the **38th parallel**, triggering the Chinese government to go to war in aid of their North Korean Communist allies. China would commit three million troops in Korea, suffering nearly one million casualties by the end of the war, including Mao's son, Mao Anying. After the war, Korea remained divided and the United States' experience in the war affirmed its belief in the Communist threat, and led it to bolster its defence of Taiwan, which would now remain unattainable to the PRC. Such was the financial cost of the war to China that it held back economic development by possibly as much as a decade.<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite the physical cost of war in terms of human lives and resources, the Chinese government emerged stronger and the people more indoctrinated and loyal to the Communist cause.

### Korean War propaganda



**SOURCE 5.9** A CCP propaganda poster showing family and neighbours bidding farewell to a volunteer leaving for the Korean front, 1951, entitled 'It's glorious to take part, to oppose America, support Korea, protect the home and the nation'.

continued

continued

## Questions

- 1 What elements of the poster show support for Mao and the war?
- 2 Who do you think was the intended audience?
- 3 According to the poster, what contribution could a young person make by volunteering to join the army?
- 4 What are the strengths and weaknesses of the poster as a source of information about China and the Korean War?

## LAND REFORM – ‘DELIVERING LAND TO THE TILLER’

Nationwide land reform began in 1950 and was intended to not only control and increase agricultural production, but also gain a hold, both socially and politically, over the peasant masses throughout China. Within three years these ambitious aims had more or less been achieved. Under the Agrarian Reform Law of June 1950, party **cadres** visited villages all over China, identified enemies of the people and educated the peasantry on the benefits of land reform. This particularly appealed to the poorest of peasants who had the most to gain. From the most enthusiastic of the village community the cadres chose leaders who would organise future reform and ‘struggle meetings’ in which ‘bad elements’, usually landlords, would be publicly humiliated through ‘speak bitterness meetings’. In these meetings, landlords were required to listen to the grievances of the people and admit their failings, and were often beaten. In this way some were reformed and allowed to continue to live as part of the village community albeit minus their land, which was redistributed. Some were banished and many others, possibly as many as one million landlords and their families, were tortured and killed. This was a process of eradicating the so-called bad elements and the redistribution of the land was known as *fanshen*, which means turning over. Although the peasants were now granted ownership of their land, the new government would move quickly within a few years to propagate and construct a collective agrarian system.

### cadre

A group of individuals, usually highly committed members of a political party or revolutionary movement

## Denouncing a landlord

Journalist Jack Belden describes a struggle meeting, during which a village landlord is denounced and murdered.

One hundred people of Stone Wall Village attended this meeting ... the crowd accused the landlord of many crimes, including betrayal of resistance members to the Japanese, robbing them of grain, forcing them into labor gangs. At last, he (the landlord) was asked if he admitted the accusations.

‘All these things I have done,’ he said, ‘but really it was not myself who did it, but the Japanese.’

He could not have chosen worse words. Over the fields now sounded an angry roar, as of the sea, and the crowd broke into a wild fury. Everybody shouted at once, proclaiming against the landlord’s words ... A shout went up from the crowd as Landlord Wang was led onto the field. Three guards marched him, pale and shaking, to a willow tree where he was bound up ... Ma Chiu-tze stepped before the crowd and called for attention.

‘Now the time has come for our revenge,’ he announced in a trembling voice. ‘In what way shall we take revenge on this sinful landlord? We shall kill him.’

As he said this, he turned and slapped Wang across the face. The crack of palm against cheek rang like a pistol shot on the morning air. A low animal moan broke from the crowd and it leaped into action. The

continued

continued

landlord looked up as he heard the crowd rushing on him ... The man closest to him shouted 'don't let him speak!' and in the same breath swung his hoe, tearing the clothes from the bound man's chest and ripping open the lower portion of his body ...

When the struggle against the landlords of Stone Wall Village ended, an immediate settlement of accounts was begun. According to Communist terminology, this involved the division of the 'fruits of struggle'. A man who could write was located and established in a cave where he wrote down all the things that were to be divided. Among other things, this included furniture, grain, cotton and cloth, but principally land.

Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1970 (1949), pp. 186–7

### Questions

- 1 According to the source, what crimes had landlord Wang committed against the village?
- 2 Why did the peasants of Stone Wall Village turn violent?
- 3 How did the peasants ultimately benefit from the murder of their landlord?
- 4 Jack Belden was not a historian but an American war correspondent who based much of his writing on firsthand accounts. How does this affect the usefulness and reliability of his interpretation?

## THE ANTIS CAMPAIGNS – ‘WE NEED TO HAVE A GOOD CLEAN-UP’

Mao's government began a series of campaigns between 1950 and 1952 with the intention of eradicating potential threats in society to CCP control of China and its people. In October 1950, the 'Resist America and Aid Korea' and the 'Suppression of Counter-revolutionaries' campaigns targeted foreigners living in China and Chinese citizens suspected of spying for foreign powers. Christian churches and missions were also closed and banished from China, as were foreign businesses. This was particularly pertinent as China was at war with the United States over Korea, and mass rallies drew public attention and added to the general frenzy of anti-American sentiment. A climate of paranoia grew over the fear of counter-revolutionary activity, as propaganda and government cadres sought to eradicate China of any potential internal threat, including anyone who had links with the GMD, bandits or criminal gangs. Captured counter-revolutionaries were often publicly executed in order to strike fear into the general population. As historian John Schrecker notes:

“ For those suspected of posing a threat to the system or seriously opposing it, punishment was extremely severe. In the late 1940s and early 1950s many of the former elite in the rural areas were denounced and tried; many were executed. In the cities several campaigns were aimed at ferreting out 'counterrevolutionaries' and also much killing. We do not have figures on the total number of people who died, but Mao himself admitted to at least one million executions, and sober foreign estimates have run as high as five million. ”

John Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Portsmouth, NH, 2004, p. 215

In late 1951, the first of two Antis Campaigns began – the Three-anti Campaign (*Sanfan*), which targeted corruption, waste and bureaucracy. The second, launched in January 1952, was known as the Five-anti Campaign (*Wufan*) and was directed against the middle classes. It targeted tax evasion, theft of government property, industrial sabotage, bribery and fraud. These movements were clearly a highly open and successful attempt by Mao to mop up the last remnants of China's merchant and industrialist class (the bourgeoisie). Persecution took the form of public humiliation and denunciations, and huge fines. Many were sent to labour camps. Others were murdered or chose to take their own lives. The fines and harassment were designed to make it virtually impossible for a private enterprise to operate in Communist China. Many privately owned businesses facing bankruptcy turned to the government, which cleverly offered them high-interest loans that made them permanently dependent on the government. Mao later told his colleagues that nationalisation was like getting a cat to eat chilli: 'Rub the chilli into the cat's arse and when it begins to burn, the cat will lick it off, and be glad of it'.

### The life of peasants after land reform



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/gallery/e16-595.php>

**SOURCE 5.10** A propaganda poster showing the improved conditions of peasants. The text reads 'The life of the peasants is good after Land Reform', 1951.

#### Questions

- 1 What is the message conveyed in Source 5.10 and what techniques does the artist use to make these points?
- 2 According to this source, 'The life of the peasants is good after Land Reform'. To what degree is this statement true? Use evidence from this chapter in your answer.
- 3 How reliable is this poster as a source of information about land reform?

## PEOPLE'S COOPERATIVES

Since 1951, mutual-aid teams had been organised in the countryside consisting of up to 10 of the poorest peasant households in a village community. Mutual aid meant sharing tools, labour and livestock, which greatly assisted these poor peasants who had the least land and resources. Such was the success of this initiative that, in 1952, agricultural cooperatives were formed, each containing 40 to 50 households. This was quickly expanded to 'higher agricultural cooperatives' of 100 to 300 families, which all but ended the ancient agricultural system of strip farming, greatly improving the efficiency of the farms in the regions where cooperatives operated. In the smaller agricultural cooperatives, the individual farms remained under private peasant ownership, and profits were shared between all members of the cooperative based on the amount of land and labour invested in the scheme. The higher cooperatives meant that peasants giving up their ownership of the land for the collective good of the cooperative received a wage for their labour. At first, many peasants resisted giving up their land and resented the government's policy of imposing low fixed prices for peasant produce and high taxation of grain, which assisted in funding China's industrialisation. Resistance to change would prove futile, however, as Mao's government increased pressure on the peasants through the introduction of full-scale collectivisation under the forthcoming Five-Year Plan in 1953.

## *The First Five-Year Plan – 'the transition to socialism'*

By 1953, the CCP had firmly established itself as the undisputed power in China. It had stabilised the economy and had fought the United States and its UN allies to a stalemate in the Korean War. Mao believed that it was time to modernise China and undertake the next stage of the 'transition to socialism'. Mao favoured rapid change and modernisation of both industry and agriculture; however, within the party there was much debate, and even opposition to Mao's ideas from leading party members such as Li Shaoqi, who argued for a slower and more careful approach and a focus on industrial development. Agriculture and industry, Li Shaoqi argued, needed to develop at a similar pace. As urban populations expanded, more food would be needed to feed the industrial force, and more machinery and improved farming methods would be needed in the countryside to enable this. What Li Shaoqi and finance minister Bo Yibo were concerned about was the pace of this change. Europe had taken more than a century to undergo an industrial and agricultural revolution; Mao aimed to achieve this within 10 to 15 years. At this stage, China did not have enough technicians, engineers and scientists, yet Mao believed that mass labour and the sheer will of the people would be enough to reach his goal. Debate broke out over the pace of the changes taking place in China and the long-term social and economic consequences of these changes. Leading party members such as Zhou

Enlai and Liu Shaoqi followed a ‘revisionist’ doctrine. They felt that it was important for China to develop a working class in the cities before true communism could be achieved, and a specialist middle class of well-paid, educated professionals would be needed in order to lead industrialisation.

Despite the importance of food supply and the need to modernise agriculture, Mao chose to prioritise industrial development and in particular rapid industrialisation through a Soviet-style Five-Year Plan, launched in 1953. Investment in heavy industry, such as steel production, petrochemicals and mining would be achieved through nationalisation of the means of production and distribution. The Soviet Union provided aid in the form of loans and thousands of technicians, engineers and scientists would help construct the large industrial plants, railways and bridges needed to back this ambitious scheme. To acquire the necessary capital, the Chinese government nationalised the banking system and forced factory owners, through applying financial pressures and incentives, to sell their companies, which became state owned. Traditional craft industries were combined and made into local cooperatives. By 1956, approximately 67.5 per cent of modern industry was state owned with 32.5 per cent under joint public–private ownership.

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Even allowing for local officials who were prone to exaggerating the figures in order to impress their superiors, the data indicates that the First Five-year Plan was highly successful. Most heavy industry was modernised during this short period and China achieved an annual economic growth rate of 9 per cent between 1953 and 1957.<sup>4</sup> Key industries such as steel and iron production, electricity, coalmining and petrochemicals were modernised and greatly expanded during this period.

The First Five-Year Plan was not as successful in agriculture as it was for industry. However, despite the focus on heavy industry, there were some significant gains made in terms of agricultural output, with an annual growth rate of 4 per cent. These gains were due to more efficient farming methods such as the use of fertilisers and farm machinery, and the pooling of resources and labour under collectivisation. By the end of 1956, 88 per cent of peasant households were members of cooperatives and only 3 per cent still farmed individually.<sup>5</sup> Most significant for Mao and the CCP was the success in gaining a psychological and political hold over rural China and the peasant population.

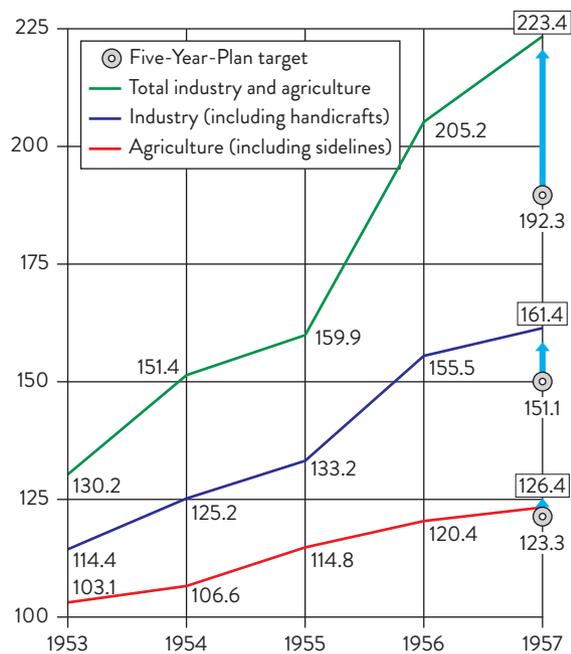
But as China’s population was continuing to grow, and an increasing number of farmers gave up food production to work in the industrial centres (urban population figures had doubled since 1949), some Chinese leaders became concerned that agriculture was not growing fast enough to keep up with demand. Grain production in particular was down. Exacerbating this situation was the fact that China had undertaken its first modern census in 1953, which revealed a total population of 583 million, a much higher figure than thought.

## The First Five-Year Plan

**TABLE 5.1** The First Five-Year Plan gross industrial output in millions of tonnes, 1952–57

Commodity	1952 actual output	1957 target output	1957 actual output
Coal	63.5	113.0	124.0
Pig-iron	1.9	4.7	5.8
Steel	1.3	4.1	5.2
Oil	0.4	2.0	1.4
Cement	2.6	6.0	4.6
Fertiliser	0.2	0.6	0.7

Schools Council, History 13–16 Project, *The Rise of Communist China*, Holmes McDougall, Edinburgh, 1977



**SOURCE 5.11** Agricultural and industrial output. Figures in boxes represent the revised annual plan for 1957.

### Questions

- 1 According to Table 5.1, what were the two most significant increases in output?
- 2 According to Source 5.11, how much more successful was industry compared to agriculture during the First Five-Year Plan?
- 3 Using the data in Table 5.1 and Source 5.11, explain in your own words the effects of Mao's policies on both agriculture and industry in the period 1953–57.

## A happy life



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/gallery/e16-269.php>

**SOURCE 5.12** 'Chairman Mao gives us a happy life', 1954. This poster shows an abundant and happy life as a result of Mao's policies.

### Questions

- 1 What features of the poster in Source 5.12 show that Mao's policies were benefiting Chinese workers by 1954?
- 2 Who was the audience for this poster and what was its purpose?
- 3 How useful is the poster as a source of information about workers' lives in 1954? What are its strengths and limitations?
- 4 In a single paragraph compare and contrast this image with Source 5.10.

## THE GAO GANG AND RAO SHUSHI AFFAIR

In 1954, Mao identified two high-level party officials, Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, for their insufficient efforts to promote industrialisation. Both were purged from the CCP and Gao Gang later committed suicide in prison. Although it is unclear why Mao decided to attack these two high-profile, talented members of the party, it seems that he believed that they were involved in some sort of conspiracy and were becoming too powerful, thus posing a threat. This illustrated Mao's personal control over the party and served as a warning to other party members, no matter how prominent, that they too could suffer a similar fate to Gao and Rao.

Historian Jonathan Spence notes of the Gao Gang affair:

“ Two of the most powerful figures in the entire party had already been purged, for reasons that are still not entirely clear: one, Gao Gang, was accused of attempting to develop his own ‘independent kingdom’ in the heavily industrialized region of Southern Manchuria and of ‘engaging in conspiratorial activities’; the other, Rao Shushi, was charged with ‘shameless deceit’ during the war years in Yanan and in postliberation Shanghai, and with forming an ‘antiparty alliance’ with Gao Gang while the two of them were on the State Planning Committee. Gao committed suicide in 1954 and Rao was removed from his posts and disappeared from view during the same year. ”

Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895–1980*, Penguin Books, New York, 1982, pp. 373–4

## *The Hundred Flowers Campaign*

“ Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend. ”

Mao Zedong

In 1953, the Soviet Union’s leader, Joseph Stalin, died. His death was followed by rebellions in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and criticism of the Soviet Union. Stalin’s successor, Nikita Khrushchev, denounced Stalin in a speech he made in 1956, portraying him as a cruel tyrant, and a period of de-Stalinisation began.

In China, there was also some guarded criticism of the Communist government even from within the party itself. Despite oppression of China’s intelligentsia, they were needed by the government to educate the population and develop industry. Many Chinese intellectuals felt that social and economic change was being held back by stifling government policy and incompetence.



**SOURCE 5.13** Mao making a speech in 1957

This greatly concerned Mao, who decided to show how China was different from the Soviet Union by allowing public opinion to be voiced. This was an opportunity to allow China’s intellectuals to speak out for the first time since taking power in 1949. It is not certain, but it is likely that Mao believed that so much had been achieved in China that the people would praise the Communist government and its work. The success of the Five-Year Plan and the various social reforms, such as the emancipation of women and the increase in public health and literacy, would mean that even the intellectuals

Getty Images/STR/AFP

would find it hard to criticise the government. Mao hoped that this would show China was a more successful example of a Communist-controlled state than the Soviet Union, and that the majority of the Chinese people supported the CCP and its policies. If some people criticised the government, then this would expose them and they could be dealt with, strengthening the position of socialism and removing the last remnants of 'rightist' opposition. Mao also felt that most of the criticism would be directed at the over-officious and corrupt bureaucrats within the party who Mao believed had begun to exploit their privileged positions, developing into a new elite in society. This too would expose them and bring them into line, strengthening the party.

In 1956, Mao gave a speech on the 'correct handling of contradictions among the people'. In his speech, Mao praised the successes and advancements made under the Five-Year Plan, but also implied that it may be time to let the people have their say on China's progress. He said, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom [in the field of culture], and a hundred schools of thought contend [in the field of science]'. This idea of listening to the people and acting on their suggestions fits well with Mao's doctrine of the **mass line**. By 1957, Mao's words had been taken up, despite opposition from fearful party leaders. The call to speak out was in the rhetoric of a rectification campaign that would become widely known as the Hundred Flowers Movement.

**mass line**

Mao's method of leadership that seeks to learn from the masses (the people)

This chance to air grievances was met with hesitancy at first as many intellectuals were suspicious of Mao's motives, but by May 1957 there was enthusiastic and widespread criticism of party policies and even of Mao himself. Mao quickly became disillusioned with the Hundred Flowers Campaign, positing that criticism was only useful if it strengthened socialism and



Australscope©Li Zhenheng/Contact

**SOURCE 5.14** Victims during the Anti-Rightist Movement that followed the Hundred Flowers Campaign, 1956

should not criticise the system itself. The aim of the campaign was to eliminate ‘demons and devils, ghosts and monsters [that] 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.’<sup>6</sup>

## THE ANTI-RIGHTIST MOVEMENT

After only five weeks, the Hundred Flowers Campaign was abandoned and quickly became an exercise in ‘pulling weeds’. It was replaced by the Anti-Rightist Movement where critics were now purged through re-education, forced labour, imprisonment and death. During this period, which lasted for several months, 2.9 million people were accused of rightist behaviour, and between 400 000 and 700 000 people were sent for re-education. A further 300 000 were imprisoned for speaking out and given sentences lasting up to 10 years. The Anti-Rightist Movement would also make itself felt at a national level as it was decided to ensure that no harm had been done to the collective thinking of the people through this short period of ‘blooming’. As expert in Chinese politics Roderick MacFarquhar puts it, ‘The other prong of this anti-rightist campaign was a vigorous programme of political education for all, designed to eradicate doubts and erroneous thoughts that the rightists might have inspired’.<sup>7</sup>

### HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HUNDRED FLOWERS CAMPAIGN

Many historians have debated the reasons for Mao’s introduction of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957. Broadly, the debate centres around the following arguments:

- that Mao set a deliberate trap by calling on people to speak out
- that Mao was genuinely seeking criticism in order to learn from the people
- that the whole thing was a muddled series of mistakes with no clear direction.

#### Interpretation 1

Many historians and writers have questioned Mao’s motivation for the Hundred Flowers Campaign as a deliberate manoeuvre to entrap China’s intellectual class. Jung Chang is a writer who recalls through interviews and firsthand accounts what it was like to live under Mao’s Communist regime. Her writing, such as her biographical work *Wild Swans*, has been highly criticised for being too subjective. Largely based on her own family’s experiences, it has been labelled ‘scar literature’ or ‘literature of the wounded’. Chang unquestionably believes that Mao set a trap in order to trick intellectuals into speaking up. She asserts:

#### Questions

- 1 Explain in your own words the three different interpretations for Mao’s motivation for launching the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Provide at least one quote for each argument.
- 2 Which of these different interpretations do you find most convincing? Explain your choice in an extended paragraph.
- 3 What do you think Mao’s motives were for launching the Hundred Flowers Campaign? Write an extended response. Use evidence to support your argument.

*continued*

continued

... with the trend in the Communist world blowing towards de-Stalinisation, Mao decided it was not wise to be too blatant about launching a purge. To create a justification, he cooked up a devious plan.

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2002, p. 434

Other historical interpretations point to Mao's own words as admission of guilt when he stated, 'let poisonous weeds sprout and grow in profusion', and his negative view of intellectuals is well illustrated when he referred to them as 'demons and devils, ghosts and monsters'. In a private conversation with the Shanghai Communist leader Ke Qing-shi, Mao supposedly said:

Intellectuals are beginning to change their mood from cautious to more open ... One day punishment will come down on their heads ... We want to let them speak out. You must stiffen your scalps and let them attack!

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2002, pp. 434–5

### Interpretation 2

Historian Lee Feigon provides a revisionist interpretation in which he contends that Mao had been seeking genuine criticism and that he had no intention of leading those who spoke out into a trap. What Mao originally intended through calling on a campaign for freer criticism of the cadres and bureaucracy was, according to Feigon, exactly that. Feigon states:

By giving scientists and engineers the freedom to express their ideas, Mao sought to prevent party bureaucrats from interfering with technical decisions. He wanted intellectuals to expose and attack corruption and bureaucracy. He also wanted peasants, students and workers to speak out and even demonstrate to prevent government bureaucrats from running roughshod over their rights.

Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2002, p. 112

### Interpretation 3

Historian Jonathan Spence provides a third interpretation, that Mao simply made a mistake, greatly underestimating the level of criticism that would be unleashed and that the whole campaign lacked direction. Spence argues that it was 'a muddled and inconclusive movement that grew out of conflicts within the Communist Party leadership. At its centre was an argument about the pace and type of development that was best for China'.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, other historians, such as Philip Short, believe that Mao 'underestimated the volume of bitterness of the criticisms, and the Party's ability to withstand them'.<sup>9</sup>

- 4 Research and produce a short presentation on three different 'scar literature' authors. Include quotes from their work.

## Conclusion

China's people had indeed stood up in 1949 only to be knocked down again by the 'high tide of socialism' and Mao's dictatorial and ambitious plans. Having purged China's landed gentry and redistributed the land to the peasants, freedom was taken away again through peasant cooperatives and government bureaucracy. The intellectual class that China needed so badly in order to rebuild and modernise its ageing and largely fragile economy had at worst been eradicated and at best silenced. Even within the CCP itself the party elite could not agree on the correct path for China's future under the new regime, leading to intra-party conflict and Mao's terrorisation of the CCP membership into following his 'correct line' to future economic and social development. Therefore, by the end of 1957, having consolidated command of China and its resources, Mao would now begin the final stage of construction of his Communist utopia. He said, 'I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation, it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever'. An all-out rapid modernisation and industrialisation of China's economy was called for by Mao, or in other words a 'great leap forward'.

## Chapter summary

- + The People's Republic of China was established in 1949.
- + China was heavily dependent on the Soviet Union during this period.
- + China fought a war against Western forces in Korea between 1950 and 1953.
- + Land was redistributed to the peasants who were then encouraged to form cooperatives.
- + The First Five-Year Plan was industrially a great success but less so agriculturally.
- + The Hundred Flowers Campaign allowed freedom of speech but this was quickly reversed by the launch of the Anti-Rightist Movement.
- + By the end of 1957, the Communist government had consolidated its power over China and its people.

### Endnotes

- 1 Opening address at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 21 September 1949.
- 2 J Fairbank et al., *East Asia – Tradition and Transformation*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1975, p. 897.



- 3 Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China, 1949–76*, 2008, p. 32.
- 4 Lynch, p. 35.
- 5 Geoff Stewart (ed.), *China 1900–76*, Heinemann, London, 2006, p. 97.
- 6 Dick Wilson, *The People's Emperor*, Futura Publications, London, 1980, p. 347.
- 7 Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*, Frederick A Praeger, New York, 1960, p. 264.
- 8 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, WW Norton, New York, 1999, p. 514.
- 9 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, Henry Holt, New York, 2000, p. 469.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

- Jung Chang & Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005.
- Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2002.
- Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, Harper Collins, New York, 2008.
- Immanuel CY Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990.
- Alan Lawrence, *China under Communism*, Routledge, London, 2000.
- Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, Henry Holt, New York, 2000.
- Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, WW Norton, New York, 1999.

### Film

- As It Happened*, 'Mao: a life', video recording, SBS, 2006.
- China: A Century of Revolution*, video recording, PBS, 2002.



## Chapter review activities

- 1 What difficulties did Mao and the CCP face in trying to establish a Communist state in China?
- 2 How did Mao and the CCP try to overcome these obstacles?
- 3 What were the effects of Mao's policies on China and its people in the early days of the PRC?
- 4 According to Mao, who would participate in 'the democratic process of Chinese unification'?
- 5 According to Mao, how would the so-called 'enemies of the people' experience democracy?
- 6 Explain in your own words what Mao meant by a 'people's democratic dictatorship'.
- 7 Why was the People's Liberation Army an important element of CCP control of China?
- 8 Using the information in this chapter, evaluate how democratic China was under Mao's Communist government.

- 9 Why were women so important to the Communist government?
- 10 Why did Mao focus so closely on the formation of mass movements in Chinese society?
- 11 What health issues did China face in the early years of the PRC?
- 12 How did the CCP tackle the question of basic literacy?
- 13 Explain in what way the Korean War was a 'double-edged sword' for Mao and the PRC.
- 14 How was land returned to the peasants by the Communist government?
- 15 Explain the term *fanshen*.
- 16 Why did Mao introduce the Antis Campaigns in 1951 and 1952?
- 17 Why did the government introduce agricultural cooperatives in 1952?
- 18 Explain why Mao chose to follow a Soviet model of economic development in 1953.
- 19 How did Mao plan to overcome China's lack of technicians, engineers and scientists?
- 20 Why did debate break out between Mao and the so-called 'revisionists' over China's economic development?
- 21 List as dot points Mao's motives for launching the Hundred Flowers Campaign.
- 22 Explain how the Hundred Flowers Campaign matched well with Mao's idea of the 'mass line'.
- 23 What were the consequences of the Hundred Flowers Campaign?
- 24 Complete the following statements:
  - a Industry was more important to Mao than agriculture because ...
  - b China can be seen as a people's democratic dictatorship in the years after 1949 because ...
  - c China needed the Soviet Union in the early days of the PRC because ...
- 25 Draw a three-column diagram to explain the political, social and economic changes that took place in China between 1949 and 1957. Use this summary to write a single paragraph evaluating the extent to which the revolutionary ideals of the CCP were achieved.
- 26 Produce a multimedia presentation on the Five-Year Plan. Focus your research and presentation on the following areas:
  - a Mao's motives for the Five-Year Plan
  - b agricultural reforms
  - c industrial reforms
  - d successes and failures
  - e your view of the Five-Year Plan and its impact on China and its people.
- 27 Propaganda posters formed an important aspect of communicating the revolutionary ideas of the CCP. Undertake research and find four examples of posters from the period between 1949 and 1957. Annotate each poster with explanations of the symbols used, a summary of their meaning and a brief description of their aim.



- 28 Using a mind map, or similar organiser, summarise the impact of the establishment of the People's Republic of China on the everyday life of peasants, women, intellectuals, business owners and party members. between 1949 and 1957.
- 29 To what extent could China be accurately described as a totalitarian state from 1949 to 1957?
- 30 How successful was the CCP in achieving its goals of liberating and improving the livelihood of the Chinese people between 1949 and 1957?



Getty Images/AFP

CHINA AND REVOLUTION

9780170244145

## CHAPTER SIX

### *China and the Cold War, 1949–1972*

The day after the Chinese Communist Party achieved victory in October 1949, the People's Republic of China was formally recognised by the Soviet Union, with other communist states quickly following suit. Within a year, non-communist countries, including Britain, India and Sweden, had also recognised the new People's Republic. By 1968, the PRC was officially recognised by 51 nations. However, the United States would not recognise the PRC as a legitimate state until 1979. This rivalry between China and the United States during the Cold War drew China into the Korean conflict (1950–53), caused China to pursue a close but uneasy relationship with the Soviet Union, and shaped Chinese international relations policy in the decades to come, particularly in relation to Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist Taiwan.

Since 1949, Chinese foreign policy has emphasised the principles and ideology of the CCP in foreign relations, especially during Mao's leadership of the PRC. But, at times, China has seen fit to pursue a more pragmatic approach and change policies when it is in its own best interest to do so. China has therefore gone through three distinct foreign policy phases during the Mao era: the *yibiandao* (leaning to one side) phase through its alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the *liangge quantou daren* (fighting with two fists) strategy of the 1960s, and the *yitiaoxian* (one united front) phase in the 1970s.

◀ Chinese President Mao Zedong shaking hands with US President Richard Nixon after their meeting on 22 February 1972, during Nixon's official visit to China

#### INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How did the Cold War shape China's international relations policy?

# China and the Cold War, 1949–53

## superpower

A state with a dominant position globally, particularly through the possession of a large military force, nuclear weapons, and economic and diplomatic influence on a worldwide scale.

The defeat of Japan in 1945 altered the balance of power in the Asia–Pacific region. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the war as **superpowers**, bent on defending their spheres of influence. Initially, the United States hoped to build a firm ally in Nationalist China.



## The Cold War

The Cold War was the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies, which developed shortly after the end of the Second World War and lasted until the end of the communist government in Russia and the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. This rivalry, which involved threats, espionage and a build-up of armaments, in particular weapons of mass destruction, was called a ‘cold war’ because no direct armed conflict took place between the superpowers. Instead, wars were fought between so-called ‘client states’, which often drew in neighbouring countries such as China. During the Cold War era, major wars took place in Korea (1950–53), Vietnam (1965–76) and Afghanistan (1979–89).

The United States and its allies were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The Soviet Union (USSR) and its communist Eastern European allies were signatories of the

*continued*

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Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Union was also allied to other countries such as China and Cuba through separate agreements.

One of the most important Cold War events was the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1963. This was the closest that the Soviet Union and the United States came to direct conflict during this period and could easily have led to a nuclear war. The Soviet Union had attempted to install nuclear missiles on the communist island of Cuba, which meant that most major US cities were within range. After an intense stand-off, the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, backed down, promising to remove all Soviet weapons from Cuba.



**SOURCE 6.1** China and the Cold War

In October 1949, when the CCP emerged as the victor of the Chinese Civil War and Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China, most of the world was already involved in a Cold War between the Western world, led by the United States and its NATO allies on one side, and the communist world, led by the Soviet Union and its communist allies in Eastern Europe on the other. The fall of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government was a great shock to the Western powers, particularly the United States, which considered the fall of China to communism as a tragedy and blamed this disaster on Moscow and its supposed ambitions for world domination. For China this would result in the United States applying its **containment** policy, formulated in 1947, to Asia as well as to Europe. The United States refused to

#### containment

US Cold War policy of restricting the spread of communism in Europe and Asia

### United Nations (UN)

An international organisation established in 1945. The UN describes itself as a 'global association of governments facilitating cooperation in international law, security, economic development and social equity'

recognise the new communist government in Beijing, instead supporting Jiang Jieshi's Guomindang government in Taiwan as the legitimate Chinese government. Furthermore, the US government now threw its substantial resources and military might behind a massive rebuilding program in Japan, which it was hoped would provide the United States with a strong capitalist ally in the region. Additionally, the US opposed China's admission to the **United Nations** and made it clear that it would be prepared to go to war with China in order to prevent Asian countries falling to communist rule. This led Mao to 'lean to one side' when China signed an alliance with the Soviet Union in February 1950.

## THE SINO-SOVIET TREATY – 'LEANING TO ONE SIDE', 1949–53

Ideologically, China and the Soviet Union did not see eye to eye from the start. Mao's brand of socialism, which had allowed him to seize power in 1949, relied on the support of the Chinese peasantry rather than the working proletariat. This was contrary to Marxist–Leninist doctrine and had led to an ideological rift between the CCP leadership and the Comintern in the 1930s. Mao and the party cadre had never forgotten the support given by Russia to Jiang's GMD during the early years of the republic, and distrusted Stalin's motives after Russian forces removed some \$900 million of engineering equipment and resources from Manchuria following the Japanese surrender in 1945. Stalin, in turn, accused Mao of being a 'radish communist': red on the surface and white inside.

The feeling of animosity between the two communist leaders was mutual. According to China's foreign minister, Zhou Enlai, Mao would have preferred closer relations with the United States, but its assistance of the Nationalists during the civil war and its largely paranoid reaction to China becoming a communist state persuaded Mao to pursue, and eventually secure, the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union in 1950. This **Sino-Soviet Treaty** meant that Russia would give short-term loans to China of \$300 million, provide technical advisers and modern industrial equipment, all of which had to be paid for by the PRC with interest, largely covered by agricultural exports to

### Sino-Soviet Treaty

In February 1950, the USSR and the PRC signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. Part of the agreement was a deal whereby the USSR would provide the PRC with resources that China would pay for with interest over time



Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

**SOURCE 6.2** On 15 February 1950, a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance was signed after difficult negotiations in Moscow between Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin. The CCP began using postage stamps as propaganda as early as 1927. Postage stamps are a particularly powerful form of propaganda as they are universally used and spread a political message both on a national and international level.



Getty Images/ChinaFotoPress

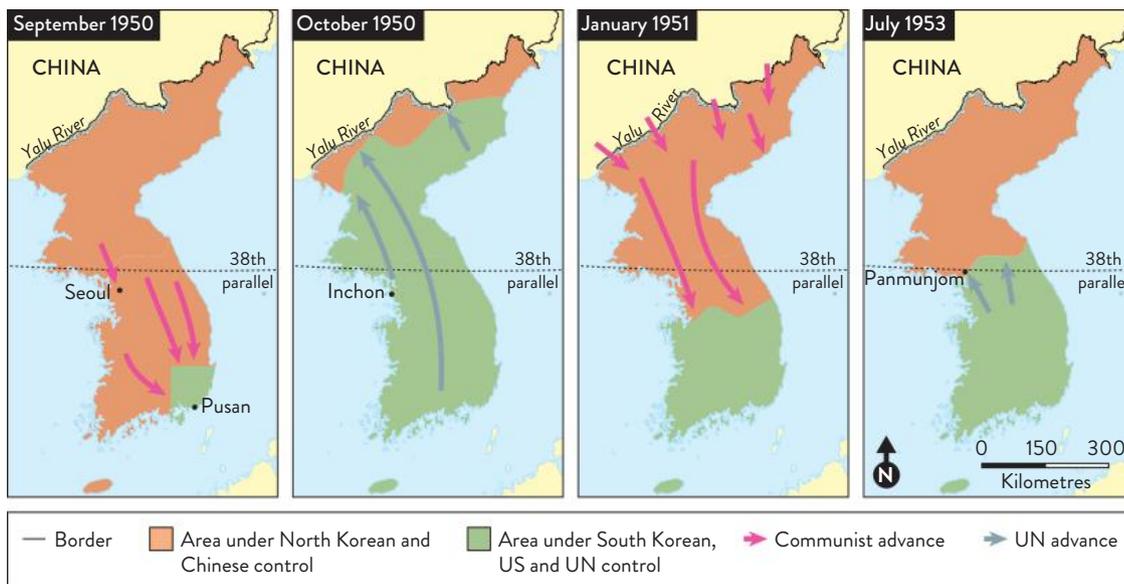
**SOURCE 6.3** Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin meet in December 1949 in Beijing, China.

Russia. Mao therefore decided to ‘lean to one side’, as he said in his ‘On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship’ speech in 1949: ‘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 road’.

For China, its alliance with the Soviet Union was essential in the early days of the People’s Republic. It needed Soviet aid and protection from the West.

## THE KOREAN WAR, 1950–53

North Korean forces invaded South Korea in 1950 and, backed by Chinese forces, almost succeeded in overrunning the entire Korean peninsula but for UN and US intervention. The Korean War ended in a stalemate. Hostilities ceased in 1953 and Korea was divided into North and South along the 38th parallel.



**SOURCE 6.4** The Korean War, 1950–53

After the expulsion of the defeated Japanese Army from Korea in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to a dividing line between their respective occupying forces, drawn up along the 38th parallel. Near the end of the war, the US had agreed to this in order to gain Soviet support in the fight against Japan and bring a swift end to the war. The US set up a pro-American government in the south and the Soviets supported a Soviet-style government in the north led by Korean communist leader Kim Il-sung.

Kim was determined that Korea should not remain divided. On 25 June 1950, having gained both Chinese and Soviet approval, North Korean communist forces, armed with Soviet weaponry and supplies, launched an invasion of South Korea in an attempt to unify Korea under a communist government. Sweeping south, North Korean forces quickly gained control of most of the Korean peninsula, pushing back South Korean and US forces into a small south-eastern enclave. US President Harry Truman decided that Korea should not

fall to communism as China had done. In the absence of the Soviet representatives, who were boycotting UN Security Council meetings to protest the UN's refusal to recognise the communist government of Mao Zedong, the United States hurriedly obtained a UN Security Council resolution condemning the invasion. Acting under the authority of the UN resolution, President Truman ordered General Douglas MacArthur and the US Pacific forces to respond. A multinational force, including British and Australian troops under MacArthur's command, launched a counterattack in September 1950, pushing the North Korean army back over the 38th parallel. By November, the UN forces had advanced to positions close to the Chinese border. At this point, fearing that Korea would be used as a launching point for a full-scale invasion of China by capitalist forces, the Chinese decided to act. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), under the command of General Peng Dehuai, took the Americans by complete surprise, using its overwhelming numbers, despite massive Chinese casualties, to push back UN forces over the 38th parallel where a stalemate developed. Two years of fighting ensued before the opposing forces agreed to a ceasefire and established a demilitarised zone, which broadly followed the line of the pre-war border.



### Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964)

General Douglas MacArthur was a popular and outspoken Second World War US general who was known for his public statements that often contradicted the US administration's policies. President Truman fired MacArthur in April 1951 after the general had publicly complained about Truman's unwillingness to go beyond the UN resolution and destroy the North Koreans and attack the Chinese even to the extent of using nuclear weapons in the conflict.



Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

### Kim Il-sung (1912–1994)

Kim Il-sung was the communist leader of North Korea, from its establishment in 1948 until his death in 1994. He was born into a Korean peasant family and was educated in Manchuria where he was arrested at age 15 for being a member of the Manchurian Communist Party. Throughout the 1930s, Kim led a guerrilla campaign against Japanese forces occupying Korea but was forced into exile to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, where he was educated as a communist revolutionary leader. After it was agreed in 1945 that Korea would be divided along the 38th parallel, Kim became the head of the Provisional Government in the North. After the Korean War, in which North Korean and Chinese forces tried to unite Korea under a communist government, Kim established a dictatorship, and a cult of personality developed around him until his death in July 1994. In an almost medieval dynastic arrangement, he was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-il, who was in turn succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-un, in 2011.



Getty Images/Mondadori Portfolio

For China, the Korean War had mixed results. China had fought a superpower and its capitalist allies to a standstill, and a communist buffer state, North Korea, had been firmly established on China's border. Mao and the CCP had also used the Korean War as the excuse for a tightening of internal control in China and the purging of 'counter-revolutionaries and rightists'. However, China had suffered 400 000 to 800 000 casualties in the conflict and had also been bled of valuable resources at a time when it was trying to rebuild and stabilise the economy after decades of warfare. Further, the war had exacerbated tensions with the United States who would now pursue an almost paranoid policy of 'containment' in Asia, which would lead to further conflict in Vietnam between 1965 and 1973, and end China's chances of recovering Taiwan from Nationalist control. The war also allowed Japan, which was used as a US-UN base during the conflict, to repair its badly damaged relations with its former Western enemies and to rebuild its economy, making it China's main rival in the Asian region.



**SOURCE 6.5** This cartoon, entitled 'The keeper of the light of Asia', shows a Chinese communist soldier standing on the globe (depicted as a huge bomb) holding a lit candle (labelled 'Total war risk') to the end of a fuse while a small fire blazes in Korea.

## China into Korea

Andrew Scobell is a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, a non-profit global policy think tank that offers research and analysis to the US armed forces and the government. Scobell describes the reasons for China's involvement in the Korean conflict:

The fact that China did not 'sit idly by' ... implies that the country's strategic culture had a considerable impact on the decision. Indeed, the Cult of Defence appears to have fostered the belief among China's leaders that US forces advancing northward on the Korean Peninsula gravely threatened the PRC's national security. Use of [Mao's] metaphor of 'lips and teeth' to describe the intimate relationship between Korea and China underscores the degree of alarm felt by Beijing. Civil and military leaders felt particularly vulnerable from this direction because, as Peng [Dehuai, commander of the PLA forces sent to fight in Korea] noted, Korea had been the stepping stone to China for the Japanese only decades before ... In addition, the cause was just; not only was it in defence of the motherland but also to rescue a fledgling socialist neighbour from an aggressive imperialist foe.

Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 92-3

*continued*

continued



Alamy/ImageBROKER

**SOURCE 6.6** Detail of a mural at the Friendship Tower in Pyongyang, North Korea, depicting American soldiers being defeated by North Korean and Chinese forces in the Korean War. The Friendship Tower was completed in 1959 as a symbol of the friendship between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and as a memorial to the dead and wounded.

### Questions

- 1 What historical interpretation does Source 6.6 give of the Korean War?
- 2 How does the mural convey this view?
- 3 With reference to the mural's origin and purpose, discuss the limitations and value of this source as evidence for a historian studying the Korean War.

## THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT, 1953–69

The Sino-Soviet split was the breakdown in relations between the Soviet Union and China. Relations between the two countries became strained after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Although Mao and Stalin were suspicious of each other, they did agree that it was mutually beneficial to become allies and share resources. The agreement made in 1950 was heavily in favour of the Soviets, but China still benefited from loans and Soviet technology. However, when Stalin convinced Mao to go to war over Korea in 1950, it was clear that the USSR was not prepared to back China militarily or provide it with weapons and supplies free of charge. All of it had to be repaid with interest. The Korean War was costly to China, but the CCP emerged from the war stronger and with less regard for Stalin and the Soviet Union. Indeed, China could now claim to be the leader of the world communist movement, something which the Russians found very difficult to accept.

## MAO AND THE KOREAN WAR

An American historian's perspective on the impact of the war on China and on its leader, Mao Zedong:

During the Korean War even the Soviets began to realize that China's revolution might be the real thing. But if the Chinese gained respect in Moscow's eyes, the appreciation was not reciprocated. Mao knew that China paid the price of thwarting American expansion with the currency of blood and tears. The cost was high, undoubtedly setting back the

### Questions

- 1 According to the text extract, why was Soviet appreciation of China not reciprocated by Mao?
- 2 Using the extract, list three reasons why China might think negatively about its alliance with the Soviet Union in 1953.

continued

continued

party's economic reconstruction, and it touched Mao personally because he lost his son in an American air raid. China did the actual fighting and absorbed the battlefield casualties while Stalin chose the easier path of talking, undertaking the verbal defence of North Korea at the United Nations. Moreover, Mao was beginning to recognize a stingy pattern to Soviet friendship: the Chinese paid full market price for Soviet weapons and ammunition supplied to the PLA during the Korean War and even were obliged to underwrite the living and travel expenses of journalists sent from Moscow to cover the conflict.

June Grasso, Jay Corrin & Michael Kort, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, ME Sharpe, New York, 2009, p. 141

- 3 Using the extract and your broader knowledge, explain in no more than 250 words how the Korean War affected China's relationship with the Soviet Union.

When Nikita Khrushchev took over as First Secretary of the Russian Communist Party in 1956, he criticised Stalin and his rule in a secret speech to the Communist Party, resulting in a period of **de-Stalinisation** throughout the Soviet Union, during which statues of Stalin were taken down and streets named after the dictator were renamed. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin took Mao by surprise and offended Mao as he felt he should have been consulted over this major shift in policy, particularly as CCP propaganda had portrayed Mao and Stalin as such close allies. Mao disagreed with Khrushchev's assessment of Stalin, concluding that Stalin's achievements outweighed his mistakes seven to three.

Furthermore, Russia refused to be drawn into arguments with the United States over independent Taiwan in 1958 when China bombarded the Nationalist-occupied islands in the Taiwan Strait. Then, when Khrushchev visited the US in 1959 seeking to follow the USSR's own policy of **peaceful coexistence**, it seemed to Mao that this was a betrayal of communist ideals and a blatant appeasement of capitalist hegemony. China's alliance with the Soviet Union seemed to lack any real meaning, prompting Mao to refer to his allies as **paper tigers**.

In May 1958, Mao boasted that China could survive a nuclear war:

“ If war breaks out, it is unavoidable that people will die. We have seen wars kill people. Many times in China's past half the population has been wiped out ... We have at present no experience with atomic war. We do not know how many must die. It is better if one-half are left, the second best is one-third ... After several five-year plans [China] will then develop and rise up. In place of the totally destroyed capitalism we will obtain perpetual peace. This will not be a bad thing.

Mao Zedong, Second Speech to Second Session, Eighth Party Congress, 17 May 1958

This kind of bombastic rhetoric from Mao was familiar to Khrushchev who had initially offered China assistance in 1957 to develop its own nuclear weapons. However, Khrushchev was gravely concerned by Mao's apparently unconcerned attitude towards the possible use of nuclear arms.

#### de-Stalinisation

The process of removing the cult of personality and influence of Soviet Union premier Joseph Stalin after his death in 1953

#### peaceful coexistence

Khrushchev's policy which aimed to avoid war with the West. Khrushchev stated that there were two alternatives for relations between the US and the USSR—peaceful coexistence or war. Through peaceful coexistence, the Soviets and Americans would still be political opponents but each would convince the other of its superior ways through peaceful means, not military power.

#### paper tiger

Translation of the Chinese word *zhilao hu*, referring to something that seems threatening like a tiger, but in reality is harmless



Alamy/RIA Novosti

**SOURCE 6.7** Mao Zedong and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in August 1958

The Russian view of Sino-Soviet relations was becoming similarly negative. Accordingly, Khrushchev boldly took action in 1960 by withdrawing all economic aid and Russian technicians from China. Sino-Soviet relations worsened still in 1962 when Russia refused to assist China in its border dispute with India. Then, in July 1964, the same year that China successfully tested its own nuclear weapon, China ended formal diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union.



### Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971)

Khrushchev led the Soviet Union during part of the Cold War era. He served as First Secretary of the Russian Communist Party from 1953 to 1964, and was Soviet premier from 1958 to 1964. Much to Mao's surprise and disgust, Khrushchev openly criticised Stalin and the harshness of his regime in 1956, resulting in Russian de-Stalinisation and the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations, eventually leading to open hostility between the two powers by 1969.



Getty Images/Keystone-France  
/Gamma-Keystone

## *China and the United States – 'fighting with two fists', 1953–69*

The People's Republic of China decided to pursue a 'fighting with two fists' strategy in the 1960s, continuing its fight against the imperialist United States, yet now simultaneously rejecting the 'revisionist' Soviet Union, which China considered a threat to its sovereignty and a collaborator of the United States.

“ The Soviet party is opportunist and revisionist; it lacks any deep knowledge of Marxism; its ideas about disarmament are absurd; peaceful coexistence could mean nothing, except as a tactical weapon to deceive the enemy; the Soviet idea of a division of labour among the countries of the socialist camp is wrong; and China must go her own way. ”

Speech by Deng Xiaoping at the Moscow Conference of Eighty-one Communist Parties, November 1960

### INDOCHINA

While China was fighting in Korea, it was also supporting communist-led Vietminh (Vietnamese Independence League) forces in Indochina against the colonialist French, who were defeated at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.

At the Geneva Conference in July of the same year, Vietnam was partitioned along the 17th parallel. The Vietnamese communists controlled the north, backed by the Soviet Union and China, and a non-communist government took power in the south, supported by the United States. Thus both China and the United States were heavily committed to Vietnam, even before a major conflict would erupt in 1965. For China, the defence of Vietnam, a former long-term enemy, was not only about supporting international communism but also to provide a communist buffer state on its border, much as it had done in Korea in 1953.

After the French defeat in Indochina, the United States, afraid that other Asian countries would fall to communism like a pack of dominoes, proposed a regional security pact in order to prevent the spread of communism in South-East Asia. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was signed by the US, Australia, New Zealand, France, Britain, the Philippines, Pakistan and Thailand in September 1954. China saw this pact as an aggressive act of encirclement and a reaffirmation of the Western powers' determination to continue their influence over the Asian region after decolonisation.

## CHINA AND THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In the early years of the People's Republic, China echoed the Soviet view that the world was divided into two camps, socialist and imperialist, with 'no third road' possible. By 1953, China revised this view, believing that developing countries, many of which had won or were in the process of winning their independence from colonial rule, could play an important role in world affairs. In 1954, Zhou Enlai and India's prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, agreed on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the underlying basis for conducting foreign relations. At the Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations, held in Indonesia in April 1955, China, represented by Zhou Enlai, took a lead role in calming some countries' fears of China and its intentions, reassuring the delegates that China was a fellow developing Asian nation and an ally in the fight against imperialism. This won over many of the delegates at the conference, especially in light of the signing of SEATO in 1954 and its imperialist undertones. After much negotiation and deliberation, consensus was reached in which 'colonialism in all its manifestations' was condemned (including the Soviet Union's actions in Eastern Europe). A 10-point 'declaration on the promotion of world peace and cooperation', incorporating the principles of the United Nations charter and the Five Principles, was adopted unanimously.

China provided weight and legitimacy to the conference, and Zhou emphasised African-Asian unity rather than trying to promote communism as an ideology. In this way China gained enormous kudos from the conference even though in the coming decade it and other Asian nations would fall into conflict with one another (China and India engaged in a border war in 1962). Bandung helped China to enter the international stage via its Asian connections and to foster allies and diplomatic friendships that would later assist the PRC in deciding to break with



**SOURCE 6.8** Zhou Enlai and Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru celebrating the new year during a visit by Zhou to India in 1957.

Corbis/Bettmann

the Soviet Union. Bandung also sent a clear message to the Western world that China would support and even defend Asian nations in their fight for independence from colonialism.

China would continue to build diplomatic ties with developing countries throughout the 1960s, particularly in Africa. Although it could not compete with the massive economic aid given to such countries by the United States and the Soviet Union, China promoted itself as an alternative to the exploitative capitalist West and the Soviet Union, which despite its communist ideology behaved increasingly as an imperialist state.

## TAIWAN

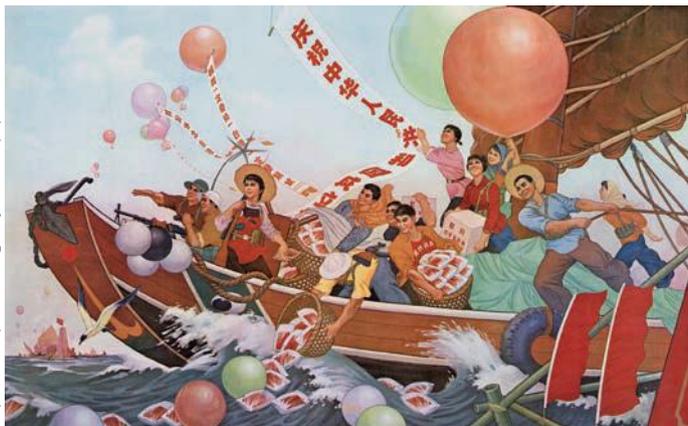
Since 1949, the United States had been obstinate in its support of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government in Taiwan. When Jiang and more than two million nationalist refugees evacuated from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan in 1949, Jiang swore to reclaim the mainland. When Chinese forces attacked Korea in 1950, the United States sent its Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait to safeguard any possible attack on Taiwan by the PRC. The US backed up its support of Jiang's government in Taiwan by blocking any Chinese ambitions for a seat in the United Nations and imposed a trade embargo on China. In 1951, the US provided economic and military aid to Taiwan to the tune of \$1.5 billion by the mid 1960s.

On 3 September 1954, Chinese artillery bombarded Nationalist troops stationed on islands off Taiwan, prompting the US to sign a Mutual Defence Treaty with Taiwan in December 1954 and thus committing itself to the defence of Taiwan's territorial integrity. China reacted by ending the bombardment of the islands but publicly announced its intention to reclaim Taiwan as part of the PRC.

In 1958, China launched yet another provocative artillery offensive against Nationalist-held islands. Mao hoped to sabotage any chance of a softening of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, who had proposed discussions of a nuclear test ban treaty. He also wanted to gauge Russia's resolve as an ally. As Mao suspected, Khrushchev refused to become involved in China's conflict over Taiwan. This was a key factor in the future Sino-Soviet split.

Without Soviet support, China was forced to step down its bombardment and, despite aggressive rhetoric on both sides, a full-scale attack on Taiwan by communist forces never took

place. By the end of the 1960s, Taiwan had a thriving economy with growth of about 10 per cent per year, and the US, embroiled in a major conflict in Vietnam, was able to reduce its economic aid to Jiang's Nationalist government.



**SOURCE 6.9** A Chinese propaganda poster entitled 'The loving care of the mother country', 1976. In this poster, copies of the *Little Red Book*, in waterproof packaging, are thrown into the sea. They are intended to wash ashore in Taiwan and inspire the population.

## THE VIETNAM WAR

Both China and the Soviet Union were heavily involved in supporting communist forces in the Vietnam War between 1964 and 1975. Initially, the Chinese were unconvinced about the success of a communist revolution in the south of Vietnam, and their view was that the communist north should consolidate and wait. On the

other hand, China did nothing to stop the Vietnamese communists in their quest to unify Vietnam under a communist government. As a signatory to the Geneva agreement of 1954, China was aware that a conflict in Vietnam might well overextend the United States' commitment in Asia, improving China's position in regard to Taiwan. In other words, a heavily committed US would mean little chance of attack on the People's Republic. Also, if the Vietnamese communists were successful in defeating the south and unifying Vietnam, then this would provide China with a useful communist ally on its border. Therefore, in 1963, at Hanoi's request, and concerned that the US would likely use both land and air forces to protect South Vietnam, China offered substantial military aid to North Vietnam.

In May 1963, then Chinese president Liu Shaoqi visited Hanoi and guaranteed North Vietnam's prime minister and president, Ho Chi-Minh, that China could be counted on as Vietnam's 'strategic rear' should the war expand to involve the United States. This was later backed by Mao himself when he told a Vietnamese delegation to Beijing in 1964 that China would offer 'unconditional support' to the Vietnamese communists. Mao had domestic as well as international reasons for providing this support. From 1963 onwards, a 'socialist education movement' was sweeping across China, which would lead to the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. Mao realised that exposing China to external threats and presenting it as the defender of international communism would assist in strengthening his position and authority within China. It was also important that China was not upstaged by the Soviet Union, which was also committed to assisting North Vietnam in its struggle.

In 1964, the international conflict over Vietnam flared up after a controversial US–North Vietnamese clash known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. Two American ships were allegedly fired on by North Vietnamese forces and US president Lyndon Johnson officially declared war on North Vietnam. This is now widely thought to have been a US excuse for escalating the war.

In 1965, US military bases in South Vietnam continued to be attacked by irregular Viet Cong (Vietnamese communist) forces. The US began bombing raids on North Vietnam, prompting the North Vietnamese to send large numbers of troops across the border to support the Viet Cong guerrilla forces operating in the south. The United States counter-attacked in March 1965 with the first US combat troops to be used in Vietnam, and by 1969 there were 544 000 American troops in Vietnam. China never sent troops to Vietnam, but supported the communist government in Hanoi with supplies and military training, as did the Soviet Union.

“ So the more troops they send to Vietnam, the happier we will be, for we feel that we will have them in our power, we can have their blood ... They will be close to China ... in our grasp. They ... will be our hostages. ”

Zhou Enlai, First Premier of the PRC, speaking to the Egyptian President Nasser in 1965, cited in Jung Chang & Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 2005, p. 482



**SOURCE 6.10** Men and officers of the PLA at a protest rally in Beijing in February 1965 condemning US imperialist aggression against the Vietnamese Democratic Republic



**SOURCE 6.11** The Ho Chi Minh trail was used to transport troops, weapons and supplies, much of which came from China, to Viet Cong forces in the south. The 1000-kilometre trail was a network of many roads and paths that traversed mountains and jungles, primarily in the neighbouring countries of Laos and Cambodia.

threatening to capture Saigon, the South Vietnamese government surrendered unconditionally to the communists and the war was over.

China's support of North Vietnam was essential throughout the war. Without the military equipment and ammunition supplied by the Chinese and the Russians, it is unlikely that the Vietnamese communists would have been able to launch a successful attack on the south or survive the massive American aerial bombardments.

On 2 July 1976, Vietnam was formally reunited under a communist government as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with Hanoi as its capital and the former southern capital, Saigon, renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

After the surprise Tet Offensive in 1969, when US and South Vietnamese forces were besieged by Viet Cong forces, it appeared to many people in the United States that the war was unwinnable. Mass peace demonstrations and the huge cost of the war, in terms of both human life and money, resulted in the Democrat US President Johnson declining to stand for another term as president, leading to the election of Republican Richard Nixon.

Nixon immediately sought to end US involvement in the conflict and hand over responsibility for the war to the South Vietnamese, known as the 'Vietnamisation' of the war. To this end, the US gradually reduced the number of troops in Vietnam until by 1973 the US had withdrawn from the war altogether and a ceasefire was negotiated.

Despite the ceasefire agreement, fire fights frequently broke out between North and South Vietnamese forces throughout 1973–74. In early 1975, North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces launched a massive attack, which quickly rolled back the South Vietnamese army who lacked the discipline and morale to continue the fight. On 30 April 1975, with NVA and Viet Cong forces

## 'One United Front', 1969–72

When Richard Nixon became US president in 1969, he was determined to improve relations with Communist China, actively pursuing a policy of **détente**. In the year he became president, Nixon lifted a 19-year trade embargo imposed on China and made it easier for Americans to travel to China. The United States also dropped its formal opposition to China becoming a member of the United Nations. By 1971, relations between the two powers had improved sufficiently to allow an American table tennis team to make an official visit to China, the first sports team to do so since 1949. Then, in July 1971, US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger held talks with his Chinese counterpart, Zhou Enlai, in Beijing, in order to improve US–China relations. The US was willing to negotiate China's admission to the UN but wanted to also retain Taiwan's membership. In October 1971, however, the UN voted to expel Taiwan in favour of China formally ending Taiwan's claim as the legitimate Chinese government.

During Kissinger's visit to China in July 1971, Zhou Enlai invited President Nixon to visit China, which he did in February 1972. This was the first time a US president had set foot on Chinese soil and was a significant step to China and the US agreeing on a policy of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, lifting what has often been referred to as the **Bamboo Curtain**. To this end Nixon promised to gradually withdraw US forces from Taiwan and the US and China established diplomatic offices in one another's capital cities in 1973. But Nixon's motives ran deeper than simple pacification of China. Nixon had two clear goals in mind. First, he wanted to align the US with China in order to undermine the Soviet Union, which he and Kissinger felt was the greater threat 'of two antagonistic powers'; pursuing a so-called 'wedge strategy' to encourage a split between the two communist allies. Second, Nixon wanted to turn China against North Vietnam, forcing them to conclude an end to the costly Vietnam War. Both of Nixon's aims were successfully achieved. The reward for China was entry into the world economy, which gave China access to foreign loans, investment and natural resources.

### détente

The easing or relaxation of political tension between nation states through agreement, negotiation and diplomacy. There was a period of détente between China and the US when China was given a place in the UN in 1971 and US president Richard Nixon visited China in 1972

### Bamboo Curtain

A metaphorical term for China's attitude towards the outside world and in particular non-communist countries; similar to the term 'Iron Curtain' used by Winston Churchill to describe the divide in Europe between communist and non-communist countries



Corbis/JP Laffont/Sygma

**SOURCE 6.12** The first sitting at the United Nations of the People's Republic of China delegation. In 1971, the UN General Assembly admitted the PRC as a permanent UN member of the Security Council, expelling Nationalist Taiwan.



Getty Images/Ollie Atkins/White House /The LIFE Images Collection

**SOURCE 6.13** Détente in action, Shanghai, February 1972: President Richard Nixon dines with Premier Zhou Enlai (left) and Shanghai party leader Zhang Chunqiao at the end of Nixon's historic visit to China.



**SOURCE 6.14** Comparisons between China, the Soviet Union and the United States, c. 1980



**SOURCE 6.15** Sino-Soviet-US relations, 1949–76

# Conclusion

The Cold War shaped China's international relations in 1949–72. This global conflict obliged China, vulnerable and weak as a fledgling communist state in 1949, to at first seek friendship and an alliance with the Soviet Union. When this alliance proved one-sided and it was clear that the Soviet Union hoped to exploit China, both economically and politically, China began to move away from its close ties with the Soviets. The People's Republic of China therefore pursued a 'fighting with two fists' strategy in the 1960s; continuing its fight against the imperialist United States, primarily in Vietnam and over Taiwan, yet now simultaneously rejecting the 'revisionist' Soviet Union, which it considered as a threat to Chinese sovereignty and a collaborator of the imperialist West. When Richard Nixon was elected US president in 1969 and he sought to pull out of the Vietnam conflict, China and the United States began an era of détente that culminated in China being given Taiwan's seat in the United Nations and receiving a visit from Nixon in 1972. This heralded a period in Chinese history that opened the door to resuming normal international relations, developing a world-leading economy and becoming part of the 'Asian Century'.

## Chapter summary

- + In its early years, the People's Republic of China leant on the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance.
- + Between 1951 and 1953, China fought a war in Korea against US and UN forces.
- + After the death of Stalin in 1953, China and the Soviet Union gradually became more hostile towards one another, leading to the Sino-Soviet split.
- + China wanted to be seen as the defender of international communism, so it supported the North Vietnamese communists in the Vietnam War.
- + China and the United States pursued a policy of détente in the late 1960s and 1970s, resulting in China gaining a permanent seat in the United Nations.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2001.  
 John L Gaddis, *The Cold War*, Penguin Books, New York, 2007.  
 Robert J McMahon, *Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.



## Chapter review activities

- 1 Invent your own terms for the following three stages of Chinese international relations between 1949 and 1972:  
 Stage 1—*yibiandao* (leaning to one side)  
 Stage 2—*liangge quantou daren* (fighting with two fists)  
 Stage 3—*yitiaoxian* (one united front).
- 2 Why did China become an ally of the Soviet Union in 1950?
- 3 Explain what Mao meant by 'leaning to one side'.
- 4 What did Stalin mean when he described Mao as a 'radish communist'?
- 5 Why did the PRC send troops to Korea in 1950?
- 6 What were the consequences of the Korean War for China?
- 7 Why was Mao disturbed by Nikita Khrushchev's speech and the subsequent de-Stalinisation of the Soviet Union in 1956?
- 8 Why did China become involved in the conflict in Vietnam in the 1960s?
- 9 Answer the following questions using the data in Source 6.14.
  - a List China's strengths and weaknesses.
  - b Using the source and your own knowledge, write a paragraph explaining to what degree China can be seen as a potential threat during the Cold War. Use data from the source in your answer.
- 10 What factors contributed to China and the United States becoming closer towards the end of the 1960s?
- 11 Divide a page into two columns and record the positive and negative factors for Chinese international relations in 1949–72.
- 12 Read the extract below and respond to the questions.



In examining modern international questions, we must proceed first of all from the most fundamental fact, the antagonism between the imperialist bloc of aggression and the popular forces in the world. The Chinese people, who have suffered enough from imperialist aggression, can never forget that imperialism has always opposed the liberation of all peoples and the independence of all oppressed nations, that it has always regarded the communist movement, which stands most resolutely for the people's interests, as a thorn in its flesh. Since the birth of the first socialist state, the Soviet Union, imperialism has tried by every means to wreck it. Following the establishment of a whole group

of socialist states, the hostility of the imperialist camp to the socialist camp, and its flagrant acts of sabotage against the latter, have become a still more pronounced feature of world politics. The leader of the imperialist camp, the United States, has been especially vicious and shameless in its interference in the domestic affairs of socialist countries; for many years it has been obstructing China's liberation of its own territory Taiwan, and for many years it has openly adopted as its official policy the subversion of the East European countries. ”

*The Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1956, pp. 21–64. The original article appeared in China's *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) on 29 December 1956.

- a Identify the two opposing world forces mentioned in the extract.
  - b According to the extract, in what two ways had the United States interfered in the domestic affairs of socialist countries?
  - c By quoting from the extract above and using your own knowledge, explain why China believed the United States to be 'especially vicious and shameless in its interference in the domestic affairs of socialist countries' by 1956.
  - d Evaluate to what extent this source is a reliable view of international relations between 1949 and 1956. Quote parts of the extract in your answer.
- 13 Write a 750-word essay on the following topic: 'Under communist rule, China regained its independence, pride and self-respect as a nation'. In terms of China's foreign relations between 1949 and 1972, to what extent is this statement accurate? Use at least three sources from this chapter and two other sources to support your answer.



Getty Images/Lonely Planet

CHINA AND REVOLUTION

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

## *China and the Great Leap Forward, 1958–1962*

By 1957, almost all of China's agricultural land was collectivised and its industrial production was booming. Mao's vision, summarised by his slogan 'more, faster, better and more economical', seemed to be realised and Mao now called for *Dayuejin* – a 'Great Leap Forward'. Many of the Chinese Communist Party leaders believed that they could do no wrong. Bolstered by the successes of the party over the Nationalist and rightist elements in society, the Korean War, and the rapid transformation of agriculture and industry through the First Five-Year Plan, it would be a 'combination of inexperience and arrogance'<sup>1</sup> that would lead Mao and the CCP to plan and execute the Great Leap Forward in 1958. What happened next, however, would be one of the greatest human disasters in history. Known as the 'Three Bad Years', the impact of Mao's 'leap forward' would result in the deaths of up to 40 million people.

“ Apart from their other characteristics, China's 600 million people are, first of all, poor, and secondly, 'blank'. That may seem like 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 words can be written on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.

Mao Zedong, 'Introducing a Co-operative', 15 April 1958,  
*Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Volume VIII

### INQUIRY QUESTION

+ What was the impact of the Great Leap Forward?

◀ Chinese propaganda poster celebrating the mandatory relocation of students to the countryside to receive 're-education' from peasants

## *Aims of the Great Leap Forward*

The Great Leap Forward, which lasted from 1958 until 1962, was Mao's Second Five-Year Plan to develop agriculture and industry in China. In July 1957, Mao stated that his aims were to 'build a modern industry and modern agriculture more rapidly and make our party and state more secure and better able to weather storm and stress'.<sup>2</sup> Spurred on by the success of the First Five-Year Plan, Mao ambitiously aimed for China's economy to overtake Britain's within 15 years and that of the United States in 20 to 30 years. This Great Leap Forward would simultaneously develop agriculture and industry through the reorganisation of the cooperatives into people's communes. This, it was hoped, would unleash 'the tremendous energy of the masses', who Mao believed could achieve anything through sheer willpower and hard manual labour.



### 'General Steel and General Grain'

Even before Mao's trip to the Soviet Union in November 1957, he had written an article that called on the party and the people to boldly follow the course of 'more, faster, better and more economically'. Mao's focus would be what he believed were the key indicators of economic development, steel and grain. These would be referred to during the Great Leap Forward as 'General Steel and General Grain', a figurative expression of two great generals who would lead China to economic victory in the battle to feed the Chinese people and modernise Chinese industry.

Mao's motives for launching the Great Leap Forward were many and varied. Historian Jonathan Spence describes some of Mao's motives:

“ The impetus for attempting the Great Leap Forward came from a combination of several factors: the general success of the First Five-Year Plan, together with the rural cooperativization and the nationalization of industry, encouraged a certain faith in the inherent powers of the Chinese economy; the Soviet Union's launching of its space satellite, Sputnik, seemed a symbol of the superiority of the socialist world over the capitalist West; and Mao's own differences of opinion with his senior colleagues, which had already been apparent in the 1955 movement to collectivize agriculture and the 1956–57 attempt to foster criticism of the party, prompted him to push in a more radical direction so as to prevent stagnation. ”

Jonathan D Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, Penguin Books, London, 1982, p. 382

Broadly, Mao's motives can be categorised as ideological, economic and international.

## IDEOLOGICAL MOTIVES

The emphasis on rural communes in Mao's plan for economic development further enforced his belief in the peasantry as a revolutionary force. The Great Leap Forward into economic prosperity was seen by Mao as the next stage in the continuing revolutionary struggle. Anything could be achieved through the sheer will and mass labour of the people. Despite the reservations of some of the party hierarchy who wished to pursue a more cautious approach, Mao insisted that his way was the correct ideological approach and that he was more in touch with the peasant population due to his peasant background and close association with them during the Jiangxi and Yan'an Soviet era.

## ECONOMIC MOTIVES

Industrial cities could only expand if there was enough food to feed the workforce. Despite reaching almost all of the targets of the Five-Year Plan, agriculture was still lagging behind industrial development, and with China's rapidly growing population, the peasants would need to produce far more food if industry were to grow. Mao opted to induce the peasants to work harder through propaganda campaigns and to organise the population into communes with the intention of making agricultural production more efficient through mass mobilisation of the peasant workforce.

## INTERNATIONAL MOTIVES

Mao was determined that China should develop its own course towards a socialist society and lean away from its close ties with the Soviet Union. This was particularly so after the Korean War, which left distrust and resentment between China and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Korean War and the overinflated success of the Five-Year Plan both encouraged Mao to think that China was ready to go it alone and reject the Soviet model of economic development. This was compounded further when the Russian premier, Nikita Khrushchev, at first promised China nuclear weapons technology only to renege on this deal and seek closer ties with the West in what was known as a policy of 'peaceful coexistence'.

## THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNES – ‘THIS IS CONVENIENT FOR LEADERSHIP’

Despite the success of the First Five-Year Plan, by the mid 1950s it was obvious that China would not be able to industrialise on the scale needed unless there was a significant shift of labour from the countryside to the cities with a correspondingly dramatic increase in food production in order to feed this growing workforce. Between 1952 and 1957, the rural population had increased by only 9 per cent, while the urban population had increased by 30 per cent.

The general consensus within the party was that the peasants were inherently lazy and that their large families consumed too much food. To rectify this, Chinese industrial planners believed that peasant collectives should be combined into regional **people's communes**.

### people's commune

In 1958, the Chinese government amalgamated collective farms into larger social and administrative units, known as people's communes, to maximise agricultural and industrial production

An experimental commune was established in Henan in April 1958 where private plots were abolished and peasant work teams ate in communal eating halls. Such was the success of this model commune that in August the government decided that the people's commune would become the standard unit of social, economic and industrial organisation throughout China, and by the end of 1958 more than 740 000 peasant collectives had been forced to combine into 26 000 communes. This resulted in significant challenges and changes to everyday life as the peasants lost the right to farm their private plots and needed special

passports to travel between communes. Twelve families formed a work team and twelve work teams made up a brigade. Communes varied greatly in size – anywhere between 20 000 and 100 000 people. The military term ‘brigade’ was fitting as every person between the ages of 15 and 50 underwent basic military training and was a member of the people's militia. Peasant plots of land were also combined into much larger fields on which the peasants worked in teams, sometimes in their hundreds rather than in family units, tilling the land and clearing new land, planting forests and building bridges, irrigation works and flood prevention measures. A typical commune consisted of about 10 000 acres of arable land with collective responsibility for 100 000 livestock. For many, the experience of living in a people's commune was one of bewildering change as traditional Chinese family and community life was transformed. Families no longer cooked and ate together, children were now cared for outside the family home, and

plots of land that had been farmed by the same family for many generations were now the property of the commune and farmed collectively.

All agriculture throughout China was now under central government control, which set prices for produce and dictated farming methods and quotas. Party cadres were appointed to administrate each commune and its production, policing, education, child care, health services and tax collection. Communal dining halls were established so that peasants could eat together, thus saving time on preparing and cooking meals. It was believed that this innovation would release many women to work in the fields or in industrial projects. This was successful to a degree, yet had a detrimental effect on



Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos/Snapper Media

**SOURCE 7.1** Construction of the gigantic Sanmenshia Dam on the Yellow River by 7000 permanent workers and innumerable volunteers, 1958

Getty Images/John Dominis/The LIFE Picture Collection



**SOURCE 7.2** Children playing at a nursery school, February 1959

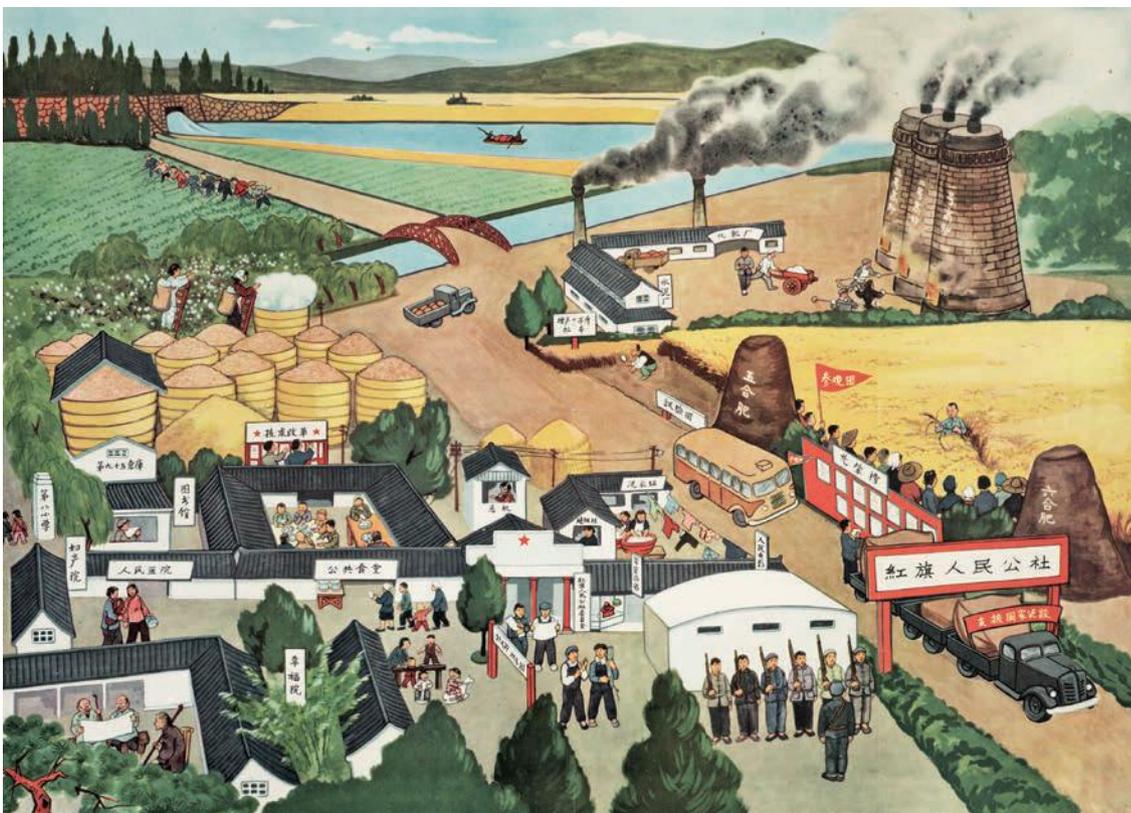


Bridgeman Images/Pictures From History

**SOURCE 7.3** A people's commune dining room during the late 1950s

food supplies as the food was provided free of charge and was not restricted in quantity, leading to overconsumption and waste.

The peasants were rewarded for their labour with points, rather than money, which they could exchange for essential goods such as food, clothing and household items. As work teams



Siefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/posters/g1-959.php>

**SOURCE 7.4** 'The People's Communes Are Good', 1958. This poster for schools shows the ideal people's commune, with abundant harvests, communal facilities for eating and washing clothes, a centre for the elderly and the people's militia parading in the foreground.

marched like military units to work in the fields, they sang songs. The lyrics to one popular 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 the ladder, we can climb the heights’.

And the heights were limitless. As historian Jasper Becker explains, Mao had ‘whipped up a fever of expectation all over China that amounted to mass hysteria’. Mao had seen the chance to create, through the communes, a sort of ‘new man’, a worker–soldier–poet who could write, weed and fight – a ‘jack of all trades but master of only one thought’.<sup>3</sup> Through the communes, Mao would bypass the officials and the party bureaucracy and gain a direct link between himself and the people.

Historian John Fairbank, writing in 1975, summarised what he viewed as the major aspects of the people’s commune system:

“ The commune was an integral part of the Great Leap, based on the mass-line idea of the ‘spontaneous initiative of the masses’. A typical commune was formed by amalgamating a number of agricultural producers’ cooperatives of the higher stage, that is, collective farms. The commune included local government functions, both military and security, as well as local trade, finance, taxation, accounting, statistics and planning, all under party control. It was divided into production brigades and teams, a production team corresponding to the old cooperative, perhaps half a village. Private plots were taken over. Peasants were to eat in large mess halls ... and all labor to be controlled. Farmer battalions marched like shock troops to attack new production goals while women took their places in the fields. This grandiose concept was pursued with great fanfare and utopian fervor. The result, it was hoped, would be agricultural cities with peasants proletarianized and uprooted from their land. ”

John K Fairbank, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1975, p. 912

The CCP was careful to convey the image that the peasants accepted their fate and that there was little or no resistance to the government policies. In more recent years it has come to light that the peasants had rebelled on several occasions against the government, even as early as 1953 when the policy of unified purchases and sales of grain was introduced. Early rebellion consisted of withdrawal from the cooperatives or refusal to comply with cooperative farming methods. By 1957, there were hundreds of riots throughout China as peasant communities were forced into communes. These armed uprisings sometimes consisted of up to 100 000 peasants but failed due to brutal suppression by the government.

## The Four Pests Campaign

In 1958, the Chinese government launched the Four Pests Campaign, which aimed to exterminate the ‘four evils’ – sparrows, mosquitoes, rats and flies. With mass involvement from every corner of society, China dedicated itself to the destruction of sparrows and other birds whose crime was to feed on the peasants’ crops. Whole communities would bang pots and pans and make as much noise as possible in order to

*continued*

continued

drive the birds into the air until they eventually dropped from the sky with exhaustion. Such was the success of this 'war against sparrows' that by 1960 the campaign was called off. However, significant environmental damage had been caused, for without the birds, insect numbers spiralled out of control, resulting in the destruction of crops. The people were set quotas by the government of numbers of flies and rats that should be destroyed, and competitions were held among communities and schools as to who could kill the most. This was particularly embraced by schoolchildren.



Stéfan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chineseposters.net/posters/e/16-358.php>

**SOURCE 7.5** 'Everybody gets to work to destroy the four pests', 1960, a propaganda poster aimed at mobilising the people to kill sparrows, mosquitoes, rats and flies

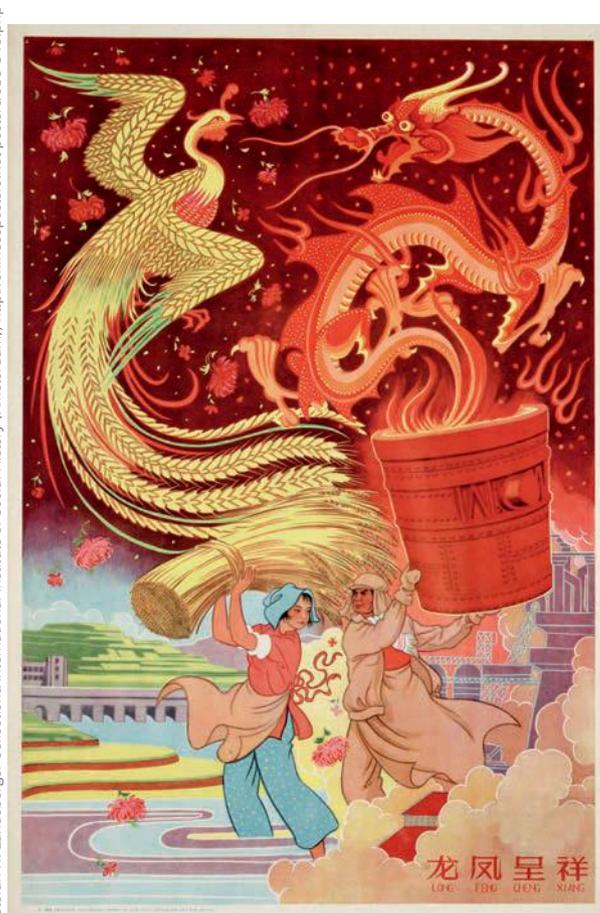
## INDUSTRY

After the seeming success of the Five-Year Plan, industrial progress was intensified through the formation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and even greater output targets. Much like the communes in the countryside, SOEs brought industry under central government control resulting in significant changes to workers' lives. Through SOEs, the government was able to control production and fix prices and workers' wages. Each SOE was backed up by government incentives, and workers were guaranteed a wage and a job, known as the **iron rice bowl**. SOEs, however, were a failure because they took away any incentive a factory might have to produce more or better quality goods since the government simply bought all produce at a fixed cost. Workers similarly had no incentive to work hard or take pride in their work as they were paid the same amount no matter how much effort they put in.

Factories, power plants, mines and steel foundries were expected to compete with one another, as were the work teams who toiled in them. Throughout this era, the CCP propaganda machine displayed posters, wrote articles, broadcast production figures and urged all to strive for increased production.

### iron rice bowl

The Communists promised workers the 'iron rice bowl' of lifetime employment, housing, health care, pension plans and education for their children



**SOURCE 7.6** 'Prosperity brought by the dragon and the phoenix', 1959. Traditional symbols were often used in CCP propaganda. This poster promotes the Great Leap Forward in agriculture and industry, using the symbols of the dragon (China) and the phoenix (good governance).

Despite the seeming zeal for production and success of government policies, whipped up through mass campaigns and propaganda, waste and incompetence were rife throughout China's industrial sector. Enormous amounts of equipment and machinery were imported from overseas during this era, most of which, without the expertise and training needed, broke down through poor maintenance and neglect. Raw materials were poorly allocated and mistakes were frequently made, wasting huge quantities of damaged produce. As with the farming communes, industrial targets were exaggerated and falsified, corners were cut and corruption was endemic. The result was vast quantities of inferior and often defective goods and materials. Poor-quality railway tracks were laid, resulting in only light goods wagons being able to negotiate the lines. Poor-quality cement meant buildings and other construction projects cracked and fell apart. The blades of tools bent, and canned food and medicines went bad due to incompetence and cost-cutting.

Despite promises of improved housing, health care and education for workers and their families, in practice the living conditions in the industrial centres of China were appalling. Almost all of the investment during the Great Leap Forward went into industry and large building projects. Very little was allocated to improving life for workers and their families. The situation was made worse by the huge numbers of people flooding into the cities from the countryside in order to bolster the workforce. The factories and dormitories where the workers lived were chronically overcrowded, lacked

heating and adequate sanitation, and were almost completely devoid of any safety standards, with workers suffering a multitude of injuries and health issues due to lack of protective clothing or even shoes.

Historian Frank Dikötter describes the conditions in one factory in the city of Jinan:

“ ... conditions deteriorated rapidly. There were inadequate toilet facilities, so workers urinated and defecated directly on the factory floor. Filth and stench permeated the premises, lice and scabies were common, chaos reigned on the ground. Scuffles were a frequent occurrence, windows were broken and doors smashed in. A pecking order emerged in which the strongest workers grabbed the best beds in the dormitories. Fear was pervasive, in particular among women, who were commonly teased, humiliated and abused by local cadres in their offices, their dormitories or sometimes on the factory floor in full view of other workers. None of them dared to sleep or go out on their own.”

Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*,  
Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2010, p. 301

The figures show that between 1957 and the end of 1958 there was a significant increase in industrial output in almost all areas, including steel (32 per cent), coal (31 per cent) and electric power (18 per cent). However, when the quality of these products and the gross exaggeration and falsification of the figures are taken into account it must be deduced that the Great Leap Forward was an industrial failure. Much of the raw material either never made it to the manufacturing plants or was of such poor quality it could not be used. Indeed, by 1960, figures for the production of manufactured goods were actually beginning to fall below pre-Leap figures.

A classic example of the overambitious and even foolhardy industrial policies of Mao and his government is the backyard steel campaign.

## BACKYARD STEEL PRODUCTION – ‘THE MASSES CAN DO ANYTHING’

Centralised planning through government bureaucrats and so-called ‘experts’ was rejected in preference for the self-reliance and participation of the masses, who were encouraged to build their own small-scale means of production in their villages and neighbourhoods. This was done under the slogan ‘Walking on two legs’ as it was hoped that communes would diversify, becoming centres of both agricultural and industrial production. This included small rural factories and workshops that processed food or made baskets and other traditional handicrafts. The most famous of these initiatives was the backyard steel campaign, whereby hand-built furnaces appeared all over China in an attempt to match the steel production figures of the Western powers. The Communist leadership wanted to industrialise China quickly and wanted to do this by diverting peasants from the countryside and ordering them to make steel using ‘backyard furnaces’. The



**SOURCE 7.7** Backyard furnaces in the commune of Shiu Shin – 310 000 inhabitants living in 280 villages divided into seven popular communes spread over 600 square kilometres. Peasants work their own windboxes on the blast furnaces. Every 30 minutes, about 50 kilograms of iron are smelted in the several hundred ovens.

project was a failure as agriculture was neglected and most of the steel produced from these backyard furnaces was unusable. Historians Grasso, Corrin and Kort, in their book *Modernization and Revolution in China*, outline the scale of the backyard steel campaign:

“ The most celebrated of such enterprises were the so-called backyard steel furnaces that appeared all over China. These were built and worked by peasants, students, physicians, clerical employees and others during lunch breaks, after regular work hours, and on weekends. The goal, said Mao, was to catch up with Britain in steel production within 15 years. Mao’s exhortation to ‘go all out and aim high’ was answered by tens of millions of Chinese. By 1958, it was reported that 600 000 backyard [furnaces] had been built and were being operated by 90 million people. Some were built and operated by schools, including primary schools. Even hospitals closed down when doctors and nurses left their patients and went into the courtyards to build their mini blast furnaces. When massed together, they were a remarkable sight in a land so long dominated by agriculture; perhaps that is why Mao and his comrades never paused to notice how well they worked. ”

June Grasso, Jay Corrin and Michael Kort, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 4th edn, ME Sharpe, New York, 2009, p. 166

Most of the steel produced in the backyard furnaces was largely useless due to its poor quality. The landscape was stripped of vast numbers of trees in order to fuel the furnaces, and the waste in the form of iron ore and the millions of household pots and pans and other iron implements was immense and irreversible.

## CROP EXPERIMENTS

In the countryside, Mao’s Second Five-Year Plan, or Great Leap Forward, ended in total catastrophe, resulting in a famine that killed an estimated 30 to 40 million people. Despite the official government statement in 1962 that the failure of the Great Leap and the subsequent famine was 70 per cent due to natural causes and only 30 per cent due to man-made causes, the evidence points to the fact that the devastating famine that swept through China between 1959 and 1961 was a direct result of Mao and his government’s policies and was only exacerbated by the effects of floods and droughts.

By 1957, Mao was widely seen by the Chinese people as infallible – he was compared to the ‘reddest of suns’, and as a personality cult grew around him his promise of a communist utopia was believed. Mao’s inspiration for agricultural advancement was Stalinist agricultural theory and propaganda; in particular, the theories of legendary Soviet agricultural scientist Tofim Lysenko, who claimed that plants could be altered to grow anywhere and in any number – just as people could change depending on their environment, so could plants. Although **Lysenkoism** dominated Russian agricultural policy for more than 25 years, almost all of Lysenko’s ideas were a monumental failure. This, however, did not stop Mao in 1958 drawing up an eight-point constitution based on Lysenkoist theory that every Chinese farmer in every commune had to follow.

### Lysenkoism

Agricultural theories of Soviet scientist Tofim Lysenko adopted by the PRC during the Great Leap Forward with disastrous consequences

.....

Its eight elements were:

- |   |  |   |                           |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | the use of new breeds of animals and seeds | 5 | innovation of farm tools  |
| 2 | close planting of crops                    | 6 | improved field management |
| 3 | deep ploughing                             | 7 | pest control              |
| 4 | increased fertilisation                    | 8 | increased irrigation.     |

Mao even admitted his total ignorance of science and economics, yet saw agricultural science as the key to China's rapid advancement. Government leaders encouraged students to rewrite their science textbooks and apply imagination to their studies. Politburo member Kang Sheng proclaimed, 'Science is simply acting daringly. There is nothing mysterious about it'. Scientists and agronomists were either ignored or were too afraid to speak out. Others, such as revered nuclear physicist Qian Xuesen, tried to ingratiate themselves with Mao and his comrades by going along with these rash claims, stating that it was quite possible to increase crop yields ten or even a hundred times if the energy from sunlight was properly utilised.

### Farming crisis

Believing that their policies significantly boosted agricultural productivity, the central government encouraged local cadres to 'overcome reactionary conservatism.' They responded by competing with one another by making wild claims about grain yields. The *People's Daily* claimed that 'agricultural production takes a Great Leap Forward with yields increasing by 100 per cent, by several hundred per cent, by 1000 per cent and by several thousand per cent'.<sup>4</sup> Based on these overambitious exaggerations, grain output was forecast to grow to 525 million tonnes in 1958,



Getty Images/Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone

**SOURCE 7.8** As in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the arrival of tractors in villages was a great propaganda opportunity. Here, the villagers of Chung Hsing Hsiang celebrate the arrival of this transformative agricultural machine in April 1958.



Getty Images/Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone

**SOURCE 7.9** Peasant women of Nanchung picking silkworm cocoons during the Great Leap Forward

or more than 2.6 times the output of 1957. Actual production has since been estimated to be probably no more than 200 million tonnes.

Adding to the weakness of agricultural production, the government diverted a significant amount of rural labour from agriculture to industry in the form of the backyard steel campaign and massive building projects such as canals, dams and land clearance. With the emphasis on grain production and crops, the peasants significantly reduced numbers of livestock to make way for arable land. Animals needed constant attention and with the government's demand for labour the peasants did not have the time to tend their animals. Such was the shift of labour from the daily task of farming that crops rotted in the fields and animals starved. Lee Feigon, in the biography *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, noted the impact on agriculture of the campaigns of the Great Leap Forward as follows:

“ Organisational chaos ensued. Inexperienced and undereducated managers mishandled fiscal affairs as they struggled to set up and manage the large, complex new structures. Local cadres became petty dictators. Richer peasants who resented amalgamating with poorer peasants destroyed livestock and supplies. Embittered and undermotivated peasants worked indifferently. Displeased with communal dining rooms and presented with a policy of free food, peasants in many areas ate themselves out of supplies ... The hours spent on iron and steel production kept the peasants from the harvest. Bumper crops withered in the fields as overworked peasants struggled at their backyard furnaces or on waterworks projects. At the last minute people were sent into the fields to work day and night to bring in the harvest. In many areas it was too little and too late. ”

Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2002, pp. 125–6

As the damaging effects of the Great Leap spiralled out of control, people began to starve. Daily food energy per person in China fell from 2100 calories in 1957 to about 1500 calories in 1960. A lower calorie intake reduced the physical capacity to carry out manual work and therefore adversely affected productivity. Peasants who survived the food shortages and famine between 1959 and 1960 were too weak to plant or harvest new crops, and this continued into 1961 even though the government started to moderate its radical agrarian policies in early 1959. Even more startling is that, boosted by overinflated production figures, the Chinese government raised exports of grain from an average of 2.11 million tonnes between 1953 and 1957 to 3.95 million tonnes in 1959.

## THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

When Nikita Khrushchev took over as First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, he criticised Stalin and his rule in a secret speech to the Communist Party. This resulted in a period of **de-Stalinisation** throughout the Soviet Union during which, for example, statues of Stalin were taken down and streets named after the dictator were given a new name. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin took Mao by surprise and offended Mao as he felt he should have been consulted over this major shift in policy, particularly as CCP propaganda had portrayed Mao and Stalin as such close allies. Mao disagreed with Khrushchev's assessment of Stalin, concluding that Stalin's achievements outweighed his mistakes seven to three.

### de-Stalinisation

Political reform program in the Soviet Union initiated by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956. The program dismantled key aspects of the Stalinist state, such as the Gulag labour camps, and de-emphasised the cult of Stalin

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Furthermore, Russia refused to be drawn into arguments with the United States over an independent Taiwan in 1958 when China bombarded the Nationalist-occupied islands in the Taiwan Strait. Then, when Khrushchev visited the United States in 1959, seeking to follow a policy of ‘peaceful coexistence’, it seemed to Mao that this was a betrayal of communist ideals and a blatant appeasement of capitalist hegemony. China’s alliance with the Soviet Union seemed to lack any real meaning, prompting Mao to refer to his allies as ‘paper tigers’.

The Soviet point of view on Sino-Soviet relations was becoming similarly negative. Khrushchev refused to assist China in developing its own nuclear weapon, and boldly took action in 1960, when Russian technicians and all economic aid were completely withdrawn from China. This had a devastating effect on China’s ability to rapidly modernise and to combat the effects of the failed Great Leap Forward.

## THE LUSHAN CONFERENCE

The Eighth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China started on 2 July 1959 at Lushan in Jiangxi province. Referred to by party officials as ‘the meeting of immortals’, the **Lushan Conference**, as it is more commonly known, was intended to be an informal meeting whereby the party elite would discuss the progress of the Great Leap Forward. Mao also intended it to be a forum from which he would rein in the ‘leftist tendency’ elements of the plan.

At Lushan, Mao divided the party leaders into small groups and encouraged them to speak openly about the Great Leap Forward. These group discussions lasted for a week, with Mao receiving daily reports on each group’s discussion. Defence minister Peng Dehuai was shown to be particularly outspoken during these meetings, even blaming Mao directly: ‘The steel target of 10.7 million tonnes was set by Chairman Mao, so how could he escape responsibility?’

On 10 July, Mao called a meeting of the leaders of the party where he delivered a speech reminding them of party unity and the importance of a shared ideology. Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi were quick to agree with Mao, and the rest of the gathering also fell into line through their deferential silence.

In the autumn of 1958, Peng had toured his home province of Henan and visited both his own and Mao’s villages. What he saw there had greatly troubled him and he had sent telegrams to Mao reporting of crops rotting in the fields, starvation and falsified production figures. Peng and several other leaders including the chief of general staff, Huang Kecheng, were determined not to allow this opportunity to pass. They believed that the Lushan Conference would be the only chance to do something about the drastic situation in the countryside. One of Peng’s supporters, Zhang Wentian, went so far as to declare that they must ‘pull the emperor from his horse even if that means losing our heads’. They convinced Peng to write a personal letter to Mao outlining their concerns. Peng’s letter was almost 10 000 words long and detailed his primary concern – the peasants and their welfare. His letter was mildly worded, praised much of what the Great Leap had achieved and avoided mentioning famine or open criticism of Mao personally. Mao, however, was unimpressed and feared a conspiracy within the party against him and his policies.

### Lushan Conference

Meeting of the CCP elite to discuss the Great Leap Forward. In this meeting, Peng Dehuai and others criticised Mao’s policies. Peng was stripped of his role as defence minister, leading to a nationwide purge of all those who criticised Mao or his policies

Two days later, Mao called a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. He ordered that Peng's letter should be copied and distributed to all 150 members of the conference for discussion. Then on 21 July, vice-minister for foreign affairs Zhang Wentian launched an attack on Mao in the form of a speech that lasted for several hours. In his speech Zhang openly criticised the Great Leap Forward, the backyard steel campaign and the ridiculously high targets set by Mao and his ministers. Zhang declared that 'our country is poor and blank' and that 'the shortcomings outweigh the achievements by a factor of nine to one'. This was a direct criticism of the Chairman, as Mao had said in a previous speech delivered at the conference on 10 July that the achievements of the Great Leap had outweighed the failures by nine to one. Zhang's speech coincided with a speech delivered only a few days earlier by Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, who criticised the use of communes in Russia in the 1920s, and how those who had supported them were misguided and lacking in an understanding of communism. To Mao this seemed like a three-pronged attack, from the ministry of defence, the foreign ministry and the Soviet government.

On 23 July, Mao gave a three-hour speech in which he took some of the blame for the shortcomings of the Great Leap. However, Mao was also careful to ensure that others should share the blame, saying that 'you must all analyse your responsibility' and pointing out that 'Marx also made many mistakes'. His speech was a mixture of barbed humour and outright fury. At one point Mao directly attacked Peng, calling him a traitor and a rightist, and challenged the party hierarchy to decide who they supported, Peng and his conspirators or Mao. He threatened: 'If those in the Liberation Army won't follow me, then I will go and find a new Red Army, and organise another Liberation Army. But I think the Liberation Army will follow me'. Facing possible civil war, any support for Peng disintegrated and a few months later he and his associates were purged. Peng was removed from his position as defence minister and replaced by one of Mao's closest supporters, Lin Biao. Mao emerged from Lushan victorious. The party continued the policies of the Great Leap Forward with renewed vigour and there was a nationwide purge of all 'anti-party elements' and 'rightist opportunists'.



### Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)

Peng Dehuai (P'eng Te-huai) came from a poor, Hunan peasant background and had experienced famine firsthand in his home village when several of his brothers died due to malnutrition. As a boy, Peng joined a warlord army and later led a band of peasant rebels in the mountains of Hunan. Although crude and lacking in education, Peng's talent and ability meant that he quickly rose through the Communist Party ranks. He commanded the CCP's Third Army during the Long March and was deputy commander of the Eighth Route Army during the war with Japan and throughout the



Pictures From History

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civil war. Peng went on to command the Chinese army in the Korean War (1950–53) and was appointed minister of defence in 1954. Honest and blunt, Peng had always spoken his mind in Politburo meetings. At the Lushan Conference in 1959, Peng was encouraged to write a letter to Mao and speak out against the policies of the Great Leap Forward. Mao was furious, labelling Peng as leader of an ‘anti-party clique’. He was dismissed as defence minister and replaced by Lin Biao. Peng was arrested and dismissed from the party in December 1966. He spent the rest of his life imprisoned, suffering interrogation and torture at the hands of the Red Guards, who beat him more than 130 times. During his interrogations, Peng was reported to have shouted, ‘I fear nothing ... The more you interrogate me, the firmer I become’. Peng died in a prison hospital in 1974.

## FAMINE

The procurement of grain had a significant impact on food supplies and was a major contributor to famine in China between 1959 and 1961. In 1959, the purchase of grain by the government increased dramatically over the previous year and reached a record level of 64 million tonnes, or almost 38 per cent of total output, compared to an average of 25 per cent in the years preceding the Great Leap era (see Table 7.1).

As local officials exaggerated production figures in order to meet constantly inflating targets (referred to by Peng Dehuai as ‘winds of exaggeration’), the government forcibly purchased a larger percentage of the communes’ produce, believing that there would be plenty remaining to feed the population and sow as seed the following season. In reality this left the communes with insufficient food. Famine quickly spread throughout China, with the central and eastern provinces suffering the worst during what became known as the **Three Bad Years**.

The terrible famine brought out the most horrible of actions in the people it touched, who in desperation turned to theft, prostitution and murder in order to survive. Some sold themselves or their children as slaves, while others ate the bark of trees, rats and even dead bodies. Suicide was endemic and death rates for 1960 show that more than double the number of people died in the countryside than in the cities.

Fearful of retribution, local officials continued to report to the central government that production figures were being met. This conspiracy of silence flowed through the system right to the top. Even high-ranking members of the government refused to admit that things were badly wrong or turned a blind eye to the truth, fearful of Mao’s scorn or humiliation at the hands of their peers, who were taken in by their own propaganda and the reporting of the state-controlled media. Even as late as 1961, Mao mocked reports of famine declaring that there was no famine but

### Three Bad Years

The period of famine in China, from 1959 to 1961, causing the death of 30 to 40 million people



**SOURCE 7.10** Victims of the disastrous famine created by the Great Leap Forward

**TABLE 7.1** China's agricultural output, 1954–62

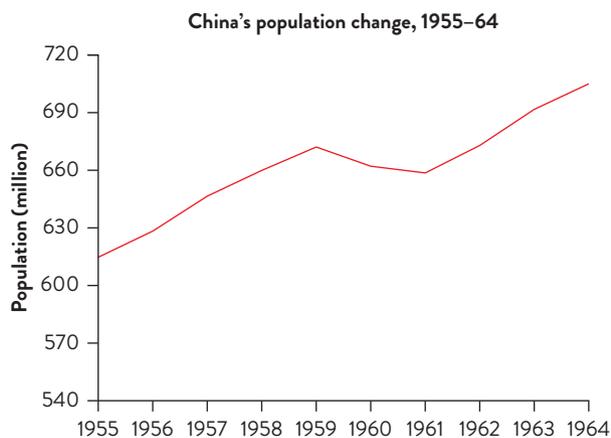
Year	Grain output (million tonnes)	Grain purchased by government (million tonnes)	Grain retained by peasants (kilograms per person)	Area sown to grain (million hectares)
1954	170	51	228	129
1955	184	48	256	130
1956	193	40	284	136
1957	195	46	273	134
1958	200	52	268	128
1959	170	64	193	116
1960	143	47	182	122
1961	148	37	209	121
1962	160	32	229	122

Ministry of Agriculture, *Compilation of China's Rural Economic Statistics: 1949–86*, Agricultural Publishing House, Beijing, 1989

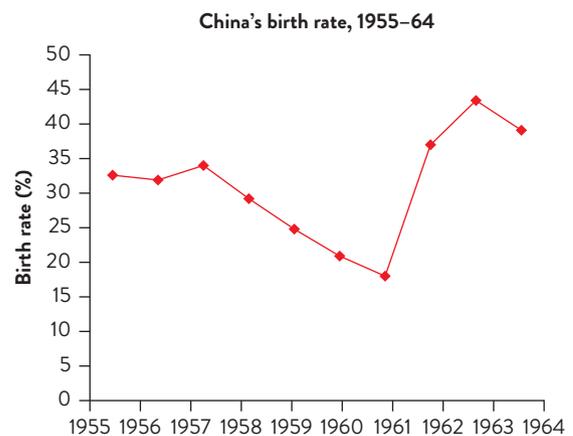
only a 'period of scarcity', blaming grain hoarding, mistakes by local officials and bad weather for the shortages of food.

Of the 40 million people who may have died during the Three Bad Years, at least two to three million died violently at the hands of the government. Women were raped and beaten to death by party cadres. Others died in the fields, forced to work during the last stages of pregnancy. Some communes operated a system whereby food was distributed according to a person's work rate. This was similar to the 'performance feeding' practices of the Nazi labour camps and ended with similar results. The old and the sick perished, in some cases their bodies used as compost for the fields.

## The impact of the famine



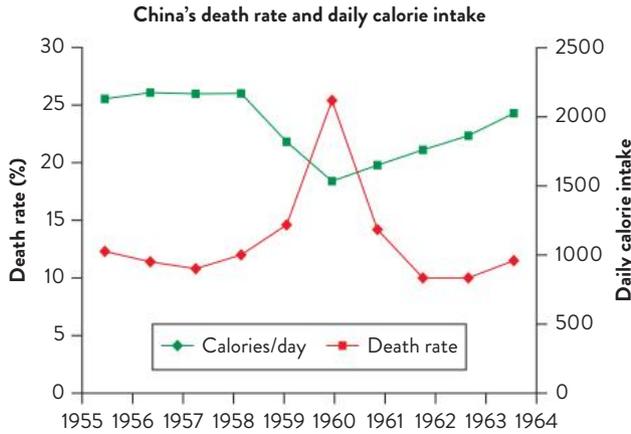
**SOURCE 7.11** China's population was steadily increasing up to 1959 and then took a dip over the next three years until it began to increase again.



**SOURCE 7.12** The period from 1957 to 1961 was marked by a decrease in the average calorie intake. As a result, the birth rate also decreased in those years.

*continued*

continued



**SOURCE 7.13** This graph shows how the death rate was directly affected by the average calorie intake. As the calorie intake decreased, the death rate increased. Data for sources 7.11, 7.12 and 7.13 from Basil Ashton, Kenneth Hill, Alan Piazza and Robin Zeitz, 'Famine in China, 1958–61', *Population and Development Review*, 10.4 (1984), pp. 613–45.

**Questions**

- 1 According to Source 7.11, in what years did China's population decline?
- 2 According to Source 7.12, in what years did China's birth rate decline?
- 3 According to Source 7.13, what is the relationship between the death rate and calorie intake?
- 4 What regions of China were most affected by the famine?
- 5 In an extended paragraph, summarise the impact of the famine on China's population.



**SOURCE 7.14** China's famine, 1959–61

9780170244145

## Interpretations of the famine

### A woman from Anhui province remembers the famine

My legs and hands were swollen and I felt that at any moment I would die. Instead of walking to the fields to look for wild grass (to eat), I crawled and rolled to save energy ... All the trees in the village had been cut down. Any nearby were all stripped of bark. I peeled off the bark of a locust tree and cooked it as if it were rice soup ...

More than half the villagers died ... The production team chief's daughter-in-law and his grandson starved to death. He then boiled and ate the corpse of the child but he also died. When the village teacher was on the verge of death, he said to his wife, 'Why should we keep our child? If we eat him then I can survive and later we can produce another child.' His wife refused to do this and her husband died.

Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*,  
John Murray, London, 1996, pp. 135–6

### Frank Dikötter on the famine

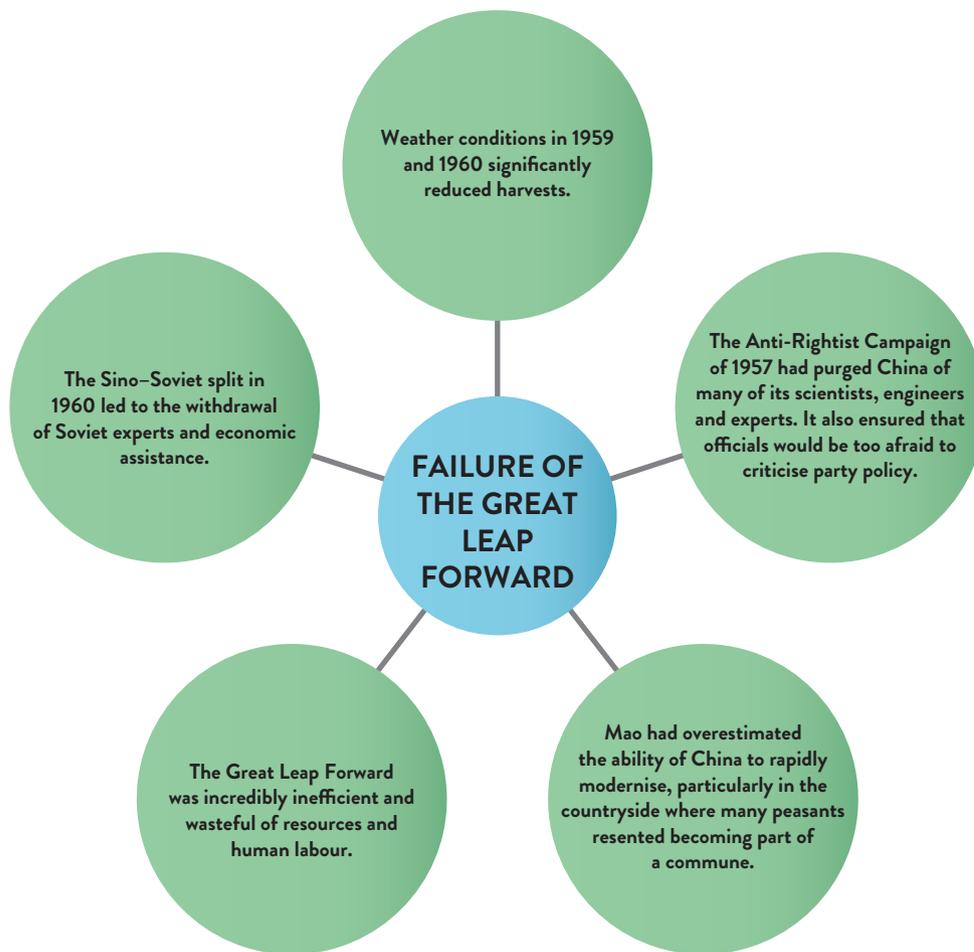
... during the Great Leap Forward something of an altogether different nature happened in the countryside. Violence became a routine tool of control. It was not used occasionally on the few to instil fear in the many, rather it was directed systematically and habitually against anybody seen to dawdle, obstruct or protest, let alone pilfer or steal – a majority of villagers. Every meaningful incentive to work was destroyed for the cultivator – the land belonged to the state, the grain he produced was procured at a price that was often below cost of production, his livestock, tools and utensils were no longer his, often even his home was confiscated. The local cadre, on the other hand, faced ever greater pressure to fulfil and over fulfil the plan, having to whip up the workforce in one relentless drive after another.

Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*, Bloomsbury Publishing,  
London, 2010, pp. 567–8

## Questions

- 1 The first source is the view of a woman who lived through the famine. How reliable or useful do you think this kind of interpretation is? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Frank Dikötter is a leading historian writing in 21st-century China. Do you think this is a more reliable or useful interpretation than the recollection of an individual who lived through the famine?

The famine was a social catastrophe that could have been avoided. It has been shown that famines can be overcome fairly swiftly as long as governments act quickly: first, admit that there is a disaster; second, commission foreign imports to relieve the shortage of supply; and third, provision the resources so that they reach those most in need. Mao's regime failed on all counts, refusing to recognise that there was a famine at all, forcing peasants into mismanaged communes and continuing food exports and preferential supply of food to the cities.



**SOURCE 7.15** The failure of the Great Leap Forward

## *The consequences of the Great Leap Forward*

In 1962, with his reputation damaged, Mao withdrew from the responsibilities of leading the country but remained head of the CCP. Liu Shaoqi became president and, together with the Party general secretary Deng Xiaoping, began the task of ending the crisis in the countryside and re-energising China's economy by providing financial incentives to workers and peasants and allowing peasants to cultivate their own plots of land. Production targets were reduced, particularly for the coal and steel industries, and many of the least productive state-owned enterprises were closed down.

Although the Great Leap Forward was a disaster and was officially abandoned in 1961, there were some long-term benefits to China. Many of the small rural factories and workshops remained in business and began to thrive under Liu and Deng's policies. The people's communes remained in place, albeit scaled back, but much of the communes' work, such as land clearance, irrigation and forestry, reaped rewards in the decades to come.

## THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

### Deng Xiaoping

Comrade Mao got carried away when we launched the Great Leap Forward, but didn't the rest of us go along with him? ... We must be fair on these questions and not give the impression that only one individual made mistakes while everybody else was correct, because it doesn't tally with the facts.

Deng Xiaoping, Remark made to Central Committee on 19 March 1980, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. II (1975–1982), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1984

### Chen Yung-fa

No matter how people judge him, no one can deny the importance of Mao Zedong in twentieth-century Chinese history ... Mao studied the Soviet Union, led the Chinese communist revolution, overthrew the regime of the Nationalist Party, and constructed an unparalleled centralized party-state system ... Even though the mainland of China today is an inseparable part of the world economic system, we can still see there the continuation of the political system of Mao's era.

Chen Yung-fa, 'Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* – A review', trans. Wenjuan Bi & Christopher A Reed, *Twentieth-Century China*, Vol. 33, no. 1, 2007, p. 104

### Frank Dikötter

We know that Mao was the key architect of the Great Leap Forward, and thus bears the main responsibility for the catastrophe that followed. He had to work hard to push through his vision, bargaining, cajoling, goading, occasionally tormenting or persecuting his colleagues. Unlike Stalin, he did not drag his rivals into a dungeon to have them executed, but he did have the power to remove them from office, terminating their careers – and the many privileges which came with a top position in the party.

Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2010, p. 17

### Questions

- 1 Compare the three sources. In your own words and by quoting from the extracts, make dot-point notes on the three different historical interpretations, focusing on the key contention of each one.
- 2 Deng Xiaoping was a senior member of the CCP throughout the Mao era and was Chinese premier after Mao's death. How might this affect Deng's interpretation? Use the source in your answer.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly Mao and his henchmen were responsible for the great famine that swept through China between 1959 and 1961. Mao's crime, and that of the CCP, is even more startling as the regime claimed to be creating a society of abundance; yet this imaginery utopia coexisted with the reality of widespread horror and death.

After the Lushan Conference, Mao found himself being relegated to the sidelines, from where he complained of being treated like a 'dead ancestor'. But Mao was not dead. He remained chairman of the party, and many Chinese, despite the sufferings of the Great Leap and the subsequent famine, still revered Mao as the great helmsman and revolutionary who would lead them to a communist utopia, preferring instead to blame party officials and local

party cadre whose misguided enthusiasm and judgement had caused disaster. Therefore the failure of the Great Leap Forward was simply a setback for Mao. He still remained convinced that his political line was the correct one, and although he had lost control of the daily operations of the state, he dominated any potential rival in both power and prestige. Mao would briefly tolerate a period of hibernation during which he would reluctantly accept a 'rightist' approach to extricating China from the economic and social catastrophe of the preceding years. During this period of seeming slumber, Mao would brood and plot his return, eventually unleashing the revolutionary forces of the PLA and of China's youth in the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution.

## Chapter summary

- + Bolstered by the success of the First Five-Year Plan, Mao aimed to catch up with the West in a 'great leap forward' and free China from Soviet influence and hegemony.
- + The people's commune would become the standard unit of social, economic and industrial organisation throughout China.
- + The peasants were worked to the point of exhaustion or were diverted from food production to work in backyard steel production or large-scale building projects.
- + Hugely wasteful and coinciding with natural disasters, the policies of the Great Leap era led to widespread famine that killed up to 40 million people.
- + In 1962, Mao stepped down as leader of the PRC but remained party chairman. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping took over government and began to reverse the damage done by the Great Leap era.

### Endnotes

- 1 William A Joseph, 'A Tragedy of Good Intentions: Post-Mao Views of the Great Leap Forward', *Modern China*, Vol. 12, 1986, p. 424.
- 2 Mao Zedong, 'The Situation in the Summer of 1957', *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. V, Tsingtao, July 1957, p. 305.
- 3 Dennis Bloodworth, *The Messiah and the Mandarins: Mao Tse-tung and the Ironies of Power*, Atheneum, New York, 1982, p. 184.
- 4 *People's Daily*, 10 September 1958.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

- Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, John Murray, London, 1996.  
 Jung Chang & Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005.  
 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2002.  
 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, Harper Collins, New York, 2008.  
 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, London, 1990.  
 Alan Lawrence, *China under Communism*, Routledge, London, 2000.

### Film

*As It Happened*, 'Mao: A Life', SBS, 2006.

## Chapter review activities

- 1 Why did Mao launch the Second Five-Year Plan (the Great Leap) in 1958?
- 2 What was the government's aim in introducing state-owned enterprises (SOEs)?
- 3 Production of raw materials increased during the Great Leap Forward but manufacturing decreased. Why?
- 4 List five reasons why China experienced a famine between 1959 and 1961.
- 5 Why can the Lushan Conference of 1959 be described as a turning point?
- 6 List five consequences of the Great Leap Forward for both China and Mao.
- 7 Draw a four-section diagram entitled 'The Experiences of Social Groups during the Great Leap Forward'. Make notes under the following headings:
  - Peasants
  - Workers
  - Women
  - Party cadre.
- 8 Produce a portfolio of three annotated propaganda images, each focusing on a different aspect of the Great Leap Forward. Find examples on three of the following areas:
  - a Mao's leadership
  - b agriculture and/or the communes
  - c the Four Pests campaign
  - d industrial production
  - e the backyard steel campaign.

Annotate each propaganda image ensuring that you describe the message conveyed by the image and its purpose.
- 9 Write a speech about the Great Leap Forward and the famine that you will deliver to a Politburo meeting at the Lushan Conference in 1959. Mao will be present at the meeting, so try to show that the Great Leap has been partially successful but also hint at the failures and, in particular, the famine.



- 10 Using data from the graphs in this chapter, write an extended response to the following question: How was China's population affected by the failure of the Great Leap Forward?
- 11 Discuss the importance of the role of significant individuals and ideas in:
  - the Great Leap Forward
  - the famine.
- 12 Write an essay. After the Great Leap Forward ended in 1962, the official Chinese government line was that the famine was 70 per cent due to natural causes and 30 per cent due to human error. To what degree is this an accurate evaluation of the causes of the famine? Use evidence to support your answer.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976*

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution started on 16 May 1966 when a party circular was read out at a Politburo meeting denouncing ‘counter-revolutionary revisionists’ within the party. Two days later, Mao’s protégé and ‘cultural adviser’ to the People’s Liberation Army, Lin Biao, identified to a crowd of one million fanatical young supporters assembled in Tiananmen Square the ‘Four Olds’ as the target for the young, who enthusiastically took up arms against these and other reactionary elements in society. What unfolded was an anarchic terror that paralysed the country and led to the death and suffering of millions of Chinese people. Such was the chaos in China that Mao was forced to use the PLA to bring back order and put down the Red Guards in 1969. However, the repercussions of the Cultural Revolution would be felt both economically and politically well into the 1970s and beyond. Indeed, the CCP Central Committee admitted in 1981 that:

“ The cultural revolution, which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976, was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People’s Republic. It was initiated and led by Comrade Mao Zedong. ”

CCP Central Committee, *Resolution on CPC History (1949–81)*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1981, p. 32

◀ Red Guards photographed in 1967, parading through the streets of Beijing

#### INQUIRY QUESTION

+ What were the consequences of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution for China and its people?

## *Causes of the Cultural Revolution, 1958–65*

Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966 as a way of securing Mao Zedong Thought as the dominant ideology in China and to eliminate political opposition. The origins of this defining episode in Mao's career, described by him on his deathbed as one of only two truly great achievements, lie in the power struggle that ensued in the wake of the Great Leap Forward and the Lushan Conference.

In December 1958, Mao resigned as Chairman of the PRC due to the failure of his economic policies and was replaced by the more moderate Liu Shaoqi. Mao remained Chairman of the CCP and in 1962 handed over responsibility for the economy to Liu and another moderate, General Secretary Deng Xiaoping. Mao then withdrew from political life for the next five years allowing Liu, Deng and Zhou Enlai to deal with the issue of famine and the social and economic problems brought on by Mao's attempt at rapid economic advancement. All three men had been close supporters of Mao, but by 1958 were disillusioned with Mao's radical policies. Under Liu's presidency, there would be a shift away from ideology and a more practical application of steady advancement and technical expertise.



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 8.1** The Great Famine of 1959–61 had a devastating effect on the people of China.

Under the advice of agricultural expert Chen Yun, free markets were allowed so that peasants could sell their produce and make a profit. Peasants were also allowed to own their own plots of land. This resulted in a rapid increase in food production, and by 1961 the famine was over and almost half of all arable land in China was under the ownership of peasant families. This was in direct conflict with Mao's agrarian and ideological policies and did not go unnoticed by the Great Helmsman, who described himself during this inert period of his political career as being 'like a dead ancestor – revered, but not consulted'.

Mao's response was to initiate the Cultural Revolution, which he launched in 1966 with the following words:

“ The task of this meeting is to attend to our documents, and primarily to change the method of sending out work teams so that revolutionary teachers and students in schools, as well as some middle-of-the-road people, can organise school Cultural Revolution Groups to lead the Great Cultural Revolution. Only they understand the affairs of the schools. The work teams do not understand ... The purpose of the Great Cultural Revolution in the schools is to carry out struggle, criticism, transformation. ”

Mao Zedong, Speech at a meeting of regional secretaries and members of the Cultural Revolutionary Group of the Central Committee, 22 July 1966



## FROM THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION TO THE DEATH OF MAO

1963	Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong (Little Red Book) published
1965	Wu Han affair
1966	Cultural Revolution Small Group formed Red Guards attacked the Four Olds
1967	PLA ordered to assist the revolutionary masses
1969	Lin Biao named as Mao's heir at 9th National Congress of the CCP Death of Liu Shaoqi in prison
1970	Chen Boda arrested and purged
1971	Lin Biao killed in air crash
1972	Start of the 'Criticise Lin Biao and Confucius' campaign
1973	Deng Xiaoping reinstated as China's vice-premier
1976	Death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four

After the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, Mao had left the government in the hands of moderate party leaders Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who reversed many of Mao's policies. Mao realised that this had been a mistake and he wanted to reassert his authority over the government and China.

Liu and Deng's policies were successful and their popularity and power were growing. Mao, the Great Helmsman, was no longer steering the ship. He believed that he was being treated 'like a dead ancestor – revered but not consulted'.

Mao was convinced that there were some substantial problems in China. He thought that the urban population was being favoured over peasants and that it was necessary to spur on a more egalitarian and participatory society.

China's young had no experience of revolution. Mao believed in a continual cycle of revolution in order to clear away the old and maintain a revolutionary consciousness.

A new elite had developed in China of party officials and experts whom Mao labelled as 'revisionists' and who were still prone to bourgeois and capitalist ways. Further class struggle was necessary if the country hoped to achieve true socialism.

Mao and his supporters wanted to cleanse China's culture of potential critics and use culture to promote Maoist ideology and the cult of Mao. Artists and writers were targeted in order to do away with feudal and revisionist ideas.



**SOURCE 8.2** Mao's motives for the Cultural Revolution

## THE SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT, 1962–65

Lasting from 1962 to 1965, the Socialist Education Movement is the precursor to the Cultural Revolution. At the 10th Plenum of the CCP leadership in September 1962, Mao called on the party to ‘never forget class struggle’. Mao felt a need to rectify the growing trend towards what he saw as the elitism of Chinese scholars, artists and intellectuals and to raise the value of labourers and peasants. Mao was also troubled by the general trend towards capitalism, which had been necessary in order to bring relief to the peasants after the disaster of the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent famine. These capitalist incentives offered to peasants were in Mao’s mind counter-revolutionary and had resulted in many peasants turning away from collectivisation to form a new petty bourgeois peasant class. Furthermore, there was widespread corruption within the ranks of the party cadre, and many were exploiting their privileged positions. Therefore at the 10th Plenum of the Eighth National Congress of the Central Committee, Mao launched the Socialist Education Movement, or what became commonly known as the ‘Four Clean-ups’, in the areas of politics, economics, organisation and ideology, claiming that ‘governance is also a process of socialist education’.

### Little Red Book

The common name for a pocket-sized edition of *Selected Quotations from the Writings of Chairman Mao*. Many people, especially the PLA and Red Guards, studied it daily and carried it everywhere

In essence this meant educating and empowering the lower-class peasants and workers against corrupt cadres and middle-class peasants. China’s education system was modified to fit in with worker and peasant shifts, combining work and study into what was known as *xiafang*. Education was therefore made accessible to all. Alongside this initiative the campaign also pushed many intellectuals and artists to learn from the peasants through forced manual labour in the fields and the factories and led to the introduction of a **Little Red Book** of Mao’s quotations as the ideological guidebook for all PLA soldiers and eventually the masses.



Alamy/Giovanni Guarino STOCK

**MAO'S LITTLE RED BOOK**

毛主席语录  
QUOTATIONS FROM  
CHAIRMAN  
MAO TSE-TUNG

- In 1964, defence minister Lin Biao compiled quotations from Chairman Mao into a single publication commonly known as the Little Red Book.
- It was issued to all PLA soldiers, who were ordered to study Mao’s words in daily study sessions and adhere to his teaching.
- Maoist ideology was therefore reinforced within the PLA, increasing morale and fanatical dedication to Mao.
- PLA soldiers were also urged to ‘learn from Lei Feng’, a young soldier who was the epitome of Maoist and Yan’an ideals.
- In turn, Mao called on the people to ‘learn from the PLA’.
- In 1965, the Little Red Book was published for mass use and was endorsed as the compulsory text for all schools and universities.

During the Cultural Revolution, the Little Red Book became synonymous with the Red Guards.

‘Study Chairman Mao’s writings, follow his teachings and act according to his instructions’. (Lin Biao, 1966)

Openly opposed by Liu Shaoqi and other moderates in the party as a muddle of confusing directives and unpopular policies, the Socialist Education Movement was largely a failure by 1965. What it did achieve, however, was a clear division and rivalry within the party between the moderate faction led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, and Mao's hardline radicals who emphasised class struggle and anti-revisionism. The battle lines had been drawn and in 1966 the Socialist Education Movement was officially merged under the larger umbrella of the Cultural Revolution.

## WU HAN'S PLAY AND THE RISE OF RADICALS, 1965

A key trigger for the launch of the Cultural Revolution was an argument over a play written by the deputy mayor of Beijing, Wu Han, entitled *The Dismissal of Hai Rui from Office*. In 1965, Mao ordered the newly created Five-man Cultural Revolution Group headed by Peng Zhen to investigate and write a report about Wu Han's play.

The play was set during the era of the Song dynasty and told of an imperial court official called Hai Rui who was unjustly dismissed from his position for disagreeing with a tyrannical emperor. Mao may have seen this as a parody of his own dismissal of the then defence minister, Peng Dehuai, who had opposed Mao over the failure of the Great Leap Forward.

Moreover, Mao saw this as an opportunity to attack Wu Han through the damning report, but also to call for a greater general attack on culture and launch a personal vendetta against his enemies.

Wu Han was closely associated with the mayor of Beijing and the party's head of culture, Peng Zhen, who had ignored the instructions of Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, to end the traditional performances of the Beijing opera and adopt a new, more 'revolutionary' repertoire. Mao saw Peng as a potential threat and criticised him for turning Beijing into his own independent kingdom. Peng tried to defend Wu Han by stalling publication of the report and defending Wu Han at party meetings.

In February 1966, the Five-man Group finally released what was known as the February Outline Report, which concluded that Wu Han's play was more of a literary issue rather than a political one. Mao refused to read the report. Throughout March 1966, with Liu Shaoqi overseas on a state visit, Mao instigated a series of Politburo meetings in which he criticised Peng's Five-man Cultural Revolution Group and called for its dissolution. Mao's henchmen, Kang Sheng and Chen Boda, persuaded the Politburo that Peng was incompetent and should resign. When Liu Shaoqi returned from abroad he had no choice but to dismiss Peng, one of his closest associates. Mao had won a powerful political victory over the moderates in the party. Bolstered by this success he made a bold move with the release of the May 16 Circular, which announced the end of Peng Zhen's Five-man Group; it was to be replaced by the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group (CCRS) consisting of Mao's most trusted and loyal supporters, including Jiang Qing, Chen Boda and Kang Sheng. The CCRSG, headed by Jiang Qing, was set up to review and report on culture. It was also designed as the overseer of a mass revolutionary movement that was designed to fundamentally change social values, calling for the need for a Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to weed out those who were guilty of 'revisionism'. The release of the May 16 Circular was therefore a key turning point and marks the transition to the political battle, through the pretext of culture, for control of Communist China. The Cultural Revolution had started.

# The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1965–69



**SOURCE 8.3** Mao and his main allies during the Cultural Revolution. From left to right: Kang Sheng, head of the Secret Service (and allegedly Jiang Qing's erstwhile lover); Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister and Secretary of State; Mao Zedong; Lin Biao, Secretary of Defence and the mastermind behind the Mao worship; Chen Boda, Mao's long-standing private secretary; and finally Jiang Qing, Mao's wife.

## May 16 Circular, 1966

Party committees at all levels must immediately stop carrying out the 'Outline Report on the Current Academic Discussion made by the Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution'. The whole party must follow Comrade Mao Tse-tung's instructions, hold high the great banner of the proletarian Cultural Revolution, thoroughly expose the reactionary bourgeois stand of those so-called 'academic authorities' who oppose the party and socialism, thoroughly criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois ideas in the sphere of academic work, education, journalism, literature and art, and publishing, and seize the leadership in these cultural spheres. To achieve this, it is necessary at the same time to criticize and repudiate those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, the government, the army, and all spheres of culture, to clear them out or transfer some of them to other positions. Above all, we must not entrust these people with the work of leading the Cultural Revolution. In fact many of them have done and are still doing such work, and this is extremely dangerous.

Those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, the government, the army, and various cultural circles 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, persons like Khrushchev, for example, who are still nestling beside us. Party committees at all levels must pay full attention to this matter.

Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China  
on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 16 May 1966

*continued*

continued

## Questions

- 1 What does this circular of the CCP instruct the party's committees to do?
- 2 According to the document, how is this to be achieved?
- 3 In what way are the 'counter-revolutionary revisionists' seen as a threat?
- 4 Explain the purpose of this document.

## Jiang Qing (1914–1991)

“ Sex is engaging in the first rounds; what sustains interest in the long run is political power. ”

Jiang Qing

Jiang Qing was born the daughter of a carpenter in 1914. She was a successful stage and movie actress in Shanghai before joining the CCP in 1936 and then marrying Mao Zedong at Yan'an in 1938. Sidelined by the party and banned from any political influence, Jiang worked as a leading member of the Ministry of Culture after the Communist victory in 1949. In the 1960s, Jiang emerged as a serious political figure during the Cultural Revolution when she criticised the government under Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who were labelled 'rightists' for their moderate economic policies. Motivated by her hatred of the party elite who had rejected her in the past and by her devotion to Mao, Jiang ruthlessly set about building a new socialist culture and eventually became the leading figure of the infamous **Gang of Four**, who occupied powerful positions in the Politburo after the 10th Party Congress of 1973. After Mao's death in 1976, the power of the Gang of Four declined dramatically, and in 1980 they were tried and found guilty of plotting against the state. Jiang was sentenced to death but the charge was later reduced to life imprisonment. She committed suicide in prison in 1991.

## Question

- 1 Research Jiang Qing and find at least five quotes about her by contemporaries and historians.



Getty Images/Keystone



Pictures from History

**SOURCE 8.4** Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, was an actress in her younger years. In this propaganda poster, her image is surrounded by scenes showing the revolutionary model operas she developed. During the Cultural Revolution, these were the only theatrical performances allowed in China. The poster caption reads: 'The invincible thought of Mao Zedong illuminates the stage of revolutionary art!'

## Gang of Four

A group of four radical CCP leaders (Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen) who were fanatically loyal to Mao Zedong; they rose to power during the era of the Cultural Revolution, overseeing many of Mao's radical political and social measures

## STUDENT ACTIVISM, 1966

The May 16 Circular caused great excitement and debate throughout China and particularly among academics and students. In the same month, a Beijing University professor, encouraged by Kang

### big-character poster

A form of propaganda in the shape of a large handwritten poster presenting an important issue. During the Cultural Revolution, big-character posters (*da-zi-bao*) were used to attack and humiliate people

Sheng's wife, posted a **big-character poster** criticising the university's administration and in particular the head of the university, who was a close associate of the ousted Peng Zhen. The poster stated that 'the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of faculty members and students has been suppressed'. Mao personally endorsed this big-character poster in an article in the *People's Daily*, which published a copy of the poster. Throughout China there was widespread support both in academic circles and in the press, and on 3 June the head of Beijing University was forced to resign. In universities all over China students responded with fanatical enthusiasm by posting their own big-character posters. Within months, tens of thousands had been posted in an avalanche of fanaticism criticising the government and the education system.

### Red Guards

Groups of high-school and university students who were from 'red' family backgrounds or who had proved themselves to be firm revolutionaries; they were Mao's loyal supporters and the pioneers of the Cultural Revolution

By late May, student groups had begun to form into military-style squads and labelled themselves **Red Guards**, an expression of revolutionary zeal which emphasised that they were both Communists and the guardians of Maoist ideology. At this point the actions of the Red Guards became decidedly more violent as they turned on their teachers and lecturers. Fanned on by Chen Boda's propaganda broadcasts and newspaper articles, millions of high-school and university students abandoned their lessons and took to the streets in demonstrations, pledging themselves to 'fight to the death to defend Mao Zedong Thought'. First at Beijing University and then throughout China, students would publicly humiliate and torture their administrators and teachers. Throughout this time, Mao stayed in the background, away from Beijing, and refused to give definitive advice to Liu and Deng, who begged Mao to return to the capital as they optimistically attempted to control the situation.

## MAO'S GREAT SWIM

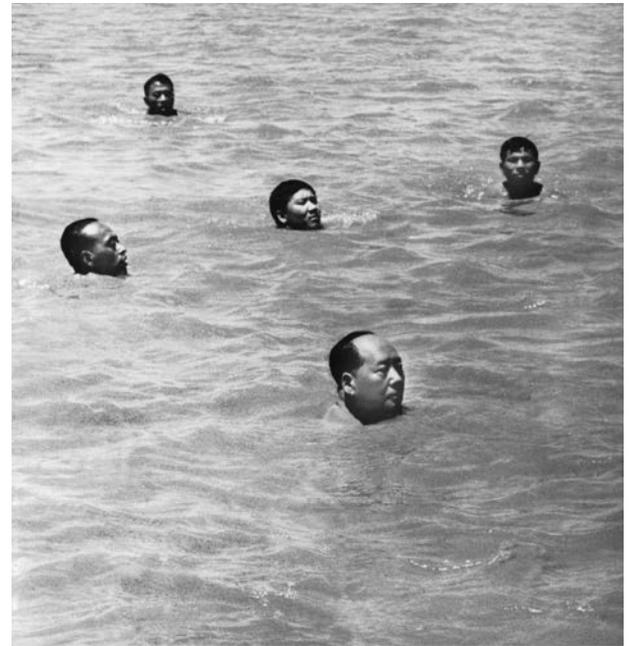
On 16 July 1966, Mao emerged from his self-imposed slumber to stage an event that would publicly declare that he was still capable, healthy and ready to retake the helm. Accompanied by platoons of PLA soldiers, Mao swam down the Yangzi River at Wuhan for about 15 kilometres. Mao's swim took approximately 65 minutes; four times the swimming speed of the then world record holder. Clearly Mao was assisted, certainly by the current and possibly by scuba divers. Nevertheless, the symbolism was clear, Mao was back and ready to reassert his authority and ideology over China and its people.

After an absence of almost eight months, Mao finally returned to Beijing on 18 July and made it clear that he fully supported the Red Guards and their actions. On 5 August he wrote his own big-character poster entitled 'Bombard the headquarters' in which Mao criticised 'some leading comrades' who had 'imposed a white terror' by suppressing the student movement. It is commonly believed that Mao was referring to the leaders of the government, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. A Red Guard writing group declared at the time that this was 'the key salvo, the shot that led to the complete and thorough burying of the bourgeois headquarters headed by Liu Shaoqi, China's Khrushchev!'



Getty Images/ChinaFotoPress

**SOURCE 8.5** Red Guards wave copies of Chairman Mao Zedong's Little Red Book during a parade in June 1966 in Beijing's streets at the beginning of China's Cultural Revolution.



Getty Images/Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone

**SOURCE 8.6** Mao's great swim signalled his preparedness to reassert his authority as leader of the revolution.

## THE SIXTEEN POINTS

On 8 August at the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee, a document known as the Sixteen Points was issued, which outlined the key goals and basic strategies for the Cultural Revolution. It conveyed to its readers that the main objective of the Cultural Revolution was 'to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road'. It called on the Red Guards to 'make full use of big-character posters' and designated 'old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits' as the main targets for destruction, which would later become a full-blown revolutionary campaign known as 'Destroy the **Four Olds**'. Furthermore, the Sixteen Points called for the mobilisation of the masses and particularly highlighted the role to be played in the revolution by the younger generation, who would be tempered by the experience of this revolution in which they would 'expose all the ghosts and monsters'. The Sixteen Points took the existing student movement and elevated it to the level of a nationwide mass campaign, calling on not only students but also 'the masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals, and revolutionary cadres' to carry out the task of 'transforming the superstructure' by writing big-character posters and holding 'great debates'. The Sixteen Points granted the most extensive freedom of speech the PRC had ever seen, but this was a freedom severely determined by the Maoist ideological climate and, ultimately, by the People's Liberation Army and Mao's authority over the army. The freedoms granted in the Sixteen Points were later written into the PRC constitution as 'the four great rights' of great democracy: to speak out freely, to air one's views fully, to write big-character posters, and to hold great debates.

Also of significance at the plenum was the forced self-criticism and demotion of Liu Shaoqi, who it was decided would hold eighth position in the Politburo hierarchy in favour of Lin Biao, who Mao described as his 'closest comrade in arms'.

### Four Olds

'Old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits' – according to the propaganda, these remnants of the old society interfered with the creation of a modern, socialist society



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/gallery/e15-125.php>

**SOURCE 8.7** 'Bombard the capitalist headquarters' – this poster quotes a big-character poster by Mao, in which he accuses other party leaders of treasonous and capitalist points of view and urges his supporters to overthrow his enemies. Big-character posters were used extensively during the Cultural Revolution.

## THE AUGUST RALLY AND THE DESCENT INTO CHAOS, 1966

On 18 August 1966, approximately one million Red Guards met in Tiananmen Square declaring their determination to carry out the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. Formal education came to a halt as the press announced that schools would be closed for the next six months



Alamy/Robert Harding Picture Library Ltd

**SOURCE 8.8** A demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1967, during the Cultural Revolution

until an acceptable curriculum could be devised. Mass rallies were held throughout the coming months, with about 11 million Red Guards gathering in Beijing to chant slogans, dance loyalty dances and sing songs in praise of Mao. This blind fanaticism gradually descended into anarchic violence, during which those in positions of authority, or having dealings with foreigners, were attacked in struggle sessions and subjected to beatings, torture and public humiliation.

## Eyewitnesses to the Cultural Revolution

The sources on these pages are all eyewitness accounts written by authors who lived through the era of the Cultural Revolution.

### Nien Cheng

Nien Cheng was arrested and imprisoned in 1966 after Red Guards looted her house. When Nien was released in 1973, she discovered that her daughter had been murdered by the Communists. She later fled to the United States.

... the mission of the Red Guards was to rid the country of the 'four olds' – old culture, old customs, old habits and old ways of thinking. There was no clear definition of 'old'; it was left up to the Red Guards to decide. First of all, they changed the street names. The main thoroughfare of Shanghai ... was renamed August the First to commemorate Army Day. The road on which the Soviet Union had its consulate was renamed Anti-Revisionist Street. The Red Guards debated whether to reverse the system of traffic lights, as they thought that Red should mean Go and not Stop. In the meantime, traffic lights stopped operating. They smashed flower and curio shops because they said only the rich had money to spend on such goods they considered offensive ... Because they did not think a socialist man should sit on a sofa, all sofas became taboo. Other things such as inner-spring mattresses, silk, velvet, cosmetics and clothes that reflected fashion trends of the West were tossed into the streets waiting to be carted away and burnt.

Other Red Guards were stopping buses, distributing leaflets, lecturing the passengers and punishing those whose clothes the Red Guards disapproved of. Most bicycles had red cards bearing Mao's quotations on the handlebars; riders of the few without them were stopped and given warning ... Each group of Red Guards was accompanied by large reproductions of Mao's portraits mounted on stands and drums and gongs. At many street corners, loudspeakers were blaring revolutionary songs at intervals.

Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Flamingo, London, 1995, pp. 56–8



Corbis/Catherine Karnow

### Jung Chang

Jung Chang is a Chinese-born writer who is now living in London. She is best known for her family biography, *Wild Swans*, and her biography of Mao entitled *Mao: The Unknown Story*, which she co-authored with her historian husband, Jon Halliday.

Provincial youngsters were encouraged to visit Peking (Beijing) to learn that Mao had given them enormous destructive licence. To facilitate this process, Mao ordered that travel be made free together with food and accommodation ... Over the next four months, 11 million young people came to Peking and Mao made seven more appearances at Tiananmen Square, where they gathered in massive, frenzied, yet well-drilled crowds.

That afternoon, groups of teenage Red Guards, many of them girls, descended on the courtyard of the Peking Writers Association. By then a



Getty Images/David Levenson

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'uniform' was firmly in fashion for the Red Guards: green army-style clothes ... red armband on the left arm, Little Red Book in hand – and a leather belt with brass buckles. Thus attired, the Red Guards rained down blows with their heavy belts on some two dozen of the country's best-known writers' necks, as they were thrashed in the scorching sun. The victims were then trucked to an old Confucian temple, which housed Peking's major library. There, opera costumes and props had been brought to make a bonfire. About thirty of the country's leading writers, opera singers and other artists were made to kneel in front of the bonfire and were set upon again with kicks and punches, sticks and brass-buckled belts.

It was with the authorities' blessing that Red Guards broke into homes where they burned books, cut up paintings, trampled phonograph records and musical instruments – generally wrecking anything to do with 'culture'. They 'confiscated' valuables and beat up the owners. Bloody house raids swept across China, which the *People's Daily* hailed as 'simply splendid'. Many of those raided were tortured to death in their own homes. Some were carted off to makeshift torture chambers in what had been cinemas, theatres and sports stadiums.

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005, pp. 538–40

### Anhua Gao

A former Young Pioneer and Red Guard, Anhua Gao is the Chinese–British author of *To The Edge of the Sky*, a best-selling autobiographical account of her and her family's life in Maoist China from 1926 until her escape to the West in 1994.

During these (struggle) meetings, dirty water and spoilt food was poured over the heads of victims. Our headmaster, Mr Sha, was dragged to one. His hair was pulled so that he had to bend forward, but his arms were lifted backwards. It was a favourite way to inflict pain, called 'flying a plane', and was used extensively to punish capitalist roadsters. A long list of crimes was read out to him, not least of which was the building of the swimming pool, now closed, which had sabotaged Mao's call to swim in the big rivers and sea. Other charges included 'growing the revisionist seedlings', which referred to the students with good marks. He was forced to crawl on all fours around the big playground, barking like a dog until his voice became a croak, and his hand and knees left trails of blood. Then, with other teachers, he was paraded through the streets. They had to wear pointed witches hats made of white paper, and big cardboard squares hung round their necks, bearing their names.

Anhua Gao, *To the Edge of the Sky*, The Overlook Press, Woodstock, New York, 2003, p. 150



Photo courtesy Anhua Gao

### Ji-li Jiang

Ji-li Jiang was born in Shanghai in 1954 and is the author of *Red Scarf Girl*, an autobiography in which she writes about her childhood memories of the Cultural Revolution. Ji-li was a science teacher in China before she went to the United States in 1984.

One day we heard that Chairman Mao was going to receive all the Red Guards at Tiananmen Square ... We all went to the square right away, because we didn't know when he would come. We waited all afternoon. When night came, we stayed. There



Photo courtesy Ji-li Jiang

continued

continued

were thousands of comrades in the square, and we spent all night establishing revolutionary ties. Right next to me there was a comrade whose cousin had seen Chairman Mao. It was hard to believe that I would see him too. No one slept a wink. The next morning many more came. The whole square was terribly crowded. There were tens of thousands of us sitting there, most of us dressed in army uniforms and wearing red armbands ... Everywhere you looked were revolutionary comrades. It was a truly magnificent sight.

My friends have asked me why, after all I went through, I did not hate Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution in those years. The answer is simple: We were all brainwashed. To us Chairman Mao was God. He controlled everything we read, everything we heard, and everything we learned in school. We believed everything he said. Naturally, we knew only good things about Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Anything bad had to be the fault of others. Mao was blameless.

Ji-li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl: A memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Harper Trophy, New York, 1997, pp. 106, 265

## Questions

- 1 Using the text sources make your own assessment of the following:
  - a the motives of the Red Guards
  - b the methods of the Red Guards
  - c the different experiences of people who took part in, or were victims of, the Cultural Revolution.
- 2 Discussion question: To what degree are these memoirs a reliable source of information about the Cultural Revolution?

## SEIZING POWER, 1967

The chaos and destruction continued until January 1967 when the revolutionary activity took a different turn with the 'Seize Power Campaign' directed at the government, party officials and the media. During this 'January storm' more than 20 government ministries were seized and government officials arrested and purged in violent struggle sessions. In the midst of this struggle, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping became prominent targets. In the coming months they were removed from power, dismissed from the party and publicly discredited through propaganda campaigns and a series of struggle sessions in which they were humiliated, beaten and forced to confess their 'crimes'. In March 1967, Deng was accused of heading a secret group of conspirators and imprisoned. Liu underwent



**SOURCE 8.9** Accused of bearing a resemblance to Mao Zedong, province governor Li Fanwu's hair is brutally shaved and torn by zealous young Red Guards in Red Guard Square, Harbin, 12 September 1966.

numerous struggle sessions and beatings between August 1967 and his death in November 1969. In April 1969, Liu was sentenced to indefinite imprisonment with hard labour by the Politburo. They accused him of being a 'renegade traitor and scab' who was, above all others in China, 'taking the capitalist road'. He died in his prison cell of pneumonia, having been denied his diabetes medication, a broken and malnourished man. Other notable party members who underwent torture and humiliation at this time were Bo Yibo, Peng Zhen and Peng Dehuai.

The families of party officials also suffered greatly during this time. Liu's wife, Wang Guangmei, was arrested by Red Guards and then subjected to a series of struggle sessions and public denunciations. Deng Xiaoping's son was forced to jump from a second-storey window in order to attempt to escape his Red Guard captors. He survived but was paralysed and still uses a wheelchair.

## ENDING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, 1967–69

By 1967, the Cultural Revolution was rapidly spiralling out of control. There was intense factionalism emerging between Red Guard units, which had resulted in violent clashes between them since late 1966, each believing that they were the true upholders of Mao Zedong Thought and the Cultural Revolution. The violence reached new levels as Red Guards raided PLA arms depots, arming themselves with automatic weapons, hand grenades and even small anti-aircraft and artillery pieces. At this time, CCP organisation was in complete disarray as upwards of 60 to 70 per cent of the party cadres had been purged along with most of the Politburo members. Zhou Enlai managed to keep some departments open and played Maoist radicals off against each other, but by the beginning of 1967 there was a state of virtual civil war in some parts of China. Education had come to a standstill as had much of China's industry, as workers were urged to join the revolution, forming rebel groups that not only fought one another but also the Red Guards.

Having reattained power and with Maoist ideology again in place, Mao believed that the Red Guards had completed their task and now needed reining in and a new direction. The PLA had always been the foremost supporter of Mao and upholder of Mao Zedong Thought. It was in danger of being undermined by the Red Guards. In September 1967, Mao gave approval to a plan by Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao to restore order. In a speech, Zhou demanded greater discipline and respect for the PLA, who had up to this point encouraged the Red Guards and the factory workers in their support for Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Mao issued orders to the Red Guards to end the fighting and return all arms to the PLA, which was authorised to fire on any group who disobeyed these orders.

Between 1967 and 1972, a new campaign was launched in which more than 12 million young people were sent 'up to the mountains and down to the villages' to work with and learn from the peasantry, a subtle plan to divide the revolutionary groups and deny them their leadership. But also, according to Mao, to deepen their understanding of revolution. By the end of 1968, the last Red Guard units had been disbanded and the Cultural Revolution took on a new direction as Mao sought to dominate China's political structure both nationally and at the local level through the formation of revolutionary committees dominated by PLA officers.

## Red Guards and peasants

### Recollection of Mo Bo, a Red Guard

Red Guard Mo Bo describes how he felt about young people going to the countryside to learn from the peasants.

For the city-dwellers things were different. Few did not want to go to the countryside. Some youngsters ignored their parents' anger and volunteered to go before the required age. Of course several years later most of them regretted it and wanted to return to the city. The sheer physical labour and material deprivation was enough to strip them of the romantic sentiment of the Great Helmsman's call. A lot of the 'educated youth' were sent to State farms where there were no poor and lower-middle peasants anyway. Those who were sent to poor villages began to despise the peasants as soon as they got there. For them, the people in the country were illiterate, ignorant and unhygienic. When an educated youth went to visit a poor peasant's home she might have enough revolutionary sense not to use her handkerchief to wipe off the dirt from the bench that was offered – but that meant she had to remain standing for half an hour, pretending to talk with and learn from the peasant. The peasants, on the other hand, treated these 'foreign students' as temporary guests. Their instinct told them that things might come and go but their life would always be the same. However, they did look at the young urban people with great interest. The 'educated Shanghai youth' became well known all over the country for their good-looking hairstyle and clothes – and young Shanghai women with their white skin were constantly hunted by the 'local bosses'. But this is only part of the story. Quite a few students settled down in the rural areas and contributed to the improvement of the country. When I went to university in 1973, we former Red Guards met to exchange our experiences. We agreed that our stay with the people in the country had taught us the value of things – and of life itself.

Mo Bo, 'I Was a Teenage Red Guard', *The New Internationalist Magazine*, April 1978



Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam), <http://chinese-posters.net/posters/e15-178.php>

**SOURCE 8.10** Poster depicting-eyed youngsters from the city arriving in the countryside for resettlement. During the Cultural Revolution an estimated 12 million young people were sent 'up to the mountains, down to the villages' in order to be re-educated by the peasants.



Getty Images/AFP

**SOURCE 8.11** Peasants and Red Guard students take a break from working in the fields to study the thoughts of Chairman Mao, 1971.

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### Questions

- 1 In what way does Source 8.10 give a false impression of the ‘up to the mountains, down to the villages’ campaign?
- 2 What was the purpose of the poster in Source 8.10?
- 3 According to Mo Bo, what hardships did young people experience in the countryside?
- 4 Why did a lot of the ‘educated youth’ begin to despise the peasants?
- 5 What was the peasant reaction to the arrival of the young urban people?
- 6 How do the three sources agree or disagree with one another? Use a quote from the text source and a description of at least one feature of the photograph and the propaganda poster in your answer.

## CLEANSING THE CLASS RANKS

New, more stable revolutionary committees dominated by PLA officers were set up in 18 provinces to take over the administration of the government. Between August 1967 and July 1969, this shift towards setting up a new political and administrative structure in China meant that army officers made up about 30 to 40 per cent of the membership of the provincial revolutionary committees, and in some county areas the PLA completely dominated the membership of the committees. In effect, China was now under military control with Mao wielding power through the PLA, who were not only fanatically loyal to Mao but also indoctrinated with Mao Zedong Thought.

As Mao’s political power unfolded across China, the Gang of Four launched yet another campaign, led by the PLA, that continued the violent purging of various elements in society and the government by the Red Guards. The ‘Cleansing the Class Ranks Campaign’ was more systematic and organised in its approach than previous campaigns, targeting so-called ‘counter-revolutionaries’ and eradicating all signs of capitalism, resulting in more widespread terror and many more deaths and suffering. A key feature of this period was the ‘May 7th Cadre Schools’, which were camps established in rural areas for the ‘re-education’ of party cadre and intellectuals through intensive study sessions and hard physical labour.

## *Consequences of the Cultural Revolution, 1969–76*

At the 9th Party Congress in April 1969, Mao was formally re-elected Chairman of the CCP and Lin Biao was announced as his successor. Most of the moderates had been expelled from the party and the Red Guards had been brought under control. Mao Zedong Thought was adopted as the guiding ideology of the party, and once again Mao reigned as the ‘red emperor’ over China and its people. Although the end of the Cultural Revolution was officially declared in April 1969, it is a widely held belief that it continued as a series of power struggles and political instability between the plot to seize power by Lin Biao in 1971 and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976.

Although Mao and Lin Biao appeared on the surface to be the closest of allies, there was a growing rift between them. By mid 1969, this had led to Lin becoming more self-important

and ambitious. As a member of the Politburo standing committee, commander-in-chief of the PLA and Mao's chosen successor, Lin had enormous power. So much so that there was growing concern from Mao and his closest advisers that Lin could be seen as a serious rival to Mao. It appears that Mao decided to weaken Lin's image by attempting to force him to undergo self-criticism, which he refused to do. Mao also attacked Lin's closest ally, Chen Boda, who was denounced by Mao for rumour-mongering and imprisoned after he sided with Lin Biao in an argument at the Lushan Plenum in August 1970.

Realising that this might be the beginning of his own demise, Lin was triggered into action against Mao. Lin was concerned that Mao's policies had gone too far and that he had become increasingly paranoid and tyrannical. In the spring of 1971, with the aid of his son, Lin Biao plotted to overthrow Mao with a plan codenamed 'Project 571'. The plan was discovered and Lin and his family attempted to escape China, resulting in their death when the plane they were travelling in ran out of fuel over Mongolia and crashed.

The fallout from Lin Biao's death and subsequent disgrace, in a series of propaganda campaigns in which Lin was publicly criticised and branded 'a Liu Shaoqi type', sent shock waves through China as the people grappled with the fact that Mao's closest supporter and advocate had turned against him. A former Red Guard described his feelings about the affair at the time by stating, 'We came to see that the leaders up there could say that something is round; [and] tomorrow, that it's flat. We lost faith in the system'.

### Lin Biao (1907–1971)

“ One word from Chairman Mao is worth ten thousand from others. His every statement is truth. We must carry out those that we understand as well as those we don't. Lin Biao, 1966 ”

Lin Biao had been a member of the CCP since he was 20 years old. He was a veteran of the 1934–35 Long March and had a significant role as a highly successful general during the Chinese Civil War. In 1959, following the dismissal of Peng Dehuai, Lin was appointed minister of defence and commander-in-chief of the PLA. A close confidant of Mao Zedong, Lin was officially recognised as Mao's deputy and heir during the era of the Cultural Revolution, during which time he was responsible for the publication of the *Quotations of Chairman Mao*. Lin's relationship with Mao deteriorated after 1970 as Mao grew



Alamy/World History Archive

**SOURCE 8.12** Mao Zedong, followed by Lin Biao, who was responsible for publishing the thoughts of Mao Zedong, in the Little Red Book.



Corbis/Bettmann

continued

continued

suspicious of Lin's popularity and power. After an attempted coup involving Lin's son, Lin and his family attempted to flee from China to the Soviet Union in September 1971. Their aircraft crashed in Mongolia having reportedly run out of fuel. All on board were killed.

### Question

- 1 Create a fact file diagram of Lin Biao. Include quotes, images and key facts about his ideas and influence.



**SOURCE 8.13** Consequences of the Cultural Revolution

## HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

### Jonathan Fenby on the economic cost of the Cultural Revolution

The economic costs of all-out civil war were evident. Per capita growth of national income dropped to 2.95 per cent in the second half of the 1960s. The number of fatal industrial accidents quadrupled in the same period. The tax system broke down in many places. There was fighting at mines and work stoppages at major plants. Employees ran amok at the Daqing oil field in the north-east. Mass absenteeism cut coal output dangerously – by the end of 1967, stocks were at their lowest ebb of the decade. Steel production was down 30 per cent. Chemicals and machine tools were also hit. Street markets were trashed, and stall owners paraded as enemies. In Harbin, only 800 of 12 600 individual enterprises set up since the Great Leap managed to survive.

Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China*, Penguin Books, London, 2009, pp. 479–80

### Yves Chevrier: Mao as Faust

French historian Yves Chevrier describes Mao as a ‘postmodern Faust’. Faust is a character from German legend who makes a pact with the devil. In exchange for his soul, Faust receives unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. The term ‘faustian’ is used to describe an ambitious person who gives up their moral integrity in order to achieve power and success.

The Cultural Revolution’s brand of totalitarianism was a marriage between rebellion and absolute power that was bound to be discovered false in the end, a monstrous ransom paid for the dream of total activism, a dream of emancipation that worried too little about limiting the powers of the liberators. Mao, son of a certain Chinese democratic ideal, proved ad absurdum [reduced to absurdity] the delusional nature of this ideal. He murdered the Chinese dream of a perfect democracy. Independently of the detours taken or not taken and the differences between this and other totalitarian regimes, failure was at the end of the road, and the final and definitive divorce of Mao’s ill-fated coupling of revolution and absolute power. As cruel as it was, this was not what Mao intended to inflict on his people. They learned it themselves, through the pain of their own experience.

Yves Chevrier, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, trans. David Stryker, Arris Publishing Ltd, Moreton-in-Marsh, 2004, p.144

### Lee Feigon: Mao as misrepresented

American historian Lee Feigon in his book *Mao: A Reinterpretation* has sought to controversially redress the balance and defend Mao and his actions. This is in stark contrast to many modern historians who have almost universally vilified Mao as a tyrant. Feigon believes that Mao is one of the most important political leaders of the 20th century, who has been misrepresented by scholars and tainted by the actions of the Soviet-style bureaucrats in the Chinese government whom Mao

### Questions

- 1 How would the following have been affected by the factors mentioned in Fenby’s description of the consequences of the Cultural Revolution?
  - a China’s economy
  - b China’s people
  - c China’s leadership
- 2 Provide two pieces of evidence from each historian, in the form of quotes, that either support or denounce Mao and his role in the Cultural Revolution.
- 3 Summarise in your own words the two interpretations of Mao described by historians Yves Chevrier and Lee Feigon.
- 4 Research and provide an additional interpretation from a contemporary communist source on Mao’s role in the Cultural Revolution. Compare this view to that of historians Chevrier and Feigon.

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hated and tried to eliminate. Indeed, without Mao's Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, China would never have been able to shake off its reliance on the Soviet Union and forge its own path to economic superpower status.

Mao may not have been the 'sun in the sky' that China's old sycophantic culture designated him in the 1960s. The deconstruction of worshipful attitudes toward officialdom that Mao engineered during the Cultural Revolution has rightly diminished the awe he once inspired, even if the old man might not have appreciated the slew of Chinese artists who have now reduced his image to postmodern kitsch. But no one can deny that Mao was a great leader who transformed China. In a post-socialist age, Mao still ranks as a socialist hero. In an anti-totalitarian time, Mao can still inspire awe for his struggles against bureaucracy and his efforts to educate and empower the common people. The rural boy from Hunan may not have even heard the name Marx until he was in his mid-twenties, but his own name will inspire discussion for years to come, and his influence – largely positive – will be felt in China for generations.

Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee Publishing, Chicago, 2002, p. 183

## Conclusion

The Cultural Revolution came to an end with the fall of the Gang of Four shortly after Mao's death, revealing the fragility of its position and the unpopularity of its policies. In its place existed a legacy of bitterness and disillusionment, especially among the young, who had been exploited by the movement. Ironically it was the sweeping away of a different kind of 'old' that would lead to this change; the old party and old ideology, and the emergence of a new revisionist leadership, exactly what Mao had sought to destroy through his Cultural Revolution. Mao himself considered the Cultural Revolution to be one of his greatest achievements. Shortly before his death, he confided in a group of his followers that he had achieved two major victories in his lifetime: his defeat of Jiang Jieshi and the Japanese, and the Cultural Revolution. It is clear therefore that Mao felt that the legacy of the Cultural Revolution would live on after his death.

The new leadership that emerged after Mao's death, led by Deng Xiaoping, embarked on what has been described as a second revolution of economic advancement and modernisation

that would ultimately bring about China's ascendancy as the economic powerhouse that it is today. This backlash, away from Maoism towards what was described by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', has led some historians to conclude that without the Cultural Revolution China would not have been able to achieve such rapid economic transformation.

Although the Communist Party has affirmed that the Cultural Revolution 'brought serious disaster and turmoil to the Communist Party and the Chinese people', they have put much of the blame on the



Corbis/Bettmann

**SOURCE 8.14** Chinese proletarian workers pay their respects to the body of Chairman Mao in Beijing in 1976.

Gang of Four and have concluded that Mao's merits have largely outweighed his faults. The Chinese government continues to play down the atrocities that were committed during the decade of chaos that was the Cultural Revolution. An example of this is the notable lack of exhibits on the Cultural Revolution at the National Museum of China in Beijing. Furthermore, no compensation has been awarded or apologies given to the millions of victims of the Cultural Revolution.

## Chapter summary

- + One of the most notable consequences of the Cultural Revolution was the resurrection of Mao as head of both the party and the state.
- + The Cultural Revolution was launched to reinvigorate the revolution and reinstate Mao's ideology over China and its people.
- + The Cultural Revolution attacked both artists and intellectuals and so-called 'rightist' party cadre.
- + Tens of millions of Chinese people were victims of Mao's policies during this period; at least 700 000 died and many millions were persecuted.
- + Education and industry came to a virtual standstill during the first two years of the Cultural Revolution, temporarily setting back China's economic development.
- + The moderates in the CCP, led by Deng Xiaoping, re-emerged as China's leaders after Mao's death in 1976, beginning a new era of economic advancement and modernisation.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/china>

### Further resources

Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1991.

Jung Chang & Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005.

Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2002.

Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, Phaidon Press, London, 2003.

Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1994.

Roderick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1966.  
 Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, Harper Collins, London, 1993.

### Film

*As It Happened*, 'Mao: A Life', SBS, 2006.

*Morning Sun*, documentary by Carma Hinton, Long Bow Group, 2003.



## Chapter review activities

- 1 What do you think was Mao's main reason for launching the Cultural Revolution in 1966? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Explain in your own words the significance of the publication of the Little Red Book.
- 3 What were the Four Olds? Explain, giving specific examples for each.
- 4 What motivated young people to gather in Beijing in August 1966?
- 5 Why did the Young Pioneers (students) attack their teachers and administrators?
- 6 Explain the role and relevance of each of the following groups to the Cultural Revolution:
  - + Cultural Revolution Group
  - + Gang of Four
  - + Red Guards
  - + PLA.
- 7 In what way did the Cultural Revolution begin to spiral out of control?
- 8 How did Mao and his supporters bring the Red Guard back under control?
- 9 Use evidence from this chapter to complete the table below in your workbook.

### Summary: The Cultural Revolution 1966–76

Aims	Targets	Methods	Impact

- 10 Produce a short presentation on the cult of Mao. Focus on the following areas:
  - + the role of Lin Biao
  - + quotations of Chairman Mao
  - + propaganda
  - + memorabilia.



- 11 Construct an argument about the consequences of the Cultural Revolution. Evaluate the following statement: 'The political and ideological gains far outweigh the social and economic losses made during the era of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution during 1966–76'. Use evidence to support your answer.
  - + Use at least three primary sources from this book and other sources such as textbooks and the Internet.
  - + Use at least two historical interpretations of the Cultural Revolution from this book and other sources.
  - + Try to match the primary sources to the historical interpretations in your argument.
- 12 Propaganda posters formed an important aspect of communicating the revolutionary ideas of the CCP. Undertake research and find four examples of posters from the period of the Cultural Revolution. Annotate each poster with explanations of the symbols used, a summary of their meaning and a brief description of their aim. Are there similarities or differences with propaganda posters from an earlier period?
- 13 Using a mind map, or similar organiser, summarise the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the everyday life of peasants, intellectuals, party members, students and Red Guards.
- 14
  - a Create an illustrated and annotated timeline of the six most significant consequences of the period 1949 to 1971. Your annotations should identify key figures and a relevant quote, a brief description of the causes of the event and its consequences.
  - b Rank the events from most significant to least significant and write a paragraph explaining your choices.
- 15 Historian Simon Leys, in his book *The Chairman's New Clothes* (1977), claims that 'The Cultural Revolution had nothing revolutionary about it except the name, and nothing cultural about it except the initial tactical pretext. It was a power struggle waged at the top between a handful of men and behind the smokescreen of a fictitious mass movement.' Do you agree with this statement? Was the Cultural Revolution nothing more than a power struggle between the leaders of the CCP, or was it a revolution launched by Mao to preserve his legacy and protect China from rightist elements? Use evidence from this chapter in your answer.

CONCLUSION

*China and  
Revolution*

## CHINA AFTER MAO

After Mao's death in 1976, there was a power struggle between the Gang of Four, whose leading figure was Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping and Mao's designated successor, Hua Guofeng. Despite the considerable power wielded by the Gang of Four, their powerbase was in Shanghai and they lacked the support of many of the Politburo members. When Hua and Deng joined forces, despite their different political views, they proved to be a formidable force against a common enemy.

At a Politburo meeting in September 1976, Jiang accused Hua of incompetence and demanded that she replace him as chairman of the Central Committee. Hua reminded her that he had considerable military backing and was supported by the majority of the Politburo. After Mao's death, the power of the Gang of Four quickly disintegrated. Many party leaders and officials had been purged during the Cultural Revolution, including Deng. With the chairman dead, there was little support for a continuation of Mao's radical policies.

With its position weakening, the Gang of Four then plotted to stage a coup, which would take place on 6 October. Hua and Deng discovered the plot and were quick to react, arresting the Gang the day before the planned takeover.

Hua was now both party chairman and China's premier. Rallies were held in Tiananmen Square and throughout the country, where millions celebrated the smashing of the Gang of Four. The trial of the Gang members was not held until 1980, and despite initially being handed death sentences the Gang's association with Mao meant that these sentences were later reduced to life imprisonment.



A CCP poster depicting members of the Gang of Four impaled on a giant skewer, entitled 'Resolutely overthrow the anti-party clique of Wang, Zhang, Jiang and Yao', 1976

## DENG'S SECOND REVOLUTION, 1978–97

Despite Hua's power and position he was quickly outmanoeuvred by the highly able and talented Deng who by 1977 had become vice-premier and CCP general secretary. Unlike Hua, Deng was a victim of the Cultural Revolution and not associated with Mao and his policies. At the 3rd Plenum of the Central Committee in 1978, Deng's 'Four Modernisations' were accepted as the basis for economic development and marked the formal end of the Cultural Revolution and its policies.

Deng's reforms would change every aspect of society and the economy, and welcome in a new era where China would open up to the West. Deng's Four Modernisations in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defence were a shift away from the ideological shaping of Maoist China. Where Mao urged class struggle and economic self-sufficiency, Deng promoted class unity and international trade and investment. Material incentives were used to encourage workers and peasants, and the 'experts' returned to guide the ambitious modernisation and education of China and its people. Between 1978 and 1984, village communes were replaced with private farming as each village household was given plots of land. Industry was decentralised and factories were leased to the workers by the government. A new emphasis was placed on the production of consumer goods rather than heavy industry – goods that could be sold both domestically and abroad.

◀ The modern Shanghai skyline reflects China's rapid progress.



Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

Deng Xiaoping, Chinese premier from 1978 until his retirement in 1992

In 1979, US President Jimmy Carter bestowed diplomatic recognition on China, and trade between the two great nations was renewed for the first time in 30 years. Foreign company employees, tourists and students began to travel to China, and China sent thousands of its students overseas to study. This, however, led to criticism of the CCP by returning intellectuals who demanded greater freedom of expression and democracy. This pro-democracy movement was condemned by the government as 'bourgeois liberalism'. Throughout the 1980s there was a struggle between China's intellectuals, who demanded civil reforms, and the CCP, who saw this as a threat to its power, and stressed the need to maintain tight control.

In December 1986, thousands of students across China demonstrated, demanding freedom, democracy and an end to party privilege. Outspoken dissidents were arrested and the government made some small reforms to the electoral process. By the end of the year the demonstrations had all but finished. Party conservatives made moves to ensure that China's intellectuals could not stir up further unrest, however, by insisting that intellectuals give up their party membership. CCP General Secretary

Hu Yaobang, one of Deng's closest allies, was purged from the party in 1987 because he advocated greater freedom of expression, and was accused of showing too much leniency in dealing with student protesters. Thus, the pro-democracy movement continued to gain momentum, and was even finding support among the workers in the urban areas.

In the summer of 1988 an economic crisis hit China brought on by rapid economic growth that had caused inflation in some cities of more than 10 per cent per month and a national annual inflation rate of between 60 and 80 per cent. As people began to hoard food and goods, inflation continued to spiral out of control. Divisions within the government began to appear as a series of ineffective economic measures were introduced in an attempt to gain control of the economy. In April 1989, pro-democracy demonstrations again exploded in 341 of China's cities on a scale that shocked the world. At this point some 3000 students went on a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square, claiming that they would rather die than live without democracy and demanding the resignation of Deng and other party officials. As the protests continued, the CCP imposed martial law in Beijing. Thousands of troops were sent to Beijing as the government called on 'the whole party, the whole army and the whole nation to make concerted efforts and act immediately at all posts to stop the turmoil and stabilise the situation'.

On 3 June 1989, the government ordered tanks and troops to end the protests, and a massacre ensued in which tens of thousands lost their lives in Beijing and throughout China's cities. The world stood in astonishment as graphic scenes of brutality were broadcast worldwide. Not so in China, however, whose own press only published pictures and reports that showed the protesters as inciting violence and attacking PLA soldiers.

Since the Tiananmen massacre, the Chinese government has sought to improve its world image, through diplomacy and a new era of openness with the world. This was evident in 2008 when the Olympics came to Beijing. Despite this, China still strives to balance its global image. On the one hand it can be seen as a one-party police state whose human rights abuses and aggressive military actions pose a threat to the Asia-Pacific region, and on the other it has the image of an economic superpower whose stated national objective is to achieve a 'peaceful rise' and a 'harmonious society'.



Getty Images/CNN

'Tank Man', a lone figure in a white shirt standing before PLA tanks at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 5 June 1989. This image appeared on the front pages of newspapers around the world and became synonymous with the demonstrations. Even today the man's identity and fate are uncertain.

## CHINA AND ITS REVOLUTION AS A STAGE PRODUCTION

The story of China and its revolution can be viewed through the lens of a stage production. The story unfolds with Act One, in which the Qing dynasty falls to a Nationalist revolution, which subsequently stalls under the weight of despotism and warlordism only to re-emerge under a United Front and the reunification of China under the GMD. Act Two follows, with a decade of Nationalist rule under Jiang Jieshi and an ongoing civil war between Communist and GMD forces that would result in the eventual rise of Mao Zedong and the departure of Jiang and his Nationalist government in 1949. Act Three is the story of a fledgling Communist government establishing its power and ideology over China's population, advancing China's economy in order to feed its rapidly growing population, and defending China from enemies both real and perceived, from within and outside its borders. Act Four is a tale of failure and misery as Mao's ill-conceived policies resulted in massive social upheaval and suffering. And finally, Act Five is the desperate conflict between the various factions within the Communist Party and the exploitation by Mao of China's youth in order to reassert his personal authority and dogma over the PRC. Throw in the subplots of the Long March and the Korean War, for example, and the story would seem to be a simple one. Yet the challenge in studying this story is in the evaluation and analysis of the myriad histories, memoirs and accounts that serve to make China and its revolution a fascinating and engaging study.

## ACTIVITIES

- 1 Compare the Chinese revolution with another revolution that you have studied. Produce a diagram comparing and contrasting the causes and consequences of the two revolutions.
- 2 Create a timeline presentation of the Chinese revolution. Focus on an event, idea or individual from the period 1912 to 1976.
- 3 Create an illustrated mind map about Mao Zedong. Include key quotes, ideas, policies, defining moments, contributions and so on.

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