

CHINA RISING

THE
REVOLUTIONARY
EXPERIENCE

IT IS RIGHT TO REBEL

LET A HUNDRED
FLOWERS BLOOM

TOM RYAN

CHINA RISING

THE
REVOLUTIONARY
EXPERIENCE

2ND EDITION

TOM RYAN

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'PING PONG DIPLOMACY'
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USING THIS SERIES

Textbooks in HTAV's Senior History Series include supplementary Web Resources (via *historyed*) which enhance students' knowledge and understanding through further activities and audio-visual materials. The Web Resources, which have been created by the authors and HTAV, will be added to over time.

To access Web Resources for this title, go to <http://historyed.com.au/course/view.php?id=19>.

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Weblink



Video



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Interactive



Activity sheets

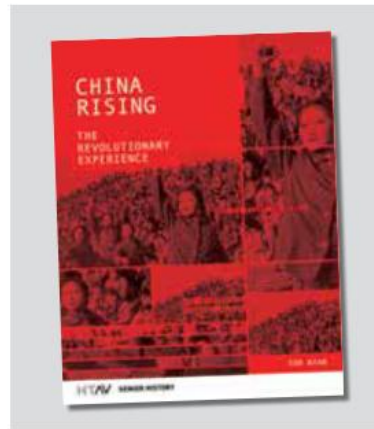


Quiz

The Revolutions series comprises four titles: *China Rising*, *Liberating France*, *Reinventing Russia* and *Forging America*. The series is available in print only, eBook or print/eBook bundle.

The textbooks, written by expert teachers and featuring innovative design elements, comprise a stand-alone resource for students of senior Revolutions.

The Revolutions series meaningfully incorporates historical thinking methodologies into chapter-review and other activities. See the discussion of historical thinking on p. ix and in the supplementary Web Resources for this title.



1 China Rising:
The Revolutionary Experience



2 Liberating France:
The Revolutionary Experience



3 Reinventing Russia:
The Revolutionary Experience



4 Forging America: The
Revolutionary Experience

FOREWORD

The scale and pace of China's recent economic growth have been staggering. Over the course of the last four decades China has transformed itself into one of the world's largest economies, a formidable military power and a consumer of vast natural resources. Less than twenty years ago it took a long bicycle ride to the municipal communication exchange to make an international telephone call; now China is home to more mobile phone and internet users than any other country in the world.

Lawrence Summers, noted economist and former president of Harvard University, has pointed out that during the Industrial Revolution the average European's standard of living roughly doubled over the course of his or her lifetime. Summers calculates that in China the average person's standard of living will increase by a factor of one-hundred in a single lifetime.¹ In other words, the post-Mao generation in China has experienced more industrialisation, urbanisation and social transformation than several generations of Europeans experienced during the two centuries or so of the Industrial Revolution.

In seeking to make sense of China's dramatic rise and its increasing importance to Australia and other countries around the world, the study of Chinese history is fundamental. 'To be human in China is to be historical,' argues intellectual historian Chun-chieh Huang.² For the Chinese, history is a mirror against which society analyses and evaluates contemporary actions. If we seek, therefore, to understand contemporary China – its peoples, actions, ideas and desires – we must first come to terms with the historical context in which it is embedded.

For the Chinese, their country's dramatic transformation from the 'sick man of Asia' to global superpower reflects not the 'rise of China' but rather its rightful 're-emergence' at the centre of world affairs. Although China produced only 4.5 per cent of world GDP when Mao Zedong declared that 'the Chinese people have stood up' in 1949, over 150 years earlier Qing China was the world's largest economy, contributing nearly thirty-three per cent of global GDP. In light of this, China's current economic strength is viewed by many Chinese people as a return to the past rather than an unprecedented or surprising rise to power.³

The story of China's decline and resistance in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries lies at the heart of modern Chinese historical consciousness. This story is richly illustrated in *China Rising*. Here the narrative of modern Chinese history is filled with both pathos and resolve. The book details the Opium Wars,

1 Lawrence H. Summers, 'Asia and the Emerging Global Financial System,' speech delivered at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center Annual Dinner, 19 September 2006.

2 Chun-chieh Huang, 'Time' and 'Supertime' in Chinese Historical Thinking,' in *Notions of Time in Chinese Historical Thinking*, eds. Chun-chieh Huang and John B. Henderson (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2006), 19.

3 Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run* (Paris: OECD Publications, 1998).

Boxer Rebellion, Republican-era warlordism, Sino-Japanese War, Chinese Civil War (the so-called 'century of humiliation') and the failed Maoist experiments of the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The last two events, in particular, ensured that China remained marginalised within the international community well into the 1970s. But rather than a sense of victimhood, the Chinese people have exhibited a strong collective resolve to 'save the nation' and restore the dignity and honour of their ancestors.

The rich details and complex twists and turns of China's long twentieth century are vividly chronicled in *China Rising*. Written in a lively and engaging style and drawing on recent scholarship, the book will help a new generation of Australians to understand better China's place in the world and some of the powerful ways in which the past continues to shape China's future.

Dr James Leibold

La Trobe University

HISTORICAL THINKING

The study of Revolutions at the senior level is guided by historical thinking concepts developed by Seixas, van Drie and van Boxtel, Levesque and others.

Historical knowledge comprises both **substantive knowledge**, which refers to historical content or subject matter (i.e. what happened in the past?) and **procedural knowledge**, which refers to the process or skills involved in understanding that subject matter (i.e. what do the sources of evidence say and what should I conclude from them?). Together, substantive and procedural knowledge give students the depth of understanding required to excel in history.

Historical inquiry begins with **historical questions**. Students ask and are asked substantial questions about people and events from the past, including their **significance** and contribution to what came later. Students assess **continuity and change** and the different types of change that occurred. They examine the relationship between **cause and consequence** and consider the **ethical dimensions** of history. As they do this, students should be aware that they bring a twenty-first-century perspective to their studies and that their values and beliefs are not necessarily the same as those who lived in the past.

The key part of historical thinking and practice is **analysing sources** – primary and secondary – to reach conclusions and **construct arguments**. Generally speaking, primary sources indicate the **historical perspectives** or viewpoints of people at the time, while secondary sources indicate the **historical interpretations** of historians or commentators who are looking back at past events.

Historical perspectives are a reminder that people rarely share the same experience or opinions at a given point in history, while historical interpretations show how historians have different views on the importance or meaning of past events. Understanding these contrasting experiences and viewpoints is an important part of appreciating the complexity and contestability of history – one should approach the evidence with an open mind and ‘listen’ to what a source is communicating before forming a conclusion.

In this book we have included many activities designed to develop and enhance students’ substantive and procedural knowledge in history. But above all, we hope students will get swept up by the story of the Chinese Revolution, as it is story-telling that lies at the heart of history.

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TOM RYAN

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

The first edition of China Rising was dedicated to the memory of my uncle, Paul Murray (1955–2009). Your wit, knowledge of antiquities and love were deeply appreciated.

I dedicate the second edition to my daughter Frankie. You are the most amazing, wonderful and beautiful thing your dad has helped create.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Ryan is Head of Humanities at Woodleigh School, where he teaches senior History and Humanities. He regularly presents lectures and online tutorials on the Chinese and Russian Revolutions, and is the co-author of *Reinventing Russia*.

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United States National Archives and Records Administration pp.V and 259 [194759].

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Zhang Zhenshi p.286.

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SPELLING OF CHINESE TERMS

A number of Pinyin words tend to be mispronounced by people unfamiliar with Chinese. These errors often involve the letters 'c,' 'q' and 'x.' In Pinyin, use the following pronunciation:

c = ts
q = ch
x = sh

As you read about China you will find that names and terms are spelt differently in different books. The Wade-Giles system of transliterating Chinese terms into English was used widely before 1979; since then Pinyin has become more popular.

In this book we use Pinyin, with Wade-Giles in brackets after the first mention only, i.e. Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). Keep in mind that in China the family name appears before the given name.

The list below will help you with some of the commonly-used terms in the Chinese Revolution.

PEOPLE

PINYIN	WADE-GILES
Bo Gu	Po Ku
Bo Yibo	Po I-po
Cai Yuanpei	T'sai Yuan-p'ei
Cao Rulin	Ts'ao Ju-lin
Chen Boda	Ch'en Po-ta
Chen Duxiu	Ch'en Tu-hsiu
Chen Jieru	Ch'en Chieh-ju
Chen Jiongming	Ch'en Chiung-ming
Chen Jitang	Ch'en Chi-t'ang
Chen Yi	Ch'en I
Chen Yun	Ch'en Yun
Cixi (dowager empress)	Tz'u-Hsi
Dai Li	Tai Li
Deng Xiaoping	Teng Hsiao-p'ing
Deng Zihui	Teng Tzu-hui
Du Yuesheng	Tu Yueh-sheng
Duan Qirui	Tuan Ch'i-jui
Feng Yuxiang	Feng Yu-hsiang
Gao Gang	Kao Kang
Guangxu (emperor)	Kuang-hsu
Hai Rui	Hai Jui
He Long	Ho Lung
He Zizhen	Ho Tzu-chen

Hu Hanmin	Hu Han-min
Hu Shi	Hu Shih
Hua Guofeng	Hua Kuo-feng
Jiang Jieshi	Chiang Kai-shek
Jiang Qing	Chiang Ch'ing
Kang Sheng	K'ang Sheng
Ke Qingshi	K'o Ch'ing-shih
Li Dazhao	Li Ta-chao
Li De	Li Te
Li Lisan	Li Li-san
Li Yuanhong	Li Yuan-hung
Li Zhisui	Li Chih-sui
Li Zongren	Li Tsung-jen
Liang Shuming	Liang Shu-ming
Liao Zhongkai	Liao Chung-k'ai
Lin Biao	Lin Piao
Lin Ligu	Lin Li-kuo
Liu Bocheng	Liu Po-ch'eng
Liu Di	Liu Ti
Liu Shaoqi	Liu Shao-ch'i
Lu Dingyi	Lu Ting-i
Lu Ping	Lu P'ing
Lu Xun	Lu Hsun
Luo Ruiqing	Lo Jui-ching

Mao Zedong	Mao Tse-tung
Nie Yuanzi	Nie Yuan-tzu
Peng Dehuai	P'eng Te-huai
Peng Zhen	P'eng Chen
Pu Yi (emperor)	P'u-i
Qin Shi Huang (emperor)	Ch'in Shih-huang
Qiu Jin	Ch'iu Chin
Qu Qiubai	Ch'u Ch'iu-pai
Rao Shushi	Jao Shu-shih
Song Jiaoren	Sung Chiao-jen
Soong Meiling	Sung Mei-ling
Soong Ziwen ('T.V.' Soong)	Sung Tzu-wen
Sun Chuanfang	Sun Ch'uan-fang
Sun Shuyun	Sun Shu-yun
Sun Yixian	Sun Yat-sen
Tian Jiaying	T'ien Chia-ying
Wang Bingnan	Wang Ping-nan
Wang Guangmei	Wang Kuang-mei
Wang Hongwen	Wang Hung-wen
Wang Jiaxiang	Wang Chia-hsiang
Wang Jingwei	Wang Ching-wei
Wang Kaixiang	Wang K'ai-hsiang
Wu Peifu	Wu P'ei-fu
Xiang Zhongfa	Hsiang Chung-fa
Xie Fuzhi	Hsieh Fu-chih
Xu Qian	Hsu Ch'ien
Yang Chengwu	Yang Ch'eng-wu
Yao Wenyuan	Yao Wen-yuan
Ye Ting	Yeh T'ing
Yu Xian	Yu Hsien
Yuan Shikai	Yuan Shih-k'ai
Zhang Chungqiao	Chang Ch'un-chiao
Zhang Guotao	Chang Kuo-t'ao
Zhang Xueliang	Chang Hsueh-liang
Zhang Yufeng	Chang Yu-feng
Zhang Zuolin	Chang Tso-lin
Zhou Enlai	Chou En-lai
Zhu De	Chu Te
Zou Rong	Tsou Jung
Zuo Zongtang	Tso Tsung-t'ang

PLACES

PINYIN	WADE-GILES
Beijing	Peking; also Beiping
Chongqing	Chungking
Dagu	Taku
E-Yu-Wan	O-Yu-Wan
Fujian	Fukien
Fuzhou	Foochow
Gansu	Kansu
Guangdong	Kuantung; also Canton Province
Guangzhou	Kuang-chou; also Canton
Hebei	Hopei
Henan	Honan
Huangpu	Huangp'u; also Whampoa
Jiangxi	Chiang-hsi (or Kiangsi)
Manchuria	Dongbei
Nanjing	Nanking
Ruijin	Juichin
Shaanxi	Shensi
Shandong	Shantung
Shanxi	Shansi
Shenyang	Formerly Mukden
Sichuan	Szechuan
Tianjin	Tientsin
Xi'an	Hsian; also Sian
Yan'an	Yenan

OTHER

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

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

SECTION

A

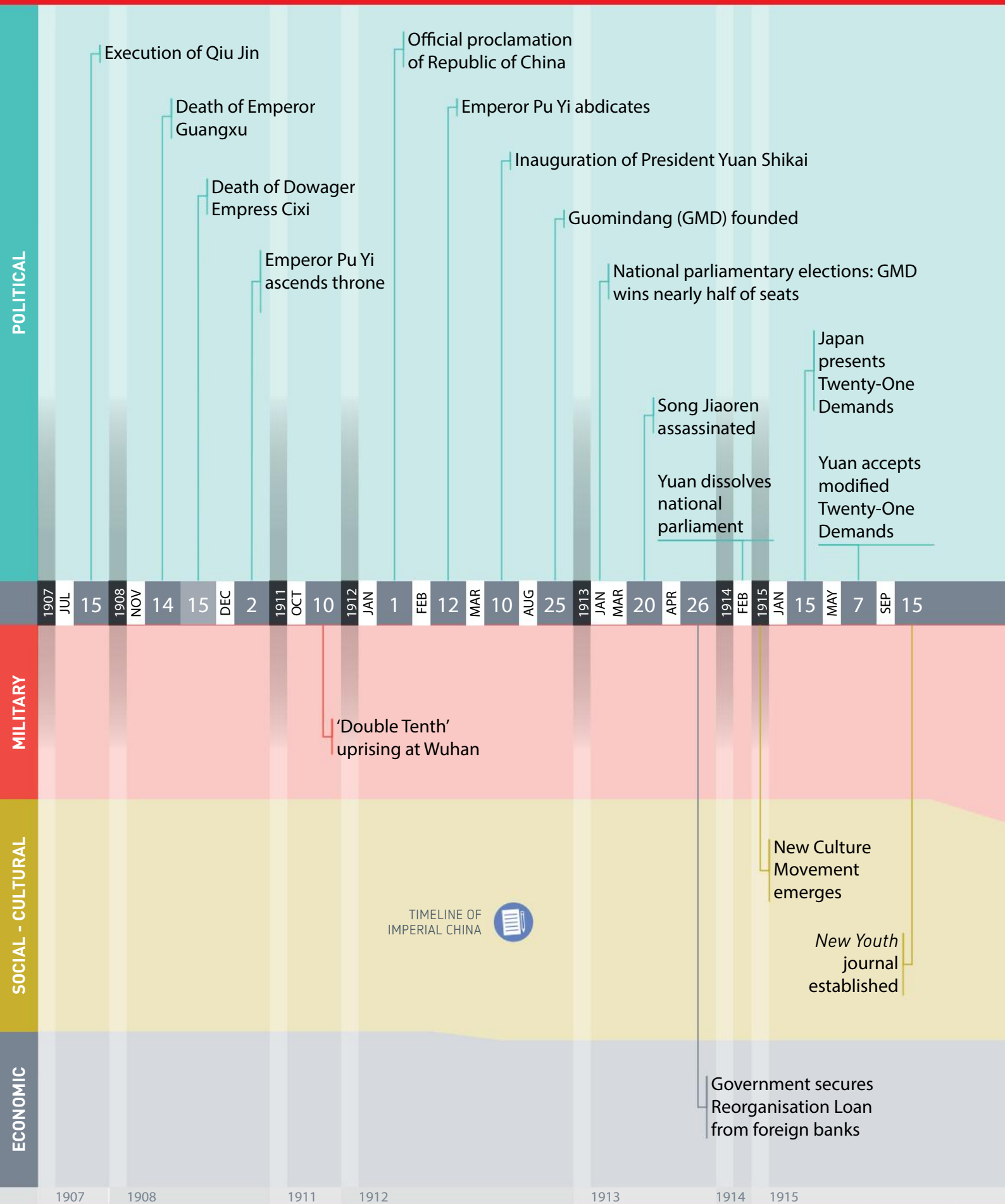
What were the significant causes of revolution?

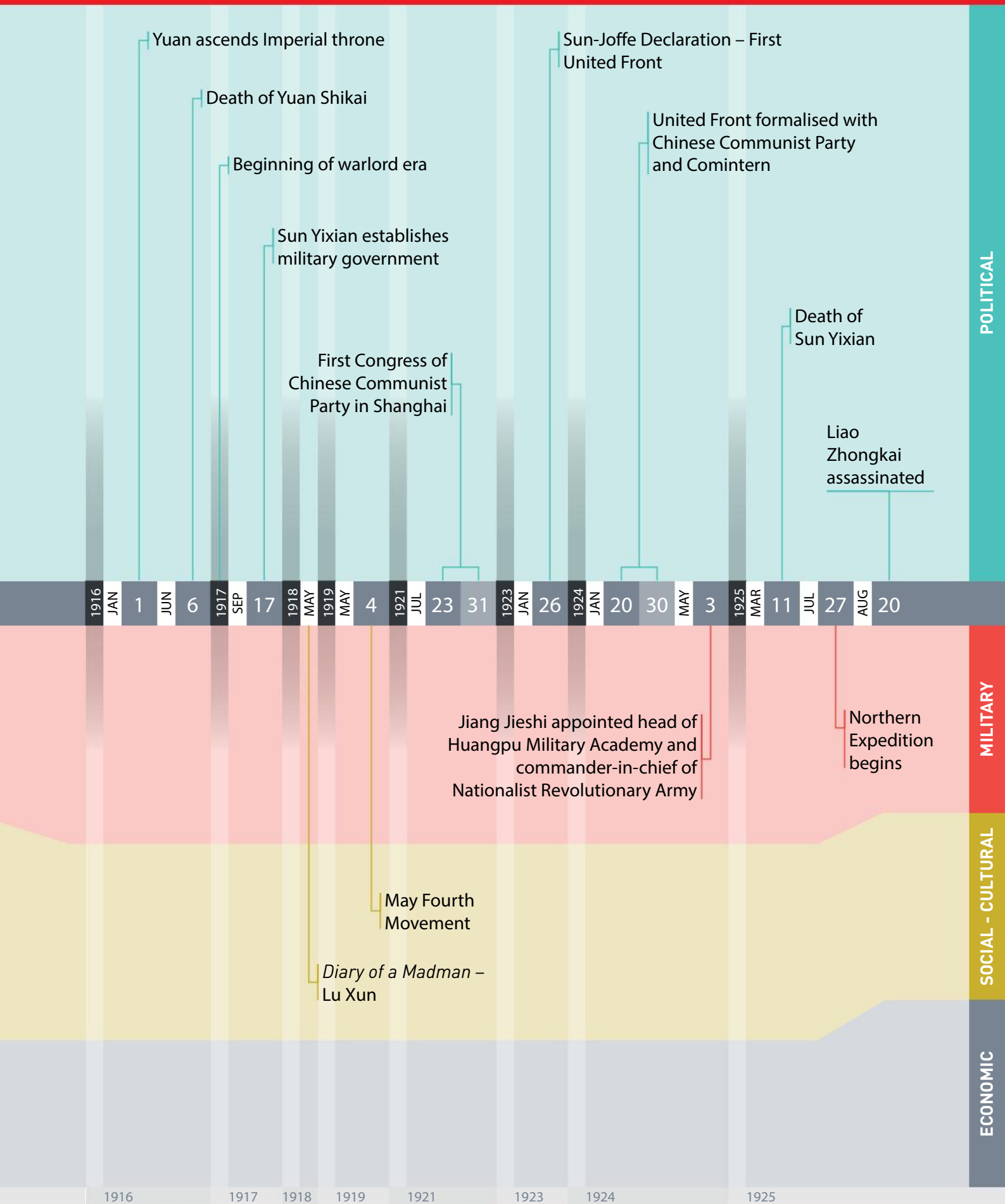
How did the actions of key individuals and popular movements contribute to triggering the revolution?

To what extent did social tensions and ideological conflicts contribute to the outbreak of revolution?

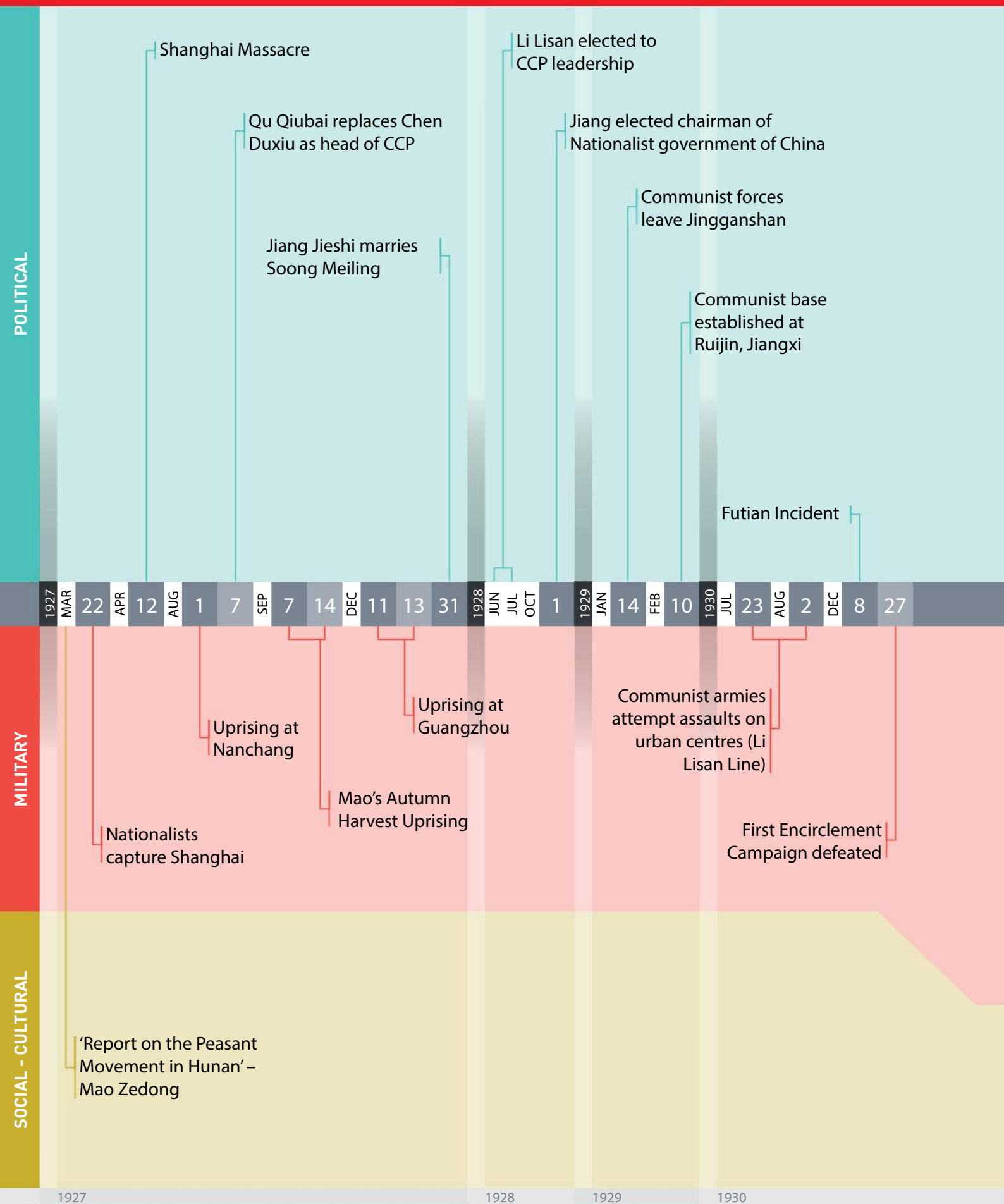
1912–October 1949

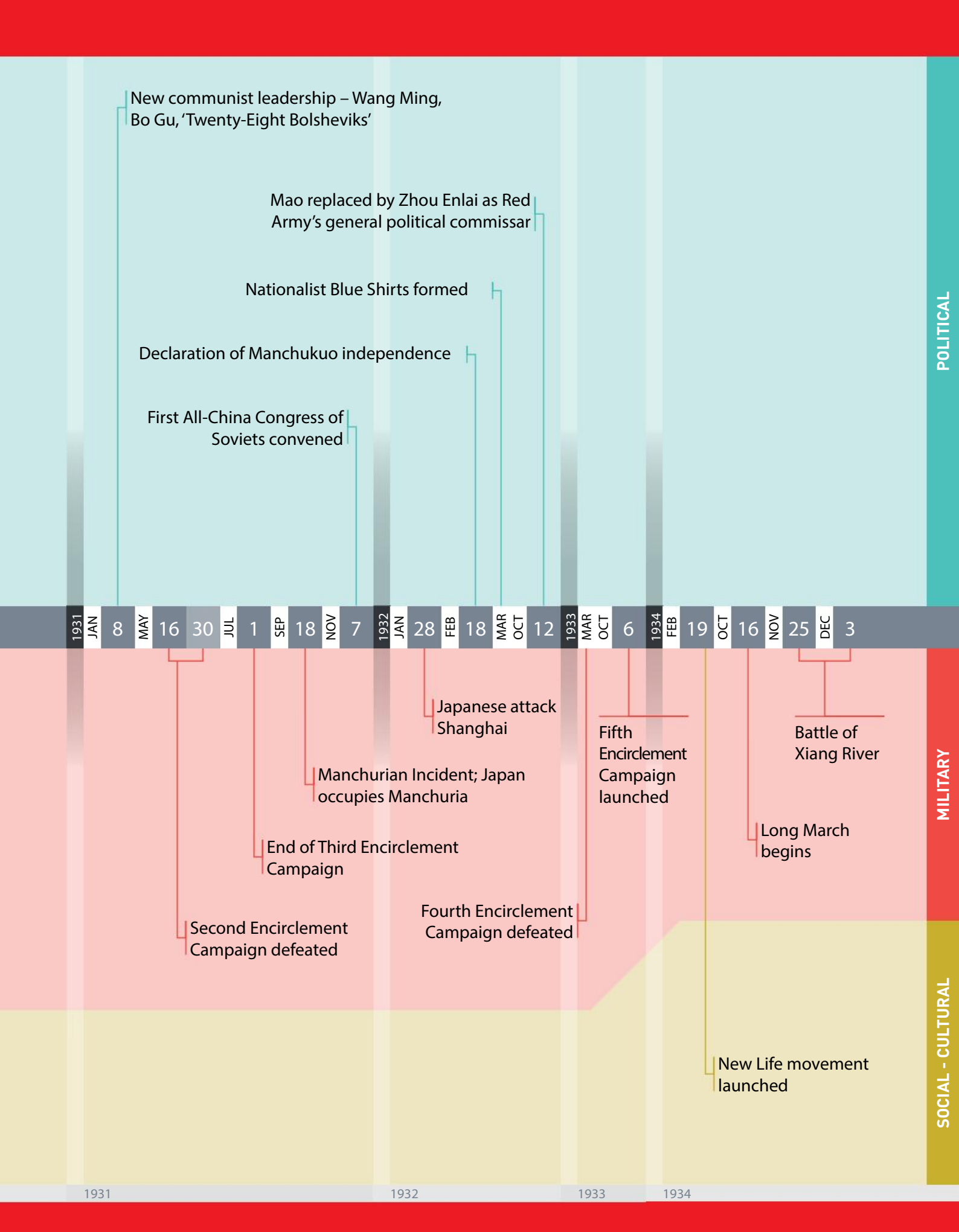
SECTION A TIMELINE





SECTION A TIMELINE cont.





New communist leadership – Wang Ming, Bo Gu, 'Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks'

Mao replaced by Zhou Enlai as Red Army's general political commissar

Nationalist Blue Shirts formed

Declaration of Manchukuo independence

First All-China Congress of Soviets convened

Japanese attack Shanghai

Manchurian Incident; Japan occupies Manchuria

End of Third Encirclement Campaign

Second Encirclement Campaign defeated

Fourth Encirclement Campaign defeated

Fifth Encirclement Campaign launched

Battle of Xiang River

Long March begins

New Life movement launched

POLITICAL

MILITARY

SOCIAL - CULTURAL

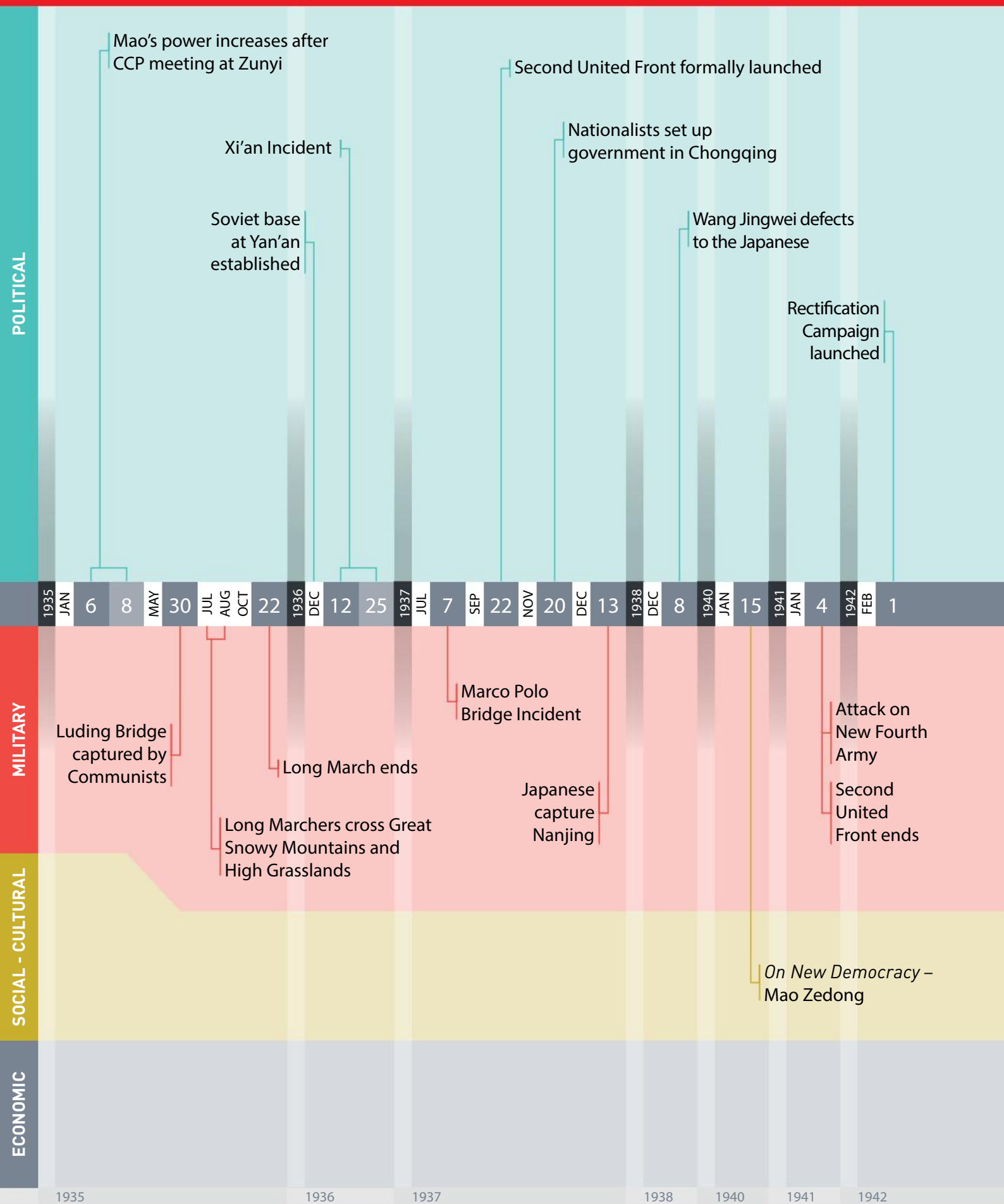
1931

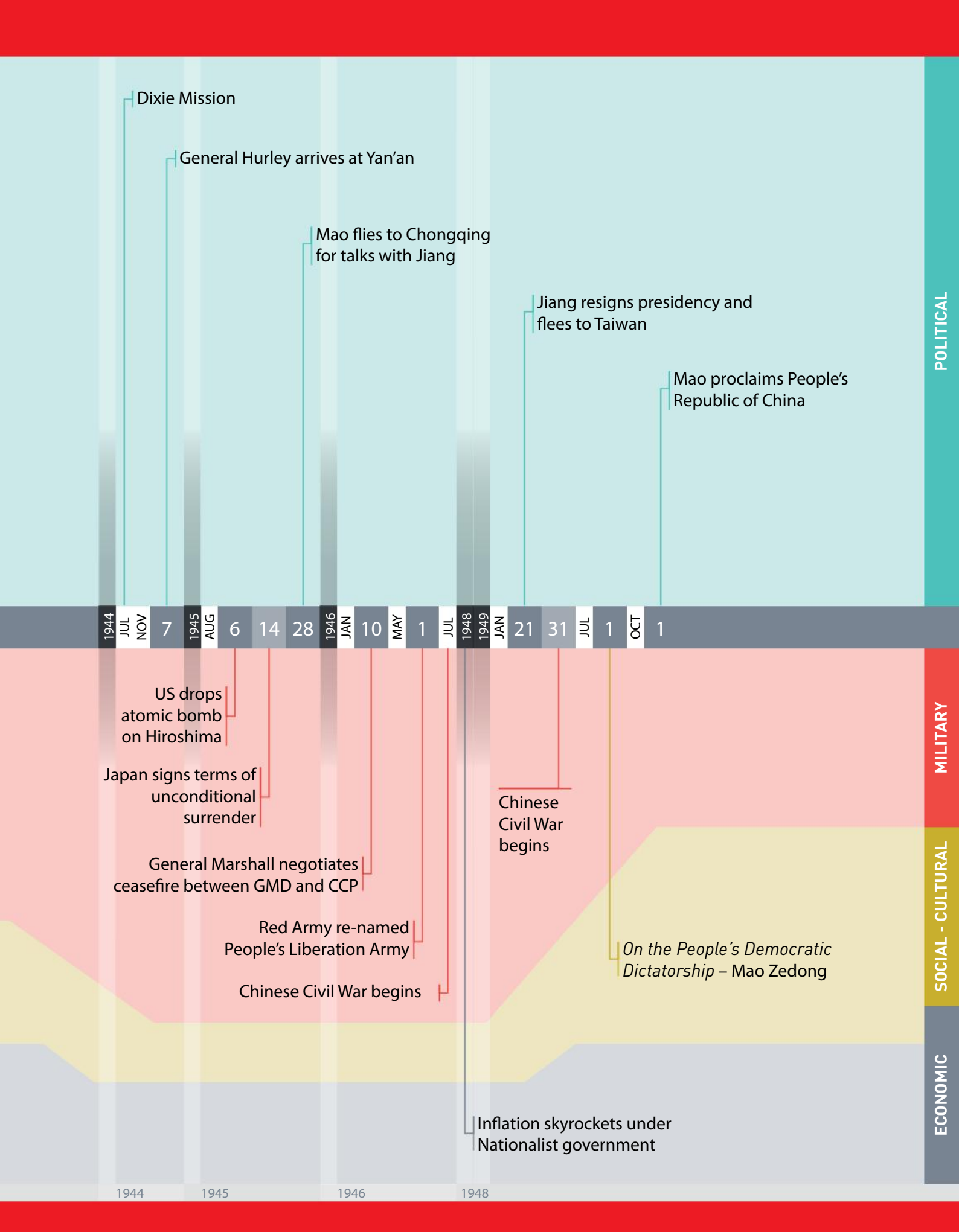
1932

1933

1934

SECTION A TIMELINE cont.





Dixie Mission

General Hurley arrives at Yan'an

Mao flies to Chongqing for talks with Jiang

Jiang resigns presidency and flees to Taiwan

Mao proclaims People's Republic of China

US drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima

Japan signs terms of unconditional surrender

General Marshall negotiates ceasefire between GMD and CCP

Red Army re-named People's Liberation Army

Chinese Civil War begins

Chinese Civil War begins

On the People's Democratic Dictatorship – Mao Zedong

Inflation skyrockets under Nationalist government

POLITICAL

MILITARY

SOCIAL - CULTURAL

ECONOMIC

1944

1945

1946

1948

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

INEQUALITY IN IMPERIAL CHINA

- Imperial dynasties ruled hierarchical society – emperor had 'Mandate of Heaven.'
- Tribute system: foreign powers restricted in their trade and diplomacy with China.
- Opium Wars and foreign encroachment.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

- Guangxu, Qing dynasty emperor, attempts modernisation with Hundred Days of Reform.
- Conservatives, headed by Dowager Empress Cixi, respond with coup.

REPUBLICAN REVOLUTION

- Sun Yixian leads Revolutionary Alliance.
- Sun develops Three Principles of the People: Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood.
- Imperial crises cause 1911 Revolution – General Yuan Shikai becomes president of new republic.
- New Culture movement leads to exploration of new ideas.
- Chinese Communist Party is founded, with close ties to Russian Comintern.

COALITION AGAINST WARLORDS

- United Front between Nationalists, Communists and Soviet Comintern.

NATIONALIST DECADE

- Jiang Jieshi dissolves United Front after Sun Yixian's death – attacks Communists.
- Northern Expedition reunifies China under a Nationalist government.
- Jiang's government struggles with corruption and poor economy.

FIRST COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS

- Jiangxi Soviet established by Mao Zedong and Zhu De.
- Long March: 100 000 Communists flee Jiang Jieshi's Encirclement campaigns (approx. 8000 survive).
- Long March ends with creation of Yan'an Soviet; success of Yan'an Way increases CCP membership.

REPELLING THE JAPANESE

- Second United Front between Communists and Nationalists seeks to expel the Japanese invaders.
- Communist guerrilla tactics and political skills win over public.

CIVIL WAR AND REVOLUTION

- Continued fighting between Communists and Nationalists – Nationalists surrender.
- Mao's peasant-focused revolutionary philosophy triumphs.
- Mao announces People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949.

Down with imperialism! Down with Japan! Down with warlordism! Why has the West betrayed China? The Chinese people must somehow find strength and unite. The nation is being sold out and carved up! My hope is for a new way forward through Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy. Mr. Confucius!? Bah! Away with him!



Li Ming, student,
May Fourth movement, 1919

Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi has got it right. China needs a strong leader and the people need discipline. The Japanese are menacing in the north, but the Communists eat away at us from within. We must be rid of them and unite the nation. Right conduct, clean living, decency and self-respect are what the people need. I urge all patriots to rally behind Jiang Jieshi, the army and the Nationalist government!



Zhang Jun, officer in
Nationalist Army, c. 1934

Jiang Jieshi and his lot are a bunch of bandits and jackals! They steal away our sons for their bandit army and tax us to death. The Japanese are worse – rape, burn, kill! But not the Red Army – it's a people's liberation army. I've sent my youngest off to join the people's war. Since the Communists came, our village has really turned over! We've taken the land from the rich and had a say in who gets what. We're learning to read. Widows have been taken in by the Women's Association. I believe in Chairman Mao – he's the head of our government.



Gao Qiangguo, peasant, c. 1948

NB. These fictional characters are based on historical research.

CHAPTER

1

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

(1793–1912)

1 Imperial Dynasties

Zhou (1046–476 BCE),
the longest-running
dynasty

Ming (1368–1644 CE), the last ethnically Han dynasty

Qing dynasty (1644–1911 CE), the last imperial dynasty

Imperial China criticised for inefficiency
and corruption

Imperial mismanagement, domestic rebellion
and foreign humiliation leads to revolution

In 6 weeks, 15 provinces break from Qing rule

Sun Yixian initially touted as president

7 The 1911 Revolution

General Yuan Shikai agrees to secure abdication of emperor

Yuan Shikai the first president of Republic of China (1912)

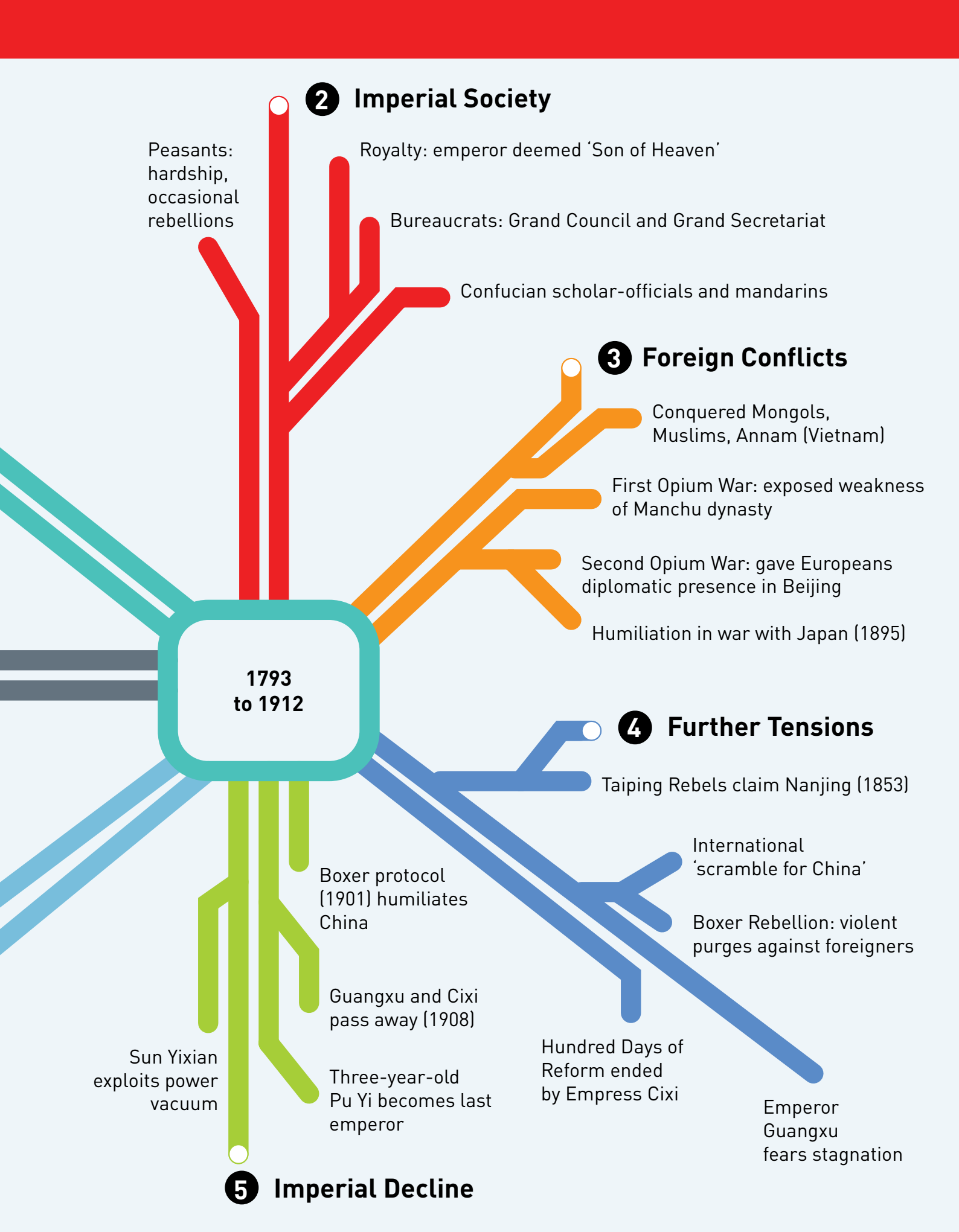
Sun influenced by Western politics and ideas

Three Principles of the People: Nationalism, Democracy People's Livelihoods

Called for military dictatorship, followed by democratic republic

6 The Rise of Sun Yixian

Headed Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui)



INTRODUCTION

INTERACTIVE MAP



In 1793 a delegation from Great Britain's King George III met with Emperor Qianlong (Ch'ien-lung) of China, hoping to extend diplomatic ties and ease restrictions on trade. China's 'Son of Heaven' was not impressed. There was nothing of value on offer: 'We possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures.'¹ The emperor was presented with, amongst other things, a clock and a telescope. Whilst he had offered tribute gifts, the head of the British mission, Lord Macartney, had refused to kowtow to the emperor (kneel and put one's head on the floor). This upset the Chinese. Qianlong rejected the offerings of these apparent barbarians:

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty ... Your merchants will assuredly never be permitted to land or reside here.²

Yet the West was determined to encroach on one of the richest lands of the East and gain access to silk, tea, rhubarb, porcelain and other valuables. Blocked from direct access to Chinese markets, Europeans began to smuggle opium for profit. Tensions concerning this unwelcome 'trade' led to the Opium Wars of the 1840s and 1850s in which China was defeated and forced to grant greater concessions to foreign nations. External threat, seen as an 'affliction of the limbs,' came at a time of 'disease' in 'China's vitals.'³ Wide-scale peasant rebellion brought great unrest to vast regions for years at a time. Internal revolts and defeat by foreign powers lowered the prestige of the Imperial court. The ways of the Old Regime struggled to deal effectively with such challenges. Reforms were seen as necessary by some Chinese, of lesser importance by others. Was China to embrace the customs and military technology of the West? Did modernisation warrant a

change in the Confucian ideals that governed Chinese social and political institutions?

The great and mighty Middle Kingdom was in dire trouble by the 1890s. Defeat in wars with foreign powers and popular unrest had exposed the institutions of the Qing dynasty as outdated and inadequate. Guided by Kang Youwei in his Hundred Days of Reform, Emperor Guangxu issued a range of edicts outlining a modernising program, which he hoped would rally his ailing realm. Such reforms, considered far too bold and dangerous by

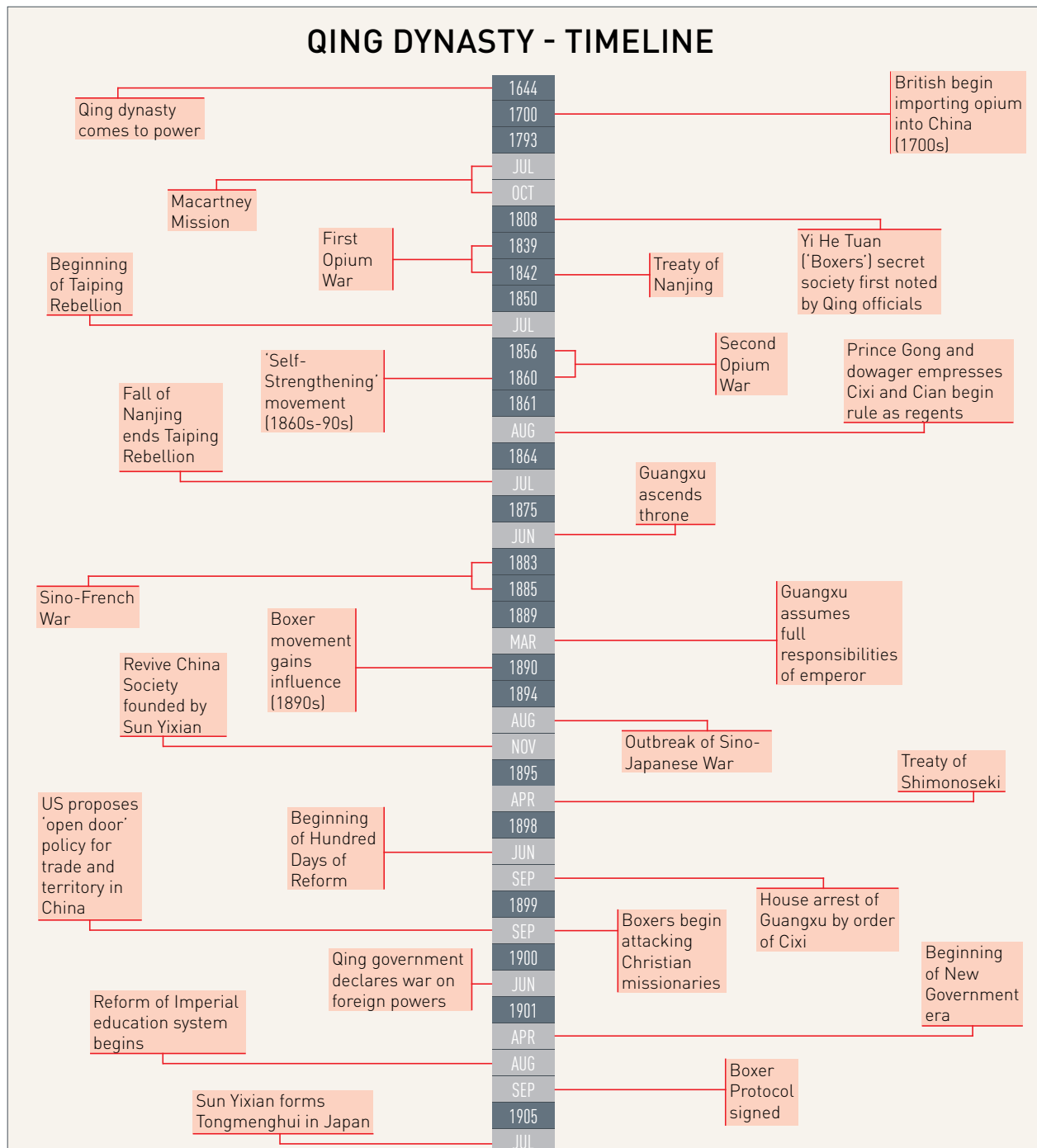
- 1 Cited in Harriet Ward, *China in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Heinemann Educational, 1990), 4.
- 2 Cited in C. P. Fitzgerald and Myra Roper, *China: A World So Changed* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1972), 19.
- 3 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China* (North Melbourne: Cassell, 1978), 238.



conservative elements in the Qing court, were later reined in by the reactionary dowager empress, Cixi. For the time being China held on to its outmoded traditions. Changes were eventually forced by the Boxer Rebellion. This vast peasant rebellion, combined with Qing mismanagement, provoked leading European nations to impose the harshest and most humiliating treaty yet. Reforms to bring about essential changes followed, but it was too little, too late. The Qing were unable to withstand the fatal combination of internal unrest and foreign encroachment. The Manchu regime, China's last imperial dynasty, was finally brought down by the 'Double Tenth' Revolution of 1911.



QING DYNASTY



Chinese Conflicts: 19th Century

KEY

- Chinese border
- Area affected by Taiping rebellion 1853-63
- Area affected by Boxer uprising 1890s
- City
- Treaty port
- Province border
- Battle in Sino-Japanese War 1894-95
- British attack during the First Opium War 1839-42
- British/French attack during the Arrow War 1858-60

The map illustrates the geographical context of 19th-century conflicts in China. It shows the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea. Major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong are marked. Conflicts are indicated by red and blue arrows and shaded areas. The map also shows neighboring countries like Russia, Mongolia, and Japan, as well as the Bay of Bengal and the Pacific Ocean.



The Yangzi River.

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Confucius: 'The wise find pleasure in waters, the virtuous in hills.'

The word 'China' is thought to have come from the West. Early explorers, such as Marco Polo, coined the term from its Sanskrit derivative, *Cina*, which came from the name of the first dynasty to rule all of China – the Qin (Chin). Traditionally China was called *Zhongguo*, a name some modern Chinese still prefer. *Zhongguo* translates as 'Middle Kingdom' or 'Central Kingdom.' The Middle Kingdom was considered the centre of the universe and the most developed of human civilisations. It was thought of as 'All-Under-Heaven.'⁴

Covering 9.6 million square kilometres, China was an immense realm in ancient times and today is the third largest country in the world. Its geography and climate are very diverse, ranging from tropical weather in the south to subarctic temperatures in the north-west.⁵ It is a land of contrasts, with vast high plateaus, lush river valleys and scenic hillsides. Mountain ranges cover around sixty per cent of the country, leaving only fifteen to twenty per cent of the land suitable for farming. The coastal areas and along the central Yangzi and Yellow rivers – the so-called 'cradle of Chinese civilisation' – have been home to the majority of the population, as well as major cities and agriculture. The Yellow (*Huang He*), Pearl (*Xi Jiang*) and Yangzi (*Chang Jiang* or Yangtze) rivers, which flow from east to west, have also provided a natural route for travel from the time of the earliest Chinese civilisation. A series of canals running between the major rivers provided an additional route for barges. Two main climatic differences are found in China's



MAP OF CHINESE PROVINCES

DID YOU KNOW?

Chinese names reflect the traditional view that the family is more important than the individual. Thus, the family name comes before the given name.

- 4 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.
- 5 The BBC series *Wild China* gives a sense of China's diverse and beautiful landscape and wildlife.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

DID YOU KNOW?

To control flooding and provide a further source of power to eastern and central China, the Chinese government has built the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangzi River. It is the world's largest hydro-electric power-station. (See below.) The dam has led to the displacement of over one-million people from their homes.

north and south. The north-west, which borders the Gobi desert, is flatter than the south and extremely dry, with very cold temperatures for much of the year. Rivers stay frozen for more than six months in the north-east. The land is most suitable to crops such as millet, wheat and cotton. With the arid climate, drought is a recurrent problem in the northern farming regions. The soil in the north is fine loess (sediment), which is easy to plough but readily picked up by the wind. A great deal of loess ends up silting the Yellow River (hence its name), and this build-up has caused devastating floods, earning the river its other name – ‘China’s Sorrow.’

Southern China is comparatively temperate and experiences monsoonal rains. The regions along the Yangzi remain green all year round. The misty hillsides of the south are particularly beautiful and often feature in traditional artwork. Humid temperatures in the south and east are well suited to growing rice, one of the staple foods for many Chinese. Extreme weather can nonetheless cause hardship, as the coast of south-eastern China is subject to typhoons in late summer.

China was, and continues to be, divided into a number of provinces for governmental administrative purposes. These today include Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Hebei, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong, Sichuan, Yunnan and Zhejiang. The outer regions of Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, which today have varying degrees of either political autonomy or independence, were also provinces of the Chinese kingdom. As is the case today, conflict between the peoples of the steppe and the sown lands was at times a source of tension in Imperial China. The cultures of sedentary Chinese (those who stayed in one place) and nomadic peoples of the outlying regions clashed as invading ‘barbarian’ armies, such as the Mongols and Manchus, threatened China proper, while Han Chinese kingdoms sent armies to enforce security along the borders of the realm.



The diverse land of China contains many different ethnic groups and dialects. The most populous ethnic group, approximately ninety per cent of the population, are the Han. Today, the People's Republic of China recognises around fifty-five other groups including Mongols, Yi, Miao, Tibetans, Zhuang, Manchus, Hui and Uighurs. Whilst *guanhua* Chinese, today known as Mandarin, is the dominant and official form of spoken Chinese, many regions have their own dialects (*fangyan*). Similarly, some ethnic groups have their own languages, for instance Tibetan and Mongolian. Differences in spoken language in the Chinese kingdom were, and still are, mediated by a standardised written language based on logograms (pictures or hieroglyphs). Chinese logograms are largely based on symbols, not so much on pronunciation, which means that people with different dialects can understand the same script.



A young girl with a talent for calligraphy and her writing instructor.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

As a class, brainstorm the possible ethnic and social tensions China might have faced in Imperial times, on account of its size and diversity. Then discuss how such tensions might have made it difficult to unify China.

ACTIVITY

FEATURE

IMPERIAL DYNASTIES

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Luo Guanzhong: 'Chaos after prolonged unity and unity after prolonged chaos are eternal rules under heaven.'

China's history can be traced back more than 5000 years. Society and politics were far from stable and different ethnic groups and dynasties (ruling families) governed at different times. Each period brought new traditions and adapted the old. The story of the triumphs and tragedies of China's

past would fill volumes of text. Just a brief account of some of the achievements of this long, and often turbulent, history follows.⁶ Whilst there was

a continuing cycle of dynastic change, there was also continuity over time, both in political systems (including bureaucracy) and cultural institutions (such as written language, the examination system, and Confucian and Daoist values). As problems and challenges emerged, forces for change confronted the Mandate of Heaven of the current ruling order. If successful, a new dynasty would take the throne. According to the Chinese saying, 'He who fails becomes a bandit, he who succeeds – a king.' But while many different emperors have sat upon the Dragon Throne, China has maintained a continuous, durable civilisation and cultural memory.

Pre-historic period 500 000–1600 BCE

Remains of early humans have been found in China. Discovered in 1920, Peking Man is one of the best preserved examples of *Homo erectus*. The history of modern humanity (*Homo sapiens*) in China dates back thousands of years to Neolithic times. Chinese folklore speaks of an early Xia dynasty, although

DID YOU KNOW?

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

archaeological records are unclear. There is no definitive evidence of the name of the Xia dynasty or its kings. Some scholars suggest the Xia were a legend, others believe that early bronze and pottery works found in Henan province are relics of the Xia. Evidence of Neolithic cultures in China include pottery, textiles, and village foundations and walls.

Shang Kingdom 1600–1046 BCE (beginning of historical record)

The Shang kingdom was China's first true dynasty and marks the period when clear archaeological records emerged. Some scholars say that Chinese civilisation began with the Shang. Tang (T'ang) the Victorious was the first Shang emperor. The Shang ruled over a largely agrarian society in the Yellow River Valley. Their social structure was divided between nobility and farmers governed by a priestly king. Horse-drawn chariots, a system of writing made on oracle bones, bronze casting and wheel-turned pottery were developed in this period. The Shang had a rich culture, including complex religious beliefs.



A pottery urn from the Zhou dynasty.

Zhou dynasty 1046–476 BCE

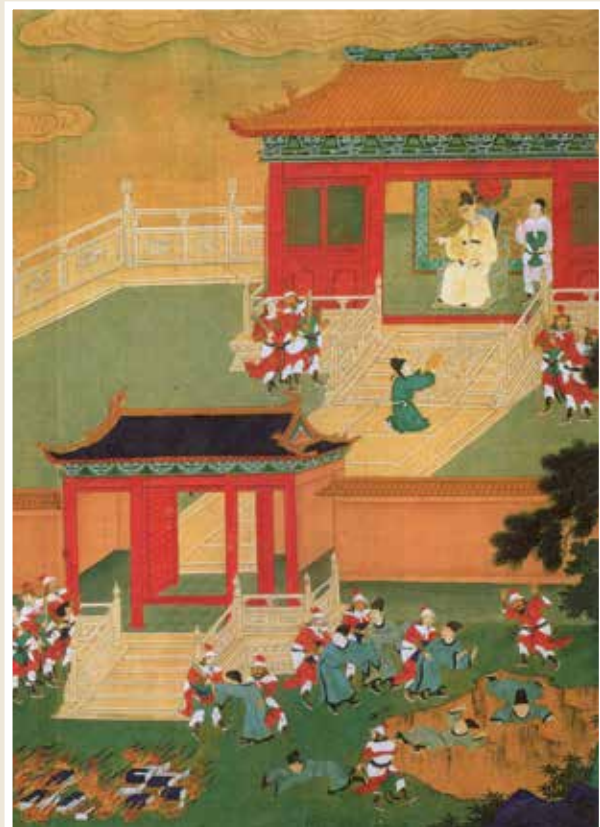
Shang rule ended after a successful rebellion by the Zhou (Chou) people of western China. China's longest ruling dynasty, the Zhou, controlled northern China and divided their kingdom into several vassal states. Each state was administered

by a governor, although such was their influence that over time central authority was weakened.

Large cities and towns grew and a merchant class emerged. Bronze-casting reached an artistic peak. Woven silk cloth and jade carvings were also produced. The concept that the emperor ruled by right of his Mandate of Heaven dates from this time. The decentralisation of power eventually brought the dynasty to an end as the kingdom fractured into several smaller independent states.

Warring States period 475–221 BCE

During this time China was divided under many kingdoms that each fought for supremacy. Many fierce military campaigns were waged. Ironwork proliferated and replaced bronze as the metal used for weapons. Many brilliant philosophers lived during this time, such as Confucius, Mencius and Laozi. The military strategist Sun Zi (Sun Tzu) wrote *The Art of War*, which is today seen as one of the most influential guides to military strategy.



Emperor Qin Shi Huang burning the books of Confucian scholars.

Qin dynasty 221–207 BCE

The Qin was the first dynasty to rule over and unite all of China. The first emperor, Qin Shi Huang (Ch'in Shih-huang), was a man of great drive and ruthlessness. His kingdom was efficient but authoritarian, with a strict legal code and centralised government. Qin had 460 Confucian scholars killed and burned their books because he felt they had not shown him enough respect. Many innovations were also made: Chinese script, currency, weights and measures, and even the axle width of carts was standardised.⁷ Thousands of kilometres of new roads were laid to enable the Qin army to travel throughout the empire. Emperor Qin began the construction of the Great Wall to keep out the 'barbarians' of the north. He was buried in a grand mausoleum with an army of terracotta warriors at Xi'an. After he died the empire fell into civil war, heavy taxes being a particular point of unrest.

Han dynasty 202 BCE–220 CE

The era of the Han dynasty is often said to be one of the greatest periods in China's history. Today people of China's largest ethnic group still call themselves Han. The first Han emperor, Liu Bang (Liu Pang), came from a peasant background. The Han kingdom kept much of the Qin administrative system but ruled in a less authoritarian and centralised way. Public servants came to be selected by examination rather than appointed by aristocrats. Confucian ideals, suppressed under the Qin, became central in Han society. Science and education prospered. Trade through the Silk Road was established and the tributary system was introduced, whereby those wishing to trade with China would come to pay their respects to the emperor. Buddhism came to China from India. Many military conquests were made. In the end, the Han kingdom was destabilised by corruption and political rivalry amongst the ruling elite.



Terracotta warriors.

Six Dynasties period of disunity 220–589 CE

In this period a series of weak and troubled kingdoms ruled parts of China. These included the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE), the Jin dynasty (265–420 CE) and the Southern and Northern dynasties (420–589 CE). It was an era of disunity and civil war.

Sui dynasty 589–618 CE

The Sui dynasty, founded under Emperor Wen Di (Wen Ti), ended four centuries of upheaval. The Grand Canal was constructed, helping to unify the kingdom while agricultural advances improved productivity. The Great Wall was extended and Buddhism gained in popularity. The Six Ministries governmental system was introduced. Like the Qin, the Sui dynasty was quite authoritarian, which eventually led to popular rebellions.

Tang dynasty 618–907 CE

Urban settlements grew substantially under the Tang, whose rule, like that of the Han, is considered one of the 'golden ages' of China's past. It was a time of stability and progress when an increase in population

DID YOU KNOW?

Empress Wu Zetian rose to power as a concubine of Emperor Gaozong. A talented and knowledgeable woman, Wu was made empress and such was her influence that she came to rule alongside Gaozong with the title 'Two Sages.' After the death of her husband, Wu had his successor killed and went on to ascend the throne herself. To ensure the longevity of her rule, Wu had a number of her rivals, including her own children, killed. She remained on the Dragon Throne for fifty years.



Empress Wu Zetian.



Tang dynasty scholar official.

allowed for a large standing army. A more powerful military led in turn to the expansion of the empire. Poetry flourished, such as that by Du Fu (Tu Fu) and Li Bai (Li Pai), as did landscape painting. Time-keeping devices and woodblock printing were developed. The Tang dynasty was briefly interrupted in 625–705 CE by the second Zhou dynasty of Empress Wu – one of history’s most ruthless despots and the only female to rule as ‘the Son of Heaven.’ Tang rule was re-established when Wu was overthrown in a coup (military takeover). The dynasty eventually declined following a period of natural disasters and regional rebellions.

Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 907–960 CE

This was a period of much political and civil turmoil. Five dynasties followed each other in quick succession and more than twelve independent states came about in the south (only ten are traditionally considered recognised kingdoms).

Song dynasty 960–1279 CE

The Song (Sung) government was the first in the world to issue paper money. The navy was built up and made a number of voyages to new territories. Innovative military technology using gunpowder emerged. Improvement in rice cultivation led to a doubling of the empire’s population. Talented Chinese in the fields of literature, philosophy, science and engineering made many achievements. The Confucian examination system was given greater emphasis. The Song were long troubled by the Mongol peoples of the north, whose armies posed a constant menace and eventually conquered the realm.

Yuan dynasty 1279–1368 CE

The Yuan dynasty was founded by the Mongol warlord Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan. The Yuan ruled over most of modern-day China as well as Mongolia. In 1266 Khan ordered the construction of a new capital at Beijing. He was very different from previous Mongol generals, who allowed their armies to pillage the land. Khan sought to gain the Chinese people’s respect and employed Han advisers. The

Yuan adopted many Chinese customs and traditions but reformed many institutions. The government was made an absolute monarchy and more efficiently centralised. It was a time of rich cultural diversity and scientific innovation.

Ming dynasty 1368–1644 CE

The Ming were the last ethnically Han dynasty to rule China. An army of over one-million troops and a powerful navy were established. Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho), a Muslim eunuch (castrated male), made voyages in the fifteenth century to many Asian lands and the African coast. The Forbidden City in Beijing was built and the Great Wall and Great Canal were restored. The Ming era was one of considerable social stability and orderly government. Trade was carried out with Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish merchants. Economic difficulties and natural calamities eventually undermined the Ming.

Qing dynasty 1644–1911 CE

The Qing was China’s last imperial dynasty. The Qing were of the Manchu people of far northern China (often called Manchuria by Westerners). The Manchu, a sophisticated warrior society, had sufficient military skill to conquer the Ming kingdom. The Qing adopted many of the Chinese civil and cultural structures but also introduced their own practices. One significant change was the insistence that all Han Chinese men wear Manchu-style dress – on pain of death. This included the queue haircut, which involved shaving the front of the head and combing the rest into a long plait. Many thousands of men were killed in enforcing this rule. Manchu women did not bind their feet, although those in the upper classes wore stilt-like shoes to emulate the ‘lily’ walk. These can be seen in photographs of Dowager Empress Cixi (Tz’u-Hsi), who dominated the Qing Court from the mid-1860s onwards.

DID YOU KNOW?

An Italian explorer, Marco Polo (1254–1324), came to China during the Yuan dynasty and on his return to Europe wrote a popular book about his travels: *Journey to the East*. Polo was impressed with the Chinese empire and strongly fostered interest in China in the West.



Groups of men and women wearing typical Manchu dress.

The sixty-one-year reign of second Qing monarch Emperor Kangxi (K'ang-hsi) (1662–1722), the longest in Chinese history, was one of the high points of Qing social, political, military and economic achievement. Kangxi took a great interest in Han Chinese culture and ensured that both Manchu and Han people were drawn into his bureaucracy. Kangxi's era of progress was continued under his heir Yongzheng (Yung-cheng) (1723–1736) and grandson Qianlong (1711–1799).



Emperor Qianlong.



Like Kangxi, Qianlong ruled for a considerable time and worked hard to present himself as a sage-emperor. He cultivated his own artistic interests and spent many hours each day reviewing state affairs. Under the reign of Qianlong, Imperial China experienced its greatest period of administrative stability, prosperity and cultural advancement. The long period of prosperity contributed to a significant increase in the population. Qianlong extended the Chinese empire to its largest proportions, conquering armies amongst the Mongol and Muslim peoples. Vietnam (then called Annam), Burma and Korea were brought under Chinese influence during his reign. Qianlong's treasury was so rich that he cancelled tax payments on four occasions.⁸ Qianlong thought highly of himself, even going so far as to consider whether he had surpassed the greatness of China's past emperors – other than his grandfather. To honour Kangxi's memory and not remain on the throne longer than his grandfather, Qianlong abdicated the throne to Emperor Jiaqing (Chia-ch'ing) in 1796. Qianlong nevertheless continued to hold considerable influence at Court until his death in 1799.

Corruption and inefficiency amongst government officials increased in the later years of Qianlong's reign. In the final years of his rule Qianlong was senile and prone to erratic decisions. Peasant rebellion, which would play a significant role in

destabilising the Qing in the mid-to-late 1800s, also emerged toward the end of Qianlong's reign. Qianlong's successor, Emperor Jiaqing, managed to suppress the rebellions, which came to an end by 1808. The armies of the Manchu had nevertheless been shown to be no longer as effective as once thought. This would become even more apparent by the mid-1800s.

- 6 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 43.
- 7 Author unknown, *The History and Civilization of China* (museum guide) (Beijing: 2008).
- 8 Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China* (New York: Check Mark Books, 1999), 406.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. List the characteristics of the Qing dynasty.
2. Describe the social status of the Manchu people during the Qing period.
3. Define the terms 'absolutist' and 'autocratic.' Identify aspects of Qing rule that might be described in these ways.
4. What were the key achievements of, and problems faced by, emperors Qianlong and Jiaqing?
5. Why was there a need for internal reform in China following Qianlong's abdication?

MANDATE OF HEAVEN



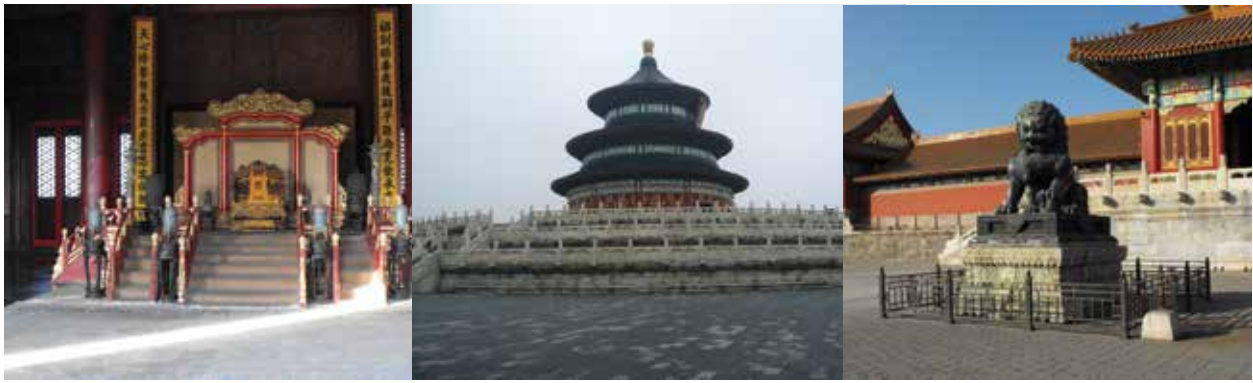
MANDATE OF HEAVEN

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

Emperor Qin Shi Huang: 'A new age is inaugurated by the Emperor; / Rules and measures are rectified; / The myriad things set in order; / Human affairs are made clear; / And there is harmony between fathers and sons. / The Emperor in his sagacity, benevolence and justice / Has made all laws and principles manifest.'



The supreme lord of the Middle Kingdom was the emperor. Revered as the 'Son of Heaven,' the emperor commanded total and complete obedience. He was the representative of heaven on Earth and had absolute power in all matters. When approaching, emperor officials were required to kowtow, which involved kneeling three times and placing one's forehead on the floor three times per kneel. Ceremony and elaborate formalities dominated the life of the emperor. As ruler, there were many duties the emperor had to perform; these included reviewing



Left to right: The Dragon throne, the Temple of Heaven in Beijing and the Forbidden City.

petitions handed on by his officials, composing new laws or proclamations called edicts, and carrying out rituals to bring prosperity to the land. The emperor sat at the top of the Chinese hierarchy. The supreme law-maker and law-enforcer, his power was unrivalled.

Ordinary people would never meet with the emperor. The reverence held for the Son of Heaven was shown on occasions when the emperor travelled outside Beijing's royal residence, known as the Forbidden City; all commoners were required to turn away with heads bowed and not lay eyes on their ruler. To question or disobey the emperor was unthinkable; his authority came from a 'Mandate of Heaven.' The Chinese notion of heaven was very different from the Christian conception of a godly realm where those who'd lived virtuous lives went after death. For the Chinese, heaven was a presence or divine force that governed all things in the world. If the emperor ruled wisely and remained virtuous, then peace and harmony were ensured. Natural disasters, however, were a sign that heaven was displeased with the current order. The Mandate of Heaven could be a force for stability or change. When a new dynasty came to power it would make known that it had inherited the Mandate of Heaven. A successful rebellion or coup was not immoral, for heaven clearly approved of it.⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

The Chinese word for revolution, *geming*, means 'to abolish the mandate.'



RELIGION IN CHINA

CONFUCIANISM, DAOISM AND BUDDHISM

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

The ideals of the philosopher Confucius¹⁰ (551–479 BCE)¹¹ played a central role in Imperial Chinese society and remain influential today. Confucianism emphasises the need for personal virtues as a way of bringing about social harmony. It is more a philosophy than a religion; a guide to behaviour and social relationships in this world rather than a promise of a better life in the next. Confucius was more concerned with how to live one's life ethically than with metaphysical (philosophical or abstract) matters.



Confucius.

- 9 Helmut G. Callis, *China: Confucian and Communist* (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), 48–9.
- 10 Pinyin: Kong Fuzi; Wade Giles: K'ung-fu-tzu.
- 11 BCE means Before the Common Era, previously referred to as BC (Before Christ).

DID YOU KNOW?

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

DID YOU KNOW?

A Daoist religious tradition emerged in the second century CE. Daoist priests were very knowledgeable in the use of herbs and other Chinese medicines. They were employed by people to conduct elaborate ceremonies to bring good fortune and health. The pursuit of longevity and immortality were a major focus of Daoist rituals and practice.



Outlined in the *Analects*, a collection of dialogues attributed to Confucius, and in the works of eminent scholars such as Mencius¹² (372–289 BCE), was the importance of one's relationships and obligations. A noble person should aspire to the *five virtues* of benevolence, wisdom, trustworthiness, righteousness and proper conduct. These virtues underpin the *five relationships* of son to father, wife to husband, younger brother to elder brother, friend to friend, and people to ruler. The most important thing was to interact with filial piety, the kind of respect and deference a good son would show toward his father. Only one of the five relationships was based on an equal standing (that between friends), although a difference in age could also create a sense of hierarchy (ranking in order of power or authority). Confucian thought indeed reinforced China's social structure, which was based on a rigid hierarchy. Confucius emphasised that one had an obligation to respect those whose social status was higher. People in positions of authority were, in turn, obliged to care for but firmly guide those below them. These values fostered a culture of obedience. An acceptance of fate, social position and authority was encouraged. These values had significant political consequences, as to challenge those in authority meant to challenge the natural order. A good ruler should act as a wise father to his people and, in turn, the people must accept his guidance. According to the Confucian *Analects*, 'He who practises government through virtue can be compared to the north polar star: while it stays stationary in its place, the mass of stars turn towards it.'¹³ If all relationships in society are in order then harmony will prevail. Natural disasters were potential signs that the emperor had failed to maintain his virtuous relations; heaven was revealing its disapproval and the Mandate to rule was in jeopardy.

A further influence on the Chinese political and social order was Daoism. Founded by Laozi, a contemporary of Confucius, the philosophy of Daoism spoke of following the 'Way of the Truth.' This mainly amounted to being in harmony with the *Dao* ('way,' 'path' or 'road') of nature. Daoism sees a balance of complementary forces in all life, as represented in the ideals of *yin* and *yang* (principles of universal balance). Daoists praise 'actionless acting,' engaging in life as water flows over rocks. The natural order of things should not be disrupted. Whereas Confucius held political and moral effort in high regard, Laozi and his disciples believed in renunciation, giving up everyday concerns for higher contemplation.¹⁴ Whilst Daoism appears contradictory to Confucianism, Chinese culture and people sought wisdom from both traditions. Importantly, Daoism further strengthened the acceptance of the given social order in China.

Buddhism, which originated in India, made its way to China via the Silk Road in the first century CE. In this period the Han dynasty was coming to an end and there was much social instability. The 'Four Noble Truths,' as taught by Buddha, found a ready audience and were looked to in the search for meaning during this time of upheaval:

1. Life entails suffering;
2. Suffering is due to attachment, which causes anxiety and disappointment;
3. Suffering can be overcome if attachment is given up;
4. Leading a virtuous, disciplined life and practising meditation can conquer attachment. Insight will overcome ignorance, thereby revealing the path to enlightenment.¹⁵

People were attracted to Buddhism because of the prospects offered for salvation and the emphasis placed on kindness, charity and preservation of all forms of

12 Pinyin: Meng Zi; Wade Giles: Meng Tzu.

13 Cited in Colin Mackerras et al, *China in Revolution 1850–1976: History Through Documents* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 3

14 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 34.

15 Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China*, 47.



Big Goose Pagoda, Xi'an. Built to house the scriptures of Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Chinese Buddhist monks made pilgrimages to India to visit sacred sites and bring back holy texts. One famous pilgrim was Xuanzang, or Tripitaka (602–64 CE). Xuanzang's travels provided the basis for the much-loved sixteenth century novel *Journey to the West*. Xuanzang was said to have been accompanied by Pigsy, Friar Sandy the water demon, a talking horse and Monkey King. These characters were featured in the popular TV series *Monkey*.

life.¹⁶ By the fourth century Buddhism, with some adaptations, had become enmeshed in Chinese culture. It found many followers amongst the noble classes and women. The landscape was also transformed by Buddhist pagodas (tall buildings built to house scriptures) and impressive cave sculptures.

A belief in spirits of the land and mystical beings, usually called ghosts or demons, were further facets of China's rich spiritual life. Ancestor worship was a particularly important and highly regarded practice. The many religious and philosophical traditions were not seen as competing or mutually exclusive ideas. Many people held and observed beliefs from a range of systems.

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

As a class, discuss how Confucianism and Daoism contributed to the forces of unity in Imperial China. Which other factors made the Empire cohesive?

ACTIVITY



Lingyin Buddhist Temple, Hangzhou.

IMPERIAL SOCIETY

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

Around eighty per cent of the population of Imperial China was made up of peasants. Within this largely rural society, a hierarchical system based on Confucian beliefs identified those who were most valued and respected. The supposedly least-virtuous people were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, while the most virtuous were at the top.¹⁷

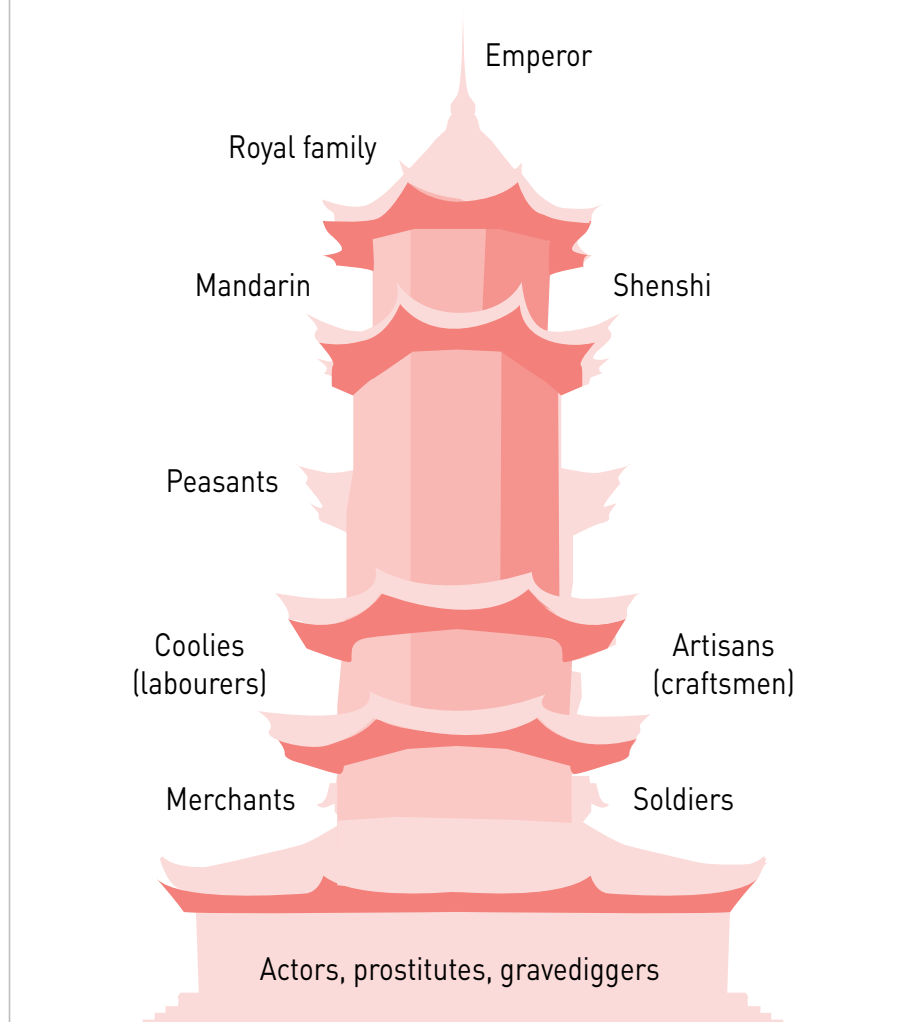
16 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 82.

17 John E. Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (London: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 14.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Confucian Social Structure



IMPERIAL CHINA



Besides social outcasts, such as actors, prostitutes and grave-diggers, the least respected members of society were merchants and soldiers. Merchants were seen as people who *made* nothing but who grew rich by selling the products of other people's work; they were frowned upon for pursuing personal wealth and seen as exploiters or 'parasites.' Common soldiers also lacked respect as they earned their living by killing. Service in the military was not popular and most soldiers were either conscripts (forced soldiers) or poor men with few other options. According to the Chinese saying, 'Good iron is not made into nails, good people do not become soldiers.'¹⁸

Artisans (craftsmen) and town workers were valued as producers of useful goods and services for society. If skilled and careful in their business artisans could manage a reasonable income. Town workers toiled as porters, rickshaw pullers, dock workers and builder's labourers. Though most were poor, these workers were viewed favourably for their service to the community.

18 John Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective*, 52.



Farmers who could not afford to keep a draft animal had to pull their ploughs themselves.

PEASANTS

Of greater importance than labourers and artisans were the peasantry. Peasants were greatly praised because without food, which peasants grew, nobody could live. They played a vital role in the economy. Before the advent of chemical fertilisers, farms in China produced a greater yield per acre than anywhere else in the world. Peasants tended their fields meticulously and made the most of natural fertilisers. Because of the care and attention shown to the land, Chinese farming was said to resemble gardening.¹⁹

A long period of prosperity and peace under the Qing dynasty led to an unprecedented population increase in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The population grew from 200 million people in 1700 to 300 million in 1800; and then to over 430 million by the 1850s. By the late nineteenth century this growth began to put a strain on the availability of land. The scarcity of land, in turn, increased prices, meaning many peasants incurred crippling debts and had to sell their land and become tenant farmers. Land was now concentrated in the hands of the wealthy, who rented it out to tenants and lived off the profits. In the 1850s up to sixty per cent of land was held by wealthy Chinese.²⁰ Many landlords did not even live in the countryside but rather resided in towns and employed bailiffs to collect the rent. The common rural labourers lived in villages accommodating between ten and 100 families. While there was considerable regional variety due to climate and available building materials, most peasants lived in simple dwellings. These were often made of compressed mud walls with a thatched roof and swept dirt floor. Those who were better off might be able to afford tiles and a raised floor. Peasant households had simple, practical furnishings. Peasants were required to work long hours of back-breaking toil, usually from dawn to dusk. Fields needed to be ploughed and crops planted.

19 John Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective*, 53; Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2005. First published 1931) offers a vivid portrayal of life in the Chinese countryside through the fictional story of Wang Lung.

20 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 223.



A mandarin.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Confucian examinations were quite an event. Thousands of candidates would travel to regional centres to sit the tests. Stalls were set up to sell paper, ink and other supplies. Candidates were overseen by guards. Grading took twenty days, during which most candidates stayed in town to await results. Those who passed were invited to the governor's residence for a banquet.

Oxen were most often used to pull the plough but the poorer farmers used family members for this task. Rice farming required careful irrigation with the aid of foot-driven water wheels, while the planting season meant days of bending over and standing in knee-high water. When crops were not in need of tending, families would concentrate on handicrafts, such as weaving, to supplement their income. By the mid-nineteenth century life had become very hard for the 'have nots' in the countryside, as poverty and debt closed off opportunities for social advancement. The most impoverished and exploited peasants were a potentially potent force, whose frustrations were sometimes unleashed in violent rebellion. The hardship of daily life for ordinary people is suggested by the average life expectancy in late Imperial China: twenty-five years.²¹

SHENSHI AND MANDARINS

Mencius spoke of society's elite as being those who worked with their minds and governed those who worked with their hands. Above the working people and below the emperor in the social hierarchy of Imperial China were the shenshi. The shenshi were scholar-officials who owned land (*shen* means 'official degree holder' and *shi* means 'noble'). Unlike gentry, the shenshi did not necessarily inherit privileged status from their ancestors. The shenshi owned wealth and land – this they could pass on to their children – but their status came from their success in Confucian education. Positions of influence were determined by a rigorous Confucian examination system. The exams tested knowledge of literature, history, philosophy and, above all, Confucian theory. Economics and other seemingly 'practical' subjects were not tested, for the Confucian system hoped to foster expertise in good human relations. Some shenshi chose to take the higher level exams and serve in the Imperial government; others contented themselves by acting as informal local administrators in their regions. The shenshi wore the robes of Confucian scholars and proved their virtue by spending much of their day contemplating philosophy and writing poetry. They grew their fingernails extremely long to signify that they did no manual labour – their life was one of 'conspicuous idleness.'

The shenshi who earned a higher degree and served the government were called mandarin by Western observers (from the Latin *mandare*, 'to command'). The mandarins dominated political life. As they tried to keep their privileged positions, they tended to support the status quo (existing state of affairs) and discourage reform. Around 40 000 men (about one-hundredth of one per cent of the population), served in the mandarin class in the eighteenth century. Those holding the lowest degrees had to re-sit examinations every now and then to keep their status.²² It was believed that ability rather than birth should determine status in this 'meritocratic system.'²³ By the 1800s it was possible for the wealthy to purchase an examination rank. This added to government revenue but at the same time undermined the standard of its officials.²⁴

BUREAUCRACY

The emperor's realm was administered by a well organised and centralised government bureaucracy. Six ministries – Public Works, Justice, War, Rites (which ran Confucian examinations), Personnel, Revenue – were based under the emperor at Beijing (the main capital city from the time of the Yuan dynasty).

21 Colin Mackerras et al, *China: The Impact of Revolution* (UK: Longman Group, 1976), 146.

22 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 167.

23 John Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective*, 59.

24 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 247.

Provincial and local levels of government were spread throughout China and each reported to its higher authority. Governors headed the regional departments and ran China's eighteen provinces. Some governors ruled over more than one province and therefore took the prestigious title of Viceroy.

Below the provincial governors and working closely with the local shenshi were the district magistrates, who collected taxes, administered government policies and settled legal cases that could not be resolved by the local shenshi.

The emperor was assisted by a small number of aides known as the Grand Council and Grand Secretariat. Grand Councillors advised on all matters of state; the emperor's Grand Secretariat dealt with administration and did not generally advise the emperor.

Under the Qing dynasty, the main administration of the military was provided by the Banner Armies. Made up of eight separate armies garrisoned across China and differentiated by eight different colours, the men of the Banner Armies were all from the Manchu people. Those serving received special privileges and monthly payments. This would prove their undoing, as corruption and lack of fighting spirit undermined their military prowess. The Banner Armies proved an ineffective force for resisting the might of foreign armed forces and widespread peasant rebellions during the nineteenth century.

WOMEN

Women, of all social groups, were by far the least valued in the social hierarchy. While there were times when a woman would rise to a position of authority, such as Empress Wu of the second Zhou dynasty, Imperial China was, on the whole, a thoroughly patriarchal (male-dominated) society. Women could not hold official positions. It was common for men of wealth to have second wives or concubines. A young bride would go to live with her husband and his parents, so people who had no sons would have no one to care for them in old age. The marriage of one's daughter required one to pay a dowry and the family name was carried by males; for these reasons female children were sometimes killed by their families. When food was scarce, young girls from poor families were allowed to die from neglect. It was traditional for a young bride to serve the whims of her mother-in-law; many were treated terribly.

Perhaps the greatest hardship for women was the practice of foot-binding. From the age of five, girls' feet were tightly bound in bandages to stunt their growth and produce 'golden lily feet.' With their toes and heels brought so unnaturally close that they were crushed and eventually deformed, women had great difficulty walking normally. One writer described the hidden horror of foot-binding:



The effects of foot-binding.



Members of the Imperial court.

DID YOU KNOW?

Corruption amongst the Banner Armies was common. Officers were known to exaggerate the numbers of men under their command and pocket the excess pay. In 1850 only half the soldiers on military rolls actually existed.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

In her tiny embroidered shoes, with beribboned pantaloons falling prettily over the swollen and deformed ankles, or in elegant spats, the Chinese girl minced along daintily on the arm of one of her sons or one of her servants. This was the famous ‘lily walk,’ for the movement of her figure as she tottered on her cramped and crippled feet was celebrated in thousands of years of verse, even though, when the bandages were renewed, the stench of compressed flesh was appalling.²⁵

Tiny feet and dainty tottering were seen as sexually attractive and pleasant to look at. Foot-binding was done by all classes of the Han and some other Chinese, but not the Mongols or Manchu. Colin Mackerras notes that ‘the practice ensured that about half the population was crippled and in constant and severe physical discomfort.’²⁶ Only very few of the poorest families, who required their girls to perform hard labour or did not have time to do the bandaging, did not bind feet.

DID YOU KNOW?

Such little thought was given to women that many did not even have proper names. It was common for girls to be called First Sister, Second Sister and so on. The name of Mao’s mother, Wen Qimei, translates as Seventh Sister.

- 25 Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress: Life and Times of Tz’u-hsi 1835–1908, Empress Dowager of China* (London: Vintage).
- 26 Colin Mackerras et al, *China: The Impact of Revolution*, 146.

ACTIVITIES

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) there was a rigid social hierarchy. To examine the social inequalities of the era, complete the tasks below.

- Divide the following social groups between class members:
 - Peasants
 - Coolies
 - Shenshi
 - Royalty
 - Government ministers
 - Provincial governors
 - Military
 - Spiritual leaders
 - Women
 - Artisans and merchants.
- Working in pairs or small groups, make a poster showing the social experiences of your allocated group during the Qing dynasty. Include the following points:
 - Living conditions
 - Daily concerns and priorities
 - Social status
 - Skills and contributions
 - Ability to influence decision-makers
 - Likely aspirations.
- Arrange posters on the board so that the most powerful group is at the top and the least powerful group is at the bottom. (Some may sit side by side.)
- As a class, discuss how the social hierarchy might have contributed to dissatisfaction in China during the Qing dynasty.

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Write a paragraph describing the social tensions that emerged in late Imperial China. Then, with the whole class, discuss the extent to which these problems might have contributed to calls for significant change by the late 1800s.



The Reception of the Diplomatique and His Suite
by James Gillray.

FOREIGN ENCROACHMENT

Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu: 'The great profits made by barbarians are all taken from the rightful share of China. By what right do you then use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? Let us ask, where is your conscience?'

The world view of Imperial China was decidedly ethnocentric. The Middle Kingdom saw itself as the most civilised of nations under heaven; all lands and peoples outside this kingdom were inferior and barbaric. As the Son of Heaven, the emperor expected peoples from far-off lands to acknowledge the superiority of China. In 1793 Britain's King George III sent the Macartney Mission to try to open diplomatic and trade ties with the Qing. Flattered by what he understood as a tributary visit, Emperor Qianlong thanked his British visitors for their gifts but rejected all treaty offers. Having declared he wanted nothing from the west and would not allow British traders access to his realm, Emperor Qianlong instructed his fellow monarch to 'Tremblingly obey and show no negligence!'²⁷ Two further British missions in the early 1800s likewise fared no better than Macartney's.

The Celestial emperor expected Western nations to relate to China in the same way smaller neighbouring nations did, such as Korea, Burma and Annam (Vietnam). Before 1862 China had neither a ministry for foreign affairs nor an official who dealt exclusively with diplomacy. International relations were seen from a Confucian perspective, with foreign nations expected to show the Middle Kingdom filial piety. Foreign states made occasional 'tribute missions' to offer gifts and be received at the Imperial court, where their representatives would kowtow before the emperor. In return, trading rights and symbolic independence under Chinese rule were granted. Trade was only allowed, though, in certain

DID YOU KNOW?

Emperor Qianlong wrote and published over 42 000 poems.



Emperor Qianlong.

²⁷ Dorothy Morrison, *The Rise of Modern China* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1988), 7.

ports or border towns and for a specified number of days. This tribute system greatly expanded the Chinese empire and brought respect to its rulers. The trade networks established by the tributary system also allowed the Chinese to control neighbouring peoples in a peaceful manner. The Qing controlled their borders through an effective combination of trading and raiding.²⁸

Western contact grew in the 1400s after Portuguese explorers established sailing routes to Asia. British, Spanish and American traders soon joined the Portuguese. The Chinese expected their new visitors to work within the tribute system and acknowledge the superiority of the Middle Kingdom. In what became known as the Canton System, Western traders were restricted to the southern port city on Guangzhou (then known in the West as Canton) and could only do business with selected Chinese merchants, called *Cohong*. The Cohong made considerable profits by regulating Western trade and collecting tariffs on behalf of the Qing government. Demand for Chinese goods was so great that the Canton System was accepted, though much resented, by Westerners.

An opium den where two Chinese men are 'chasing the dragon' (smoking opium).



THE OPIUM WARS

Rebuffed in their efforts to establish regular diplomatic and economic ties, Britain was the first nation to challenge the Canton System. Greatly concerned by the costs of Chinese goods, which had to be paid for in silver, the British sought a means to end the imbalance of trade. Their solution was opium. Smuggling this highly addictive drug into China, British merchants soon turned the balance of profits in their favour, as demand grew rapidly and silver poured from Chinese coffers into the hands of the opium smugglers. Up to ten million Chinese became addicts. Ruining countless lives, the opium trade soon gained the attention of the Imperial court. A ban on its import had little effect. By 1839 the Emperor had had

enough and appointed an official, Lin Zexu, to deal with the problem. Lin seized then destroyed all opium stocks. His resolute stance was seen as an unreasonable, provocative affront by the British government. Relations deteriorated and what became known as the First Opium War (1839–42) commenced. While an adviser to the emperor assured his ruler, 'The English are an insignificant and detestable race,'²⁹ the British navy inflicted a devastating defeat upon the Middle

28 Peter Purdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (London: Belknap Press, 2005).

29 Cited in Dorothy Morrison, *The Rise of Modern China*, 8.

Kingdom's outdated military. The Qing called for peace and in 1843 signed the Treaty of Nanjing, the first of what the Chinese call the 'unequal treaties.' The treaty gave Britain a sizeable indemnity (payment), Hong Kong as a colonial territory, unhindered trade access to five port cities and other privileges. Britain's victory in the First Opium War had exposed the weakness of the Manchu dynasty.

The First Opium War marked the beginning of a century-long struggle to resist imperialism by the Chinese. In the years that followed, France, America and Russia pressured China for similar privileges to those granted to Britain. The ongoing opium trade and Chinese perceptions that foreign powers were imposing upon their sovereignty, led to increasing unease that culminated in the Second Opium War (1856–60). Unfortunately for the Chinese, Britain and France again achieved a decisive victory in the war. Following a disagreement over peace terms, foreign forces looted the capital and burned down the Imperial Summer Palace. The Qing eventually capitulated, signing the Treaty of Tianjin, granting further territorial rights and a large indemnity to the victors.

The fall of Beijing, 1860.



PODCAST: THE OPIUM WARS



THE OPIUM WARS

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

In pairs, discuss and take brief notes on the questions below.

1. What was the impact of the Opium Wars on the Qing dynasty?
2. Why might the Chinese have considered the Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaty of Tianjin 'unequal'?
3. What flaws in the Qing dynasty were revealed by the Opium Wars?

ACTIVITY

DID YOU KNOW?

It is said that public parks in the British district of Shanghai were posted with signs reading, 'No Dogs or Chinese Allowed.'

THE TAIPING REBELLION

Hong Xiuquan: 'Slay the demons! Slay the demons!'

The military defeats of the mid-1800s came at a time of great social unrest in the Chinese countryside. An influx of foreign imports such as cotton undermined local handicrafts, while the population explosion and land shortages fuelled rural poverty. Natural disasters, such as floods and droughts, coupled with corruption and heavy taxation by local officials, made things worse. The countryside was ripe for upheaval. Almost all regions of China were affected by peasant rebellions in the nineteenth century.

The largest and most spectacular uprising was the Taiping Rebellion. The Taiping movement was founded by Hong Xiuquan (Hung Hsiu-ch'uan). From a poor family, Hong had worked hard to gain a good education yet he repeatedly failed his Imperial examinations and was frustrated in his attempts to advance socially. After his third failed attempt at the exams Hong experienced feverish delusions.

DID YOU KNOW?

Women served as high-ranking officials in the Taiping government. Since they did not bind their feet they were able to march – some even enrolled in the Taiping army.

He reportedly experienced great visions in which he was visited by Jesus Christ. Hong believed his visions were a sign of his great destiny and claimed he was a son of God and the younger brother of Jesus. He founded a religious sect, the Association of God Worshippers, and attracted a great number of followers, particularly amongst poor workers and farmers. By 1850 Hong's followers numbered in excess of 30 000. The God Worshippers preached equality between men and women, communal ownership of land and equal distribution of food and clothing. The cause of all social evils, according to the sect, was the Manchu dynasty.

By mid-1850 conflict between the Qing and the God Worshippers had increased, leading to a declaration of rebellion. Hong Xiuquan announced the founding of a new political order: the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (Taiping Tianguo). The Taiping achieved considerable military victories and the movement grew substantially, eventually attracting millions of devotees and affecting sixteen of China's eighteen provinces. In 1853 Taiping forces seized Nanjing and made it their capital. For ten years there were two governments and two capital cities in China: the Qing in Beijing and the Taiping in Nanjing.

The Qing eventually emerged victorious in the war against the Taiping but the cost was great. The rebellion was the most destructive civil war of modern times, with approximately thirty- to fifty-million people killed and untold damage inflicted upon property and livelihoods. The armies of Bannermen were proven ineffective and the Qing were forced to decentralise military power to provincial governors, who raised and trained their own troops, and rely on foreign mercenary forces. The deep-seated causes of the rebellion remained unaddressed and in some regions were made far worse. Popular resentment toward Qing rule continued.

ACTIVITY

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Explain the causes and consequences of the Taiping Rebellion. Why did the rebellion fail? What flaws in the Qing dynasty were revealed by the rebellion?

THE SELF-STRENGTHENING MOVEMENT



Prince Gong.

Feng Guifen: 'Why are the Western nations small and yet so strong? Why are we large and yet weak? We must search for the means to become their equal.'

The end of the Taiping Rebellion in 1864 and peace agreements with Britain and France in 1860 saw China enter a period of relative stability and revival. The 1860s saw a new direction in leadership with the rise of two significant figures: Prince Gong and Dowager Empress Cixi. Prince Gong had gained political standing through his confident negotiations with western powers following the Opium Wars. Cixi was Emperor Xianfeng's favourite concubine and the mother of his only son and heir, Tongzhi (T'ung chih). In 1861 the emperor, who had been in poor health, passed away. Not long after five-year-old Tongzhi was enthroned, Prince Gong and the Dowager Empress made a political alliance, installing themselves as co-regents.

Dowager Empress Cixi became the dominant force at the Qing court, the so-called 'power behind the silk screen,' managing state affairs and issuing edicts on behalf of the emperor.³⁰ Prince Gong meanwhile sought to improve China's diplomatic relations and advance its military. He established a Ministry for Foreign Affairs and founded a school to teach Chinese scholars foreign languages. Gong also supported a number of provincial governors and scholar-officials whose reforms became known as the Self-Strengthening movement or Tongzhi Restoration. The leading theorist of the Self-Strengthening movement was scholar-official Feng Guifen (Feng Kuei-fan). Feng believed that in order to strengthen the Qing state, traditional Confucian culture and institutions must be preserved, but supplemented by western weapons and technological learning.

The Self-Strengthening effort resulted in the building of a modern dockyard, machine factories, new arsenals, the founding of a Chinese merchant shipping line and the beginnings of a modern navy. Yet the movement suffered from a significant flaw: a preoccupation with western ships and weapons at the expense of appreciating modern political systems and culture; in the latter China remained superior, according to the Self-Strengtheners. This resulted in inadequate military training for modern warfare and sub-standard industrial goods. Di McDonald argues that 'Modern weapons were useless in pre-modern hands.'³¹ The Chinese subsequently experienced further military defeats, losing control of Indo-China (Vietnam) to France in 1884–85 and ceding Taiwan to Japan in 1894–95.

A further barrier to reform were conservative mandarins, with the veiled backing of Dowager Empress Cixi, who opposed many of the new innovations. Funds set aside for modernising projects were also misused; the most outrageous case was a full-sized ornamental marble boat built in the grounds of the restored Summer Palace. Made for Cixi's entertainment as she considered retirement, the boat cost millions in silver from funds set aside for a fleet of modern ships. No new ships were bought after 1888.

DID YOU KNOW?

The name 'self-strengthening' comes from the *Book of Changes*, a classical Confucian text: 'Heaven moves on strongly, the superior men therefore strengthen themselves.'

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 1800s the Qing government bought, for a large sum, a railway built by British merchants. Local officials ordered the tracks to be pulled up for they believed the railway disturbed the harmony between earthly and heavenly things – *feng-shui*.



HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

According to Immanuel Hsu, Self-Strengthening was 'a superficial gesture toward modernization; the finer aspects of Western civilization ... went totally untouched.'³² To what extent is this a fair interpretation?

ACTIVITY

- 30 As women were required to remain out of sight during Imperial audiences, Empress Dowager Cixi was required to sit behind a silk screen while conducting business at the Imperial court.
- 31 Di McDonald, *Revolution: China: Student Handbook* (Collingwood: HTAV, 2005), 20.
- 32 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 262.

THE SCRAMBLE FOR CHINA

Li Hongzhang: 'Barbarian affairs are hard to manage.'

The 1895 Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War and subsequent Treaty of Shimonoseki, which granted Taiwan, Korea and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan along with a sizeable indemnity, was a terrible humiliation. The Chinese had long considered the Japanese an inferior race of 'dwarf pirates'; however, the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) had seen Japan rapidly modernise and emerge as a leading power in the region. China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War exposed the weakness of the Qing and vulnerability of Chinese territory. It marked not only the end of the Self-Strengthening movement but also the beginning of a new era of imperialism.

Between 1895 and 1899 the domination of China by foreign powers degenerated into a scramble. Britain, Germany, France, Russia and Japan all declared areas of China to be their 'spheres of influence' and staked claim to different assets, trading rights or other concessions, such as mines and railways.

This unchecked advance of foreign influence exposed the Qing dynasty to the perception that it was unable to protect China's national sovereignty. The Chinese people were well aware that their livelihoods were being eroded by powerful western nations and Japan. Many Chinese feared their nation was being carved up or torn apart by foreign powers. This sense of national crisis led some scholar-officials to consider more radical reforms to strengthen and modernise the Middle Kingdom.

ACTIVITIES

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write a paragraph explaining how foreign imperialism undermined the authority of the Qing dynasty in the late nineteenth century.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at 'Hold On, John!' and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the message conveyed by the source. E.g., which nations are represented and what are they doing to 'John'? (NB. 'John Chinaman' was a caricature of a Chinese person that appeared frequently in cartoons of the time.)
2. Using the source and your own knowledge, explain China's difficulties during the 'scramble for China.'
3. Analyse the significance of foreign imperialism in China from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. In your response, refer to the source and other views.



'Hold On, John!' A cartoon from *Punch*, 2 April 1898.

THE HUNDRED DAYS OF REFORM



DOWAGER
EMPRESS CIXI

Emperor Guangxu: 'Today it is really imperative that we reform.'

When Emperor Tongzhi died in 1875 at the age of nineteen, Dowager Empress Cixi used her influence to have her young nephew Guangxu (whom she'd adopted as her own son), appointed to the throne. Cixi thereby continued to rule as regent. Emperor Guangxu began full duties – called 'reaching maturity' by the Chinese – in 1889. He did so under the ever-vigilant Cixi, who continued to take an interest in court matters although she was officially in retirement at the Summer Palace.

Guangxu was shy and withdrawn, suffering from a speech impediment and health problems throughout his life.³³ Unlike previous Chinese monarchs, however, twenty-seven-year-old Guangxu developed a keen interest in western ideas and the world beyond his Kingdom under Heaven. He took lessons in English, world geography, western literature and history. As Guangxu cultivated his intellect, he came to the conclusion that imperial institutions and their conservative officials were to blame for China's lack of progress. By early 1898, the young emperor was intent on change.

In 1895, Kang Youwei, a young Confucian scholar, drafted a memorial to the emperor. Kang expressed deep concern at China's inability to deal with the demands of the modern world, arguing that significant reforms were needed if the Middle Kingdom was to avoid being dismembered by foreign powers. 'China is in imminent peril,' Kang warned.³⁴ China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War was especially distressing. Kang's petition was intercepted by officials, who deemed it too radical for consideration; however, Kang persisted in writing to the emperor and explaining his reformist vision. In early 1898 more open-minded officials took notice, passing on his petitions and recommending an audience for Kang with the emperor.

Guangxu was impressed by Kang Youwei's ideas. When the emperor met with Kang he spoke of his difficulty in implementing changes when he suspected they would be resisted by many of his ministers. Kang replied, 'If Your Majesty wishes to rely on them [conservative ministers] for reform it will be like climbing a tree to seek fish.'³⁵ Inspired by Kang's advice, Guangxu boldly set out on the road to reform. Between June and September 1898, a flourish of imperial decrees, later known as the Hundred Days of Reform, outlined a bold program for modernisation. The reforms included the founding of new schools based on western and Chinese learning; ending confucian examinations for aspiring public servants; removal of unnecessary imperial departments; a careful accounting of court spending; support for new railways and farming methods; investment in mining and commerce; and the adoption of modern military drill for the armed forces.

CIXI'S COUP

At first Cixi offered cautious support of Guangxu's reforms; however, her views changed once she received numerous petitions from conservative officials, appalled at the perceived threat to their prestige. On 21 September, with the support of military and state officials, Cixi staged a coup. Guangxu was placed

DID YOU KNOW?

On meeting Kang Youwei and hearing his ideas, one high official described the reformer as 'very crazy.'



33 Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady: The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 160–6, 253–5.

34 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 134.

35 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 372.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is rumoured that the grooves left by Guangxu's walking stick as he paced his small quarters in the Summer Palace during house arrest can still be seen today.

under house arrest and imprisoned on an island in the Summer Palace. For the rest of his life he remained a ruler in name only, while Cixi resumed powers of regency. The reform edicts, except those establishing a new university in Beijing, were cancelled over the following months. Kang Youwei managed to escape to Japan, but six of his associates who had advised Guangxu during the Hundred Days, the so-called 'Six Gentlemen,' were arrested and executed. Guangxu was eventually allowed to attend court audiences, although Cixi remained the judge of imperial policy. The failed Hundred Days of Reform signified the unwillingness of the conservatives within Qing society to adopt change by peaceful means. A number of educated critics now argued that only a revolution could sweep away the inequalities of Old China.

ACTIVITIES

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

With a partner, discuss the following questions. Then note down your findings.

1. What were the key changes proposed by Kang Youwei and Emperor Guangxu?
2. Why did the Hundred Days of Reform fail?
3. In what ways did the failure of the Hundred Days of Reform signal the need for revolution?

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the representation of the Dowager Empress Cixi (right) and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline Cixi's role in the Hundred Days of Reform. In your response, refer to the source and to your own knowledge.
2. Analyse how Cixi reacted to attempts to reform China. In your response, refer to the source and to your own knowledge.
3. Evaluate the significance of Cixi's role in the Hundred Days of Reform as a cause of social unrest. In your response, refer to the source and other views.



THE BOXER REBELLION

Dowager Empress Cixi: 'I never dreamt that the Boxer movement would end with such serious results for China.'

THE BOXER REBELLION



As the reactionary Qing court under Cixi abandoned the reforms of 1898, a militant movement emerged among the common people. China had a long history of 'secret societies' – underground sects or brotherhoods with their own rituals and symbolism. In 1808 a new group emerged in the northern province of Shandong called the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, or Yi He Quan (I Ho Chuan). The Righteous and Harmonious Fists were commonly known as 'Boxers,' as they practised martial arts. They believed their boxing gave them supernatural powers such as immunity to bullets, help from Heavenly 'spirit soldiers,' and, after much practice, the ability to fly.

In the late 1890s, Shandong Province was hit by severe flooding and drought, which caused famine and great hardship in the region. The cause of these natural calamities, according to the Boxers, was the influx of western construction, such as railways, and Christian missionaries. These were evidently disturbing the feng shui, the balance between heaven and earth.

Fiercely patriotic, the Righteous and Harmonious Fists had originally been opposed to all 'foreigners,' including the Manchu, but in the late 1890s the conservative Viceroy of Shandong secretly gave them his support. The Boxers chief catch-cry now became 'Support the Qing, exterminate the Foreigners!' The Boxers began to attack all that they saw as foreign, burning churches, pulling up railways and tearing down telegraph lines. Missionaries and their converts were brutally murdered. By 1899 around 250 Westerners and countless Chinese had lost their lives. During a visit to Beijing, the Viceroy of Shandong commended the Boxers to Cixi. At the urging of the conservative advisers, the dowager empress came to believe that the Boxers might be used to rid China of its 'Foreign Devils.' Over the course of late 1899 to mid-1900, a series of imperial edicts endorsed and encouraged the Righteous and Harmonious Fists.

DID YOU KNOW?

Boxers demonstrated their prowess at country fairs, firing rifles at fellow Boxers to prove they could withstand bullets. It was not revealed that the guns had been disarmed prior to firing. Sometimes this didn't work, however, and Boxers were killed or wounded. In such cases it was announced that the person involved had not done enough magic training.

DOCUMENT

BOXER POETRY, 1899

There are many Christian
converts
Who have lost their senses,
They deceive our Emperor,
Destroy the gods we worship,
Pull down our temples and
altars,
Permit neither joss-sticks
nor candles,
Cast away tracts on ethics,
And ignore reason.

Don't you realize that
Their aim is to engulf the
country?
Their men are all immoral;
Their women truly vile
For the Devils it's mother-son
sex
That serves as the breeding
style.
No rain comes from Heaven,

The earth is parched and dry.
And all because the
churches
Have bottled up the sky.
When at last all the Foreign
Devils
Are expelled to the very last
man,
The Great Qing, united,
together,
Will bring peace to this our
land.³⁶

BOXER VIOLENCE

The Boxers subsequently rampaged across Hubei and Shandong. They murdered all the Christian converts and westerners they could find and destroyed constructions built by western firms. In the process they gained more followers, particularly among destitute peasants. By 13 June 1900, Boxer forces had reached Beijing. Western diplomats sent alarming reports to their governments back home and called for immediate troop reinforcements. There were moderates at court, such as General Ronglu (Jung-lu), who urged Cixi to have the Boxers dispersed. Arch-conservatives, however, encouraged the dowager empress to embrace the movement. Cixi faced a dilemma: if the Boxers were suppressed, they would likely turn on the Qing, but if they were allowed to continue, the foreign powers would likely take action.³⁷

36 Cited in Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 299–300.

37 Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, 314.

'Je Su [Jesus], the Pig, is put to death.' Anti-Christian and anti-foreign propaganda produced by the Yi He Tuan (Boxers).

DID YOU KNOW?

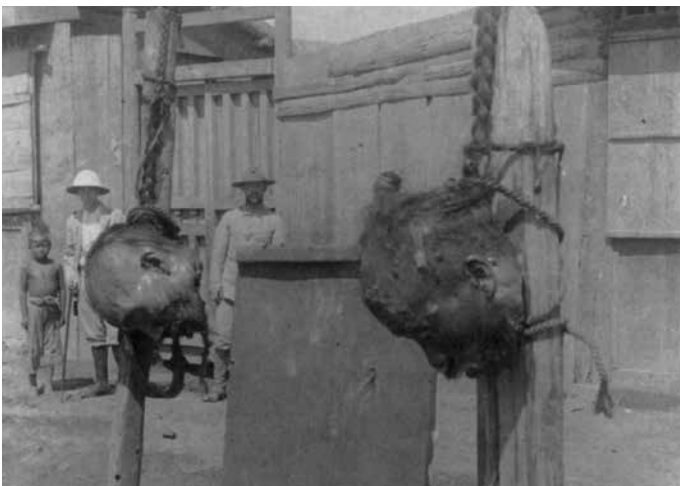
Up to three-quarters of Beijing's population fled following the occupation that followed the Boxer Rebellion. Some who remained placed signs on their doors pleading, 'Noble and Good Sirs. Please Do Not Shoot Us.'



FOREIGN INTERVENTION

Tensions escalated when the British ordered a precautionary force stationed at the coast to move toward Beijing. This incensed the Boxers, who attacked and pushed back the British troops. The march on Beijing also alarmed the Qing and was taken as an act of war. Faced with the choice of siding with the 'invaders' or 'the people,' Cixi chose the latter. The Qing declared war on the foreign powers and the Boxers, together with some imperial troops, lay siege to the foreign legations in Beijing. For fifty-five days, from 21 June to 14 August 1900, the foreign legations withstood the Boxer attack. The court requested that provincial viceroys send troops to assist in expelling the Foreign Devils, but realising the futility of the conflict, most refused.

The decapitated heads of Boxer rebels.



NATIONAL HUMILIATION

A nine-nation expeditionary force of 18 000 soldiers from the major European powers, as well as America and Japan, landed on the Chinese coast and made its move on Beijing. The Boxers put up a determined fight, but their antiquated weapons and martial arts 'magic' were no match against a large, modern military force. The multi-nation army easily defeated the Chinese. On 14 August 1900, the foreign legations were liberated. Terrified and humiliated, Cixi and Emperor Guangxu, with leading figures of the Qing court, fled the

capital. Allied troops in Beijing looted and pillaged at will; Boxers were publicly beheaded in great numbers. Beijing remained under foreign control for the next eighteen months.

On 7 September 1901, the Qing signed the Boxer Protocol. It was the culmination of China's humiliation at the hands of foreign powers and included a range of harsh provisions. In particular:

- Foreign troops were stationed indefinitely at points between Beijing and the sea;
- Pro-Boxer officials were removed from office and punished;
- Imperial examinations were suspended in Boxer-dominated regions for five years;
- Foreign powers affected by the Boxer Rebellion were given an indemnity of 450 million silver dollars, almost twice the Qing court's total yearly revenue.



Boxers on trial before a high official.

The national humiliation resulting from the Boxer Rebellion has commonly been interpreted by historians as the result of Cixi's poor leadership. Michael Lynch argues, 'Cixi's support of the Boxers had proved as unwise as it had been ineffective.'³⁸ By contrast, Sterling Seagrave argues that Cixi was 'paralysed by indecision' throughout the crisis.³⁹ Cixi herself later lamented, 'I should have issued an edict against the Boxers ... It is terrible, but it was all due to ignorance.'⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the failure of the Boxer Rebellion greatly tarnished popular support for the Qing leadership and revealed an emerging sense of nationalism amongst the common people.



A CENTURY OF HUMILIATION

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Create a diagram summarising the impact of the Boxer Rebellion on Imperial China. Include two or three primary source quotes and the same number of historical interpretations. Then discuss as a class the ways in which the rebellion helped to create revolutionary sentiment in China.

ACTIVITY

NEW GOVERNMENT REFORM

Sun Yixian: 'The humiliation of defeat and foreign occupation finally convinced the Qing that reforms were needed to strengthen China and build a basis from which the country's national honour might be recovered.'

The humiliation of yet another defeat at the hands of foreign powers shocked the Qing court out of complacency. Cixi in particular recognised the need to update China's military and political institutions, and strengthen the legitimacy of the dynasty. Between 1901 and 1909 this 'New Government' (*Xinzheng*) period saw a number of important reforms implemented. However, it seemed that the further the Qing moved toward progressive change the more the inadequacies of the dynastic system were revealed.

38 Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People's Republic* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 20.

39 Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, 314.

40 Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, 407, 418.

NEW GOVERNMENT REFORMS



Dowager Empress Cixi.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the New Government period, Cixi met with Western dignitaries for the first time. The wives of diplomats were even invited to a number of informal social meetings with Cixi where they were entertained with tea and cakes at the Summer Palace.

EDUCATION	POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS	THE MILITARY
Modern schools introduced, based on a mix of Western and classical Chinese learning. Overseas study encouraged. (Many went to Japan.) Confucian examination system phased out; abandoned by 1905. Imperial posts to be filled by people with understanding of current affairs, not Confucian ethics.	Ministries of Education, Police, Military Training and Commerce introduced. Edict of August 1908 set nine-year plan for introduction of national parliament. Provincial assemblies, made up of landed elite, created in 1909. These came to be forums for critical debate.	'New Armies' introduced, with higher pay and updated weapons and training. Units to be commanded by regional generals, not central court. Over time soldiers developed more loyalty to regional commanders than to Qing rulers.

Traditionally, historians have questioned the sincerity and effectiveness of the New Government reforms. Edwin Moise argues, 'The Manchu ruling class had neither real enthusiasm for the changes that had been forced on it, nor great skill at carrying them out ... The government's initial steps towards modernization drastically increased the number of people who expected rapid progress, and many of them turned against the dynasty when their expectations could not be met.'⁴¹ More recent scholarship, however, has reconsidered the significance of the late Qing reforms. Jung Chang describes Cixi's reforms as the, 'real revolution of modern China,' during which, 'China decidedly crossed the threshold of modernity ... Under her [Cixi's] measured stewardship, Chinese society was fundamentally transformed, thoughtfully and bloodlessly, for the better, while its roots were carefully preserved and suffered minimum trauma.'⁴² On the whole, however, the Qing reforms fulfilled the hopes of very few.⁴³ The Qing reforms unwittingly set Imperial China on the road to revolution.

THE LAST EMPEROR

Pu Yi: 'Two days after I entered the palace Cixi died and on December 2, the "Great Ceremony of Enthronement" took place, a ceremony that I ruined with my crying ... I struggled and cried, "I don't like it here. I want to go home" ... [T]hese words were prophetic as within three years the Qing dynasty was in fact "finished" and the boy who wanted to "go home" did go home.'

The Dowager Empress Cixi passed away quite suddenly from dysentery on 15 November 1908. She was seventy-three. Guangxu, who suffered terribly from a kidney disorder, had died the day before at the age of thirty-eight. In 2008, tests by forensic scientific experts revealed that Guangxu had died from arsenic poisoning.⁴⁴ While some historians believe Cixi may have had Guangxu poisoned,⁴⁵ the question of who administered the arsenic remains a mystery.

Before she died, Cixi appointed her grand-nephew, Pu Yi, to the throne. Three-year-old Pu Yi was the eldest boy of Prince Chun (Ch'un) II, Guangxu's younger

- 41 Edwin Moise, *Modern China: A History* (London: Longman, 1994), 41.
- 42 Jung Chang, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 302, 325.
- 43 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 236.
- 44 James Macartney, 'Arsenic Used To Murder Emperor,' *The Australian*, 5 November 2008.
- 45 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 157.

brother. As had been the case for much of the nineteenth century, a child emperor was to rule as the Son of Heaven. Prince Chun served as regent for Pu Yi.

Chun appointed conservative Manchu princes as his advisers. The reforms set in motion by Cixi after 1901 were thereby continued in a half-hearted fashion.⁴⁶ In its final years the Qing leadership was riven with factional in-fighting, antagonised those seeking constitutional reform and alienated one of China's most powerful military figures – Yuan Shikai (Yuan Shih-k'ai). Revolutionary tensions were also rife in the broader community. Living blissfully in the Forbidden City, Pu Yi had no idea of the upheaval unfolding around him.



Emperor Pu Yi.

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

As a class or in small groups, debate the following topic: 'By 1911, a revolution in China was inevitable.'

ACTIVITY

SUN YIXIAN AND THE TONGMENGHUI

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

By and large, anti-Qing revolutionary groups would not play a direct role in bringing down the Manchu dynasty. However, their efforts in articulating and encouraging anti-Qing sentiment were considerable. One of the most important leaders of the Chinese revolutionary movement was Dr Sun Yixian (Sun Yat-sen).

Sun Yixian was born into a peasant family in Guangzhou, southern China, in 1866. At the age of thirteen he was sent to live with his elder brother in Hawaii where he received his secondary education. A talented student, Sun went on to further study in Hong Kong and gained a degree in medicine. Brought up with stories of the Taiping rebels and impressed by Western ways, Sun came to profess a far more radical vision for China than constitutional monarchy. According to Sun, China could not move forward unless it became a republic. Modernisation was possible only if China adopted progressive Western political and economic institutions. The Imperial system was archaic and must be overthrown. Highly charismatic, Sun founded the Revive China Society from his Hawaiian base in 1894. The Society called for the 'overthrow of the Manchus, the restoration of China to the Chinese, and the establishment of a republican government.'⁴⁷ In 1895 Sun set up a further branch of the Society in Hong Kong, with which he planned an anti-Qing insurrection, to be launched in nearby Guangzhou. The uprising proved a dismal failure and Sun was forced to flee China to Japan.

Sun Yixian continued his revolutionary work with Chinese communities in Japan, the United States and Britain. In October 1896, while in London, Sun was kidnapped by Qing authorities and held prisoner in the Chinese embassy, with the intention of returning him to China for execution. Through the efforts of his



Sun Yixian.

DID YOU KNOW?

As Sun Yixian came from Guangzhou in the south he spoke Cantonese, not Mandarin. While he learnt English during his time abroad, the 'father of modern China' needed a translator to understand most Chinese people.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 101–6.

⁴⁷ Cited in John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 148.

Statue of Sun Yixian, located in his Shanghai residence (now a museum).

THE FATHER OF
MODERN CHINA



DID YOU KNOW?

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

former medical teacher, Dr Cantlie, Sun received assistance from Scotland Yard, the *Times* newspaper and the British Foreign Office. His plight received much publicity and ensured his eventual release. In the coming years, Sun travelled in Europe, Vietnam and the US, where he raised funds for his revolutionary work and studied radical ideologies such as Marxism. He eventually summarised his own revolutionary philosophy in what he termed *Sanminzhuyi* – 'Three Principles of the People.'

Sun Yixian spent a good deal of time living in Japan, where he met and inspired young Chinese students who had come to study at modern universities following the Qing educational reforms. In September 1905 Sun brought together a coalition of different revolutionary groups into the *Tongmenghui* or Revolutionary Alliance. The *Tongmenghui* was a considerable achievement, for it represented the unification of diverse anti-Qing revolutionary groups. The group's newspaper *Minbao* ('People's Paper') was secretly smuggled into China and eagerly read by more and more Chinese, particularly students. The *Tongmenghui* had 10 000 members by 1906, with organisational contacts in many Chinese provinces and funding from Chinese communities overseas. Between 1906 and 1908 Sun's followers staged five uprisings, and three of the four major anti-Manchu rebellions between 1908 and 1911 were sponsored by the *Tongmenghui*.⁴⁸ Whilst none of these uprisings succeeded or gained much wider support, Fairbank wryly notes that Sun 'certainly deserves A for Effort.'⁴⁹ The vision of Sun Yixian and the *Tongmenghui* popularised the idea that revolution and an end to Qing rule were the keys to modernising China. According to Edwin Moise, 'The final collapse of the Qing Dynasty was to a considerable extent inspired by a revolutionary from Guangdong named Sun Yat-sen.'⁵⁰

48 Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China*, 494.

49 Cited in John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 148.

50 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 42.

51 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 50.

ACTIVITY

KEY PEOPLE

On the board, brainstorm Sun Yixian's revolutionary ideas and actions. To what extent did he challenge the Imperial order in China? In what ways was he successful and in what ways did he experience difficulties?

Three Principles of the People: Sun Yixian



Nationalism

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

The principle of nationalism was summed up by the slogan, 'China is the China of the Chinese' – a clear statement of anti-Qing feeling.

Democracy



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

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

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

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

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



People's Livelihood

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

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

Often described as a form of socialism, People's Livelihood was somewhat vague. Sun once described it as 'socialism, it is communism, it is Utopianism.'⁵¹ During one of his lectures in 1924 Sun spoke of his great respect for the ideas of Karl Marx but suggested that his methods were not applicable to China.

REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

Make a propaganda (political) poster explaining the key ideas of the Tongmenghui to the Chinese people. Alternatively, compose a speech or poem to be given at a public rally to gather support for the Tongmenghui.

FEATURE

QIU JIN: REVOLUTIONARY FEMINIST



Qiu Jin.

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

One of the Chinese revolutionaries of the early twentieth century was a young woman, Qiu Jin (Ch'iu Chin), who came from a scholarly middle-class family. In 1904, at the age of twenty-

six, Qiu rebelled against her arranged marriage with an older man she did not love and escaped to Japan. There she engaged in deep discussions with fellow Chinese revolutionary activists.⁵²

In 1906 Qiu returned to China and campaigned for women's rights. According to Qiu, 'We, the 200 million women of China, are the most unfairly treated objects on this earth.'⁵³ She was particularly keen to encourage women to seek financial independence by gaining an education and entering professional careers. She wrote,

Women must get educated and strive for their own independence; they can't just go on asking men for everything. The intellectuals are all chanting, 'Revolution! Revolution!' But I say the revolution will have to start in our homes, by achieving equal rights for women.⁵⁴

Qiu was a staunch critic of foot-binding: 'As long as we have these tiny three-inch feet we can do nothing. We must end this practice!'⁵⁵ She fiercely condemned arranged marriages, the killing of female babies, wife beating and pressures on widows to remain chaste. Based at Anqing in the province of Zhejiang, Qiu became head of a modern girls' school. The curriculum included firearms drill with live ammunition. The school's weapons were part of a stash kept by a local revolutionary group whose members included Qiu's brother, her cousin and Qiu herself.

In late June 1907 one of Qiu Jin's revolutionary associates attempted to assassinate the provincial Manchu governor. The assailant's shot missed but local students were nonetheless inspired to rise up and attack the Anqing armoury. A battle ensued between Qing troops and the revolutionaries. The final standoff was at Qiu's school. The rebels were unsuccessful and Qiu was arrested, along with seventeen others.

On 15 July, at the age of thirty, Qiu was tried, found guilty of insurrection and beheaded.⁵⁶ Posthumously, Qiu Jin became an icon of the anti-Qing movement and China's first female revolutionary martyr.

52 Harriet Ward, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 8.

53 Cited in Dorothy Morrison, *The Rise of Modern China*, 9.

54 Cited in Harriet Ward, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 8.

55 Cited in Dorothy Morrison, *The Rise of Modern China*, 9.

56 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 110–1.

THE XINHAI REVOLUTION OF 1911

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

By 1911 a fatal combination of political mismanagement, domestic rebellion and continued humiliation at the hands of foreign powers had thoroughly discredited the Qing dynasty. Given that the Imperial leadership could not redress such profound problems in the foreseeable future it seemed that only a spark would be needed to ignite the fires of revolution. In the end it was a bomb. Although this did happen to be an unintentional explosion, it was one which nevertheless resulted in the fall of the Manchu regime. The weakness of the court allowed even an unprepared and indecisive revolutionary movement to gain the upper hand.

On 10 October 1911 (the 'Double Tenth'), a bomb being assembled by radical New Army officers with connections to the Tongmenghui prematurely exploded in the city of Wuhan, Hubei province. A subsequent investigation by Qing authorities uncovered a stash of unauthorised weapons and a list of conspirators amongst the Wuhan garrison. The soldiers had been plotting an uprising but were now forced to bring forward their plans. Rather than be arrested the officers and soldiers of the Wuhan garrison rebelled. With staggering success they caused the provincial governor to flee the city and soon had control of the whole Hubei province. An officer, Li Yuanhong (Li Yuan-hung), was pressed to assume the role of military governor. The head of the Double Tenth (*Xinhai*)⁵⁷ movement was a somewhat reluctant revolutionary, as he was hesitant about assuming such a prestigious position. The uprising nevertheless spread to other provinces. Within six weeks, fifteen of China's twenty-four provinces had declared their independence from Qing rule – all of central and southern China and some north-western provinces were in revolt. The rebel leaders were primarily New Army officers working with delegates of the provincial assemblies, although members of the Tongmenghui were also present in some provinces. Sun Yixian, who had been on a speaking tour of the United States, returned to China once he heard of the uprisings. As a leading figure in the Chinese revolutionary movement, it was assumed he would play a significant role.

On 29 December 1911, a provisional government of the Republic of China was proclaimed at Nanjing. On 1 January 1912, Sun Yixian was inaugurated as China's provisional president. Li Yuanhong, the Wuhan garrison officer, was named vice-president. The Qing, however, still remained in power in Beijing.

THE ROLE OF YUAN SHIKAI

At this point, Yuan Shikai played a decisive role in events. Yuan was a capable general who had successfully modernised the Beiyang Army under his command in northern China. He was a cunning politician who had sided with Cixi during the Hundred Days of Reform and was distrusted by the current regent Prince Chun. In January 1909, Yuan was relieved of his duties and ordered to rest until he had recovered from a supposed foot injury. In 1911, Yuan, who had apparently turned bitter towards Prince Chun, was recalled to Imperial service to head the military campaign against the republican revolution. He did so only after being appointed commander-in-chief of the Qing military, as well as leading minister in

DID YOU KNOW?

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

DID YOU KNOW?

The Wuhan rebels had sent a note to Sun Yixian asking for his approval and support of their plans. Busily engaged in a speaking tour, Sun did not read the note until after the Double Tenth had already got underway. He learnt of the rebellion in a Denver newspaper.



RANA MITTER ON THE
1911 REVOLUTION

⁵⁷ The Chinese often refer to the events that brought down the Qing as the Xinhai Revolution, a term that comes from the name of the given to the year 1911 in the traditional Chinese calendar.

DID YOU KNOW?

The 'cutting of queues' was the defining symbol of the 1911 Revolution. The Manchu queue, a long plait, was worn throughout the Qing period as a sign of subservience. In 1911, the revolutionaries insisted that all men cut their queues and set up checkpoints at city gates where men with scissors would force compliance.



EDWIN MOISE ON
SUN YIXIAN



a new government cabinet. Yuan insisted that Prince Chun step down as regent in favour of the emperor's adoptive mother, Dowager Empress Long Yu (Guangxu's consort). The general's forces marched south and restored order but halted their offensive at Wuhan. Yuan then opened negotiations with the revolutionaries and called for the presidency himself.

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

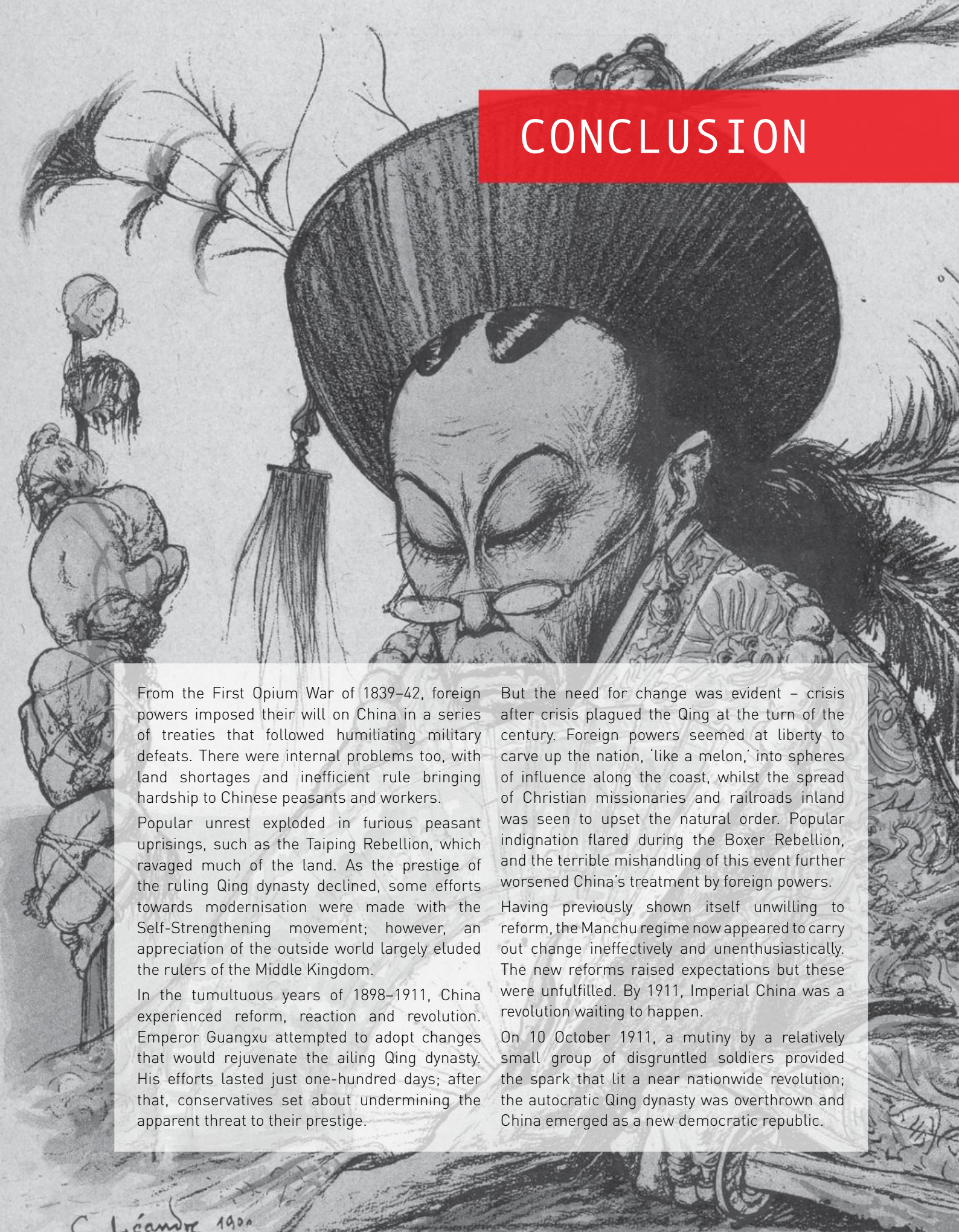
Sun Yixian agreed to stand down on the condition that Yuan would secure the abdication of the Qing emperor and uphold the republican government. Agreement was reached, and on 12 February 1912 Dowager Empress Long Yu signed the abdication on behalf of Pu Yi – the tenth and last Qing emperor. Completely devoid of popular support and authority, the Manchu regime had little choice but to pass on its Mandate of Heaven.

On 14 February, Sun Yixian stepped down as provisional president in favour of Yuan Shikai, who was sworn in as the new president of the Republic of China on 10 March 1912.

ACTIVITY

KEY PEOPLE

Read about Yuan Shikai and Sun Yixian in the Who's Who at the back of the book. Then discuss their involvement in the 1911 Revolution. Why was there such a quick transition from Sun to Yuan as president of the new republic?



CONCLUSION

From the First Opium War of 1839–42, foreign powers imposed their will on China in a series of treaties that followed humiliating military defeats. There were internal problems too, with land shortages and inefficient rule bringing hardship to Chinese peasants and workers.

Popular unrest exploded in furious peasant uprisings, such as the Taiping Rebellion, which ravaged much of the land. As the prestige of the ruling Qing dynasty declined, some efforts towards modernisation were made with the Self-Strengthening movement; however, an appreciation of the outside world largely eluded the rulers of the Middle Kingdom.

In the tumultuous years of 1898–1911, China experienced reform, reaction and revolution. Emperor Guangxu attempted to adopt changes that would rejuvenate the ailing Qing dynasty. His efforts lasted just one-hundred days; after that, conservatives set about undermining the apparent threat to their prestige.

But the need for change was evident – crisis after crisis plagued the Qing at the turn of the century. Foreign powers seemed at liberty to carve up the nation, 'like a melon,' into spheres of influence along the coast, whilst the spread of Christian missionaries and railroads inland was seen to upset the natural order. Popular indignation flared during the Boxer Rebellion, and the terrible mishandling of this event further worsened China's treatment by foreign powers.

Having previously shown itself unwilling to reform, the Manchu regime now appeared to carry out change ineffectively and unenthusiastically. The new reforms raised expectations but these were unfulfilled. By 1911, Imperial China was a revolution waiting to happen.

On 10 October 1911, a mutiny by a relatively small group of disgruntled soldiers provided the spark that lit a near nationwide revolution; the autocratic Qing dynasty was overthrown and China emerged as a new democratic republic.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at *The Most Unkindest Cut of All* and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the action taking place in the representation and its meaning. In your response, refer to the source and to your own knowledge.
2. Using the source and your own knowledge, explain the tensions that existed between 'Old China' and 'New China' up to January 1912.
3. Evaluate the significance of the 1911 Revolution in changing the power relations and social conditions of Imperial China. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

SUMMARY

Using dot-points, create a one-page summary of the ideas, individuals, popular movements, events and other conditions that led to downfall of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic of China.



The Most Unkindest Cut of All [sic]. The kneeling figure's cap is labelled 'Manchu' and the standing figure's belt is labelled 'New China.'

FURTHER READING

Jung Chang. *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

A sympathetic biography that seeks to refute the portrayal of Cixi as a close-minded despot and instead presents her as a key figure in setting China on the road to modernisation.

Jean Chesneaux. *Peasant Revolts in China 1840–1949*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973.

A richly-illustrated academic discussion of rural revolution in China.

Patricia Buckley Ebrey. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

A well-written and engaging text supplemented with excellent photographs and illustrations.

John King Fairbank. *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985*. London: Picador, 1988.

A useful and insightful academic text.

Immanuel Hsu. *The Rise of Modern China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

A detailed and thorough academic reference book by a Chinese-American historian.

Gwendda Milston. *A Short History of China*. North Melbourne: Cassell, 1978.

A thorough, high-level account of the whole of Chinese history.

Dorothy Perkins. *Encyclopedia of China*. New York: Check Mark Books, 1999.

A very useful and well-organised reference book.

Sterling Seagrave. *Dragon Lady: The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

A gripping and thought-provoking re-evaluation of the Dowager Empress Cixi. Although it is quite detailed, students would find Seagrave's account engaging.

CHAPTER

2

THE REPUBLIC: TROUBLES AND TRIUMPHS

(1912–1927)

1 Yuan and the Republic

Republican
government
based in
Beijing

The charismatic Yuan Shikai becomes president (1912)

Yuan reforms law, education, economy

Though flawed, Yuan has unifying influence on China

Wuhan becomes new seat of government,
undermining Jiang Jieshi

Communist-led worker strike paralyses Shanghai

Jiang joins with criminals, e.g. Green Gang

7 The White Terror

Green Gang kills 10 000 communists (Shanghai Massacre)

CCP cuts ties with Jiang, but GMD recognised
as China's government

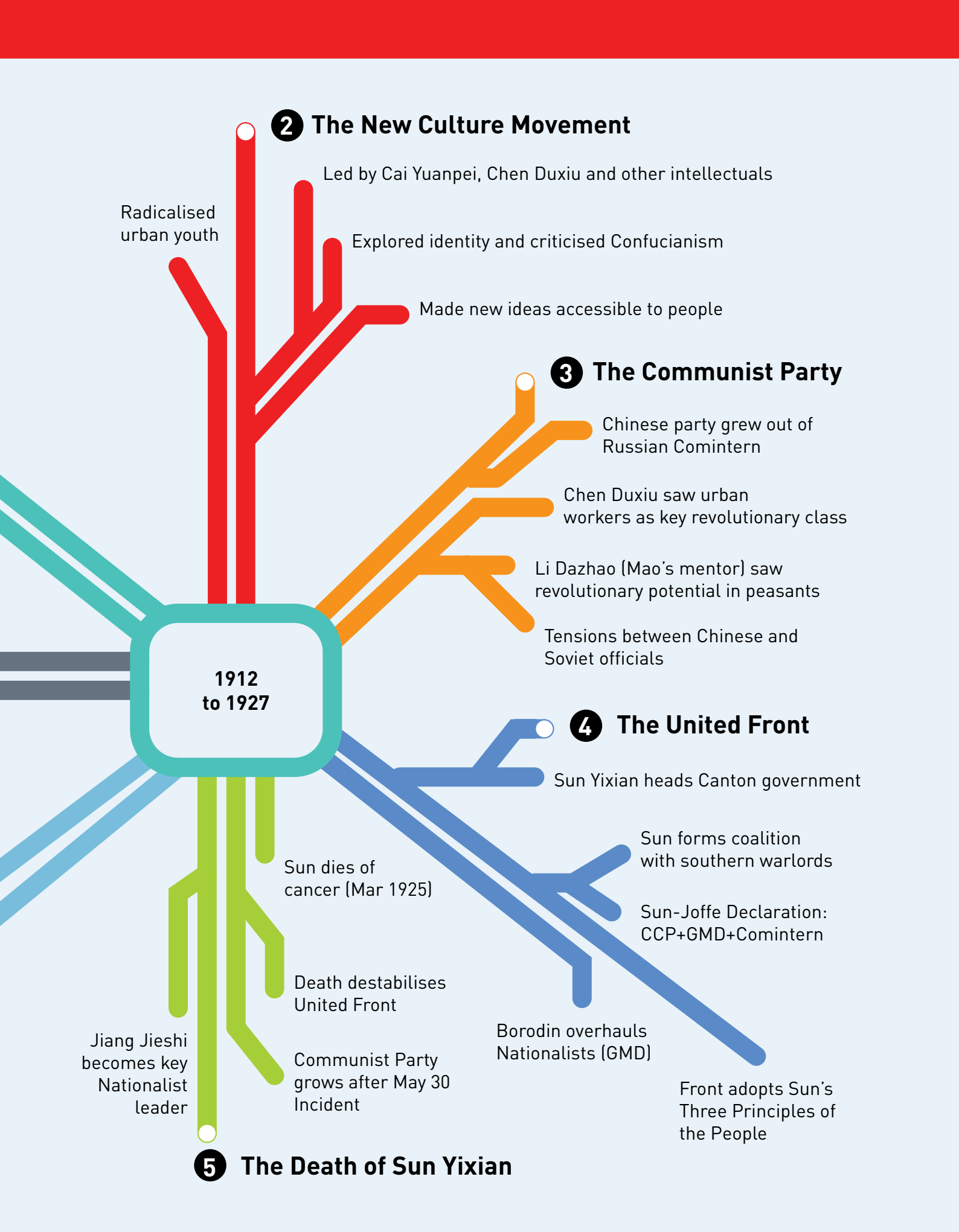
Launched by Jiang Jieshi to overthrow warlords (Jul 1926)

Jiang's Nationalist Revolutionary Army supported by Soviet Comintern

Communists contribute effective guerrilla tactics

6 The Northern Expedition

Military success, but tensions between coalition parties



INTRODUCTION

AFTERMATH OF THE
1911 REVOLUTION



Inspired by the revolutionary propaganda of Sun Yixian's Tongmenghui, the Qing dynasty was overthrown in the 'Double Tenth' (10 October) revolution of 1911. Yet a democratic new society did not immediately emerge. General Yuan Shikai, a powerful militarist, assumed the presidency but showed little respect for republican sentiment. The Guomindang (GMD) (Kuomintang), a popular political party that emerged from the Tongmenghui, proved to be an ineffective opposition as Yuan placed increasing pressure on the newly-elected parliament. He eventually did away with the parliament altogether and crowned himself emperor, ironically declaring his reign the 'Grand Constitutional Era.' Yuan was strong but not strong enough to enforce autocratic power. He was forced to step down from the Dragon Throne and died shortly thereafter. Without Yuan's unifying influence, the Middle Kingdom fell under the rule of warlords with little regard for the unity or good of the nation. This was made clear when corrupt deals with the Japanese government were exposed at the Versailles negotiations in 1919. A new period of protest subsequently emerged, involving critical evaluation of politics, ethics, philosophy and literature. The New Culture and May Fourth movements showed that young people were no longer willing to accept China's humiliation at the hands of warlords and foreign powers. For some, Marxism offered an appealing framework for change. Soviet Russia provided practical guidance and funding for the revolutionary struggle. The Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began a struggle for power, but the road to revolution would be a long one. At first, both parties worked together with the Russian Comintern as the United Front. After the death of Sun Yixian in 1925, however, the militarist Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) steadily gained influence in the GMD, turning the party more conservative and anti-communist in outlook. Jiang's distrust of the communists led to the Shanghai Massacre of 1927, which greatly weakened the CCP and violently concluded the relationship between the two parties. The CCP fled in disarray to the countryside while Jiang Jieshi – facing down bitter recriminations and outwitting his political rivals – emerged as the victorious hero who had united China by defeating the warlords.

*Supplement to The National
Review, 12 October 1912.*



BRAVO!

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

YUAN SHIKAI AND REPUBLICAN CHINA

Yuan Shikai: 'The republic is universally recognized as the best form of state ... Let us henceforth forge ahead and endeavour to reach a state of perfection. Never shall we allow the monarchical system to reappear in China.'

According to C.P. Fitzgerald, 'the decision to replace the dynasty, and the monarchy, with a republic was, at that time, a most radical step ... That the Chinese, of all people, should choose a republic rather than a new dynasty seemed to be wildly idealistic, unpractical

and reckless.¹ Was a republic a fanciful adventure bound to end in disaster? President Yuan Shikai, a man of the Self-Strengthening generation, was a capable administrator and a charismatic military commander. Modernisation projects such as judicial reform, suppression of opium farming and improved primary education were implemented by Yuan.² China's national currency was centralised, with the government taking greater control of minting, and outdated banknotes were withdrawn. Yuan also hoped to further develop the economy by raising crop yields through irrigation and flood control projects, and by encouraging farmers to breed hardier livestock. There was much praise in the British press of Yuan's firm leadership in holding together the volatile former Chinese empire. 'Yuanity' was the byword for 'unity' and 'strength.'³ Yet Yuan's strength was also a potential threat to the fledgling republican system: according to John King Fairbank, 'He knew how to make the old system work, but it turned out that ... he had no vision of a new system.'⁴ Yuan, though a stabilising influence, was ambitious and domineering; he was far from democratic in style.



Yuan Shikai.

DID YOU KNOW?

George Morrison, an Australian journalist, served as Yuan Shikai's public relations officer. Morrison, a respected China correspondent, ensured that Yuan got favourable press in the West.

Sun Yixian was given the post of minister of railways and set to work expanding the train network. Song Jiaoren (Sung Chiao-jen), Sun's deputy, began preparing the revolutionary movement for parliamentary politics. A founding member of the Tongmenghui and a long time anti-Qing revolutionary, Song turned the Revolutionary Alliance into a modern political party. In August 1912, the Tongmenghui was combined with four smaller parties to form the Guomindang (National People's Party, or 'Nationalists'). Under Song's able direction, the Guomindang campaigned strongly for the parliamentary elections of January 1913. The GMD subsequently secured a majority of seats and Song was chosen by his party colleagues to serve as prime minister. Song had hoped to curb the executive powers of Yuan Shikai by encouraging a 'responsible' ministry and determined parliamentary opposition. As it turned out, electoral victory did not translate into real power for the GMD.

Yuan, who retained his hold over the military, had no intention of allowing the parliament to impede his authority. He insisted that the new government reside in Beijing, his stronghold, rather than Nanjing. The most influential cabinet posts, such as minister of foreign affairs and minister of war, were given to Yuan loyalists. In June 1912, Yuan pressured the four ministers of his cabinet who were former members of the Tongmenghui to resign. On 20 March 1913, Song Jiaoren was killed by one of Yuan's men. In April 1913, Yuan secured a 'reorganisation loan' of \$100 million from a consortium of foreign banks. He did so without the approval of parliament. As Yuan made a mockery of republican democracy, the forces of opposition prepared for a showdown. When the Guomindang tried to impeach the president over the Reorganisation Loan, Yuan had the parliament surrounded by armed troops and forced a backdown.

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

- 1 C. P. Fitzgerald, *Communism Takes China: How the Revolution went Red* (London: St Giles House, 1971), 30–1.
- 2 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 237.
- 3 'The Giant and the Pygmies' (cartoon - reproduced on page 60), *Supplement to the National Review*, 12 October 1912 (Courtesy Essex Institute, Salem Massachusetts); reproduced in Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution* (Silverwater: Shakespeare Head Press, 1988), 64.
- 4 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 170.

by the formal recognition of his leadership by foreign powers, Yuan banned the Guomindang on 4 November and dissolved the national and provincial parliaments in February 1914. The parliaments were replaced with a purely advisory state council. By May, Yuan had secured a new constitution that extended his tenure as president from five to ten years – a decisive consolidation of his dictatorship.

DOCUMENT

C.P. FITZGERALD, EXTRACT FROM *THE BIRTH OF COMMUNIST CHINA*, 1976

Not far from Peking [Beijing], in the western hills, there is an ancient temple, where grew a strange and rare plant. This plant flowered at long intervals, and then only at the accession of a new emperor. Then it put forth a single blossom. When the Empire fell the plant flowered again, but this time was covered with a multitude of small flowers. So, at least, the Peking people will tell you. The monks were asked to explain this strange phenomenon. To republican officials, visiting foreigners and other persons of modern cut, they said that the crowd of little flowers symbolized the rule of the many, the people of China. To the more old-fashioned inquirers the monks would say perhaps the explanation of the miracle was that in place of one sovereign, the Empire would now suffer the oppression of many small despots.⁵

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from *The Birth of Communist China* and complete the tasks below.

1. According to the source, when would the 'strange and mysterious plant' flower, and what form would the blooms take?
2. Analyse the key message of the source, as conveyed through the allegory of a plant. What political events does it allude to?
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain why China struggled to develop an effective democracy after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.
4. Evaluate the significance of the early years of the Chinese Republic. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each Chinese emperor took a 'reign name' which said something about their era. Yuan Shikai chose 'Hong Xian,' meaning 'Grand Constitutional Era.'

JAPAN'S TWENTY-ONE DEMANDS

On 15 January 1915, Yuan's luck changed. Japan presented Twenty-One Demands in return for granting loans to the Chinese government. The demands proposed to give Japan, among other things: extensive rights to economic development in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia; control over mining in central China; control of the Liaodong Peninsula near Korea; and the right to appoint Japanese advisers of the Chinese government. China would be a virtual protectorate (district) of Japan.

Yuan rejected the demands for participation in China's administration but accepted the economic conditions. Many Chinese were outraged and patriotic protests erupted. When the Twenty-One Demands were signed, a 'day of shame' was announced. The date, 7 May, was commemorated annually thereafter with anti-imperialist rallies.

Disregarding popular sentiment, Yuan set about founding a new Imperial dynasty; on 1 January 1916, he assumed the title of emperor. His quest for power had gone too far. Many of his generals and provincial governors made known their disapproval; some even declared independence from Yuan's rule. Yuan was forced to

5 C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1976), 43.

renounce his claim to the throne on 22 March. His ambition thwarted and deeply humiliated, Yuan grew ill, and on 6 June 1916 succumbed to kidney disease – the Chinese say he died from ‘eating bitterness.’

YUAN’S SIGNIFICANCE

For all his faults, Yuan Shikai held China together – a considerable achievement given its size and ethnic diversity. When he died, regional tensions resurfaced, fragmenting China into areas controlled by provincial strongmen, or warlords. Tibet and Mongolia declared independence. A ‘national’ government, in name only, continued at Beijing under Yuan’s successor, Li Yuanhong (Li Yuan-hung). In the coming years, control of Beijing would change hands more than ten times. Real power was divided amongst the warlords, who ruled over more or less autonomous regions. Some warlords received the backing of foreign powers and signed their own treaties and business agreements. For the next decade, China would be governed by these ‘many small despots’ whose rule did indeed bring much ‘oppression.’ The warlords were not all bad – some did try to provide for the ordinary people – but for most, the first priority was holding and capturing territory. Because they were poorly paid, warlord armies often plundered peasant crops and resources. This, combined with their strong-arm tactics, earned them the reputation of marauders.

DID YOU KNOW?

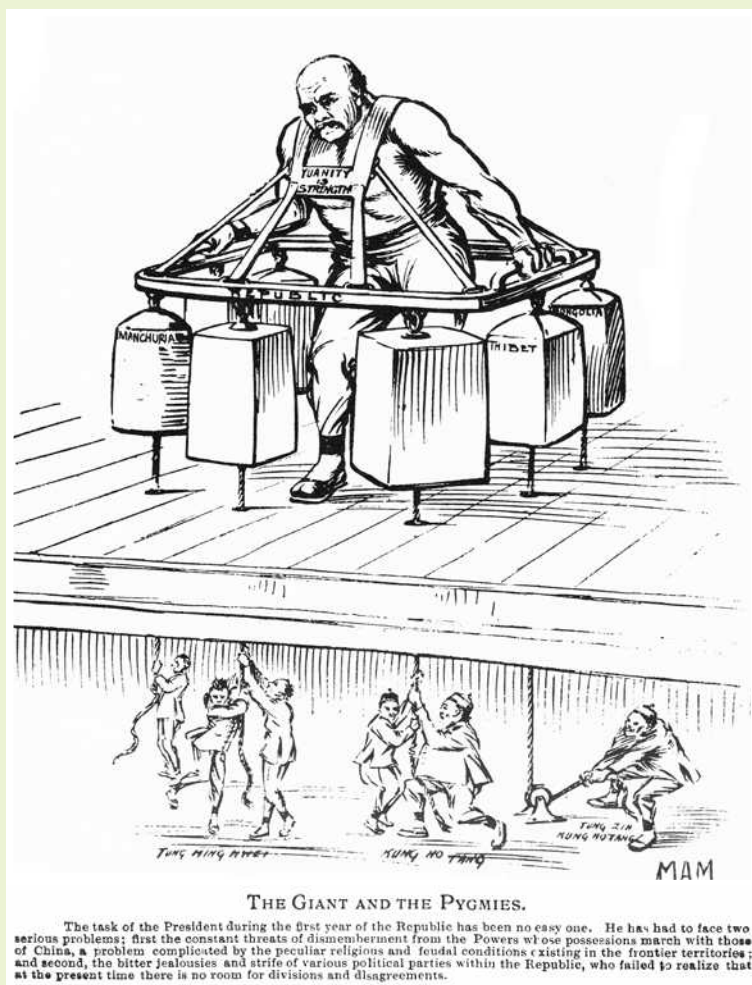
Yuan Shikai claimed that he assumed the Imperial throne in response to popular pressure; he said he received a series of telegrams and petitions from across China. It is now known that Yuan faked these so-called popular appeals.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at *The Giant and the Pygmies* and complete the tasks below.

1. What message is conveyed about China under Yuan Shikai, and how is it communicated visually?
2. Describe the perspective of the source. To what extent does it appear to approve of Yuan?
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, discuss the extent to which Yuan brought ‘Yuanity’ (unity) to China.
4. Analyse the significance of Yuan Shikai’s leadership to early republican China. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

The Giant and the Pygmies, from *Supplement to The National Review*, October 1912. The harness reads, ‘Yuanity is strength.’ The weights are labelled ‘Manchuria,’ ‘Tibet’ and ‘Mongolia.’



ACTIVITY

DID YOU KNOW?

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

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- 'Yuan Shikai's desire for power doomed hopes for a democratic republic in China.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'Sun Yixian could inspire a revolution, but he failed to establish a republic.' Is this a fair assessment of Sun?
- 'After the 1911 Revolution, China needed a strong leader and Yuan Shikai fulfilled this role effectively.' Discuss.

DID YOU KNOW?

Several Western thinkers were invited to China during the New Culture period, such as Albert Einstein (1922), Margaret Sanger (1922), Bertrand Russell (1920–21) and John Dewey (1919–21). Dewey said, 'There seems to be no country in the world where students are so unanimously and eagerly interested in what is modern and new in thought.'

THE NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

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

REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

In the ferment of emerging nationalist feeling and political fragmentation during the warlord period, a 'flowering of intellectual energy' occurred. A result of both the new education system begun under the Qing and a decline in Confucian influence,⁶ this so-called New Culture movement emerged during World War I (1914–18). Headed by young intellectuals and adopted by students, the movement sought to articulate a new cultural identity for China. A leading thinker of the time, Hu Shi (Hu Shih), wrote, 'What is the sole aim of the new thought tide? It is to recreate civilisation.'⁷ With the country seemingly in danger, morally and physically, from foreign powers, the New Culture movement began to ask what it meant to be Chinese.⁸ This involved questioning Confucian traditions, finding new writing styles and examining China's future. Nationalism, women's rights and feminism, liberalism, Darwinism, democracy, anarchism, socialism, Marxism-Leninism and more were discussed with passionate interest. Partly because the republican revolution had not brought peace or national unity, as had been hoped, China's young people engaged in soul searching and intellectual re-evaluation in the quest for a way forward. It was, reportedly, 'intellectually and socially one of the most promising and exciting times in Chinese history.'⁹

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

Hu Shi's major contribution was to advocate a more accessible, vernacular form of writing. Most written texts (*wenyan*) produced by Confucian scholars, were

- Jonathan Spence and Annping Chin, *The Chinese Century* (London, HarperCollins, 1996), 60.
- Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 500.
- Steve Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8–10.
- Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 40.

incomprehensible to ordinary people. Hu popularised *baihua*, everyday writing, which had previously been considered coarse or vulgar. Hu saw that using everyday writing had great value for it allowed a wide spectrum of people access to literary works and new ideas. He dismissed *wenyan* as a ‘dead language.’ Advocates of New Culture argued that a modern nation needed literate people since they would be more likely to understand new ideas and values.¹⁰

Criticising Confucian values was a central part of the New Culture movement. Lu Xun, a philosophy lecturer and short-story writer, composed of number of works accusing Confucian culture of being outdated and morally bankrupt. Written in *baihua* style, Lu’s stories inspired others to break with classical literary traditions. Fiction, according to Lu, was a powerful means of educating people about the problems inherent in Chinese society. In *The Diary of a Madman*, written in 1918, Lu described Confucian society as cannibalistic:

I recollect in ancient times, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history [the Confucian Canon] has no chronology, and scrawled over each page are the words: ‘Virtue and Morality.’ In any case, I could not sleep, so I read half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words, ‘Eat People.’¹¹

By equating Confucian texts with cannibalism, Lu was condemning what he saw as an amoral tradition. Confucianism, he argued, reinforced exploitation at the expense of social harmony.

Chen Duxiu was arguably the most influential scholar of the New Culture movement. In 1915 he had founded the literary journal *New Youth*, a forum for discussion and new ideas. Terrill describes it as ‘a magazine that jabbed the rapier [sword] of modern Western ideas through the ribs of China’s rigid traditions.’¹² *New Youth* was at the forefront of the vernacular language drive. Lu Xun and Hu Shi regularly contributed articles. The journal gained considerable circulation. In the first issue Chen wrote, ‘The strength of our country is weakening, the morals of our people degenerating, and the learning of our scholars is distressing. Our youth must take up the task of rejuvenating China.’¹³ In one article he praised ‘Mr Science’ and ‘Mr Democracy’ as being far superior to Confucianism. ‘Scientific’ ideas would allow a ‘new’ society to emerge while ‘democracy’ held attraction as both a political and a moral system.¹⁴ Chen would become one of China’s founding Marxist thinkers – revolutionary Marxism was seen as particularly inspiring and ‘modern’ after the successful Russian Communist revolution of October 1917.

Li Dazhao was the chief librarian and a history professor at Beijing University. A close associate of Chen Duxiu, he began a study group to explore Marx’s theories. Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) was a member of Li’s study circle and worked as one of his library assistants. Li wrote articles and served as editor for *New Youth*. One of his theoretical contributions was exploring how nationalism and Marxism could be brought together. Li argued that the whole Chinese nation was being exploited by stronger capitalist imperialist powers.¹⁵



Lu Xun.

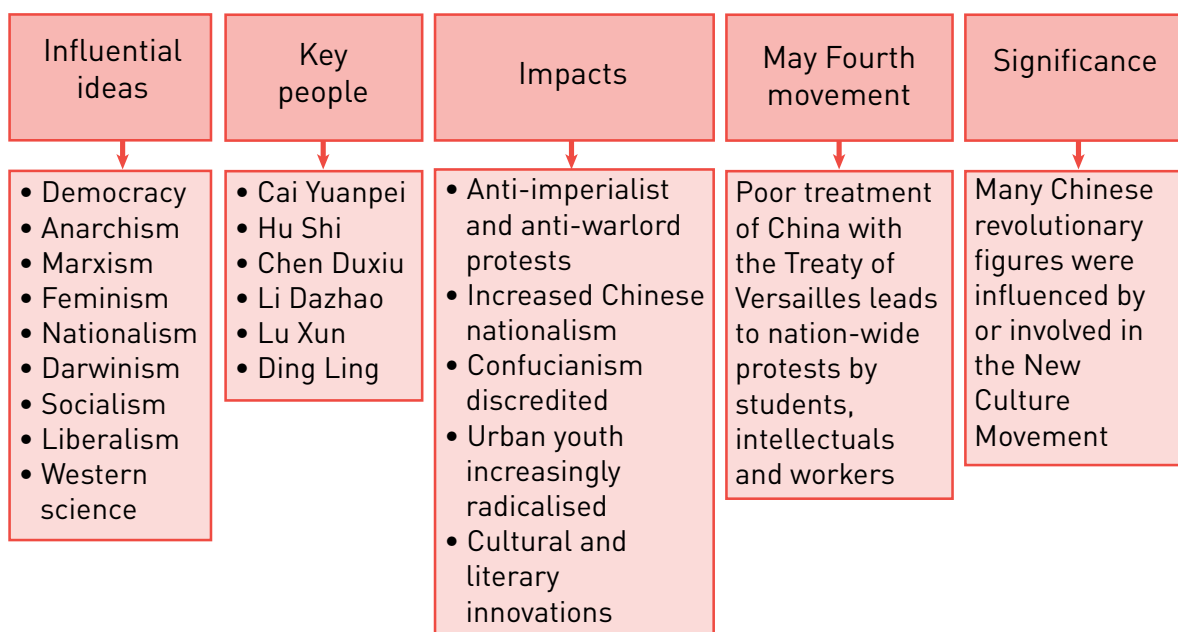
- 10 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 240.
- 11 Cited in Ruis, *Mao for Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 47.
- 12 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 53.
- 13 Cited in John E. Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (London: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 182.
- 14 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 270; Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 65.
- 15 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 272.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Women activists, such as the writer Ding Ling, were prominent in the New Culture movement. Having lacked many rights under the old order, young women embraced new learning and opportunities with enthusiasm. An increasing number of women in the cities took up employment as teachers, civil servants and nurses. Many campaigned for female suffrage (right to vote) and higher legal status. Female students at high schools and universities were avid readers of *New Youth*.¹⁶ Ding wrote important literary works that explored the nature of love in China's changing society. *The Diary of Miss Sophie* was one her most popular stories. Only limited gains were made in furthering women's rights, however, due to ingrained patriarchal attitudes in wider Chinese society, especially in the countryside.

NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT



MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

NEW CULTURE
MOVEMENT



The New Culture movement expressed outrage at the disproportionate power of warlords and at China's treatment at the hands of foreign powers. In early May 1919 Beijing students were preparing for Day of Shame protests when they received news of the Treaty of Versailles – the peace agreement that concluded World War I. China had entered the conflict in 1917 on the side of the Allies, contributing 100 000 labourers to the war effort in Europe. The Chinese had expected that German concessions¹⁷ in Shandong Province would be returned to China following an Allied victory. American President Woodrow Wilson had also made many public declarations in support of national self-determination. However, the national government in Beijing had made a secret agreement in 1918 to give German concessions to Japan. Chinese diplomats had not known about the secret agreement before Versailles and were mortified to hear of them. They protested the terms of the treaty vigorously.

¹⁶ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 246.

¹⁷ German-controlled areas and infrastructure.

Popular reaction was even stronger. Outrage and shame at this betrayal and further capitulation to imperialism led to the Day of Shame protests being brought forward to 4 May. Students from Beijing's universities took to the streets in a series of huge protests that came to be known as the May Fourth movement. Three-thousand students rallied at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Tiananmen Square. After a number were arrested, protests in support of the students and their cause broke out in cities across the nation. Workers



Student demonstration at Tiananmen Square during the May Fourth movement.

went on strike and Japanese goods were boycotted. The leading figures of the New Culture movement were also prominent in May Fourth – the terms are often used interchangeably. This unity of workers, students and intellectuals indicated the beginning of a credible and important nationalist movement, albeit an urban one. This yearning for national renewal was one of the defining and most significant periods of modern Chinese history.¹⁸ Resisting foreign treaties and the corruption of warlords was now considered urgent within the May Fourth movement. According to historian Rana Mitter, 'the May Fourth period marked a unique combination of ... a sense of real and impending crisis; a combination of a plurality of competing ideas aimed at "saving the nation", and an audience ready to receive, welcome, contest and adapt these ideas.'¹⁹ Radicalised by anti-imperialist sentiment, many turned to the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx.



MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

18 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 92.

19 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 23.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Create a journal entry, poem or cartoon capturing the experiences of a student during the May Fourth movement.

POPULAR MOVEMENTS

In note form, evaluate the significance of the following popular movements in challenging the old order in China:

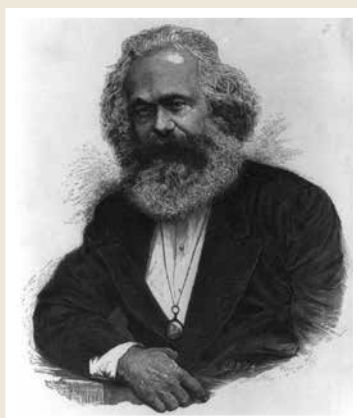
- Revolution of 1911
- Twenty-One Demands
- New Culture movement
- May Fourth movement
- Day of Shame protests
- Chinese Communist Party
- *New Youth* journal.

ACTIVITY

KEY IDEAS: MARXISM

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

Marxism is the revolutionary philosophy of German thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In 1848, Marx and Engels authored one of the most influential texts of modern times – *The Communist Manifesto*. Making use of a detailed study of the lives of industrial workers in Britain, Marx and Engels proposed a framework for understanding the modern world. For Marx, economic forces and class struggle were the primary forces shaping society and history. He famously declared that all history is the history of class struggle. The ongoing



Karl Marx.

struggle between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' was seen as the driving force behind development and change in human societies.

Marx's theory of *historical materialism* was an attempt to demonstrate

that history is made by humans, not by 'the hand of God' or 'destiny.' Past history and the predicted future progress of human development could be seen in definable stages that reflected differing *modes of production*.

The force that brought about each stage in social development (except the step from socialism to communism) was revolution. Revolution, for Marx, was inevitable. The scientific manner proposed for understanding the conflict that brought revolutionary change about was called *dialectical materialism*. Materialism considers that there is nothing in the world other than material things; it denies divine or supernatural forces. The observable and measureable material conditions of the world, particularly economic systems, were the

prime factors that shaped society. Dialectic means an argument, a concept that Marx extended from the philosopher Hegel. Marx believed the world was inherently full of clashing and opposing forces, such as the conflict between workers and industrialists; labour and capital. Dialectical materialism refers to a *thesis*, or given state of things, and an opposing force, the *antithesis*. Inevitably the clash of opposing forces becomes so great that a resolution or *synthesis* will come about. This idea could be applied to social development, Marx argued. In feudal times the thesis was the situation where land was owned by the nobility and farmed by peasant labour. The antithesis was the emergence of new urban classes, made wealthy by commerce and trade and opposing the feudal order. The synthesis was the bourgeois revolution that brought about parliamentarianism. Under capitalism, the thesis was the bourgeois ownership of capital (industry) and exploitation of the proletariat. Marx believed an antithesis would emerge with the growth of revolutionary consciousness amongst industrial workers leading to socialist revolution – the synthesis of this supposed inevitable conflict.

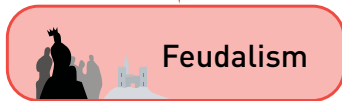
Marxism also holds that a society's economic *base*, meaning those who own the means of production and the ways in which work is done (the mode of production), ultimately determines its *superstructure* such as politics, values, morality and culture. Change therefore cannot be achieved through a reform of laws or the election of a new government. The economic base must be changed, which comes through revolution, so that new social relationships and values can emerge.

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

Marxism: Stages of History (Historical Materialism)



evolves into



bourgeois
revolution



socialist
revolution



gradual
transition



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

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

In modern times, the means of production or capital (the opportunities to acquire wealth through industry) were owned by the bourgeoisie. They accumulated their wealth by exploiting the labour of their workforce – the proletariat. Marx argued that as the proletariat became aware of its exploitation in the industrial era it would develop a 'revolutionary consciousness.' The workers of the world would eventually unite and overthrow the bourgeoisie in a socialist revolution.

The socialist phase in history was not clearly outlined by Marx. He spoke of a workers' state that would take over the means of production in a dictatorship of the proletariat and distribute wealth equitably: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' Eventually society would lose its sense of class difference and would evolve into a higher form of development, where the state would 'wither away.'

A system in which all people would live in peace and equality as there would no longer be social conflict. Modern machinery would reduce the need for hard physical labour and resources would be plentiful. Marx vaguely theorised that under communism an 'administration of things' would take the place of 'government.' The tasks of government would be uncomplicated and easily managed by all peoples.



Li Dazhao.

FOUNDING OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

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

The Chinese delegates to Versailles had expected fair and equal treatment by those representing Western democracies. They were deeply disappointed. China's humiliation at Versailles was likewise a sore point for the protesters of the May Fourth movement. Disillusioned with the liberal politics of the West, young intellectuals now looked to Soviet Russia for inspiration. Such appeal was strengthened in 1919 when the Soviet government declared in its Karakhan Manifesto of 25 July that it would renounce all imperialist claims in China as a rejection of its tsarist past and in the spirit of fraternal internationalism.²⁰ The Russian Communists, keen to encourage revolutionary groups abroad, founded the Communist Internationale or 'Comintern' in March 1919. The Comintern would provide the theory and support for the formation of revolutionary groups worldwide. In April 1920, Grigory Voitinsky, an agent of the Comintern, came to China hoping to organise a Chinese communist party. He met with Li Dazhao, who had already formed the Marxist Study Society at Beijing University. Chen Duxiu, who was now living in Shanghai, was also approached to head a Communist Party cell in the south. Voitinsky made favourable reports to Moscow of his Chinese fact-finding mission.

20 Edmund Fung, 'China's International Relations' in Colin Mackerras, ed., *China: The Impact of Revolution*, (Hawthorn: Longman, 1976), 191.

21 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 119.

Chen Duxiu.



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

This foreign devil was aggressive and hard to deal with; his manner was very different indeed from that of Voitinsky ... He saw himself coming as an angel of liberation to the Asian people. But in the eyes of those of us who maintained our self-respect and who were seeking our own liberation, he seemed endowed with the social superiority complex of the white man.²¹

Maring's organisational drive and the appeal of a functional Chinese communist organisation allowed such concerns to be overlooked. Efforts towards a national organisation continued. On 23 July 1921, twelve delegates representing communist cells in Beijing, Wuhan, Hubei, Shanghai, Jinan, Guangzhou and Japan met in the classroom of a girls' school in the French Concession of Shanghai (the school was closed for summer holidays). This was the First National Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.



Site of the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Shanghai.

Mao Zedong attended as the delegate from his home province of Hunan and served as note-taker. Zhu De (Chu Te), who would later be a famed general of the Communist Red Army, was also in attendance. The congress had to be convened in secret as local authorities did not approve. Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu were not able to attend for fear of arrest. The congress was nonetheless a success and marked the official birth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Chen Duxiu was elected secretary-general to lead the party.



FOUNDING OF
THE CCP

The CCP was initially very small. The twelve delegates to the First National Congress represented just fifty-seven members. Most were intellectuals. They were a minuscule drop in an ocean of 400 million people. The promise of funds from Soviet Russia and the revolutionary potential of the Chinese people was, nonetheless, a cause for excitement. An official guidebook to the museum that stands on the site of the first CCP Congress describes the gathering as ‘an epoch making event.’²² In their controversial biography of Mao Zedong, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday claim that the CCP was actually formed in August 1920 under Voitinsky’s guidance, that Mao Zedong was not present and that he had nothing to do with the party’s foundation.²³ Most Chinese and Western historians, however, accept that the CCP officially began at the congress of 1921 and hence that Mao was a central figure in the birth of Chinese communism.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Why do historians debate who founded the CCP and when? Why does it matter? To what extent was it true that the founding of the CCP was an ‘epoch making event’?

ACTIVITY

INTERNAL DEBATES

From the outset, the CCP proved to be far from the disciplined and ideologically-unified organisation advocated by Lenin. The relative importance of the peasantry

22 Ni Xingxiang, *Picture Album of the Site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing: 2001), 91.

23 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 19.

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

DID YOU KNOW?

To guard against police agents attending the First Congress of the CCP in Shanghai, Maring arranged for some meetings to take place on a pleasure boat.



was one important point of difference. Chen Duxiu, from Shanghai, was an orthodox (traditional) Marxist who believed the proletariat, urban workers, would be the chief revolutionary class in China. Peasants, he argued, were too tied to traditional customs and would be hard to unify. According to Chen,

The peasants are scattered and their forces are not easy to concentrate, their culture is low, their desires in life are simple, and they easily tend toward conservatism ... These environmental factors make it difficult for the peasants to participate in the revolutionary movement.²⁴

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

In economically backward and semi-colonial China, the peasantry constitutes more than ninety per cent of the population; among the whole population they occupy the principal position, and agriculture is still the basis of the national economy. Therefore, when we estimate the forces of the revolution, we must emphasize that the peasantry is the most important part.²⁵

Differences were so pronounced that the Communists coined the expression, 'Chen in the south, Li in the north.'²⁶ (Mao, a member of Li's study group and his former assistant in the Beijing University library, was deeply influenced by his mentor.) Relations between the Chinese Communists and the Comintern agents were also tense. Chen Duxiu had a fiery temper and exploded in rage on a number of occasions when he felt the Russians were being overbearing; Maring called him 'the volcano.'²⁷ Despite Chen's outbursts and Li's unorthodox Marxism, of which the Russians thoroughly disapproved, the Comintern held sway over the CCP. Money from Moscow provided almost all of the Party's funds, and Soviet Russia, as the sole socialist nation, remained the original source of revolutionary wisdom. Such was the influence of Russian communism that Sun Yixian would soon also accept Soviet guidance and support. The spirit of revolutionary China was rising.

24 Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 242.

25 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 517.

26 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 517.

27 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 27.

ACTIVITY

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

1. Explain the allure of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism for young Chinese intellectuals at the time of the May Fourth movement.
2. The Chinese Communist Party was founded with just fifty-seven members. Yet Li Dazhao declared, 'See the world of tomorrow; it assuredly will belong to the red flag!' What gave the CCP leaders such hope for a Marxist future?

THE UNITED FRONT

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

The death of Yuan Shikai by no means made things easier for Sun Yixian. In 1917, Sun returned to China where he again involved himself in politics, basing himself in Shanghai. With little influence over the Beijing government, Sun spent most of his time writing and lecturing. Prime Minister Duan Qirui (Tuan Ch’i-jui) and President Li Yuanhong squabbled continuously, to the effect that actual power was dispersed amongst the various regional warlords. According to one commentator, power was ‘based on force in a meritocracy of violence.’²⁸ In August and September 1917, members of the old National Assembly gathered at the southern city of Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province under the protection of a local warlord. There Sun was elected grand marshal of a new military government on 10 September 1917.

Sun’s government allied itself with a number of southern warlords and, as the self-proclaimed true representatives of the republic, stood in opposition to the government in Beijing. Sun even sent delegates to attend negotiations at Versailles in 1919, even though his government was not recognised by world powers. Foreign governments continued to negotiate their own advantageous agreements with both regional warlords and the official government in Beijing. Factional in-fighting kept Sun’s government weak and divided; he fell out with his warlord backers and was forced to leave Guangzhou for Shanghai, where he spent the next few years writing and lecturing. Sun returned to Guangzhou in 1921 and, in alliance with Chen Jiongming (Ch’en Chiung-ming), the Hakka General, established yet another government on 5 May. Sun dreamed of building up a military force to march north and re-establish the republic. General Chen was more inclined to consolidate his position in the south.²⁹ A series of failed military expeditions, which Chen did not support, led to a breakdown in their alliance and Sun’s exile, first to Hong Kong, then Shanghai. Sun attributed his lack of success at this time to poor organisation and discipline within the Guomindang, as well as a lack of proper indoctrination in the party.³⁰

DID YOU KNOW?

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



CHINESE REACTIONS TO VERSAILLES

THE SUN-JOFFE DECLARATION

Sun Yixian called for support from the West and Japan but he was consistently rebuffed. He had more luck when the Soviet Comintern gave its attention to China. In August 1922, Sun met with Comintern agents Hendricus Maring and Adolph Joffe to discuss the re-organisation of the Guomindang and conditions for Soviet aid. Moscow had concluded that the prestige of the GMD would be useful in furthering the revolutionary movement and hoped to foster ties between the CCP and Sun Yixian. The Comintern, despite objections by a number of Chinese Communists, began negotiations for a United Front, in which CCP members could take up individual membership in the GMD. The national revolution was to come before the socialist one; in other words, it was seen as more important to find common ground as Chinese before tackling class divisions. Chen Duxiu, head of the CCP, grudgingly accepted the alliance, but given the tiny membership of his party, could also see advantages in working with the far-larger GMD. On

28 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 145.

29 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 194.

30 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 519.

26 January 1923, a joint manifesto by Sun and Joffe outlined the urgent goals of the new alliance: 'national independence' and 'national unity.' The Sun-Joffe Declaration also made clear that China was not yet ready for communism.

Although Sun expressed admiration for the organisational structures of the Soviet government, he admitted that his alliance with the Comintern was one of desperation.

DOCUMENTS

THE SUN-JOFFE DECLARATION, 1923

Dr Sun is of the opinion that, because of the non-existence of conditions favourable to their successful application in China, it is not possible to carry out either communism or even the Soviet system in China. M. [Mr] Joffe agrees entirely with this view; he is further of the opinion that China's most important and most pressing problems are the completion of national unification and the attainment of full national independence. With regard to these great tasks, M. Joffe has assured Dr Sun of the Russian people's warmest sympathy for China, and of willingness to lend support.³¹

SUN YIXIAN ON THE REPUBLIC AND SOVIET RUSSIA, 1923

The Republic is my child. It is in danger of drowning. I am trying to keep it afloat and we are being swept down the river. I call for help to England and America. They stand on the bank and jeer at me. There comes a Russian straw. Drowning I clutch at it. England and America, on the bank, shout at me, on no account to clutch the Russian straw. But they do not help me. No. They jeer themselves and at the same time tell me not to clutch that Russian straw. I know it is a straw, but it is better than nothing.³²

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1. From the sources, find two reasons why Sun Yixian turned to Soviet Russia for assistance.
2. Identify from the sources two objectives of the Russian Comintern in supporting Sun.
3. Using the sources provided and your own knowledge, explain the impact of the United Front on the Chinese revolutionary movement.
4. Evaluate the significance of Soviet revolutionary ideas and organisations in China up to 1923. In your response, refer to the sources provided and other views.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

FORMING A COALITION

Sun's fortunes were nevertheless improving. A base was re-established once more at Guangzhou on 16 January 1923 after a mercenary (paid) force funded by Sun captured the city from General Chen. Sun returned on 21 February. The Comintern lent further support to Sun by sending Mikhail Borodin to assist the GMD to re-organise itself; General Vasily Galen was sent as a military adviser.

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

Borodin was more tactful, easy-going and persuasive than the overbearing Maring. He calmed disquiet among the Communists and Nationalists. As Sun's adviser, Borodin overhauled the GMD. The first National Congress of the re-organised Guomindang was held on 20–30 January 1924. The Congress formally approved a new Leninist-style party structure, governed by democratic centralism,³³ and re-affirmed the United Front – a three-way

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

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

alliance between the GMD, CCP and Comintern. Sun's Three Principles, the *Sanminzhuyi* (Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood; see Chapter 1), were acknowledged as the party's guiding ideology. The principles were slightly amended to emphasise the need to rid China of warlord and imperialist rule, and to articulate the crucial role of workers and peasants. There remained some concerns about the relationship between the Communists and Nationalists, but Li Dazhao, a leading Communist, declared that the CCP was not a 'bloc' or faction within the GMD seeking only to further its own needs:

To complete successfully this revolution, we have to have a united, all encompassing revolutionary party for the simple reason that in the process of conducting this revolutionary movement we cannot afford to have our revolutionary forces divided We want to become part of the Guomindang and to be organised as one of its armies, so that we can fight for the successful completion of our national revolution shoulder to shoulder with other comrades, under the same leadership and abiding by the same discipline We join the Guomindang because we believe that we can contribute to its strength as well as provide an additional rationale for promoting our national revolution; we are not the opportunists who merely wish to use the Guomindang label in order to advance the Communist movement.³⁴

Many long-time GMD activists were impressed by the passion of the (mostly) younger Communists. After the Congress, GMD veteran Wang Jingwei (Wang Ching-wei) said, 'The young people of the May Fourth movement are something to be reckoned with, after all. Look at the enthusiasm with which they speak, and their energetic attitude.'³⁵ Three of the twenty-four seats on the new Guomindang Central Executive Committee (CEC) were given to Communists, including Li Dazhao. Mao Zedong was one of seven Communists given a place on the sixteen-place alternative CEC membership (non-voting positions). Communists were assigned the task of rallying support amongst workers and peasants. Galen and Borodin had meanwhile proven their value by pulling together an effective militia that repulsed a campaign to re-take Guangzhou by General Chen.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY

With the founding of a military school in Huangpu, steps were taken to prepare a professional military force for the new Nationalist coalition. Situated on an island in Guangzhou's Pearl River, the Soviet-financed Huangpu Military Academy began training and arming officers for a new Nationalist army. Having returned from the USSR, Jiang Jieshi was appointed head of the academy and commander-in-chief on 3 May 1924. Galen worked closely with Jiang. In addition to military training, Huangpu cadets were indoctrinated in Nationalist ideology and most developed a strong loyalty to Jiang. Simple living, initiative and bravery were encouraged at Huangpu.³⁶ Communists also attended; amongst those who would later rise to prominence was Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), who served as the chief political commissar (advisor) of the Academy until 1927.

THE DEATH OF SUN YIXIAN

In late 1924, following a conflict between northern warlords, a new government in Beijing seemed likely. Sun Yixian, as one of the nation's best-known political leaders, set out for the capital to engage in talks with those competing for power.



Mikhail Borodin.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

33 In democratic centralism, favoured by Lenin, issues could be debated and suggestions made by ordinary members, but once a decision had been made by party leadership everyone must abide by it. A disciplined, hierarchical model.

34 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 53–4.

35 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 146.

36 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 163.



Sun Yixian's mausoleum, Nanjing.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sun Yixian's body was laid to rest in an elaborate mausoleum in the hills just outside Nanjing (above). His last words were said to be, 'Just as Christ was sent by God to the world, so God also sent me.'

He hoped to gain agreement for a proper representative government, thus averting a military campaign from the south. Upon arriving in Beijing, Sun was stricken with stomach pain and taken to hospital; he was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer.

The Father of the Republic died in Beijing on 11 March 1925, at the age of fifty-nine. Sun's final testament urged his followers to continue the struggle for national reunification. In a letter to Stalin and the Soviet government, Sun wrote, 'I leave behind a party which, as I always hoped, will be allied with you in its historical task of liberating China and other suppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism.'³⁷

ACTIVITY

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Write an extended answer (approx. 150 words) on one of the topics below. Use evidence to support your response.

- Explain how the difficulties faced by Sun Yixian between 1917 and 1922 constituted a long-term cause of the revolution.
- Explain how the formation of the United Front constituted a long-term cause of the revolution.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Not all Nationalists felt so sure that working with the Communists was for the best, but Sun had kept the various factions and interests in the United Front together. His death destabilised this fragile union. Sun also left behind a party unsure of its leadership and prone to factionalism. The mantle of leadership fell to

37 Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism* (London: World University Library, 1966), 60.

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

39 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the China He Lost* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 68.

Wang Jingwei and Liao Zhongkai (Liao Chung-k'ai), who headed the left faction of the GMD, and Hu Hanmin (Hu Han-min), who dominated the right.³⁸ None carried the prestige or authority of Sun. A further source of power was the military under Jiang Jieshi; Jiang told his wife, 'If I control the army, I will have the power to control the country. It is my road to leadership.'³⁹

Furthermore, Sun Yixian's death was the first of a number of dramatic events in the mid-1920s that shaped the course of the Chinese revolutionary movement. On 30 May 1925, protesting textile workers in Shanghai – who had been locked out of their factory by Japanese management – were fired on by British guards. Eleven men were killed. In Guangzhou, a protest in solidarity with the 'May 30 Martyrs' was also violently dispersed by British soldiers, resulting in fifty-two deaths. The 'May 30 Atrocious Incident,' as it was called, inflamed anti-imperialist feeling and renewed the protests of the May Fourth movement. Rebecca Karl argues, 'The May 30th Incident and its aftermath helped usher in a new hope for social mobilization and revolutionary upsurge.'⁴⁰ Support for the CCP swelled as workers and students were increasingly attracted to the message of Communist agitators and strikes spread throughout the country. By the start of 1927, the Communists had 57 000 members.⁴¹

While the more radical elements of the United Front increased their influence after Sun's death, the first challenge for leadership appeared from the right. On 20 August 1925, Liao Zhongkai, a leading member of the GMD left faction, was assassinated. An investigation pointed to the involvement of Hu Hanmin of the GMD right. Hu was subsequently packed off to Moscow to 'study communism.' A three-man leadership team of Wang Jingwei, Jiang Jieshi and Mikhail Borodin was established. On 20 March 1926, a confused plot to kidnap Jiang, involving a gunboat commanded by a Communist officer, allowed Jiang to further consolidate his authority, this time against the left. (The left Communists were blamed for the failed coup.) Soviet advisers were placed under 'protective custody.' At Jiang's urging, in May the Guomindang CEC resolved to remove a number of Communists from senior positions and restrict their involvement in committees: 'comrades on the left ... should retire for a while.'⁴² There was little Borodin could do to moderate Jiang's measures. As Jiang still needed Soviet support, relations between the two, while tense, were maintained. When Wang Jingwei was suspected of association with the plot against Jiang, he prudently decided to retire from politics and leave for France.

Thus, less than eighteen months after Sun Yixian's death, Jiang Jieshi had secured his position in Guangzhou and sidelined most of his leadership rivals. One Soviet adviser recorded the following assessment of the self-proclaimed generalissimo (commander-in-chief): 'We consider Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] a peculiar person with peculiar characteristics, most prominent of these being his lust for glory and power and craving to be the hero of China.'⁴³



Wang Jingwei.

40 Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 29.

41 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1999), 70.

42 Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 93.

43 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 95–6.



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

DID YOU KNOW?

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

THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION

Jiang Jieshi: 'To protect the welfare of the people we must overthrow all warlords and wipe out reactionary power so that we may implement the Three People's Principles and complete the National Revolution.'

It was not long before Jiang did indeed have an opportunity to pursue personal glory, as well as to fulfil one of Sun Yixian's long-held dreams. On 1 July 1926, Jiang announced the mobilisation of the Northern Expedition: 'To protect the welfare of the people we must overthrow all warlords and wipe out reactionary power so that we may implement [Sun's] Three People's Principles and complete the National Revolution.'⁴⁴ On 6 July, Jiang was elected chairman of the Guomindang CEC, giving him full control of the party's military and political organisations.

The Nationalist Revolutionary Army, with Jiang as its commander-in-chief, began its march north on 27 July, with a total of 85 000 troops led by 6000 Huangpu officers. The China correspondent for the *New York Times* wrote, 'the expedition appeared to be a hopeless folly.' The combined forces of 'Philosopher General' Wu Peifu (Wu P'ei-fu), 'Old Marshall' Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin) and 'Nanjing Warlord' Sun Chuanfang

(Sun Ch'uan-fang) amounted to 750 000 troops. The Nationalists had some advantages, however. Whereas southern China was relatively united under the Guomindang, the north was more divided than ever.⁴⁵ There was little chance that northern militarists could mount a coordinated defence, partly because their troops were often poorly trained and equipped. By contrast, the Nationalist Army was a disciplined, professional fighting force with high morale. General Galen and his Soviet experts continued to advise Jiang. The Nationalist government was in a good financial situation after the appointment of T.V. Soong (Soong Ziwen; Sung Tzu-wen) as finance minister. Soong was Western-educated and a brilliant financier. He built up a silver reserve for the Nationalist government, which brought stability to the currency, and increased tax income considerably.

Travelling ahead of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army were Communist and left-GMD agitators, who mobilised support amongst the peasants and rallied workers' organisations. Strikes and other acts of sabotage by ordinary people played an important part in destabilising the warlords. The Nationalist Army, against expectations, enjoyed victory after victory as it swept into central China. Wuhan was captured on 10 October – an auspicious date in Republican history – and Nanchang fell a month later. By 1927, Jiang's army, enlarged with defections from warlord forces, was advancing on Nanjing and Shanghai. Despite success on the battlefield the Nationalists and their United Front allies were far from harmonious. Tensions, suspicions and jealousies were mounting.

44 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 114.

45 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 220.



KEY EVENTS

Using the map and information above, summarise the Northern Expedition in your own words. Then comment on how the end of the 'warlord era' changed China politically. Who filled the gap left by the warlords?

KEY PEOPLE

Discuss the questions below.

1. What were the consequences of the death of Sun Yixian for the Nationalist movement?
2. How accurate is Sun Yixian's popular title, 'Father of the Republic'?
3. How did Jiang Jieshi increase his political influence during the United Front period?

ACTIVITY

THE WHITE TERROR

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

DID YOU KNOW?

Journalist Arthur Ransome described Justice Minister Xu Qian as 'unbalanced' and 'obstinate'; he was 'a brilliant man with something seriously wrong with his brain.'

DID YOU KNOW?

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

On 1 January 1927, the Guomindang CEC and Comintern adviser Borodin relocated to Wuhan, central China, and established the city as the new seat of government. The Nationalist government, under the influence of its left faction, now tried to lessen Jiang's authority. The extraordinary powers granted him at the start of the Northern Expedition were revoked and Jiang was made answerable to a committee headed by one of his old rivals, Justice Minister Xu Qian (Hsu Chien). Wang Jingwei returned from France and further bolstered the Wuhan government. Jiang was furious and insisted that the government be based at Nanchang, a city he had captured shortly before. For the moment the dispute remained unresolved and the two opposing elements vied for control.

As Nationalist troops advanced on Shanghai, Communist-led workers' unions, under the direction of Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), formed militias and staged a huge strike, which paralysed the city. The Nationalist Revolutionary Army breached Shanghai's defences on 18 March and, thanks to the workers' efforts, faced little resistance. The Nationalists held the city by 22 March. Yet the success of the Communist labour agitators presented a problem for Jiang: 'This could be portrayed either as fifth column⁴⁶ aid for the Nationalists,' argues Jonathan Fenby, 'or as a bid to set up a Soviet, or both. It was a major threat to Jiang since the strikers would greatly outnumber his troops.'⁴⁷ On his arrival Jiang sought the help of Shanghai's leading businessmen, bankers and foreign diplomats. All were keen to do away with the militant workers' movement. Jiang's first meeting, though, was with 'Pockmarked Huang' (Huang Jinrong) and 'Big Ears Du' (Du Yuesheng) – the leaders of Shanghai's notorious Green Gang criminal network.⁴⁸ The Green Gang (*Qingbang*) ran drug smuggling and distribution, gambling dens, prostitution and protection rackets. Huang also happened to be boss of the Chinese detectives in the French Concession. The power and connections of the Green Gang were called upon to deal with Jiang's Communist 'problem,' in return the Gang was promised immunity from the law and exclusive rights to sell opium in Shanghai.

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

THE SHANGHAI MASSACRE

With assistance from the French consul-general, Big Ears Du armed a 2000-man militia with the somewhat ironic title of China Mutual Progress Association. Early on the morning of 12 April, the Green Gang militia fanned out through Shanghai's working-class districts. They wore blue denim overalls and white

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

47 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 176.

48 Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 146.

armbands with the Chinese character for ‘labourer’ printed on them. Just before dawn the militia began a massacre. Communists and union activists were rounded up and executed. Nationalist troops joined in the slaughter. Somewhere between 5000 and 10 000 Communists and unionists were killed. Maurice Meisner argues that Jiang had brought about ‘a bloodbath that virtually destroyed both the CCP and the workers’ movement in China’s largest city’: it was ‘an orgy of counter-revolutionary violence.’⁴⁹ The White Terror spread to other cities under Nationalist control.⁵⁰ The eventual death toll numbered in the hundreds of thousands – nobody kept an official record. In disarray, Communists discarded their trademark red-neckties and tried to evade capture. Zhou Enlai went into hiding and was one of the lucky ones who escaped. American Vice-Consul Frederick Hinke described the fate of many less fortunate radicals:

Execution squads patrolled the streets and on finding a suspect, they questioned him, examined his neck for the tell-tale red. If found, they ordered the victim to open his mouth, thrust a revolver into it, and another coolie came to the end of his Communist venture. I, myself, saw a rickshaw stopped, the coolie grabbed by the police, his shirt jerked from his neck disclosing the red stain. He was rushed to the side of the road, compelled to kneel down, and unceremoniously shot while the crowd of people in the street applauded.⁵¹

Jiang had been vastly underestimated by Stalin’s Comintern. A week before the Shanghai Massacre, Stalin said, ‘We are told that Chiang [Jiang] is making ready to turn against us again. I know that he is playing a cunning game with us; it is he that will be crushed. We shall squeeze him like a lemon and then be rid of him.’⁵² Wang Jingwei’s Wuhan government accused Jiang of a ‘massacre of the people’ and on 17 April expelled him from the GMD. Jiang didn’t care – he had a powerful army and his own government, now based in Nanjing (which he captured on 24 March). The CCP leadership were, meanwhile, bewildered by confusing orders from Stalin. On a number of occasions in the past they had asked Moscow to allow them to split from Jiang, to work only with the Guomintang left, pursue revolution in the countryside and raise their own military force. Their proposal had been repeatedly vetoed (rejected) by Stalin. After the Shanghai Massacre the CCP leadership cut ties with Jiang but continued to work with Wang Jingwei. The CCP was instructed by the Comintern to adopt the very strategies that had been refused in previous weeks. Chen Duxiu said it was ‘like taking a bath in shit,’ another Communist said he didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.⁵³ The arrival of new Comintern advisors, headed by Mahendranath Roy, made matters worse for the CCP. Borodin and Roy disagreed over policy. Roy made a terrible blunder in showing Wang Jingwei a confidential telegram from Stalin that proposed the formation of an exclusively Communist army. Roy had hoped to reassure Wang with his openness but he instead aroused suspicions. On 15 July the left Guomintang expelled the CCP and Comintern representatives from its government. The leading Russian advisors were sent home by the end of the month. ‘It’s all over,’ despaired Borodin.⁵⁴ Before he left, Borodin urged his Chinese comrades to continue their struggle and defy Jiang’s ‘counter-revolutionary’ regime. Borodin later described the Guomintang as ‘a toilet which, however often you flush it, still stinks.’⁵⁵

After the expulsion of the Communists the left faction of the Guomintang ‘remained a house divided against itself ... Its revolutionary ardour was broken, its unity shattered, and its leaders had become rivals for power.’⁵⁶ The right GMD at Nanjing was similarly unsettled. In late 1927 Jiang made the surprising but



THE SHANGHAI MASSACRE

DID YOU KNOW?

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

DID YOU KNOW?

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

49 Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China: a History of the People’s Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 27.

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

51 Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism*, 104.

52 Cited in Rius, *Mao For Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 69.

53 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 190.

54 Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, first volume (Frogmore: Panther Books, 1976), 213.

55 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 158.

56 Helmut G. Callis, *China: Confucian and Communist* (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), 254–5.

clever move of taking a break from the leadership struggle. Pretending to give up his ambitions, Jiang travelled to Japan and married his third wife, Soong Meiling (Sung Meiling). 'This cleared the way for his rivals to tear at each other's throats.'⁵⁷ By the end of the year many in the Guomindang were yearning for a strong leader and hoped for a reconciliation of the party's factions. The Wuhan government dissolved and joined with the government at Nanjing. Jiang was asked back and on 1 January 1928 he returned to the Nationalist capital. He once again took the role of commander-in-chief and the Northern Expedition resumed. In alliance with the warlord 'Christian General' Feng Yuxiang (Feng Yu-hsiang), Nationalist troops had taken Beijing by June. The city was renamed Beiping, meaning 'northern peace,' as Nanjing remained the centre of power. On 10 October Jiang Jieshi was elected chairman of the Nationalist government of China.

The Northern Expedition achieved a semblance of national unity and the Guomindang government was recognised by world powers. Whilst some areas remained outside the government's immediate control, China was now under its first unified government since the death of Yuan Shikai. The Nationalist flag flew throughout north, south and central China, as well as Manchuria. The man of the moment was Jiang Jieshi, who enjoyed enormous power and prestige. He held the positions of chairman of the Central Executive Committee and State Council, secretary general of the GMD and head of the Military Council. Under his leadership China embarked on a decade of modernisation and national reconstruction. Behind the impressive new façade, however, many cracks remained. After the White Terror, the story of the revolution became a tale of two Chinas: Communist and Nationalist.⁵⁸

ACTIVITIES

KEY PEOPLE

- Draw a concept map or flow chart showing Jiang Jieshi's role in the Chinese Revolution up to 1928.
- As a class, debate the following topic: 'The Shanghai Massacre showed that Jiang Jieshi was morally bankrupt.'

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Write a paragraph on each of the topics below. Use evidence to support your response.

1. Explain how the actions of the CCP contributed to a growing revolutionary situation in China up to 1927.
2. Explain the impact of the Shanghai Massacre and White Terror on the Chinese revolutionary movement.
3. Explain the extent to which the Northern Expedition contributed to the fulfilment of Sun Yixian's revolutionary vision.

57 Sterling Seagrave, *The Soong Dynasty: The Extraordinary Story of the Richest and Most Powerful Family in Modern China* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985), 263.

58 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 229.

JIANG JIESHI AND THE SOONG DYNASTY

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

On 31 December 1927, while temporarily out of office, Jiang Jieshi married the youngest daughter of Charlie Soong (Soong Jiashu), one of Shanghai's wealthiest businessmen. Soong Meiling was a woman of great beauty and intelligence. She was educated in the United States and spoke fluent English with a slight American accent. She also had considerable 'connections.' Meiling strengthened Jiang's ties with Shanghai's business elite. Her elder sister, Ailing, who had arranged the marriage with Jiang on behalf of her family, was married to Shanghai's leading banker, H.H. Kung (Kong Xiangxi). The youngest brothers of the family – Tse Liang 'T.L.' Soong (Soong Ziliang) and Tse An 'T.A.' Soong (Soong Zian) – were also influential financiers. T.V. Soong, their eldest brother, was already Jiang's finance minister. Meiling's other sister, Qingling, was the widow of Sun Yixian. On marrying Meiling, Jiang Jieshi became one of the Father of the Republic's in-laws. Jiang's ties to this so-called 'Soong dynasty' represent shrewd political manoeuvring and the importance of family 'connections' in Chinese culture.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Once Jiang came to power, Soong Meiling proved to be a valuable political asset. She made a number of speaking tours to Europe and the United States to rally support for Jiang's government. She was a hit with the American public and

regularly featured in magazines. Her eloquence and beauty were much admired. As a Methodist she was popular with the anti-communist Christian right in America (Jiang also became a Methodist

after marrying Meiling). In 1937, Jiang and Meiling made the front page of *Time* magazine as 'man and wife of the year.' Photographs from World War II show Meiling linking arms with her husband and his American adviser, General Joe Stilwell. She was Jiang's literal and symbolic link to the West.



'Generalissimo' Jiang Jieshi and Soong Meiling.

In order to marry Meiling, Jiang had to work out what to do with his other wife, Jennie (Chen Jieru). Jiang promised Jennie that he was only marrying Meiling for political convenience. He arranged for Jennie to go to the United States for a five-year 'study tour,' after which he promised he would send for her and their married life would resume. Jennie eventually agreed to the arrangement. Jiang made a vow in Jennie's presence before a Buddhist shrine, 'Should I break my promise and fail to take her back, may the Great Buddha smite me and my Nanjing government.'⁵⁹ Once in America, Jennie learnt from articles in the press that Jiang denied their marriage, claiming he had paid for a former 'concubine' to move to the States. She was shattered. (It was not the first time Jiang had dealt Jennie an awful blow. He infected her with syphilis on their wedding night; the treatment used to cure the infection left her infertile.)

⁵⁹ Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 167.



CONCLUSION

While it seemed that a bright new future lay on the horizon following the downfall of the corrupt and inept Qing dynasty, China's woes were just beginning. The idea of a republic floundered while military strongmen came to rule over a divided, embittered land. More radical visions were embraced by a young China yearning for social equity, political stability and international respect. New learning and philosophies, such as Marxism-Leninism, inspired mass protest movements and revolutionary approaches to changing society. From this radicalism emerged the Chinese Communist Party. The prospect of revolution also brought much-

needed assistance from Soviet Russia to the Guomindang (Nationalists). A brief period of cooperation between the GMD and CCP, the so-called United Front, came to a violent end when Jiang Jieshi turned on his Communist allies. The Shanghai Massacre forced the CCP to flee from the cities and attempt to re-group in the countryside. Meanwhile, Jiang's political fortunes were on the rise. Ending the rule of warlords with the Northern Expedition and outmanoeuvring his rivals, not to mention making valuable connections with the powerful Soong family, Jiang Jieshi emerged triumphant as the leader of Nationalist China by 1928.

CHAPTER REVIEW

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Imagine you are a young Chinese student who writes articles for a university newspaper. You were involved in the May Fourth protests and are interested in the Chinese Communist Party. You are lucky enough to meet with Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Hendricus Maring. They each tell you of their beliefs and attitudes about the CCP. Write up your interviews in a short article for the student newspaper (500–600 words).

KEY IDEAS

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

Represent the following figures: Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Hendricus Maring. The meeting should discuss:

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

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

KEY PEOPLE

Write a paragraph on how each of the following people changed Chinese society between 1912 and 1927:

- Sun Yixian
- Jiang Jieshi
- Yuan Shikai.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- Jonathan Fenby describes the United Front as ‘a marriage of convenience.’ To what extent do you agree with this interpretation?
- Explain the significance of the the May Fourth movement as a revolutionary turning point.
- Evaluate the extent to which the Northern Expedition was successful in creating national unity.
- Explain the extent to which the New Culture movement ‘changed what it meant to be Chinese.’

FURTHER READING

Patricia Buckley Ebrey. China: A Cultural, Social and Political History. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

An innovative and assessable textbook written for higher level students. Feature boxes on material culture and lesser-known figures are fascinating.

Jonathan Fenby. Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the China He Lost. London: Simon & Schuster, 2003.

A detailed and engaging biography of Jiang Jieshi. Students would find Fenby useful for further research and extension reading.

Jack Gray. Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

An interesting and accessible general reference book. Gray's analysis of the Chinese Communist movement

provides a good counterpoint to more critical interpretations.

Rana Mitter. A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Mitter brings together cultural, social and political history in this examination of how the May Fourth movement and its ideals shaped modern China.

Edwin Moise. Modern China: A History. London: Longman, 1994.

An illuminating academic text. Useful for its discussion of key individuals and movements.

John E. Schrecker. The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective. London: Praeger Publishers, 2004.

An innovative and interesting text that analyses the history of China through Chinese sociological concepts rather than Western approaches.

Sterling Seagrave. The Soong Dynasty: The Extraordinary Story of the Richest and Most Powerful Family in Modern China. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985.

A detailed and lively account of the significant members of the Soong family.

Jonathan Spence. The Search for Modern China. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.

A detailed but accessible general reference book.

CHAPTER

3

THE LONG MARCH TO REVOLUTION

(1927–1949)

1 Communists in Crisis

Communists fail to capture Nanchang from Jiang's Nationalists

CCP announces Canton Commune (1927) – GMD kills 5700

'Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks' take charge of failing CCP

Disastrous
Autumn Harvest
Uprising led
by Mao

Mao's strategy: 70% expansion;
20% fighting GMD; 10% fighting Japan

Japan surrenders after US atomic bombs (1945)

US tries to broker peace between CCP and GMD

7 The Chinese Civil War

Mao: 'We will give Jiang Yan'an – he will give us China'

Nationalists surrender – CCP proclaims
revolution won (Oct 1949)

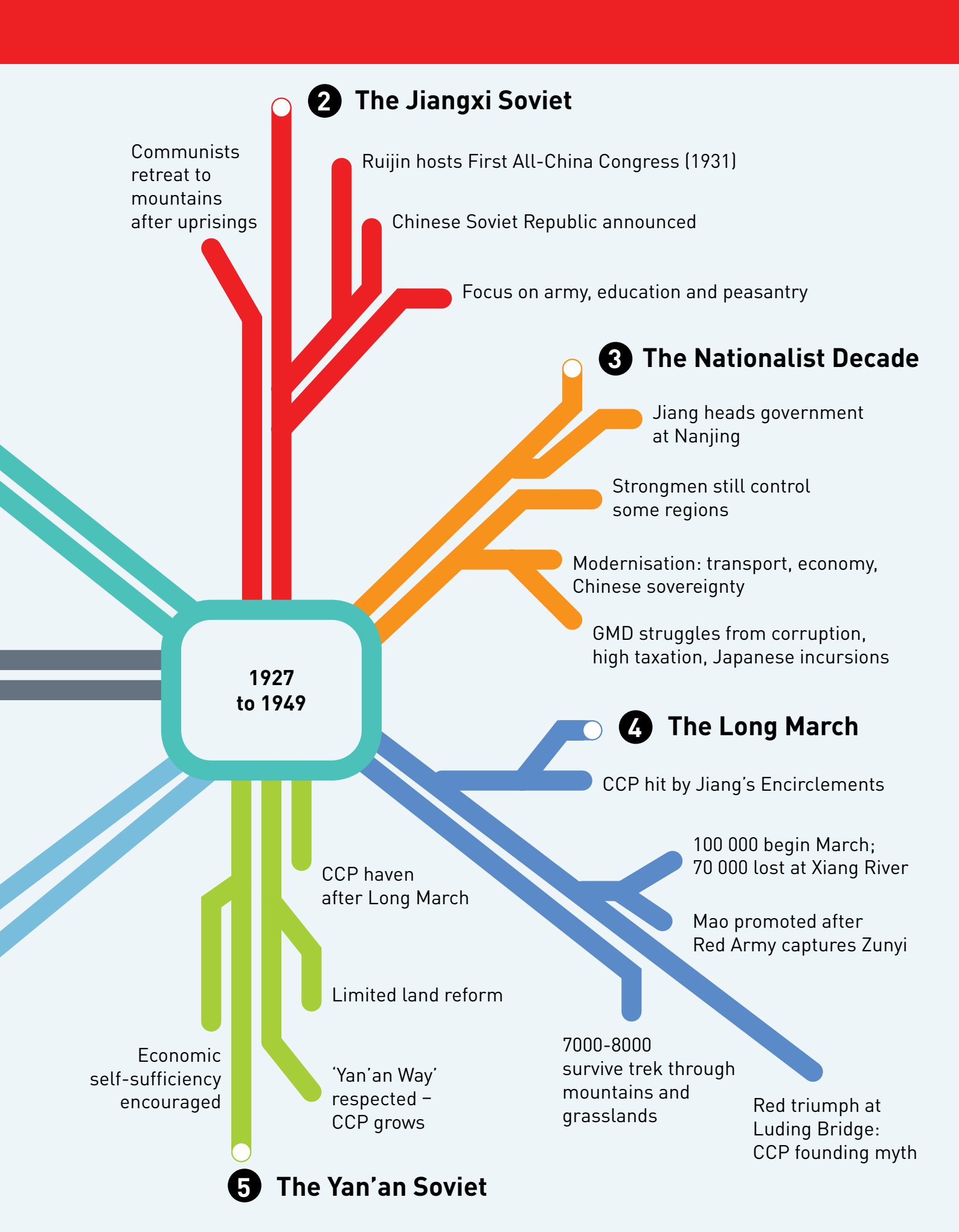
Rebel GMD unit strikes truce with CCP at Yan'an

CCP captures Jiang (Xi'an Incident) – he agrees to join Front against Japan

Japan invades China (Jul 1937)

6 The Sino-Japanese War

Japanese atrocities at Nanjing





INTRODUCTION

Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government succeeded in bringing a sense of unity back to China; the Northern Expeditions ended the regional in-fighting of the warlord era and urban areas were modernised. Relations with Western powers improved markedly. Jiang's regime, however, faced great difficulties. Many regional commanders, rather than being overthrown, were co-opted into Nationalist rule. In rural areas, poverty, corruption and unequal land distribution continued to fester, largely ignored by the government. Forced to retreat by Jiang's brutal repression, the CCP meanwhile found a home among the peasantry. Thriving communities like the Jiangxi (Chiang-hsi or Kiangsi) Soviet became models of socialist reform. However, the path to revolution was by no means straightforward. The Communists were bitterly divided. The meddling of the Russian Comintern caused tension and uncertainty. Jiang, determined to extinguish the Communists, continued a series of campaigns against their strongholds. The Communists, in fear of their lives, embarked upon the Long March – a harrowing experience that few survived. But those that did survive emerged from the northern base at Yan'an (Yenan) to form a credible revolutionary movement under the restored leadership of Mao Zedong. The deciding factor in China's fortunes, though, was Japan's invasion and occupation in 1937. The resulting period of hardship, during which political movements competed over their nationalist credentials, finally led to civil war.



Josef Stalin.

COMMUNISTS IN CRISIS

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

After the breakdown of the United Front, the Communists had to find a scapegoat and it wasn't going to be the Russians. Accused of 'opportunism and betrayal,' on 7 August 1927, Chen Duxiu resigned as CCP secretary-general and was replaced by Qu Qiubai (Ch'u Ch'iu-pai), a much younger man who had studied in Moscow. In the months after the Shanghai Massacre, the CCP was used as a pawn in an ideological and political power-play between Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Stalin, who had never been to China, had been taken to task by acid-tongued Trotsky for failing to devise effective policy for the Chinese Communists. Stalin quickly dispatched two new Comintern advisers, Heinz Neumann and Besso Lomindaze, both staunch Stalinists, to China. Through them, Stalin directed a number of uprisings against Nationalists in key urban centres.

THE NANCHANG UPRISING

The first uprising was launched on 1 August 1927, at Nanchang in Jiangxi province. A number of Nationalist Army divisions there were led by Communists.,

including up to thirty-thousand soldiers under the command of He Long (Ho Lung) and Ye Ting (Yeh T'ing); a perfect opportunity for insurrection. The rebels seized control of the city and proclaimed a revolutionary government. The local people were indifferent. The Communists held out for four days before loyal Nationalist troops re-captured the city and forced the CCP survivors to flee south.

THE AUTUMN HARVEST UPRISING

A motley group of soldiers in Hunan were led by the former head of the GMD Peasant Department, Mao Zedong, with the aim of rousing a peasant uprising and taking the capital, Changsha. Mao had some experience as a rural revolutionary activist. He had been principal of the Farmers' Movement Training Institute, which trained revolutionaries for work in the countryside, and in early 1927 had submitted a controversial assessment on the revolutionary potential of the rural working class: *Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. (This contrasted with the traditional Marxist-Leninist focus on urban workers.) Mao's Autumn Harvest Uprising of 7–13 September, however, was a disaster. His forces seized a few small towns but didn't get anywhere near the capital. Guomindang troops inflicted severe casualties on the Communists. Mao was briefly captured but managed to escape. His ragged mob of 1000 survivors eventually found sanctuary at Jinggangshan ('Well Ridge Mountain') along the Hunan-Jiangxi border. He was later joined in January 1928 by Communist Zhu De, who brought 2000 more soldiers, veterans of the failed Nanchang uprising.

THE CANTON COMMUNE

On 11 December 1927, the Communists attempted another insurrection, this time at Guangzhou (Canton). A dispute between local GMD-backed warlords had created a politically unstable situation that the Communists sought to exploit. CCP troops seized control of the city and a Canton Soviet Council was proclaimed. A radical program of socialist measures was announced, including the redistribution of land, collective ownership of industry and reduced working hours for the city's proletariat (workers). The Canton Commune lasted just two days. As in Nanchang, the workers of Guangzhou were not interested; some were even hostile to the revolutionaries.¹ Unionists assisted in the campaign against the Communists. The Nationalists re-took the city with the aid of foreign gunboats. Brutal reprisals were dished out to suspected Communists and their sympathisers. Around 5700 people were killed. Trucks stacked high with bodies drove through the streets.

DID YOU KNOW?

Girls with bob-style hair, which was popular amongst radical students, were executed as suspected leftists during the suppression of the Canton Commune.

RECRIMINATIONS

By the late 1920s, the Chinese Communists were in disarray; they were fractured in organisation and uncertain of policy. Their active membership had fallen from 57 000 to 10 000. The Comintern had imposed policies on their Chinese comrades that, to succeed, required military strength and widespread popular support. The CCP had neither. Stalin's exhortation to 'deepen the revolutionary tide' and the resulting abortive uprisings only exposed Communist agents to further repression.² Moscow remained impervious to its failures, instead blaming the Chinese. At a CCP Politburo meeting in November 1929, it was decided that

- 1 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 254.
- 2 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 251.

- 3 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Ringwood: Pelican Books, 1971), 125.
- 4 Cited in Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution* (Silverwater: Shakespeare Head Press, 1988), 190.
- 5 Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism* (London: World University Library, 1966), 114.

the ‘general line’ of urban-directed insurrection was ‘entirely correct.’ Mao was criticised for taking ‘a purely military viewpoint’ – he had not effectively roused the revolutionary consciousness of the people. For his ‘military adventurism’ Mao lost his seat on the Politburo. Communication between party organs was so infrequent at this time that Mao didn’t actually learn of his demotion for some months.³ Mao, meanwhile, formed the view that peasants would be too scared to rise up against the established order unless they were offered protection from a powerful army.

The repression of Communists in China was so widespread that the Sixth Party Congress of the CCP had to be held in Moscow. At the Congress, held between 18 June and 20 July 1928, there was much discussion of who was to blame for the Communists’ dire position. The Congress condemned the ‘right opportunism’ of Chen Duxiu and the ‘left deviationism’ of Qu Qiubai. Qu was replaced by Xiang Zhongfa (Hsiang Chung-fa) as general-secretary while Li Lisan (Li Li-san) headed the party’s propaganda department. It was soon apparent that Li Lisan was the dominant figure. Li had a long history of urban revolutionary work. He held strong views on the importance of industrial workers and cities as the foundations of socialist revolution. According to Li, ‘The villages are the limbs of the ruling class. The cities are their brain and heart.’⁴

FURTHER DEFEATS

Li’s theories were given a chance after Jiang Jieshi faced a number of defections by regional militarists in central China during 1929 and 1930. The situation had become so volatile that on 23 July 1930 the Comintern advised the CCP that

‘The new upsurge in the Chinese revolutionary movement has become an indisputable fact.’⁵ The Great Depression gave further credence to the idea that the triumph of communism was nigh. Following Moscow’s assessment, Li Lisan ordered the Communist Red Armies to launch yet another round of campaigns against cities in the Yangzi River valley. General Peng Dehuai (P’eng Te-huai) took Changsha, but his men were driven out after eight days. Mao and Zhu De tried but failed to capture Nanchang. Communist forces also made an unsuccessful attack on Wuhan. The military campaigns proved not only futile, they provoked Jiang Jieshi into organising operations against Communist rural bases that he had previously ignored.

NEW LEADERSHIP

The failure of the ‘Li Lisan line’ led to Li’s dismissal from the CCP leadership. On 8 January 1931, the task of heading the Politburo was entrusted to a new group of Moscow-trained Chinese students headed by Wang Ming and Bo Gu (Po Ku). They were informally known as

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



the ‘Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks’ or ‘Returned Students’ Clique.’ The new leadership was young and inexperienced, a fact derided by the veterans of the revolutionary movement. One Communist later recalled, ‘These fellows were just a group of young students who, needless to say, had done nothing for the revolution. While we were carrying out the revolution, they were taking milk at their mothers’ breasts.’⁶ For the time being the CCP Central Committee, based in Shanghai, was far removed from the revolution that was taking shape in the remote mountains, led by Mao, Zhu and others. By 1931, Mao and Zhu were known as the ‘real power faction’ amongst their Party comrades.⁷ It was in the villages, not the cities, that the Communists were finally gaining strength.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In 1929, the Soviet leadership in Moscow gave the following warning to the Chinese Communists: ‘To *play* with insurrections instead of organising a mass uprising of workers and peasants is a sure way of losing the revolution.’⁸ Discuss the significance of this warning with reference to the events involving the CCP between 1927 and 1931.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Summarise the difficulties faced by the Chinese Communist Party between 1927 and 1931. Use evidence to support your response.

ACTIVITIES

MAO’S LABORATORY: THE JIANGXI SOVIET

Mao Zedong: ‘Without a people’s army the people have nothing.’

Around a dozen rural bases were established by the Communists following the failed insurrections of 1927–30. The one organised by Mao Zedong in Jiangxi was arguably the most significant. Mao’s immediate concern following the Autumn Harvest Uprising was survival: the southern Jiangxi mountains provided a remote and defensible base from which to regroup. As Brantly Womack argues, ‘Necessity was the mother of the CCP’s reinvention.’⁹ Before Jinggangshan Mao was a relatively minor figure in revolutionary circles. The chance to act more independently allowed Mao to confirm the validity of his revolutionary strategies. When he arrived at Jinggangshan he recruited into his army a band of impoverished local bandits. Later joined by units under Zhu De and Peng Dehuai, the Communists’ First Workers’ and Peasants’ Army was far from a formidable fighting force in its early days. Although Mao and Zhu could muster 10 000 troops, their men often went hungry and were terribly under-equipped; some were armed with only spears. For the moment this was not a concern – Mao often said that in war it is people who count more than weapons. Of his new vagabond recruits Mao said, ‘They are all human beings.’¹⁰ Mao had a vision for his motley crew – it was to become an improved Red Army. By January 1929, difficulties in finding sufficient food combined with raids by Guomindang armies forced Mao and Zhu to abandon Jinggangshan and establish a new base deeper in the mountains. The small Jiangxi town of Ruijin was chosen as the new headquarters.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

- 6 Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism*, 119.
- 7 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, 151.
- 8 Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism*, 105.
- 9 Brantly Womack, ‘From Urban Radical to Rural Revolutionary,’ in Timothy Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 77.
- 10 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 119.



The hall in Ruijin where the First All-China Congress of Soviets was held.

THE FIRST ALL-CHINA CONGRESS

On 7 November 1931, the First All-China Congress of Soviets was convened at Ruijin. The Congress involved fierce policy debate between Mao and the Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks led by Wang and Bo. Whilst criticised for its 'opportunistic pragmatism,' Mao's faction won out against the Comintern-backed Politburo. For the moment, Mao's policies would be pursued.

THE CHINESE SOVIET REPUBLIC

At the congress, a Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed, with Mao appointed chairman of its executive committee. Mao spoke of the importance of the Jiangxi Soviet:

From now on there are two totally different states in the territory of China. One is the so-called Republic of China ... The other is the Chinese Soviet Republic, the state of the broad masses of the exploited and oppressed workers, peasants, soldiers and toilers. Its banner is that of overthrowing imperialism; eliminating the landlord class; bringing down the Guomindang warlord government ... and striving for genuine peace and unification of the whole country.¹¹

The Chinese Soviet, unlike soviets in Russia, was a *community* rather than a workers' council. A governmental structure, constitution, laws and policy were endorsed. While Mao was chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet, this did not mean he had taken leadership of the CCP. The Central Committee remained under the control of Wang, Bo and the other Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks, who returned to Shanghai after the congress. Mao stayed on, determined to pursue his revolutionary agenda and further his own ambitions. Delia Davin argues that Ruijin was 'a social laboratory' for the trying out of new ideas.¹²

DID YOU KNOW?

On 18 April 1932, the Jiangxi Soviet declared war on Japan.

MAO'S RED ARMY

Mao's first and most important innovation was the attention he gave the Red Army. He famously declared, 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' While Zhu served as commander-in-chief of operational matters, Mao was chief political commissar. His job was to instil in the army a sense of self-worth, discipline and direction. Mao set about reversing the Chinese aphorism that one should 'not waste good iron making nails, nor good men as soldiers.'¹³ Political instruction was given together with military training. Mao used straightforward, easy to understand language and earthy symbolism that were readily grasped by his troops. With conscription frowned upon, the Red Army was a volunteer force. Captured warlord or Nationalist soldiers were offered the choice of returning home, for which they received some travel money, or, after a period of political training, they could join the Communists. Political commissars served alongside officers to spread party ideology amongst the troops. Officers wore no badges or honours to signify rank. They shared their men's hardships, ate the same food and lived amongst them. Officers were forbidden to beat common soldiers. Large meetings were held after each battle where soldiers could voice their concerns and offer criticism or praise to officers.

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

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

12 Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing), 25. (1997) Delia Davin, *Mao: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24.

13 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 212.

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows:

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

The Eight Points for Attention are as follows:

Speak politely
Pay fairly for what you buy
Return everything you borrow
Pay for anything you damage
Do not hit or swear at people
Do not damage crops
Do not take liberties with women
Do not ill-treat captives.¹⁴

These rules were starkly different from those of other armies. Traditionally, soldiers pillaged, raped, killed and destroyed property – but not Communist soldiers. When not on active duty Red soldiers carried out chores such as cutting firewood for the surrounding communities and assisted with sowing crops.¹⁵ This won them respect. Red Army personnel were often the first point of contact between the party and the people: their political work and conduct were therefore paramount. They were to be a ‘people’s army.’ Power might come from a gun, but the ‘gun is useless if the trigger puller is not the missionary of an appealing cause.’¹⁶

DID YOU KNOW?

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

GUERRILLA TACTICS

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

The enemy advances, we retreat;
The enemy camps, we harass;
The enemy tires, we attack;
The enemy retreats, we pursue.¹⁷

From 1930 onwards Jiang Jieshi made a number of ‘bandit extermination’ campaigns against the Communists at Jiangxi. Abandoning positional warfare, the Red Army successfully resisted and achieved a number of victories against forces of much greater strength. The key tactic was to lure Nationalist troops ‘in deep’ to Communist territory. With an intimate knowledge of the terrain, which allowed for concealment and quick retreat, the Red Army would strike against the enemy’s weakest points. They hit swiftly and hard against troops that they knew they could overwhelm. This demoralised and exhausted the invaders, ultimately leading to their withdrawal.

THE KEY ROLE OF PEASANTS

Successful guerrilla warfare relies on mobility and the support of the local populace. According to Mao, ‘The peasants are the sea; we are the fish. The sea is our habitat.’¹⁸ The Jiangxi peasants provided shelter, food, local knowledge and intelligence on enemy movements to the Red Army. Land reform carried out under the protection of the Communist armed forces strengthened the ties

14 Mao Zedong, ‘On the Re-issue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention,’ in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 256–7.

15 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 123.

16 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 118.

17 Cited in Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China* (North Melbourne: Cassell, 1978), 320.

18 Cited in Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People’s Republic* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 39.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang Jieshi has been better known in the West by his Cantonese name, Chiang Kai-shek. This is because the Nationalists' first base was in Guangzhou (Canton).

between the Soviet government and the people, as did the disciplined conduct of Red soldiers. Mao's land reforms were based on a pragmatic view of social relations in the villages. This was a point of dispute with the Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks. The young heads of the Politburo were 'good at theory and bad at most other things,' Terrill argues.¹⁹ Wang Ming and Bo Gu wanted land reform that would redistribute the holdings of 'rich' landowners to the 'poor.' Mao had followed such a policy at Jinggangshan, but he soon learnt that he had alienated a significant proportion of the local people, including those who were the most successful farmers. At Jiangxi, Mao implemented a more moderate, common-sense approach: the 'fish' shouldn't excessively stir up the 'water.' Mao went to great lengths to ensure that the goodwill and grain production of middle-level peasants were maintained. The most exploitative and brutal of landlords were executed but land was redistributed to all members of the village, including 'rich' peasants, who were allowed to keep more than enough land to support their families. Exploitative rents were abolished and a fixed grain tax of fifteen to twenty per cent was set to ensure the government received adequate supplies of food. While at Jiangxi, Mao was criticised by the Politburo for 'not killing and burning enough.'²⁰

MAO LOSES INFLUENCE

A significant point of ideological dispute between Mao and the CCP Politburo was his insistence that peasants could be a revolutionary class. That Mao welcomed peasant recruits into the party was seen as a heretical departure from the 'correct' path of Marxist proletarian revolution. Even the successful guerrilla tactics of the Zhu–Mao Army were derided as 'roving bandit ideology.' While he could, Mao ignored calls from the Politburo to change his ways. He showed a strong inclination to disobey orders when he thought they were irrelevant to his army and base.²¹ In the end, Mao's obstinacy meant his political fortunes fluctuated at Jiangxi. On a number of occasions, Mao took 'sick leave.' Sometimes he was genuinely ill – such as when he had a particularly nasty case of malaria – but there were times when, as Bo put it, 'diplomatic disorders' and psycho-somatic depression took hold. On 12 October 1932, Mao was replaced by Zhou Enlai as general political commissar of the Red Army. According to Mao, 'From 1931 until 1934 I had no voice at all at the Centre.' In January 1933, the Central Committee moved from Shanghai to Ruijin, reducing Mao's influence further. Bo launched a sweeping campaign to undermine Mao; once the Politburo took up residence in the mountains he had little input into broad policy and military matters. The chairman of the Soviet therefore turned his full attention to civil administration, making a detailed study of the economy and overseeing social policies.



Zhou Enlai.

SOCIAL CHANGE AT JIANGXI

Reforms instituted during the Jiangxi Soviet period included reading classes for soldiers and peasants and campaigns against foot binding, forced marriages and child slavery. Divorce and marriage rights were made equally available to women. Mao said that educating a man means educating an individual, whereas teaching a woman means educating a whole family.²² Opium farming was strongly discouraged (at least according to Communist rhetoric), for the cultivation of cereal crops was essential. A 'People's Bank' with its own currency and a Red

19 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 134.

20 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 223.

21 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, 143

22 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 310

postal service were established. The Jiangxi Soviet came to govern three-million people in a region covering 30 000 square kilometres. Another three-million lived under the smaller soviets that fell under Jiangxi's administration. The onslaught of Jiang's determined anti-Communist campaigns, however, meant that the Jiangxi Soviet lasted only three years. The Soviet had nevertheless provided a framework for Mao and Zhu's future revolutionary work.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

KEY IDEAS

Complete the tasks below in a pair or small group.

- Compose an instruction manual (500–600 words) for Red Army soldiers serving in the Jiangxi Soviet (1931–34). Explain the philosophy underpinning the army, as developed by Mao Zedong and Zhu De. Give soldiers practical advice on how to conduct themselves in warfare and daily life.
- Create a propaganda poster, poem or song explaining the Zhu–Mao Red Army to the public.
- Discuss the key ideas, policies and achievements of the CCP during the Jiangxi Soviet period. Use evidence to support your comments.

ACTIVITY

FEATURE

MAO'S FIRST PURGES: FUTIAN

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

During the Jiangxi period, Mao could be ruthless towards those who got in his way. In October 1930, he instigated a bloody purge of Red Army units whose loyalty was questionable. Local Communist officials and troops of the 20th Corps who had been based in the southern regions of Jiangxi were suspected of holding allegiance to Li Lisan. They had been reluctant to follow Mao's orders. Mao accused the group of harbouring members of a secret Guomindang clique called the Anti-Bolshevik League and of being 'mountaintopists,' meaning they put local concerns and their unit's interests before the greater good of the party. It is claimed that Mao placed 4000 men of the accused unit under arrest and had 1000 of them

executed, including the four founding members of the local party committee. Many of those arrested were horribly tortured to extract a confession: they were hung up by their arms and beaten with bamboo rods; bamboo splinters were rammed under their fingernails; they were burnt with incense sticks; red-hot pokers were pushed up their rear ends; and their hands were nailed to tables.²³ Quite a few soon 'confessed' to being members of the defunct Anti-Bolshevik League!

The purge escalated a few months later. On 8 December, one of the remaining officers of the 20th Corps, Liu Di (Liu Ti) and troops under his command, freed a number of their fellows held in the town of Futian. They retreated across the Gan River to the neighbouring town of Yongyang where they hoped they would be safe. In the

town square they raised banners proclaiming, 'Down with Mao Zedong!'²⁴ They remained an 'independent' group for the next few months, in which time they sent appeals for clemency to the CCP Central Committee. In June 1931, Mao called a meeting of the 'rebel' officers of the 20th Corps. They came – 200 in total – thinking that they would discuss and resolve their differences. As they sat down in the local hall, troops loyal to Mao seized the unwitting officers, disarmed them and took them away for execution. The troublesome garrison and its Party committee was thereby dissolved.

The killing did not end there. The purge spread throughout the Jiangxi Soviet as people denounced each other and Party investigators extracted 'confessions.' In the end, many thousands lost their lives.²⁵ One man who remembered the killings told writer Sun Shuyun,

Madness! It was total madness. Nobody could understand what was going on. Red Army was killing Red Army! Communists were killing Communists! How could there be so

many enemies anyway? If the men of the 20th Corps and the Jiangxi Committee had been bad people, why hadn't they defected to Jiang Jieshi? Nobody dared to tell Mao that. They were too scared. They kept their mouths shut like a grasshopper on a cold day.²⁶

Sun Shuyun argues that the purge may have claimed up to 20 000 people over the course of the year. She believes it seriously undermined the standing of the Communists and 'squandered' their popular support, leading to their eventual abandonment of the Jiangxi Soviet.²⁷ Though there is some debate amongst historians over what happened at Futian, the episode demonstrates Mao's capacity for brutality.²⁸

23 Sun Shuyun, *The Long March* (London: HarperCollins, 2006), 59.

24 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 274–5.

25 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 100.

26 Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, 62.

27 Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, 67.

28 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, 152–3.

THE NATIONALIST DECADE

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

Jiang Jieshi formally set up his Nanjing Nationalist government on 18 April 1927 in the aftermath of the White Terror. In 1928, Jiang announced the 'Organic Law,' which outlined a government structure based on five major bureaus called the *Yuan*:

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

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Jiang Jieshi headed the government as chairman of the State Council. In March 1929, the Third Congress of the Guomindang announced that the party would monopolise power on behalf of the people for a period of 'political tutelage' in line with Sun Yixian's program; the timeframe for its completion was left somewhat vague. Above the government, therefore, sat the Guomindang party apparatus, in which Jiang was a dominant figure, while further influence was exercised by the military. The latter provided bedrock support for Jiang: in 1931 he took the title Generalissimo as a mark of his political pre-eminence and military standing.

The Nationalist unification of China was a major triumph and there was goodwill and hope directed at Jiang's government. It was believed that a united country would be able to renew itself through economic modernisation and campaigns for moral virtue. Yet throughout the Nanjing Decade the Nationalist government was beset with problems and conflicts. Lucien Bianco argues that the 'peace and order were relative, just as the unification achieved in this decade was more apparent than real.'²⁹

REGIONAL AND FINANCIAL PRESSURES

Regionalism remained a potent force during Jiang's reign. On several occasions in the 1930s, militarist governors broke away from Nanjing and ruled their domains independently. Bribery and force were commonplace as Jiang played his allies off against each other and authorised campaigns to subdue rebellious provinces. Jiang was strong enough to suppress any single breakaway region but not strong enough to impose order across the whole nation. The Nanjing government held direct control of only five provinces in the Yangzi region. The others were still governed, with varying degrees of cooperation, by provincial strongmen.³⁰ In these areas the central government had no say in appointments or administration. Lack of strong centralised rule also limited the government's tax income as provincial leaders imposed and pocketed taxes more or less as they wished, leaving indirect taxes and customs revenue as the chief source of income for Nanjing. Jiang's vision for national renewal was therefore limited by regional politics and financial constraints. Despite this, Jack Gray points out that the Nationalist record 'should be judged ... by what took place where its power was sufficient.'³¹ In such places Jiang had many achievements.

MODERNISATION PROGRAMS

The modernisation projects carried out under the Nationalists were significant. Visitors to Nanjing and Shanghai during the 1930s marvelled at the new architecture and vibrant nightlife. William Kirby says that the Nationalists made 'stunning accomplishments from a position of unenviable weakness.'³² Similarly, Jack Gray says, 'there is no doubt that by 1937 in every respect China under the Nanjing government was solving her problems, at least on an experimental scale.'³³

i) Transport and communications

Basic facilities were upgraded by the Nationalist government. Railways were expanded considerably and hundreds of new locomotives and freight wagons were imported. Modern signal systems were installed and well laid-out stations built at major transport hubs. Thousands of kilometres of new roads and bridges were built, and ferry lines between cities on major rivers were introduced. Buses and trams became a common sight in Nanjing, Beiping (Beijing) and Shanghai.³⁴ A Chinese airline was founded. The postal service established many more offices and became more efficient in its deliveries. A network of radio stations was set up and telegraph lines extended, greatly improving communications.

- 29 Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution 1915–1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 25.
- 30 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 198.
- 31 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 242.
- 32 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the China He Lost* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 228.
- 33 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 243.
- 34 Jonathan Spence and Annping Chin, *The Chinese Century* (London, HarperCollins, 1996), 99.



Steam train, Shanghai.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

DID YOU KNOW?

Electric trams took trade away from rickshaw pullers. In October 1929, 25 000 rickshaw men rioted, smashing trams and shelters, pulling up lines and cutting power cables. The army was brought in to end the riot.

Streetcars on Nanjing Road, Shanghai, 1930s.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

35 Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 183.

ii) Industry

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

iii) Finance

T.V. Soong, Jiang's finance minister, reformed the banking and currency sector. Trading centres in Shanghai boomed. Measurements and weights were standardised and an income tax system established.

iv) Chinese sovereignty

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



LIMITATIONS OF JIANG'S GOVERNMENT

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

i) Inflation

Paying off debt and funding the military accounted for eighty per cent of spending.³⁵ Soong resigned in protest at the high level of military expenditure, to be replaced by H.H. Kung (husband of Ailing Soong). Kung dealt with the crisis by printing more banknotes; thus, inflation was a huge concern by the 1940s.

ii) Excessive taxation

Provincial governments, which collected taxes on behalf of Nanjing, were not always prompt in passing on revenue. They also imposed their own 'special taxes' on everyday items, placing a heavy burden on common people. For example, during the 1930s, Gansu (Kansu) peasants paid forty-four different taxes.

DOCUMENT**THE FORTY-FOUR TAXES OF GANSU PROVINCE**

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

There was even a 'happy tax' to raise funds to promote goodwill on the day taxes were due! Some officials collected taxes well in excess of the amounts prescribed, or even several years in advance; in Sichuan province, taxes for 1971 had been collected by 1933. In other provinces, taxes eleven times higher than the official rate were collected between October 1931 and March 1933. These often went into the pockets of local officials rather than the coffers of the Nanjing government. R.H. Tawny, a British researcher who visited China during the Nationalist period, said the common Chinese farmer was like 'a man standing permanently up to his neck in water so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him.'³⁶

iii) Corruption

Corruption and bureaucratic lethargy abounded in city and country areas. Jiang admitted,

I have observed that many of the staff members do not seem to know what they are supposed to do while others do not know how to work at all. That is why our organisation becomes worse and worse. I have often observed that many staff members just sit at their desks and gaze into space, others read newspapers and still others sleep.³⁷

The Control Yuan received 69 500 reports between 1931 and 1937 detailing misdemeanours and poor efforts by GMD officials. From these reports, only 268 officials were found to be at fault and thirteen were sacked.³⁸

SOCIAL CHANGE: THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

Jiang sought to combat corruption and improve the character of the Chinese people through a series of campaigns to improve behaviour. Launched on 19 February 1934, Jiang's New Life movement was an attempt at national moral rejuvenation through discipline and traditional values. Jiang Jieshi was strongly

36 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 207.

37 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 184.

38 Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 240.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

influenced by Confucian thought. He hoped that the virtues of social decency (*li*), honesty (*lian*), right conduct (*yi*) and self-respect (*qi*) would be re-embraced by the Chinese. The social Puritanism³⁹ of Meiling's Christianity, to which Jiang was a convert, was also an influence. A joke from the time quipped, 'There's Methodism in this madness.'⁴⁰ While the Confucianism of Jiang's approach might have seemed outdated, Rana Mitter sees the New Life movement as being driven by modernisation; it aimed to 'create a citizenry that was self-aware, politically conscious, and committed to the nation.'⁴¹ It was meant to give China a sense of moral purpose and an alternative to Communism: Soong Meiling described it as 'a direct attempt to compete with the Chinese platform of economic and social reform, substituting a retreat to Confucius for an advance to Marx.'⁴²

The New Life movement resulted in a series of campaigns to encourage more virtuous, austere behaviour. Ninety-six 'rules' detailed a wide range of 'offences' including: gambling; walking out into the middle of the road; urinating in public; spitting in public; having permed hair (those with naturally curly hair often got into trouble too); wearing tight or 'revealing' clothing (women); smoking; mixed bathing; men and women walking arm in arm in the street; using opium; and extravagant meals. There was also encouragement of personal hygiene and healthy living. People were encouraged to wash their hands regularly, kill pests such as flies and rats, and to get vaccinated against diseases. Jiang Jieshi declared, 'If we are to have a new life ... then we must start by not spitting heedlessly. If we are to restore the nation and gain revenge for our humiliations, then we need not talk about guns and cannon, but must first talk about washing our faces in cold water.'⁴³ Young thugs loyal to the Nationalist regime handed out beatings and intimidated those who fell foul of the ninety-six rules.

The New Life movement achieved very little other than intruding into people's lives. It remained an urban movement and had little or no impact on the peasantry. Calls to live frugally made no sense to people who in many cases spent their lives in abject poverty. W.H. Donald, the Australian adviser to General Zhang Xueliang (Chang Hsueh-liang), told Jiang, 'The rickshaw man and the wharf coolie are worse off than the horse and camel in many another land.'⁴⁴ The hypocrisy of the movement was also shown by the Nationalist leadership. Meiling was a heavy smoker in private, while other leading figures maintained very comfortable and flamboyant lifestyles. One of the greatest ironies was Shanghai's Opium Suppression Bureau – its director was Big Ears Du Yuesheng, the Green Gang boss who helped to finance the government with profits from opium.

JIANG AND FASCISM

Frederick Wakeman describes Jiang's ideology as 'Confucian Fascism.'⁴⁵ By the mid-1930s, Jiang was indeed inspired by the regimes of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, which were based on authoritarian right-wing ideology. Jiang saw himself as the very embodiment of his nation and identified with Hitler and Mussolini's 'Great Leader' principle. It fitted well with his Confucian notion of filial (son-like) devotion to an all-powerful leader. By 1935, Jiang was openly saying, 'Can fascism save China? We answer: yes. Fascism is now what China most needs.'⁴⁶ The Generalissimo saw fascism as 'a stimulant for a declining society,' and 'a wonderful medicine exactly suited to China.'⁴⁷ Jiang even had his own quasi-fascist organisations to affirm his leadership. In 1932, at the Huangpu (Whampoa)

39 Puritanism was based on ideals of moral purity and frugal living.

40 Methodism was influenced by Puritanism.

41 Rana Mitter, *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.

42 Cited in Jonathan Spence and Annping Chin, *The Chinese Century*, 97.

43 Cited in Hannah Pakula, *The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-shek and the Birth of Modern China* (London: Phoenix, 2010), 232.

44 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 249.

45 Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 226.

46 Cited in Patricia Buckley Ebbey, *China: A Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 254.

47 Cited in Pakula, *The Last Empress*, 219.

Military Academy, a secret brotherhood called the Blue Shirts was founded (inspired by the Blackshirts in Italy and Brownshirts in Germany). The Blue Shirts swore an oath to advance Jiang's supreme leadership by any means including violence. They infiltrated the military, police force, banks and bureaucracy. Though Jiang denied their existence it is estimated that there were 14 000 Blue Shirts by 1935.⁴⁸ The Blue Shirts assassinated people deemed to pose a threat to Jiang or who criticised the regime: Communists and their sympathisers were prime targets. One of Jiang's closest associates, Dai Li (Tai Li), coordinated the Blue Shirt assassinations. Dai was the only man allowed to carry a pistol in the Generalissimo's presence. He also headed Jiang's secret police – the Military Bureau of Statistics (*Juntong*). Dai's agents carried out surveillance, gathered intelligence, arrested 'subversive elements' and executed suspected rebels. Thousands of trade unionists, journalists, students and CCP supporters were rounded up by Dai's men. The Nationalists claimed that 24 000 Communists and 155 525 left-wing sympathisers were arrested and 'reformed' between 1927 and 1937. Communist sources claim that during the same ten years, the GMD murdered some 300 000 people.⁴⁹ Despite the Nationalist government's attempts at social progress, Jack Gray points out that it 'nevertheless presented an ugly face to the world.'⁵⁰ In describing life under Jiang's rule, Australian historian C.P. Fitzgerald argues, 'the Chinese people groaned under a regime Fascist in every quality except efficiency.'⁵¹ By contrast, William Kirby questions the use of the fascist label, suggesting it may not be useful to compare Nationalist China with Nazi Germany.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wherever possible, Dai Li employed men from his home district. Their obscure dialect provided a 'code' through which they could discuss secret matters. His real name was Dai Chunfeng. He changed his name to Dai Li (which in Chinese means an assassin's hood) when he began working with Jiang Jieshi at the Huangpu Military Academy. In his youth, Li had been a member of the Green Gang and was a close associate of Big Ears Du.



Jiang Jieshi addresses the Chinese people.

WAR WITH JAPAN

In 1931, Japan began to encroach once more on Chinese territory. Elements in the Japanese military harboured particularly strong aspirations to gain control of the mineral-rich region of Manchuria (Dongbei). That Japan might colonise and exploit the north of China for its own industrial and social needs was seen as justifiable by many leading Japanese politicians. Without approval from the

48 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 309.

49 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 309.

50 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 244.

51 C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China*, (Ringwood: Penguin, 1976), 106.



DID YOU KNOW?

A popular Chinese song in 1931 went, 'Kill the enemy! Kill the enemy! Hurry up and kill the enemy!'

Japanese civilian government, a group of military officers took matters into their own hands to achieve this end in 1931. On 18 September, a bomb went off on the tracks of the South Manchurian Railway near the city of Mukden (now Shenyang). The troops of the Japanese Guandong Army, which guarded nearby stretches of the line, responded to the so-called Manchurian Incident by occupying a number of cities including Mukden. On hearing of the apparent unauthorised invasion, the Japanese prime minister commented, 'The units have already moved, so what can be done?'⁵² In the coming months, most of the officers involved received commendations or promotions.

By the end of the year, Japan controlled all of Manchuria. People in China were furious. Thousands of students took to the streets of Nanjing and Shanghai in protest. There was little Jiang could do – his armed forces were in no position to challenge Japan. He prevented Manchuria's governor, former warlord Young Marshall Zhang Xueliang, from resisting the invasion. Jiang instead appealed to the League of Nations (predecessor to the United Nations), which sent the Lytton Commission to investigate the matter. On 18 February 1932, Japan declared Manchuria's independence from China. A puppet state called Manchukuo ('land of the Manchu') was established with the deposed Qing emperor, Pu Yi, as its formal head of state. A proud Manchurian, Pu Yi was delighted to return and rule his homeland. He soon found he was nothing more than a convenient figurehead for the Japanese. When the Lytton Commission released its report, which criticised Japan's actions, Japan simply left the League of Nations. Japanese military aggression in the north of China continued. In February 1933, the province of Rehol was annexed by Manchukuo, while in 1935 the provinces of Suiyuan, Charar, Shanxi, Shandong and Hebei were designated the North China Autonomous Region under Japanese administration. Hebei, which included the major cities of Beiping and Tianjin, was under Japanese influence too by this time. There were pockets of Chinese resistance, such as in Shanghai, where the Nationalist Nineteenth Route Army fought valiantly to defend the city in 1932. For the most part, though, Jiang's apparent unwillingness to confront Japan brought his government into disrepute, particularly when it became clear that appeasement did nothing to lessen the threat of all-out invasion.

In mid-1937 China found itself embroiled in major conflict with Japan – a prelude to what would become World War II. This would have profound consequences for China. John King Fairbank argues, 'In an era of peace and order the Nanjing Government might have ridden the crest of modernisation, but its fate was determined almost from the first by the menace of Japanese militarism.'⁵³

52 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo*, 203.

53 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 220.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- 'Beneath the [Nationalist government's] veneer of progress lay fundamental problems of social and economic injustices.' (Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 1990, 573). Discuss with reference to urban and rural China.
- 'Some Chinese revered [Jiang] as a flawless national leader; others reviled him as a feudalistic militarist. Some foreigners lauded him as a Christian defender of democracy; others denounced him as an outmoded Confucian and ruthless dictator.' (Lloyd Eastman, *The Nationalist Era in China*, 1991, 15). Which assessment of Jiang Jieshi do you find most convincing, and why?

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Explain the achievements and challenges faced by Jiang Jieshi's government during the Nationalist Decade, and how these added to revolutionary sentiment in China. Use evidence to support your response.

KEY PEOPLE

Under the influence of publishing magnate Henry Luce, *Time* magazine ran a number of special editions on Jiang Jieshi and his government in the 1930s and '40s. These were, on the whole, very favourable. Working in small groups, create your own brief *Time* magazine-style feature on Jiang and his Nationalist government, adopting either a neutral or a critical position.

THE LONG MARCH

Mao Zedong: 'We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history, that is, it is a manifesto, an agitation corps and a seeding machine ... To sum up, the Long March ended with our victory, and the enemy's defeat.'

ENCIRCLEMENT CAMPAIGNS

Throughout the Nationalist Decade, Jiang showed a fierce determination to rid China of the Communists. According to Jiang Jieshi, 'The Japanese are a disease of the skin: they can be cured. The Communists are a disease of the soul: it affects the whole body.'⁵⁴ He believed the Japanese threat, while urgent, would be short-lived, whereas the destabilising influence of the Communists would plague the Nationalist government for a long time to come. National unity, therefore, must take precedence over foreign affairs, as external threats could not be addressed by a divided nation. Beginning in December 1930, a number of Bandit Extermination and Encirclement campaigns were launched against CCP strongholds in the countryside. Yet the Zhu–Mao Army at Jiangxi proved an elusive foe; mobile guerrilla warfare allowed the 30 000 men of the Red Army to repel better-equipped and much larger Nationalist forces on several occasions.

The first campaign involved 100 000 Nationalist troops; the second, in March 1931, involved 200 000; and the third, in July the same year, engaged 300 000. After Bo Gu arrived at Ruijin and Zhou assumed the position of chief military commissar, a policy of holding Soviet territory through positional warfare was adopted. The aim was to 'halt the enemy at the gates.'⁵⁵ Communist military commanders were being advised by Otto Braun, a German Comintern operative, who was also known as Li De (Li Te). Although he could not speak Chinese Braun held considerable influence. Policy at this time was largely determined by a 'three man group' of Bo, Zhou and Braun; their 'halt the enemy at the gates' approach proved effective in resisting Jiang's fourth extermination campaign. The fifth campaign, which began in October 1933, would be very different.

Jiang, too, acquired a German adviser. General Hans von Seeckt was sent by the Nazi government to assist the Nationalist government (following an appeal for help from Jiang). General von Seeckt adopted new tactics. No longer were Nationalist troops sent into Communist territory on find-and-destroy missions. Von Seeckt ordered the construction of concrete blockhouses (small forts) linked by roads and barbed wire, which would encircle Soviet bases and offer cover while

DID YOU KNOW?

Communist accounts of the Long March typically blame Otto Braun for the failure to fend off the Fifth Encirclement Campaign. In 2001, a Chinese television drama showed Braun shouting, ignoring advice and banging tables. Recent scholarship, however, recognises that Communist guerrilla tactics, though successful previously, were ineffective by the time of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign.

⁵⁴ Edwin Moise, *Modern China: A History* (London: Longman, 1994), 84.

⁵⁵ Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 139.



General von Seeckt.

DID YOU KNOW?

Communist soldiers called von Seeckt's dreaded blockhouses 'turtle shells.' In Chinese, this had rude connotations.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao's wife, He Zhizhen, was heavily pregnant when she set out on the Long March. She had to give away her baby girl to a peasant and never saw her again.

more blockhouses were built. Von Seeckt had devised a concrete and steel 'noose' that could be gradually tightened around the enemy. Over one-million men, including some of Jiang's elite units, were brought in for the purpose. Two-hundred aircraft provided support and reconnaissance. The ring of forts deprived Communist-held territories of trade and made mobile warfare difficult. As the Nationalist forces advanced, Seeckt encouraged a scorched-earth policy, whereby farmland that could support the CCP and Red Army was destroyed. Famine subsequently unfolded in some mountain communities and many villages were devastated.⁵⁶

COMMUNIST LOSSES

Thousands of Red soldiers were killed. At the battle of Guangchang on 11–16 April 1934, 4000 were killed and 20 000 wounded. It was the worst defeat inflicted on the Communists in many years. General Peng Dehuai, whose men bore the brunt of the assault, was furious. He yelled at Braun, 'You dogmatists are tactical experts only on maps and paper. Your plan has produced heavy casualties. Do you feel no guilt in your conscience? Do you feel no pain in your heart?'⁵⁷ The strategy was not altered, though, and the losses of men and land escalated. By September, sixty of the seventy Soviet-controlled counties had fallen. The Communist leadership had a stark choice: run or stay and die. It was decided that Ruijin would be abandoned. A soviet had been established 550 kilometres to the west in Hunan by He Long. Amidst great secrecy the Red forces at Jiangxi prepared to leave and join He's base. This destination, though, was not certain.

THE MARCH BEGINS

A small force was left behind to defend the Jiangxi Soviet while 80 000 soldiers and 20 000 CCP support staff prepared to leave. Only thirty-five women, all wives of leading Communists, were allowed to go. Only the party leaders knew of the immediate aim. Although they spoke of a 'big house moving operation,' common soldiers believed they were heading off on a march that might take a few weeks to complete. Instead, from 16 October 1934, the Communists embarked on an epic trek that would become known as the Long March.

The first stage of the journey was relatively easy. Chang and Halliday argue that Jiang allowed the Reds to escape. This was allegedly done under pressure from Stalin – Jiang's son was studying in Moscow – and had the added advantage of allowing troops to be deployed in regions where Nationalist control had previously been limited. There is significant evidence to dispute this view. The process of breaking out of the encirclement was aided by secret agreements between the Communists and southern warlord generals, such as Chen Jitang (Ch'en Chi-t'ang), who ruled over Guangdong to the west of Jiangxi. Chen allowed the Communists safe passage so that Jiang would *not* send in his troops. The Reds were also able to intercept Nationalist radio communications, which helped in avoiding reconnaissance patrols. Jiang didn't even know the

56 Sterling Seagrave, *The Soong Dynasty: The Extraordinary Story of the Richest and Most Powerful Family in Modern China* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985), 290.

57 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March* (London: Pan Books, 1986), 45.



Communists had left Jiangxi for some weeks.⁵⁸ He did not remain ignorant for long. The Communists were a nation on the move: their marching columns were up to eighty kilometres long, weighed down by tons of equipment including printing presses, sewing machines, typewriters, the entire Ruijin library, boxes of government files and an x-ray machine so heavy it required twenty men to carry it. One Red general said the columns were like an emperor's sedan chair.⁵⁹ Only three kilometres were covered on the first day of the march.



THE LONG MARCH

THE BATTLE OF XIANG RIVER

As the Communists moved into Guangxi province, Jiang ordered an offensive to halt them at Xiang River. A pitched battle from 25 November to 3 December

⁵⁸ Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, 70–1.

⁵⁹ Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, 72.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Long March, many Communist leaders were carried in stretchers ('litters'), either because they were wounded or because they had been up all night talking strategy. Wang Jiaxiang, a wounded Politburo member, was impressed with the 'litter talks' he had with Mao as they were both carried along; the talks convinced him that the March was being poorly led.

DID YOU KNOW?

To capture the city of Zunyi, Red soldiers dressed in Nationalist uniforms, approached the gate singing GMD songs and asked to be let in. They then seized the entrance while the rest of the Red Army poured in.

almost brought the Long March to an end. The Communists made it through but suffered horrendous losses, especially amongst non-combatants. The river ran red with blood and bodies piled up on its banks. Many people deserted; only 30 000 were left to continue the journey.⁶⁰ From this point on, 'It was one long battle from beginning to end.'⁶¹ Air attacks and artillery bombardment continued to inflict casualties. Red Army commanders were increasingly displeased after Xiang River. As they marched, Mao made overtures to a number of his leading comrades and fanned the flames of discontent. He made his concerns known to the rest of the leadership at a meeting in Tongdao on 12 December. Mao said the march had been hampered by too much equipment and a predictable route. 'Head On, Straight On' Li De (Braun) had allowed Jiang to set an ambush at Xiang River.⁶² Correctly guessing that the Red Army was heading toward He Long's Hunan Soviet, Jiang had deployed a substantial force to block their way. At Mao's urging, but with no clear direction, the Jiangxi exiles headed south-west into Guizhou province, where provincial troops were reputed to have little fighting spirit. The remaining heavy baggage was tossed aside as the marchers moved as quickly as possible to avoid being detected by Nationalists.

THE ZUNYI CONFERENCE

On 7 January 1935, the Reds captured the city of Zunyi. Twelve days rest was called while the party leadership held a meeting to take stock. The Zunyi Conference of 15–18 January proved a turning point. Mao, in a bid for leadership, poured scathing criticism on Bo Gu and Otto Braun for their handling of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign and the first stages of the march. Bo tried to blame the 'objective conditions' of Nationalist troop supremacy but received little support. The problem was tactics, not numbers, responded Mao.⁶³ Mao was backed by two members of the Politburo, Luo Fu (Lo Fu) and Wang Jiaxiang (Wang Chia-hsiang). Braun later described Mao, Luo and Wang as the 'Central Triad [threesome] of the faction which waged a subversive struggle to take over the Party and Army leadership.'⁶⁴ Generals Peng Dehuai, Zhu De and Liu Bocheng (Liu Po-ch'eng) added powerful voices to the chorus of discontent. They trusted Mao's credentials as a guerrilla strategist and military commissar. Zhou Enlai, sensing change, threw in his lot with Mao, saying Mao had 'been right all the time and we should listen to him.'⁶⁵

MAO'S ASCENDANCY

The only formal changes made at Zunyi were putting Mao in the role of chief adviser to Zhou and promoting him to the Politburo Standing Committee.⁶⁶ Yet the Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks would no longer command the party. Out of contact with Moscow, Braun was similarly sidelined. Although his authority was far from absolute, Mao was in a powerful position; a military commission made up of Mao, Zhou and Wang took control of the march.

Mao brought in a number of changes. Rank-and-file commissars doubled their efforts to keep up morale (spirits). The troops were given explanations of their movements while catchy slogans reinforced the tactics and rules of the Red Army.⁶⁷ Mao coined the slogan 'March North to Fight the Japanese' to give an upbeat, patriotic spin to what had been (and still technically was) a forced retreat. Tactically, traditional strategies were abandoned and the Zhu–Mao Army assumed its old guerrilla ways and even its old name: the First Front Army. Some victories

60 Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March: the True Story behind the Legendary Journey that Made Mao's China* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2006), 83.

61 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943), 189.

62 Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, first volume (Frogmore: Panther Books, 1976), 350–1.

63 Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March*, 122.

64 Otto Braun, *A Comintern Agent in China* (St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1982), 71.

65 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 148.

66 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 321.

67 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 147.



Mao Zedong with Zhou Enlai during the Long March in the north of Shaanxi, c.1935.

finally came their way. At the Battle of Loushan Pass,⁶⁸ two GMD divisions were soundly defeated and 3000 prisoners captured. The next few months were by Mao's own admission his proudest military achievement. Philip Short describes how 'Mao engaged in a dazzling, pyrotechnic display of mobile warfare, criss-crossing Guizhou and Yunnan, that left pursuing armies bemused, confounded Chiang Kai-shek's [Jiang Jieshi's] planners and perplexed even many of his own commanders.'⁶⁹ As they passed through towns and villages large meetings were held to explain the nature of the 'people's army.' Wounded or sick marchers who could no longer continue were left in the care of friendly villagers. They were given money and arms in the hope they might start up guerrilla bands once they recovered. The rules of discipline were reiterated again and again. The conduct of the Red soldiers as they moved through the southern provinces was an important propaganda initiative. Edgar Snow claimed that the Long March was 'the biggest armed propaganda tour in history ... millions of peasants have now seen the Red army and heard it speak, and are no longer afraid of it.'⁷⁰

The Red Army was not kind to all, however. Young men were sometimes 'recruited' by force while landlords and merchants were violently deprived of their property, which was given out to the poor or taken as supplies for the march. On occasion, whole towns were sacked, left deserted and in ruin.⁷¹ More often, though, dire poverty spurred young people to join the Red Army; when asked why they wanted to join up, many replied, 'I have nothing to eat.'⁷²

THE BATTLE OF LUDING BRIDGE

General Liu Bochong: 'We've given plenty of blood and energy to get you, Luding Bridge, but we've got you! We've won out!'

A new destination was eventually decided upon. Mao's First Front Army would make a huge loop through Yunnan that would ultimately lead it north. The plan was to head to Sichuan to meet up with the Fourth Front Army under Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-t'ao), whose force had established a new base after fleeing the E-Yu-Wan Soviet in 1932. As they crossed the Golden Sands River, the Reds encountered a new threat. They were in Lolo territory, home to the fierce Yi tribal

DID YOU KNOW?

The following slogan was issued to the Red Army on 16 February 1935:

We must be prepared to walk on highways and also on small roads.

We must be prepared to travel on a straight line or on a zig zag course.

We must not damage property because we may come that way again.

68 Not to be confused with Lushan.

69 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 323.

70 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 207.

71 Alexander V. Panstov with Steven I. Levine, *Mao: The Real Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 282.

72 Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March*, 193.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2002 two British journalists followed the trail of the Long March. Although they found some distances had been overstated, they were impressed by the stamina of Red soldiers. The journalists said the march to Luding was 'the equivalent of two marathons, back to back. At least half of that was on treacherous mountain paths; a third of that time they marched in the dark. You try it.'

people. The Yi could make the journey north very difficult. General Liu Bochong, however, knew the region well and secured safe passage. Some Yi warriors even joined the march.

To the north lay the raging, treacherous Dadu River. As Nationalist troops closed in, finding a suitable crossing point was critical. When crossing by ferry proved too time-consuming, Mao made a fateful decision. The First Front Army would race to the Luding (Luting) Bridge. A plank and chain-link construction spanning steep cliffs, the Luding Bridge had been the site of the last battle of the Taiping Rebellion. A Taiping army had been cornered and slaughtered by the Qing after they failed to make the crossing. A vanguard unit commanded by Yang Chengwu (Yang Ch'eng-wu) and Wang Kaixiang (Wang K'ai-hsiang) set off on a gruelling three-day forced march to take the bridge before Nationalist reinforcements arrived. Like the Taiping, failure would spell their doom. As they marched during the night, Yang's troops could see the torches of their opponents marching on the opposite bank. At one point they covered 120 kilometres in twenty-four hours.

When Yang and his unit arrived at the bridge on 29 May they found it defended by enemy troops from Sichuan province, who had torn up half the bridge planking, leaving only the chains swaying in the breeze. Yang Chengwu recalled the battle to take the bridge:

DOCUMENT

YANG CHENGWU, ACCOUNT OF LUDING BRIDGE BATTLE

The attack began at four in the afternoon. The regimental commander and I directed it from the west end of the bridge. The buglers of the regiment gathered together to sound the charge, and we opened up with every weapon we had. The blare of the bugles, the firing and the shouts of the men reverberated through the valley. The 22 heroes, led by Commander Liao, crept across on the swaying bridge chains in the teeth of intense enemy fire. Each man carried a tommy-gun or a pistol, a broadsword and 12 hand-grenades. Behind them came the men of the Third Company, each carrying a plank in addition to full battle gear. They fought and laid planks at the same time.

Just as the assault party reached the bridgehead on the opposite side, huge flames sprang into the sky outside the town's west gate. The enemy was trying to throw a fire barrier across our path. The blaze, reddening the sky, licked fiercely around the end of the bridge.

The outcome of the attack hung by a hair ... With the clarion call of the bugles, our assault party swiftly plunged into the flames. Commander Liao's cap caught fire. He threw it away and fought on. The others also dashed through the flames, closely behind Liao ... Our gallant men fought until all their bullets and grenades were spent ... the Third Company came charging to their rescue. Then regimental Commander Wang and I sped across the bridge with our reinforcements and entered the town ... The enemy's dream ended in smoke, for though we followed the same route as Shi Takai [the Taiping general killed by the Qing], history did not repeat itself. Ours was a people's army led by the Communist Party and Chairman Mao.⁷³

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, describe the challenges faced by the Red Army in crossing the Luding Bridge.
2. Explain the importance of the Luding Bridge incident in the wider context of the Long March. In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
3. Evaluate the significance of the Luding Bridge incident for the Chinese Communist Party. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

Four men fell to their deaths, but the bridge was captured. The main body of the First Front Army arrived and crossed a few days later. According to Ross Terrill, ‘Spirit somehow triumphed over matter that afternoon at the Dadu.’⁷⁴ The extraordinary feat of the twenty-two Heroes of Dadu, ‘the most critical single incident of the Long March,’ was first presented to Western readers in a similarly dramatic fashion by journalist Edgar Snow.⁷⁵ Snow gave an influential, and somewhat idealised, account of the March:

Adventure, exploration, discovery, human courage and cowardice, ecstasy and triumph, suffering, sacrifice, and loyalty, and then through it all, like a flame, this undimmed ardour and undying hope and amazing revolutionary optimism of those thousands of youths who would not admit defeat either by man or nature or god or death – all this and more are wrapped up in a history of an Odyssey unequalled in modern times.⁷⁶

Fellow journalist Agnes Smedley backed up Snow’s account after an interview with Zhu De at Yan’an in 1937.

73 Yang Chengwu, ‘Lightning Attack on Luding Bridge,’ in Liu Bochong, *Recalling the Long March* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), 98–100.

74 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 155.

75 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 194, 198–200.

76 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 189.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at *Swiftly taking Luding Bridge* and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe the tone of the source. What atmosphere is conveyed?
2. Compare the source with Yang Chengwu’s account of the Battle of Luding Bridge (see opposite page). To what extent do the two sources agree on what occurred?
3. Using the two sources and your own knowledge, explain why the CCP considered the Battle of Luding Bridge to be a turning point in the Long March.
4. Evaluate the significance for the Chinese Communist Party of the Long March. In your response, refer to the two sources and other views.

ACTIVITY



Swiftly taking Luding Bridge.



DEBATES OVER LUDING BRIDGE

Many accounts given by survivors of the Long March, as well as some by Western journalists such as Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow, were strongly influenced by the official Communist Party line. From this perspective, Luding Bridge proved the indomitable revolutionary spirit of the Red Army. Chairman Mao was right – with the correct attitude, any obstacle could be conquered.



Luding Bridge.

What actually occurred at Luding Bridge has been a point of debate in recent years. The strongest doubters are Jung Chang and Jon Halliday:

This bridge is the centre of the Long March myth created by Mao, who fed it to the journalist Edgar Snow in 1936 ... This is complete invention. There was no battle at the Dadu Bridge. Most probably the legend was constructed because of the site itself: the chain bridge over the roiling river looked a good place for heroic deeds. There were no Nationalist troops at the bridge when the Reds arrived on 29 May ... The numerous Nationalist communications make no mention of any fighting on the bridge or in the town ... Chiang [Jiang] had left the passage open for the Reds.⁷⁷

Eye-witnesses, one of whom Chang and Halliday use to support their view, offer contradictory accounts that can be used to support different viewpoints. Sun Shuyun interviewed Blacksmith Zhu, who recalled that:

Only a squadron was at the other end. It was a rainy day. Their weapons were old and could only fire a few metres. They were no match for the Red Army. When they saw the soldiers coming, they panicked and fled – their officers had long abandoned them. There wasn't really much of a battle. Still I take my hat off to the twenty-two soldiers who crawled on the chains ... Those men were brave. They crossed very quickly.⁷⁸

As he crossed the bridge, Mao's bodyguard exclaimed, 'Chairman, with one squad we could hold a bridge like that indefinitely.'⁷⁹

The troops guarding the Luding Bridge were not disciplined Nationalist soldiers but provincial warlord men. Ed Jocelyn believes there was a fight at Luding but that it wasn't as spectacular as the Communists later made it out to be. Philip Short agrees: 'The reality was only slightly more prosaic [unexciting] than the myth which Snow created. The assault force did not "swing out ... hand over hand"; they crept out crabwise along the chains at each side of the bridge, while a second group laid an improvised floor of planks and branches behind them.'⁸⁰ Harrison Salisbury cites an elderly Nationalist officer who later recalled that the men who defended the bridge had old guns and mouldy cartridges. As Blacksmith Zhu had told Sun Shuyun, their bullets could barely cover the width of the river.⁸¹

CROSSING THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS AND HIGH GRASSLANDS

According to Jonathan Spence, 'The Long March, later presented as a great achievement in Communist history, was a nightmare of death and pain while it was in progress.'⁸² Nowhere was this more evident than in the obstacles confronting the Communists after they left Luding Bridge.

Wearing cotton clothes and straw sandals, the Red Army soldiers dragged themselves across the Great Snowy Mountains. Mao told his bodyguard, 'The snow has confiscated my feet!' Men slipped down deep, icy cliffs and died from exposure. Those who stopped for a rest at the Jiajin summit often did not wake up

⁷⁷ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 158–9.

⁷⁸ Sun Shuyun, *The Long March*, 161.

⁷⁹ Cited in Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March*, 249.

⁸⁰ Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 326.

⁸¹ Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March*, 230.

⁸² Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1999), 83.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Drawing on the accounts of the Battle of Luding Bridge in this chapter, create a table like the one below and fill it in.

WRITER/ HISTORIAN	WHAT HAPPENED AT LUDING BRIDGE	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE	TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE BATTLE A COMMUNIST TRIUMPH? EXPLAIN.
Yang Chengwu			
Edgar Snow			
Chang and Halliday			
Sun Shuyun			
Philip Short			

With the class, discuss which interpretation(s) you find most convincing and why.

again. Making their way into Sichuan, the 10 000 survivors met up with advance units of the Fourth Front Army led by Zhang Guotao. There was much rejoicing at the Red reunion but political rivalry soon emerged between Zhang and Mao. Zhang was a founding member of the CCP and had 40 000 men under his command. He was not ready to let Mao assume leadership of the party. The two men disagreed on where the march should proceed to next. Mao wanted to head north-east and join with a small soviet led by Gao Gang (Kao Kang) in Shaanxi; Zhang favoured western Sichuan. For two weeks the armies rested at the town of Maoergai while a decision was made. In the end, the two forces split. Zhang went west while Mao's forces made their way north. The worst part of the Long March lay before them.

Marching in two columns, the First Front Army entered the High Grasslands in August 1935. It was a horrific experience. The grasslands were one big, deadly swamp; deep, black muck pits swallowed men and horses. Food became critically scarce. The southerners found it difficult to digest the wheat grain and developed stomach problems. There was nowhere dry to rest and no clean water: dysentery and diarrhoea resulted when people were forced to drink from the swamp. After a few days some were so hungry they ate weeds and grew even sicker. Others boiled leather belts and shoes to eat. Some even picked through the faeces of those who had marched ahead in the hope of finding undigested grain.⁸³ Untold numbers lost their lives – the exact number of casualties is difficult to determine. One woman told of a particularly harrowing experience: 'I walked and something squeaked under my foot. I parted the dense weeds and my foot was in a dead man's face. I still dream of it.'⁸⁴ Another recalled, 'Some people got stuck in the mire and just couldn't be saved and so we trod on their shoulders.'⁸⁵ On the edges

DID YOU KNOW?

Before they crossed the Great Snowy Mountains, Communist soldiers were taught the following song:

*The Jiajin Mountain is
very high,
We must pay attention,
Wrap your feet and rub
them well,
Don't take a rest at
the top.*

83 Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March*, 269.

84 Cited in Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, 385.

85 Cited in Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March*, 298.

of the swamp, Tibetan tribes further hampered the marchers. A final battle was fought at Lazikou (Latzu) Pass on 16 September against provincial GMD troops. The Red Army was victorious and its tribulations almost over.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at *Chairman Mao and the First Front Army Crossing the Great Snowy Mountains* and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe how the source conveys a sense of importance about Mao and the Long March.
2. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, outline how the Long March might have been considered a positive experience for the CCP.
3. Explain Mao's role in the Long March. In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
4. Evaluate the significance of the Long March in CCP mythology and ideology. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.



Chairman Mao and the First Front Army Crossing the Great Snowy Mountains.

THE END OF THE LONG MARCH

On 19 October 1935, the First Front Army straggled into the small Shaanxi town of Wuqi Zhen, then the base of Gao Gang's soviet. The end of the Long March was officially proclaimed on 22 October. Of the original 100 000 marchers, only 7000–8000 survived. But survive they did – Jiang Jieshi failed to exterminate the Communist army. Tactically the Long March was a retreat but psychologically it imbued the Communists with a strong sense of purpose. Organisationally it brought Mao to the forefront of leadership.⁸⁶ Edgar Snow famously wrote, '... the Reds finally reached their objective with their nucleus still intact, and their morale and political will evidently as strong as ever.'⁸⁷ In a year they had travelled 12 000 kilometres through eleven provinces, crossed twenty-four rivers and eighteen mountain ranges. Mao said it was a march of 25 000 *li* (one *li* is about half a kilometre).⁸⁸ In December, the soviet base was moved to the town of Yan'an.

86 Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

87 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 207.

88 A *li* takes into account the effort involved in travel, such as going uphill or covering difficult terrain.



From left, Bo Gu, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Mao Zedong in northern Shaanxi after the Long March of the Chinese Red Army, c. 1937.

The remnants of Communist bands soon arrived from other abandoned soviet and bolstered troop numbers to 30 000. The Fourth Front Army failed in its bid to establish a base in Sichuan, and Zhang Guotao's remaining 2000 men made their way to Shaanxi. Zhang's political career never recovered.

Yan'an would be the capital from which Mao would clarify his revolutionary program, rebuild the Red Army and ultimately conquer China. Maurice Meisner describes Mao after the Long March as a latter-day revolutionary Moses: '... the experience ultimately contributed enormously to the perception of himself as a man of destiny who would lead his followers to the completion of their revolutionary mission ... for Mao was the prophet who had led the survivors through the wilderness.'⁸⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

The Long Marchers included a number of Little Red Devils – young boys who served in the Red Army as messengers and buglers.

ACCOUNTS OF THE LONG MARCH

The Long March is the foundation narrative of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which was established in 1949. But like many legends the march is shrouded in controversy. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday claim it is 'one of the biggest myths of the twentieth century.'⁹⁰ Not all historians agree. Although there has certainly been, and continues to be, a good deal of Communist 'spin' attached to the tale, Ed Jocelyn sees the Long March as a 'true story exploited for propaganda purposes.'⁹¹ What the Communists, particularly ordinary soldiers, achieved through the Long March was an extraordinary feat of survival and endurance; it had profound consequences on the party leadership. Its deeper meaning – the moral of the story – was similarly important.

⁸⁹ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: a History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 35.

⁹⁰ Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 134.

⁹¹ Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March*, 251.

In his study of Russia's October Revolution, Frederick Corney examines how revolutionary foundation narratives are a means of constructing cultural identity. The question isn't one of myth versus reality, but an appreciation of 'a story told in the telling.'⁹² Seen in this light, Luding Bridge and the Long March are parts of a story that the Chinese Communists and others identified with and sought to popularise. In their telling of the heroic exploits of the Long March the CCP were saying something about who they thought they were and what they believed in.

ACTIVITY

CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

Write a paragraph on one or more of the topics below. Use evidence to support your response.

- Discuss the extent to which the Long March was a long-term cause of the Chinese Revolution.
- Explain the consequences of the Long March for Jiang and the Nationalists.
- Discuss the significance of the Long March as a foundation narrative for the Chinese Communist Party.

WORKS OF
MAO ZEDONG



DOCUMENT

MAO ZEDONG ON THE LONG MARCH, DECEMBER 1935

We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history ... we encountered untold difficulties and great obstacles on the way, but by keeping our two feet going, we swept across a distance of more than twenty thousand *li* through the length and breadth of eleven provinces. Well, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? No, never. The Long March is ... a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, and that the imperialists and their jackals, Jiang Jieshi and his like, are perfect nonentities. The Long March is also an agitation corps. It declares to approximately two hundred million people of eleven provinces that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation ... The Long March is also a seeding machine, it has sown seeds in eleven provinces which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in the future. To sum up, the Long March ended with victory for us and defeat for the enemy.⁹³

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Mao Zedong's comments on the Long March and complete the tasks below.

1. Analyse Mao's claims that the Long March was a great achievement for the CCP. What evidence does he offer to support this view?
2. Describe two challenges the Red Army overcame during the Long March, according to the source.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain how the Long March served as a 'seeding machine.'
4. Evaluate the extent to which the source provides an accurate assessment of the Long March. What alternative views exist?

92 Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 4.

93 Mao Zedong, 'On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism,' in *Selected Works I* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press), 160.

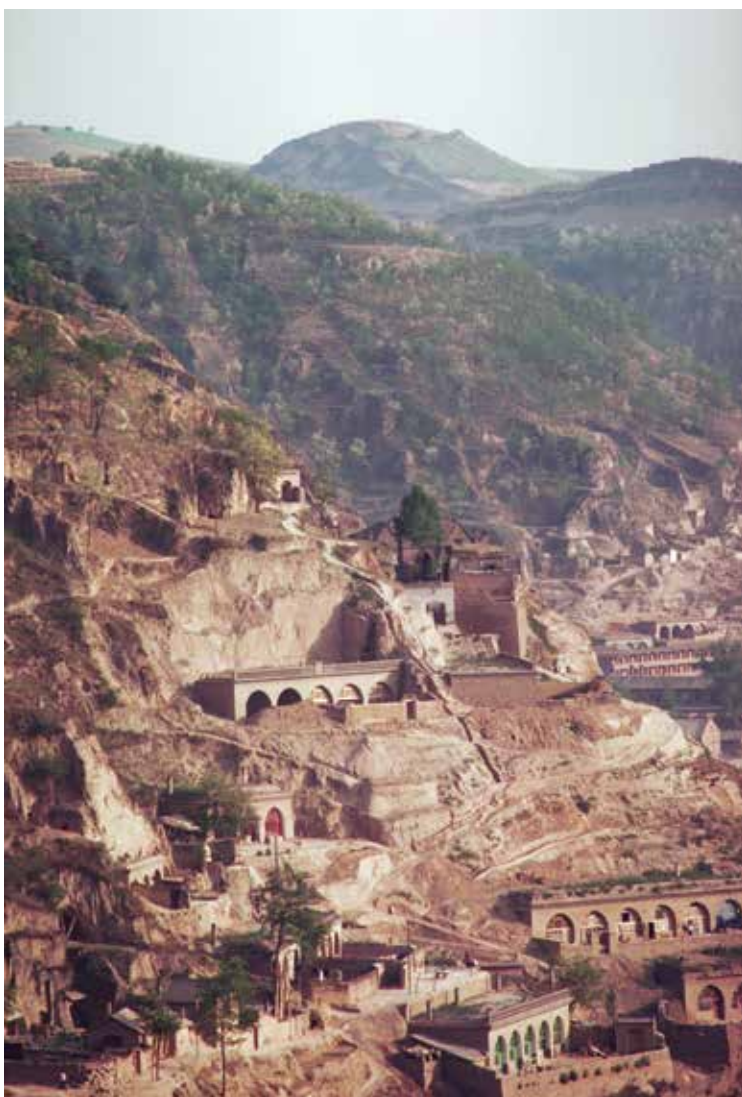
THE YAN'AN WAY

Mao Zedong: 'We Communists are like seeds and the people are like the soil. Wherever we go, we must unite with the people, take root and blossom among them.'

In the midst of war with Japan, Jiang's Nationalist government floundered. Mao's Communist government meanwhile flourished. From its base at Yan'an the Shaan-Gan-Ning Soviet extended its influence by successful guerrilla campaigns and won the support of the local peasantry. Yan'an was a poor area with no industry or major buildings (people lived in caves cut out of rock). Most inhabitants were illiterate and some wore the *queue* plait of the Qing era. Yet in this rural backwater Mao and his comrades built a thriving community. The experience of the Long March and the Yan'an years would reinforce many of the ideals that became fundamental to the Chinese Communists. A revolutionary tradition, dubbed the 'Yan'an Way',⁹⁴ was forged during this era. Mao established himself as a revolutionary theorist and consolidated his grip on the party leadership.

LAND AND TAX REFORMS

Land reform was a significant element in winning over the peasantry. From 1935 to 1937, surplus land was taken from landlords and redistributed to those in need. Poor peasants' associations, under the protection of Red Army troops, carried out the land reform. Cadres (officials or activists) of the CCP gave advice where necessary but it was emphasised that the people themselves must *fanshen*, 'turn over,' the established order. Mao envisaged the fusion of the Communist revolution with an agrarian (agricultural) revolution.⁹⁵ Most landlords were left with enough land to support their families. Once the Second United Front came into being, the Communists moderated their land reform policies. To foster support for the anti-Japanese campaign amongst all social classes, including the wealthy, land was no longer taken outright. Only surplus land left by landlords who had fled the area was redistributed. Interest on loans and mortgages, however, was reduced from eighteen to 1.5 per cent and rents to no more than twenty-five per cent of the harvest. Landlords who invested in local industry or who had a son in the Red Army were given tax bonuses. All peasants were encouraged to form cooperatives to sell their produce.



Buildings and cave dwellings in the hillsides of Yan'an.

94 Mark Selden, *The Yanan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

95 Jean Chesneaux, *Peasant Revolts in China 1840–1949* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), 113.

DID YOU KNOW?

As a youth, Zhu De had travelled to France. There he developed a liking for European-style salads. At Yan'an the Red Army commander-in-chief grew his own lettuces.

DID YOU KNOW?

During one of Edgar Snow's interviews with Mao at Yan'an, the Chairman began searching his own body for lice. Mao liked to flaunt his 'peasant ways' as a contrast to the urbane manners of party intellectuals. Snow was surprised but continued with the interview.

96 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 332.

97 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 277.

98 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 308.

SOCIAL CHANGE

In Yan'an, as at Jiangxi, women's associations were set up to support women with abusive husbands or those too poor to feed their children. Evening schools were established for children and adults. Other basic but clever innovations were employed. For example, soldiers marched with Chinese characters stitched onto their packs so that those behind could memorise them, while ploughing peasants learned characters from signs placed at the end of each furrow. The literacy rate in Yan'an was raised from one per cent in 1936 to fifty per cent by 1943. The local University of Anti-Japanese Resistance attracted left-wing students and intellectuals from across China. Many were growing disillusioned with the Nationalist regime and were attracted to the CCP on account of its ordered government, anti-Japanese sentiment and apparent integrity.

ECONOMIC CHANGE

Building a solid economy in remote Shaanxi was no easy task. Mao popularised the notion that hardship and adversity caused one to become self-sufficient and therefore more confident. Morale at Yan'an was high. Foreign journalists like Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley were struck by the enthusiasm and drive amongst the Communist officials and the discipline of Red Army soldiers. Soldiers not on patrol or training helped peasants to till the land, harvest grain and construct irrigation channels. Land was set aside for Red soldiers serving at the front and was worked either by their family or cooperatively by volunteers from the local peasants' association.⁹⁶ Everyone was involved in growing food and making useful things: matches, wire, tools, batteries, soap, leather goods, clothing and many other items were produced. Most army units managed to produce forty per cent of their own food.⁹⁷ Mao even grew his own tobacco. Although it was kept a secret from visiting Western journalists, opium was grown and sold to Japanese-occupied territories to raise funds. Opium trade provided the greatest source of income for the Yan'an government. It was noted in records as 'soap,' 'foreign trade' and 'special product.'⁹⁸

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the photograph of Mao speaking with peasants and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe the relationship between the CCP and the peasantry. In your response, refer to the source and your own knowledge.
2. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain how Mao adapted Marxist revolutionary ideas to suit Chinese conditions.
3. Analyse the significance of Mao Zedong in shaping the CCP's approach during the Yan'an period. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.



Mao speaking with peasants, Yan'an, 1939.

POLITICAL CHANGE

In the Border Regions, a degree of popular representation was fostered. For example, at Yan'an, local government was based on the principle of 'three thirds': one-third of members were from the CCP, one-third were from other leftist groups and the remaining third could be anyone except Japanese collaborators, landlords, 'local bullies' or right-wing Guomindang. Government had a simple structure: a hierarchy of regional, district and village councils, loosely governed by democratic centralism, were popularly elected at the lowest level. A good deal of independence was given to officials to meet local needs. Intellectuals and bureaucrats were encouraged to do manual labour alongside 'ordinary' people.⁹⁹ Mao hoped to establish the theory and practice of *mass line*: the notion that the Communist Party should learn from the masses and develop programs providing revolutionary leadership. Mass line was essentially leadership 'from the people, to the people.' Cadres needed to work among peasants, listen carefully to their concerns and then find practical solutions to their problems. According to Mao, good revolutionary leaders should, 'Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership – such is the basic method of leadership.'¹⁰⁰

DID YOU KNOW?

Because many people in the Border Regions were illiterate, local elections were sometimes done by colour code. Candidates wore different colours and voters placed corresponding coloured beans into a bowl to indicate their vote.

MAO'S RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

The 1940s were Mao's most creative and productive years in formulating his core ideologies. He spent up to fourteen hours a day reviewing policies and making a systematic study of Marxism. He produced an abundance of seminal revolutionary works in this period. On 1 February 1942, Mao formally launched his *zhengfeng* or Rectification Campaign. The campaign aimed to teach Chinese Communists Mao's own revolutionary ideas and to eliminate the influence of his political opponents.¹⁰¹ The movement emerged from an educational drive in 1939. There was concern that the numerous new party members did not have a sound grasp of Communist ideology or, as Mao put it, 'the correct style of work.'¹⁰² Unity and discipline needed tightening. Mao stressed the need for 'correct revolutionary consciousness' from which would come correct revolutionary action. Views and actions, not simply socio-economic class, were the key factors in determining whether one was a 'revolutionary proletariat.'

By late 1941, this was shaping up as a purge. When Wang Ming of the Returned Students' Clique had come to Yan'an from Moscow in 1937, Mao had been determined to prove himself as a theorist in his own right and to head off any leadership rivalry. Mao might have also felt threatened by the influx of intellectuals into the Soviet. Mao complained, with some exaggeration, that following Wang Ming's arrival 'my authority did not extend beyond my cave.'¹⁰³

The Rectification Campaign followed a set routine. Mao, or one of his allies such as Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-ch'i), would give a lecture to a mass gathering. Afterwards the audience

99 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 48.

100 Mao Zedong, 'Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,' in *Selected Works III* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 120.

101 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, 222.

102 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 336.

103 Cited in Davin, *Mao: A Very Short Introduction*, 35.



Mao Zedong and Zhu De.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao married his fourth wife, Jiang Qing, at Yan'an. His third wife, He Zizhen, was physically weak and mentally fragile after the ordeal of the Long March. Jiang was an attractive and ambitious young woman who had been an actress. The Central Committee reluctantly agreed to the marriage on condition that Jiang had no involvement in politics; her resentment at this had extraordinary consequences later during the Cultural Revolution.

broke into small groups for discussion and 'study' of the ideas presented. The aim was to grasp the 'correct' interpretation. Those who were seen as unreliable were required to stand before denunciation meetings called 'struggle sessions' where they offered self-criticisms and responded to the criticism of their peers. This was followed by intense study of Mao's writings and, for those who needed to 'reform' their thinking, a period of manual labour. Those who resisted could be demoted, imprisoned, expelled from the party or even executed. Mao spoke of unity-criticism-unity bringing a higher level of understanding. The Maoist ideal of 'continuous revolution' further underpinned the Rectification movement: Communists were to struggle against becoming stagnant (inactive) and continuously renew their revolutionary energy.

Particular virtues and habits were also important. Cadres needed to be humble so they could work well amongst the people. As Mao believed in the primacy of human will over material forces – that people mattered – it followed that attitudes mattered. Struggle, sacrifice, selflessness, diligence, ingenuity and courage were celebrated as the Yan'an Way. These Maoist virtues were intrinsic to revolutionary success. They served the Communists through the Long March and went on to bring revolutionary victory in the future.

When explaining policies, ideology and their foundations, Mao pointed out the importance of ideas being grounded in practical application and adjusted to fit current experience. Mao believed that theory and practice went hand-in-hand.



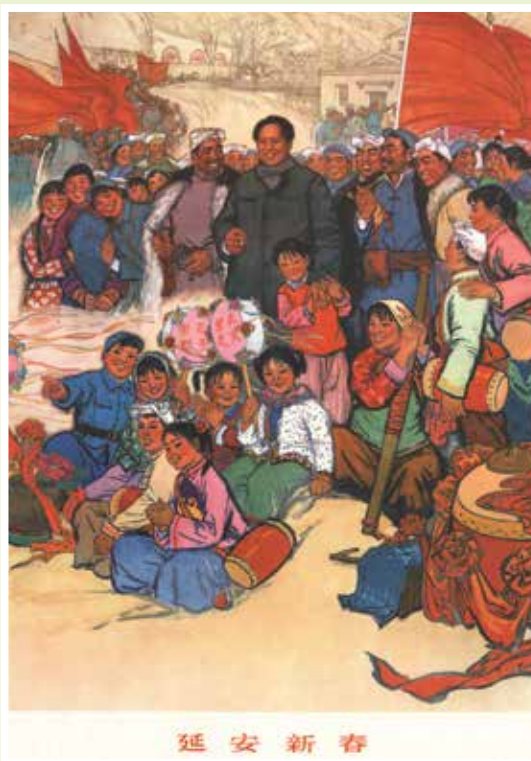
Mao giving a lecture during the Rectification period (Zhengfeng).

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at *New Spring in Yan'an* and complete the tasks below.

1. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, outline how the Yan'an Soviet offered common people positive government.
2. Explain the importance of the Yan'an period in Mao's political career. In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
3. Explain the significance of the Yan'an period in the growth and development of the Chinese Communist Party. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

New Spring in Yan'an,
early 1970s.



ACTIVITY

He said that if you wanted to know the taste of a pear you had to eat one. Mao sneered at Communists he saw as the champions of 'book learning.' He held little regard for those who hung on to the 'dogma' (strict beliefs and doctrines) of orthodox Marxism. In Mao's words, 'dogma is less useful than excrement ... [It] can't fertilize fields ... Of what use [is it]?'¹⁰⁴ As Mao put it, revolutionary socialism needed to be tailored to 'specific, concrete Chinese conditions.'¹⁰⁵ Above all, revolutionary ideas needed to work – 'Marxism-Leninism has no beauty,' he said, 'nor has it any mystical value. It is only extremely useful.'¹⁰⁶

The head of the CCP Propaganda Bureau, Chen Boda (Ch'en Po-ta), was an important figure in the Rectification Campaign. Chen did not deliver speeches – due to a bad stutter and strong Fujian accent – but he was a brilliant writer. He helped Mao refine his essays and rewrote party history in order to emphasise Mao's importance. By 1939 Chen was comparing Mao's importance to that of Confucius.¹⁰⁷ Another close ally was Kang Sheng (K'ang Sheng). Kang was director of the Communist 'social affairs department,' a secret police force. Kang arrested and executed comrades found wanting by the harsh regime of Rectification.



Mao at Yan'an.

GROWTH OF THE CCP

Although life at Yan'an was tough and lacking in material comfort the Shaan-Gan-Ning Soviet grew into a sizeable state. Fifty-million people lived in the Liberated Areas by 1940. Yan'an was governed efficiently, was free of corruption and brought welcome benefits to its people. Peasants showed genuine respect to the Soviet government. The phrase *women de zhengfu* – 'our government' – was

104 Cited in Rius, *Mao For Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 111.

105 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 355.

106 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 194.

107 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong*, 95.

DID YOU KNOW?

The iconic image of Yan'an was a Ming-era pagoda which stood on the top of a hill overlooking the city. The pagoda would become a revolutionary landmark.

108 Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution*, 316.

109 Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 77.

often heard.¹⁰⁸ The Yan'an period saw a considerable increase in Communist Party membership, from 40 000 in 1937 to 800 000 in 1940; there were more than a million members by 1945. At the end of the Civil War in 1949, the Communists had four-and-a-half-million cadres. The Red Army showed similar growth: 92 000 in 1937, 500 000 in 1940, 860 00 in 1945 and four-million troops in 1949. The vast majority of support came from the peasantry – Mao's chosen vanguard class of the revolution – but intellectuals were increasingly attracted. Mao's 1940 work *On New Democracy* outlined a broad policy that embraced all social classes in the united front against Japan. This encouraged educated Chinese and rallied patriots to their cause. The fusion of Communism with nationalism was an ingenious program.

Mao's ideology, fully titled Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, became part of the collective consciousness of the CCP at Yan'an. It provided a cohesive vision and unity of purpose. By 1944, when the Rectification campaign had drawn to a close, the leadership cult and political dominance of Chairman Mao had been well and truly established. Recalling his time in Yan'an, Sidney Rittenberg highlighted his impressions of Zhou Enlai and the charismatic qualities of Mao: 'When I was with Zhou, I felt I was with a real friend, a comrade. With Mao, I felt I was sitting next to history. With Zhou I felt warmth, with Mao, awe.'¹⁰⁹

ACTIVITY

KEY IDEAS

Write an extended response on one or more of the following topics. Use evidence to support your response.

Topics:

- Explain the key elements of Mao Zedong Thought.
- What was revolutionary about the Yan'an Way and the Yan'an Soviet?
- Explain the extent to which Rectification was consistent with the Yan'an Way and Mao Zedong Thought.

THE SECOND UNITED FRONT

Mao Zedong: 'Chiang [Jiang] is stubborn, but fundamentally he is a gangster.'

ZHANG'S TRUCE WITH THE RED ARMY

When the Japanese overran Manchuria in 1931, Nationalist troops under the command of Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang fell back to China. Jiang Jieshi had them garrisoned at the Shaanxi city of Xi'an (Sian). In 1935, Jiang sent orders to Zhang to commence a Sixth Extermination Campaign, this time against the Yan'an Soviet. General Zhang was not pleased with this assignment. He and his men had little interest in fighting Communists – they wanted to resist the Japanese occupiers of their homeland. In the coming months Zhang's troops made only half-hearted skirmishes along the Yan'an Soviet border. Even some 'fake battles' were held to keep up the appearance of hostilities. At the Seventh Comintern Congress of August 1935, a resolution was passed urging all Communist parties to seek

alliances with other leftist groups in resisting anti-Soviet Fascist forces. In the Asian context this meant Japan. The CCP duly made contact with a number of popular resistance groups and Mao made overtures to General Zhang. Communist agitators secretly worked amongst the Manchurian troops, feeding them slogans such as 'Immediate war with Japan; stop fighting the Communists' and 'Chinese must not fight Chinese.'¹¹⁰ When they did exchange fire, Red Army soldiers treated Zhang's wounded and released any officers they captured, having first discussed their hopes for a united anti-Japanese front. By January 1936, Zhang had negotiated a truce with the CCP. Trade between Yan'an and Xi'an was allowed, while liaison officers aided communication between the two armies.¹¹¹ As the year went on a number of declarations were issued by Yan'an urging the Guomindang to drop the civil war and join in a united front. These were to no avail.

THE XI'AN INCIDENT

Jiang's extermination campaign was getting nowhere. On 3 December 1936 the Generalissimo flew into Xi'an to impose order upon his disobedient northern troops and discipline his Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Bandit Extermination (Zhang Xueliang). Zhang was ordered to resume the anti-Communist offensive or be transferred elsewhere. Zhang resolved, however, to change the course of Nationalist policy by forcing a united front upon Jiang. (Ironically, Jiang had already decided to begin resisting Japanese militarism now that the CCP, in his opinion, had been virtually eliminated.)¹¹² At dawn on 12 December a division of General Zhang's troops attacked the luxurious temple where Jiang Jieshi was staying. Jiang fled and hid in a cave in the nearby hills; he was soon found and placed under arrest. He was beside himself with rage. Jiang reminded the arresting soldiers that he was their commander-in-chief. He was given a polite bow and told, 'You are also our prisoner.'¹¹³ Zhang Xueliang sent word of his bold actions to the Communists. Zhou Enlai promptly made his way to Xi'an for talks. The CCP couldn't believe their luck. Their arch-nemesis had unexpectedly fallen into their hands!

Communist leaders discussed what they should do next. Some proposed a public trial of Jiang, followed by imprisonment or execution; others saw merit in a gesture of generosity towards the Nationalists. Zhou Enlai recalled, 'We didn't sleep for a week trying to decide.'¹¹⁴ Much to Mao's disgust, Stalin intervened. The leader of the Soviet Union declared that Jiang's arrest was 'another Japanese plot.' The Chinese Communists were told to 'try to solve the incident peacefully.' Without the CCP's knowledge Stalin had been finalising a treaty agreement with Nationalist China and favoured Jiang as the recognised leader of the nation.

The Nationalist government at Nanjing was meanwhile in a panic. Leading generals were urging airstrikes on Xi'an. Soong Meiling and her adviser, W.H. Donald, who had worked closely with the Young Marshall in the past, hoped for a peaceful outcome and flew to Xi'an. Other GMD figures including Dai Li and T.V. Soong joined them. Talks with Soong, Jiang and Zhou were polite and fruitful. In the end, Jiang was released on the condition that he ended his anti-Communist campaigns and agreed to negotiate terms for a Second United Front. The Generalissimo flew back to Nanjing on 25 December and was welcomed as a patriotic hero. The public expected a new anti-Japanese agreement to emerge soon afterwards. The Communists, too, were seen to have put the interests of the nation before the ambitions of the party. The loser in the affair was Zhang Xueliang. The Young

110 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 563–4.

111 Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 340–1.

112 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 270.

113 Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 168.

114 Cited in Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 271.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jiang fled from his pursuers at Xi'an in such a rush that he left behind his false teeth and shoes. He was arrested in his nightshirt.

DID YOU KNOW?

W.H. Donald was an Australian adviser to the Nationalists known in international circles as 'Donald of China.' He could not speak Chinese and would not eat the local food: 'Never touch the stuff! It ruins my stomach.' A British journalist described Donald as 'a red-faced, serious man with a large, sensible nose.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Zhang Xueliang was taken to Taiwan when the Nationalists fled mainland China in 1949. He remained under house arrest until 1991. Chinese President Jiang Zemin named him 'a hero for eternity.' Zhang died at the age of 100: he said the secret of his long life was getting a good night's sleep and not worrying.

Marshall returned to Nanjing as a sign of goodwill. He was arrested, tried and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. This was later extended to an indefinite sentence of house arrest at Jiang's pleasure.

JAPAN ESCALATES INVASION

It took nine months of formal negotiations to arrange the Second United Front. The agreement was hurried along after Japan launched a full-scale invasion on 7 July 1937. Mao declared that the Red Army, under the command of Zhu De and Peng Dehuai, would head towards Japanese positions on 20 August with or without an agreement with the Nationalists. When the Japanese attacked Shanghai on 13 August, Jiang told one of his assistants to 'Go and tell Zhou Enlai ... They need not wait any more.'¹¹⁵ On 22 September the Second United Front was formally declared. The Yan'an Soviet was made an 'autonomous region' of the Nationalist Republic while the Red Army was redesignated the Eighth Route Army of the Nationalist Armed Forces. Communist generals remained in command but overall strategy was directed by the Guomindang High Command. A second Communist army was approved shortly after. The New Fourth Army was based below the Yangzi River and made up of Jiangxi guerrillas and recent recruits.

ACTIVITIES

KEY EVENTS

Imagine you are a reporter preparing a radio story on the Xi'an Incident in 1936. Record a series of short interviews with key figures in the drama. Suggested interviewees: Jiang Jieshi, Zhang Xueliang, Soong Meiling, Mao Zedong, a Manchurian soldier, Josef Stalin, Zhou Enlai and W.H. Donald.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

In pairs and then as a whole group, discuss the following questions.

1. Why was Jiang arrested at Xi'an in 1936?
2. What changes resulted from the Second United Front?
3. Which party benefited more from the formation of the Second United Front – the CCP or GMD? Explain your answer.

THE SECOND SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Jiang Jieshi: 'All we can do now is to resist to the bitter end.'

On 7 July 1937, a skirmish broke out between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beiping (Beijing). The Japanese claimed that while on military exercise Chinese troops had fired on their men and that a Japanese soldier was missing, presumed captured or killed. Japan demanded the withdrawal of Chinese forces from the area and an apology. Much to their surprise they got neither. The Chinese stood their ground – Jiang sent reinforcements to Beiping. Japan used the Marco Polo Bridge incident as a pretext for launching a full-scale invasion. Troops from Manchukuo moved in to pound the Chinese. Beiping fell on 28 July and Tianjin on 30 July. The Chinese

¹¹⁵ Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 351.

withdrew south as invading forces advanced in strength, sweeping into the Yangzi region and making landings on the coast. The Japanese threw all they had into the offensive. Aircraft were used to great effect. Prince Takamatsu, brother of the Japanese emperor, explained, 'We're really going to smash China so that it will be ten years before it can stand straight again.'¹¹⁶

A second front opened at Shanghai on 12 August. Jiang sent in his best units to defend the city and said it must be held at all costs. Though a fine gesture of patriotic resolve, the order left his commanders with little room to manoeuvre and, ultimately, led to the deaths of some of the Nationalists' best soldiers.¹¹⁷ The civilian population meanwhile suffered terribly from bomb attacks. One of the best-known photographs of the period was taken in the aftermath of one such raid: a lone baby sits screaming on an empty street with smoke and wreckage strewn in the background. On 15 August, the Nanjing government declared a War of Self-Defence. Well aware that his army could not match Japan blow for blow, Jiang and his generals planned to draw the invaders into a long war of attrition. There was little point in trying to defeat such a superior foe.¹¹⁸ Nationalist China would 'trade space for time' and, eventually, outlast the enemy.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the GMD anti-Japanese propaganda poster and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify features of the source that symbolise Nationalist resistance against the Japanese.
2. Outline how the source suggests that Nationalist China was well-prepared for a conflict with Japan.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain the effectiveness of Jiang Jieshi's government in resisting Japanese aggression.
4. Evaluate the significance of Japanese military aggression for Nationalist China. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

A GMD anti-Japanese poster: (clockwise from top right) 'Everybody must hate the enemy, defences must be constructed step-by-step, the enemy must be exterminated, fortifications must be strengthened.' [c. 1937]



ACTIVITY

THE CHINESE RETREAT

The Chinese armed forces fought bravely during the first two months of the war; however, in the face of a large, well-equipped and disciplined Japanese army, retreat was only a matter of time. Retreat soon turned into rout; Shanghai was lost in November 1937 and Nanjing on 13 December. There had been little preparation for a strategic withdrawal in the event of invasion. Wounded soldiers

¹¹⁶ Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 275.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Spence and Anping Chin, *The Chinese Century*, 121.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 263.

DID YOU KNOW?

In December 1938, Wang Jingwei defected to the Japanese. In 1940 he was appointed head of the collaborationist Nationalist government at Nanjing.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1938, Japanese newspapers reported that the last line of Chinese defence at Wuhan were 5000 orang-utans who had been specially trained to throw grenades and operate machine guns.

lay without proper treatment while they waited for transport; an American Red Cross volunteer said their moans sounded like 'the wind in a pine forest.'¹¹⁹ Hundreds of thousands of refugees created further chaos as they congested roads and railway lines. It was a humanitarian tragedy; bombers and fighter planes attacked civilian and military targets alike.

JAPANESE ATROCITIES AT NANJING

In an incident often called the Rape of Nanking (Nanjing), the Japanese Imperial Army killed, according to some estimates, 300 000 civilians in Nanjing. People were reportedly set alight, buried alive, beheaded and machine gunned. Iris Chang described the episode as 'the Forgotten Holocaust of World War II.'¹²⁰ It is estimated that thousands of Chinese women and girls were raped. Significantly, recent scholarship suggests that the atrocities may have been overstated.¹²¹ Nevertheless, throughout their occupation the Japanese inflicted many horrors on the Chinese people. Some Japanese soldiers sent photographs of their exploits at Nanjing to be developed in Shanghai. These images were leaked to the press and shocked the world. Many showed prisoners being used as live targets in bayonet practice.¹²²

Having delivered a considerable blow at Nanjing the Japanese made overtures for a peace settlement, assuming that Jiang would come to terms. The Generalissimo, a staunch patriot, was fixed on a policy of no surrender. He declared, 'Wherever I go is the Government and the centre of resistance. I am the State.'¹²³ The Nationalist government first re-established itself at Wuhan where it resolved to make a stand as it prepared for a transfer to Chongqing, which could be more easily defended. Trenches, bunkers and other defences were built around Wuhan while the Soviet Union provided a welcome 800 planes and pilots. To delay a Japanese advance after

Chinese prisoners are used as live targets in a bayonet drill by their Japanese captors during the Rape of Nanjing.



119 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 280.

120 Cited in James Leibold, 'Picking at the Wound: Nanjing 1937–38,' *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, 15 November 2008.

121 James Leibold, 'Picking At the Wound.'

122 Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 178; James Leibold, 'Picking at the Wound.'

123 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 286.

Nanjing, Jiang ordered the dykes (flood walls) of the Yellow River to be blown up on 7 June. ‘China’s Sorrow’ lived up to its name: crops in three provinces were ruined, eleven cities and 4000 villages were flooded, three- to five-million people were left homeless and became refugees, and an estimated 500 000 people drowned. The flooding kept the Japanese advance bogged down for three months, but ‘Chiang’s [Jiang’s] government had committed one of the grossest acts of violence against its own people.’¹²⁴ The loss of life was a terrible price to pay for a strategic advantage that only delayed the inevitable. After a desperate two-month battle, fought with great courage by the Chinese, Wuhan was lost on 25 December 1938.

JIANG’S NEW CAPITAL AT CHONGQING

The Nationalist government moved to Chongqing in the Sichuan mountains on 20 November 1937. People from across the nation came to the new capital of ‘Free China,’ around 2000 businesses relocated there to escape the Japanese. Dai Li and Big Ears Du worked at smuggling goods into Nationalist territory through Japanese blockades. The invasion had nonetheless deprived the Nationalists of their powerbase in central and coastal China. The main centres of industry and the rail network were lost.¹²⁵ The government suffered from reduced income from customs tariffs (from sixty-seven per cent to 6.3 per cent) and income tax. To meet its costs the Nationalist government began printing more banknotes.¹²⁶ This was a solution in the short term but led to serious consequences later; hyper-inflation wiped out wealth, alienating the upper classes, and affected the livelihoods of ordinary people. Literally cartloads of paper money were needed to buy basic goods. Prices rose on average 237 per cent between 1942 and 1944. Costs increased spectacularly by another 251 per cent from January to August 1945.¹²⁷ The wartime inflation destroyed the economy.¹²⁸

THE INFLATIONARY SPIRAL, 1937-48		
	Notes issued (millions of Chinese \$)	Price index (cost of living)
1937	2,060	100
1938	2,740	176
1939	4,770	323
1940	8,440	724
1941	15,810	1,980
1942	35,100	6,620
1943	75,400	22,800
1944	189,500	75,500
1945	1,031,900	249,100
1946	3,726,100	627,210
1947	33,188,500	10,340,000
1948	374,762,200	287,700,000

Source: Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People’s Republic* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 59.

Purchasing Power of 100 Chinese Dollars

1937: oxen



1939: pig



1941: sack of flour



1943: hen



1945: eggs



1947: piece of coal



1949: sheet of paper



124 Rana Mitter, *China’s War with Japan 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 161.

125 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 86–7.

126 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 243.

127 Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution*, 291.

128 Jonathan Fenby, ‘The Man Who Lost China,’ *BBC History Magazine* (November 2003), 6. Go to www.bbchistorymagazine.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

A small number of American fighter pilots worked as mercenaries for Jiang Jieshi during World War II. Known as the Flying Tigers, they proved very effective. For every enemy plane shot down Jiang promised his Tigers a \$500 bonus.

DID YOU KNOW?

Whereas US President Roosevelt supported Jiang's government, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (below) thought that including China as one of the 'Big Four' allies was a joke.



CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT

The reputation of the Nationalist government was greatly sullied by its conduct during the 1940s. This was not just for economic reasons; the war also made the government's other failings more apparent. Chaos and negligence were noted often in observations of the time.¹²⁹ Corruption amongst government and army officers was rife. Up to thirty per cent of aid from foreign governments was misused, ending up on the black market. When criticism was voiced by students or intellectuals, the secret police made it known that speaking up was dangerous for one's health. Dai Li, Jiang's self-proclaimed 'claws and teeth,' kept up his campaign against subversive (rebellious) groups and individuals at Chongqing. Restrictions on the press and free speech also grew tighter during the war. The peasants in areas under Nationalist jurisdiction suffered under a heavy tax burden that sometimes took between seventy and ninety per cent of their crops.¹³⁰

FOREIGN RELATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

In the initial phase of the Japanese invasion, from 1937 to 1939, substantial territory was lost. After this the Sino-Japanese War settled into a stalemate, with victory on neither side. According to Jiang, he was 'saving the nation by the winding path' by extending and wearing down the enemy. It was true that China's resistance kept one-million Imperial Japanese troops in the field when they could have been deployed elsewhere. Jiang had hoped that eventual victory would come with help from the League of Nations. During one interview Jiang shouted, 'We are fighting the battle of the world. Intervene for Christ's sake!'¹³¹ Hitler had withdrawn his military advisers after forging closer links with Japan. After the United States entered World War II, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Nationalists finally received much-needed supplies, advice and equipment. These were first brought in from Burma but after the road was cut by a Japanese offensive an airlift program was established. The route into Free China was known as 'the hump.' Considered one of 'Big Four' powers of the free world and a valued ally by America's President Roosevelt, Jiang's government was given generous US Lend-Lease aid that did not have to be repaid as long as it was used in the anti-fascist war against Japan and Germany. It was soon apparent that Jiang was stockpiling much of the equipment for future campaigns against the Communists. He likewise held back his best troops.¹³²

JIANG'S MILITARY BLUNDERS

The Generalissimo's chief American adviser was General Joseph Stilwell. He knew China well, was respectful of its customs and spoke Mandarin fluently. He was known as 'Vinegar Joe' for his sour manner. Stilwell was a man who spoke his mind – the reports he sent his superiors on the Guomindang leadership were far from positive. Nationalist generals seemed blatantly to ignore Stilwell's advice. Stilwell found the misuse of military supplies and stockpiling for expected anti-Communist campaigns particularly distasteful. He also disagreed with the policy of pursuing a stalemate; he described the Nationalist war effort after 1938 as 'practically zero.'¹³³ Although there was logic to giving up territory to buy time, it would not bring quick victory. By not actively participating in a war of resistance the Generalissimo was ruining the morale of his soldiers and appearing

129 Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution*, 159.

130 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 99.

131 Cited in Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell*, 173.

132 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 275.

133 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 333.



Generalissimo and Madame Jiang Jieshi meet with General Joseph W. Stilwell, the commander of the China Expeditionary Forces.

DID YOU KNOW?

When General Stilwell believed he would be placed in charge of Nationalist troops in 1944 he wrote the following poem:

*I've waited long for
vengeance
At last I've had my
chance,
I've looked the Peanut
[Jiang] in the eye
And kicked him in the
pants ...
I know I've still to
suffer,
And run a weary race,
But oh! The blessed
pleasure!
I've wrecked the
Peanut's face.*

weak to the people.¹³⁴ Stilwell claimed the Chinese could not 'get the idea of the offensive into their heads.'¹³⁵ He also found the treatment of conscripted (forced) troops appalling – officers beat their men and didn't give them enough supplies. The wounded were inadequately cared for. In late 1937, Chinese journalist Du Zhongyuan wrote, 'what was saddest was that when our side withdrew, a lot of our seriously wounded brothers had nobody to look after them. Some were crawling by the roadside, others shot themselves.'¹³⁶ Conscripts were press-ganged into service, then roped together naked so they could not escape. Up to half of those rounded up for service died from hunger, thirst, exposure or disease before they even reached the military training camps.¹³⁷ Deaths from mistreatment or disease totalled 1.5 million. The draftees were most often very poor and therefore unhealthy to begin with. The wealthy could pay to avoid service. Soldiers' pay was delivered in lump sums to divisional commanders for distribution. Many kept the names of men on their rosters that had died or deserted in order to pocket the remaining pay. A division of 10 000 might have only had 5000–7000 men in actual service.¹³⁸ Stilwell reported, 'The Chinese soldier is excellent material, wasted and betrayed by stupid leadership.'¹³⁹

Jiang knew his commanding officers were incompetent. He once said, 'I have to lie awake at night, thinking what foolish things they may do.'¹⁴⁰ Jiang made matters worse by constantly interfering in the chain of command and issuing orders based on poor intelligence. According to Stilwell, 'Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] is directly responsible for much of the confusion that normally exists in his command.'¹⁴¹ Relations between Stilwell and Jiang became increasingly strained. In 1944 Stilwell passed on an order to Jiang from President Roosevelt, directing him to grant Stilwell operational command of Chinese forces. Jiang responded by demanding that Stilwell be recalled to America on account of irreconcilable differences between the two men. On 29 October Stilwell was replaced by General Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer was more to Jiang's liking but did not secure any change in the Nationalist war effort.

134 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 97.

135 Cited in Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell*, 187.

136 Cited in Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 155.

137 Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 133.

138 Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, 139.

139 Cited in Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell*, 194.

140 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 295.

141 Cited in Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell*, 197.

GMD-CCP FIGHTING RESUMES

In late 1940, the Communist New Fourth Army was ordered by the Nationalist high command to move north of the Yangzi. A deadline for the completion of this order was set at 31 December. By 4 January 1941, the bulk of the Fourth Army troops had moved out of the disputed area, but members of the high command, support staff, nurses, political commissars and a small protection force of 5000 soldiers remained in camp. Without warning, Nationalist troops launched a devastating attack, and all but the commanders, nurses and female cadres were massacred. The surviving high-ranking officers were imprisoned and the women raped. Hearing this news, Mao sent a cabled message to Chongqing: 'Those who play with fire ought to be careful ... the whole people of the whole country will throw you into the gutter.'¹⁴² The Second United Front thereby came to an end. Jiang ordered a blockade of Yan'an and denied foreign military aid to the Communists.

For the most part, the war with Japan advantaged the CCP: the Nationalists bore the brunt of Japanese invasion while the Communists were largely left alone. There was no strategic reason for the invaders to take the remote, dusty regions of Shaanxi. Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan and Guizhou likewise remained free except for the occasional bombing raid or retaliatory attack. The Communists nevertheless took every opportunity to be seen as patriots in the war of national defence; they kept up guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese, disrupted supply and communication lines, picked off stray soldiers, pulled up railway tracks and disarmed isolated battalions.

In late 1940, the Communist Eighth Route Army made an ill-fated venture into large-scale warfare with its Hundred Regiments Offensive. The army lost 22 000 men while the Japanese lost only 4000. The enemy responded with blood-chilling ferocity. Against regions where Communist guerrillas were thought to be operating, General Okamura ordered a 'three alls campaign': burn all, kill all, destroy all. Such devastation only inflamed resentment towards the Japanese and drove poor and embittered peasants into the arms of the Communists.¹⁴³

After the losses of the Hundred Regiments the CCP concentrated on guerrilla fighting and expanding Communist territory and influence. Mao told his comrades, 'Our fixed policy should be seventy percent expansion, twenty percent dealing with the Guomindang, and ten percent resisting Japan.'¹⁴⁴ The keys to expansion were land reform, which resumed after the collapse of the Second United Front, and patriotic appeal. Edwin Moise argues, 'The Party was functioning very much as a nationalist organisation; indeed it was struggling for nationalist goals more vigorously and more competently than the Guomindang.'¹⁴⁵

142 Sterling Seagrave, *The Soong Dynasty*, 373-374.

143 Jean Chesneaux, *Peasant Revolts in China*, 122.

144 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 589.

145 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 91.

146 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 598.

147 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 399.

148 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 201-2.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

In pairs, discuss and take notes on the following:

- Jiang's weaknesses as a political and military leader.
- The significance of Japan to Chinese revolutionary politics.
- Reasons for the collapse of the Second United Front.

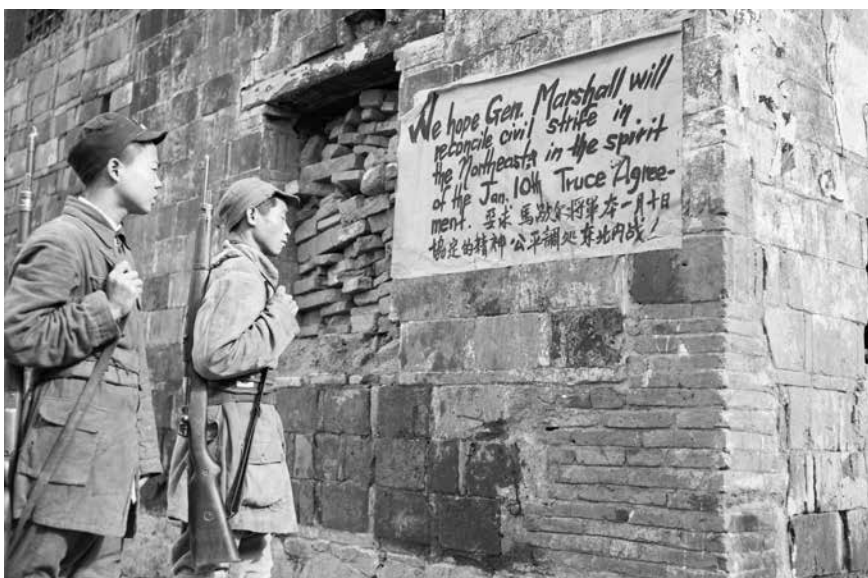
THE DIXIE MISSION

In July 1944, the US sent a number of diplomats and military officers to Yan'an on an inspection tour – the so-called 'Dixie Mission.' The nickname came from a comparison between rebel CCP territory and the 'Dixie' states (southern rebels) in the American Civil War. Joe Stilwell, in particular, wanted an evaluation of the Communists as a force in the war against Japan. A settlement between the Guomindang and Communists was the chief aim of the mission. Headed by Colonel David Barrett, the Dixie Mission was impressed with the organisation, discipline and morale at Yan'an. The mission also produced damning reports comparing the Communists and Nationalists: 'the Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Chiang's [Jiang's] but theirs.'¹⁴⁶ The Guomindang needed to carry out significant reform and improve its governance if it hoped to prove this assessment wrong.

In November a personal emissary from President Roosevelt came to Yan'an – General Patrick Hurley. Hurley, from Oklahoma, was loud, vain and cowboy-like. As he got out of the plane in Yan'an he gave a rousing Native American war cry – 'yahoo!' It was said that he could 'strut sitting down.' Mao thought he was a 'clown.' Hurley's grasp of Chinese politics left a lot to be desired. He believed there was little difference between the basic principles of the main parties and therefore no major obstacle to their reaching agreement. Believing many US State Department agents were pro-Communist, Hurley was determined to support Jiang. The General nevertheless drafted a five-point agreement with Mao for Nationalist–Communist cooperation. When Hurley took the plan to Jiang, the Generalissimo refused to sign and demanded a number of amendments. Hurley's representatives came back to Yan'an to renegotiate but Mao was furious:

General Hurley agreed that the terms were eminently fair ... The Generalissimo has refused these terms ... If the United States wishes to continue to prop up the rotten shell that is Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi], that is her privilege ... We are not like [Jiang Jieshi]. No nation needs to prop us up. We can stand erect and walk on our own feet like free men.¹⁴⁷

In another outburst, Mao yelled, 'Back him as long as you want. But remember one thing. China is whose China? It sure as hell is not [Jiang Jieshi's]; it belongs to the Chinese people. The day is coming when you will not be able to prop him up any longer.'¹⁴⁸ No agreement was forthcoming.



Soldiers reading a sign painted in English and Chinese, urging Sino-American friendship and calling for increased hope that Gen. George C. Marshall will end civil war in north-east China.

DID YOU KNOW?

General Patrick Hurley is said to have called Mao Zedong 'Moose Dung' and Jiang Jieshi 'Mr. Shek.'



General Patrick Hurley.

JAPAN SURRENDERS

Jiang expected the US to launch an assault on China in a bid to secure air bases for an attack on Japan. This never eventuated. On 6 August 1945, the US



IMPRESSIONS OF
GENERAL HURLEY

DID YOU KNOW?

When Mao met with Japanese diplomats in the 1970s, they apologised for the conduct of their armed forces during WWII. Thinking of the trouble Japan had caused his Nationalist enemies, Mao suggested it might be better for him to thank them instead of accept their apology.

DID YOU KNOW?

When the Soviet Union left Manchuria, its armed forces took nearly all of the region's factory equipment with them. This set China's economic development back several years.



General George Marshall.

dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. On 9 August, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The bombs brought the Pacific War to a sudden close – far sooner than most expected. Japan signed an unconditional surrender on 14 August. The war had taken the lives of three-million Chinese soldiers and eighteen-million civilians. Ninety-five-million refugees were created and untold damage was done to Chinese cities and towns. The country desperately needed to recover. Jiang's GMD seemed well placed to return to national government. His armies were three times bigger than those of the Communists and were equipped with American weapons and vehicles. Although the CCP controlled more territory, the US preferred the Guomindang to handle the surrender of Japanese forces. The US also airlifted Nationalist forces into major cities in central China while American Marines secured the coastal ports until Jiang's men arrived. The fate of the nation, however, was still to be decided.

THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR

Mao Zedong: 'China is whose China? It sure as hell is not [Jiang Jieshi's].'

From August to October 1945, General Hurley tried to broker a peace agreement with the Communists and Nationalists. Mao and Zhou flew to Chongqing for talks. The negotiations made little headway, while a race for territory and Japanese arms was underway in the background, particularly in the north. On 8 August the Soviet Union had sent troops to Manchuria and had begun disarming the Japanese. The CCP had likewise moved rapidly into the region and, with the cooperation of their Communist allies, had also accepted the surrender of Japanese forces, thereby gaining much-valued armaments.¹⁴⁹ This went against an agreement made between the major powers at Yalta in early 1945 and greatly alarmed Jiang Jieshi. He asked the Russians to remain in Manchuria until such time that he could send in troops. Nationalist forces were subsequently airlifted by the Americans into major Manchurian cities. The Communists, under General Lin Biao (Lin Piao), fell back to the countryside. A master of guerrilla warfare, Lin said it was no cause for alarm. His men would consolidate their support in rural areas, surround the cities and 'sit them to death.'¹⁵⁰

In late 1945, US President Harry Truman sent General George Marshall to China as his special ambassador. Marshall brought the Nationalists and Communists together for further talks. He hoped to avoid civil war through the formation of a coalition government. A ceasefire was signed on 10 January 1946. This only gave the Communists breathing space to strengthen their hold in the Manchurian countryside. By May the two sides were again at war.

LAND AND MEN

From their position of strength, both in numbers and equipment, the Nationalists appeared to make many military gains in the first phase of the civil war. They charged through northern China and Manchuria, taking major cities and railways. Even Yan'an was lost in March 1947. Mao, apparently unmoved, explained, 'We will give [Jiang] Yan'an. He will give us China.'¹⁵¹ Keeping towns for their own sake, even revolutionary landmarks such as Yan'an, was seen as unwise. According

149 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong*, 103–4.

150 Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China*, 351.

151 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: a Life*, 407.

to Mao, 'It is after all only caves. Empty cities don't matter. The aim is to destroy the enemy's army.'¹⁵² The Red Army retreated from its positions in an orderly manner, reverted to guerrilla tactics and focused on wearing down Nationalist forces. A song reminded Communist troops of their objectives: 'Keep men, lose land, land can be taken again; Keep land, lose men, land and men both lost.'¹⁵³

It appeared that keeping land and losing men was the Nationalists' speciality. Jiang's army was soon overstretched. Troops were unsure of their fighting prowess after long periods of sitting around in towns and cities; however, those that ventured into the countryside faced the terrifying prospect of an army that refused to fight openly but struck when least expected. Mao used himself as bait to lure Nationalist forces into pursuit and ambush. Speaking of the Nationalist commander who took Yan'an, Mao said, '[Hu Zongnan] came in like a fist. We forced him to open like a hand; now we are cutting off the fingers one by one.'¹⁵⁴

On 1 May 1946, the Communist forces were officially renamed the People's Liberation Army (PLA). It was a fitting title. The difference between the Nationalist and Communist troops was striking: Lucien Bianco argues that almost 'every major area of the Nationalist military weakness was an area of Red Army strength.'¹⁵⁵ The Reds were highly mobile whereas the Nationalists were stuck in towns. The bravery and discipline of Communist soldiers led Helen Snow (wife of Edgar) to describe them as 'Prince Valiants in straw sandals.' Many small victories in the guerrilla campaign reinforced Communist confidence. 'Conscription, a tragedy in the government controlled areas,' Bianco relates, 'was an honour in Liberated Areas.'¹⁵⁶

PEASANTS

Peasants joined the Communist cause largely because of land reform, which became more radical and violent during the civil war. In 1947, the new Land Law took away all rights of landlords, empowering peasant associations to redistribute land. In fury, many peasants struck out at landlords – symbols of the old order – and joined the 'people's war' against Jiang.¹⁵⁷ Rural people supplied the PLA with food, shelter, intelligence and recruits. Jiang's predicament was well illustrated when Manchurian peasants removed railway tracks and left Nationalist troops in charge of empty stations.



Mao Zedong on horseback before a battle in 1947.



THE CHINESE
CIVIL WAR

152 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 206.

153 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 208.

154 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao*, 208.

155 Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution*, 184.

156 Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution*, 185.

157 Jean Chesneaux, *Peasant Revolts in China*, 147–8.

THE NATIONALISTS SURRENDER

In many ways the Nationalists had already lost the fight even before the war had begun. The morale of Jiang's troops was low after a long period of half-hearted resistance to the Japanese. Nationalist troops were dejected by the 'Three Don't Cares: 1. Don't care to fight; 2. Don't care about the people; 3. Don't care about myself.'¹⁵⁸ According to journalist Jack Belden, 'Throughout the Japanese war and the civil war that followed, this army was continuously beaten because it had no soul.'¹⁵⁹ Corruption had not only reduced the quality of military personnel, it affected the whole government system. The Nationalists seemed hopelessly incapable of dealing with crippling inflation. Middle class Chinese who had supported the government for many years began to desert it.

In April and May 1947, the People's Liberation Army under Lin Biao and Liu Bocheng launched a series of spectacular offensives. Their forces were strengthened with arms abandoned by retreating Nationalists. After the civil war, Mao liked to quip that Jiang Jieshi was his 'supply officer.' By 1948, guerrilla fighting was no longer required. The PLA surrounded cities and towns that could no longer be reinforced or provisioned. Nationalist troops surrendered *en masse*. Entire divisions gave themselves up. After one battle, 327 000 prisoners were taken. Many chose to join the Communists; those that didn't were allowed to go home, their travel costs paid. On 31 January 1949, the triumphant troops of the PLA marched into Beiping. Many rode on American-made tanks and jeeps captured from the Nationalists. Residents in many cities were surprised to find

158 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 335.

159 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 338.



The People's Liberation Army marching into Beiping, 1949.

that PLA troops insisted on paying for goods and treated civilians well. On 21 January, Jiang resigned as president and fled to Taiwan. He left his vice-president, Li Zongren (Li Tsung-jen), to negotiate peace talks with the Communists. When Li refused to accept the terms of unconditional surrender, the Communist offensive resumed, sweeping south of the Yangzi. Nanjing, again the Nationalist capital after World War II, was captured on 23 April. In the following months, PLA forces took control of all but China’s most remote regions. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong addressed a jubilant crowd in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, proclaiming the foundation of the People’s Republic of China.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Jiang Jieshi left for Taiwan, he took all of China’s gold reserves and crates of priceless antiques from the Imperial Forbidden City.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Individually or in a pair, draw up a comparative table like the one below and fill it in.

THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR, 1946–1949

	COMMUNIST PARTY	NATIONALISTS
Objectives		
<i>Political</i>		
<i>Military</i>		
<i>Social</i>		
<i>Economic</i>		
Leadership		
<i>Effectiveness of propaganda / rhetoric</i>		
<i>Military competence</i>		
Sources of support		
<i>Urban</i>		
<i>Rural</i>		
<i>International</i>		
Overall success		

ACTIVITY

 RANA MITTER ON MAO’S SUCCESS

CONCLUSION

The Communists *won* and the Nationalists *lost* the Chinese Civil War. This was more than a military affair: it was a fundamental conflict between the support bases, social and economic policies, leadership and vision of the two parties. In a 1944 report, General Stilwell wrote,

I judge the Guomindang and Communist Party by what I saw: GMD – Corruption, neglect, chaos, economy, taxes, words and deeds. Hoarding, black market, trading with the enemy. Communist program [aimed to] reduce taxes, rents, interests. Raise production and standard of living. Participate in government. Practice what they preach.¹⁶⁰

Other people made similar observations towards the end of the civil war. In 1948, Major General David Barr wrote to Washington,

... the military debacle in my opinion can all be attributed to the world's worst leadership and many other morale-destroying factors that led to a complete loss of will to fight. There is complete ineptness of high military leaders, widespread corruption and dishonesty throughout the armed forces.¹⁶¹

Perhaps the most telling indictment of Jiang Jieshi's regime was that the CCP, in its own way, followed more faithfully Sun Yixian's Three Principles of 'nationalism,' 'democracy' and 'people's livelihood' than the Nationalists ever

did. Jiang had done his best to bring unity to the Middle Kingdom. His Northern Expedition brought about a modern government. His rule was, however, mired by a lack of national unity, embezzlement and a determination to destroy the Communists. In the end, even his most forceful Bandit Extermination campaign – that which led to the Long March – was turned into an advantage by the CCP.

More than anything, Nationalist China was doomed by the Sino-Japanese War. A horrible experience for many Chinese, it was a blessing in disguise for the Communists, bringing them back from the brink of disaster. From this conflict they emerged triumphant, even when, in 1945, Jiang appeared to have the upper hand. The Communist victory of October 1949 marked the beginning of a dramatic new era – the People's Republic of China. For Mao, it was merely the beginning of the Communist revolution: 'We have just taken the first step on our Long March. It is the beginning, not the end. To build a new socialist state will involve a hard struggle, too.'¹⁶²

160 Cited in Michael Lynch, *China: From Empire to People's Republic*, 58.

161 Cited in Terry Buggy, *The Long Revolution*, 355.

162 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1992), 51.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Select three primary sources from this chapter that offer contrasting perspectives on the actions or beliefs of the Chinese Communist Party and/or its key people between 1927 and 1949. Then complete the tasks below.

1. Summarise what each source communicates about the Chinese Communists.
2. Compare and contrast the perspectives offered in your three chosen sources.
3. According to the sources, what were the key challenges and successes of the Chinese Communists between 1927 and 1949? In your answer, refer to two or more historical interpretations.

KEY IDEAS

Write a sentence explaining each of the following aspects of Mao's revolutionary program:

- Peasant-based revolution
- Mass line
- The Yan'an Way
- Correct revolutionary consciousness
- Continuous revolution
- The Red Army
- Guerrilla warfare.

KEY EVENTS

Working in pairs, write and perform a three-minute dialogue about the period 1927–49 in China. Your dialogue will feature figures of the day discussing an important event or period.

Choose one of the following pairs for your dialogue:

- Mao Zedong and Zhu De (Yan'an period)
- General Joe Stilwell and Jiang Jieshi (c. 1944)
- Jiang Jieshi and Soong Meiling (c. 1950, after Civil War)
- Jiang Jieshi and Big Ears Du Yuesheng (Shanghai Massacre)
- Zhou Enlai, Zhang Xueliang and Jiang Jieshi
- (Xi'an Incident, December 1936)
- Mao Zedong and Otto Braun (Zunyi Conference, January 1935)
- Two peasant farmers, one living under Communist rule, the other under GMD rule
- A Long March veteran PLA soldier and a Nationalist Army conscript (c. 1948).

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- 'Without a People's Army the people have nothing.' How did Mao and the CCP make use of the Red Army to mobilise the peasantry into revolutionary action?
- 'The Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Jiang Jieshi's but theirs.' What were the reasons for the success of the CCP and the failure of the GMD by 1949?
- 'All we can do now is resist to the bitter end.' To what extent did the Second Sino-Japanese War cause the downfall of Nationalist China?
- 'We Communists are like seeds and the people are like the soil.' How did the revolutionary practices established during the Yan'an Soviet era lay the foundation for the Communist victory of 1949?
- 'To sum up, the Long March ended with victory for us and defeat for the enemy.' Why was the Long March a significant experience for the Chinese Communist Party?
- 'The Chinese people groaned under a regime fascist in every quality except efficiency.' What were the successes and limitations of the Nationalist Decade?

FURTHER READING

Jack Belden. *China Shakes the World*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.

An influential journalist's assessment of China during the Sino-Japanese conflict and Civil War. Belden's comparative analysis of Communist and Nationalist policies is insightful.

Delia Davin. *Mao: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

A short biography that gives recognition to the complexities and contradictions of Mao's character. A good read for students.

Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen. *The Long March: The True Story behind the Legendary Journey that Made Mao's China*. London: Constable & Robinson, 2006.

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Rana Mitter. *China's War with Japan 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival*. London: Penguin Books, 2013.

A moving analysis of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Gives insight into the experiences of ordinary people and China's wartime leaders.

Hannah Pakula. *The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-shek and the Birth of Modern China*. London: Phoenix, 2010.

A thorough and engaging biography of Soong Meiling. Useful for its insights into Jiang Jieshi's public and private life.

Alexander V. Panstov with Steven I. Levine. *Mao: The Real Story*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013.

A thorough and balanced biography, drawing on recently obtained documents from Soviet archives.

Harrison Salisbury. *The Long March*. London: Pan Books, 1986.

A lively account of the Long March by an American journalist. Salisbury

gathered interviews with participants in the March and travelled part of the route himself.

Sun Shuyun. *The Long March*. London: HarperCollins, 2006.

Sun's account of the Long March, which is based on many new interviews with survivors, gives great insight into this important period in CCP history.

Edgar Snow. *Red Star Over China*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1943.

Snow's classic account of the early years of the Chinese Communist movement was based on interviews he conducted during the Yan'an era.

Ross Terrill. *Mao: A Biography*. Ringwood: Hale & Iremonger, 1995.

An updated edition of this classic biography by an Australian historian. Terrill employs wit and lively anecdotes to relate the story of the Chairman's life.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

SECTION

B

How did the consequences of revolution shape the new order?

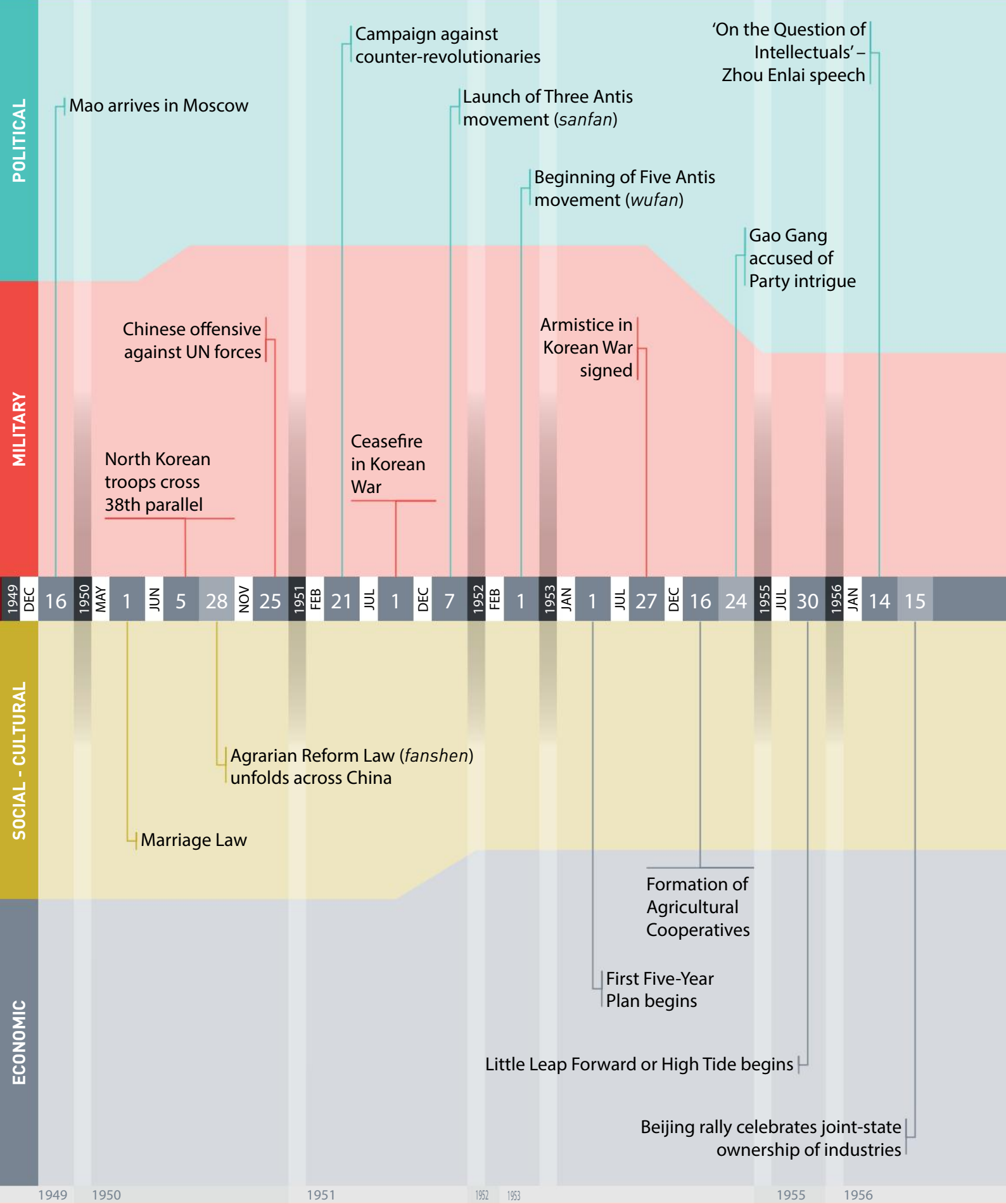
How did the new regime consolidate its power?

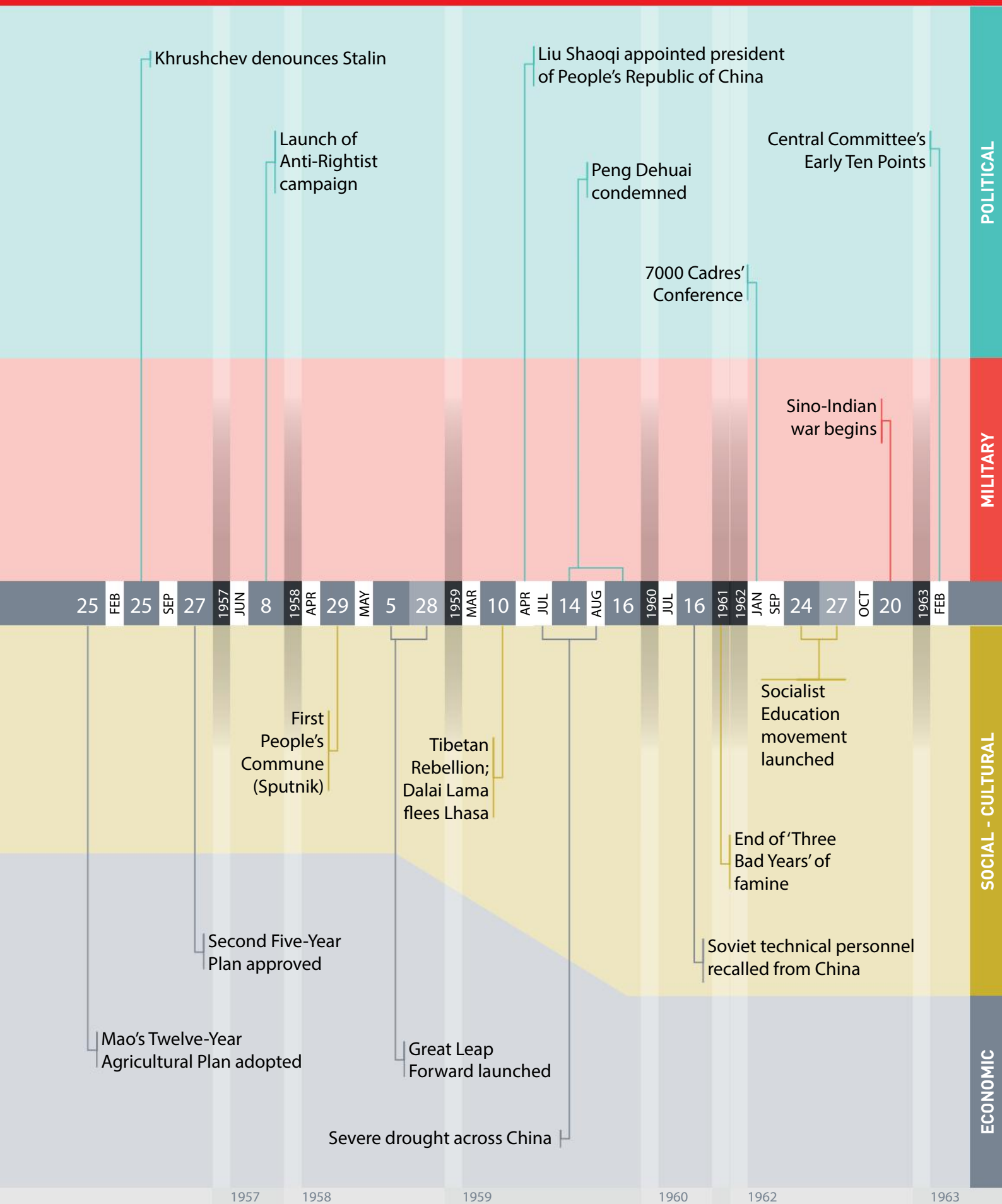
How did the revolution affect those who experienced it?

To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved?

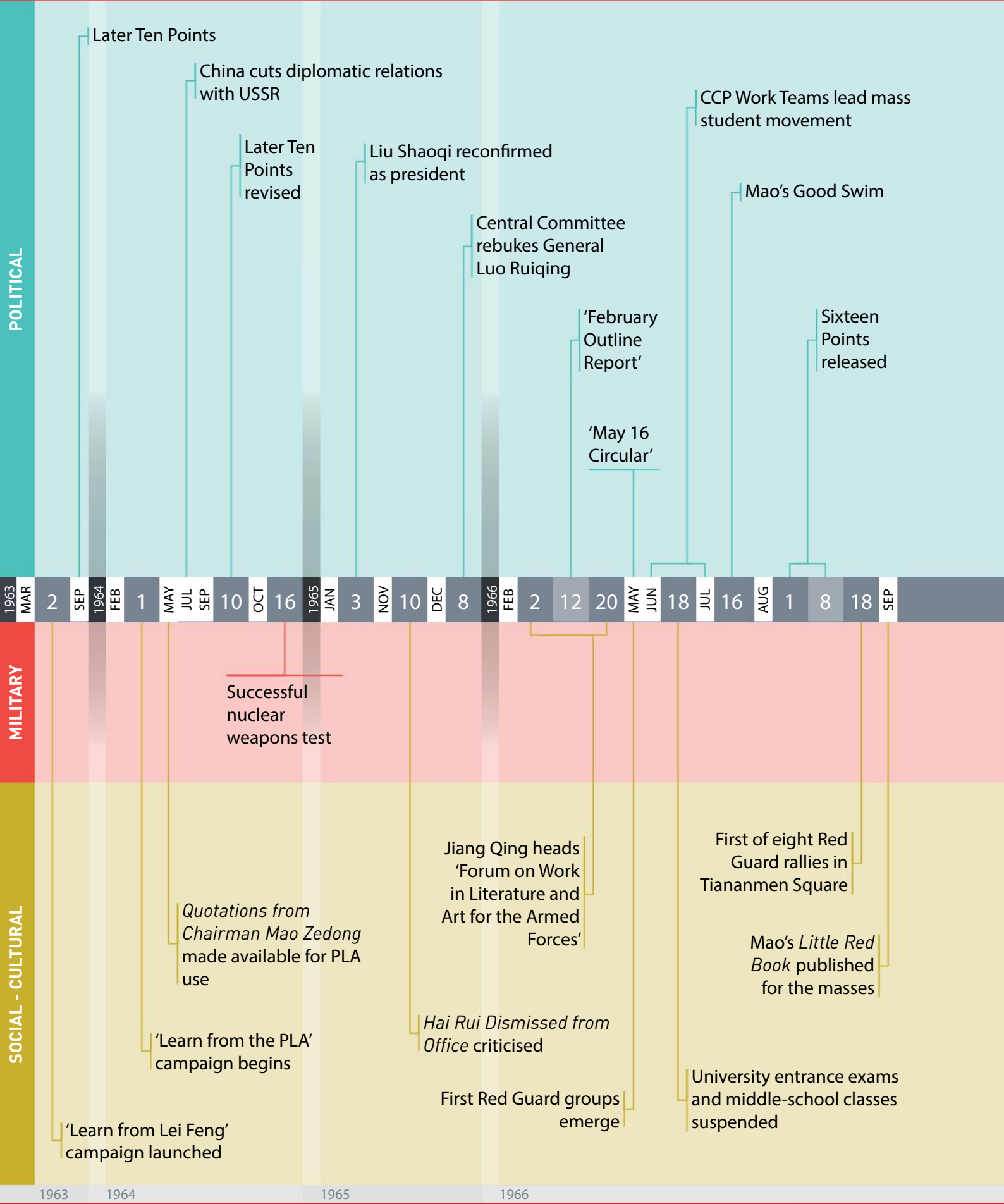
October 1949–1971

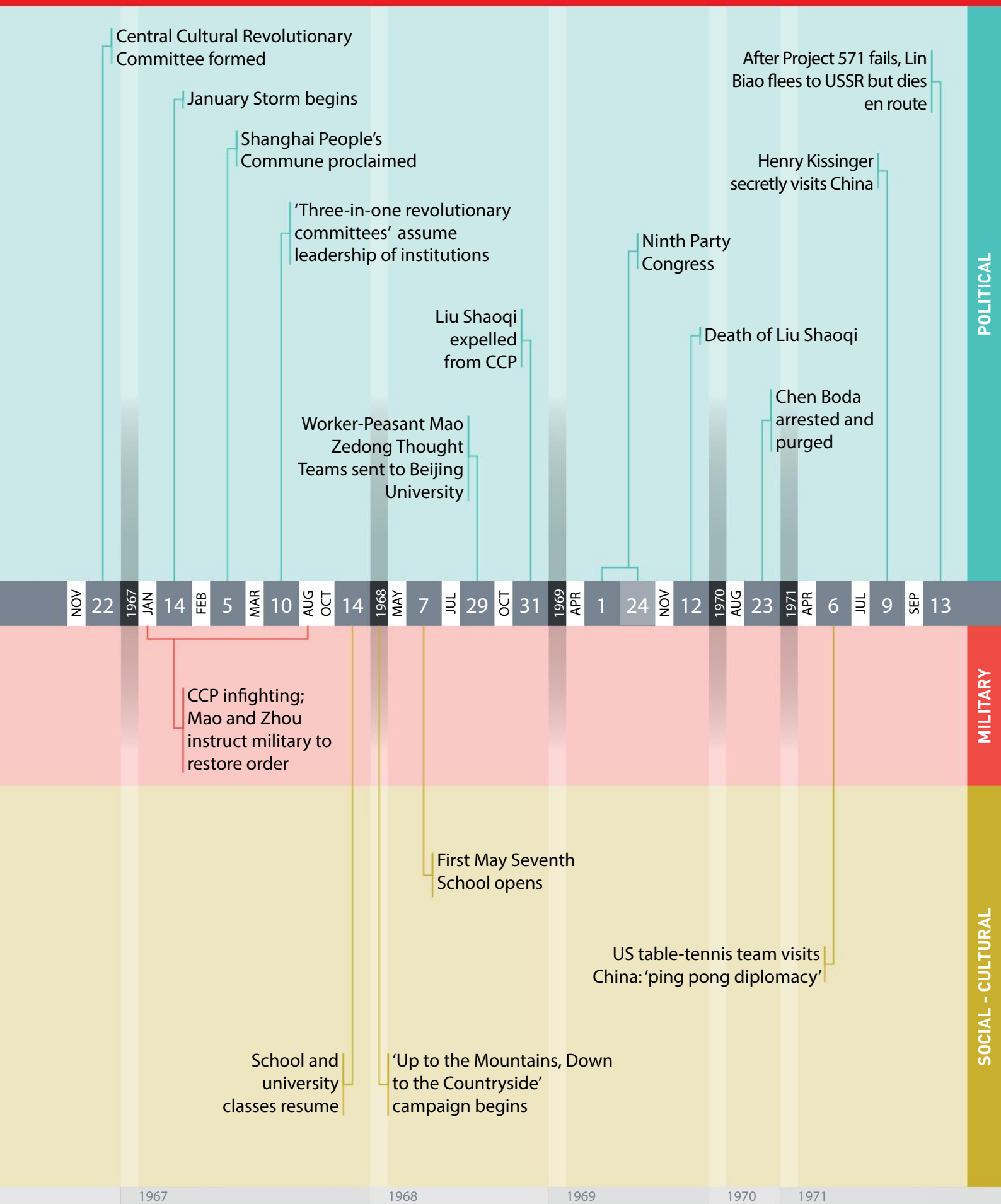
SECTION B TIMELINE





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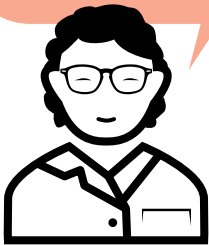




CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

POLITICAL	MILITARY	SOCIAL-CULTURAL	ECONOMIC
Centralisation With the founding of the PRC, China became a centralised, hierarchical system dominated by the Communist Party.	People's Liberation Army The People's Liberation Army (PLA) played a key role in consolidating power in the early years of Communist rule.	Mass campaigns <i>Fanshen</i> saw denunciation of landlords ('speak bitterness') and admissions of immorality ('speak frankness'). Cleanliness drives improved sanitation.	National capitalists Pragmatic policies designed to stabilise the economy were initially pursued by the CCP, with 'national capitalists' urged to continue managing businesses.
International isolation Isolated from the West following the Korean War, the People's Republic established close ties with the USSR in the 1950s.	Outlying regions Outlying regions of the People's Republic, such as Xinjiang and Tibet, were brought under central rule by the PLA in the 1950s.	Starvation 30-40 million people starved to death in the 'Three Bad Years' of famine following the Great Leap Forward.	Land reform The Agrarian Reform Law (1950) (<i>fanshen</i>) gave peasants the right to redistribute land; this intensified during the Korean War.
Mao's purges The first major purge within the CCP came in 1953-54 with the Gao Gang affair. Peng Dehuai was purged after the Lushan Plenum (1959). The fall of Lin Biao (1971) caused confusion and disillusionment.	Korean War In 1950, China was drawn into the Korean War in support of North Korea against US-led UN forces. The Chinese military fought to a standstill at the 38th parallel.	Civic virtues The Socialist Education movement encouraged virtue through the Learn from the PLA and Learn from Lei Feng campaigns.	Five-Year Plan Inspired by the USSR, China adopted a Five-Year Plan (1953-57) focusing on heavy industry. Agriculture was collectivised in stages from Mutual Aid Teams to Higher Cooperatives.
Hundred Flowers Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1957, encouraging intellectuals to criticise the party. Mao was surprised by the fierceness of the criticism that emerged, and launched the Anti-Rightist campaign.	International conflicts In the 1950s, China had territorial disputes with India and tensions in the Taiwan Strait. After the Sino-Soviet split, the PRC and USSR had periodic border clashes. China built shelters and moved industries inland in fear of nuclear war.	Women's rights The Marriage Law of 1950 gave women the same legal rights as men and banned arranged marriages, child marriages and polygamy. Sun Yixian's widow, Soong Qingling, and others in the Women's Federation, advocated for women's rights.	High Tide Industry was nationalised and agriculture further collectivised in rapid fashion during the High Tide of 1955.
Sino-Soviet split From 1956-64, relations between the PRC and USSR deteriorated, with accusations of 'revisionism' and mutual criticism.	US rapprochement The international standing and security of the People's Republic improved significantly following the normalising of relations between China and the US in 1971-72. The PRC gained a seat on the UN Security Council.	Health 'Barefoot doctors' assisted in providing basic medical attention to the villages. Mass inoculations increased life expectancy.	Great Leap Forward The Great Leap Forward (1958-61) introduced People's Communes, Work Teams, backyard steel smelters and bizarre experiments with farming. The GLF led to widespread famine.
Cultural Revolution The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution encouraged popular attacks on the CCP establishment and brought down President Liu Shaoqi.		Young people Young people were central to the Cultural Revolution, as Red Guards and as participants in the 'Up to the mountains, down to the countryside' movement. Many members of this 'lost generation' suffered greatly.	Limited recovery Increased state expenditure in rural areas, particularly small-scale industries, improved agricultural production during the later years of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao called for 'blooming and contending' and I took him at his word. I said some things about my colleagues and about wanting to focus on research, not politics. Now I face a struggle session in front of the faculty – I may lose my job.



Wang Xiuying, intellectual,
Anti-Rightist campaign, c. 1957

Go all out, aim high, and achieve greater results in building socialism! This is what we encourage. And see the result! The peasants are building the bridge to communism. The People's Communes are great! Day and night my brigades smelt steel and send up Sputniks. A bumper harvest is on the way.



Hu Xiaolong, CCP cadre,
Great Leap Forward, c. 1959

We're starving. There's no grain. The Commune canteen only serves hot water. I scrounged some weeds and corn-husks, but we all got sick. The children cry but I'm too weak to look for more food. My legs are swollen and my teeth are loose.



Feng Guiying, peasant,
Great Famine, c. 1960

Chairman Mao is the red sun shining in my heart! I will go to Tiananmen and be reviewed by the Chairman. It has been great since school finished. The rough boys beat up our teacher, which scared me, but the world belongs to us now. It is right to rebel!



Chen Xiaofei, Red Guard,
c. June 1966

The factory cadres used to boss us around. They were rude and got the first pick of special goods. But not anymore – we've exposed the snake spirits and cow demons! Those authorities taking the capitalist road must be overthrown! Down with counter-revolutionary revisionists!



Deng Dongfeng, factory worker,
c. Jan 1967

It's boring in the countryside. We're meant to 'learn revolutionary experience' but I can hardly understand the local dialect. The farmers hate us and I hate farming. As a Red Guard I was a fearless Monkey King, but now all I do is drudge-work. Did Chairman Mao betray us?



Tang Qiang, youth sent to
the countryside, c. 1971

CHAPTER

4

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(1949–1961)

1 People's Republic Proclaimed

Communist Party interwoven with government

People's Liberation Army crucial to governance

Four 'revolutionary classes': peasants, workers, small business, national capitalists

Mao announces 'China has stood up'

Excesses and failures of GLF cause catastrophe

Three Bad Years ('59, '60, '61) – 30 million starve

Mao claims he tried to warn of disaster

7 The Great Chinese Famine

Tensions mount with Russian communists

Mao cuts ties with USSR (Jul 1964)

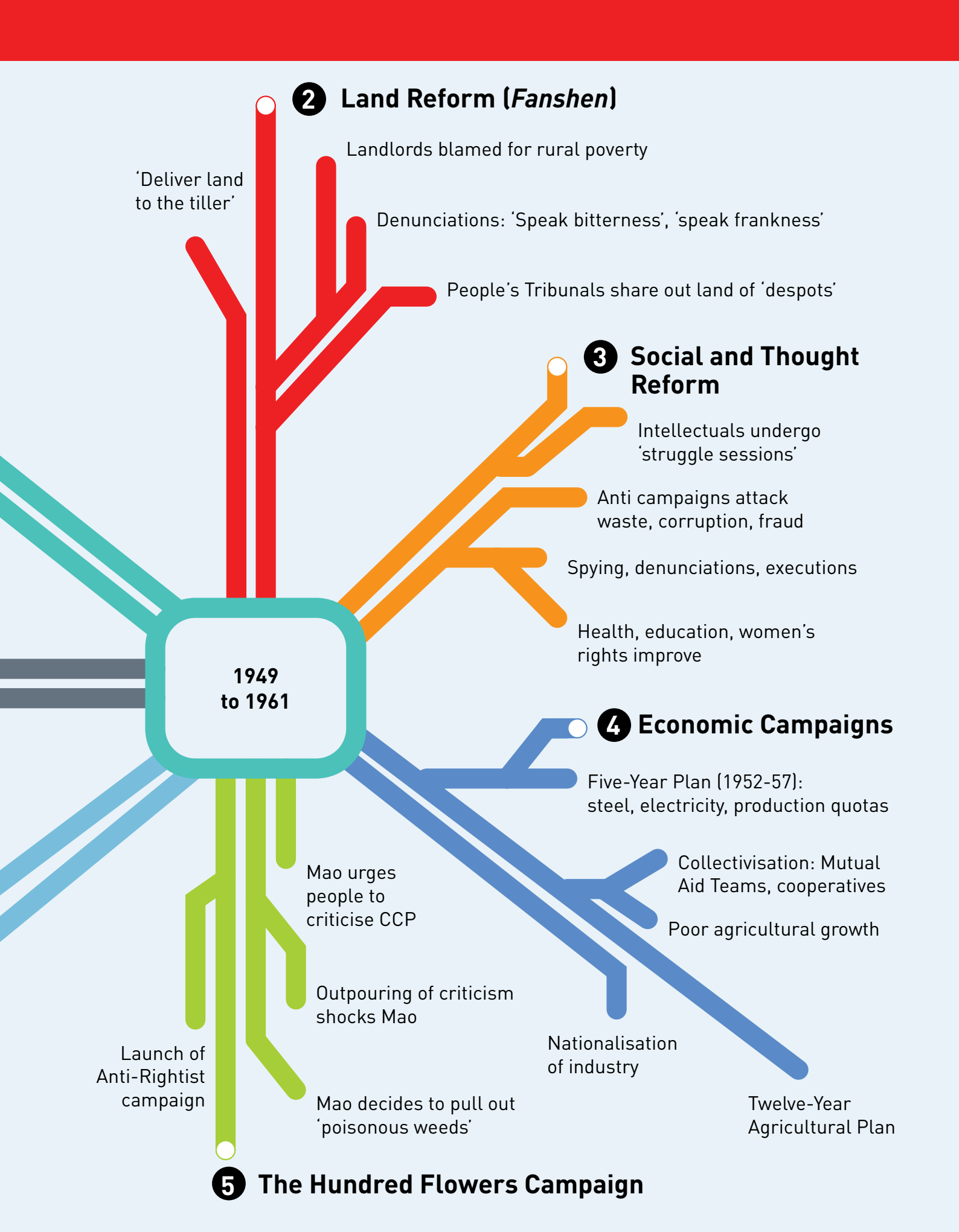
Mao celebrates backwardness as a virtue

People's Communes: backyard steel smelters, collective living, work teams

Impossible production quotas and fudging of figures

6 The Great Leap Forward

Bizarre experiments: killing pests, close planting, deep planting



- 1 Cited in Gwendda Milston, *A Short History of China* (North Melbourne: Cassell, 1978), 356.
- 2 Cited in Geramie Barne, 'For Truly Great Men, Look to This Age Alone,' in Timothy Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 254.
- 3 Cited in Tony Boddington, *The Rise of Communist China* (Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall, 1985), 42.

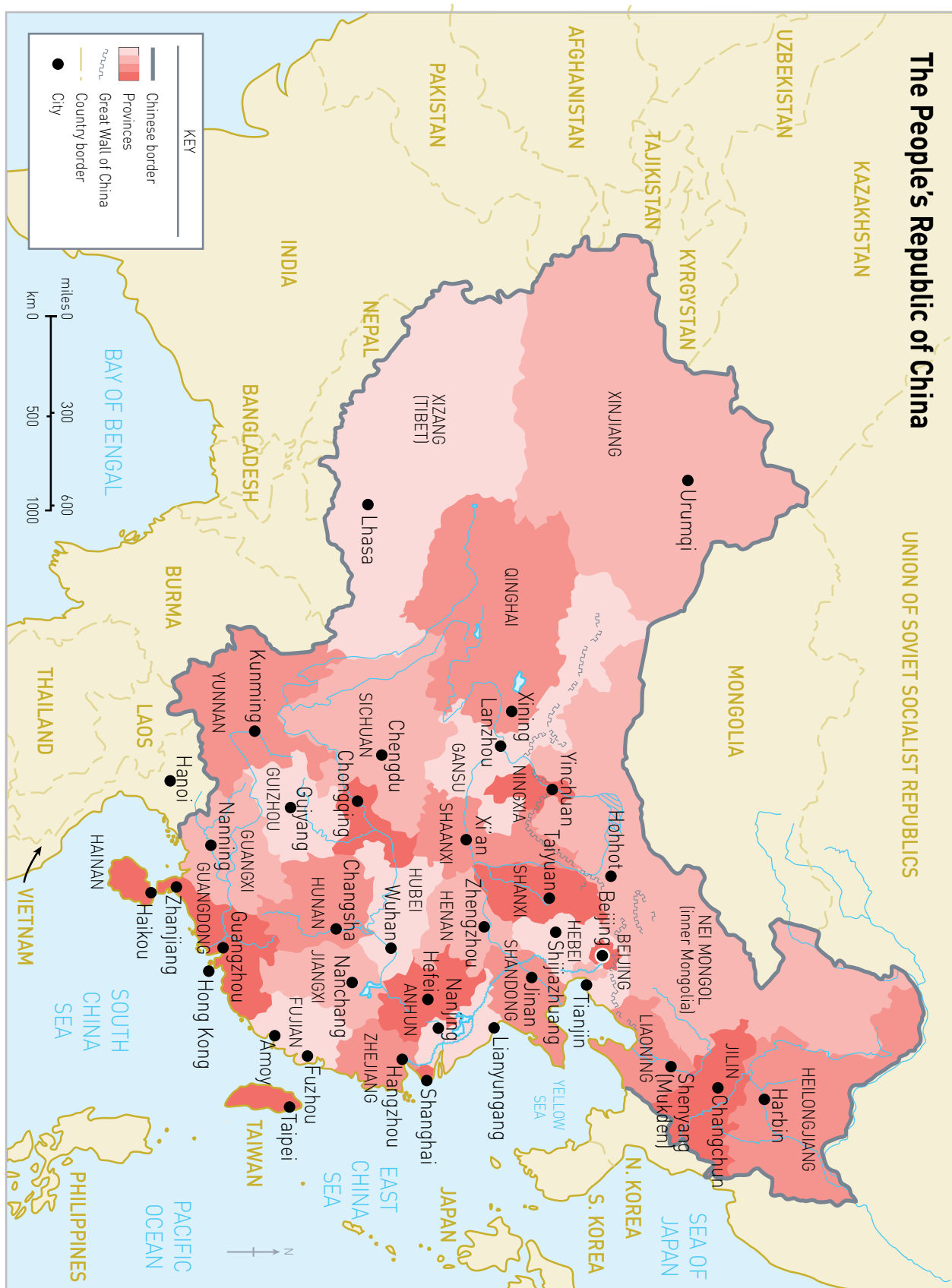
Chairman Mao proclaims the founding of the People's Republic of China.



INTRODUCTION

At the founding of the People's Republic in October 1949 Mao said that China 'will never again be an insulted nation. We have stood up.'¹ The country was finally free from the domination of foreign imperialism and Guomindang corruption. The fighting that began in the warlord era thirty years before came to an end with the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War. The Communists now faced the daunting task of bringing stability to a nation torn apart by decades of war and economic turmoil. The CCP had already proven itself a revolutionary force in rural areas; it now had to govern all of China. The party, which still faced hostility from some quarters, assumed this enormous challenge with little experience of ruling urban areas or managing a national economy. On the eve of the capture of Beijing in the Civil War, Mao remarked, 'Today we're heading into the capital to take the big test [*gan kao*: high Imperial exam], no wonder everyone is nervous ... All of us have to make the grade.'²

Despite this, the early period of the People's Republic was remarkably successful. In the space of three years the government revived the economy, gained control of outlying regions and established a new social and political order. Things began to go awry, however, in the late 1950s. Political repression, a feature of the People's Republic from its outset, escalated following the Hundred Flowers campaign. The Great Leap Forward, an attempt to bolster the economy and strengthen the new socialist order, proved to be a catastrophic failure that inflicted great suffering. Relations between China and the Soviet Union – initially close – grew tense by the late 1950s and early 1960s. The CCP's efforts to implement its revolutionary agenda in this period were both triumphant and tragic. Mao admitted in 1949, 'We shall soon put aside some of the things we know well and be compelled to do things we don't know well. This means difficulties.'³ Many of these 'difficulties' would come from shaping the new society to the particular ideological vision of Mao Zedong.



DID YOU KNOW?

When workmen placed the new Communist symbols on the Gate of Heavenly Peace at Tiananmen Square, they put the old Republican emblems in a storeroom. There they found the emblems of China's dynasties likewise consigned to dusty storage.

DID YOU KNOW?

Soong Qingling, the widow of Sun Yixian, was a non-Communist vice-chairperson of the People's Republic.

THE NEW ORDER

Mao Zedong: 'Our constitution is of a new socialist type, different from any of the bourgeois type.'

POLITICAL CHANGE

On 20–21 September 1949, the CCP held the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing. The conference drafted a preliminary constitution to outline the new political order of the People's Republic. The subsequent Organic Law of the Central People's Government and Common Program was a clear appeal to national unity. Eight 'democratic parties,' including the Democratic League and Guomindang Revolutionary Committee, would govern alongside the Communists, although the CCP remained dominant. Eleven of the twenty-four ministers in the new government were non-Communists. Jonathan Fenby argues that this amounted to 'window dressing; the non-Communist politicians were known as "flower vases" – there for decoration.'⁴ In 1954, a formal constitution was drawn up and the first National People's Congress (NPC) was held, thus establishing the processes and structures of government that continue to this day.

The National Congress, a parliament of sorts, was the end result of a multi-tiered process. First, 200 000 local assemblies elected county representatives, who then chose representatives for the provincial level. This body then elected delegates for municipal assemblies, which in turn decided who would sit in the National Congress. Within the congress a Standing Committee presided over matters. The NPC elected Mao president, the head of state. The new government, the State Council, was a cabinet made up of ministries. It was headed by Premier Zhou Enlai, who also served as minister of foreign affairs. Provincial, county and municipal governments implemented policies at the lower levels.

⁴ Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 358.



'The Founding of the Nation.' Mao Zedong announces the birth of the People's Republic of China, 1 October 1949.

The Chinese Communist Party, of which Mao was chairman, provided the core personnel of government and was the real seat of power. Though not technically the government, the party was interwoven with the state. The CCP had a centralised, hierarchical structure. The Communist National Party Congress, which met irregularly, represented delegates from lower level party bodies from across the nation. These included six regional committees, twenty-nine provincial committees, and around 2500 county and city committees. The Party Congress (not to be confused with the National Congress) voted in a Central Committee that would debate and suggest amendments to major policies. Meetings of the Central Committee were called 'plenums' or 'plenary sessions.' The Central Committee also selected the members of the higher-ranking Politburo (short for political bureau), which met more regularly and had fewer members. An elite group of around five men made up the Standing Committee of the Politburo, a powerful and dominant body that guided other members of the Politburo. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun (Ch'en Yun) and Liu Shaoqi served in the Standing Committee during the early 1950s. The final Communist organisation was the Secretariat; an administrative arm of the Central Committee which supervised and facilitated communication between higher and lower committees. The secretary-general of the Secretariat, appointed in 1954, was Deng Xiaoping. All government functions were carried out under close party direction and major policies originated from the Politburo.⁵



People's Republic of China insignia.

DO YOU KNOW?

Though it is a matter of some debate, it is generally agreed that the four small yellow stars on the PRC flag and insignia represent the four main classes: peasants, workers, small businessmen and loyal industrialists. The large star represents the leadership of the Communist Party. The red in the background, traditionally the Chinese colour for happiness, denotes communism.

MILITARY CHANGE

In the new government, the military had close ties to the party and state. The People's Liberation Army was closely supervised by the Military Affairs Committee (under the Politburo). Leading figures in the military, such as Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao, held key positions in the party and government.

NEW IDEAS

In his 1940 work *On New Democracy*, Mao spoke of China undergoing revolution in its 'bourgeois-democratic' phase in transition to socialism.⁶ He by no means meant that this entailed capitalist liberal democracy. Nor was China a 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' as was the Soviet Union. After 1949, Mao said that state power, in theory, would be exercised through a People's Democratic Dictatorship of the four 'revolutionary classes':

1. Peasantry
2. Proletariat (workers)
3. Petit-bourgeoisie (lower-middle class; small business owners)
4. National capitalists (managerial middle class; 'loyal industrialists').

All were guided by the Communist Party. It was a relationship symbolised by the stars of the flag of the People's Republic. Mao saw no contradiction in the notion of a democratic dictatorship. According to Mao,

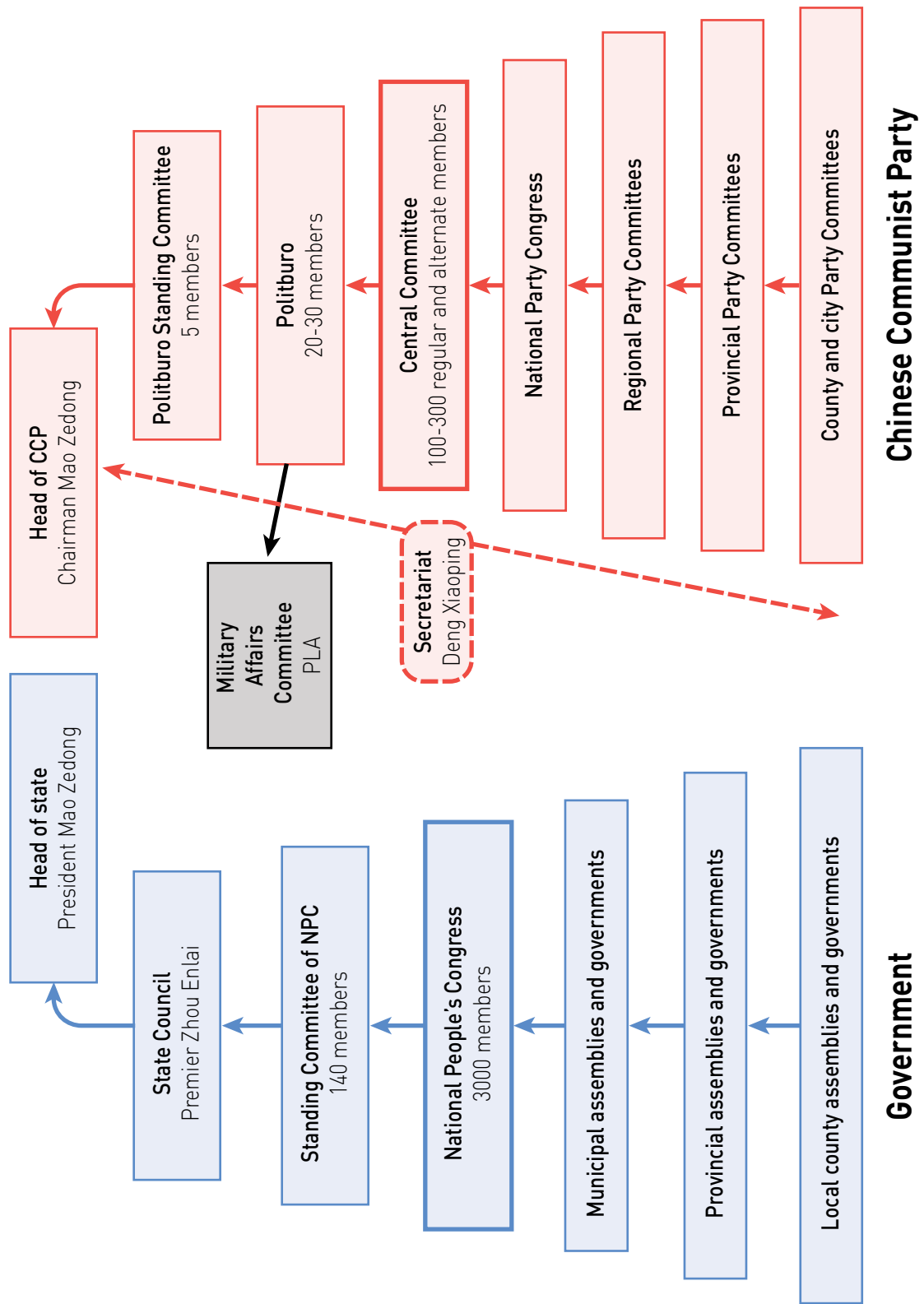
Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people ... The right to vote belongs only to the people and not to reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, this is the people's democratic dictatorship.⁷

5 Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 55–65.

6 Mao Zedong, 'On New Democracy,' in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong II* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 339–380.

7 Mao Zedong, 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship,' in *Selected Works IV* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press), 418.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNIST STATE



In the People's Republic the 'new democratic' coalition of revolutionary classes upheld a dictatorship over 'reactionaries' and 'bad elements.' As the party of the proletariat (working class), the Communists claimed the right to administer and guide the new society to socialism.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING:

1. Why does Jonathan Fenby describe the inclusion of non-Communist ministers in the early PRC government as 'window dressing'?
2. Explain the symbolism of the PRC flag as a representation of a 'People's Democratic Dictatorship.'
3. Make a list of the ways in which the CCP consolidated its authority on coming to power in 1949. In what way were these measures 'guided by pragmatic considerations'?

ACTIVITY

CONSOLIDATING COMMUNIST POWER

Mao Zedong: 'The Chinese revolution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous.'

The first few years of the new regime were guided by pragmatic (practical) considerations.⁸ An effective administration needed to be established, law and order maintained, and the economy revived. Reconstruction and consolidation were pressing concerns but reliable and effective administrators were in desperately short supply. Although the Communists had governed the Liberated Areas during the Civil War, the four-and-a-half-million members of the CCP made up less than one per cent of the Chinese population.⁹ Ruling one of the world's largest and most populous nations was a different prospect from running a soviet community. Initially, civil servants who had served under the Guomindang were encouraged to stay at their posts. They were promised decent salaries and urged to work for a New China. Many accepted the offer. Educated Chinese overseas were encouraged to come back and help rebuild the homeland. With little understanding of Communist policies or outlook, many gave up good careers in the West to contribute to the new society. Most would later harbour deep regrets at this fateful decision.¹⁰

DID YOU KNOW?

Many PLA soldiers and officers had never set foot in a big city before 1949. Some found modern conveniences confusing. City dwellers spoke with amusement at seeing soldiers washing rice in Western toilets, thinking they were sinks, and looking horrified when they pulled the 'more water chain' and their meal flushed away. Others tried to light cigarettes on lightbulbs.

WORKING WITH NATIONAL CAPITALISTS

To ease their transition to power, the Communists made known their willingness to use the resources and expertise of 'national capitalists': industrialists who were willing to give support to the CCP. Hoping to keep the economy stable, Mao offered China's numerically small but influential managerial middle class the opportunity to work with the new government. Many were compensated for factories or equipment taken by the Communist authorities. Favourable treatment, however, was not extended to all members of the urban elite; businesspeople deemed as having worked too closely with the former GMD government and suspected of being hostile to the CCP were denounced as 'bureaucratic capitalists.'

8 Edwin Moise, *Modern China: A History* (Harlow: Longman, 1994), 115.

9 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 356.

10 The experiences of Wu Ningkun, an intellectual who returned from America to China, illustrate this point. See Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

DID YOU KNOW?

The PRC has a number of autonomous regions, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia. 'Autonomy' has been granted where a particular minority dominates a region. Such peoples may use their own language in local government and in schools. Non-Han minorities make up around ten per cent of the PRC population but are well represented in the media and public events.

Their property was confiscated outright by the state. The Communists did try to retain the managers of most enterprises. One deputy manager of a mint in Beijing trembled before the arrival of an inspection team of Communists officials, yet after a tour of the factory and some brief questions about production methods, a CCP official told him, 'You seem to know what you are doing. You are in charge.'¹¹ The banking sector, transport industries, electricity and gas suppliers were all brought under direct government regulation. Assets and industries controlled by foreign powers, except the USSR, were likewise nationalised.¹²

Financial stability, which had so devastatingly eluded the Nationalists, was achieved with commendable speed. In May 1949, a new 'people's currency' – the *yuan* or *renminbi* – was introduced and foreign cash banned. By nationalising all banks the government was able to enforce strict centralisation of exchange and dramatically decrease the amount of paper money in circulation. A simple but ingenious pay system was introduced whereby wages were based on the prices of five basic items: flour, coal, rice, cotton cloth and oil. Price controls were also brought in, meaning that wages stayed in line with the basic cost of living and were far less vulnerable to the whims of inflation.¹³ Taxes were similarly reformed and made more equitable. This eased financial pressures on the badly-off and increased government revenue from 6.5 billion yuan in 1950 to 13.3 billion yuan by 1951.¹⁴ By decisive fiscal measures and careful management the rampant inflation of the Nationalist years, which had reached 85 000 per cent in 1949, was brought down to fifteen per cent by 1951.¹⁵

- 11 Cited in John Robottom, *Modern China* (London: Longman, 1967), 117.
- 12 Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China since 1949* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), 18.
- 13 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 652.
- 14 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 285.
- 15 James C. F. Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995), 20.

THE KEY ROLE OF THE ARMY

While Communist influence was being exerted in urban areas, the military brought the border regions and remote rural areas under central control. By 1951 the People's Liberation Army had enforced Communist power over all outlying areas of the old Qing empire, including Tibet, Hainan and the far northern province of Xinjiang (with the exception of Outer Mongolia). The PLA played a major role in the governance of China during the early 1950s. China was divided into six regions administered by four officials: a chairman, a party secretary, a political commissar and a military commander. Military commanders and political commissars were officers in the PLA, while many others with positions in the civilian government also held posts in the army. Until 1954, China remained under this system of quasi-military administration.

FEATURE

TIBET

Mao Zedong: 'Tibet is a part of China.'

On 7 October 1950, Chinese troops crossed into Tibet. By the eighteenth century, Tibet was considered a protectorate of the Qing empire, but

following the 1911 revolution it became quasi-independent. On coming to power the Communist government was determined to reassert control over Tibet, for reasons of national security and from a belief in the historical sovereignty of China over

the region. While some Tibetans along the border welcomed the Chinese, hoping for an end to heavy taxes imposed by the theocratic Lhasa government, others resisted the invading 'liberators'. Fierce mounted tribesmen of the Khamba people waged a bitter campaign against the People's Liberation Army in the Tibet-Sichuan border region.¹⁶ Fearing all-out occupation, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, sought talks with the Chinese government. The resulting Seventeen-Point Agreement reached on 23 May 1951 formally designated Tibet an 'autonomous region' of the People's Republic. The agreement meant that the Chinese would control Tibet's internal security and foreign policy, while the Lhasa government under the Dalai Lama would largely control domestic matters.

Between 1951 and 1954 the PLA strengthened its position in Tibet, building highways into the region, increasing its garrisons of troops and searching out caches of arms hidden in local monasteries. Tensions built up between the Chinese and Tibetans. The agrarian policies of the Great Leap Forward were a particular focus of ill-feeling; protests grew into outright rebellion in March 1959. The PLA responded with overwhelming force, including heavy artillery, tanks and air strikes.¹⁷ Many thousands of Tibetans were killed and some of the most treasured Lamaist monasteries destroyed. The Dalai Lama fled Lhasa and, along with a great number of his followers, was given sanctuary in India.¹⁸ The Tibetan insurgency continued for some time, supported by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which trained Tibetan rebels. The uprising was eventually put down while the Dalai Lama established a Tibetan government in exile at Dharamsala in India, where he continued his criticism, with varying degrees of conciliation, of Chinese policies on Tibet.



Potala Palace, Tibet.

The Communist government was resolute in controlling the region over the following years. Important projects for modernising Tibet's infrastructure were undertaken. The Tibetan people, however, remained resistant to efforts at outside control and were resentful of 'occupying' authorities.¹⁹ In 1988, the Dalai Lama made known that he would no longer campaign for the sovereign independence of Tibet; however, his relations with the government of the People's Republic remained strained. In 2009, the fiftieth anniversary of the Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama accused the Communists of bringing 'untold suffering and destruction to the land and people of Tibet ... they literally experienced hell on earth.'²⁰ In response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry declared, 'The Dalai Lama clique is confusing right and wrong. They are spreading rumours. The democratic reforms [under Chinese rule] are the widest and most profound reforms in Tibetan history.'²¹ Tibet remains one of the most sensitive issues in China today (one of the 'three Ts': Tibet, Taiwan and Tiananmen) and potentially the 'biggest headache' for the Chinese government in terms of continued political and social unrest.²²

A range of contrasting viewpoints on the Tibetan issue can be found on websites belonging to Students for a Free Tibet, the Government of Tibet in Exile, the Chinese Government (see White Papers on Tibet) and the Xinhua News Agency. You might like to find out about infrastructure and social projects undertaken by the Chinese government in Tibet and compare these benefits to the concerns of Tibetan independence and human rights groups.

16 Brian Catchpole, *A Map History of Modern China* (US: Heinemann, 1977), 108.

17 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 474.

18 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), 556.

19 Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China* (New York: Check Mark Books, 1999), 528; John Robottom, *Modern China*, 155; and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 284.

20 Cited in Matt Wade, 'Dalai Lama speaks out on "hell on earth"', *The Age*, 11 March 2009, 1.

21 Cited in Matt Wade, 'Dalai Lama speaks out on "hell on earth"', 1.

22 Charles Li, senior ABC producer, Beijing, interview with author, 19 January 2009.



The South Korean flag.

MILITARY CHALLENGES: THE KOREAN WAR

Zhou Enlai: 'The Chinese people absolutely will not tolerate foreign aggression, nor will they ... tolerate seeing their neighbours invaded by imperialists.'

THE KOREAN WAR



DID YOU KNOW?

In protest at the PRC not having a seat on the UN, the Soviet representative to the UN was absent when the Security Council voted on whether to allow the US to intervene in Korea. He was therefore unable to use his right of veto to defeat the resolution.

In the first year of its inception, the People's Republic was drawn into an international war in Korea. It was a costly conflict that came at a time when China desperately needed to focus on reconstruction; the war made this task much more difficult. It would also affect domestic social and political campaigns by heightening fear of spies and 'counter-revolutionary' influences. Yet the conflict in Korea would demonstrate that the Chinese Communist government was a force to be reckoned with in international politics.

NORTH KOREAN EXPANSIONISM

After Japan's defeat in 1945, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel, with a communist government in the north, under Kim Il-sung, and an American-backed government in the south, headed by right-wing Syngman Rhee. Kim hoped to emulate Mao's success and unite Korea under communist rule. The armed forces of the Democratic People's Republic (North Korea) were bolstered by Soviet military equipment. A further reassurance to the North Koreans came on 12 January 1950 when US Secretary of State Dean Acheson publicly stated that South Korea and Taiwan were not within the 'defensive perimeter' of the United States' international interests.²³ In 1949, Kim had raised the possibility of waging war against South Korea and Josef Stalin had largely approved of Kim's ambitions. He had, though, warned Kim, 'If you should get kicked in the teeth, I shall not lift a finger. You have to ask Mao for all the help.'²⁴ Stalin also said that the question of war in Korea must be decided by the Chinese and Korean comrades. Although Stalin made it clear that China would have to bail Kim out if he got into trouble, Mao was kept out of the negotiations. In May 1950, Kim flew to Beijing and told Mao of Stalin's approval of his forthcoming campaign. Mao too gave his support; however, Kim conveniently failed to mention Stalin's so-called reluctance to 'raise a finger' in the East. Neither did he offer a definite or detailed briefing to Mao. For his part, Mao did not envisage having to fight on the Korean peninsula and had, in fact, been planning to demobilise PLA troops in the north. He assumed Kim would be able to handle his own military affairs. Mao was instead focused on a plan to invade Taiwan – the island stronghold where Jiang Jieshi and the remnants of the GMD had fled in late 1949.

NORTH INVADES SOUTH

On 5 June 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel. Within a matter of weeks they had pushed back the South Korean Army and a small contingent of their American allies, taking almost the entire Korean peninsula. The southern capital, Seoul, fell in just three days. US President Harry Truman was quick to react. He decided that a communist victory in Korea could not be tolerated and secured the United Nations' backing for intervention. Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, the American military and their Western allies

23 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 22.

24 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 365.

launched a spectacular counter-offensive on 15 September. MacArthur's troops routed the North Koreans, swept past the 38th parallel – capturing the northern capital Pyongyang – and advanced toward the Chinese border. Kim Il-sung begged Mao for help.

Mao and his comrades were alarmed. They did not wish to see their communist ally fall to US 'imperialism'; neither did they want a hostile government installed in North Korea, which bordered China's industrial heartland in Manchuria.

A hastily convened meeting of the top CCP leaders fretted over how to proceed. PLA General Lin Biao and China's leading economist, Chen Yun, urged caution. The People's Republic could hardly afford a costly war when economic reconstruction was such a pressing priority. Mao, Premier Zhou Enlai and General Zhu De nonetheless felt that intervention was necessary. Urgent communications were made to the USSR. Stalin agreed to involve the Soviet air force. Those committed to aiding North Korea prevailed but their decision to intervene was not taken lightly. Mao had previously pointed out to Kim Il-sung, 'Your enemy is not an easy one. Don't forget, you are fighting the chief imperialist. Be prepared for the worst.'²⁵

CHINA JOINS THE WAR

Mao barely slept for days as the decision to oppose America was debated. Lin Biao claimed he was ill and refused to lead the campaign. General Peng Dehuai, a tough, no-nonsense veteran of the Long March, was called in to command the 'People's Volunteers,' as the Chinese expeditionary force was named. Meanwhile Zhou Enlai sent warning to the Americans to halt their advance. MacArthur paid no attention, apparently oblivious to the two-million Chinese troops amassing across the Yalu River, which marked the Chinese–Korean border. At this point Stalin dealt the Chinese a terrible blow by reneging on his promise of Soviet air support. His forces would not be 'properly prepared' for some months.²⁶ The Chinese now faced the prospect of either continuing alone without air cover or losing face by withdrawing their offer of support to Kim. The Chinese honoured their commitment to the Korean Communists. On 8 October 1950, Mao released a formal decree approving the campaign and on 15 October the People's Volunteers crossed the Yalu River.

25 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 427.

26 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng, a Dual Biography* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1992), 113.

DID YOU KNOW?

The residents of Seoul suffered terribly during the Korean War. The city was reduced to rubble and changed hands three times. The civilian population fell from 1.5 million to 200 000. General MacArthur said, 'After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children and everything, I vomited.'

During a rally to collect the signatures of volunteers to fight in the Korean War, Beijing University students shout slogans such as 'Go to Korea,' 'Resist America' and 'Defend our country.'



DID YOU KNOW?

Mao did not hear about the death of his son, Anying, for three months. When Peng Dehuai accidentally let the news slip during a meeting with Mao, the Chairman was visibly shaken and was silent for some time. He then said, 'In revolutionary war, you always pay a price. Anying was one of thousands ... you shouldn't take it as something special just because he was my son.' Mao Anying was buried alongside other common soldiers in Korea.



American reconnaissance failed to determine the strength of Chinese forces in North Korea. They estimated that 10 000 troops had crossed the border. In reality, Peng Dehuai had 350 000 troops ready, with more on the way. General MacArthur confidently declared that he would 'get the [US] boys home by Christmas' and continued to move as quickly as he could toward the Yalu. On 25 November, the Chinese slammed 200 000 troops into the Americans and by sheer weight of numbers forced them into a headlong retreat south. In seven weeks, North Korea was retaken, and, in January, Seoul was re-captured by the Communists. The success of the People's Volunteers came at a huge price. The weather had dropped to minus thirty degrees centigrade and the Chinese soldiers suffered greatly from exposure. The Chinese suffered appalling losses due to their inferior firepower and a total lack of air cover; by the end of the war, 900 000 soldiers were out of action, missing, wounded or killed.²⁷ Among the 500 000 deaths was Mao's oldest son, Anying. The Americans and their allies had 157 000 men out of action, 54 000 of whom had been killed. By January 1951, UN forces

²⁷ Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 67.

had launched an effective counter-attack and fought the Chinese to a bloody stalemate at the 38th parallel. MacArthur urged the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese mainland but his hawkish adventurism was by this time too much for President Truman, who sacked him and installed General Matthew Ridgeway in his place. An uneasy ceasefire was called in July 1951, although it was not until 27 July 1953 that a formal armistice was signed.

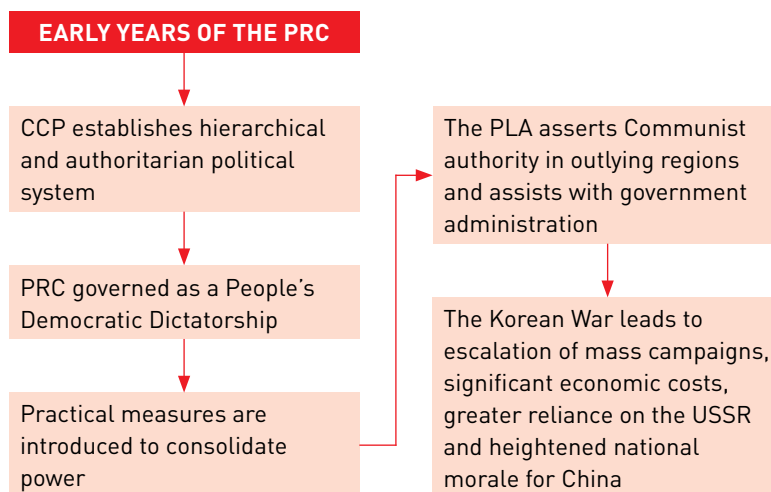
CONSEQUENCES OF THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War had immense repercussions for China's new regime. In 1951, the US successfully sponsored a UN resolution that declared China to be the aggressor in Korea. An economic embargo²⁸ was enforced – a significant setback to the economy – and the People's Republic was excluded from the United Nations until the 1970s. 'China' was represented by Jiang's Republic of China (ROC), based in Taiwan. The US assistant secretary of state, Dean Rusk, explained that while the government in Beijing 'may be a colonial Russian government ... it is not the government of China. It does not pass the first test. It is not Chinese.'²⁹ In the midst of the Korean War, America vowed to support Taiwan in the event of future Communist aggression, thereby putting an end to plans for campaigns from the mainland. The People's Republic was made more reliant on Soviet support. Land reform and political movements, which had been proceeding with moderation, were dramatically intensified. The Chinese were whipped up in to a virtual frenzy, with a campaign to 'Resist America, Aid Korea.' Rumours of American atrocities abounded, such as the use of germ warfare and the testing of atomic weapons in Nevada on Chinese prisoners of war. 'In this superheated atmosphere,' Philip Short argues, 'the campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries burned white-hot.'³⁰

The Korean War cost the People's Republic dearly. Mao later said it was a mistake, '100 per cent wrong.'³¹ In addition to the massive casualties, vast amounts of capital were needed to finance the war. Mao said in 1952, 'Last year what we spent on the war to resist US aggression and aid [North] Korea more or less equalled our expenditures for national reconstruction.'³² Yet the Korean War was also a great boost to Chinese morale. Russell Spurr titled his book on the conflict *Enter the Dragon* – an apt metaphor.³³ Mao's forces had taken on the 'biggest imperialist' and not been beaten. China had, at last, 'stood up.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Christian missionaries, who were accused of being 'spies,' were expelled from China during the Korean War.



28 A prohibition on trading with a particular country.

29 Cited in Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 134.

30 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 436.

31 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 27.

32 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 231.

33 Russell Spurr, *Enter the Dragon* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1988).

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Write a paragraph on each of the following topics:

- What caused Mao to pledge support for North Korea?
- What were the consequences of the Korean War for the People's Republic of China?
- How might China's 'success' against an 'imperial superpower' like the US be seen as a revolutionary turning point?

DID YOU KNOW?

After 1949, the traditional Chinese greeting, 'Brother, have you eaten?' changed to 'Comrade, have you *fanshen*ed?'



Farm tools.

FANSHEN: LAND REFORM

Mao Zedong: 'The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly – the peasants keep clear accounts.'

Land reform had long been a focus of the Chinese Communist movement. The promise of delivering 'land to the tiller' had been enacted in the areas liberated by the PLA during the Civil War, particularly in northern China (though for the most part in a moderate form). The redistribution of land was considered the fundamental element of revolution by many peasants. With the founding of the People's Republic, the CCP formalised its policy on land reform through the Agrarian Reform Law of 28 June 1950. Thousands of party cadres were sent out to the countryside to organise a nationwide campaign to redistribute land and denounce landlords. The key principle underpinning this revolution in the villages was *fanshen*, or 'turning over.' Work teams of Communist activists established Peasants' Associations that helped to identify the 'reactionaries' and 'counter-revolutionaries' in their local area. One activist recalled,

So the first thing to do is to find out exactly who's who in the village and how the village works: who profits, who suffers. You generally choose to live with the poorest peasant you can find and you live with him – not eating or sleeping any better than he does. You do that until he sees you really mean it – until he gives you his confidence.³⁴

Party officials (cadres) then tried to impress upon the peasants that the exploitative landlords were to blame for their poverty.

Once the landlords had been identified, 'Speak Bitterness' meetings were encouraged in which everyone in the village gathered together and subjected the landlords and better-off peasants to long public denunciations. This was an opportunity to 'stand up' by publicly expressing indignation at the years of mistreatment and exploitation. The Speak Bitterness meetings were emotionally charged – those making accusations openly wept or screamed out in anger, as did the spectators. After the peasants had 'spoken bitter,' a People's Tribunal decided on the fate of the accused. If a landlord was deemed a 'local despot' (tyrant), his property would be shared out. Particularly despised landlords and those who had collaborated with the Japanese were often beaten. Some were executed. At the beginning of *fanshen*, landlords who were considered to have been fair in their dealings with peasants were treated leniently and given enough land to support

34 Cited in John Robottom, *Modern China*, 121.

themselves. Some were made to pay higher taxes, give their tenants cheap rent or annul debts.³⁵ The Agrarian Reform Law allowed landlords to keep not only the land cultivated by their immediate family but also rented land and fields farmed by hired hands, as long as this amounted to no more than half of their holdings.³⁶

LAND REFORM ESCALATES

Two factors led to the radical intensification of the land reform movement. Firstly, once the class struggle and passions of rural people had been unleashed they were harder to contain than the Communists had anticipated. *Fanshen* was based on a moderate approach to dealing with the larger and wealthy landowners, and aimed to protect the more productive farms to ensure that food supplies were not disrupted. However, local People's Tribunals did not always take this into account, and their bitterness led to excesses. Secondly, once the Korean War got underway, fear of counter-revolutionary influences made the official attitude to landlords less restrained. A wave of executions swept the countryside. It is difficult to determine the exact number of deaths. Although the figure of one million is most often cited, Jasper Becker argues that between two- and five-million landlords may have been executed.³⁷ In his 1927 report on the peasantry, Mao had argued that the tough justice of the common people was fair and acceptable:

True, the peasants are in a sense 'unruly' in the countryside. Supreme in authority, the peasant association allows the landlord no say and sweeps away his prestige ... Doing whatever they like and turning everything upside down, they have created a kind of terror in the countryside. This is what some people call 'going too far' ... Such talk may seem plausible, but in fact it is wrong. First, the local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords perpetuated the worst outrages. The peasants are clear-sighted. Who is bad and who is not, who is the worst and who is not quite so vicious, who deserves punishment and who deserves to be let off lightly – the peasants keep clear accounts ... Secondly, a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.³⁸

DID YOU KNOW?

In Yu Hua's novel *To Live*, the narrator says, 'After I got home, the village began land reform, and I was given five *mu* of land, the same five *mu* I had originally rented from Long Er. Long Er was really in deep trouble – he was labelled a landlord, and ... the Communist Party confiscated his land and divided it amongst his tenants ... In the end he was executed.'



A landlord, bound and guarded, kneels before a 'People's Tribunal.'

35 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 118.

36 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 289.

37 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine* (London: John Murray, 1996), 35.

38 Mao Zedong, 'Investigation into the Peasants Movement in Hunan,' in *Selected Works I* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press), 27–8.

As he did in 1927, Mao lent his full support to the judgments and punishments of the People's Tribunals. The aim was to destroy the traditional rural order, dominated in the past by the political and social standing of the landlords, so that a socialist one could emerge in its place. Land reform also brought much support to the new regime. Having the peasants carry out the agrarian reform themselves was also important; Philip Short explains that 'peasants who killed with their bare hands the landlords who oppressed them were wedded to the new revolutionary order in a way that passive spectators could never be.'³⁹ Land reform both fulfilled an essential revolutionary ideal for the peasants and actively involved them in the revolutionary movement. 'In a pact sealed in blood between the party and the poor,'⁴⁰ the peasants were now complicit in making the new society – including its expressions of revolutionary violence.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the early 1950s, the Communists launched a terror campaign against 'bandits and gangsters' in the cities. In Guangzhou, 130 000 were executed. In what might be considered payback for the White Terror of 1927, over 28 000 gangsters were killed in Shanghai, including the leaders of the infamous Green Gang. Big Ears Du, however, had since fled to Hong Kong.

THOUGHT REFORM AND THE ANTI CAMPAIGNS

Mao Zedong: 'We definitely have no benevolent policies towards the reactionaries or the counter-revolutionary activities of the reactionary classes.'

THOUGHT REFORM

Mirroring the hardened approach toward landlords, three campaigns began in the early 1950s targeting 'subversive' groups in urban areas. As in the Rectification movement at Yan'an, intellectuals were made the focus of the Thought Reform campaign (*sixiang gaizao*) beginning September 1951. University professors, teachers, writers and other educated people were called upon to amend their 'bourgeois' attitudes through self-criticism and admission of 'incorrect' thoughts. Intellectuals were required to attend mass meetings, at which they were assigned to smaller groups for intense discussion. Those undergoing Thought Reform read Marxist texts, made lengthy self-criticisms and assisted others in pointing out faults as they gave public declarations of their ideological shortcomings. Part of this process was writing one's autobiography – with repeated editing – which amounted to an admission of all aspects of one's bourgeois habits. As the process went on, intellectuals were called before 'struggle sessions' where they reported and were judged on their progress by Communist cadres, their peers and groups of workers or students. Those not deemed to be sufficiently remoulded were sent for 're-education' through hard labour in the countryside. Most were subjected to months of self-criticism and 'struggle.'

PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS

The Thought Reform movement featured highly publicised denunciations of well known figures and their works. While the philosopher and famed literary reformer associated with the New Culture movement, Hu Shi, lived in Taiwan, his followers and his ideas were attacked with considerable menace. In 1953, Liang Shuming (Liang Shu-ming), a member of the Democratic League party who attended government committees as an adviser, received a verbal hammering from Mao. When Liang voiced concerns over CCP policies in rural areas, Mao

39 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 436–7.

40 Frank Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xii.

snatched the microphone and snarled, 'I suppose you think you are very beautiful ... but to me you stink.'⁴¹ For the next hour, Mao outlined why intellectuals such as Liang were in need of rectification:

There are two ways of killing people: one is to kill with a gun and the other with a pen. The way which is most artfully disguised and draws no blood is to kill with the pen. That is the kind of murderer you are. Liang Shuming is utterly reactionary ... What service did you do, Liang Shuming? In all your life, what service have you ever done for the people? Not the slightest, not the least bit.⁴²

In 1955, Mao personally initiated a campaign against Communist literary theorist and writer Hu Feng, who had criticised the politicisation of popular culture. Accused of heading an anti-Party conspiracy, Hu was arrested and imprisoned until 1979.⁴³ Maurice Meisner argues that the Communists saw their campaign not as a punitive practice but rather an 'educational' measure designed to produce 'correct thoughts' that would, in turn, bring about correct political and social behaviours. For some, the experience was a genuine personal conversion and an understanding of the self in a new way.⁴⁴ There were, though, times when it was used in a punitive manner.⁴⁵ Thought Reform was a traumatic and psychologically taxing experience. Some later called it a 'carefully cultivated Auschwitz of the mind.'⁴⁶ China's intellectual classes were in effect cowed by Communist authority while their skills and knowledge were preserved for the service of the new society.

THE THREE ANTIS

In 1951, simultaneous with Thought Reform, the government launched *sanfan*, or the Three Antis, a campaign against 'corruption, waste and bureaucratism.' *Sanfan* aimed to uncover politically unreliable government officials and corrupt party cadres. Under closest scrutiny were public servants who had worked for the Guomindang. Mao declared, 'We need to have a good clean up ... which will thoroughly uncover all cases of corruption whether major, medium or minor, and aim the main blows at the most corrupt, while following the policy of educating and remoulding the medium and minor embezzlers so that they will not relapse.'⁴⁷

THE FIVE ANTIS

The Three Antis were expanded in 1952 to the Five Antis, *wufan*, which targeted tax evasion, fraud, 'cheating' (excessively profiting) from government contracts, theft of government property and bribery. Businessmen and industrialists, who had been previously reassured of their place in the People's Republic, were the subject of *wufan*. Jack Gray describes the campaign as 'an opportunity to pulverize China's capitalists politically.'⁴⁸ Mao believed that it was the 'sugar coated bullets' of bourgeois capitalists that brought about the corruption of Communist cadres and government officials. During the campaign, 450 000 businesses were investigated.⁴⁹ Fines were handed out and some businessmen were imprisoned. Between 1952 and 1953, most factories became joint private–state ventures as heavy fines took their toll on China's industrialists. The so-called tigers had been de-clawed. Ross Terrill argues that it was not necessary for the Chinese Communists to destroy the bourgeoisie for they were easily subdued by the new order: 'Many capitalists simply turned red when the heat went on, silently, like lobsters put in hot water.'⁵⁰

- 41 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 236.
- 42 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 454.
- 43 See Mei Zhi, *F: Hu Feng's Prison Years* (London: Verso, 2013).
- 44 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*, 285.
- 45 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 95.
- 46 Cited in Frank Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, xiii.
- 47 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 153.
- 48 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 291.
- 49 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 96.
- 50 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 235.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Anti campaigns, Communist activists encouraged 'tiger-hunting teams' to arrest suspects and bring them before mass meetings.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hangzhou building in which businessmen were questioned during the *sanfan* and *wufan* movements had a banner across its door: 'Without a confession, no tiger can leave.'

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 1950s people could deposit anonymous accusations into special government letterboxes placed on the street. It was a cost-effective way for authorities to gather intelligence on who might be exhibiting 'reactionary' ways, engaging in 'counter-revolution' or acting like a 'bad element'.

PURGES AND EXECUTIONS

The mobilisation of ordinary people was a feature of the Anti campaigns and remained an ongoing characteristic of the People's Republic. Cadres were encouraged to report on their comrades, workers informed on their bosses and neighbours kept an eye on each other. Few people were tried in a formal court; those suspected of any of the Antis were brought before a mass meeting of workers and party activists. Suspects were 'struggled' against and made to confess their crimes. A struggle could go on for days before a satisfactory confession and expression of remorse were given. A punishment was then decided. In some cases, managers and officials were purged from their positions and sentenced to hard labour. Some were executed. More commonly, people found guilty were shamed through public denunciation and the imposition of large fines. Even for these people, however, the experience was often harrowing; the humiliation of 'losing face' and the pressures of struggle meetings were simply too much for some. Zhou Qingli, the wife of a well-to-do Shanghai businessman, recalled, 'So many wealthy people committed suicide at this time. They could not stand the idea of a public trial.'⁵¹

A CULTURE OF SPYING

As soon as the CCP came to power, structures were put in place for applying party influence among everyday people through compulsory household (*hukuo*) registration and workplace (*danwei*) registration. Employees in all industries were required to be a member of their *danwei* or work unit, which responded to government directives. Street committees, which coordinated local initiatives, were another important driver of mass campaigns. Party cadres encouraged all to watch for 'reactionary' and 'counter-revolutionary' leanings amongst their neighbours and work colleagues. A culture of spying and informing was fostered; children were even told to report on their parents. Involvement in meetings and campaigns was virtually compulsory as non-attendance would raise suspicions. Fear of public humiliation, a traditional feature of Chinese culture, was thus used to ensure political and social conformity. Unlike Soviet Russia, China did not need a large political policing organisation to monitor and expose would-be and actual counter-revolutionaries; this was done by the people themselves.

In addition to being registered for a particular household and local work unit, each Chinese person was given a class label – *chengfen* – that reflected their occupation and family background. Divided into broad class groupings, there were more than sixty *chengfen*, which were further ranked into 'good,' 'middle' and 'bad' categories, depending on one's apparent commitment to the revolution.⁵²

GOOD CLASSES	MIDDLE CLASSES	BAD CLASSES
• CCP cadres • Soldiers • Industrial workers • Revolutionary martyrs • Poor and lower-middle peasants	• Middle peasants • Petty-bourgeoisie (e.g. shopkeepers) • Intellectuals and professionals	• Rich peasants • Landlords • Capitalists

51 Cited in C. K. Macdonald, *Modern China* (Tonbridge: Basil Blackman, 1985), 37.

52 Frank Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 47.

In the new society, the principle of *fanshen* was neither limited to the countryside nor exclusively concerned with changing the economic and social makeup of a village. Turning Over also applied to attitudes and past 'sins.' In urban areas, people of all walks of life participated in 'Speak Frankness' meetings, which were similar to and sometimes called 'struggle sessions;' people publicly expressed sorrow at the wrongs they had committed and begged for forgiveness. Street committees played an important role in organising these meetings and pressuring individuals to participate, especially if they were considered to be lacking in revolutionary zeal.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the poster 'Suppress counter revolutionaries, safeguard good circumstances' and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe what appears to be happening in the scene depicted.
2. Analyse the tone and intended message of the source.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain why certain groups of people were the targets of repression and public denunciation by the Communists in the early 1950s.
4. Evaluate the significance of political repression during the early years of the People's Republic of China. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- How did the Chinese Communist Party consolidate its state power through political, social and economic change in the period 1949–53?
- Discuss how the CCP coming to power affected the lives of three social groups in China during the early to mid-1950s.
- 'Practical measures rather than ideological campaigns were the focus of the early years of Communist rule in China.' To what extent do you agree?

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Select three sources from this chapter that depict/describe the CCP's public campaigns in the period 1949–53. What impression do the sources give of the effects of the campaigns on a range of Chinese people?



'Suppress counter revolutionaries, safeguard good circumstances.' (1951)

DOCUMENT

JOURNALIST JACK BELDEN ON *FANSHEN*, 1949

A landlord must overturn his thoughts, not only so he won't rob his tenant of the fruits of his labour, but so that he himself can cease to be a landlord and be born again as an entirely new man. A husband must cease to beat his wife not only for his wife's sake, but so that he may become a new person. A 'broken shoe,' or a prostitute, must reform so that she can become a young girl again, one capable of finding a husband or a useful place in society ...

Repentance was a method of impressing on people that certain types of conduct were wrong under the new order. Thus, offenders against the social order were to bow their heads, kowtow on the ground and admit all their sins. In this way, the Communists obviously hoped to set up invisible directors inside each man to guide his actions in the new way of life.

Public confession was another way in which the Communists sought conformity. But here again the methods were more Chinese than they were Marxist ... In China ... confessions were made in public.

Thus Speak Frankness Meetings became forums where individuals confessed their sins against the body social ... The reverse of the Speak Frankness Meetings, of course, were the Speak Bitterness Meetings, where people confessed, not their sins, but their sorrows. This had the effect of emotional solidarity. For when people poured out their sorrows to each other, they realised they were all together on the same sad voyage through life and from the recognition of this they drew closer to one another, achieved common sentiments, took sustenance and hope.

Struggle Meetings were also definite weapons in molding public opinion and regulating morals. Tenants struggled against landlords, wives against husbands, farmers against thieves, the individual against the bad demon inside him. The central idea behind many such meetings was public humiliation.⁵³

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Jack Belden's comments on *fanshen* and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline how people were expected to change their behaviour and thinking as part of *fanshen*.
2. Explain the purpose and consequences of public confessions, as suggested in the source.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain why the CCP encouraged *fanshen*, especially in rural areas.
4. Evaluate the significance of the CCP's use of mass campaigns in the period 1949–53. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

53 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 485–88.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

Mao Zedong: 'Women hold up half the sky.'

THE MARRIAGE LAW

The Communist government brought about significant benefits in the social and economic standing of women. The Marriage Law of May 1950, the first major legislation passed by the new government, gave women the same legal rights as men and banned customs such as arranged marriages, child marriages, polygamy, foot binding and the practice of buying brides. Women were free to choose their own partners and divorce abusive husbands. Further laws guaranteed women the right to equal pay, maternity benefits and, in some cases, work-based childcare. Women's rights were enshrined in Article 48 of the Constitution:

Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The state protects the rights and interests of women, applies the principle of equal pay for equal work to men and women alike and trains and selects cadres from among women.⁵⁴

DID YOU KNOW?

As a young man during the New Culture movement, Mao Zedong wrote a number of articles explaining the importance of women's rights.



'Registration of marriage by free choice.'

WOMEN AND WORK

The new regime provided greater opportunities for women to join the workforce and be involved in party campaigns, such as through their street committees or by holding positions of responsibility in government organisations. The writer Han Suyin heard the following radio announcement in the early 1950s: 'It is better for a woman to have big hands and big feet. Big feet are beautiful, big hands are capable hands. A white skin is sickly.'⁵⁵ There was also a dedicated national body for women's rights: the All-China Women's Federation. Founded in 1949 and quickly gaining a membership of seventy-six million, the federation celebrated the

54 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change*, 181.

55 Han Suyin, *My House Has Two Doors* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 258.

contribution of women to society and advocated for policies to improve their day-to-day lives. While emphasising the emancipatory role of the Communist Party, the Women's Federation also involved other progressive political figures, such as its honorary president Soong Qingling, Sun Yixian's widow.

Despite campaigns to implement the Marriage Law and provide support to women, the traditional view of what constituted 'women's work' remained, to a large extent, intact. Housework was still generally considered the responsibility of wives and efforts to improve women's rights had limited success in rural areas, where traditional patriarchal attitudes remained strong. Chinese women were nonetheless considerably better off than they had been under the old regime. One writer wryly observed that China's women had *risen* to the status of second class citizens.⁵⁶



CLEANLINESS DRIVES

In addition to explaining and popularising government decrees and organising mass meetings, the *danwei*-level street committees played an important role in social welfare. The heads of street committees arbitrated in family and neighbourhood quarrels, undertook fire prevention and rubbish collections, distributed welfare to the needy and organised local recreational activities. In a spectacular drive to improve cleanliness in the new society, people were mobilised to clean the laneways, their household belongings and seemingly every inch of urban living space. Throngs of residents would be seen in the street scrubbing, polishing and sweeping. Street committee officials visited each household to inspect and critique housework. Keeping up to standard largely remained the burden of women.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Many advances were made in public healthcare in the early 1950s. Mass inoculations prevented diseases that had affected China for centuries. Outbreaks of cholera, smallpox and typhus dropped dramatically. Educational campaigns discouraged the tradition of spitting, thereby reducing the spread of tuberculosis. Urinating in public was also frowned on – a measure that improved sanitation in urban areas. Life expectancy, a significant measure of national health, rose from 36 in 1950 to 57 by 1957.⁵⁷ The government's efforts in disease prevention were a key contributor to this. The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases also dropped dramatically after 1949. Brothels were closed and sex workers were trained for other occupations. Opium addicts were put in rehabilitation programs and traffickers were severely punished with long prison terms or execution.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the following historical interpretations on Communist rule in the early 1950s and fill in the table that follows.

Maurice Meisner: 'The new regime was authoritarian and often repressive, but the cities were governed honestly and efficiently for the first time in modern Chinese history.'⁵⁸

(continued over page)

- 56 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 71.
- 57 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 107.
- 58 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 97.
- 59 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 279.
- 60 Joseph W. Esherick, "Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution" in *Twentieth Century China: New Approaches*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (London: Routledge, 2003), 42.
- 61 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 336–8.
- 62 Frank Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, xi, xv.

John King Fairbank: 'Here was a dedicated government that really cleaned things up – not only the drains and streets but also the beggars, prostitutes, and petty criminals, all of whom were rounded up for reconditioning.'⁵⁹

Joseph W. Esherick: 'Most Chinese did not experience the success of the revolution and the coming to power of the CCP as some form of personal liberation. It was a new world, in many respects, and for most it was a better world. But the PRC ushered in a better world in part because the CCP brought order and discipline to their environment, and this was probably as important to many as was any sense of liberation.'⁶⁰

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday: 'Once the state was secure, Mao began systematic terrorisation of the population, to induce long-term conformity and obedience ... Mao intended most of the population – children and adults alike – to witness violence and killing. His aim was to scare and brutalise the entire population.'⁶¹

Frank Dikotter: 'The Chinese Communist Party refers to its victory in 1949 as a "liberation." The term brings to mind jubilant crowds taking to the streets to celebrate their newly won freedom, but in China the story of liberation and the revolution that followed is not one of peace, liberty and justice. It is first and foremost a history of calculated terror and systematic violence ... The first decade of Maoism was one of the worst tyrannies in the history of the twentieth century, sending to an early grave at least 5 million civilians and bringing misery to countless more.'⁶²

	JOHN KING FAIRBANK	JOSEPH W. ESHERICK	MAURICE MEISNER	JUNG CHANG AND JON HALLIDAY	FRANK DIKOTTER
What were the consequences of CCP rule on Chinese people? (early 1950s)					
What evidence is used to support the historian's viewpoint?					
What is the historian's overall assessment of early CCP rule?					
Which interpretation(s) do you find most convincing, and why?					

MAO IN MOSCOW

Josef Stalin: ‘You’re a winner now, and winners are always right. That’s the rule.’

When the CCP came to power, Mao said that in foreign relations China would ‘lean to one side,’ meaning it would seek an alliance with the Soviet Union. On 16 December 1949, Mao made his first trip abroad, taking a train to Moscow. The Chairman was noticeably nervous during the journey – so much so that he became ill and nearly fainted while stretching his legs during a stop in Siberia. Meeting Stalin was a big deal; he was a formidable personality and the leading figure of the international Marxist movement. Members of the Soviet Politburo lined up to meet Mao and a lavish welcome was staged at the Kremlin. Mao was Stalin’s guest of honour at his seventieth birthday celebration in mid-December.⁶³

At their first meeting, Mao announced that he was seeking ‘Something that doesn’t just look good, but tastes good.’⁶⁴ The head of the Soviet secret police force (KGB), Laverntii Beria, snorted and giggled when this was translated, thinking that Mao was alluding to something sexual. Stalin asked for clarification. Mao gave none but Stalin knew what was being hinted at: Mao wanted a new diplomatic agreement to replace the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty signed by Jiang Jieshi in 1945. The territorial status of Outer Mongolia was also discussed. Stalin told Mao, ‘You’re a winner now, and winners are always right. That’s the rule.’⁶⁵ Stalin, however, proved to be an elusive and tough negotiator. While Mao was billeted in a comfortable *dacha* (chalet) just outside Moscow, Stalin refused to take telephone calls and repeatedly cancelled meetings. Weeks went by and Mao showed little interest in the entertainment on offer, such as a trip to the Bolshoi Ballet. Mao soon became annoyed at Big Brother’s obstinacy; Stalin relented and in January 1950, Zhou Enlai joined Mao to negotiate the terms of a new treaty.

The Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, signed on 14 February 1950, was somewhat sweet and sour. Under the terms of the treaty, a loan of US\$300 000 000 was made to China (to be paid in instalments over five years), the USSR agreed to support China if it came under military

threat, and Soviet experts and machinery would help China develop its industries. The Soviets, however, got the upper hand in lucrative joint stock ventures to extract Chinese minerals in Xinjiang and they continued to occupy the naval base at Port Arthur. Outer Mongolia also remained in Soviet hands, which riled the Chinese. Soviet aid came at a price too – the loan had strict and steep repayment conditions. The alliance nevertheless strengthened the socialist bloc at a time when international tensions were mounting. In 1949, Mao had declared, ‘The Chinese people must lean either to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism. There can be no exception. There can be no sitting on the fence; there is no third path.’ Mao returned from his trip to the Soviet Union and announced with much fanfare that there was ‘eternal and indestructible friendship’ between the Chinese and Soviet peoples.⁶⁶ After the death of Stalin in 1953, Sino-Soviet relations would become increasingly strained and Mao would show that he could indeed take his own distinctive ‘third path’ to socialism.

⁶³ Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 363–4.

⁶⁴ Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 423.

⁶⁵ Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 422.

⁶⁶ Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 21.



‘Great meeting.’ [1951]

THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Liu Shaoqi: 'The Soviet road is the road all humanity will eventually take.'

By 1953, the government of the PRC had carried out initial social and political campaigns, brought inflation down to manageable levels and ensured military control of the nation. On 1 October, the fourth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, the Chinese government announced the beginning of 'the general line for the transition to socialism' and the end of New Democracy (as a phase of the bourgeois democratic revolution). How this might be achieved had been debated and agreed upon by Communist leaders in January. The USSR was looked to as the model for further development, particularly in industrial production. Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi declared, 'The Soviet road is the road all humanity will eventually take. To bypass this road is impossible.'⁶⁷ Like Stalin had done in 1928, the government drew up a Five-Year Plan to guide China into a new era of economic progress. Its exact content was not made public until 1955.

PRIORITY INDUSTRIES

Priority was given to heavy industry, which received 88.8 per cent of the government's budgeted capital. Manufacturing industries received just 11.2 per cent investment.⁶⁸ A bare minimum of investment was assigned to agriculture. Seven-hundred new industrial enterprises including oil refineries, petrochemical manufacturing units, metallurgical plants, coal mines and power stations provided the foundation of the Five-Year Plan. Transport infrastructure also received attention and new bridges and railways were built. Rail and road bridges across the Yangzi River at Wuhan provided a link between the north and south without the need for time-consuming ferry crossings. The Soviet Union played a key role – around 10 000 engineers and advisers came to China to establish the new industrial plants and install Soviet-made machinery. Twenty-eight-thousand Chinese went to the USSR for training.⁶⁹

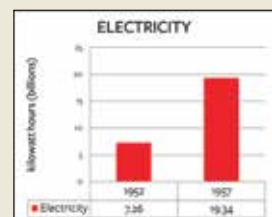
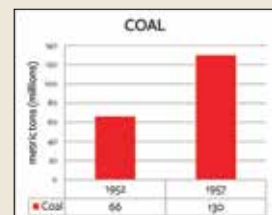
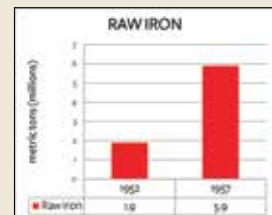
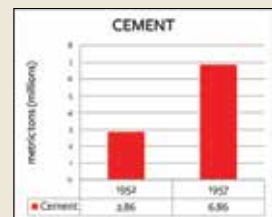
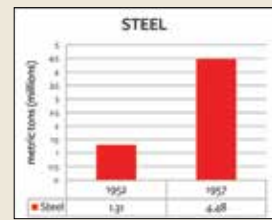
PRODUCTION QUOTAS

The Chinese Five-Year Plan followed the Stalinist model in setting production quotas and regulating these through a central administration. Targets were set by a State Planning Commission and the heads of industrial enterprises and regions were required to meet them. The First Five-Year Plan achieved considerable success. It met most of its industrial targets – some were exceeded – and laid the basis for further economic advances. A very respectable increase of ten to sixteen per cent in overall annual production was achieved.⁷⁰ China, for the first time, was able to produce its own trucks, aircraft, cars and ships.

LOAN REPAYMENTS

Whilst Soviet technical assistance was greatly appreciated, investment loans were of questionable value, being in effect more beneficial to Russia than China. Repayments were so steep that by 1955 China was repaying more than it was

PRODUCTION OUTPUT, FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN (1952–1957)



Source: Schools Council History Project, *The Rise of Communist China* (UK: Holmes McDougall, 1977), 46.

67 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 376.

68 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 122.

69 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 286.

70 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 123.

receiving in aid. Soviet capital was limited, accounting for about three per cent of total investment. The bulk of the costs for the Five-Year Plan came from the Chinese, financed largely at the expense of the agricultural sector. While Soviet investment brought impressive gains in heavy industry, growth in overall farming production – vital to China's large population and grain trade – was only four per cent a year.⁷¹

STAGED COLLECTIVISATION

While they followed the Soviet model in industrial planning, the Chinese were more original in their rural policies. The USSR had collectivised agriculture as a means to increasing government income and improving efficiency; however, the coercive practices employed to force Russian peasants into collective farming had brought much suffering. The Chinese Communists sought an eventual collectivisation of the countryside, but they did so in a gradual and persuasive manner. Peasants were at first encouraged to form Mutual Aid Teams, in which up to ten families shared tools, draught animals and labour during the peak harvest and planting times. Once teams had been established, 'lower' Agricultural Cooperatives (twenty to forty households) and then 'higher' Agricultural Cooperatives (100–300 families) were encouraged. In lower cooperatives,



A women's Mutual Aid Team on a communal farm.

peasants would receive payment depending on the amount of land they owned (ownership titles were retained) and the labour they contributed. In higher cooperatives, land ownership became collective – farmers were now paid for their labour only.

AGRICULTURAL STAGNATION

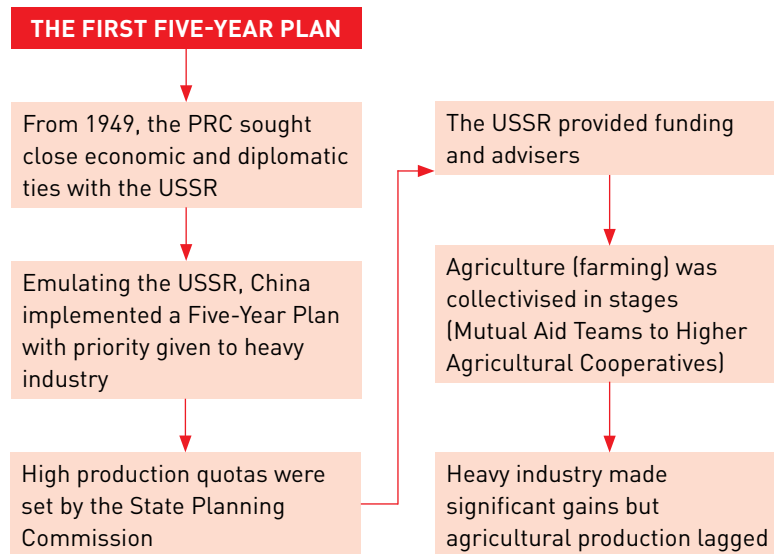
The greater concentration of workers under cooperatives allowed for excess labour to be assigned to carry out small-scale irrigation works, such as new dams and ditches, and clearing

land. While limited funds were given to the agricultural sector, which might seem strange given its importance, it was assumed that the more 'socialist technique' that came with gradual collectivisation would balance this out and bring great benefits. Farmers would take on more efficient, superior production methods and harvests would increase. The shift from mutual aid teams to cooperatives met resistance in some areas, as peasants were reluctant to give up their newly acquired land. The government had also imposed high grain taxes and low fixed prices to fund its industrialisation drive – a measure that many peasants found exploitative. Grain production, expected to increase significantly, grew by just two to three per cent annually. Some crops, such as soybeans and cotton, experienced a decline. Food production was therefore barely keeping pace with a population growth of 2.2 per cent.⁷² This worrying stagnation of the agricultural sector was a potential brake on the industrial progress of the Five-Year Plan. China's

71 Bruce McFarlane, 'The Economy of the Chinese People's Republic,' in *China: The Impact of Revolution*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Hawthorn: Longman, 1976), 97.

72 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 124.

leaders began an earnest debate among themselves: 'Did they prescribe the wrong medicine, or was the dose too small? Should they go backward or forward?'⁷³



CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Complete the tasks below.

1. Using dot points, outline the objectives of the First Five-Year Plan.
2. Write a short paragraph explaining the successes and limitations of the First Five-Year Plan.
3. In small groups, discuss why the First Five-Year Plan and the aid received from the Soviet Union have been described as 'sweet and sour.'

ACTIVITY

THE GAO GANG AFFAIR AND THE HIGH TIDE OF 1955

Mao Zedong: 'We must guide the movement forward boldly and must not fear dragons ahead and tigers behind.'

The pace and degree of agricultural collectivisation remained a hot topic in upper party meetings throughout the Five-Year Plan. Advocates of a gradualist position rallied around Finance Minister Bo Yibo (Po I-po), Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi, leading economist Chen Yun (the architect of the industrial modernisations), Politburo member Chen Yi (Ch'en I) and Zhou Enlai. These moderates, who together were an influential voting bloc in the Central Committee, believed there was little sense in pushing for collectivisation until such time that industry could provide the tools and machinery to modernise farming further. With the backing of Liu Shaoqi, the director of the party's Rural Work Department, Deng Zihui (Teng Tzu-hui), even authorised the dissolution of a large number of

⁷³ Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 87.

74 Cited in Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 49.

75 Ten leading generals of the PLA were given the prestigious title of Marshall in 1955.

Agricultural Cooperatives in 1953 and 1955. According to Deng, the move to cooperatives was premature in some areas. Liu Shaoqi warned of the danger of 'false, dangerous and Utopian agrarian socialism ... no collectivisation without mechanisation.'⁷⁴ Mao did not agree, nor did his ideological ally Chen Boda. Mao believed that if the peasants were left to their own devices their 'spontaneous tendencies towards capitalism' would run unchecked. Furthermore, Mao and Chen believed that revolutionary zeal could overcome any material deficiencies. Mao's opinion did, however, fluctuate on exactly how fast the change should be implemented.

THE GAO GANG AFFAIR

Politburo member and chief Communist in Manchuria, Gao Gang (Kao Kang), was one of Mao's spokesmen articulating the need for collectivisation. Gao's career had flourished during the early years of the new regime. He presided over the building of many new industrial enterprises in Manchuria, a region rich in mineral deposits, and fostered close relations with the USSR. Mao's backing of Gao during the Five-Year Plan would indirectly lead to the first major political purge of the CCP in the era of the People's Republic. In late 1952, Mao called Gao to Beijing and appointed him head of the State Planning Commission. When Mao privately complained to Gao of Liu Shaoqi's seeming lack of enthusiasm for a more radical pace of socialist development, Gao took it as a sign that his own political fortunes were on the rise. He harboured ambitions to unseat Vice-Chairman Liu as Mao's second-in-charge. In 1953, Gao sounded

out other leading Communists on whether they would join in his conspiracy. He won over Shanghai party boss, Rao Shushi (Jao Shu-shih), with the allure of a high post under his leadership. PLA Marshalls⁷⁵ Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai also expressed interest. Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, however, went straight to Mao and reported Gao's plotting.

On 24 December 1953, a Politburo meeting was convened and Mao berated Gao for creating divisions in the party. With the Chairman's blessing, Liu and Zhou unleashed a campaign of scathing attacks against Gao Gang and Rao Shushi at party gatherings in February 1954. Gao was accused of running an 'independent kingdom' in Manchuria. Gao begged to see Mao but was refused an audience. He and Rao were arrested and purged from the party on 31 March 1954. Rao spent the next twenty years in prison, while Gao committed suicide a few months after

Mao Zedong (left) with Deng Xiaoping.



he was expelled. Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai were cleared of any wrongdoing, while Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping both received promotions. Mao was clearly pleased with their loyalty. According to Mao, the Gao Gang affair indicated that there was an 'anti-Party sinister wind' blowing.⁷⁶ The turn of events revealed Mao's emerging imperial leadership style and set a dangerous precedent of intrigue at the top of the CCP hierarchy.⁷⁷ He was evidently prepared to play his comrades off against each other in order to strengthen his own authority. Liu and the others had been given a salutary reminder that their positions relied upon Mao's continuing favour.

RURAL COLLECTIVISATION INCREASES

With the government taking a hefty portion of grain from producers, hunger and unrest developed in some regions; these regions were not keen to collectivise further. The leaders of the CCP Politburo had by early 1955 come to a consensus that Agricultural Cooperatives could only be implemented carefully and gradually – a view not shared by Mao. Mao told Deng Zihui, the most outspoken critic of hasty collectivisation, 'Your mind needs to be shelled with artillery.'⁷⁸ Dissatisfied with the party leadership, Mao convened a conference of regional and provincial CCP secretaries in July 1955. He delivered a speech on 'The Question of Agricultural Cooperation' in which he rebuked those who failed to embrace the 'high tide' of socialism:

An upsurge in the new, socialist mass movement is imminent throughout the countryside. But some of our comrades, tottering along like a woman with bound feet, are complaining all the time, 'You're going too fast, much too fast' ... on no account should we allow these comrades to use the Soviet experience as a cover for their idea of moving at a snail's pace.⁷⁹

Dragons ahead and tigers behind were not to be feared, Mao declared. Mao's appeal to the party at large had an electrifying effect and placed the initiative firmly back in his hands. Provincial officials launched an all-out drive to bring as many peasants into 'higher' Agricultural Cooperatives as they could. Mao hoped that half of the rural workforce might be collectivised by the end of 1957. Whipped up by revolutionary fervour, Communist cadres in the countryside were keen to do even better. They mobilised support amongst the poorer peasants by extolling the virtues of collective farming and placed pressure on those who expressed caution. By December 1956, ninety-seven per cent of the peasantry had joined the cooperatives. Mao was overjoyed and told his secretary that he hadn't been as happy since the defeat of Jiang Jieshi.⁸⁰

NATIONALISATION OF INDUSTRY

The so-called 'Little Leap' in the countryside was echoed by a similar drive for further socialist measures in the cities. In late 1955, Mao asked a delegation of businessmen their opinion on how socialism might be extended in industry. Having had their backsides 'burnt' by the 'pepper' of the *wufan* Five Antis movement, the industrialists enthusiastically gushed that nationalisation of what remained of the private sector should be carried out as soon as possible.⁸¹ It was an extraordinary tactic by which the state was not obliged to force nationalisation by decree, but achieved it through persuasion (with thinly veiled intimidation). On 6 December 1955, Mao declared that by the end of 1957 all private enterprises would be taken

DID YOU KNOW?

A joke popular in the CCP in 1955 shows how different leaders approached the task of convincing businessmen to accept socialist policies. Asked 'How would you make a cat eat pepper?' Liu Shaoqi said, 'You get somebody to hold the cat, stuff the pepper in its mouth, and push it down with a chopstick.' This would not do, Mao said. Persuasion, not force, was needed. Zhou Enlai said, 'I would starve the cat. Then I would wrap the pepper with a slice of meat. If the cat is sufficiently hungry, it will swallow it whole.' Again, Mao disagreed: 'One must not use deceit. Never fool the people.' The Chairman then offered his own answer: 'You rub the pepper on to the cat's backside. When it starts to burn, the cat will lick it off – and be happy to be permitted to do so!'

76 Alexander V. Panstov with Steven I. Levine, *Mao: The Real Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 405.

77 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 444.

78 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 446.

79 Cited in Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin-Viking, 1999), 127.

80 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 447.

81 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 448.

over by joint-state ownership. Mao's vision was completed by the end of the first fortnight of January. On 15 January 1956, a rally at Beijing's Tiananmen Square was attended by 200 000 people to celebrate the triumph of socialism over capitalist private enterprise. There were incongruous scenes of businessmen leaping for joy and enthusiastically embracing as they handed over the deeds to their factories and firms. Other cities made rapid moves to emulate Beijing.

THE TWELVE-YEAR AGRICULTURAL PLAN

Although the 'high tide' of 1955 was satisfying for Mao, the successes of the First Five-Year Plan brought new problems. Central planning required a large bureaucracy. Mao was concerned that as the Communists established themselves in power, revolutionary sentiment might be lost. Many comrades were 'tottering' on 'bound feet' rather than showing a knack for hard work and revolutionary endeavour. Mao's sense that 'rightist conservatism' was holding back further progress bothered him, as did the question of how to rectify the imbalance of rural and urban China. Mao began to doubt the virtues of Soviet-style economic planning. Something new was needed. He proposed a Twelve-Year Agricultural Plan that called for grain and cotton output to be doubled. Collectivisation should be pursued 'more, faster, better and more economically.' The Plan was formally endorsed by the State Council and Central Committee in January 1956, but Mao felt it was given a lukewarm reception by the rest of the Politburo. Premier Zhou Enlai and other moderates, including economic planning officials, expressed concern at the impact of collectivisation. Grain harvests were down and peasant handicrafts were suffering. Mao believed that lessening collectivisation would only impede much-needed improvements. An infusion of Yan'an-style energy was what was needed; mass line was preferable to centralised bureaucracy.

THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS

1956 brought further unpleasant surprises. There were popular uprisings against Communist regimes in Hungary and Poland. Dramatically, at the Twentieth Party Congress in the USSR on 25 February, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev revealed and denounced the crimes of the deceased Josef Stalin. His strongest criticism was of Stalin's cult of personality. This was potentially dangerous for Mao, given his own cult-like approach to leadership. The question of a personality cult was obliquely addressed at the Eighth Party Congress of September 1956 – the first since the Communists had come to power. Direct references to Mao Zedong Thought as the CCP's guiding doctrine were dropped from the CCP constitution, a measure proposed by Marshall Peng Dehuai. A leadership team, headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, emerged. Mao declared that he would move to the 'second line' where he would consider broader policy questions, whilst the 'first line' of day-to-day administration would be handled by Liu and Deng. The Congress also saw Zhou Enlai offering a critical analysis of the rapid pace of collectivisation and Mao's Twelve-Year Plan. It appeared the 'high tide' would soon be slowed down, a severe personal setback for Mao. Events would show that Mao did not find the views of the party leadership agreeable. The challenges facing Maoist-style socio-economic development – in particular avoiding a 'Hungarian situation' and retaining a 'revolutionary' central bureaucracy – were responded to by Mao with a surprising tactic.

DID YOU KNOW?

Peng Dehuai's proposal to remove Mao Zedong Thought from the CCP constitution later received a harsh rebuke – it was not seemingly to challenge the Chairman's authority.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- How did Mao Zedong attempt to change the economy and political system of the new society (1949–56)? Use evidence to support your response.
- 'The First Five-Year Plan and Twelve-Year Agricultural Plan showed that the Communist regime in China was economically sensible.' To what extent do you agree?
- Explain how Mao and the CCP leadership responded to political challenges during the period 1949–56. Use evidence to support your response.

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS CAMPAIGN



HUNDRED FLOWERS
CAMPAIGN

Mao Zedong: 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.'

Mao countered the challenges of 1956 through a campaign to encourage greater freedom of expression amongst intellectuals. He believed the benefits would be two-fold: intellectuals could help to make the party more responsive to popular sentiment; and social grievances could be expressed safely through discourse rather than protest. In January 1956, Zhou Enlai had given an address to non-Party academics, 'On the Question of Intellectuals,' which attempted to clarify the problematic class status of China's intelligentsia. Zhou explained that, 'The overwhelming majority of intellectuals have become government workers in the cause of socialism and are already part of the working class.'⁸² The government was by this time concerned with China's shortage of technical expertise – a worrying obstacle to industrial development. Creative thinking, essential for scientific innovation, needed encouragement. Zhou's speech promised a more lenient and understanding relationship between the Communists and intellectuals. Mao carried through with this idea and revived the classical expression, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.' The principle was first publicly espoused, on Mao's behalf, by Lu Dingyi (Lu Ting-i), head of the Central Committee's propaganda department, at a meeting of scientists, writers and artists in May 1956. Letting 'a hundred flowers bloom' was taken to mean that a variety of opinions and freedom of speech were valued by the Communists. Mao hoped that public debate would shake up the party bureaucracy and 'vaccinate' the masses against the sort of suppressed discontent that had plagued Hungary.⁸³

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao often referred to body functions in his political speeches, as he liked the 'earthiness' of such things. He once said, 'My farts are socialist farts. They are fragrant.' This language, particularly when used in important meetings, was intended to shock those with 'bourgeois sensibilities,' but to peasants and soldiers it was quite acceptable. Mao's personal habits were thus an expression of his political 'purity.'

INITIAL RESISTANCE

By the end of the year, little had come of Mao and Zhou's efforts. Most intellectuals were wary of the sudden call to state their views freely. Many feared arrest, as was the fate of Hu Feng in 1955. One Democratic League minister noted, 'During the past year, not many flowers bloomed and few schools of thought contended in the academic and ideological fields ... the basic cause lies in the fact that the higher intellectuals are still suspicious.'⁸⁴ With the exception of

82 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 171.

83 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 303.

84 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 179.



'The happy life Chairman Mao gave us.' (1954)

Mao and Zhou, most party leaders were similarly unenthusiastic about unleashing popular criticism. The mayor of Beijing, Peng Zhen, did his best to dampen the movement by keeping a tight hold over reports in official newspapers, such as the *People's Daily*. Liu Shaoqi also tried to rein in Mao's campaign but the Chairman remained determined to see his Communist garden bloom with more variety. Mao said that even Jiang Jieshi's works and the ideas of Liang Shuming (who had been rebuked during the 1951 Thought Reform movement) should be open to public discussion. Critical intellectuals need not be feared: 'If they have something to fart about, let them fart! If it's out, then one can decide whether it smells bad or good ... If the people think their farts stink, they will be isolated.'⁸⁵ The hesitation of other Communists only fuelled Mao's desire to push his ideas more vigorously.

Mao reinvigorated the Hundred Flowers campaign on 27 February 1957, with a speech to the Supreme State Conference, whose members included delegates of the democratic parties, scientists, academics and writers. That he chose to address a non-Party forum was significant and reflects Mao's frustration with his CCP comrades. Mao's speech, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People,' was his way of

explaining the nature of conflict in a post-capitalist society. Although class conflict had ceased, Mao argued that 'contradictions among the people' were still bound to occur. Such contradictions were different from class conflict. They could and should be resolved peacefully amongst the people by the Maoist approach of unity-criticism-unity. Debate and criticism were of value in this process for they would eventually achieve a greater consensus.⁸⁶ Contradictions were only harmful if they were ignored and allowed to aggravate the people – as had happened in Eastern Europe. Mao's dialectical outlook found no harm in contradictions: 'They are just contradictions, that's all. The world is full of contradictions.'⁸⁷ Mao's campaign for critics of the party and government to voice their opinions began to gather momentum. By April, Mao had won over his colleagues, who were reassured that the forthcoming rectification by popular means would be 'a gentle breeze and a fine rain.' Mao also made a three-week train journey through eastern China during which he did his best to ease the concerns of provincial party cadres and encourage non-Party intellectuals. His rapturous welcome at carefully stage-managed meetings with local peasants and workers gave him a sense that the people were fully supportive of his measures.⁸⁸ It was mass line on a mass scale. On 13 April 1957, the *People's Daily*, which had previously been silent on the issue, released an editorial promoting the Hundred Flowers. That Mao was seeking non-Party criticism was now widely known and the first critics began to speak up.

85 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 458.

86 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 303.

87 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 457.

88 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 390.

FLOWERS BEGIN TO BLOOM

By May 1957, signs of lively 'blooming and contending' were apparent. This critical fine rain soon grew to a torrential downpour at public meetings, in non-Communist publications and through large wall posters at universities. People expressed dissatisfaction at the CCP's monopoly on political power, meddling by Communist cadres in intellectual matters, valuable research time wasted in attending political meetings, and the 'work style' of party officials, which was said to be no better than that of corrupt GMD bureaucrats or Imperial mandarins. Communist officials were accused of 'sitting in sedan chairs and keeping themselves from the masses.'⁸⁹ One young academic lamented the fact that the government treated him and his colleagues like 'dog shit one moment and 10 000 ounces of gold the next.'⁹⁰ Even Mao was criticised for his 'arbitrary and reckless character' and his tendency to be 'very confident about the false reports and dogmatic analysis presented to him by his cadres.'⁹¹ That the Communists were accused on a number of occasions of betraying their socialist ideals was a particularly stinging rebuke. Whilst the Hundred Flowers was largely a movement amongst students and academics, in some cities workers went on strike over political and economic concerns. There were student riots at some universities. Popular unrest was mounting.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the last Hundred Flowers posters at Beijing University read, 'Intelligent friends! Everybody has been cheated! ... Even after the Emperor had ordered the Party to mend its ways, the mandarins of all degrees are nevertheless still in place, everything remains just as before.'

'POISONOUS WEEDS'

Mao was shocked. Although he had expected and welcomed criticism, he had assumed it would be constructive and would criticise practices and individuals *within* the Communist administration – not the system itself.⁹² He had hoped for 'moderate criticism of the details, rather than the fundamentals, of life in the new China.'⁹³ Mao made it known that critical talk had gone beyond acceptable boundaries. On 8 June 1957, an editorial in the *People's Daily* signalled the end of the Hundred Flowers movement by announcing that denunciations of the party would no longer be tolerated. Mao's speech, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions,' was published by the paper on 19 June with significant revisions. Mao now made a distinction between 'non-antagonistic' contradictions and 'antagonistic' contradictions. The former could be resolved peacefully and were beneficial; the latter were bourgeois, dangerously anti-revolutionary and needed to be opposed through class struggle. Mao explained that this was like 'distinguishing between fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds.' Ideas that were contrary to socialism, divisive, critical of the democratic dictatorship, democratic centralism or the Communist Party were 'poisonous.' 'Any word or deed at variance with socialism,' Mao claimed, 'is completely wrong.'⁹⁴ Between February and June the tone of the speech had changed from liberal to threatening.

DID YOU KNOW?

A seventeen-year-old girl was sent to a Manchurian labour camp for 're-education' after she was heard to say, 'American-made shoe polish is really good.'

THE ANTI-RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN

After just five weeks, the cultivation of 'flowers' turned into the pulling of 'weeds.' Deng Xiaoping was appointed to direct an Anti-Rightist campaign. Tens of thousands of academics and students were subsequently put through harsh denunciations and self-criticism meetings. Institutions where intellectuals were employed were required to expose a quota of five per cent of their staff as Rightists; failure to do so would result in the institutional leadership being suspected of Rightist leanings. Self-criticism was only the beginning of their

- 89 Cited in Jonathan Spence and Annping Chin, *The Chinese Century* (London, HarperCollins, 1996), 176.
- 90 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 455.
- 91 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 391; Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 107.
- 92 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 128; John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 292.
- 93 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 189.
- 94 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 467.



RITTENBERG ON THE
HUNDRED FLOWERS
CAMPAIGN



A CHINESE ACADEMIC
ON THE HUNDRED
FLOWERS CAMPAIGN

95 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday,
Mao: The Unknown Story,
438.

woes; between 300 000 and 400 000 'Rightists' were sent to the countryside for 're-education through labour' in prison camps. Their terms of labour could be up to ten or even twenty years. Many thousands lost their jobs or were demoted to positions far below their qualifications. People whose partners were deemed Rightists were urged to 'draw a line' between themselves and their spouse and seek a divorce. Forty per cent of the Guomindang Revolutionary Committee and Democratic League parties were found guilty of following an 'anti-Communist, anti-people, anti-Socialist bourgeois line.' Their influence thereby declined further. The prospect of professional ruin and the pressure of self-criticism led to many suicides. Early morning exercisers at Beijing's Summer Palace gardens would encounter bodies floating in the lake and hanging from trees.⁹⁵ The Anti-Rightist campaign ruined countless lives. Not only a great injustice, the campaign did serious damage to China's higher education system and discredited people with technical training and expertise. This would have tragic consequences for economic planning during the Great Leap Forward.

FEATURE

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

DID YOU KNOW?

After the Hundred Flowers campaign, Mao retained a deep distrust of intellectuals for the remainder of his life. Mao was fond of saying, 'Peasants have dirty hands and cow shit-sodden feet, but they are much cleaner than intellectuals.'

The Hundred Flowers campaign has often been presented as a Machiavellian trap. Michael Lynch argues that 'Mao's apparent mellowing was an act. He had not really become more tolerant; he was engaged in a ruse.'⁹⁶ The speed with which the movement was brought to an end, Lynch contends,

suggests that Mao had been planning to expose and remove his critics all along. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday agree that Mao had 'cooked up a devious plan ... Mao was setting a trap ... He was inviting people to speak out so that he could use what they said as an excuse to victimise them.'⁹⁷ Mao admitted that he did set a trap of sorts, but explained that his motives were honest:

The purpose was to let demons and devils, ghosts and monsters 'air views freely' and let poisonous weeds sprout and grow in profusion so that the people, now shocked to find these ugly things still existing in the world, would take action to wipe them out ... The Communist Party foresaw this inevitable class struggle. Some say this was a secret scheme. We say it was open.⁹⁸

Mao's motives

Alan Lawrence is sceptical of Mao's portrayal of the Hundred Flowers as an intentional trap: 'It implies that the Communist Party knew what it was doing: that it was in control all along.'⁹⁹ Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, recalls that, 'Mao of course was shocked. He had never intended that any of the criticisms be directed against him. He had never meant the party as an institution to come under attack ... Mao had grossly miscalculated.'¹⁰⁰ Like Lawrence, Edwin Moise, Maurice Meisner and Craig Dietrich believe that Mao's motives were complicated and ambiguous. Mao's claim that he



'Bring every positive factor in to play, correctly handle contradictions among the people.' (1958)

had set a trap was issued later as an explanation and defence. A number of subtle factors were at play at the time: Mao's desire to make use of public criticism to rectify the Communist bureaucracy and allow for the release of popular tensions; his genuine surprise at the extent of popular dissatisfaction; and the back-dated revisions to his speech on 'contradictions.' Jasper Becker points out that a number of CCP officials also came under attack in the Anti-Rightist campaign, especially those who had opposed Mao's collectivisation drive;¹⁰¹ amongst those purged was Deng Zihui (who had authorised the disbanding of higher Agriculture Cooperatives in the mid-1950s). The

Hundred Flowers – regardless of intent – certainly went a long way towards silencing those who dissented from Chairman Mao's 'revolutionary' line. It was 'an extraordinary response to the challenges the CCP was facing,' according to Jonathan Fenby, one that demonstrated Mao's 'naiveté – and then his utter ruthlessness.'¹⁰²

Philip Short on the Hundred Flowers

The 'Hundred Flowers' was the most ambitious attempt ever undertaken in any communist country to combine a totalitarian system with democratic checks and balances. Even Mao was unsure what it would produce. 'Let's try it and see what it's like,' he said at one point. 'If we acquire a taste for it, there will be no more worries.' What would happen if the Party did not 'acquire a taste for' being criticised was left discreetly unsaid ... As the torrent of popular anger, mistrust and bitterness swelled, Mao began to have second thoughts ... Mao had not made one but two misjudgements. He underestimated the volume and bitterness of the criticisms, and the cadres' ability to withstand them. What had started as an attempt to bridge the gap between the Party and the people (and had been only incidentally an effort to expose and punish a small number of anti-communist irreducibles) was turned on its head. It became a trap not for the few but for the many – for the hundreds of thousands of loyal citizens who had taken the Party at its word.¹⁰³

- 96 Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic*, 27.
- 97 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 434–5.
- 98 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 109.
- 99 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 41.
- 100 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 200.
- 101 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 54–5.
- 102 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 386.
- 103 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 464, 466, 469.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the above accounts of the Hundred Flowers campaign and complete the tasks below.

1. According to Short, what was Mao trying to achieve with the Hundred Flowers campaign?
2. With reference to further evidence and Short's perspective, explain how the Hundred Flowers campaign had a different outcome than what was intended.
3. Compare Short's interpretation with the others above. To what extent is his view convincing?

ACTIVITY

DID YOU KNOW?

The PRC's first population census was completed in 1953. While the population had been thought to be around 450 million, the census revealed the true figure was closer to 582 million.

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD



THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

Mao Zedong: 'I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation, it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever.'

By the summer of 1957, the Soviet-style First Five-Year Plan was coming to an end. A second Five-Year Plan, with similar aims regarding investment and planning, had been drawn up by government economists and approved in September 1956. The results of the first plan had been quite pleasing, with particular success in heavy industry. Yet the ongoing suitability of the Stalinist model was seriously questioned. Agriculture was not achieving the surplus required for further export or sustaining the growing population. The emergence of bureaucratised state agencies, which managed economic and social policies, was also detested by Mao. The Chairman felt that planning had become overcentralised. The direction of collectivisation remained a further unresolved issue. A number of contradictory policies were put forward, but not clearly endorsed, in September 1957. The Central Committee gave cautious approval to the winding back of some collective farms and approved the proposals set out in the Second Five-Year Plan. Mao's more radical 1956 Twelve-Year Plan for Agriculture also remained accepted 'in principle.'

COMPETING WITH THE WEST

The immediate catalyst for policy change came from an unusual direction. The Soviet satellite *Sputnik* was launched on 4 October 1957, prompting a wave of euphoria in socialist countries around the world; Russia, not America, had made the first major step in space exploration. Mao quipped with glee that the United States 'hadn't even launched a potato.'¹⁰⁴ In the wake of *Sputnik*, Nikita Khrushchev declared that in fifteen years the Soviet Union would overtake the United States in the production of electric power, steel, coal, iron and oil. In November, Mao went to Moscow to address the Conference of World Communist Parties, marking the fortieth anniversary of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Mao gave a rousing speech in which he declared that 'the east wind prevails over the west wind.' Never one to be seen lagging behind, Mao boldly told the gathered communist delegates that in fifteen years China would overtake Great Britain in steel production. Buoyed with revolutionary optimism, Mao returned to Beijing determined to inspire the Chinese people 'to get to heaven in a single leap.' On 12 December, the National Economic Planning Conference reiterated Mao's declaration that China would surpass Britain's steel output. While the means to achieve this were not identified, Mao felt there was an urgent need for an alternative, more original, path to socialist development.

SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS

To 'seek truth from facts,' Mao set out on a four-month tour of provincial China. As in the past, Mao met with adoring crowds, and local officials carefully stage-managed his visits. Mao, however, believed he was genuinely in touch with popular sentiment; he was particularly interested in the outcome of a campaign that had mobilised millions of peasants to complete massive water conservation projects. A profusion of irrigation ditches, canals and reservoirs had

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 478.

been constructed – their production exceeded official targets. These had been built by hand with sheer manpower as there was often no machinery available. Other huge engineering feats, such as the expansion of Tiananmen Square, were also undertaken. The potential of the Chinese people to achieve great things by their collective will sparked Mao's imagination. He spoke with renewed enthusiasm of the Yan'an days when human endeavour triumphed over seemingly impossible odds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many children born in 1958 and 1959 were given names reflecting the goals of the Great Leap Forward. Chaomei ('Overtake America') and Chaoying ('Surpass England') were quite popular choices made by new parents.

THE VIRTUE OF BACKWARDNESS

There were a number of important meetings of policy-making bodies in early 1958, at which Mao lobbied for a renewal of revolutionary virtue in economics and social relations. Between trips to different provinces, Mao gave speeches to the Supreme State Conference, National People's Congress and gatherings of central and provincial party leaders. A recurring theme was his disdain for bureaucratic and 'expert' planners. Regulations only held back the 'productive forces' of the masses. In typical fashion, the Chairman extolled creative thinking and mass enthusiasm but warned of false reporting of production targets and rash implementation of new ideas. The 'correct' line between pragmatism and idealism was becoming blurred and difficult to judge. Mao didn't see this as a problem – a love of contradictions was his trademark. The ideal of 'disequilibrium,' a lack of balance, was held by Mao as one of the essential laws of historical development.¹⁰⁵

There were strong ideological assumptions behind Mao's thoughts, but unlike more orthodox Marxist thinkers, Mao believed that backwardness was a virtue in revolutionary progress. China's low level of economic development was not an impediment to the socialist transformation of society. According to Mao, human consciousness was more decisive than material conditions. A communist society – in terms of its societal values – could emerge before its economic structures were fully realised. The Chinese people were endowed with characteristics that made them particularly amenable to this socialist transformation of the soul:

China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities; they are, first of all, poor, and secondly blank. That may seem a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.¹⁰⁶

MAOIST ECONOMICS: THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Mao once said, 'If you are too realistic you can't write poetry.'¹⁰⁷ That the Great Leap Forward (GLF) would come to be driven by utopianism, irrationality and a lack of sensible policies is true. However, the ideas that Mao and his adviser Chen Boda were exploring in 1958 were neither illogical nor invalid.¹⁰⁸ Mao spoke of an economy that would 'walk on two legs' through 'simultaneous development.' Heavy industry would continue to receive capital investment but rural areas would aim to acquire small-scale industries that would generate their own capital. A vast resource lay in the peasants, whose labour was untapped outside the planting and harvest seasons. More efficient organisation of their work would surely bring further gains. The countryside would therefore make use of its massive population with labour-intensive projects to produce goods, improve rural infrastructure and further encourage collective values. As had been carried out in the Border Regions and Yan'an during the Civil War, rural cooperatives would engage in the small-

105 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 209.

106 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 213.

107 Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122.

108 James C. F. Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics*, 23; Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 307.

scale production of hand tools, fertilisers, cloth, handicrafts, coal for local use and simple medicines. Local know-how and innovation could make use of lower-grade raw materials that heavy industrial enterprises could not. Far from requiring heavy investment, these measures would actually produce their own capital. Funding for agriculture could therefore remain fairly low.

The emerging problem of unemployment would also ease as recent migrants to the cities could be encouraged back to the countryside and given appropriate jobs. A further result would be a 'technical revolution,' whereby common people would learn basic scientific knowledge and skills in the course of their everyday work. In learning by doing, the masses would come to be 'socialist-conscious, cultured labourers,' largely removing the need for an elite class of experts.¹⁰⁹

THE LAUNCH OF THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

At the second meeting of the Eighth Party Congress of 5–23 May 1958, the Great Leap Forward was officially launched. It was not a detailed blueprint but rather a declaration of revolutionary intent. Mao argued for the need to 'let the people explode.'¹¹⁰ The production targets set out in the Second Five-Year Plan were revised upwards and the slogans of the High Tide were proclaimed again: 'Go all out, aim high, and achieve greater, faster, better, and more economical results in the building of socialism.' A greater degree of collective organisation in the countryside was encouraged. Mao gave more addresses to delegates than normal, one of them stating:

I once asked some comrades whether we live in heaven or on earth. They all shook their heads and said we live on earth. When we look at the stars from earth, they are in heaven. But if there are people in the stars, when they look at us, wouldn't they think we are in heaven? Therefore I say that we live in heaven as well as earth.¹¹¹

Philip Short describes Mao at this time as being 'on an adrenalin high pumped up by the limitless vista of a bright communist future in which nothing would be able to withstand the concerted efforts of 600 million people.'¹¹² Brimming with energy and new ideas, in the coming months Mao repeatedly spoke of 'going all out' and 'aiming high.' Linked with the slogan 'achieving greater, faster, better, and more economical results,' these ideals would form the General Line of the Great Leap Forward.

Frustrated at the lack of development in rural areas, many provincial officials were deeply inspired by Mao's General Line. Party idealists readily embraced the idea of China leaping ahead of its capitalist rivals and were therefore keen to embrace radical Maoist innovations to achieve this end.¹¹³ Echoing the Chairman's visionary pronouncements, Xie Fuzhi, a Central Committee delegate and the minister for public security, proclaimed,

We are supernatural. Maybe we are supernaturals of the second order. Maybe on another planet there are people who are brighter than we are, in which case we are of the second order, but if we are brighter than they are we are supernaturals of the first order.¹¹⁴

PEOPLE'S COMMUNES

The principal basis for the Great Leap Forward, which Mao saw as the means by which the transition from socialism to communism could be achieved, came

DID YOU KNOW?

In the autumn of 1958, a popular peasant song went,

*Communism is
paradise,
The People's
Communes are the
bridge to it.
Communism is
heaven,
The Commune is the
ladder.
If we build that ladder,
We can climb the
heights.*

109 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 225.

110 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 398.

111 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 285.

112 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 480.

113 Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 21.

114 Cited in Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine*, 56.

about spontaneously, although it fitted well with the idea that rural communities should strive towards greater efficiency of labour. In the midst of the water conservation campaigns, a number of Agricultural Cooperatives in Henan Province amalgamated into a single large organisation in order to meet labour shortages. The organisation, calling itself the Sputnik Commune, was founded on 29 April 1958. A number of other regions followed suit. On 9 August, while touring in Shandong Province, Mao saw a banner above a village headquarters reading 'People's Commune.' It was the first Mao had heard of the term and he liked it very much. A reporter overheard him remark, 'The people's commune is great!' and the next day his declaration – much like an Imperial edict – appeared on the front page of every newspaper.¹¹⁵

The movement to establish People's Communes grew exponentially. From 17–30 August 1958, Mao called an enlarged meeting of the Politburo and secured approval for the idea. By the end of the year, 740 000 Agricultural Cooperatives were reorganised into 26 000 People's Communes.¹¹⁶ According to a *People's Daily* editorial of September 1958, 'The main features of the people's commune are that it is bigger and more socialist.'¹¹⁷ The communes were indeed much bigger than cooperatives and averaged 5000 households, with total populations of up to 100 000 people. Their significance, as the editorial indicated, was not just their size; they were decidedly more socialist in many of their initiatives. Private plots were replaced by the complete collective ownership and farming of land. Smaller fields were combined into much larger ones and tilled by hundreds of people at a time. Tools and livestock also became collective property. Wages were paid in 'work points,' which were exchangeable for everyday items, rather than money.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, people were encouraged to use hand tools rather than machines; using one's hands was seen as virtuous.

115 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 269. The translation is sometimes given as 'The people's communes are fine' or 'The people's commune is good.'

116 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 58.

117 Cited in Colin Mackerras et al, *China in Revolution, 1850–1976: History Through Documents* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 137.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the poster 'The communes are big, the people are numerous, the natural resources abundant, it is easy to develop a diversified economy – People's Communes are good' and complete the tasks below.

1. From the source, identify signs of economic success the People's Communes have achieved.
2. Outline the ways in which the artist suggests that the People's Communes have improved the everyday life of peasants.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain the agricultural policies of the Great Leap Forward.
4. Evaluate the significance of the Great Leap Forward for rural China. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

'The communes are big, the people are numerous, the natural resources abundant, it is easy to develop a diversified economy – People's Communes are good.'
(1960)



ACTIVITY

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, the Dazhai Commune in northern China was held up as the model for all to imitate. Dazhai peasants were said to have had turned great tracts of barren land into fertile fields through collective effort. Peasants and workers were urged to 'learn from Dazhai.' It later emerged that Dazhai had been generously aided by the government and army.

Communes were organised along military lines, with units of ten to twenty brigades, made up of a dozen or so smaller units called work teams. The 'troops' of the work teams marched in military formation as they set off to 'battle nature' (work). Communes were military in function too, as each trained and armed its own militia. There was speculation by some observers that even the nuclear family was coming to an end; large nurseries allowed parents more time to work in the fields while communal kitchens and eating halls fostered collective spirit and reduced the number of people required for cooking meals. The elderly were brought together and cared for in 'Happiness Homes.' The most optimistic party cadres claimed that communes were not just a means to the eventual transition from socialism to communism; they were a fledgling communist society in the present. Mao spoke with great enthusiasm that communes would bring to an end the 'Three Great Differences' in China: divisions between city and country, between worker and peasant, and between mental and physical labour. Administration of public welfare, schooling, local defence, farming and small industry were all the responsibility of the commune. It was claimed that each commune owned its own means of production and that more formal state functions would soon be unnecessary. Historians critical of Mao's intention argue that the communes really allowed for the Communist Party to govern the peasants more stringently than ever. According to John King Fairbank, 'The state had become the ultimate landlord.'¹¹⁸ More scathingly, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday argue that 'The aim was to make slave driving more efficient.'¹¹⁹

Whatever the aims of the CCP leadership, there was genuine enthusiasm for the People's Communes among many ordinary people; such enthusiasm was an important factor in the early successes of the Great Leap Forward. Many peasants and workers felt they were building a prosperous future with their own hands. It was 'an exciting experience,' recalled Li Zhisui, 'Something big was happening in the Chinese countryside, something new and never seen before.'¹²⁰ Zhao Tongmin, a peasant, had fond memories of working in his commune:

Those were the days. Whenever I sit at home and think about it I feel happy again ... What was so great? The fact that so many people came together. Their discipline was marvellous. Everyone came to work on time and all joined in with a will. No line divided village from village, people from here and people from there! ... Those were great days! Great days!¹²¹

A translator for Beijing's national radio broadcast service, Sidney Rittenberg, was exhilarated to engage in voluntary manual work alongside his colleagues during the Great Leap. He recalled, 'I felt the thrill of being one of the people who didn't just talk about changing the world, but actually did something about it.'¹²²

BACKYARD STEEL PRODUCTION

Mao was whipping up a frenzy of enthusiasm to achieve his grandiose vision of an ideologically pure and prosperous new society. It was clear, though, that the steel industry would struggle to meet the proposed targets. To boost metallurgical production, a campaign to build 'backyard' steel furnaces was introduced. Small furnaces had long been used to forge simple farming implements. It no longer seemed wise to invest heavily in large steel mills when smaller ones could be established cheaply at a much greater rate. But, Mao asked, 'If these small backyard steel furnaces can really produce so much steel, why do foreigners build such gigantic steel mills? Are foreigners really so stupid?'¹²³ On a visit to Anhui

118 John King Fairbank, cited in Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic*, 29.

119 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 452.

120 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 269–70.

121 William Hinton, *Shenfan* (London: Picador, 1983), 205, 217.

122 Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 230.

123 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 276.



Backyard steel smelters.

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to backyard steel, peasants were shown how to identify surface deposits of uranium. Backyard smelters were used to refine the ore into functional grade uranium. Edwin Moise argues that while this caused a good deal of pollution, backyard uranium smelters made a significant contribution to China's emerging nuclear power industry.

province, which was governed by a particularly fanatical Maoist, the Chairman was given a tour of some backyard steel works and shown their product. (To Mao's untrained eye, it looked like good steel and may have even been produced elsewhere at a modern furnace.) Mao was impressed and his doubts were allayed.

The production of backyard steel was taken up by people of all walks of life. Furnaces were made from mud bricks and people competed to produce the most steel. Peasants in the People's Communes were especially hard working. There were even small steel mills in the grounds of Zhongnanhai, the compound in Beijing which housed leading CCP officials and their families. The drive to make steel soon assumed manic proportions – people tended smelters night and day and virtual forests of smoking chimneys sprang up across the country. Vast woodlands were destroyed for fuel. The search for scrap metal became a further obsession – woks, tools, doorknobs, nails, bicycles and wagon wheels were all melted down. 'The country looked as though it had been picked clean by iron-eating ants,' writes Harrison Salisbury.¹²⁴ Privately, some people felt that melting metal to make more metal was rather silly, while others revelled in the collective competition to 'send up Sputniks' or 'launch a satellite' (make the most steel).

DID YOU KNOW?

In the film of Yu Hua's novel *To Live*, the main character saves his ancient puppet set from being melted down for steel by offering to perform shows for those working the backyard smelters.

COMMUNAL KITCHENS AND ENTERTAINMENT

While the peasants made steel and tilled the fields they were encouraged to eat as much as they liked at communal kitchens. Acting troupes, puppeteers and musicians provided entertainment to those working the furnaces. One commune official, Wang Wende, spoke with great enthusiasm of the food and entertainment provided:

We all ate well during the smelting drive – bread and noodles at midnight for all hands. Huge pots next to every furnace provided the noodles. Who can ever forget it? And then there were the skits, the drama teams, the films! All the barriers between the people broke down ... We ate a lot of meat. It was considered revolutionary then to eat meat. If you didn't eat meat it wouldn't do ... People even vied with each other to see who could eat the most.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng*, 149.

¹²⁵ William Hinton, *Shenfan*, 216.

Whilst enjoyable and satisfying, the generous meals served by the commune kitchens were setting a dangerous precedent. The peasants were consuming food reserves that had yet to be replenished. The steel drive was also taking men away from farm work. In the end, the campaign proved a failure. Ordinary people with homemade furnaces, despite their best intentions and revolutionary enthusiasm, are not metallurgists. The quality of backyard steel and iron was extremely poor – low in purity and brittle ‘like cattle droppings.’ Backyard mud furnaces also tended to wash away in the rain. A number of hand-dug canals and dams, reinforced by earth walls, similarly did not last. The quantity-over-quality approach had proven flawed.

DID YOU KNOW?

So-called innovations based on Lysenkoism included a corn-rice hybrid and cows that produced only cream. These were some of the more ‘plausible’ claims. Other ‘innovations’ were a cotton plant fused with a tomato plant to produce red cotton. There was even talk of a breed of rabbit that was nearly the size of a cow and the cross-breeding of cows with pigs.

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENTATION: LYSENKOISM

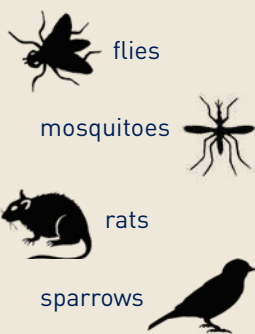
The weather in 1958 was exceptionally good and a bumper grain crop was ready for harvest. Innovations based on the theories of Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko were encouraged to increase yields further. Lysenko claimed to have proven that biological and ecological characteristics of plants and animals are acquired from the immediate environment or direct forebears, rather than from genetic makeup. For example, the seeds of fruit trees, after storage in very cold conditions, could supposedly be planted in snowy regions with positive results. Two Lysenkoist theories adopted with particular enthusiasm by the Chinese included close planting and deep ploughing. It was thought that close planting would lead to greater yields as seedlings of the same plant type would not compete with each other. The theory of deep ploughing postulated that previously untouched fertile soil should be brought to the surface and that larger root systems should be encouraged. In practice, topsoil was made barren by being mixed with clay and sand brought up from the depths, in some cases three metres below the usual ploughing level. Close planting of rice restricted the amount of wind that passed through the crops, resulting in poor quality and lower yields. Crops unsuited to a particular region were planted in abundance, in the Lysenkoist belief that they would grow if well-tended.

Why was the time-honoured wisdom of China’s peasant farmers – not to mention common sense – so readily abandoned? Because the Great Leap Forward extolled innovation and the supremacy of human will at the expense of ‘expert’ advice. One of Mao’s close associates, Kang Sheng, explained in a lecture in 1958, ‘We should be like Marx, entitled to talk nonsense. What is science? Science is simply acting daringly. There is nothing mysterious about it ... just act recklessly and it will be alright.’¹²⁶

THE ‘FOUR PESTS’

A further example of reckless nonsense during the Great Leap Forward was the campaign to rid China of the ‘Four Pests’: flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows. People spent hours killing as many of these creatures as they could, working enthusiastically in teams and devising ingenious traps. The Great Sparrow Campaign, however, had unforeseen consequences. Crop damage from sparrows was reduced but locusts and other insects had a free run on newly planted fields. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday give a telling example of how embarrassing the situation was for the CCP:

THE ‘FOUR PESTS’



¹²⁶ Cited in Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 61–2.

It was not long before a request from the Chinese government marked 'Top Secret' reached the Soviet embassy in Peking. In the name of socialist internationalism, it read, please send us 200,000 sparrows from the Soviet Far East as soon as possible.¹²⁷

The sparrow was later replaced by the bedbug as 'number four pest.'

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the poster 'Everybody comes to beat sparrows' and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the features of the Four Pests campaign, referring to the source.
2. Explain how nature was controlled during the Great Leap Forward, referring to the source provided and your own knowledge.
3. Evaluate the significance of this campaign and other policies of the Great Leap Forward. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.



ACTIVITY

- 127 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 449.
- 128 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 287.
- 129 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 399.
- 130 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 293.
- 131 Paul Ivory, 'Great Leap Forward,' in *Dictionary of the Politics of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Colin Mackerras (London: Routledge, 1998), 99.

'Everybody comes to beat sparrows.' (1956)

MANIPULATION OF STATISTICS

Ross Terrill points out that Mao's philosophy on numbers reinforced the unrealism of the Great Leap Forward.¹²⁸ In the way the Chinese phrase 'ten thousand years' is used to designate an infinitely long time rather than a literal period of time, Mao was often imprecise in his estimations. He would say that something might come about in five or twenty or forty years. When reviewing whether steel production targets should be increased from six-million to nine-million tons, Mao proposed, 'Let's just double it! Why dilly-dally? Let's make it eleven million tons.'¹²⁹ Mao had 'an almost metaphysical disregard for reality, which might have been interesting in a poet, but in a political leader with absolute power was quite another thing.'¹³⁰ On one occasion, Mao said that economics was like playing the game *mah-jong* and all you had to do was double the stakes.

What most directly led to disaster, however, was misinformation. Planning and statistical monitoring were passed from the central government ministries to communes and provincial officials.¹³¹ The production of grain was not tied to set quotas; the cadres in charge of the People's Communes were simply told to produce as much as possible. Mass rallies were held, at which representatives from different communes vowed to achieve spectacular grain harvests. Whilst a one-acre field might normally produce one ton of grain or rice, commune activists pledged fifteen to thirty tons. Amid gongs, drums, singing and fanfare, work teams launched competitive drives to over-fulfil their preposterously high targets.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Great Leap Forward, mathematics students demonstrated their revolutionary disregard for 'bourgeois specialists' and 'expert' knowledge by deliberately calculating equations incorrectly and putting decimal points in the wrong places.

DID YOU KNOW?

A 1958 propaganda photo shows a field where the crop was so dense it supported the weight of four children. It was later revealed that a concealed wooden platform held the children up.



- 132 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 133.
 133 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 276.
 134 Cited in Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine 1958-1962* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 25.
 135 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 298.
 136 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 277–8.
 137 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 125.
 138 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 60.
 139 Each category of worker (e.g. young males, elderly people etc.) received the same number of work points regardless of actual hours worked; you could not earn more points by working harder.
 140 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 113.

‘Good News Reporting Stations’ took the place of proper accounting and central authorities were told about plentiful harvests only. The false sense of success was bolstered by ‘show fields’ set aside for inspection by officials; these contained rice or grain recently transplanted from other fields, giving the impression of incredibly high yields per acre. To fulfil quotas, commune officials falsified and inflated harvested grain figures. ‘With each repetition,’ Jasper Becker argues, ‘the lies became more and more fantastic, a ghastly parody of Chinese Whispers.’¹³²

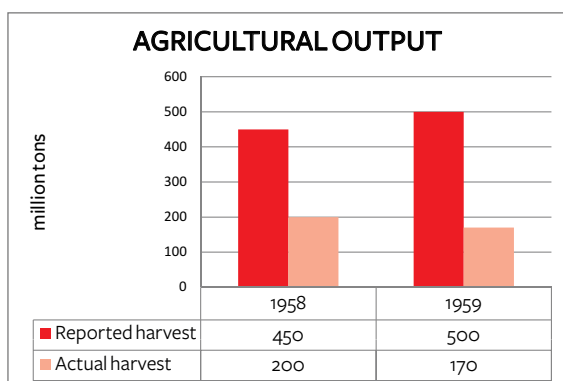
Not all reports were taken at face value. Economist Chen Yun doubted the accuracy of many claims. One of Mao’s secretaries, Tian Jiaying (T’ien Chia-ying), was likewise sceptical and saw the attitudes of provincial officials as irresponsible: ‘In the past, our party has always sought truth from facts, but this isn’t what we’re doing now. People are telling lies, boasting ... This is ridiculous. It is shameful.’¹³³ Voices of reason, such as Tian’s, were shouted down by the multitude of Maoist sycophants and idealists, unable or unwilling to acknowledge reality. Similarly, cadres or other local officials who raised questions or urged caution were liable to be struggled against as ‘deniers’ who were ‘casting aspersions on the excellent situation.’¹³⁴ Jung Chang recalled, ‘It was a time when telling fantasies to oneself as well as others, and believing them, was practised to an incredible degree.’¹³⁵ Li Zhisui, Mao’s doctor, felt that, ‘Everyone was hurrying to jump on the utopian bandwagon ... everyone was caught in the grip of this utopian hysteria ... The excitement was contagious.’¹³⁶ Mao, too, joined in the game and came to believe the slogans and inflated reports. It seems Mao heard and saw only what he wanted to – that the Great Leap Forward was a tremendous success.¹³⁷

‘SURPLUS’ GRAIN

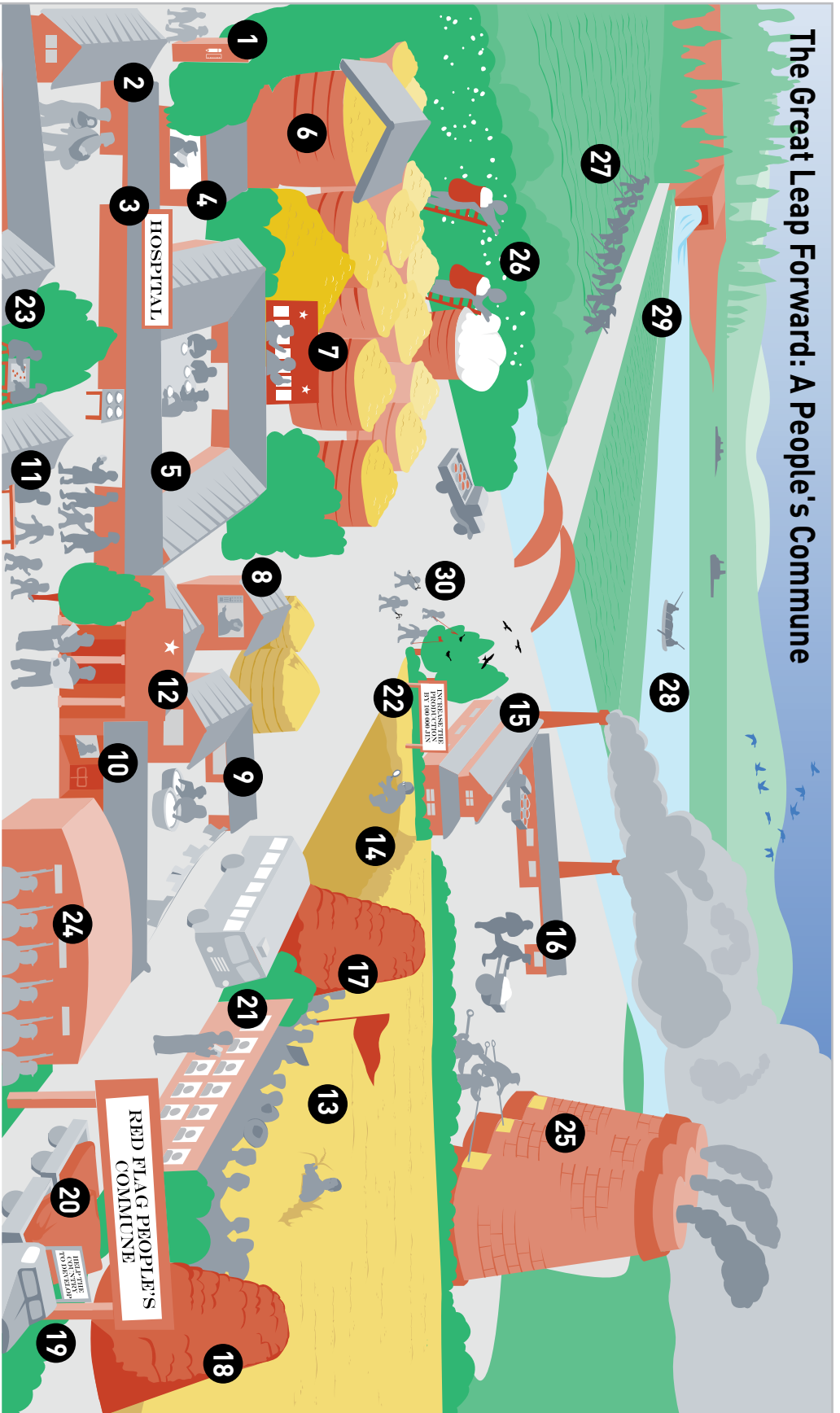
Based on faulty statistics indicating a sizeable grain surplus, the government negotiated export sales to fund heavy industry. There was a lively debate in the *People’s Daily* on how China might deal with its apparent abundance of food. Nations with close ties to China, such as Albania, North Vietnam and North Korea, even received shipments of free grain.¹³⁸ Favourable weather and enthusiasm had increased agricultural output from 195 million tons in 1957 to 200 million tons in 1958. However, provincial officials reported that 450 million tons had been harvested. In 1959, the harvest was 170 million tons but reported as high as 500 million.

Production fell because of poor management and a decline in peasant enthusiasm. Some grew disillusioned with the ‘work points’ system that allocated the same rewards to all people of a certain type despite how much each one worked;¹³⁹

there was no incentive, other than revolutionary idealism, to put in extra effort. Even enthusiastic workers could not sustain the frenetic pace required. Central authorities, having been inundated with glowing reports of bountiful harvests, subsequently imposed high grain levies. Around thirty per cent of the harvest had previously been collected by the state; this rose to about ninety per cent.¹⁴⁰ Provincial officials and rural cadres did their best to send in as much grain and rice as they could. Given that many communes had already consumed their stores of food, grain requisitioning meant going without. Disaster was looming.



The Great Leap Forward: A People's Commune



1. Primary school	8. Electricity station	15. Concrete factory	23. Happiness Home for the elderly
2. Maternity clinic	9. Communal laundry	16. Fertiliser factory	24. People's Militia
3. Hospital	10. Cinema	17-18. Fertiliser	25. Large 'backyard' steel production
4. Library	11. Kindergarten and nursery	19. Slogan on truck: 'Help the country to develop'	26. Cotton picking
5. Communal kitchen and canteen	12. General store	20. Harvested goods being exported	27. Rice farming by Work Team
6. Grain storage (note abundant harvest)	13. Delegation of visitors from another commune being shown field and harvest	21. Honour board to celebrate achievements	28. Fishing boat
7. Notice board outlining breakthroughs in production	14. Agricultural experimentation	22. Slogan encouraging greater crop yields: 'Increase the production by 100 000 jin'	29. Water conservation project (canal)
			30. The Great Sparrow Campaign (Four Pests)

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Write a short paragraph on each of the topics below. Use evidence to support your response.

1. Why was the Great Leap Forward introduced?
2. Identify the main elements of the Great Leap Forward.
3. By early 1959, what problems had emerged from the GLF?

DID YOU KNOW?

In the novel *To Live*, the narrator, who lives in rural China, says, 'villagers ... started to keep track of work points. I was considered a strong worker, so they gave me ten points. If [my wife] hadn't gotten sick she would have had eight points, but once she got sick she could only do light work and so had to settle for four.'

ATTEMPTS TO CURB THE GLF

Mao Zedong: 'I am absolutely no good at construction, and I don't understand industrial planning.'

THE WUHAN PLENUM

A Central Committee plenum (meeting) was held at Wuhan from 28 November to 10 December 1958. There, 'Some Questions Concerning People's Communes' were raised. The party had become aware of the problems emerging in rural areas and was seeking to rein in the more radical aspects of the Great Leap Forward. The General Line was right but implementation had been hasty and careless. Rather than 450 million tons, it was decided that a harvest of 370 million tons was more 'realistic.' Production quotas were reduced and communes were made more accountable. Some private markets were allowed to reopen, families could tend their own small vegetable plots and food was no longer provided in communal kitchens. Investigative teams set out from Beijing to assess the effects of the GLF. In short, the plenum tinkered with, rather than rethought, the policy.

At the Wuhan Plenum, it was announced that Mao Zedong would not stand for re-election as China's president but would continue to be CCP chairman. He was apparently satisfied with his achievements to date and wished to spend more time on broader theory and policy than day-to-day administration. The party went to some lengths to reassure the general public and the Communist rank-and-file that Mao had not been demoted. Liu Shaoqi was appointed the new head of state, formally assuming the presidency in April 1959. Liu was the dominant figure in a series of high level meetings in early 1959 that endorsed more pragmatic measures and further moderated the Great Leap. By the summer, communes did little more than supervise Agricultural Cooperatives. Mao was present at the National People's Congress, Supreme State Conference and Central Committee meetings at which there was a 'judicious trimming' of policies.¹⁴¹ It seemed the Great Leap Forward was being quietly wound down. The economic situation nevertheless continued to deteriorate. Fields were not being farmed effectively, partly because labour was going into backyard iron production or tools had been lost in the smelting drive. Famine was breaking out in a number of provinces.

FACT-FINDING MISSIONS

The Great Leap Forward was not going at all well and Mao wanted to know why. Mao told one of his bodyguards, 'Something has gone wrong in the countryside.'

¹⁴¹ Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 134.

I must find out what it is.¹⁴² He said to the governor of Henan, 'all my plans are messed up.'¹⁴³ Leading Communists, including Mao, took it upon themselves to travel to various regions and investigate problems. Mao went to Manchuria in January to see how large steel plants operated. He learnt that good steel can only be made in professional refineries with good sources of fuel. He did not, however, order that backyard steel production should cease. Mao felt that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people should not be dampened.¹⁴⁴ In June, Mao visited his old home village of Shaoshan in Hunan; it was the first time he had been back in thirty-two years. Mao chatted with villagers, saw his family home and took a swim in the local reservoir. He heard some complaints but was also told that the People's Communes were 'really good.' It was what he wanted to hear: the Great Leap needed adjustments but was, on the whole, a fine ideal.

Like Mao, Marshall Peng Dehuai had made a trip to his home village of Niaoshi, which was also in Hunan and not far from Shaoshan. Peng was appalled by what he found. The villagers were hungry and living in squalor. Elderly residents of the local Happiness Home shivered on flimsy bamboo mats as there were no proper beds. Children in the kindergarten were crying with cold and hunger. Peng shouted, 'What sort of Happiness is this?'¹⁴⁵ He gave 400 yuan from his own pocket to buy bedding for the kindergarten and elderly home. He also assured the villagers that he would tell his fellow leaders in Beijing of their plight. Peng then spent April to June making a diplomatic visit to the Soviet Union. He reputedly shared his misgivings about the Great Leap with Khrushchev.



Chairman Mao Zedong with teachers and students of the Shaoshan School in 1959.

LUSHAN: PENG CRITICISES MAO

In July 1959, the leading figures of the CCP gathered at Lushan for a Central Committee plenum. High on Mount Lu, the summer resort of Lushan offered a cool respite from the stifling weather, in which the policies of the Great Leap Forward could be reviewed in comfort. Before the plenum, Peng Dehuai had tried to meet with Mao; as Mao was unavailable, Peng outlined his concerns in a private letter.¹⁴⁶ Peng was a no-nonsense, straight-talking soldier – certainly not one of the fawning sycophants seeking to ingratiate themselves with Mao. Although Peng and Mao had known each other a long time and were not unaffectionate with each other, they had many disagreements. Mao seemingly took Peng's letter as a personal affront; on 16 July he submitted 'Comrade Peng Dehuai's Statement of Opinions' as a formal document to the Politburo and called for comment. While it outlined some of the party's recent achievements, Peng's letter expressed concern at 'winds of exaggeration' brought by 'petty-bourgeois

142 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng*, 173.

143 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng*, 171.

144 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 291.

145 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 461.

146 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong*, 145.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao sent his trusted bodyguards on secret fact-finding missions; usually to their home villages. Deciding what to report back was a dilemma. One guard said, 'On one hand Mao wanted to discover the truth, but on the other hand he could not tolerate anyone who dared to tell the truth.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Peng Dehuai wrote a poem at the end of his tour of Hunan:

*The millet is scattered
all over the ground,
The leaves of the sweet
potatoes are withered,
The young and strong
have gone to make
iron,
To harvest the grain
there are children and
old women.
How shall we get
through next year?
I shall agitate and
speak out on behalf of
the People.*

fanaticism' and criticised 'hasty and excessive' socialist transformation. Peng did not mention famine but argued there was serious fault in the Great Leap Forward:

Bewitched by the achievements of the Great Leap Forward and the passion of the mass movement, some leftist tendencies emerged ... In the view of some comrades, putting politics in command could be a substitute for everything ... But putting politics in command is no substitute for economic principles, much less for economic measures.¹⁴⁷

Peng was clearly refuting Mao's frequent claim that 'politics should be in command.' According to Lee Feigon, 'Peng had told the emperor he had no clothes. When Mao insisted that he was, metaphorically, well clothed – as others had been telling him on his tours of the countryside – few besides Peng cared to contradict him.'¹⁴⁸ Mao was in danger of losing face, particularly in light of Khrushchev's speech on 14 July that criticised the People's Communes in China. Mao suspected Peng of colluding with the Soviet leader – a dangerous development given the fate of Gao Gang in 1954.

MAO SILENCES PENG

When the Lushan Plenum formally got under way, Mao opened with a generally positive summation of the situation: 'The achievements are tremendous, the problems are numerous, the experience is rich, and the future is bright.'¹⁴⁹ The delegates then broke into small groups for discussion and debate. Mao gave no indication of his thoughts on Peng's letter. Central Committee members 'were misinterpreting his silence now, reading it as approval when in fact Mao was becoming more and more disgruntled.'¹⁵⁰ Peng remained critical of the GLF and won over a number of comrades to his views. Others were soon offering similar assessments. It seemed the party leadership was on the verge of abandoning the policy. Mao took this as an attack on his leadership, and on 23 July 1959, stepped into the fray. He began with an air of nonchalance as he addressed a full gathering of the Central Committee: 'You have talked so much. Now allow me to talk for an hour or so, will you? I have taken sleeping-pills three times and still couldn't sleep.'¹⁵¹ As Peng sat ashen-faced in the back row of the auditorium, Mao launched into a scathing counter-attack and rebuked those whose revolutionary zeal appeared to be wavering. A master of political intrigue, Mao simultaneously blamed and excused himself for the failures of the Great Leap Forward:

Everybody has shortcomings. Even Confucius made mistakes. So did Marx ... I have seen Lenin's manuscripts, which are filled with changes. He, too, made mistakes ... I devoted myself mainly to revolution. I am absolutely no good at construction, and I don't understand industrial planning ... I should take primary responsibility for 1958 and 1959. It is I who am to blame.¹⁵²

While taking 'primary responsibility,' Mao also put it back on others. No one had pointed out that his ideas were ill-founded or taken him to task when they didn't work out: 'I do not claim to have invented the people's communes, only to have proposed them.'¹⁵³ All comrades needed to share some responsibility, and if they had a problem, they best speak up: 'You must all analyse your responsibility. If you have to shit – shit! If you have to fart – fart! You will feel much better for it.' The tension amongst delegates was palpable, but Mao was only getting started:

We are under attack from within and outside the Party. The majority of comrades need to strengthen their backbones. Why are they not strong? Just because for a time there were too few vegetables, too few hair-grips, no soap, a lack of balance in the

147 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 692.

148 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, 133.

149 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 137.

150 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 312.

151 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 469.

152 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 693.

153 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change*, 175.

economy and tension in the market, everyone became tense ... in the first part of the night you might be tense, but once you take your sleeping pills the tension will go away for the rest of the night.¹⁵⁴

Over the following days, relations between Mao and Peng deteriorated further. Harrison Salisbury relates one confrontation:

Peng said that if the 5 billion yuan uselessly spent for backyard steel had been put into consumer goods it would have made a pile higher than Mount Lu. Mao interrupted to say: 'Not so high as Mount Lu.' 'OK' retorted Peng, 'a little bit lower.'¹⁵⁵

Peng asked Mao, 'Do you hear the people outside? They are not crying "Long live Chairman Mao," but "We're hungry. We want food." What did we fight the war for?'¹⁵⁶ The fiery general bluntly reminded the Chairman that people can't eat poetry. Both men screamed obscenities at each other. Mao eventually presented the Politburo with a stark choice: if they didn't want to follow his leadership he would go back to the countryside, raise another Red Army and overthrow the government. In the end, no one took up Mao's offer to voice further objections or back Peng Dehuai. Speeches and reports that presented the Great Leap Forward in a critical light were discreetly forgotten and all sided with Mao. On 16 August, the Central Committee released a document condemning Peng Dehuai as an 'anti-Party element' and reaffirmed the General Line of the Great Leap Forward. Peng was replaced as defence minister by the loyal Maoist Lin Biao. A new Anti-Rightist campaign was carried out to silence and punish any other 'little Peng Dehuais' in the party and government.

The Lushan proceedings were of great significance. Mao made it very clear that his authority was paramount. No longer would the Politburo openly challenge his views. According to Salisbury, 'Mao had turned his band of brothers into a clique [tame group of followers], clapping hands and nodding heads like mechanical dolls.'¹⁵⁷ One Communist official, Wang Bingnan (Wang Ping-nan), later recalled:

After Lushan the whole Party shut up. We were afraid to speak out. It stifled democracy. People didn't tell Mao their honest opinions. They were afraid. This led straight to the terrible times of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵⁸

154 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 411.

155 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors*, 179.

156 Jean Pasqualini, cited in the BBC documentary, *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor* (1997).

157 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng*, 183.

158 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng*, 184.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- 'Despite its shortcomings, the Great Leap Forward succeeded in bringing ordinary people together in a shared enterprise.' Discuss.
- In what sense was the Lushan Plenum an important turning point in Mao's leadership of the CCP?
- How did the Great Leap Forward affect a range of people in China? Discuss in regard to two or more social groups.

ACTIVITY

DID YOU KNOW?

During the famine, many city people were forced to eat chlorella. Supposedly high in protein, chlorella was a slimy, green fungus-like substance grown in urine. Although it was washed thoroughly before being eaten, it is still said to have tasted disgusting.

FAMINE: THE THREE BAD YEARS

Mao Zedong: 'Even if there's a collapse that'll be alright. The worst that will happen is that the whole world will get a big laugh out of it.'

After the 1959 Lushan Plenum, any retreat from the radical economics of the Great Leap Forward would have been a loss of face for Mao and the CCP.¹⁵⁹ Policies that had been marked as failures were now vigorously defended.

The People's Communes were revived, as were Lysenkoist farming practices. Grain targets were set at 270 million tons, lower than previously proposed but still far above the actual harvest of 170 million. There was even a push to create communes in urban areas. People began to sell personal items before the government could claim them as public property.

The Great Leap Forward thus went on for a further year after Lushan. The result, according to John King Fairbank, was 'an all-time first-class manmade famine ... The GLF had played itself out as a Mao-made catastrophe.'¹⁶⁰ Conditions in several regions were made more difficult by flood, drought and locust plagues in 1959 and early 1960.¹⁶¹



The suffering of rural people was further exacerbated by the whims of Chairman Mao, who insisted on upholding the General Line of the Great Leap Forward. 'It was grotesque,' says Sidney Rittenberg, 'in that Mao was an adventurer who didn't hesitate to embark on adventures with hundreds of thousands of people's lives at stake.'¹⁶² One of the worst famines in Chinese history would soon claim many more lives than this.

As the situation deteriorated, officials continued to report to the central authorities that everything was fine and tried to prevent news of the famine from leaking. Public security bureaus

intercepted mail and entire villages were placed under lockdown. People who tried to escape were arrested and imprisoned for 'vagrancy.'¹⁶³ No one would admit what was happening – until Mao said so, there was no famine.

Some commune officials did their best to help the people under their care, but others, who tended to be the Maoist fanatics, extracted as much grain for the government as possible. One official said, 'It is not that there is no food. There is plenty of grain, but 90 per cent of the people have ideological problems.'¹⁶⁴ Some regional CCP cadres even tortured peasants who refused to toil in the fields or hand over their remaining food. Peasants who tried to revert to tried and tested farming methods were sent away to forced labour camps as 'right opportunists.'¹⁶⁵

During the 'Three Bad Years' of 1959, 1960 and 1961, up to thirty-million people died of starvation.¹⁶⁶ People showing symptoms of malnutrition, such as oedema (yellow skin and swelling of the limbs), were a common sight in the cities. A former school teacher recalled the hardships of the time:

159 Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 73.

160 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 302–3.

161 Jasper Becker disputes the theory that bad weather contributed to the famine.

162 Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor* (BBC, 1997).

163 Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone*, 21.

164 Cited in Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 113.

165 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 115.

166 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, xi.

DOCUMENT

MS. FAN, FORMER SCHOOLTEACHER, ON THE CHINESE FAMINE

The starvation began in 1958 and 1959, and got worse in 1960. If you check the population statistics you'll find that the population born in 1960 is much less. At that time, only those families that were really quite rich would give birth to a baby. For us, as citizens in towns, things were better as we got food rations, but even that was nowhere near enough to fill our stomachs.

I was thirteen years old at the time and lived with just my younger brother at home as my parents went to another city to earn money to support our family. So our aunt took care of us from time to time. We lived as neighbours. At the beginning of each month we took home our bag of grain. I could get 6.5 kilograms, which was the ration of an adult. My brother's ration was smaller as he was still a child. We would grind the grain into powder at weekends so as to get more rice. I had to calculate the right amount for thirty days. It wasn't really like rice, actually a kind of powder or paste – there was much less rice and more water. And pickle was the only dish for the meal. I would carefully count the grain to cook every day, set the amount, and then at the end of each month we would have some extra leftover grain so that we could finally enjoy a nice rice meal. When the rice was ready, I would fill two bowls and put exactly the same quantity in each bowl. Then I'd put both bowls on the table and let my brother choose one. I'd take the one that was left. Yet he always ate so fast and would sometimes grab my bowl after his! I couldn't fight him. I would only weep and cry. This kind of situation happened often.

Our aunt didn't calculate the amount of grain very well during the month; as a result her big family of eight children were always short of food at the end of the month. Then it happened that she began to suspect that I stole the grain from her home. I remember all those sad things. But the worst starvation happened in rural areas. People didn't get any food.¹⁶⁷



DIKÖTTER: MAO'S GREAT FAMINE



YANG JISHENG ON THE CHINESE FAMINE



FURTHER READING: DIKÖTTER AND YANG

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Ms. Fan's account of life during the Chinese famine and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the effect of the Chinese Famine on family relationships, as suggested by the source.
2. Describe the experiences of urban people during the Three Bad Years (1959, 1960 and 1961). In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
3. Analyse the significance of the Great Chinese Famine as a consequence of the revolution. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

ACTIVITY

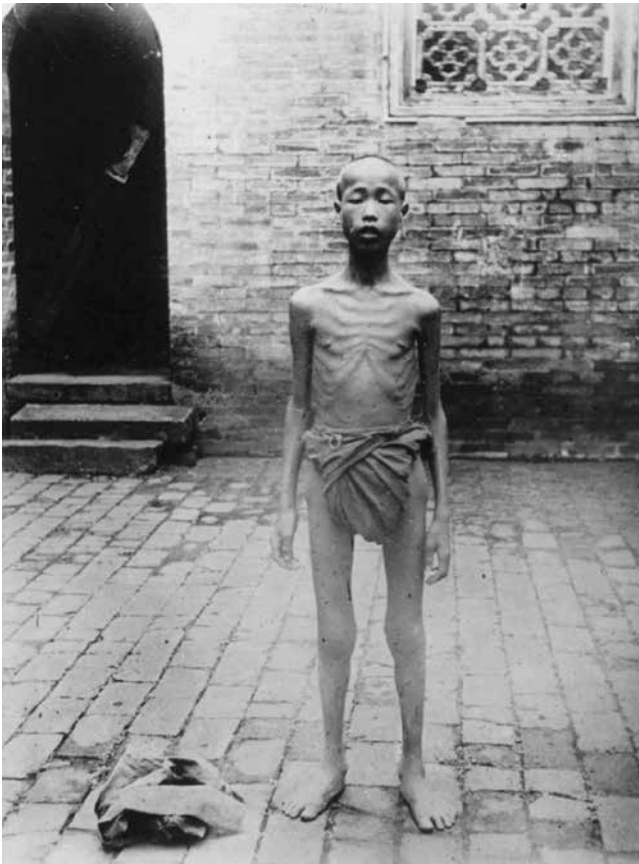
EXPERIENCES OF FAMINE

In country areas the famine brought unparalleled social upheaval and suffering. People were forced to consume food substitutes such as sawdust, grass, bark and soil. Serving a sentence of hard labour as a Rightist, Jean Pasqualini, a man of French-Chinese background, recalled the crime of a fellow inmate:

One day a group of people came into our camp. They were all peasants. So I said to one, 'What are you in for?' He says, 'For ruining public property.' I said, 'What did you do?' He said, 'I ate the bark off trees.' When I heard that I felt very bad.¹⁶⁸

167 Author interview (13 February 2009), translated by Rachel Fan. Note from translator: 'My aunt's eight children now have very good relations with my family. Her younger brother – my father – is now very close to her. They are all very close families; those things just happened in those hard times.'

168 Jean Pasqualini, cited in the BBC documentary, *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor*.



A victim of famine in China.

Cannibalism was widespread. People cut flesh from dead bodies and neighbours ate each others' children so that they did not have to eat their own. Becker describes at some length the 'famine culture' which justified desperate practices such as 'swap child, make food.'¹⁶⁹ Husbands sold their wives and daughters into prostitution. Thousands of children were abandoned or orphaned. Some children were left in holes by the side of the road, deep enough so they could not climb out and follow after their families, but in view of passers-by, who, it was hoped, might adopt them.

It is difficult to confirm the number of casualties resulting from the famine of the Three Bad Years; the government did not recognise the famine and kept poor records. The devastation was not acknowledged until after Mao's death. Some sources indicate a death toll as high as eighty-million.¹⁷⁰ Estimates of twenty- to thirty-million are more commonly accepted. According to Frank Dikotter, 'at least 45 million people died unnecessarily between 1958 and 1962,' and it may well have been even worse than that.¹⁷¹ The leading Western expert on the famine, Jasper Becker, concludes that while up to forty-million may have died, thirty-million is the most 'reliable figure.' He

adds, 'From a moral perspective,' debate over death statistics 'is meaningless ... In terms of sheer numbers, no other event comes close to this.'¹⁷² China's famine was extraordinarily widespread and caused to a large extent by government policy. To show sympathy with those suffering, Mao adopted a vegetarian diet: 'Everyone is starving. I can't eat meat.'¹⁷³ More often, though, Mao seemed breathtakingly callous. Towards the end of 1959, he reportedly said, 'Even if there's a collapse that'll be alright. The worst that will happen is that the whole world will get a big laugh out of it.'¹⁷⁴ On another occasion he mused, 'Working like this, with all these projects, half of China may well have to die. If not half, one-third, or one-tenth – 50 million – die.'¹⁷⁵

ACTIVITIES

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Discuss the following questions:

- Who was most to blame for the post-GLF famine? Did anyone try to prevent it?
- To what extent were those responsible for the famine brought to account?
- How did the famine compare with other twentieth-century crises?

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Using a similar style to the cartoons at the start of Section B, draw a character with a voice bubble that conveys what life was like for a small-business owner in the years following the Great Leap Forward.

169 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 137–8.

170 'Death Toll under Mao High as 80m,' *The Australian*, 19 July 1994, 8.

171 Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine*, x, 333

172 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 273.

173 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 340

174 Cited in Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 235.

175 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 458.

WAS MAO A MONSTER?

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Mao's suggestion that the collapse of the Chinese economy would be a cause for amusement, and his flippant remarks regarding the death of fifty-million people, are anecdotes taken from Chang and Halliday's book *Mao: The Unknown Story*. Chang and Halliday offer these quotes to suggest that Mao knew millions would perish because of his policies and that he deliberately allowed the tragedy to unfold.

While not denying the terrible disaster that came from the Great Leap Forward and Mao's responsibility for much of it, a number of historians have been critical of Chang and Halliday's scholarship on this matter.¹⁷⁶ They argue that, at times, Mao employed crude phrasing for rhetorical effect, humour (sometimes in bad taste), poetic symbolism or irony, and that he could be intentionally vague, contradictory and misleading. In other words, he didn't always intend to be taken literally.¹⁷⁷ Taking Mao's comments out of context can therefore overly simplify or change their meaning.

When read in full, Mao's speech at a Politburo meeting at Wuchang on 21 November 1958 might suggest a different interpretation:

Do not pursue vanity, and get a disaster. We should reduce the amount of our task. On the waterworks, the whole nation accomplished 50 billion cubic metres of earth last winter and this spring, but for this winter and next spring, the plan is 190 billion,

three times more. There are various other tasks, steel, iron, copper, aluminium, coal, transport, machinery, chemicals; how much labour and financial resources are needed? Working like this, I am afraid that half of China may well have to die. If not half, one-third, or one-tenth - 50 million deaths. 50 million deaths, if you are not fired, at least I will be. Should we do so much? It is OK if you really want to, but the principle is no death. If you insist, I cannot stop you, but I should not be killed when people die. Next year's plan is to produce 30 million tons of steel, should we plan so much? Can we do it? How many people must work for it? Will people die? We should lower our tone in this meeting, cool the air down. The string of the *huchin* [a Chinese instrument] should not be pulled too tightly. There is a risk of breaking down.¹⁷⁸

Mobu Gao argues that rather than dismissing the death of millions, Mao's intention was 'to warn his audience of the dangers of overwork and overenthusiasm in the Great Leap Forward.'¹⁷⁹ In a similar vein, Sidney Rittenberg believes that Mao was exaggerating the potential number of deaths for effect, 'to try to bring unruly comrades into line.'¹⁸⁰

176 Gregor Benton and Lin Chun (ed.'s), *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Routledge, 2010); Mobu Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao & the Cultural Revolution* (London, Pluto Press, 2008).

177 Andrew J. Nathan, 'Jade and Plastic,' in Benton and Chun, *Was Mao Really a Monster?* 28-29.

178 Cited in Jin Xiaoding, 'A critique of Jung Chang and Jon Halliday,' in Gregor Benton and Lin Chun, *Was Mao Really a Monster?*, 154.

179 Gao, *The Battle for China's Past*, 75.

180 Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, 247.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

After reading the historical interpretations above, discuss and note down answers to the following questions.

1. Do you think Mao genuinely believed that up to fifty-million Chinese people would die in the achievement of the Great Leap Forward? Explain, with reference to his speech at Wuchang (see above).
2. Chang and Halliday imply that Mao's policy failures were tantamount to mass murder. To what extent do you agree with this assessment?
3. What did Mao's personal style and language suggest about his approach to leadership?

ACTIVITY

MAO'S POLICY FAILURES: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS



Mao privately voiced concern at the way his policies were implemented. During the Great Leap Forward, he could not understand why things were not working out. Rather than blaming himself, he expressed displeasure with a number of subordinates and fellow leaders. The following views reflect on Mao's policies and how they were carried out.

Maurice Meisner, American historian

[S]ince the Great Leap was 'utopian' in nature from the beginning, it is generally assumed that failure in the end was inevitable. But a fair historical evaluation of the Great Leap in general and communization in particular does demand that one take into consideration the vast [inconsistencies] between what was intended and what was done, the striking differences between what originally were basic rational (and perhaps 'possible') Maoist policies of socio-economic change and the largely irrational fashion in which Maoists attempted to implement these policies.¹⁸¹

Li Zhisui, Mao's doctor

Mao was a great philosopher, a great soldier, and a great politician, but he was a terrible economist. He had a penchant for grandiose schemes. He lost touch with the people, forgot the work style that he himself promoted – seeking truth from facts, humility, attention to details. This was the source of the country's economic problems ... Mao was a complex and often contradictory man. As the emperor, he believed in his own infallibility. If wrong decisions were made, wrong policies introduced, the fault lay not with him but with the information provided to him. The emperor could not be wrong, but he could be deceived.¹⁸²

Sidney Rittenberg, American communist and CCP volunteer

I think there was a drastic change, really a drastic change [in Mao after he came to power]. I want to say fatal change really because my main impressions of Mao – before coming to power – was that he was one of the best listeners I had ever spoken with. He focused his whole being on you. What you were saying was the most important thing to him. He now became imperious. He tended to penalize people who stood up against him on issues. He became someone who liked to hold forth and wasn't a particularly good listener.¹⁸³

Rebecca Karl, American historian

Mao dared to propose and activate a revolutionary project calling every convention into question so as to remake the world. Recalling Mao's challenge is to recall a time when many things seemed possible; it is to remember possibility against pressure to concede to the world as it now appears.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 250–1.

¹⁸² Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 307, 296.

¹⁸³ Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in *As It Happened: Mao – A Life* (SBS, 2006).

¹⁸⁴ Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), x.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the historical interpretations above and complete the following tasks.

1. Discuss the extent to which the Great Leap Forward was a failure of policy, and the extent to which it was a failure of implementation. Then draw a continuum and place the GLF in the appropriate place between 'policy failure' and 'implementation failure.'
2. Draw up a table listing Mao's positive and negative personality traits.
3. Discuss the extent to which we should judge historical figures such as Mao on their intentions. How much do these count in the final analysis?

ACTIVITY

THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

Mao Zedong: 'The Soviet Union may attack Stalin, but we will not. Not only that, we will continue to support him.'

An important influence on the rhetoric and direction of Chinese (Sino) politics in the late 1950s and into the 1960s was an increasingly strained relationship between China and the Soviet Union. On 25 February 1956, the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, gave his so-called 'Secret Speech' to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. To the surprise of the Chinese Communists, and many others, Khrushchev denounced Josef Stalin as a brutal dictator. The Secret Speech, formally titled, 'On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences,' was 'a bone chilling litany of Stalin's transgressions, which included self-glorification, paranoia, despotism, mass arrests, torture, extracted confessions, punishments without trial, deportations, mass murder of military officers, and inaction against the Nazi invasion.'¹⁸⁵ Deng Xiaoping and Zhu De, who led the Chinese delegation at the Twentieth Congress, returned to China a week later with a copy of Khrushchev's speech, which was hastily translated.¹⁸⁶ While Stalin had caused the CCP many difficulties in the past, Mao had continued publicly to support him. Even Stalin's refusal to meet all of Mao's diplomatic requests during his first visit to Moscow in 1949, not to mention his negligible backing in the Korean War, did not sour diplomacy between the two countries. According to Mao, Comrade Stalin had been 'a friend to all people everywhere and a friend to the Chinese people.'¹⁸⁷ In private, however, Mao revealed deep personal antagonism towards Stalin. After Stalin's death in 1953, Mao welcomed Khrushchev's leadership and Sino-Soviet relations grew closer. Particularly pleasing was Khrushchev's renunciation of the USSR's 'special rights' in China, such as control of the Central Manchurian Railway and Port Arthur on the Liaodong peninsula.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Mao never showed Khrushchev the same respect he showed Stalin. Mao now saw himself as the world's top communist statesman; the new Soviet leader did not.

CCP COMMENTS ON STALIN

Khrushchev's Secret Speech greatly bothered Mao and the Chinese leadership. The Chinese comrades were not consulted and had no warning of the sudden change in Soviet opinion. They were left to make a hasty re-evaluation of a man who for many years was much admired in China. Mao felt that Khrushchev was publicly airing dirty laundry and had betrayed a great revolutionary leader.¹⁸⁹ The condemnation of Stalin also reflected badly on Mao's own cult of personality. In April 1956, the Chinese Communists offered their own assessment of Stalin, which was decidedly different from Khrushchev's:

Some people consider that Stalin was wrong in everything. This is a grave misconception. Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist, yet at the same time a Marxist-Leninist who committed several gross errors without realizing they were errors. We should view Stalin from a historical standpoint, make a proper all-round analysis to see where he was right and where he was wrong, and draw useful lessons therefrom.¹⁹⁰

In his 'proper all-round analysis,' Mao came to the conclusion that Stalin's achievements outweighed his mistakes seven to three.¹⁹¹ He could be viewed critically but should not be condemned outright. The Chinese Communists were clearly showing a determination to break with the Khrushchev Soviet line.

DID YOU KNOW?

The emerging disdain of the Chinese towards the Soviet leadership was shown in an exchange between Soviet Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan and Marshall Peng Dehuai in 1956. Speaking of the Stalin era, Mikoyan explained, 'If we had spoken out, we would have been killed!' Peng replied, 'What kind of communist is it that fears death?'

185 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 97.

186 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 449.

187 Mao Zedong, cited in *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor*.

188 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 132.

189 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 217.

190 Cited in Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Ringwood: Pelican Books, 1971), 434.

191 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 38.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1954, Mao told a Finnish diplomat, 'If the US had atom bombs so powerful that ... they would make a hole right through the earth, that would hardly mean anything to the universe as a whole, though it might be a major event for the solar system.'

THE NUCLEAR THREAT

Other changes in Soviet policy, initiated by Khrushchev, were not to Mao's liking. Seeking to ease relations with the West, Khrushchev declared that peaceful coexistence between communist and capitalist nations was both possible and desirable. In the age of nuclear weapons, conflict between the major powers was far too great a risk to humankind; even localised disputes should be discouraged in case they led to greater wars. This too was unwelcome in China, where anti-imperialist rhetoric was paramount and the United States was painted as chief villain. Mao also maintained that localised wars of national liberation were of great value to peoples of the developing world.¹⁹²

During the Great Leap Forward, anti-Americanism had intensified; Mao had declared that advances in both China and the Soviet Union would demonstrate that 'the east wind prevails over the west wind.' In the New Technology and National Defence Pact of October 1957, Khrushchev offered Mao a token of socialist solidarity – assistance in developing nuclear technology. Mao readily agreed. Yet, much to the consternation of Soviet leaders, the Chairman expressed an alarming indifference toward the possibility of nuclear war. During a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Nehru in 1954, Mao claimed, 'The atom bomb is nothing to be afraid of. China has many people. They cannot be bombed out of existence. If someone else can drop an atomic bomb, I can too. The death of ten or twenty million people is nothing to be afraid of.'¹⁹³ During his 1957 visit to the Soviet Union, Mao speculated that if a nuclear war killed a third of the world's population, the Chinese would emerge at an advantage. On many occasions, Mao stated that the atom bomb was nothing more than a 'paper tiger which the US reactionaries use to scare people.' Mao's pronouncements on nuclear war – even taking into account his rhetorical bluster – worried the Russians, especially given that they had pledged to help the Chinese develop their own bomb. Could Mao be trusted with such a powerful weapon?

192 Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong*, 65.

193 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 125.

194 Cited in Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 50.

195 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 249.

196 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 262.



Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

KHRUSHCHEV VISITS CHINA

Khrushchev visited Beijing in July 1958. He had hoped to gain backing for joint Soviet–Chinese long-wave radio stations on the Chinese coast. Mao was far from impressed. He snapped, 'We don't want you here. We've had the British and other foreigners on our territory for years now, and we're not ever going to let anyone use our land for their purposes again.'¹⁹⁴ The Soviet leader had difficulty making sense of Mao: 'I was never exactly sure that I understood what he meant.'¹⁹⁵ Khrushchev also failed to win Mao over to his views on Soviet–US détente. Mao told his doctor,

Khrushchev ... wants to improve relations with the United States? Good, we'll congratulate him with our guns. Our cannon shells have been in storage for so long they're becoming useless. So why don't we just use them for a celebration? Let's get the United States involved, too. Maybe we can get the United States to drop an atom bomb on Fujian. Maybe ten or twenty people will be killed ... Let's see what Khrushchev says then.¹⁹⁶

TENSIONS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

On 24 August 1958, the Chinese Communists tested the support of their Soviet allies by launching heavy artillery bombardments against the Nationalist-occupied

islands of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu (Mazu) in the Taiwan Strait. Mao and his comrades were deliberately stirring up trouble with Taiwan in order to provoke the United States and, in turn, make difficulties for the Soviet Union in its talks with the US. In response to the Chinese bombardment, the US made a substantial show of force in the Taiwan Strait; not until mid-September were tensions in the region calmed. Moscow offered only lukewarm support to Beijing during the crisis; Khrushchev did not want to be drawn into a conflict with the United States.¹⁹⁷

The Soviet leader was also annoyed by Mao's claim that the People's Communes of the Great Leap Forward would allow China to achieve communism before the Soviet Union. Khrushchev is said to have exasperatedly told a delegation of Chinese Communists, 'It's impossible to *leap* into communism.'¹⁹⁸ Khrushchev was by now convinced that Mao was a wrong-headed romantic deviationist, intent on wasting Soviet aid on foolhardy schemes.¹⁹⁹

THE SOVIETS WITHDRAW SUPPORT

Relations between China and the Soviet Union turned from sour to bitter after mid-1959. A border clash between China and India a week after the 1959 Lushan Plenum elicited a declaration of neutrality in the dispute from the Soviet government – much to the fury of the Chinese. On 20 June, a week after Peng Dehuai returned from Russia, Moscow informed Beijing that the Soviet Union was backing out of its promise to provide China with nuclear weapons. In late September, Khrushchev made a visit to Beijing on his way home from a trip to the United States (the first US visit by a Soviet leader). Flushed with optimism from his talks with President Eisenhower, Khrushchev was keen to mend differences with China. Khrushchev felt the People's Republic needed to recognise that 'we ... must do all we can to exclude war as a means of settling disputed questions.'²⁰⁰ The Chinese would have none of it. Khrushchev received neither an honour guard at the airport nor a welcoming speech.²⁰¹ A number of Chinese officials, such as Marshall Chen Yi, were openly rude to their guest. The visit was cut from seven days to three, such was the hostility between the supposed comrades.

By early 1960, both sides were trading insults and accusations. Mao charged the Soviet leadership with 'emasculating, betraying and revising' revolutionary Marxism, while Khrushchev called Mao 'an ultra-leftist, an ultra-dogmatist, and a left deviationist.'²⁰² In July 1960, Russian technical personnel were abruptly recalled from China and instructed to take with them all their blueprints. The loss of 1400 Soviet scientists and engineers was a shock to the Chinese and greatly compounded the economic difficulties of the Great Leap Forward.²⁰³ Many factories, bridges and other infrastructure projects were left half-finished. Mao complained, 'The Russians have landed us in the shit.'²⁰⁴

Despite the withdrawal of Soviet assistance, the People's Republic managed to develop nuclear technology. On 16 October 1964, China detonated its first atomic bomb at Lop Nor in the Gobi Desert. The successful test was celebrated throughout China. Mao marked the occasion by composing a short poem: 'Atom bomb goes off when it is told. Ah, what boundless joy!' The detonation was auspiciously timed, occurring two days after Khrushchev's demise as Soviet leader. The Chinese code-name for the bomb was '596,' a reference to June 1959, when Khrushchev withdrew support for the Chinese nuclear program.

DID YOU KNOW?

On his 1958 visit to China, Khrushchev was received by Mao in his swimming pool. While Mao cheerfully invited the Soviet leader to have a swim, it was a thinly-veiled diplomatic insult. Khrushchev, who could not swim, joined Mao in the pool; he bobbed around in a pair of floaties while interpreters did their best to help from the sidelines. Li Zhisui said, 'The Chairman was deliberately playing the role of emperor, treating Khrushchev like the barbarian come to pay tribute.'

197 William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2005) 392.

198 Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time: The Epic Saga of the People's Republic: From the Communist Victory to Tiananmen Square and Beyond* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), 34.

199 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 290.

200 Cited in Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 557.

201 William Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 393.

202 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 680.

203 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 250.

204 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 303.



The hammer and sickle
(Soviet emblem).

HOW SUCCESSFUL
WAS THE FIRST
DECADE OF THE CCP?



DID YOU KNOW?

Few Westerners were seen in China for a period following the mid-1960s. Those that were there were assumed to be Albanians.

A number of international communist gatherings in the early 1960s failed to bridge the widening gap between China and the Soviet Union. Throughout 1962–63, Chinese denunciations of the ‘revisionist’²⁰⁵ Soviet government grew ever more shrill. India provided the catalyst for further tensions. Unbeknownst to the Indian government, in the mid-1950s a Chinese road had been built to link Xinjiang with Tibet; the road went through land claimed by India. Fighting between border troops broke out in 1959. In October 1962, Chinese troops occupied the disputed territory and pushed back Indian forces. Having staked their claim, the PLA withdrew from the conflict. Describing the dispute as ‘stupid’ and ‘sad,’ Khrushchev nonetheless showed where his loyalties lay by refusing to endorse China’s territorial claims and providing arms and economic contracts to India.²⁰⁶

THE END OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

In his July 1964 article, ‘On Khrushchev’s Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World,’ Mao wrote that there was a ‘struggle between Marxist-Leninists the world over and the revisionist Khrushchev clique [in-group].’²⁰⁷ The same year, Mao said, ‘The Soviet Union today is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie ... a fascist German dictatorship.’²⁰⁸ Regardless of the country’s socialist economy, privilege amongst Communist Party officials had created real class inequality in the Soviet Union; according to Mao, it was on the ‘capitalist road.’ The fear that China was following a similar path would play a leading role in the Cultural Revolution of the mid-to-late-1960s. Mao had often assessed the Chinese Revolution and CCP policies in the context of global developments; central to this in the 1960s was the hostility between Moscow and Beijing.²⁰⁹

On 14 July 1964, China ended its formal diplomatic relations with the USSR. The emergence of a new Soviet leadership under Leonid Brezhnev in October 1964 failed to improve relations. According to the Chinese, the USSR now had ‘Khrushchevism without Khrushchev.’²¹⁰ Increasing numbers of troops were deployed along the Russian–Chinese border, leading to periodic clashes. The breakdown of Sino–Soviet relations also had broader diplomatic consequences, as China now had to face two antagonistic superpowers instead of one. Oddly enough, the only country in the European socialist bloc with which China remained on good terms was Albania.²¹¹ Thus, the biggest communist nation and the smallest thus developed a close partnership.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- Why did the relationship between China and the Soviet Union deteriorate after 1956? Why was the end of diplomatic relations in 1964 so significant?
- ‘Mao and Khrushchev represented two vastly different approaches to socialism.’ What were the differences, and how were they played out in the 1950s and 1960s?

205 ‘Revisionists’ were said to betray the ‘Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist’ model of communism.

206 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 557.

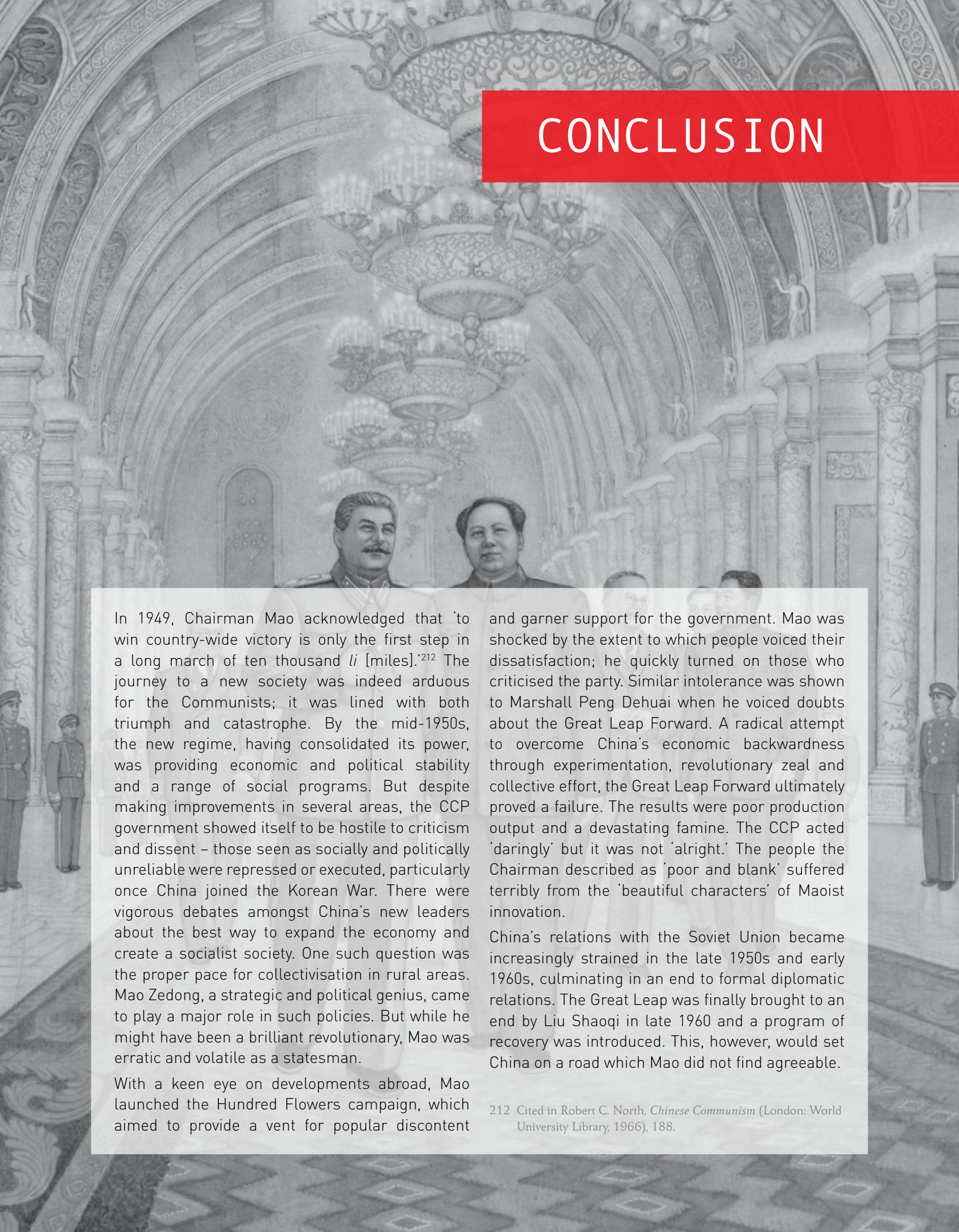
207 www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1964/phnycom.htm.

208 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 304.

209 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3–4.

210 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 425.

211 Albania had broken off relations with the USSR in 1961.



CONCLUSION

In 1949, Chairman Mao acknowledged that 'to win country-wide victory is only the first step in a long march of ten thousand *li* [miles].'²¹² The journey to a new society was indeed arduous for the Communists; it was lined with both triumph and catastrophe. By the mid-1950s, the new regime, having consolidated its power, was providing economic and political stability and a range of social programs. But despite making improvements in several areas, the CCP government showed itself to be hostile to criticism and dissent – those seen as socially and politically unreliable were repressed or executed, particularly once China joined the Korean War. There were vigorous debates amongst China's new leaders about the best way to expand the economy and create a socialist society. One such question was the proper pace for collectivisation in rural areas. Mao Zedong, a strategic and political genius, came to play a major role in such policies. But while he might have been a brilliant revolutionary, Mao was erratic and volatile as a statesman.

With a keen eye on developments abroad, Mao launched the Hundred Flowers campaign, which aimed to provide a vent for popular discontent

and garner support for the government. Mao was shocked by the extent to which people voiced their dissatisfaction; he quickly turned on those who criticised the party. Similar intolerance was shown to Marshall Peng Dehuai when he voiced doubts about the Great Leap Forward. A radical attempt to overcome China's economic backwardness through experimentation, revolutionary zeal and collective effort, the Great Leap Forward ultimately proved a failure. The results were poor production output and a devastating famine. The CCP acted 'daringly' but it was not 'alright.' The people the Chairman described as 'poor and blank' suffered terribly from the 'beautiful characters' of Maoist innovation.

China's relations with the Soviet Union became increasingly strained in the late 1950s and early 1960s, culminating in an end to formal diplomatic relations. The Great Leap was finally brought to an end by Liu Shaoqi in late 1960 and a program of recovery was introduced. This, however, would set China on a road which Mao did not find agreeable.

²¹² Cited in Robert C. North, *Chinese Communism* (London: World University Library, 1966), 188.

CHAPTER REVIEW

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- 'For the CCP, a revolutionary new society proved more difficult to manage than a revolutionary movement.' Discuss.
- 'In the early years of the PRC, ideology and experimentation brought more hardships than improvements.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'The Great Leap Forward showed that Mao was too poetic and impractical to run a government.' Is this a reasonable assessment?
- 'When faced with criticism, the Chinese Communists responded with repression.' Discuss.

Alternatively, create your own historical question on the consequences of the CCP coming to power and how this brought change to Chinese society in the 1950s and early 1960s.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL CHANGE

The Chinese Communists attempted to change social and cultural life through a range of mass campaigns. Create a comparative table like the one below and fill it in.

PRC MASS CAMPAIGNS, 1949–61

	LAND REFORM (FANSHEN)	SPEAK BITTERNESS (FANSHEN)	THREE ANTIS (SANFAN)	FIVE ANTIS (WUFAN)	THOUGHT REFORM
Groups affected		A range of social groups, mostly the urban population.			Intellectuals, e.g. teachers, academics, writers.
Focus of campaign			Corruption, waste, bureaucracy.	Tax evasion, fraud, bribery, cheating on government contracts, theft of government property.	
Consequences	Millions of landlords executed. Poor/middle-income peasants received re-distributed land.		Those targeted were subject to denunciations at mass meetings, fines, imprisonment.		

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Select a photograph or propaganda poster depicting China before, during or after the Great Leap Forward. Annotate the image with speech or thought bubbles to show a conversation between the people pictured, expressing their beliefs and attitudes about the Great Leap Forward. Display your graphic in the classroom and compare it with those of other students.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Write a paragraph describing how two or more different social groups experienced daily life in the People's Republic of China during the 1950s and early 1960s.

KEY PEOPLE

After reading about the following people in the Who's Who (see end of book), discuss their contributions to the new regime in the period 1949–61.

- Mao Zedong
- Liu Shaoqi
- Deng Xiaoping
- Peng Dehuai
- Lin Biao.



ECONOMIC CHANGE

Using a format similar to the Chapter Overviews in this book, create a diagram showing how the Chinese economy changed between 1949 and 1961. In your diagram:

- Choose four or more economic reforms/events in the new PRC.
- For each reform/event, list 2–3 details, e.g. why the reform was made, who was directly affected, and what the consequences were for the Chinese economy overall.

Compare your diagram with those of other students. Then, as a class, discuss the consequences of the CCP's economic policy on Chinese society, and the extent to which the policies could be considered a compromise of revolutionary ideals.

FURTHER READING

Jasper Becker. *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*. London: John Murray, 1996.

An in-depth analysis of the policies and consequences of the Great Leap Forward. Becker discusses the problematic nature of, and the debates surrounding, the Chinese Famine.

Gregor Benton and Lin Chun. *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's 'Mao: The Unknown Story.'* New York: Routledge, 2010.

An exceptionally useful and interesting compilation of fourteen academic reviews of Chang and Halliday's biography of Mao. The contributors, China specialists of international standing, give complexity and balance to Chang and Halliday's portrayal of the Chairman.

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

Chang and Halliday's biography of the 'unknown' Mao has been the source of considerable debate. Although the book has been much lauded in the popular press, academics have questioned many aspects of this highly critical account of Mao Zedong, particularly its problematic referencing. A good read, but not a well-rounded assessment of Mao.

Craig Dietrich. *People's China: A Brief History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

A well structured and accessible account of the events, people and policies that shaped the PRC.

Frank Dikotter. *Mao's Great Famine*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.

A detailed study of the causes and consequences of the famine that followed the Great Leap Forward.

Frank Dikotter. *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

A scathing account of the policies and practices of the early years of rule by the Chinese Communist Party.

Yang Jisheng. *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine 1958-1962*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

An insightful and detailed analysis of the Great Chinese Famine. Useful for both its personal anecdotes and statistical analyses.

Alan Lawrence. *China Under Communism*. London: Routledge, 2000.

A concise academic study of the Communist era. Accessible for most students.

Philip Short. *Mao: A Life*. London: John Murray, 2004.

Arguably the best biography of Mao to date. A detailed, insightful and compelling account. Short paints a complex human picture of a man and his times.

CHAPTER

5

THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION

(1961–1971)

1 Recovery from Great Leap Forward

Mao Zedong
sidelined

Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping reverse GLF policies

People's Communes, cooperatives reduced in size

Army distributes food to alleviate famine

Lushan Plenum: Mao denounces Chen Boda

Lin and family fear he is next to be purged

Lin's son (Tiger) plots to kill Mao

7 The Demise of Lin Biao

Mao discovers murder plot

Lin and family flee in fatal aeroplane flight

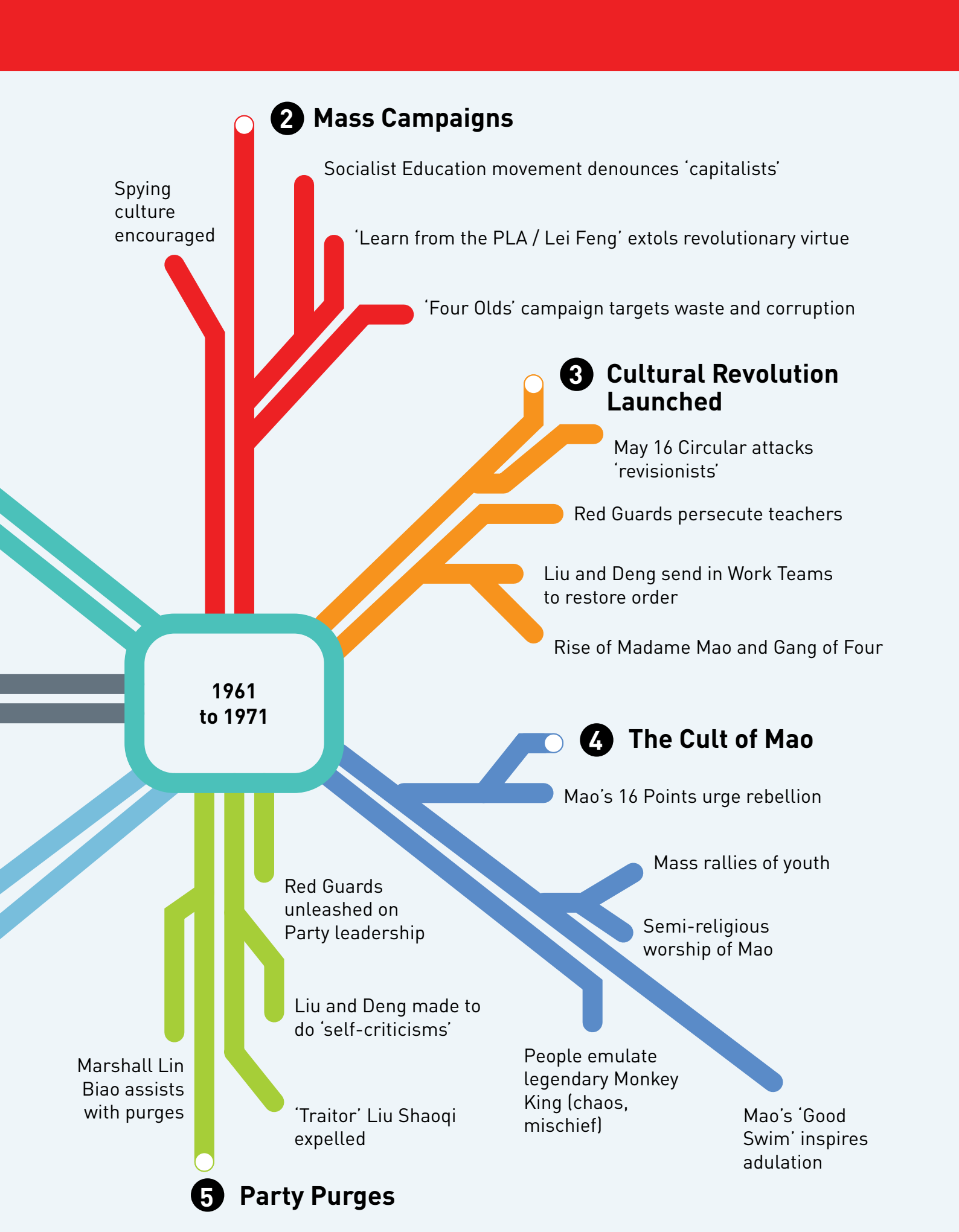
Red Guards sent to mountains and countryside

Mixed reception from rural people – more mouths to feed

'Lost generation' faces hardship and sense of rejection

6 'Down to the Countryside'

May 7th Cadre Schools train party leaders in manual labour



INTRODUCTION

'The Cultural Revolution was one of the most profound political and social upheavals of the twentieth century.'

ORIGINS OF
THE CULTURAL
REVOLUTION



DID YOU KNOW?

Party leaders made a show of solidarity with ordinary people suffering shortages in the early 1960s. They set an example of self-sufficiency by growing vegetables in the grounds of the CCP compound in Beijing. Zhu De had great success with his pumpkins, while Liu Shaoqi and his bodyguards tended a plot of kidney beans.

After 1961, the devastating consequences of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) were attended to by President Liu Shaoqi and General Secretary Deng Xiaoping. Advised by Chen Yun, one of China's leading economists, Liu and Deng reversed a number of Maoist policies and put in place practical measures to alleviate the suffering caused by the Three Bad Years of famine. Conditions in both urban and rural areas soon improved. Mao Zedong and his supporters, however, harboured grave misgivings; they perceived a threat to socialist values from the more liberal economic policies of President Liu and were concerned by the continuation of corruption amongst rank-and-file cadres. Mao also felt politically sidelined during this time. Between 1962 and 1965, varying policies reflected the contest between Liuist and Maoist visions for shaping the direction of the People's Republic. When his ideas failed to hold sway, Mao came to the conclusion that the revolutionary ardour of the Chinese Communist Party was on the wane. The revolution had been hijacked by those 'following the capitalist road' and the party could no longer be trusted to uphold correct revolutionary virtues. A dire ideological crisis was facing the new society. Mao and his chief ideological and political associates, his wife Jiang Qing and Marshall Lin Biao, turned to the PLA as models of socialist piety and China's youth as the shock troops of a new revolutionary vanguard. The resulting Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966–76 was one of the most profound political and social upheavals of the twentieth century. It was, in part, a theatrical and brutal political comeback by Mao Zedong. Chen Yun later lamented, 'Had Mao died in 1956, his achievements would have been immortal. Had he died in 1966, he would still have been a great man. But he died in 1976. Alas, what can one say?'¹ Yet millions of Chinese participated in Mao's campaigns; indeed, many people went further than he had intended. The Cultural Revolution was popular with many in China and abroad;² those who participated willingly viewed it as 'a movement to better Chinese society and humanity in general.'³ Whether the Cultural Revolution was simply the means by which Mao overcame his political rivals has therefore been a point of debate. Questions of ambition, ideological rectification, Mao's personality, the complicity of other individuals and groups and China's cultural heritage have all been examined by scholars seeking to understand the Cultural Revolution. The 'Ten Lost Years,' as the era is known in China, remains a sensitive issue. The guilt and torment have left many raw memories. The so-called 'literature of the wounded,' recounting the suffering of the period, has played a seminal role in the construction of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese and Western social memory.

A semblance of normality returned in the early-to-mid-1970s, characterised by an uneasy balance between moderate and radical influences in the CCP. Jiang Qing and her Gang of Four ensured that the radical fires of Cultural Revolution politics continued to smoulder, while Premier Zhou Enlai pressed for a more restrained course. The highpoint of the early 1970s for Zhou's moderate leadership was a visit to the People's Republic by US President Richard Nixon. By this time many Chinese were thoroughly disillusioned with the party leadership. It was not until the death of Mao and the arrest of his Gang of Four, however, that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution finally came to an end.

- 1 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: John Murray, 2004), 629.
- 2 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 62.
- 3 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 5.

RETREAT AND RECOVERY

Liu Shaoqi: ‘The period of revolutionary storm and stress is past; let’s get down to practical work.’

With the failure of the revived Great Leap Forward apparent by late 1960, President Liu Shaoqi took matters in hand to alleviate the famine and revive the economy. A number of Communist leaders travelled to various regions in early 1961 to inspect conditions first hand. Liu Shaoqi went to his home village in Hunan. Even though he had lived a lifetime of revolutionary struggle and witnessed much hardship, Liu was deeply troubled by the tales of suffering he encountered. Moved to tears, Liu said, ‘I am shocked to see my fellow-villagers are leading such a harsh life ... I feel responsible for causing so much suffering to you, and I must apologise.’⁴ Chen Yun, a respected member of the Politburo and chief economist under the First Five-Year Plan, made an intensive study of the countryside near Shanghai.⁵ Mao was not pleased by Chen’s findings; his report ‘paints a very dark picture showing not one trace of light. This man, Chen Yun ... cannot get rid of his bourgeois character. He leans consistently to the right.’⁶ Yet when Liu returned to Beijing he told his fellow leaders, ‘We cannot go on like this.’ The president was keen to hear Chen’s recommendations for improving the morale of ordinary people and increasing agrarian and industrial production. A retreat from the practices of the Great Leap Forward was subsequently made.

While Communes continued as geographical units, they were reduced in size by up to one-half. Farming was managed in work units of around thirty people, rather than brigades of hundreds or thousands. Work units resembled the village groupings of the past and boosted peasants’ motivation; they could again see a direct reward for their labour. Private plots were permitted, as were markets for produce and handicrafts.⁷ The communal food kitchens were closed and labour-camp prisoners were assigned the task of making new aluminium cooking utensils to replace those destroyed in backyard iron furnaces.⁸ In the provinces hardest hit by famine, such as Anhui, PLA units were mobilised to distribute food and a ‘household responsibility system’ gave out land to individual families. The responsibility system proved remarkably effective; grain production rose from six-million to ten-million tons by the end of 1962.⁹ In Hunan, the responsibility system came to be called ‘save yourself production’ by the peasants.¹⁰ Twenty-six-million migrants were sent back to the countryside to ease urban overcrowding and further boost the rural workforce.¹¹ In heavy industrial and manufacturing enterprises, bonuses and differentiated wages for efficient and hard-working employees were introduced. In 1963–65, heavy industrial production grew by seventeen per cent, light industry by twenty-seven per cent, while grain harvests gradually recovered to pre-GLF levels. Premier Zhou Enlai authorised grain imports from Australia and Canada to make up for shortfalls.¹² Even with this expenditure, the government budget of 1962 achieved a surplus of one-billion yuan compared to a deficit of eight-billion yuan in 1960.¹³ The centralised control and supervision of the party was also strengthened and officials stressed that strict attention should be paid to accurate reporting of production figures. The drive and bureaucratic precision of the CCP played an important role in putting the economy back in order.¹⁴ Deng Xiaoping summed up the pragmatic approach underpinning the policies of the post-GLF recovery: ‘White cat, black cat – either will do as long as it catches mice.’¹⁵



Liu Shaoqi.

- 4 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 491.
- 5 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), 559.
- 6 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 392.
- 7 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China. A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 266; Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 425.
- 8 Jonathan Clements, *Mao* (London: Haus Publishing, 2006), 125.
- 9 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine* (London: John Murray, 1996), 243.
- 10 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 239.
- 11 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 425.
- 12 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 425.
- 13 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 564.
- 14 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 266.
- 15 An old Sichuanese proverb, cited in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 313.

DID YOU KNOW?

At the 7000 Cadres' Conference, Liu Shaoqi admitted, 'People do not have enough food, clothes or other essentials ... agricultural output, far from rising in 1959, 1960 and 1961, dropped not a little, but tremendously ... There is not only no Great Leap Forward, but a great deal of falling backward.'



Lin Biao.

THE 7000 CADRES' CONFERENCE

In January 1962, an enlarged Central Committee conference was called to review the policies of the previous few years. More than 7000 CCP cadres from across China were in attendance. Under President Liu's guidance, the Central Committee endorsed the 'Three Privates and One Guarantee': peasants could continue to farm their small plots, engage in handicrafts and sell their products at free markets (three privates), while the fulfilment of government production quotas remained essential (one guarantee.) The question of responsibility for the famine was also discussed. According to Liu, the conference was an opportunity to acknowledge the failings of the past and move forward with cautious optimism. The troubles of 1958–60 could be attributed '30 per cent to natural calamities, 70 per cent to human failings,'¹⁶ while primary responsibility lay with the 'Party Centre.' Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen (P'eng Chen) was even more forthright: the Politburo, including Mao and Liu, were specifically at fault.¹⁷ Much to the surprise of the assembled 7000 cadres, Mao Zedong offered a self-criticism:

Any mistakes that the Centre has made ought to be my direct responsibility, and I also have an indirect share of the blame because I am Chairman of the Central Committee. I don't want other people to shirk their responsibility. There are some other comrades who also bear responsibility, but the person primarily responsible should be me.¹⁸

As he had at Lushan in 1959, Mao stressed that the party's failings were collective and must be admitted by all. Mao was also indignant at the overly bureaucratic manner and privileged position of the rank-and-file cadres who were overseeing current policies:

Those of you ... who are afraid of taking responsibility, who do not allow people to speak, who think you are tigers, and nobody will dare to touch your arse – whoever has this attitude, ten out of ten of you will fail ... You think that nobody will really dare to touch the arses of tigers like you? They damn well will!¹⁹

The famine had bred corruption amongst provincial officials, who used their positions to benefit their own families. The revival of centralised economic measures strengthened bureaucratic practices and the aloofness of the party officials from the common people. Material benefits were of greater concern than socialist virtue. Mao believed the party was in danger of becoming 'modern equivalents of the mandarins of old, who valued their procedures and political connection more than the welfare of the people.'²⁰ Mao grumbled that many cadres 'complain all day long and watch plays at night, they eat three full meals a day – and fart; that's what Marxism-Leninism means to them.'²¹ Mao found the 7000 Cadres' Conference a distasteful experience; his concerns were not taken up by the rest of the party leadership and the unenthusiastic attitude toward the ideals of the GLF was disappointing. One of the few leading Communists to make a show of unswerving dedication to Mao's instructions was Marshall Lin Biao: 'The thoughts of the Chairman are always correct. If we encounter any problem, any difficulty, it is because we have not followed the instructions of the Chairman closely enough.' Mao was pleased by Lin's address: 'What a good speech Vice-Chairman Lin has made. Lin Biao's words are always so clear and direct. They are simply superb! Why can't the other party leaders be so perceptive?'²²

Other party leaders were less rapturous about the Chairman's thoughts. In the coming months Mao complained that he was being treated like 'a dead ancestor'

16 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 509.

17 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 510.

18 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 510.

19 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 511.

20 Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 151.

21 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 511.

22 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 387–8.

— much respected but not consulted.²³ His words were given a respectful audience but not taken to heart. In a sulky mood following the 7000 Cadres' Conference, Mao left Beijing for the lakeside city of Hangzhou where he spent the spring and summer, leaving matters of state entirely under the direction of Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai. The moderate economic policies of renewal thereby continued and were envisaged to remain in place for some time. Chen Yun explained, 'How many years are required for the recovery stage? In my personal opinion it requires about five years, starting from 1960.'²⁴ Speaking of the hasty and ill-founded policies of the Great Leap Forward in comparison with more tempered approaches, Deng Xiaoping quipped, 'A donkey is certainly slow, but at least it rarely has an accident.'²⁵ Mao apparently found the policies underway so infuriating that he stopped reading the *People's Daily*.²⁶

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1966, Mao said, '[Deng Xiaoping] has never consulted me over anything.' Deng, who was hard of hearing, was known to sit as far from Mao as possible during meetings, allowing him to claim that he hadn't 'heard' Mao's instructions.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun bring about a recovery from the Great Leap Forward?
2. What evidence suggests that post-GLF economic policies were successful?
3. Why was Mao increasingly uneasy with the policies and nature of the Communist Party in the early 1960s? What crisis was facing the new society?
4. When Mao spoke of 'tigers' at the 7000 Cadres' Conference, which attitudes and practices was he referring to?

ACTIVITY

THE SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Mao Zedong: 'Never forget class struggle. From now on we must talk about this every year, every month, every day.'

Corruption within the Communist bureaucracy and the question of infusing Maoist revolutionary values into the economic recovery program were the main points of discussion at the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee held on 24–27 September 1962. Liu Shaoqi and Chen Yun spoke favourably of the current policies. As at the 7000 Cadres' Conference, Mao voiced concerns over the revolutionary vitality of the party rank-and-file. The Chairman called for a rigorous campaign against the 'revisionist' and 'capitalist' tendencies emerging in the politics, economic practices and social structures of the People's Republic. More than ever, Mao urged his comrades to 'Never forget class struggle. From now on we must think about this every year, every month, every day.'²⁷ The Tenth Plenum endorsed a new campaign to instil socialist values throughout the countryside and stamp out corruption amongst provincial officials. The focus was improving the administration of the 'Four Clean-ups': communal grain holdings, the allocation of work points in commune labour, accounting procedures and care of public property. Mao hoped that peasants could supervise officials administering the Clean-ups. Party cadres were urged to engage in rigorous hands-on labour and adhere to the 'mass-line' leadership style.²⁸ Mao's praise of class struggle and rural toil was resisted by many cadres, who found the Socialist Education movement 'a hardship to be endured rather than an experience to be cherished,' writes Immanuel Hsu.²⁹

- 23 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 311.
- 24 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 151.
- 25 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 290.
- 26 Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 60.
- 27 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 152.
- 28 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 561.
- 29 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 695.

CORRUPTION AND THE ‘TEN POINTS’

In February 1963, a high-level party work conference gathered to formulate more definitive instructions for carrying out the Socialist Education movement. Mao continued to insist on the approach advocated at the Tenth Plenum: ‘Once we grasp class struggle, miracles can happen.’³⁰ The conference passed a resolution, drafted by Mao, which came to be known as the ‘Early Ten Points.’ To rectify wayward cadres, poor-peasant associations would be mobilised and the peasant masses would play a central role in identifying faults in leadership, uncovering corruption and passing judgment after hearing self-criticisms. The movement struggled to make much headway, and, in September, Deng Xiaoping took on the task of updating directives: the resulting ‘Later Ten Points’ differed from Mao’s earlier instructions. Work teams of reliable officials appointed by central authorities would travel to regions suspected of corrupt practices, carefully observe local conditions and guide peasants in appropriate action. Deng’s instructions made no reference to ‘class struggle,’ instead explaining ways for resolving ‘non-antagonistic contradictions.’³¹ With the Later Ten Points, Deng hoped to cause as little disruption to agricultural work as possible while seeking to improve regional administration through educational means.

Cadres continued to prove successful at avoiding the strictures of the central government. Liu Shaoqi’s wife, Wang Guangmei (Wang Kuang-mei), carried out a covert investigation into how the campaign was proceeding. Travelling in disguise and speaking with peasants from different communes, Wang was appalled by the corruption she observed. Wang found that the complaints of ordinary people were routinely stifled, while some cadres used the materials and labour of the villagers to build themselves comfortable houses. Once her findings were made known to Beijing authorities, Liu resolved to enforce stricter controls.

In September 1964, Liu drafted a third series of instructions, the ‘Revised Later Ten Points,’ authorising larger work teams to back peasant complaints, uncover corruption and assume leadership if local cadres would not reform. The result was a sweeping, no-nonsense purge of regional party organisations.³² The Revised Later Ten Points caused great upheaval; as one cadre recalled, ‘All hell broke loose.’³³ They threatened to affect day-to-day farm work, while the ‘human wave’ of work teams acted in a dictatorial manner, assuming many responsibilities Mao had assigned to peasant associations. The Chairman was not happy. Furthermore, while weeding out corruption was a good thing, President Liu’s approach failed to address broader capitalist tendencies in the countryside.³⁴ While Liu and Mao agreed that party corruption needed attention, the differences in how they dealt with this problem were striking. Mao wanted to unleash the masses against revisionism³⁵ and stamp out capitalist attitudes; Liu saw the struggle as an internal party matter and aimed to make the Communist bureaucracy more reliable and thereby more capable of implementing orthodox Marxist economics.³⁶ ‘Two diametrically opposed views of how to implement policy in China were now out in the open for all to see.’ Mao, ‘the populist,’ sought a mass campaign while Liu, ‘the consummate Leninist,’ placed his trust in party-directed work teams.³⁷

MAO’S FRUSTRATION WITH THE PARTY

On the whole, the Socialist Education movement did not address Mao’s concerns and led him to feel that he was no longer able to assert his will over the party –

30 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People’s China*, 153.

31 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 325.

32 Craig Dietrich, *People’s China*, 155.

33 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 518.

34 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 64–5.

35 Revisionism: A lapse in proper ideological practice and the corruption of ideals.

36 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 522; Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 563.

37 Gao Wenqian, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007), 101.

DID YOU KNOW?

Such was Mao’s frustration in 1964, that during one meeting he waved a copy of the PRC constitution and his party membership card. It was a dramatic gesture of his right to attend meetings and be listened to.

including its current leadership. Passive resistance was thwarting Maoist ideals and the common people were denied the opportunity to ‘touch the tigers’ arses.’ According to Immanuel Hsu, ‘Mao became convinced that it was not his policies that were wrong; rather, it was those in high party positions who were subtly foot-dragging, distorting, and diluting their implementation.’³⁸ Mao became more agitated, as well as more outspoken, towards the party leadership in late 1964. At a meeting on 26 November, he snarled at Liu, ‘Let’s do the handover now. You be Chairman. You be First Emperor.’³⁹ After another meeting the same month, Mao exploded, ‘Someone is shitting on my head!’⁴⁰ Around this time, Mao began to talk of ‘leaders taking the capitalist road.’ Mao claimed, ‘There are at least two factions in our party. One is the socialist faction, the other is the capitalist faction.’⁴¹ Liu and Deng seem to have taken Mao’s outbursts as the grumblings of a tetchy old man.⁴² This was a major underestimation of Mao’s ambitions. The evident failure of the Socialist Education Movement would inspire Mao to look beyond the party to achieve his vision, eventuating in a campaign of cataclysmic proportions.



THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

- 38 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 696.
- 39 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 525.
- 40 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 513.
- 41 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 428.
- 42 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 526.
- 43 Joan Robinson, *The Cultural Revolution in China* (Penguin, 1970).
- 44 Joan Robinson, *The Cultural Revolution*, 11–17.

COMPROMISED IDEALS

Write an extended response on one of the topics below. Use evidence to support your response. Topics:

- To what extent had Maoist revolutionary ideas been compromised by the early 1960s?
- Why did Mao argue that the CCP was facing an ideological crisis in the early-to-mid-1960s? In your answer refer to the Socialist Education movement and the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward.
- How had corruption, particularly amongst cadres, emerged during the Great Leap Forward and resulting famine? How effective were the Ten Points of the Socialist Education movement in addressing leadership problems in the CCP?

ACTIVITY

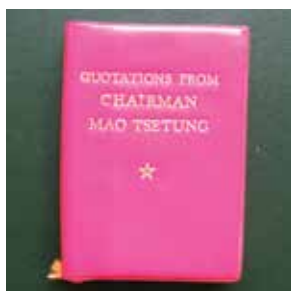
IDEOLOGY AND THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

FEATURE

According to Joan Robinson, the origins of the Cultural Revolution are grounded in Mao’s conception of revolution and its influence on Chinese society.⁴³ Orthodox Marxism dictates that social systems are dependent on and formed by their *base* – the economic foundations and subsequent control over the means of production. Under a socialist system, industry and its resources are owned and controlled by the state. Under capitalism, industry is privately owned and subject to market fluctuations. Marxist theory holds that the base of a social system determines its *superstructure* – its political and social institutions, culture, leadership and values. For socialism, this means a spirit of service to society, collective values and disapproval of private property. Such ideals theoretically discourage greed and lead to

a classless society. Under capitalism, a desire to acquire wealth, status and a spirit of individual betterment is said to dominate, along with a disparity between rich and poor. Societal values and culture therefore come from economic and material conditions. Mao accepted these ideas, but also believed that it was possible for a *capitalist superstructure* to emerge on a *socialist base*. Mao argued that the USSR had developed in such a way. What really worried Mao, though, was Chinese Communists emulating Soviet officials and obstructing the development of socialism in China’s superstructure – what he called ‘following the capitalist road.’ According to Joan Robinson, the Cultural Revolution was, in part, Mao’s attempt to infuse socialism into China’s superstructure, thereby strengthening and purifying the base.⁴⁴

- 45 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 413.
- 46 Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung* (Ringwood: Pelican Books, 1971), 324.
- 47 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 569; Jaap van Ginneken, *The Rise and Fall of Lin Biao* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1976), 37–8.
- 48 Alexander C. Cook, 'The spiritual atom bomb and its global fallout' in Alexander C. Cook, *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.
- 49 A Chinese Communist version of the Boy Scouts.
- 50 Geremie R. Barme, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 9.



Mao's *Little Red Book* (*Hongbaoshu*).

DID YOU KNOW?

Lin Biao apparently had several phobias, including light, wind and water. The sound of running water gave him instant diarrhoea. Lin's wife, Ye Qun, fed him steamed buns dipped in water so he could avoid the trauma of drinking. Mrs. Lin would ask guests to walk slowly in her husband's presence to avoid creating a breeze. In direct sunlight, Lin would sweat profusely from nerves.

'LEARN FROM THE PLA'

Lin Biao: 'Follow the example set by Comrade Lei Feng and be Chairman Mao's good fighters.'

A number of campaigns centred on the military were carried out concurrently with the Socialist Education movement. These campaigns similarly aimed to address the degeneration of revolutionary ideals in broader Chinese society. In early 1963, efforts were made to strengthen Mao Zedong Thought within the People's Liberation Army. The driving force behind the campaign was Lin Biao. Having risen to minister of defence after the purge of Marshall Peng Dehuai, Marshall Lin went to great effort to increase popular adulation of the Chairman. One of his chief contributions was a short compilation of Mao's famous writings: *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (*Hongbaoshu*, popularly known in the West as the *Little Red Book*). First published in May 1964 and issued to every soldier, the *Little Red Book* served as the basis for intense daily study. In his foreword, Lin urged all soldiers to 'Study Chairman Mao's writings, follow his teachings and act according to his instructions and be his good fighters.' Not all top military figures approved of Lin's efforts. Chief of General Staff Luo Ruiqing (Lo Jui-ching) thought the prescribed study sessions were needless exercises in memorisation with no practical benefit.⁴⁵

On 1 February 1964, an editorial in the *People's Daily* announced Mao's directive to 'Learn from the People's Liberation Army.' While it wasn't immediately obvious, Mao was shifting the base of correct revolutionary virtue from the party to the military. The Learn from the PLA campaign characterised members of the military as virtuous socialist heroes – their political consciousness was the model all Chinese should emulate.⁴⁶

Under Lin, political commissars were appointed to all levels of the military to oversee political study. More egalitarian practices were also instituted, such as the abolition of insignia and distinctions of rank. After 1965, Soviet-style uniforms were abandoned in favour of drab khaki fatigues for soldiers and officers alike (officers were distinguished by four pockets on their tunics instead of two). The PLA resumed involvement in wider society through political bureaus, staffed by soldiers, in schools, factories and other large workplaces. The military also sponsored arts festivals, performances and literature. The PLA thereby took on a greater role in popular political education.⁴⁷ Destined to play an iconic role in the Cultural Revolution as 'a weapon of mass instruction,'⁴⁸ the *Little Red Book* was later widely distributed and became the chief text used in schools. Copies were given out after mid-1964 as rewards to members of the Communist Youth League.⁴⁹ The book was selected for mass readership in September 1966 and a billion copies were distributed by the end of the year. During the course of the Cultural Revolution more than forty-billion copies of Mao's writings were printed – enough to provide each Chinese man, woman and child with fifteen copies.⁵⁰

'LEARN FROM LEI FENG'

The most celebrated hero of the PLA was a truck driver, Lei Feng. Lei was born in 1939 to a very poor family. He was left an orphan at an early age and

suffered at the hands of many cruel people, particularly landlords. Lei's fortunes improved once the Communist Party came to power. The Peasants' Association in Lei's village made provisions for his welfare and he was able to go to school. He joined the Communist Youth League and later worked as a bulldozer operator.

Lei gained respect as a model worker. His life-long dream was fulfilled when he was accepted into the People's Liberation Army, which trained him as a truck driver. Lei was virtuous, selfless and caring towards ordinary people and his comrades. He would get up early to assist with chores at the local Commune, mend his fellow soldiers' uniforms while they slept and insist that others wear his coat in cold weather. He feared no hardship and put up with many discomforts: 'I'd rather steel myself in the storm of hard and arduous struggle than spend my days peacefully and tranquilly.'⁵¹ Ever frugal, Lei saved his wages and would donate generously to emergency relief funds or construction projects. When not on duty, Lei helped comrade soldiers with their studies and volunteered at the local school. Above all, Lei Feng was dedicated to Mao Zedong Thought. Each night he would study Mao's works and during the day carried a satchel of articles (his 'mobile library') in case time permitted further study. Lei wrote in his diary, 'To me Chairman Mao's works are like food, weapons and the steering wheel of a vehicle. To live you must have food, to fight you must have a weapon, to drive a vehicle you must have a steering wheel, and to work for revolution you must read Chairman Mao's works.'⁵² Lei never sought recognition for his good deeds and when pressed for his name and regiment by strangers would answer, 'My name is Liberation Army and I live in China.' On 15 August 1962, while Lei Feng was guiding a fellow driver as he parked a truck, the vehicle hit an unstable power pole. The pole fell and struck Lei's head. He died soon after.



Lei Feng.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 'Learn from Lei Feng Day,' Chinese schools and community groups clean up parks and other facilities, in memory of Lei.



'Uncle Lei Feng tells revolutionary stories.'
(1965)

51 Chen Kuang-sheng, *Lei Feng: Chairman Mao's Good Fighter* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), 32.

52 Chen Kuang-sheng, *Lei Feng*, 60.

Lei Feng's diary, in which he had diligently recorded all his deeds and great love of the party, was published posthumously in March 1963. It was soon made an essential text for study in schools, while Mao coined the slogan 'Learn from Lei Feng' to popularise Lei's example. Jung Chang recalled how as a child she felt obliged to 'do good deeds like Lei Feng':

We went down to the railway station to try to help old ladies with their baggage, as Lei Feng had done. We sometimes had to grab their bundles from them forcibly because some countrywomen thought we were thieves. On rainy days I stood on the street with an umbrella, anxiously hoping that an old lady would pass by and give me an opportunity to escort her home – as Lei Feng would have done.⁵³

Those suspecting that Lei Feng's virtues were too good to be true were later vindicated – his diary proved to be a work of fiction produced by PLA propagandists.⁵⁴

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- What was the purpose of the 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaigns?
- How were ordinary people affected by these campaigns?

REFORMING THE ARTS

Mao Zedong: 'The Jiaqing Emperor dismissed Hai Rui from office. We dismissed Peng Dehuai from office. Peng Dehuai is indeed Hai Rui.'

HISTORIAN TERRILL
ON JIANG QING



Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch'ing) made her first official public appearance as Mao's wife on 29 September 1962, during a state visit by President Sukarno of Indonesia. Jiang had previously been excluded from politics by agreement during the Yan'an days. Her sudden appearance in photographs on the front page of the *People's Daily* came two days after the Tenth Plenum, which launched the Socialist Education movement. After a considerable period of estrangement, Mao had turned to his fourth wife, whose ambitions and fanaticism would be useful in his struggles within the party. Mao suggested that Jiang investigate culture and the extent to which socialist values were being advocated by writers and artists. Jiang was appointed to the Ministry of Culture as the Chairman's personal observer. This suited Jiang well; a former B-grade film and theatre actress, she felt qualified to pronounce judgment on the arts.

Jiang took up residence in Shanghai, where she formed a close working relationship with the city's mayor, Ke Qingshi (K'o Ch'ing-shih). Jiang spent her time reviewing plays and visiting the rehearsals of opera troupes. She was fond of telling people, 'I am just a plain soldier, a sentry of the Chairman patrolling on the ideological battlefield. I am keeping watch and will report what I find.'⁵⁵ Mayor Ke introduced Jiang to the radical polemicists Zhang Chunqiao (Chang Ch'un-chiao) and Yao Wen yuan (Yao Wen-yuan) – the two writers developed a close allegiance to Jiang and fuelled her interest in leftist ideas. As cultural investigator, Jiang concluded that 'feudal' and 'reactionary' values remained at the forefront of popular Chinese culture. On 12 December 1963, Mao said of one of Jiang Qing's reports into operas and plays:

53 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 339–40.

54 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 560.

55 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 405.

We have established a socialist foundation in our economy, but the superstructure – literature and art – has not changed so much. Dead people are still in control of literature and the arts ... We have to study this problem. Even party members are enthusiastically promoting feudal and capitalist art but ignoring socialist art. This is absurd.⁵⁶

Traditional Chinese opera came under Mao and Jiang's scrutiny in 1963. In particular, the Ghost Drama genre (in which the spirits of wronged people return to haunt their persecutors) was singled out as 'superstitious.' The genre was subsequently banned.⁵⁷ Jiang had less success in bringing the Beijing arts community under her sway. Mayor Peng Zhen intervened when Jiang suggested that the top Beijing opera troupe abandon its usual repertoire and focus on developing a piece of Jiang's devising. Peng instructed the singers and musicians to continue with their traditional work and ignore Jiang.⁵⁸

DID YOU KNOW?

During her acting career, one of Jiang Qing's favourite roles was the character of Nora in Ibsen's play *A Doll House*. Nora is a housewife who leaves her husband after coming to question traditional expectations of women.

'HAI RUI DISMISSED FROM OFFICE'

The view that the arts provided a forum for dissenters had some validity. In the years after the Great Leap Forward, a number of writers made veiled criticisms of the government's policies through historical allegories (symbolic stories).⁵⁹ A group of writers – Wu Han, Deng Tuo and Liao Mosha – using the combined pen-name 'Three-Family Village,' suggested that Mao had lost touch with reality and was prone to amnesia and 'great empty talk.'⁶⁰ Wu Han, a historian and the deputy mayor of Beijing, had, on 16 June 1959, published a short story in the *People's Daily* about a Ming-dynasty mandarin who was dismissed from office by Emperor Jiaqing. The hero of Wu's story, Hai Rui (Hai Jui), bravely spoke out at the injustices suffered by peasants and the arbitrary ways of the Son of Heaven (emperor): 'You think that you alone are right; you refuse to accept criticism; and your mistakes are many.'⁶¹ The story caused little debate at the time; Mao even encouraged academics to make a serious study of the Ming era, particularly Hai Rui. But in January 1961, Wu Han developed his short story into a play entitled *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. The play extended Wu's previous themes and showed Hai Rui being punished for granting land to poor peasants. The fact that there were many critical articles – purporting to be historical commentaries – appearing in the Beijing press at the time may suggest support for such ideas among some higher authorities, including Mayor Peng Zhen.⁶² In 1962, Mao remarked caustically, 'the use of novels for anti-Party activity is a great invention.'⁶³ Despite alleged amnesia, Mao would long remember the sentiments expressed in the veiled critiques of Wu Han and Three-Family Village.

By the spring of 1965, Mao had his hackles up over *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. At the urging of Jiang Qing, he had come to view Wu's play as an allegory for the dismissal of Peng Dehuai. The Chairman was the arbitrary and unheeding emperor – a metaphor that any educated Chinese person with an eye for political symbolism could see. It is also likely that Mao saw debate over the play as a useful means of exposing his enemies.⁶⁴ Culture would thus be the first battleground in a far broader political and social movement.

In September, Mao travelled to Shanghai and met with Jiang and her associates Yao Wenyan and Zhang Chunqiao. Under the direction of Mao and Jiang, Yao Wenyan spent the coming months drafting a scathing review of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Yao's diatribe dismissed Wu's work as a 'poisonous weed' that championed private farming at the expense of collective approaches. It was

56 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 405.

57 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 508.

58 Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao: White-Boned Demon* (Ringwood: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), 245.

59 Allegory is the treatment of one subject under the guise of another; a symbolic representation.

60 Three Family Village was the residence of a Song dynasty official who had been unfairly dismissed from office but continued to offer a critical voice on Imperial policy. See Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 569.

61 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 697–8.

62 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 699; Jack Gray, interviewed in *Red Chapters: The Play's the Thing* (SBS documentary, 1999).

63 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 309.

64 Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 80–1.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao once remarked to a family member, 'Jiang Qing is as deadly poisonous as a scorpion.' As he did so he wiggled his finger for effect.

Jiang Qing applauding performers of her revolutionary model operas.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mao loved traditional Chinese opera and was deeply moved by it. On occasion he was known to sob and blow his nose loudly during a performance.

a reflection of 'the struggle of the capitalist class against the dictatorship of the proletariat ... Its influence is great and its poison widespread. If we do not clean it up, it will harm the people's cause.'⁶⁵ In January 1965, a Politburo meeting was convened, and, at Mao's urging, a 'Five-Man Group' chaired by Peng Zhen was appointed to investigate ways of carrying out a 'cultural revolution.' At the top of the list of tasks entrusted to the Five-Man Group was an investigation of Wu Han. Little had come of this by late 1965. Upon receiving Yao's critical review for publication, Peng Zhen's officials refused to pass on the article to the *People's Daily*. Mao circumvented Peng by having it published on 10 November 1965 in the Shanghai paper *Liberation Army Daily*. Peng was furious (he was unaware of Mao's involvement) and protested vigorously that a regional party committee had undercut his investigation and smeared a high-ranking official (his deputy) without Beijing's approval.⁶⁶ Zhou Enlai called Peng to tell him of Mao's role and urged him to go ahead with the article. The Beijing party boss eventually put it on page five of the 30 November issue of the *People's Daily*, under the sub-heading 'Academic Discussions.' An accompanying editorial spoke of 'the freedom to criticize as well as the freedom to counter-criticize.'⁶⁷ Peng continued to argue at party meetings that Wu Han's play was a literary rather than a political question.

THE FEBRUARY OUTLINE REPORT

Although Wu Han offered a self-criticism on 30 December 1965 and admitted his play showed an incorrect ideological outlook, the matter was far from resolved. Mao continued to press Peng Zhen and his Five-Man Group to offer a clear judgment. On 12 February 1966, the group's February Outline Report was released. Approved by the Politburo, the report concluded that the Wu Han problem should be resolved by 'seeking truth from facts' and was largely a matter of literary debate. Yao Wenyan was reproached for 'treating a purely academic question in political terms.'⁶⁸ When Peng Zhen personally presented Mao with a copy, the Chairman waved it away and said, 'You people work it out. I don't need

65 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 528.

66 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 175.

67 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 437.

68 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 310.

to see it.’⁶⁹ Mao’s refusal to read the report was an ominous indication of his disapproval.⁷⁰ Shortly after, Mao remarked to his doctor, ‘Reactionaries don’t fall down unless you hit them hard.’⁷¹

In early February 1966, Lin Biao invited Jiang Qing to head a ‘Forum on Work in Literature and Art for the Armed Forces.’ Lin told his fellow military leaders, ‘Comrade Jiang is very sharp politically on issues of art and literature ... From now on, all army documents on the arts will cross her desk.’⁷² Jiang relished her new role as chief cultural attaché to the PLA. Jiang’s Forum, which met from 2–20 February, produced a document flatly denying the findings of the February Outline Report and reiterating the centrality of class struggle in artistic spheres. The forum also called for a ‘Great Socialist Cultural Revolution,’ to do away with feudal and revisionist ideas.⁷³ What this meant was not immediately certain, and, for a time, both Jiang Qing’s and Peng Zhen’s reports remained in circulation. Those with keen political insight, however, sensed that further trouble was brewing. Deng Xiaoping ceased playing bridge with Wu Han, while Liu Shaoqi distanced himself from his long-time friend Peng Zhen.

69 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 448.

70 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 69.

71 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 449.

72 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao*, 256.

73 Craig Dietrich, *People’s China*, 176.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Why was culture used by Mao and his wife as a political forum for exposing their critics in the mid-1960s?

KEY PEOPLE

After reading about the period 1961–66, identify the contributions made by the following people to the development of the Cultural Revolution.

KEY PEOPLE IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

	VIEWS ON CULTURE OR ECONOMIC RECOVERY (1961–66)	KEY ACTIONS/COMMENTS IN THIS PERIOD	PART PLAYED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION
Lin Biao			
Jiang Qing			
Liu Shaoqi			
Mao Zedong			
Wu Han			
Yao Wenjuan			
Peng Zhen			

LAUNCHING THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao affectionately called General Luo Ruiqing 'Luo the Tall,' due to his imposing height. On one occasion, Mao told an associate, 'As soon as Luo the Tall steps closer, I feel very safe.'

Mao Zedong: 'Capitalist roaders are power-holders who follow the capitalist road ... They do not take the socialist road, but they now hold power.'

Liu Shaoqi had been reconfirmed as president on 3 January 1965, and it was widely assumed that he was Mao's chosen successor. Press headlines at the time proclaimed, 'Chairman Mao and Chairman Liu are both our beloved leaders.'⁷⁴ Yet the purge of a senior military and Security Bureau official, General Luo Ruiqing, who was subject to an intense haranguing at a Central Committee meeting in December 1965, hinted that further political fallout amongst the party elite would be forthcoming. (Luo would be formally relieved of duties on 16 May 1966.) A close associate of Deng Xiaoping, Luo was distrusted by Lin Biao. Such was the pressure on Luo, who by March 1966 was facing accusations of 'treason,' that he attempted suicide by leaping from a fourth-storey window. He survived but both his legs were badly broken. When told the news, Mao snorted, 'How pathetic.'⁷⁵ The literal and figurative downfall of Luo Ruiqing strengthened Lin Biao's authority in the PLA. Despite the growing influence of Lin and Jiang Qing, as well as the unresolved internal party dispute over the Wu Han affair, it seemed that Liu Shaoqi felt no immediate threat to his authority during the winter of 1965–66. Mao had again retired to Hangzhou. When Liu Shaoqi left in March 1966 on a month-long diplomatic tour of Burma, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mao roused himself into action and set about unleashing a new revolutionary movement against the party establishment.

74 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 514.

75 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 436.

76 Cited in Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 336.

THE MAY 16 CIRCULAR

Lin Biao (left) and Mao.



In Liu Shaoqi's absence, Mao convened a number of Politburo meetings throughout March, where he called on the party leadership to revoke the February Outline Report and dissolve Peng Zhen's Five-Man Group. Mao spoke of 'scholar tyrants' (i.e. Wu Han) being protected by a 'party tyrant' (Peng Zhen). He also called the Central Committee's Propaganda Department 'the palace of the King of Hell' (it was led by a close associate of Peng Zhen). Mao claimed, 'For a long time I have begged the local authorities to rebel against the Central Committee if those in power have not done their job ... I call upon the local provinces for a rebellion and an attack on the centre.'⁷⁶ Mao's views were repeated in the following weeks by Zhang Chunqiao, Kang Sheng (head of secret police) and Mao's long-time propagandist, Chen Boda. When Liu Shaoqi returned to China in late April, he found himself facing a political storm of dizzying complexity. Mao remained at his Hangzhou summer retreat, while in Beijing the Central Committee met from 4–18 May. The radical faction within the party was clearly gaining influence. Lin accused Peng of planning a military coup while Kang, Chen and Zhang spoke on Mao's behalf; they succeeded in having a directive issued

on 16 May.⁷⁷ Drafted by Mao, the ‘May 16 Circular’ announced the end of Peng Zhen’s Five-Man Group and the formation of a new Cultural Revolution Small Group, headed by Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao and Kang Sheng. The circular made clear that the Cultural Revolution was rapidly turning political:

77 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 69–70.

DOCUMENT

MAY 16 CIRCULAR, 1966

The so-called [February] Outline Report by the ‘Group of Five’ ... is a reflection of bourgeois ideology in the Party; it is out and out revisionism. Far from being a minor issue, the struggle against this revisionist line is an issue of prime importance ...

The whole Party must follow Comrade Mao Zedong’s instructions, hold high the great banner of proletarian Cultural Revolution, thoroughly expose the reactionary bourgeois stand of those so-called academic authorities who oppose the Party and socialism, thoroughly criticise and repudiate reactionary bourgeois ideas in the sphere of academic work, education, journalism, literature and art and publishing, and seize the leadership in these cultural spheres ...

Those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party ... are a bunch of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Some of them we have already seen through, others we have not.

Some are still trusted by us and are being trained as our successors ... Party committees at all levels must pay full attention to this matter.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

ACTIVITY

Read the May 16 Circular and complete the following tasks.

1. Outline the problems with the February Outline Report, as stated in the source.
2. Explain what actions should be taken to resolve these concerns, according to the source.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain why the May 16 Circular was produced.
4. Evaluate the significance of the May 16 Circular as a consequence of the Chinese Revolution. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

While he was not named, the reference to ‘successors’ and a Chinese Khrushchev implied that Liu Shaoqi was in trouble. For the time being Liu, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai agreed with the denunciation of Peng Zhen. Beijing’s mayor no longer appeared in public.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

ACTIVITY

After reading the May 16 Circular, select two further Cultural Revolution-era primary sources and write a paragraph on each of the topics below.

1. What do the sources suggest about the extent to which China changed, socially, culturally, politically and/or economically, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–71)?
2. Using your chosen sources and your own knowledge, explain Mao’s likely reasons for launching the Cultural Revolution. Did he appear to want radical change simply for its own sake, or might he have had genuine objectives?

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao enjoyed breaking with tradition. When he celebrated Tibetan New Year on one occasion, he was told that it was customary to throw cake at the ceiling as an offering to Buddha. Mao grinned as he threw one piece of cake at the ceiling and another on the ground.

RED GUARD SONG



RED GUARD
'LOYALTY DANCE'



MAO AND THE MONKEY KING

What was Mao seeking through the Cultural Revolution? According to Simon Leys, 'The "Cultural Revolution" had nothing revolutionary about it except the name, and nothing cultural about it except the first tactical excuse. It was a power struggle fought at the top between a handful of men and behind the smokescreen of [an invented] mass movement.'⁷⁸

A struggle for political supremacy between the Liuist and Maoist factions of the party was a key factor. Jonathan Spence argues, however, that 'This movement defies simple classification, for embedded within it were many impulses at once feeding and impeding each other.'⁷⁹ A valuable clue for understanding the complexities is Mao's fascination with Chinese literary traditions and history. According to his doctor, 'Mao read history more than Marx when preparing for political battle.'⁸⁰ Ross Terrill sees Mao's identification with the literary figure Monkey King as particularly insightful:

The Cultural Revolution reflected Mao's evolution from a Marxist to the 'Monkey King' of one of his favourite novels, *Journey to the West*. The novel's hero is a monkey with a red behind called Sun who performs fantastic feats. He steals and eats peaches of immortality in the gardens of paradise, he storms the gates of hell in order to remove his name from a cosmic blacklist, he covers thousands of miles in one leap, and reaching the world's outer boundary, pisses on the base of a pillar to show his disrespectful spirit.⁸¹

When threatened, Monkey King plucks hairs from his body and cries 'Change!' – the hairs magically transform into an army of little monkeys who fight alongside their king. In 1966, Mao told a Western journalist, 'We've been Monkey King upsetting heaven. We've thrown away the heavenly rule book. Remember this, never take a heavenly rule book too seriously – one must go by one's own revolutionary rules.'⁸²

Mao's sense of his own mortality was a further influence. Mao turned seventy-three in 1966 and knew the end of his life was not too far away. He noted on a number of occasions that Confucius died at age seventy-three, and he said, 'I will soon be seeing Marx.'⁸³ Despairing of the party establishment, Mao sought to impart his ideals to a younger generation of revolutionaries. Mao spoke of the need to 'set fires' in order to avoid a stagnation of revolutionary sentiment.⁸⁴ According to Jonathan Fenby, Mao was 'seeking immortality by identifying himself with symbols that would live on after him.'⁸⁵ Robert Jay Lifton sees this as a quest by Mao to achieve 'revolutionary immortality' – a symbolic transcendence of death.⁸⁶ The Chairman was mortal, but his legacy could be of such profound impact that his revolutionary vision would live on.

THE RED GUARDS

Mao Zedong: 'Marxism consists of thousands of truths, but they all boil down to one sentence, "It is right to rebel."'

In March 1966, Mao declared to the Politburo, 'We must overcome the king of hell and liberate the little devils. We need more Suns [monkey kings] ... to go and disrupt the heavenly palace.'⁸⁷ The shock troops of the Cultural Revolution who would upset heaven – 'Mao's arse kickers'⁸⁸ – emerged soon after the May

78 Simon Leys, cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: China in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 231.

79 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 572.

80 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 440.

81 Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time*, 90; see also Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 335.

82 Cited in Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time*, 91.

83 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 317.

84 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin-Viking, 1999), 157.

85 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 440.

86 Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 20-21.

87 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 335.

16 Circular. A few days before the Circular, Kang Sheng, the head of China's secret police, had sent his wife to make contact with the party secretary of the philosophy department at Beijing University, a junior member of staff called Nie Yuanzi (Nie Yuan-tzu). Kang's wife assured Nie that activism in support of the Cultural Revolution would be given 'high level backing'.⁸⁹ When released, the May 16 Circular generated a great deal of excitement and discussion amongst students and young academics.⁹⁰ On 24 May, Nie Yuanzi put up a big character poster headed, 'What are you up to in the Cultural Revolution?' Nie denounced the head of Beijing University, Lu Ping (Lu P'ing, an associate of Peng Zhen), whom she accused of obstructing student discussions and political meetings:

At present, the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit which manifests their boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party, anti-socialist gang, are making vigorous and great cultural revolution ... But here in Beijing University the masses are being kept immobilised, the atmosphere is one of great indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? Something fishy is going on.⁹¹

The university administration responded through the Communist Youth League, which launched a counter-campaign of posters ridiculing Nie's claims; however, on 1 June, Nie received the 'high level backing' that was promised. The *People's Daily*, now edited by Chen Boda, reprinted Nie's poster with an accompanying personal endorsement by Mao.⁹² Provincial papers followed suit, as did national radio programs. In triumph, Nie proclaimed, 'Chairman Mao has said that I am the first red banner – so anyone who opposes me opposes Chairman Mao.'⁹³ On 3 June, Lu Ping was dismissed from Beijing University.

Grass-roots student radicalism went into overdrive. Lin Biao had already been fanning the flames of Maoist fanaticism. From early May, he had been making increasingly sensational claims of the importance of Mao Zedong Thought: 'Chairman Mao is a genius ... One sentence of his surpasses 10 000 of ours.'⁹⁴ Students from universities and middle (secondary) schools echoed such sentiments in thousands of big-character posters (*dazhibao*) plastered around their campuses (65 000 went up at Beijing University alone).⁹⁵ Through their posters and emotionally charged meetings, the students expressed a deep yearning to rise up against the repressive party and educational establishment: 'Since we want rebellion, the matter has been taken out of your hands! We are going to make the air thick with the pungent smell of explosives. Toss them over, grenades and ... bombs together, and start a big fight!'⁹⁶

In late May 1966, students of a middle school attached to Beijing University coined the term 'Red Guards' to describe their group – the name caught on and was soon in common use amongst student activists. Chen Boda's provocative *People's Daily* editorials further encouraged student radicalism. According to Chen, 'Chairman Mao is the red sun in our hearts ... Whoever dares to oppose him shall be obliterated.'⁹⁷ Chen's editorial of 8 June urged loyal Maoists to 'Sweep away all the Freaks and Monsters' and praised Red Guard character posters. On 18 June, a decree announced the postponement of university entrance examinations while classes in middle schools were suspended indefinitely to allow more time for Red Guard activities. According to Patricia Buckley Ebrey, 'Young people who had grown up in New China responded enthusiastically to calls to help oust revisionists.'⁹⁸ While there was some spontaneity to the protests, Kang Sheng's agents also had a role in encouraging



Revolutionary figurines.



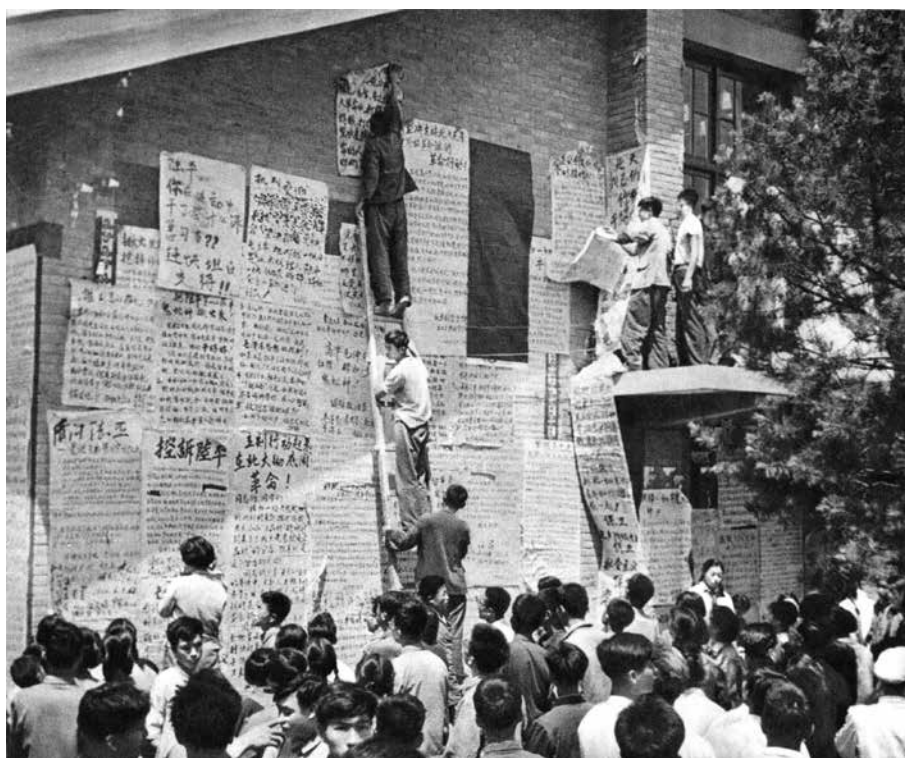
RED GUARD
VIOLENCE

- 88 Ed Jocelyn and Andrew McEwen, *The Long March: The True Story Behind the Legendary Journey that Made Mao's China* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2006), 222.
- 89 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 536. Nie Yuanzi also had a grudge against the University establishment: she was about to be transferred to a regional post. See Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 55.
- 90 Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), 71.
- 91 Cited in Jaap van Ginneken, *The Rise and Fall of Lin Biao*, 70–1.
- 92 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 536.
- 93 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 443.
- 94 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 536.
- 95 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 442.
- 96 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 183.
- 97 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 536.
- 98 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 291.

Big-character posters in Beijing University, *China Pictorial*, November 1967. This image appears courtesy of the Long Bow Group Archives, Boston.

DID YOU KNOW?

In his 1967 foreword to the second edition of *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, Lin Biao wrote, 'Comrade Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era. He has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism with genius ... and has brought it to a higher and completely new stage ... Once Mao Zedong's thought is grasped by the broad masses, it becomes an inexhaustible source of strength and a spiritual atom bomb of infinite power.'



student militancy.⁹⁹ Furthermore, not all students were thrilled by the disruption to their education. Mr. Lin, who was due to begin university, recalled,

When the Cultural Revolution started in June 1966, I was nineteen years old. My classmates and I just finished the courses of high school and were preparing for the national college entrance exam. Actually we did not have a clear idea of what the Cultural Revolution was and what it would mean to us. We were a bit disappointed when we heard that ... the national college entrance exam was cancelled and we would not have a college education.¹⁰⁰

Others delighted in an increasing sense of their own importance – their actions were truly 'revolutionary' – and found the Red Guard movement to be liberating and entertaining. According to one former Red Guard, 'We were free to do as we pleased, nobody checked on us, and we controlled ourselves ... I thought that what we were doing was important; therefore I enjoyed myself fully. It was a great deal of fun!'¹⁰¹ Rana Mitter notes that, while initiated by Mao, the Cultural Revolution, 'also had widespread support: it was a genuinely mass political movement which left many youths feeling as if they had the best days of their lives.'¹⁰²

By mid-June, some Red Guards were beginning to act out the violence of their rhetoric and developing an arsenal of rituals that would become trademarks of the Cultural Revolution. On 18 June, students at Beijing University seized members of the administration, placed dunce (fool) caps on their heads, spattered them with ink, ripped their clothes and made them kneel while being kicked and punched. Character posters were pasted on their front and back, after which they were marched around campus to be jeered at by students.¹⁰³

An associate of Nie Yuanzi said, 'A red terror spread over the campus as the black gang ['counter-revolutionaries'] trembled with fear and shook with fright, and the

99 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 441.

100 Mr. Lin, interview with author, 4 February 2009.

101 Cited in Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 221.

102 Rana Mitter, *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

103 Many Red Guard rituals were inspired by Mao's accounts of peasant attacks on landlords during the 1920s. See Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 74.

revolutionary teachers and students were filled with joy.¹⁰⁴ For Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the escalating social turmoil springing forth from schools and universities was no fun at all. Beijing was descending into chaos and they did not know what to make of it. Mao remained far from the capital, staying first at Hangzhou and then at a villa in his home village of Shaoshan. Liu phoned Mao to ask him to return to Beijing and offer advice. He then visited him in person. Liu explained that he was unfamiliar with a 'cultural revolution' and was unsure how to proceed.¹⁰⁵ The Chairman remained impervious and gave no counsel. He remarked to his doctor, 'Let them handle the problems of the movement by themselves. I need a rest.'¹⁰⁶

WORK TEAMS RESTORE ORDER

Inevitably, Liu and Deng did respond to the student unrest. Much to the relief of school administrators, they organised for work teams of party activists to descend on university campuses and take control. They hoped to restrain the more radical impulses of the Red Guards and restore order. On the surface, they were successful at dampening the movement, but tensions continued to simmer. On 8 July 1966, Mao wrote to Jiang Qing, 'Every day I read documents and other materials with great interest. Great chaos will lead to great disorder. The cycle appears every seven or eight years. The demons and monsters will come out by themselves.'¹⁰⁷ It seemed that Liu had no idea that Mao was seeking his political destruction. Mao was furious with Liu's work teams, which were impeding his mass revolutionary movement. He was also by now well 'rested' and ready, as Percy Craddock puts it, 'to get back into the swim of things.'¹⁰⁸

104 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 444.

105 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors: Mao and Deng, a Dual Biography* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1992), 232.

106 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 459.

107 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 461.

108 Percy Craddock, interviewed in *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor* (BBC, 1993). Craddock was a senior British diplomat in Beijing in the 1960s and 1970s.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the work teams sent to rein in the Red Guards was led by Liu Shaoqi's wife, Wang Guangmei. She would later pay dearly for her actions.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Write a paragraph on each of the following topics.

1. Were the Red Guards a genuine mass movement or a political strategy devised by Mao?
2. What initially attracted many young people to Red Guard activism?
3. To what extent was the initial phase of the Cultural Revolution a challenge for the established CCP authorities, headed by Liu Shaoqi?

ACTIVITY

MAO'S GOOD SWIM AND THE SIXTEEN POINTS

Mao Zedong: 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is a revolution that touched the souls of the people.'

Accompanied by a great deal of fanfare, Mao took a swim down the Yangzi River at Wuhan on 16 July 1966. Much like an Imperial pageant, Mao's 'Good Swim' elicited an enthusiastic response from ordinary people (a crowd of 10 000 lined the banks to cheer the Chairman on) and was celebrated in the press. An editorial in the *Beijing Review* summed up the news:

Chairman Mao, the most respected and beloved leader of the Chinese people, had a good swim in the Yangzi ... He was in the water for sixty five minutes and covered

DID YOU KNOW?

Cynics have noted that for Mao to achieve the impressive distance of his swim, all he had to do was float on his fat belly; the fast flowing current of the Yangzi did the rest.



Mao Zedong swims in the Yangzi River at Wuhan.

a distance of nearly fifteen kilometres downstream. As the good news spread through the country, it was greeted with unprecedented enthusiasm. People expressed the heartfelt wish for a long, long life for their venerated and beloved leader, and their determination to follow forever the revolutionary road charted by Chairman Mao advancing through the tempestuous storms of class struggle.¹⁰⁹

Although the event reflected Mao's established personality cult, John King Fairbank argues that there was genuine popular delight in the novelty of Mao's Good Swim: 'Since rural Chinese generally could not swim, and few adventurers had ever tried the [Yangzi], this was like news that Queen Elizabeth II had swum the Channel. He was obviously a paragon of athleticism, capable of superhuman feats.'¹¹⁰ The symbolism of the swim was also clear to all: the great 'helmsman' Mao Zedong was in fine health and more ready than ever to steer China through revolutionary waters.

ACTIVITY

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Discuss the beliefs and attitudes that surrounded Chairman Mao, as indicated in the reaction to his 'Good Swim.'

Without notifying Liu Shaoqi, Mao returned to Beijing on 18 July 1966. He initially refused to see the president, choosing instead to meet with Kang Sheng and Chen Boda. On 25 July, Mao ordered the withdrawal of the work teams from universities, while Liu offered a meek self-criticism while maintaining that he still didn't know what course of action he should take. On 1–8 August, the Eleventh Plenum of the CCP Central Committee convened to review Mao's ideological and political program. A document known as the 'Sixteen Points' was produced, which summed up the new 'decision concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.' Its main instructions included the following:

- 'At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road.'
- 'Since the Cultural Revolution is a revolution, it inevitably meets with resistance ... It tempers the proletariat and other working people and especially the younger generation, teaches them lessons and gives them experience.'
- 'Put daring above everything else, boldly arouse the masses.'
- 'Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative ... Make the fullest use of big-character posters and great debates ... and expose all the ghosts and monsters.'
- 'When there is debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.'
- 'In certain schools ... some persons in charge have organised counter-attacks against the masses ... This is an error ... and absolutely impermissible.'
- 'The period of schooling should be shortened. Courses should be fewer and better.'
- 'Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses.'
- 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is bound to achieve brilliant victory under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party headed by Comrade Mao Zedong.'¹¹¹

Liu Shaoqi was not directly implicated as a 'capitalist roader' or 'revisionist' but his influence was clearly on the wane. The Eleventh Plenum appointed Lin Biao

109 Cited in Colin Mackerras et al, *China in Revolution 1850–1976: History Through Documents* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 158.

110 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (London: Picador, 1988), 327.

111 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change*, 212–3.

first vice-chairman of the Central Committee, making him second in charge under Mao, while Liu was demoted to eighth position in the Politburo hierarchy. From this time on, Mao called Lin Biao his ‘closest comrade-in-arms.’¹¹²

KEY IDEAS

On the board, summarise the aims of the Cultural Revolution, as stated in the Sixteen Points of August 1966.

ACTIVITY

The ominous mood at the Plenum was heightened on 5 August, after Mao pinned his own big-character poster on the door to the Central Committee meeting room. Mao’s poster, reprinted the following day in all major newspapers, was titled, ‘My First Big Character Poster: Bombard the Headquarters!’

DOCUMENT

MAO, ‘MY FIRST BIG CHARACTER POSTER: BOMBARD THE HEADQUARTERS!’, 1966

China’s first Marxist-Leninist big-character poster [by Nie Yuanzi] and Commentator’s article on it in are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the central down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the great cultural revolution of the proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing from their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How poisonous!¹¹³

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Mao’s ‘First Big Character Poster’ and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe Mao’s thoughts on Nie Yuanzi’s big-character poster.
2. Explain Mao’s likely reasons for issuing his own big-character poster. In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
3. Referring to the source and to Mao’s Sixteen Points (see opposite page), outline Mao’s criticisms of ‘some leading comrades’ in the Communist Party.
4. Evaluate Mao’s intentions for the Cultural Revolution (1966–71). In your response, refer to the two sources and other views.

ACTIVITY

RALLIES, GHOSTS AND MONSTERS

Jiang Qing: ‘The more brutal, the more revolutionary.’

Massive rallies were organised to ‘boldly arouse the masses’ of young people to cultural revolutionary action. The first, held on 18 August 1966 in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, was attended by over a million Red Guards. Seven more rallies were held in the months that followed. Those attending waved their copies of Mao’s *Little Red Book*, performed the ‘loyalty dance,’ chanted slogans and sang

112 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 700.

113 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change*, 211.

DID YOU KNOW?

A number of young people were allowed to shake Mao's hand and be photographed with him at the Tiananmen rallies. Afterwards they were swamped by hundreds of other young people wanting to shake the hands that had shaken Mao's.

114 Mr. Lin, interview with author, 4 February 2009.

115 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 447.

116 Rana Mitter, *Modern China*, 62.

117 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 543.

Chairman Mao Zedong is surrounded by admiring young people following a mass rally celebrating the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

A phrase from Mao's *Little Red Book* often cited by Red Guards was, 'The world is yours as well as ours, but in the last analysis it is yours.' Many Red Guards took Mao at his word.

revolutionary songs in honour of their beloved Chairman Mao. Lin Biao and Chen Boda made speeches that whipped up the emotion of the crowd (political ambition had allowed Lin to master his phobias). The climactic highlight was Mao's appearance at the balcony of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, where he waved to the surging mass of young people. Mao wore a khaki tunic and military cap favoured by the Red Guards. At the first rally, a female middle-school student was given the great honour of pinning a Red Guard armband on the Chairman. This sent the crowd wild; Mao was bestowing his symbolic blessing on the movement. Around ten-million young people from across China came to Beijing during the Cultural Revolution to be 'reviewed' by Chairman Mao in this manner. They were drilled on how to behave by the PLA and given free accommodation and transport.

Many former Red Guards remember the 1966 rallies with excitement. Mr Lin, who attended one rally, said, 'The atmosphere was thrilling. We were so excited that we wept and kept shouting, "Long live Chairman Mao!" when we saw Mao Zedong and other leaders.'¹¹⁴ It was commonplace for Red Guards to be reduced to hysterical tears of joy upon seeing Mao. The rallies were the climax of their revolutionary experience, 'a delirious exultation in which the individual melded into the mass.'¹¹⁵ Mao said that the Cultural Revolution was to be a 'great revolution that touches the people to their very souls.' According to Rana Mitter, the movement was not simply a political campaign of great ideological conviction, but also, 'despite its seeming irrationality, reflected a particular type of modernity' which was 'meant to provide a retooling of Chinese society to become a renewed, self-aware citizenry finally free from the shackles of the past.'¹¹⁶ Many Red Guards were certainly swept up in the emotive, transformational experience. One wrote afterwards to a friend, 'I saw our most, most, most, most dearly beloved leader, Chairman Mao! Comrades, I have seen Chairman Mao! Today I am so happy my heart is about to burst ... I have decided to make today my birthday. Today, I start a new life!'¹¹⁷



'LINKING UP'

A further important experience for Red Guards – a Long March of sorts – was travelling by free transport to revolutionary sites such as Jiangxi, Yan'an, Zunyi or Mao's birthplace at Shaoshan. The trip to Beijing was a highlight for provincial youths. In Beijing, empty schools became makeshift dormitories and free meals

were provided to young pilgrims. The revolutionary tourists called their travels ‘linking up’ and ‘exchanging experiences.’ Mrs. Fan was one of millions who took up this opportunity: ‘For teenagers it was popular to “link-up,” which was when students cut class and travelled across the country to meet other young activists and propagate Mao Zedong Thought. I did it also. All of us teenagers were on the train, crammed in with no seats. But we didn’t need to pay any ticket fee. It was called “Physical Struggle.”’¹¹⁸ Young people from across China did indeed meet up, swap Mao badges, collect soil from Yan’an and see different parts of their country for the first time.¹¹⁹ For many, this was the best time of their lives.¹²⁰ Many also realised the incredible poverty that country people endured. Li Nanyang recalled, ‘Walking through the countryside had an impact on my whole life. I saw China through different eyes. I realised how insignificant I was.’¹²¹



Young people from north-eastern China carry a banner as they march into Beijing during the Cultural Revolution.

STRUGGLE SESSIONS AND RITUAL HUMILIATIONS

After the rally of 18 August, an ‘orgasm of devotional enthusiasm swept feverishly through the streets.’¹²² So too did extreme violence. During one of his speeches, Lin Biao called on young people to bring about the destruction of the Four Olds: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. This was first taken by Red Guards as a licence to attack people in the academic establishment and in positions of immediate authority above them, namely teachers and lecturers. Red Guards put many teachers and academics through brutal ‘struggle sessions.’ The victims were harangued and accused of being ‘black gang elements,’ ‘snake-spirits,’ ‘cow-demons,’ ‘freaks,’ ‘capitalist roaders,’ ‘evil wind,’ ‘counter-revolutionary revisionists’ and ‘lickspittle running dogs of imperialism and capitalism.’ Intellectuals were denounced as the ‘stinking Ninth Category’ of society. Those given such names, ironically derived from Buddhist demonology, were symbolically no longer human and therefore not worthy of compassion.¹²³ Those undergoing ‘struggle’ were made to wear metres-high dunce caps and large signs around their necks detailing their shortcomings; real names were crossed out and replaced with suitably monstrous or insulting monikers. Li Zhensheng recalled at one struggle session that the crowd decided the victim ‘didn’t look monstrous enough,’ so ink was smeared on his face, while at another a man with a hairstyle similar to Mao’s had it ‘shaved into a ghost head.’¹²⁴

For hours on end, Red Guards made their victims hold their arms out behind them in the ‘jet’ or ‘airplane’ position, often while kneeling on broken glass or hot charcoals.¹²⁵ Some of those being denounced had to balance precariously on rickety chairs or tables, while others were made to walk all day along a set route through their city while wearing a sign and banging a gong. At specific points they had to seek out a traffic policeman to sign a form proving they had made their journey.¹²⁶ Between struggles, ‘cow-demons’ and ‘snake spirits’ were kept in makeshift cells called ‘cow sheds.’

118 Mrs. Fan, interview with author, 13 February 2009 (translated by Rachel Fan).

119 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 221.

120 Rana Mitter, *Modern China*, 62.

121 Li Nanyang, interviewed in *Morning Sun* (documentary by Long Bow Group, screened on BBC, 2003).

122 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 543.

123 Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun, ‘Language in the Cultural Revolution,’ in Jeffrey Wasserstrom (ed.), *Twentieth Century China: New Approaches*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 226–7.

124 Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, 73, 75.

125 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 543;

126 Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, 74.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Beijing opera singer Yun Yanming was struggled against by Red Guards, she was paraded around town wearing a string of old shoes and a sign saying 'I am a big worn shoe' (colloquial Chinese term for prostitute).

127 Edwin Moise, *Modern China: A History* (London: Longman, 1994), 167.

128 Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun, 'Language in the Cultural Revolution,' 224–5.

129 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 208–9.

130 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 451; Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 575.

131 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 543.

132 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 545.

133 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 544.

The rituals and language of the Cultural Revolution and Red Guard movement were significant. Edwin Moise suggests that 'Mao's followers, not having been told exactly who or what they were struggling against, had to conjure pictures of the enemy from their imaginations.'¹²⁷ The crude language of the big-character posters, replete with 'damn its' and 'damn it to hells,' were an assertion of proletarian identity, youthful brashness and a purposeful break from the refined language of past public discourse.¹²⁸ Rana Mitter argues that language divorced from reality and meaning, 'particularly in relation to terms that contained value judgments, was one that also ended up abandoning responsibility.' The language of violence promoted actual violence and contributed to the 'moral nullity' of the Cultural Revolution.¹²⁹

'Struggle' meant not only just humiliation but also, often, physical harm. The Red Guards viciously beat people with leather belts and clubs, some so severely that they died or were left with permanent injuries. Middle-school students inflicted particularly horrific tortures on their teachers. The headmistress of a girls' school was made to carry heavy bricks around the campus, had boiling water poured over her, and was beaten with belts and sticks studded with nails. The exhaustion and stigma of being denounced caused countless suicides.¹³⁰ One such victim was the renowned writer Lao She. After an all-day beating, Lao's clothes were so caked with blood that his wife had to cut them from him. The following day he was meant to return to his workplace for further struggles. He instead drowned himself in a lake near the Forbidden City.¹³¹ A former teacher recalled the tragedies that occurred at his school: 'On the athletic field, every few days, several teachers would be taken out and shot in public ... Some teachers were buried alive. On the roof over there, four teachers were ordered to sit on a pack of explosives and to light it themselves. A tremendous sound, and nobody could be seen – only legs and arms were in the trees and over the roof.'¹³² Security Minister Xie Fuzhi (Hsieh Fu-chih) instructed his police to not interfere in Red Guard activities: 'Should Red Guards who kill people be punished? My view is that if people are killed, they are killed; it's no business of ours.'¹³³

FEATURE

THE CHAIRMAN AND SONG BINBIN

The girl who pinned the armband on Mao at the rally of 18 August 1966 was named Song Binbin. When she told Mao her name, he asked her if *bin* meant *educated and gentle*. When Song replied that it did mean that, the Chairman replied, 'Be violent!' Song Binbin thereafter changed her name to Be Violent, while her middle school was renamed The Red Violent School.

At least, this is how Jung Chang and Jon Halliday relate the story.¹³⁴ But when Song Binbin was interviewed in the documentary *Morning Sun*, she

claimed that Mao merely told her, 'Be militant.' Song was upset that her experience of meeting the Chairman had been used by others to suggest that she herself was violent and brutal, or to promote revolutionary violence: 'My name and my image were hijacked. I was furious because I lost control over my identity, but I was also sad because people suffered because of what that name stood for.'¹³⁵

134 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 537.

135 Song Binbin, interview in *Morning Sun* (documentary by Long Bow Group, 2003).

ASSESSING THE BRUTALITY

How are the violence and allure of the Cultural Revolution to be understood? Jonathan Spence suggests that young Chinese were genuinely frustrated with social restraints and lack of opportunities. Youth unemployment was a major concern in the mid-1960s. 'They were repressed, angry, and aware of their powerlessness.'¹³⁶ Similarly, Jonathan Fenby argues that the movement grew because it was 'responding to social and human elements that had little to do with ideology.'¹³⁷ The Cultural Revolution allowed for the venting of social grievances in a society previously deprived of that right. As Jonathan Unger argues, it reflected a 'complicated mix of pre-existing grievances and animosities [that] got played out and amplified.'¹³⁸ Mo Bo, a former Red Guard, supports the view that many young Chinese people were attracted to the movement for its novelty and the opportunity to lash out at authorities:

We all enjoyed having no classes and degrading the teachers ... In the past our teachers had been intimidating. Now the situation was reversed ... This kind of experience was so intoxicating that some of us went off our heads. But like most of the Red Guards I never appreciated the beating-people-up business. The farthest we went was when the most unpopular teacher was made to kneel down and confess his 'crimes' to the students. One student hit the teacher's heel with a brick – I couldn't bear to look. This student was one of the rough boys who would call their fathers 'bastards' and perform badly on exams. Chairman Mao gave them the chance to get their own back – at least that was how I understood it then and it is how I understand it now.¹³⁹

Jonathan Unger points out that in the years before the Cultural Revolution, secondary school students 'had faced increasing difficulties getting admitted to a university, and increasingly difficult career prospects if they were not admitted.'¹⁴⁰ In the same period, he argues, 'the criteria laid down by the government for getting into university kept shifting, but on the whole it gave progressively greater play to a parent's class origin and less to a student's academic achievement.' Students who had not been accepted into the Communist Youth League or who had 'bad class' (middle class) origins were often denied a place at university.

Those who were uncomfortable with the violence or who sympathised with those being struggled against had to do their best to hide it. The pressure to be violent was intense. To appear unenthusiastic was deemed 'reactionary' or 'counter-revolutionary.' Yang Rae recalled the day when her class turned on its teacher:

The other kids started beating her up. We were in a very small room. Should I also beat her? I was fifteen years old and I thought I was being tested. I felt that I had to charge forth. I didn't want to be a cowardly deserter. I could've chosen not to join in, but that required a greater courage; the strength of conscience. Later I thought, what if I didn't join in? I was a traitor, but so what if they thought that? Now I have to take responsibility for it.¹⁴¹

Another former Red Guard, Ken Ling, writes that teenage rebels made use of Maoist rhetoric for their own advantage: 'mutual exploitation had become the real basis of the relationship between the central authorities and us ... Our basic premise was that we were the future masters of the country. Only after this basic premise was destroyed by Mao Zedong were we to come to realize too late that Mao had used us more than we did him.'¹⁴²

A further expression of autonomy, which had no parallel since the Communists came to power, was the profusion of self-published Red Guard newspapers. Thousands of these unofficial tabloid publications provided a unique forum

DID YOU KNOW?

One woman said of the Cultural Revolution in her village, 'seeking revenge afterwards is very common in China, and that's why people beat their victims down so hard: because they're afraid that if they can rise again they might take revenge. So you feel you need to totally demolish them.'

When asked to explain the meaning of Red Guard activism, one young person asked, 'Do you really want to know what the Cultural Revolution is? It is a feast of criticism.'

136 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 576.

137 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 453.

138 Jonathan Unger, 'The Social Conflicts Underpinning China's Cultural Revolution Turmoil,' *Agora* 44, No. 3 (July 2009), 4.

139 Mo Bo, 'I was a teenage Red Guard,' *New Internationalist* (April 1987), 8. Not to be confused with Ma Bo, author of *Blood Red Sunset*.

140 Jonathan Unger, 'The Social Conflicts Underpinning China's Cultural Revolution Turmoil,' 4.

141 Yang Rae, interviewed in *Morning Sun* documentary.

142 Cited in Dahpon Ho, 'Omnipotent God-Emperor or Simply the Spark on a Tinderbox? The Primacy of Mao in the Cultural Revolution Historiography,' orpheus.ucsd.edu/chinesehistory/cr/dahpon.htm.

for young people to express their views on society.¹⁴³ The non-institutional Red Guard press and middle-school fanatics who lashed out at their teachers were clearly beyond the immediate control of central figures such as Mao or Jiang Qing. Mao was responsible for unleashing the Red Guards, yet he expressed surprise at their excesses and perhaps did not expect the degree of turmoil that eventually unfolded.¹⁴⁴

The following big-character poster, written by a group of Red Guards at a middle school in Beijing, was chosen by the journal *Red Flag* in November 1966 as a commendable example of Cultural Revolution activism:

DOCUMENT

BIG-CHARACTER POSTER BY RED GUARDS, BEIJING, 1966

Revolution is rebellion, and rebellion is the soul of Mao Zedong's thought ... to make revolution – in a word, daring to rebel – is the most fundamental and most precious quality of proletarian revolutionaries ... Not to rebel is revisionism, pure and simple! Revisionism has been in control of our school for seventeen years. If today we do not rise up in rebellion, when will we?

... You say we are too arrogant? 'Arrogant' is just what we want to be ... We are bent on striking down not only the reactionaries in our school, but the reactionaries all over the world. Revolutionaries take it as their task to transform the world. How can we not be 'arrogant'?

You say we are too crude? Crude is just what we want to be. How can we be soft and clinging towards revisionism or go in for great moderation? To be moderate toward the enemy is to be cruel to the revolution! You say we are going too far? ... Well, we are going to strike you down to the earth and keep you down!

... A revolutionary is a 'monkey king' ... whose supernatural powers are far-reaching and whose magic is omnipotent precisely because he has the great and invincible thought of Mao Zedong. We are ... 'displaying our supernatural powers' and using our 'magic' in order to turn the old world upside down, smash it to pieces, create chaos, and make a tremendous mess – and the bigger the better! We must do this to the present revisionist middle school ... Create a big rebellion, rebel to the end! We are bent on creating a tremendous proletarian uproar, and on carving out a new proletarian world! Long live the revolutionary rebel spirit of the proletariat!¹⁴⁵

ACTIVITY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the big-character poster and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the reasons why the Red Guards viewed rebellion as a key part of their identity, according to the source.
2. Describe how the Red Guards responded to perceived criticism of their behaviour, as suggested in the source.
3. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, explain the role of the Red Guards in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.
4. Evaluate the significance of the campaigns by Red Guards and others against 'revisionists' during the Cultural Revolution. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.

143 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China's Past*, 23.

144 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 453; Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 187.

145 Patricia Buckley Ebrey ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, revised edition, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 450.

A former Red Guard recounts the experiences of one of her friends:

DOCUMENT

LI NANYANG, FORMER RED GUARD

I had a good friend who came from a workers' family. She told me at first she could not bring herself to beat people. But to be accepted by the other Red Guards she felt that she'd have to be as revolutionary as they were. She said, 'So I followed their example and started beating people.' She told me that once she started beating people she became addicted to it. 'I got quite a high from it. The people you beat up didn't dare fight back. You felt so heroic.' I can't remember her exact words, but it was something like 'You felt so incredibly strong, people were afraid of you, you had this awe inspiring prowess.' She told me, 'Do you know how bad it got? I wouldn't stop beating someone till my arms hurt.' I thought, this is really scary. Because she was actually very nice and we had been friends for a long time. She wasn't a bad person yet she could do something like this.¹⁴⁶

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine 2–3 primary sources (written or visual) on the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Then complete the tasks below.

1. Compare the impressions given about the Red Guards in your chosen sources.
2. Using the sources and your own knowledge, explain why the Red Guard movement came about in 1966.
3. Evaluate the significance of the Cultural Revolution for young people in China (1966–71). In your response, refer to your chosen sources and other views.

'Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought – thoroughly smash the rotting counterrevolutionary revisionist line in literature and art' (1967).



ACTIVITY

THE 'FOUR OLDS' CAMPAIGN

Lin Biao: 'The revolutionary torrents of the masses are washing away all the sludge and filth left over from the old society.'

The Red Guard movement represented a profound change in societal attitudes. For young people to stand up to their elders – indeed to be totally free of traditional authority – had been unthinkable in China. Now it was 'right to rebel.' Girls, too, played a major role in the movement and thereby subverted traditional

¹⁴⁶ Li Nanyang, interviewed in *Morning Sun* documentary.

DID YOU KNOW?

Leaders of the Cultural Revolution did not necessarily renounce 'bourgeois' possessions; some profited from Red Guard raids of private homes. Kang Sheng sent lists of his desired artworks with the raiding parties. Rare books were preserved for Mao's library. Jiang Qing allegedly paid seven yuan for a jewellery collection.

expectations. Jiang Qing and Nie Yuanzi represented an inspiring example of women taking a greater public role in leadership.¹⁴⁷ Insistence on gender equality was a feature of Red Guard politics and young women would readily quote Mao to advance their position: 'Times have changed. Men and women are the same. What men can do women can also do.'¹⁴⁸ The campaign against the Four Olds (old ideas, culture, customs and habits) also changed everyday life and culture dramatically, albeit in a largely destructive way. In addition to struggling against 'bad elements,' Red Guards led raids on museums and private residences and carried out a frenzy of destruction and confiscation. Artworks, musical instruments, recordings by Western classical composers, fine porcelain, libraries of old books, ancient temples, gravestones, Western clothing – anything considered 'reactionary,' 'old,' 'foreign' or associated with 'Confucius and Co.' – was smashed or defaced.¹⁴⁹ As they were forced to watch the desecration of their temple, Buddhist monks in Harbin were made to hold up a banner reading, 'To hell with the Buddhist scriptures. They are full of dog farts.'¹⁵⁰ Even the grave of Confucius was vandalised. Some sites, however, were protected; Zhou Enlai ordered the closure of the gates to the Forbidden City and had soldiers patrol its perimeter. A number of important sites were declared 'state property' while some relics were stored in guarded warehouses.¹⁵¹ Raids by Red Guards were traumatic and terrifying for ordinary people without such protection. Nien Cheng recounted the arbitrary destruction unleashed on her most precious belongings during a raid by Red Guards:

Mounting the stairs, I was astonished to see several Red Guards taking pieces of my porcelain collection out of their padded boxes. One young man had arranged a set of four K'ang Hsi winecups in a row on the floor and was stepping on them. I was just in time to hear the crunch of delicate porcelain under the sole of his shoe. The sound pierced my heart. I leapt forward and caught his leg just as he raised his foot to crush the next cup ... With his face flushed in anger, the young man waved his fist, threatening me with a severe beating ... I picked up one of the remaining winecups and cradled it in my palm. Holding my hand out, I said, 'This winecup is nearly three hundred years old ... No one in this world can make another winecup like this one again. This is part of our cultural heritage.' ... The young man whose revolutionary work I had interrupted said angrily, 'You shut up! These things belong to the old culture. They are the useless toys of the feudal Emperors and the modern capitalist class and have no significance to us ... The old culture must be destroyed to make way for the new socialist culture.'¹⁵²

THE CULT OF MAO

Slogan: 'Father is close, Mother is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao.'

The power of Mao Zedong Thought and the cult of Mao reached new heights at the start of the Cultural Revolution. According to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, 'Red Guards tramping down the street, the bonfires of destruction, and the screams of the victims being set upon – these were the sights and sounds of the summer nights of 1966.'¹⁵³ That year saw Maoist Puritanism and aesthetics extended into everyday life more than ever before. People were discouraged from wearing jewellery, high heels, sunglasses, cosmetics, perfume, silk, velvet, blue jeans, fitted trousers and skirts.¹⁵⁴ Those attired in a 'bourgeois' manner were likely to be harassed by Red Guards, marched to a barber shop for haircut or even have their clothing cut from them. Chess was deemed too Russian.

147 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 455. Anchee Min, who as a young student was sent to the countryside in the early 1970s, recalled with great admiration her team leader Yan Sheng. Yan acted with the self-assuredness exhibited by many ordinary Communist feminist figures of the period. See Anchee Min, *Red Azalea* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993), 47–53.

148 Delia Davin, 'Gendered Mao,' in Timothy Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010), 210.

149 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 187.

150 Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, 72, 99.

151 Daphon David Ho, 'To Protect and Preserve: Resisting the Destroy the Four Olds Campaign,' in Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz and Andrew G. Walder, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 69–71.

152 Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 96–7.

153 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 540.

154 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*.

Spring mattresses, considered ‘too soft,’ were thrown out into the streets in great numbers.¹⁵⁵ Children were encouraged to trample grass and knock down flowers to prove they had not been ‘seduced’ by bourgeois values.¹⁵⁶ Keeping pets and cultivating pot plants was also frowned upon. For a brief period, traffic lights were changed so that red meant ‘go’ and green meant ‘stop.’¹⁵⁷ Taxis, trains and bicycles all displayed portraits of Mao; it is estimated that 2.2 billion portraits were produced.¹⁵⁸ Businesses changed their names from things like ‘Delicious Aroma’ (restaurant), ‘Comfort’ (shoes), ‘Happy Homes’ (furniture) or ‘Good Fortune and Longevity’ (men’s hats) to Maoist slogans like ‘East is Red,’ ‘Defend Mao Zedong’ and ‘Permanent Revolution.’¹⁵⁹ The street that housed the North Vietnamese embassy was renamed ‘Support Vietnam Street’ while the one that housed the Soviet Embassy became ‘Anti-Revisionist Street.’¹⁶⁰ Loudspeakers on almost every corner broadcast the Thoughts of Mao throughout the day and sometimes at night. Telephone operators would answer the phone with ‘Long Live Chairman Mao!’ Simple purchases while shopping required a recitation from Mao to complete the transaction.

THE NEW RELIGION

Whereas the Maoist movement initially ‘stimulated iconoclasts [breakers of icons],’ it later ‘produced icons.’¹⁶¹ Mao’s full title was extended to ‘Great Helmsman, Great Leader, Great Supreme Commander, Great Teacher, Chairman Mao.’ Mao’s disciples would bellow, ‘*Mao Zhuxi, wansui! Wansui!*’ (‘Ten thousand years of life to Chairman Mao!’), the same blessing given to the god-emperors of old China.¹⁶² Like the Sons of Heaven, Mao and his Thoughts were supposedly endowed with divine power. Mao was commonly portrayed as a disembodied head, radiating light and beaming down benevolently upon the revolutionary masses. In a ritual known as ‘receiving instructions and reporting to the Chairman,’ people bowed to Mao’s image after rising and before retiring for the day.¹⁶³ The *Little Red Book* provided the answers to all problems. Athletes quoted Mao as they trained, while doctors performed operations with a scalpel in one hand and their *Little Red Book* in the other. Peasants used Mao’s Thought to grow better crops, while workers checked their *Little Red Book* when trying to get machines to run more efficiently. The Thoughts of Chairman Mao could heal the sick, allow the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.¹⁶⁴ There were even reports that Mao’s Thought raised a man from the dead!¹⁶⁵ Mao even impinged on everyday family relations: according to a popular slogan of the time, ‘Father is close, Mother is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao.’¹⁶⁶ Those whose family members had been denounced were pressured to ‘draw a line’ between themselves and the accused by cutting off contact.

- 155 Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, 83
- 156 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 358–9; Michael Lynch, *The People’s Republic of China since 1949* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), 49.
- 157 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 548
- 158 This amounted to three for every person in China. See Geremie R. Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 8.
- 159 Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, 83
- 160 Percy Craddock, *Experiences of China* (London: John Murray, 1994), 39.
- 161 Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China*, 336.
- 162 Percy Craddock, *Experiences of China*, 43.
- 163 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 550
- 164 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 550.
- 165 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 457; Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 550.
- 166 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 348.



MAO: THE LAST
EMPEROR



EVERYDAY USE OF
MAO QUOTES

‘The sunlight of Mao Zedong Thought illuminates the road of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.’ (1966)



- 167 Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China since 1949*, 44.
- 168 Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change*, 222.
- 169 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 621; W.J.F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1992), 163.
- 170 Li Zhenheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, 132.

Many stories highlight the extent of devotion (real or performed) to Mao. Some Red Guards pinned their Mao badges on their skin, 'close to their heart'.¹⁶⁷ On one occasion, a school building caught fire and a PLA soldier who arrived on the scene ran in to save all the portraits of Mao before turning his attention to the people trapped inside (he rescued everyone just as the building collapsed). The soldier's priorities were deemed correct and he was celebrated as a hero in the press.¹⁶⁸ A man fighting a forest fire discarded his tools, cried 'Long live Chairman Mao!' and tried to put out the flames by rolling on them. Although he burned to death, he was celebrated as a hero. One Red Guard died while trying to save a telegraph pole being swept down a flooded river – the pole apparently wasn't a piece of driftwood but rather the means by which the Thoughts of Chairman Mao could be transmitted. The event was treated not as a needless waste of a young life but the act of a revolutionary martyr.¹⁶⁹

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

1. Give five examples of changes to everyday life that occurred during the Cultural Revolution.
2. Give three examples of extreme or bizarre behaviour observed during the period. What explanation might there have been for such extremism?
3. Considering that the Cultural Revolution denounced old Imperial ways, why did people wish Mao 'ten thousand years of life' and treat him like a modern-day Son of Heaven?
4. Li Zhenheng writes, 'Mao was more than a leader. He was our *saviour*. And everyone had to believe – or pretend to ... it was all a bit crazy to me.'¹⁷⁰ How do Li's comments compare with other recollections from the period? Did anyone try to preserve normal life during the Cultural Revolution?

ACTIVITY

FEATURE

THE EIGHT REVOLUTIONARY MODEL OPERAS

Jiang Qing: 'To act is to fight.'

It is commonly claimed that China was turned into an artistic wasteland by censorship and fanaticism during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷¹ Writers and artists who emerged relatively unscathed by the revolutionary onslaught were often too scared to create anything new. Poet Yan Yen noted, 'As a result of the Cultural Revolution you could say the cultural trademark of my generation is that we have no culture.'¹⁷² Jiang Qing was the driving force behind the censorship and radicalisation of popular culture after the mid-1960s. Only plays, dance pieces, books and films given her approval were officially published. Supposedly just 124 novels were produced during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷³

One artform that was nurtured by Jiang, apart from propaganda posters and anthems, was

musical theatre. The form had already begun to be reinterpreted by Communists – in 1964 there had been a fifteenth-anniversary celebration of the founding of the PRC, an all-singing, all-dancing spectacular titled *The East is Red*, which was staged and filmed in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Featuring dancers, singers, acrobats, an impressively emotive narrator and many inspiring anthems, *The East is Red* recounted the story of China's revolution and its bright communist future. After her appointment to the Ministry of Culture, Jiang took a greater hand in developing revolutionary performances. She was determined to ensure that China's performing arts would come to support the government's socialist world view.¹⁷⁴ Tales of common soldiers, workers and peasants were rarely told in high art, where ghosts, concubines and emperors traditionally held centre

stage. China's superstructure needed to reflect more accurately its base, otherwise the former might corrupt the latter.¹⁷⁵ Under Jiang's patronage a new revolutionary style of opera emerged. In all, eight 'revolutionary model pieces' were developed:

Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy
Shajiabang
The Legend of the Red Lantern
Raid on the White Tiger Regiment
The White-Haired Girl
On the Docks
Sparks Amid the Reeds
Red Detachment of Women.

The model pieces recounted brave military

campaigns in the history of the Red Army, the stories of proletarian heroes and exploited heroines, and other tales of class struggle and revolutionary valour. While to modern Western eyes these works might appear to be nothing more than Communist kitsch, contemporary audiences quite enjoyed the performances.¹⁷⁶

DID YOU KNOW?

The Maoist anthem *The East Is Red* became the unofficial Chinese national song during the Cultural Revolution, as the author who penned the official anthem (which did not refer to Mao) had been denounced.

The east is red, the sun is rising
 China has brought forth a Mao Zedong.
 He works for the people's welfare.
 Hurrah, He is the people's great savior.
 Chairman Mao loves the people,
 He is our guide,
 To build a new China,
 Hurrah, he leads us forward!
 The Communist Party is like the sun,
 Wherever it shines, it is bright.
 Wherever there is a Communist Party,
 Hurrah, there the people are liberated!

Many of the tunes were familiar and some of the stories built on earlier works of which people were fond. Lively acrobatic stunts, making use of martial arts leaps and kicks, were undoubtedly thrilling. One former acrobat, however, Yishujia, felt that contemporary works weren't anywhere near as good as past performance pieces:

It was ludicrous really, we were all idiots. We acted out battles, or things like 'catching a spy,' or taking Americans prisoner, that kind of revolutionary stuff, all fighting and killing ... Originally [performing] was pure skill and art. During the Cultural Revolution it was just revolutionary gestures ... The movements didn't matter, the important part was shouting slogans ... Thinking about it now, it was truly ridiculous. At that time everyone was a lunatic, some were genuinely crazy, some pretending to be crazy.¹⁷⁷

The development of the revolutionary opera was by no means easy. Jiang's combative personality – 'I am fond of firing cannon balls' – brought her into conflict with other Communist art patrons, particularly Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen. Jiang was greatly affronted that Peng didn't take her artistic concerns seriously. On one occasion she asked Peng to look over some opera scores; he snatched the music and stormed off, muttering to a companion, 'She wants this, she wants that. Doesn't she realize the mayor of Beijing has other things to do besides help her with her games?'¹⁷⁸ When Peng heard that Jiang's works were praised



Modern revolutionary ballet, *The White Haired Girl* (1973).

DID YOU KNOW?

Deng Xiaoping hated Jiang's revolutionary operas. After viewing one piece he scoffed, 'You just see a bunch of people running to and fro on the stage. Not a trace of art.' He remained unimpressed after a performance of *Red Detachment of Women*: 'After a week's work, people want to go to the theatre to relax. Instead, with this thing, you go to the theatre and find yourself on a battlefield.'

Source: Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao: White-Boned Demon: A Biography of Madam Mao Zedong* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), 249–50.

as 'revolutionary model pieces' following an Opera Festival in Beijing, he exclaimed, 'What the hell are these models? I'm head of the arts in this place, and I know nothing of models.'¹⁷⁹

What Peng had seriously underestimated was that, despite her annoying traits and lack of political clout (in the early 1960s at least), Jiang Qing was Mao's wife. He paid for this oversight dearly after mid-1966.

Liu Shaoqi also preferred more traditional works: 'The novels and plays of today are in most cases also not as good as those of the feudal

era. Therefore, plays about "emperors, and princes, generals and ministers, gifted scholars and beauties" should be performed.'¹⁸⁰ Mao, however, gave his approval to the revolutionary model pieces. He said of *Red Detachment of Women*, 'The orientation is right. It has been successfully revolutionized, and artistically it is also good.'¹⁸¹

It is often joked that during the Cultural Revolution China was a nation of 'eight-hundred million people watching eight shows.' Paul Clark has questioned these assumptions. Clark argues that there was a genuine and dynamic cultural

dimension to the Cultural Revolution: 'Instead of simply a period of madness, the Cultural Revolution was also a time of considerable creative energy, official and unofficial.'¹⁸² The works of the era added much to the modernising and innovative trends that preceded and followed the period.¹⁸³

Clark offers a detailed analysis of the influences and talent that went into the performing arts during the Cultural Revolution – including older works that continued to be performed surreptitiously. Artistically, the revolutionary model works were an innovative synthesis of influences. Western ballet and European instrumentation were combined with Chinese styles. According to Clark, 'a great deal more was being created, enjoyed, or resisted than hackneyed jokes about 800 million people limited to eight model performances.'¹⁸⁴

171 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 542; Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China since 1949*, 49.

172 Cited in Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China*, 50.

173 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 457.

174 Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao*, 243.

175 Roxanne Witke, *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1977), 306.

176 Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 35.

177 Cited in Xinran, *China Witness: Voices of a Silent Generation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2008), 145–6.

178 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao*, 249.

179 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao*, 249.

180 Cited in Roxanne Witke, *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing*, 308.

181 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Madam Mao*, 250.

182 Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 4.

183 Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 9.

184 Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 249.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Consider Paul Clark's views on Chinese artistic trends in the 1960s and 1970s (above). With a partner, discuss what Clark's interpretation might add to traditional accounts of the Cultural Revolution, which tend to characterise the period as culturally barren. Does a political message necessarily preclude artistic merit?

CULTURAL CHANGE

View an excerpt from one of the eight revolutionary model performances listed on the previous page (such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q65reK-KpRI). After viewing a few scenes, give a verbal or written review of the performance from the point of view of a *People's Daily* reporter at the time. What messages are conveyed through the dancing, music, stories and costumes? In your review, use phrases appropriate to the Cultural Revolution era.

SEIZE POWER! THE JANUARY STORM AND LIU'S DEMISE

Mao Zedong: 'Have no fear of chaos. The more chaos you dish up the better. Disorder and chaos are always a good thing. They clarify things. But never use weapons.'

With all the ingenuity of his guerrilla past – not to mention his delight in the poetic and theatrical – from late 1965 to mid-1966, Mao embarked on a baffling series of manoeuvres to undermine perceived threats to his revolutionary vision.¹⁸⁵ No one amongst the party leadership grasped the enormity of the social and political turmoil the Chairman had set in train. None suspected they were 'being led up a mountain and into a volcano.'¹⁸⁶ In typical Mao style, it appears that he too had no clear idea of how the Cultural Revolution might proceed or end. According to Jonathan Spence, 'It does seem to have been a case of allowing theory to grow out of practice, as he had always interpreted the revolutionary process to be.'¹⁸⁷ Chaos, as Monkey King would have it, or in Marxist terms dialectic contradictions, would nevertheless lead to a new order and the resolution of socio-political conflict. In the quest to achieve a new order, the fury of the Red Guards was soon directed by Mao and his associates at those 'following the capitalist road' in the upper levels of the party. On 15 September 1966, Lin Biao urged Red Guards to 'focus on denouncing those power-holders inside the Party pursuing a capitalist road.'¹⁸⁸ Red Guards thereafter literally 'bombarded the headquarters' of provincial party offices, seizing cadres and putting them through 'struggles' at denunciation rallies. At his seventy-third birthday in December 1966, Mao proposed a toast to 'the unfolding of all-round civil war.'¹⁸⁹ On another occasion, the Chairman announced that a 'few months of disorder' would be sufficient to shake up the party.¹⁹⁰ An alternate power base had already emerged. On 22 November 1966, a Central Cultural Revolutionary Committee was formed. Chen Boda was its chairman and Jiang Qing its vice-chairwoman. Dominated by members of the former Cultural Revolution Small Group, the new committee assumed greater influence as the Politburo virtually ceased to function after February 1967.¹⁹¹

DENUNCIATIONS OF PARTY LEADERS

On 23 October 1966, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were called before the Central Committee and obliged to deliver self-criticisms. Posters soon appeared throughout Beijing denouncing them by name. After 12 November, Liu no longer appeared in public or attended to presidential duties, instead remaining at home in the Zhongnanhai compound. On 1 January 1967, Zhongnanhai clerical staff burst into Liu's home and subjected him to a verbal struggle. Liu's wife, Wang Guangmei, was also a target. On 6 January Wang received a phone call informing her that her daughter was in hospital after a car accident. When Wang arrived to see her daughter, a group of Red Guards seized and delivered her to a denunciation rally. The call had been a hoax.¹⁹² Wang endured many more struggles in the coming months. One of the most humiliating occurred at Beijing University in April 1967. Wang was made to wear a tight-fitting *qipao* dress, high heels and a necklace of ping-pong balls; a symbolic condemnation of the 'bourgeois' attire and pearls she wore when greeting President Sukarno in 1963.



Mao badge, c. 1968.

- 185 Feng Xiangshu, *Making Sense of Mao* (Collingwood: HTAV, 1995), 4.
- 186 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 326.
- 187 Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong*, 168.
- 188 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 543.
- 189 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 551.
- 190 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 551.
- 191 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 562.
- 192 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 461.



'Long live the victory of the proletarian revolutionary line with chairman Mao as its representative! Long live the victory of the proletarian revolution!,' with (left to right) Kang Sheng, Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Chen Boda and Jiang Qing, c.1966.

DID YOU KNOW?

Consignments of Chinese guns being sent by rail to North Vietnam were seized by Red Guards and used in their battles.

A Red Guard described Wang's stoic refusal to cooperate as 'the ugly performance of a bitch struggling in the water.'¹⁹³

From July to September 1967, Red Guards set up camp outside Zhongnanhai and blasted the compound with loudspeakers.¹⁹⁴ Urged on by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing, the militant students hauled out many leading figures of the Chinese Communist movement to account for their shortcomings before the 'revolutionary masses': Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Bo Yibo, He Long, Liu Bochong, Chen Yi and Peng Zhen were all struggled against. Peng Zhen underwent more than 200 denunciation meetings, while Peng Dehuai was assaulted 135 times by Red Guards, resulting in permanent damage to his liver and half the bones in his body being broken.¹⁹⁵ Luo Ruiqing, unable to walk due to his broken legs, was carried to struggle sessions in a wicker basket.¹⁹⁶ Some, such as Zhu De, were spared physical torment at Mao's personal insistence. The denunciations were nonetheless a harrowing experience. The families of party leaders also suffered dreadfully. Deng Xiaoping's son was either thrown or forced to jump out of a second-storey window by Red Guards; he was left a paraplegic. One figure who appeared largely immune from the chaos was Zhou Enlai. Although he went along with much of the purging, Zhou managed to keep a semblance of government organisation intact and personally intervened on a number of occasions to 'rescue' individuals he needed.¹⁹⁷ When Foreign Minister Chen Yi was beaten and struggled against, Zhou arrived at the meeting, took Chen by the arm and led him away.¹⁹⁸ A fiery old cadre, Chen Yi, gave as good as he got to the Red Guards, telling them that if they were so keen on 'fighting,' then perhaps a trip to Vietnam would be to their liking. On another occasion he told them to 'cool down' and wrap wet towels around their heads.¹⁹⁹

FACTIONAL IN-FIGHTING

Perhaps the Red Guards really did need to 'cool down.' Factionalism had been prevalent in the movement from the outset. Initially this expressed itself through the children of the party elite competing with young people of working class and peasant backgrounds; the latter had called for more determined assaults on the Communist establishment. Factionalism had grown to a level of confusing complexity and caused vicious fighting by late 1966.²⁰⁰ All vowed to 'die fighting for Chairman Mao.' And die they did, in their thousands. By early 1967, fighting was no longer with fists: knives, slingshots, homemade spears, clubs and even 'tanks'²⁰¹ were used in bloody pitched battles. Campus buildings were barricaded

193 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*.

194 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors*, 269.

195 James Palmer, *The Death of Mao: The Tangshan Earthquake and the Birth of the New China* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), 8.

196 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 449.

197 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 349.

198 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors*, 270.

199 Percy Craddock, *Experiences of China*, 55.

200 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 546.

201 Everyday vehicles modified with armour plating.

and turned into fortresses. Red Guards even raided PLA arms depots and turned on each other with firearms. Anti-aircraft guns and heavy artillery were used during fighting in Chongqing.²⁰² One battle there involved 10 000 combatants. Those captured by their enemies were tortured and incarcerated in ‘reformatories.’ It was reported in 1967 that victorious Red Guards in Guangxi province ate the bodies of their victims.²⁰³ An extreme expression of an extreme period, cannibalism was a potent sign that the values of Chinese society had been turned upside-down.²⁰⁴ The revolution was literally devouring its own children. It is estimated that 650 000 people died in the fighting of 1966–68.²⁰⁵ Scared of the excesses and weary of endless sloganeering and poster campaigns, many students were by now spending much of their time at home.²⁰⁶

REBEL WORKERS

From early November 1966, workers were urged to join the Cultural Revolution. This eventually led to further social radicalisation and greater assaults on established authority. Militant office and factory workers formed ‘Rebel’ groups and challenged the party committees in their workplaces. Workers who had been disadvantaged under the old system gained a new voice as Rebels, as one former distillery worker recalled:

Before the Cultural Revolution there were hidden problems. When our leadership said something was one, not two, it had to be accepted as one, not two. We could say nothing in response but just had to work more. You could only talk about good things and never about the bad things. In the Cultural Revolution, people talked about anything, without restrictions. People said things they dared not say before. Many things were exposed ... It raised people’s thinking ... The Rebel faction was made up of ordinary small people, people without any power. They felt wronged. You’d been under your supervisor, and there was nowhere to vent your dissatisfaction. It wasn’t that I personally felt any anger, but when you joined the Rebel faction you felt better. When we talked with each other, we could feel a sense of relief.²⁰⁷

Like the Red Guards, Rebel organisations were rife with factional in-fighting. ‘Revolutionary Rebels’ seeking to overturn existing party structures completely were opposed by ‘proletarian Rebels’ who sought limited change.²⁰⁸ It was the Rebel groups that eventually brought about the most fundamental shake-up of the Communist Party apparatus.

THE SHANGHAI PEOPLE’S COMMUNE

During the winter of 1966–67, radical worker factions in Shanghai, headed by the Red Rebels group, battled the ‘conservative’ Scarlet Guards faction who supported the established trade unions and party committees.²⁰⁹ The city’s authorities initially tried to appease militant workers by granting bonuses, higher wages and other economic concessions. Radicals accused the municipal government of undermining the revolutionary movement through ‘economism.’ In the midst of the fighting, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing’s associate, came to Shanghai and encouraged the Red Rebels to ‘seize power.’ On 14 January 1967, the Rebels succeeded in toppling the authorities, and on 5 February, a Shanghai People’s Commune, which was said to represent a direct form of people’s democracy, was proclaimed. By this time the Rebels had fractured into 700 different sub-factions.²¹⁰ Under the slogan ‘Seize Power!’, radicals in provinces

202 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 563.

203 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*.

204 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 226.

205 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 481.

206 Craig Dietrich, *People’s China*, 196; Mr. Lin, interview with author: ‘Instead of fighting in the street, I just stayed home.’

207 Jonathan Unger, ‘The Social Conflicts Underpinning China’s Cultural Revolution Turmoil,’ 6.

208 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 555.

209 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 72–3.

210 Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 351.



A Red Guard in Shanghai during the Shanghai People's Commune, February 1967.

and cities throughout China emulated the Shanghai example in what became known as the 'January Storm.' The result was 'a bewildering situation in which varieties of radical groups, not coordinated by any central leadership, struggled with party leaders and with each other.'²¹¹ The Communist Party virtually ceased to function as a national organisation. Authority remained with the Cultural Revolution Committee, the central government ministries under Zhou (although they were under constant barrage) and the PLA.

RESTORING ORDER

According to Philip Short, Mao had 'looked into the abyss — and he did not like what he saw.'²¹² On 14 January 1967, as radicals overthrew the Shanghai government, Mao and Zhou told the military to restore order. Free travel for Red Guards and Rebels was withdrawn the following month. Coinciding with the formal proclamation of the Shanghai Commune, new guidelines stated that the overthrow of regional authorities needed prior approval from the central government.²¹³ This was followed on 10 March by a directive declaring that 'three-in-one revolutionary committees' consisting of soldiers, radical party cadres and Rebels should assume leadership of all institutions. Zhang Chunqiao was told that Shanghai must follow suit. Mao scoffed at Shanghai radicals who envisaged an end to government 'heads.' He said, 'This is extreme anarchism, it is most reactionary ... In reality there will still always be heads.'²¹⁴ The new committees, dominated by military men, would fill the void left by the 'heads' of the now-decimated party ranks and provide a new structure of governance.²¹⁵

This was by no means a straightforward assumption of authority. Factional disorders continued in some regions for the next eighteen months. Thousands were killed in clashes between rival factions and the PLA. Armed confrontations in the city of Wuhan during April–July 1967 were particularly violent. Mao admitted, 'Some people say there is no civil war in China. But I think there is a civil war.'²¹⁶ To further encourage the radicalisation of China's proletariat, Jiang Qing had coined the slogan, 'To stop production is revolution itself!'²¹⁷ This proved a concern when revolutionary rhetoric resulted in real economic consequences; industrial output fell by fourteen per cent in 1967 and continued to drop in 1968.²¹⁸ Foreign relations were also severely strained — Red Guards fermented trouble in Hong Kong, while a number of foreign embassies were besieged and ransacked. The office of the British Charge d'Affaires in Beijing was burnt to the ground on the night of 22 August 1967.

While he expressed misgivings, Mao still held faith in radical mass action. He told a delegation of Red Guard leaders on 6 April 1967, 'Have no fear of chaos. The more chaos you dish up the better. Disorder and chaos are always a good thing. They clarify things. But never use weapons.'²¹⁹ The point concerning the degree of violence was important — Mao could not understand why his calls to cease fighting were ignored.²²⁰ Tiring of violent student factionalism, the Chairman proposed that Worker–Peasant Mao Zedong Thought Teams be sent into schools and universities to guide the Cultural Revolution on a more stable course. On 29 July 1968, a group of workers sent by Mao to take leadership of Beijing University was shot at by student radicals. Five workers were killed. Mao

211 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 577.

212 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 557.

213 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 579.

214 Cited in Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 323.

215 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 709; Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 352–3.

216 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 194.

217 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 618.

218 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 576.

219 Cited in Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 74.

220 Xiaowei Zheng, 'Passion, Reflection, and Survival: Political Choices of Red Guards at Qinghua University,' in Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*, 59.

was furious at the treatment of his work team.²²¹ The next day Mao summoned five prominent Red Guard leaders to a meeting. When one of the students complained that a 'black hand' was seeking to usurp their movement, Mao snapped, 'I am that black hand.'²²² Reportedly with tears in his eyes, Mao spoke of his great disappointment and rebuked their 'ultra-leftism, their sectarianism, and their mad fratricidal combats.'²²³ American Communist volunteer Sidney Rittenberg recalled one of the final Red Guard rallies: Mao turned away after surveying the sea of fanatic youngsters and 'looked absolutely miserable.'²²⁴



SIDNEY RITTENBERG
IN CHINA

DID YOU KNOW?

Two of the Rebel factions in Wuhan were called 'Wonderful' and 'Fart.' When one decreed, 'Our seizing of power is wonderful,' the other declared, 'Wonderful? What a load of fart!'

THE EXPULSION OF LIU SHAOQI

In October 1967, classes in schools and universities resumed. Social order was restored by mid-1968. At the same time, the campaign against Liu Shaoqi intensified. Mao met with Liu for the last time on 13 January 1967. Mao advised Liu to 'read some books' and look after his health.²²⁵ The president's official fall from grace was made public on 1 April 1967 when the *People's Daily* named him as China's 'biggest capitalist roader.' From July, Liu was held in solitary confinement between struggle rallies. By August he was the subject of physical mistreatment. Liu was formally stripped of his positions and expelled from the party on 31 October 1968. He was already an emotionally and physically broken man. Those supervising his incarceration reported that he 'brushed his teeth with a comb, put his socks on over his shoes and his underpants outside his trousers.'²²⁶ Liu was denied his diabetes medication and sleeping pills.

By late 1968, the gravely-ill Liu was given treatment to keep him alive until the Ninth Party Congress.²²⁷ The congress, convening from 1–24 April 1969, created a new constitution which explicitly restored Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought as the theoretical basis of the party. Mao was re-elected chair of the Central Committee and the party, and Lin Biao became his vice-chairman and successor. Jiang Qing joined the Politburo, as did the wives of Lin Biao, Kang Sheng and Zhou Enlai.²²⁸ At the congress, Liu Shaoqi was finally judged by the party: accused of heading an anti-Party conspiracy, Liu was denounced as a 'renegade, traitor and scab' and again vilified as the 'number one person in authority taking the capitalist road.'²²⁹ The delegates passed a resolution 'to expel Liu Shaoqi from the Party, once and for all.'²³⁰ Liu died of pneumonia in a stark concrete prison cell on 12 November 1969. He was wrapped in a thin, filthy blanket. His death was not publicly announced during Mao's lifetime. Viewed as less guilty than Liu, Deng Xiaoping, China's 'number two Khrushchev,' was removed from all his positions and sent to reform his errant ways in a provincial tractor workshop. He kept his party membership.

THE 'VICTORY' OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Ninth Party Congress: 'A congress of unity and a congress of victory.'

The Ninth Party Congress was to usher in the triumphal end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Despite its upbeat Maoist rhetoric, however, the

- 221 Xiaowei Zheng, 'Passion, Reflection, and Survival,' 59.
- 222 Percy Craddock, *Experiences of China*, 85–6.
- 223 Cited in Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 702; Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 335.
- 224 Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor* documentary.
- 225 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 550.
- 226 Cited in Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 554.
- 227 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 484.
- 228 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 293.
- 229 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 198.
- 230 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 578.

congress proved to be more of a 'transitional' rather than a 'terminating' stage in the process.²³¹ The anti-bureaucratic storm that had brought established party organisations to their knees was certainly reducing; stability had been restored to a nation ravaged by virtual civil war. The Cultural Revolutionary Committee was dissolved. At the event touted as 'a congress of unity and a congress of victory,' veteran party delegates were outnumbered by new comrades. Military men made up two-thirds of the congress. Seventy to eighty per cent of regional party cadres had been purged since 1966, sixty to seventy per cent in central organisations. Out of twenty-three Politburo members, just nine retained their posts.²³² According to Lee Feigon, Mao had managed to 'infuse the government with a group of women and workers who, unlike their predecessors, looked, talked, and thought like the people they represented.'²³³ By the Ninth Congress, those in authority 'following the capitalist road' had been exposed and removed from power. Mao, though, had yet to outline a clear and coherent strategy for shaping the new society. For all the talk of unity and victory at the Ninth Congress, it was apparent that the nature of the triumph was difficult to define. Mao conceded, 'the job of the Great Cultural Revolution is not yet finished.'²³⁴ While giving his report, Mao looked annoyed, particularly when interrupted by delegates incessantly leaping from their seats and shouting 'Long live Chairman Mao!' Factionalism amidst the party elite would soon cause the Chairman further headaches, even heartache.



CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERIOD

Whereas the Ninth Congress declared the Cultural Revolution a success, those who had suffered in the bloody carnage of 1966–69 would hold bitter memories of the era. Deng Xiaoping's disabled son, Pufang, concluded, 'The Cultural Revolution was not just a disaster for the party, for the country, but for the whole people. We were all victims, people of several generations. One hundred million people were its victims.'²³⁵ The post-Mao Chinese leadership affirmed that the Cultural Revolution was 'ten years of calamities,' an erroneous break from China's correct socialist development.

The general consensus among Western historians is that the movement wrought little more than terror and suffering, leaving the People's Republic 'a vast prison of the mind' behind the bars of radical Maoist ideology.²³⁶ More recent scholars, paying particular attention to the period following the upheavals of the mid-1960s, have questioned these assumptions and pointed to a number of positive legacies. Lee Feigon argues, 'The decade dominated by the Cultural Revolution left an enduring legacy of social justice, feminist ideals, and even many democratic principles that still resonate with many Chinese.'²³⁷ Rebecca Karl also emphasises the democratic and empowering elements of the movement:

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was an inspiration for many ... The idea and image of a people, apparently set free from constraint to practice mass politics, appealed to those, who were increasingly disaffected from the routines of life ... The perceived imaginative and creative exuberance of the Cultural Revolution – particularly in its early days – tapped into burgeoning desires everywhere for common people to seize politics from the dead hands of faraway bureaucrats.²³⁸

Despite its decided lack of formal voting procedures and protection of individual rights, Richard Kraus sees the Cultural Revolution as 'China's greatest experiment in participatory democracy.'²³⁹

231 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 285.

232 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 487.

233 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 164.

234 Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 285.

235 Cited in Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China*, 55.

236 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 583; Michael Lynch, *The People's Republic of China*, 54–5.

237 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, 139.

238 Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 139.

239 Richard Curt Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 38.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the poster 'The renegade, traitor and scab Liu Shaoqi must forever be expelled from the Party!' and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe the action portrayed in the source.
2. Using the source provided and your own knowledge, outline the reasons for the negative attitude towards Liu Shaoqi.
3. Explain what happened to Liu Shaoqi and other 'revisionists' during the Cultural Revolution. In your response, refer to the source provided and your own knowledge.
4. Evaluate the significance of the Cultural Revolution (1966–71) as a consequence of the Chinese Revolution. In your response, refer to the source provided and other views.



'The renegade, traitor and scab Liu Shaoqi must forever be expelled from the Party!' (1968)

HISTORICAL INQUIRY

Referring to evidence and a range of historical interpretations, write a historical inquiry report on one of the topics below. Include references and a bibliography of your sources. Topics:

- To what extent was the Cultural Revolution simply a power struggle between Mao and others in the CCP?
- How did one or more of the following individuals contribute to or influence the Cultural Revolution? Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, Lin Biao, Yao Wenyuan, Zhang Chunqiao, Wu Han, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Nie Yuanzhi, notable Red Guard faction leaders, or someone of your own choice.
- What was the Shanghai Commune and why was it significant?
- Was Mao's relationship with the Red Guard movement genuine and mutual, or simply exploitative?
- To what extent was the Ninth Party Congress (April 1969) 'a congress of unity and a congress of victory'?
- How was working life disrupted by the Cultural Revolution?
- In what sense did Mao and the Red Guards behave like the legendary Monkey King during the GPCR?
- How did the Cultural Revolution lead ordinary people to commit unthinkable acts?

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

As a class, debate one of the topics below.

- 'If Mao had died in the mid-late 1960s, history would have been kinder to him.'
- 'Most of the violence of the Cultural Revolution came from fear rather than anger.'
- 'Though extreme, the Red Guards were reacting to real problems in Chinese society.'
- 'China in the period 1966–71 was a cultural and intellectual wasteland.'



Rural China.

UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, DOWN TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Ma Bo: 'In 1968, a raging tide of youth, a raging tide of hot blood, a raging tide of innocence surged toward the countryside, the mountains, and the vast wilderness.'

The Cultural Revolution profoundly disrupted the schooling of many young Chinese people. A typically Maoist innovation sought to find useful work for this generation and to continue its 'revolutionary education.' Beginning in 1968, the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' campaign sent millions of young people to live and work with peasants or workers in state-owned provincial industries, under the supervision of the military. Mao hoped the experience would give young people a deeper understanding of the revolution and an appreciation for how common people lived: 'All people who have had some education ought to be very happy to work in the countryside if they get the chance. In our vast rural areas there is plenty of room for them to develop their talents to the full.'²⁴⁰

Between 1968 and 1972, around seventeen-million young people were 'sent down to the villages.'²⁴¹ A great many went voluntarily, others were coerced. Liang Heng recalled the varied motivations of those leaving their homes in the cities:

The young people signed up with excitement for many reasons. Some went because they wanted to get away from home, others because they longed for something fresh and because there was nothing to do at school. Above all they went because Chairman Mao told them to go. They were told that the peasants were waiting to give them a warm welcome. Later, after the first groups had sent back reports of what things were really like, nobody wanted to go any more, but by then they no longer had any choice in the matter. I for one was really pleased to go, although I knew we were going to an extremely poor area. I imagined how we would plough, plant and eat what we grew and be able to respect ourselves again.²⁴²

CULTURE SHOCK

As Liang suggests, many young people got a shock when they arrived at their destinations. Ma Bo recounted the first political meeting he attended with local people in Inner Mongolia: 'All those newspaper reports we'd read about student workers being greeted as heroes were a real crock [lie]... for the minute the meeting was called to order, the poor and lower-middle class herdsmen began to giggle, goof off, brag, hold spitting contests, or stretch out to catch up on their sleep, clutching the grimmest "Little Red Books" I'd ever seen. Once again the newspapers had fed us a crock.'²⁴³ Jung Chang was mind-numbingly bored by the uneducated village women and resented their narrow-mindedness: 'I knew their restricted horizon was not their fault, but nonetheless I found their conversations unbearable ... I did not try to get to know them, or to get on with them.'²⁴⁴

Many peasants were equally unimpressed with the kids from the city: 'Chairman Mao said we were supposed to learn from the peasants, but the peasants didn't want anything to do with us. We couldn't understand their accents anyway. They thought we were lazy. They blamed us for eating all their food without earning it.'²⁴⁵ Urban students were another set of mouths to feed and not much good at farm work. The harsh conditions and poor living standards of rural China made going to the countryside a trying experience for most urban youths.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao commented that too much education makes a person stupid and that reading too many books was a bad thing (his own voracious reading was not mentioned). He told one delegation of young people, 'Rather than keeping your eyes open and listening to boring lectures, it is better to get some refreshing sleep. You don't have to listen to nonsense, you can rest your brain instead.'

240 Cited in Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 199.

241 Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, 294.

242 Cited in C.K. Macdonald, *Modern China* (Tonbridge: Basil Blackman, 1985), 51.

243 Ma Bo, *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 12.

244 Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, 559, 564.

245 Song Mingchao, cited in C.K. Macdonald, *Modern China*, 51.

Mr. Lin recalled:

In August 1968, we were sent to the mountainous area ‘to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants,’ as Chairman Mao called it. It was a tough time for us. The hardships we suffered were beyond words. I went to a mountain village. There was no electricity there. We used kerosene lamps. Every month we had to carry the unhulled rice down to the foot of the mountain to be processed and then carry the rice up to the mountain. It took about two hours each way. Mosquitoes were rampant. I got malaria, which almost killed me. In summer time, when we came out of the paddy rice field, our legs would be covered with leeches. In winter time, we had to break the ice with bare feet and step into the freezing muddy field. However, we did learn a lot. We would never have known the hardship of farmers if we had not settled down in the countryside. We need to improve the life of farmers.²⁴⁶

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

As Mao intended, many people sent to the countryside and mountains came to realise the bleakness of peasant life; however, from this arose critical questions about the nature of the new communist society. According to Liang Heng, ‘The peasants’ day-to-day life was miserably cruel. Where was the “Liberation” from suffering that the Revolution was meant to have given them?’²⁴⁷ Disappointed and disenchanted, many former Red Guards would come to see themselves as a ‘lost generation’ and deeply resent their treatment: ‘If intellectuals were deemed to be the “stinking old ninths,” members of the lowest social caste, then we were “stinking old tenths,” since we were even lower on the social ladder ... Life was bitter – bitter and meaningless.’²⁴⁸ Chairman Mao’s ‘little soldiers,’ who had sat at the top of the revolutionary hierarchy, had now been cast into the wilderness. The remote reaches of China, however, provided space in which to think independently and expand one’s intellectual horizons. While not working, students read contraband literature and engaged in deep discussions concerning their experiences.²⁴⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

During the later years of the Cultural Revolution, an army recruit from north China, Zhang Tieshan, drew a big ‘zero’ on his university entrance exam paper accompanied by the explanation, ‘To make revolution, one need not answer the above questions.’ He became an instant hero throughout China, epitomising the spirit of the Cultural Revolution.

MAY SEVENTH SCHOOLS

The ‘Down to the Countryside’ campaign occurred at the same time as a program for urban party cadres which aimed to instil country virtues. Named after an earlier directive by Mao, ‘May Seventh Cadre Schools’ began receiving students after mid-1968. Set up in provincial areas, the schools were essentially farms and industrial enterprises where cadres would carry out heavy labour for a period of six to thirty-six months.²⁵⁰ Up to a third of staff from some party organisations attended at any one time. Like China’s young people, Mao envisaged the ‘students’ of the May Seventh Schools coming to appreciate the toil of ordinary people and enriching their life experience by working with their hands rather than their heads. Intense ideological study was mandatory for those in the provincial schools. According to Jonathan Spence, these ‘were as much prisons as schools,’ as personal freedoms were greatly restricted.²⁵¹ Like their Red Guard counterparts, few CCP officials relished their time engaged in hard manual labour. While those in the May Seventh Schools saw their ‘education’ as more like ‘detention in a labour camp,’ Mao had hoped for positive outcomes from the initiative. ‘It was intended to create new subjectivity,’ argues Chinese-Australian historian Mobo Gao; ‘the urbane and social elite would experience physical labour so that they would be able to understand and empathize with the reality of life of the majority of the people. It was meant to be an approach to a new way of governing and governance.’²⁵² In short, the schools aimed to keep city officials humble.

246 Mr. Lin, interview with author, 4 February 2009.

247 Cited in C.K. Macdonald, *Modern China*, 52.

248 Ma Bo, *Blood Red Sunset*, 46, 348.

249 *Morning Sun* documentary.

250 Craig Dietrich, *People’s China*, 200.

251 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*.

252 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past*, 5.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the poster 'Educated youth must go to the countryside to receive re-education from the Poor and Lower-Middle peasants!' and complete the tasks below.

1. Compare the poster with the experiences of Mr. Lin during the 'Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside' campaign (see previous page). To what extent was the impression given in the poster reflected in Mr. Lin's experience?
2. Referring to both sources, explain why young Chinese people were sent to rural areas by the Communist Party in the late 1960s.
3. Evaluate the consequences of the Cultural Revolution for young Chinese people (1966–71). In your response, refer to both sources and to other views of the period.



'Educated youth must go to the countryside to receive re-education from the Poor and Lower-Middle peasants!' (1969)

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao scorned the Ministry of Health, which he accused of serving only the urban middle class and the party elite. He dubbed the health profession the 'Ministry of Urban Gentlemen's Health.'

IMPROVING RURAL LIFE

During this period the Maoist leadership also gave close attention to the educational needs of ordinary country people. While schooling in urban areas was greatly disrupted during the Cultural Revolution, the number of schools in village areas increased exponentially, particularly in places poorly served in the past. Education was made more difficult for children of the elite but more accessible for children of peasants.²⁵³ The national education system attempted to give a limited education to a greater number of people, resulting in higher enrolments in primary schools but a shortening of middle-school and college courses.²⁵⁴ Clearly this benefited some and disadvantaged others. Mobo Gao recalls attending a 2007 lecture on the Cultural Revolution by Chinese historian Sun Ge. When Sun finished her talk, a student in the audience asked, 'What is your family background?' Sun explained that she was the daughter of intellectuals who suffered during the Cultural Revolution. The student replied, 'So no wonder. My father used to be the production team head in my village. He still recalls the Cultural Revolution with fond memories because that was his most brilliant years. Those were years when the farmers felt proud and elated.'²⁵⁵ As old party structures came under strain during the Cultural Revolution, the election of village leaders became more independent. The peasantry gained greater political clout and were able to participate in economic and social decisions during this time.²⁵⁶

Increased government investment in the agricultural sector also boosted production, as did tax breaks and support for local, small-scale enterprises. Rural industries produced farm tools, chemical fertiliser, irrigation equipment, cement and parts for motors. During the later years of the Cultural Revolution, provincial-based machinery companies provided rural people with much greater access to basic tractors and diesel pumps, which was a significant factor in boosting farming efficiency.²⁵⁷

253 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, 142–3, 149.

254 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 176.

255 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China's Past*, 13.

256 Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 342.

257 Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation*, 164–7; Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China*, 344; Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 81.

‘BAREFOOT DOCTORS’

A further rural initiative during the Cultural Revolution was the ‘barefoot doctors’ scheme. Barefoot doctors were laypeople trained in basic medicine and sent to the countryside to treat peasants. Due to the short and rudimentary courses they undertook, barefoot doctors were by no means the greatest of medical practitioners; they did, however, assist in diagnosing and treating minor ailments and common diseases. More serious problems were referred to clinics.²⁵⁸ Barefoot doctors were cheap to train and most were dedicated idealists who put their hearts and souls into caring for patients. Mobo Gao argues that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, considering China’s size and developmental level, the scheme provided a ‘fairly effective healthcare system’ in areas not previously catered for.²⁵⁹ In Mao’s view, ‘The type of doctor we need in the villages doesn’t have to be so talented. They’d still be better than witch-doctors. Besides, this is the only type of doctor the villages can afford.’²⁶⁰ Mao was also critical of the Chinese medical profession for giving undue attention to researching exotic ailments at the expense of investigating common complaints. Mao, it should be said, had a notoriously poor understanding of modern medicine; traditional approaches were more to his liking. This nevertheless had some positive outcomes – traditional Chinese medicine (including acupuncture) and modern medical procedures were combined to good effect during the Cultural Revolution.²⁶¹ Efforts by the Communist government saw the average Chinese person’s life expectancy increase from thirty-five in 1949 to sixty-three by 1975.

While it was the cities that saw the great political battles of the Cultural Revolution waged, focusing on workers, students and intellectuals, it was in the countryside that concrete social gains were made.²⁶²

‘CLEANSING THE CLASS RANKS’

The villages were relatively unscathed by the upheavals of 1966–67 experienced in cities and larger towns. However, from late 1967 and into 1968, violence spread to the countryside with the ‘Cleansing the Class Ranks’ movement. The first major campaign launched by the new Revolutionary Committees, ‘cleansing’ allowed those in power to target anyone seen as a real or imagined opponent – broadly defined as ‘bad people.’ Zhou Enlai explained, ‘The bad people you have to drag out aren’t just capitalist roaders, but bad people inside your ranks as well.’²⁶³ The initial focus of the campaign were members of local governments and the CCP, who were subjected to rigorous investigation of personal files and family histories. However, rumors of ‘hidden enemies’ and an atmosphere of conspiracy also inflamed local disputes. In particular, people of former landlord status and other ‘class enemies’ came under attack. The result, as Chinese-American historian Yang Su has documented, was extensive collective killings totalling approximately 1.5 million deaths.²⁶⁴ Carried out by ordinary peasants or village militiamen, these executions were often horrendously brutal, involving the use of farm implements and torture, and on occasion resulted in the death of whole families.²⁶⁵ There were also instances of cannibalism. Higher-up officials constantly warned local cadres against excessive violence and there was no central directive endorsing mass killing. The PLA was sent to some regions to intervene and restore order.²⁶⁶ However, local pressures and hatreds were largely beyond Beijing’s control. ‘The tragedy of collective killings during the Cultural Revolution,’ Yang Su argues, ‘was



A Chinese ‘barefoot doctor’ uses her needles to treat a production brigade worker.

258 Edwin Moise, *Modern China*, 175.

259 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past*, 19.

260 Cited in Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 420.

261 Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past*, 21.

262 Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China*, 341.

263 Cited in MacFarquar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 253.

264 Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China During the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35–38.

265 Yang Su, *Collective Killings*, 61.

266 Yang Su, ‘Mass Killings in the Cultural Revolution,’ in Joseph W. Esherick et al., *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, 118.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Cleansing Class Ranks movement, residents of Hong Kong were shocked by the sight of hundreds of bloated bodies floating down the Pearl River from mainland China.

267 Yang Su, *Collective Killings*, 249.

268 Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 16.

rooted in this paradox of state sponsorship and state failure.²⁶⁷ Less visible and lacking the theatrics of the Red Guard movement, the Cleansing Class Ranks purges 'were the most violent aspect of the Cultural Revolution.'²⁶⁸

ACTIVITY

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Discuss the following questions in pairs, then with the rest of your class. In each case, find at least one piece of evidence from this chapter to support your viewpoint.

1. What positive developments were there for groups of Chinese people during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution?
2. To what extent were the 'educational' aims of the May Seventh Cadre Schools and 'Down to the Countryside' campaign a success?
3. To what extent does the term 'lost generation' accurately describe the people who grew up during the Cultural Revolution?

FEATURE

MAO, THE 'LAST EMPEROR'

Mao Zedong: 'I graduated from the University of Outlaws.'

On assuming leadership of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong's daily life came to resemble that of an emperor, with Mao growing accustomed to thinking and acting in an Imperial manner.

Living in an updated Forbidden City in the Zhongnanhai compound, Mao had a retinue of bodyguards, secretaries and other personal attendants at his beck and call, but was largely cut off from everyday people. The Chairman was kept under close watch by special service troops and was subject to the highest levels of security. His food came from special secure farms and was checked for poison by a personal taster before being served.²⁶⁹ His favourite food was Hunanese cuisine laden with pepper and chilli. Challenging dinner guests to try the hottest dishes, Mao liked to explain, 'If it's not spicy, it's not revolutionary!'²⁷⁰

Mao had no desire for costly personal possessions; his bed quilt was patched and he preferred the same old shoes and suits. It was hard to persuade him to accept new ones. Mao's chief interest was

reading. His bedroom, which doubled as a study, was lined with books. The other feature was a huge bed in which the Chairman would sprawl, surrounded by his favourite literary works.

With age, Mao grew increasingly abrupt in his manner, unpredictable and difficult to read. In turn, those around him came to act more and more like fawning courtiers.²⁷¹ The Chairman was notorious for remarking aloud on people's appearances: 'She is already more than seventy years old!', 'Very tall!', 'All are young!' He had stopped caring about what others thought of him. Mao would slurp his soup loudly and offer a hearty burp after dinner, even in the presence of foreign dignitaries.²⁷² He habitually broke

DID YOU KNOW?

Like many of the emperors that came before him, Mao was paranoid about conspiracies. He had some cause to be – officials had secretly installed listening devices in his train so that they could respond quickly to his whims. When the Chairman became aware of this in 1961, he was furious and purged several staff.

wind loudly. Mao made no effort to hide his crude peasant manners, even flaunting them amongst more urbane colleagues, and 'came to articulate his rural personal habits as an expression of political purity.'²⁷³

As he grew older, Mao mused more and more on metaphysics and philosophy. He would ask visitors, 'What will Beijing be like 10 000 years from now?'²⁷⁴ Harrison Salisbury even wonders whether Mao's grandiose ventures and supposed disengagement from reality were a product of his addiction to sleeping pills and other drugs: 'The taint of opium could be suspected in the dreamlike quality of Mao's speculations and ideas, remote from reality, his boundless flights of fancy that were transmuted in one form or another into domestic or foreign policy.'²⁷⁵

Mao knew Chinese history intimately. Historical records were likely to have had a far greater influence on his thinking than drugs. Mao was particularly fond of drawing parallels between himself and Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BCE) with whom he felt an affinity. Mao even boasted that he had outdone Qin in terms of brutality;²⁷⁶ reflecting on the Anti-Rightist campaign, Mao asked, 'So what's the big deal about Qin Shihuang? He only buried 460 Confucians alive; well, we've buried 46,000 ... We're a hundred times greater than Qin Shihuang.'²⁷⁷ Peng Dehuai, at the time of the Lushan Plenum, said that Mao exemplified the spirit of China's Imperial leaders: 'The first emperor of any dynasty was always severe and brilliant.'²⁷⁸

Mao's Imperial persona was further reinforced by popular adulation. Mao was treated like an emperor by ordinary Chinese, such as when they wished him ten-thousand years of life. Interviewed in 1989, one peasant claimed, 'Chairman Mao had wealth and greatness written all over his face. He had the look of a real emperor, but he was better than an emperor. No emperor ever saved the poor.'²⁷⁹ W.J.F. Jenner argues that this was a natural reaction born of tradition; the 'nature of the culture required an emperor ... China cannot manage without an emperor.'²⁸⁰ According to Jenner's argument, the legacy of Imperial leadership was so imbued in Chinese culture that autocratic rule was readily accepted.

From the early 1950s into the 1960s, the high point of Zhongnanhai entertainment was the weekly Saturday night dance party. Bands would play while Chinese leaders and their retinue would dance the night away. Ever suave, Zhou Enlai was reputed to be the best dancer.

The dances also provided Mao with the opportunity to indulge in a thoroughly depraved Imperial habit: meeting and seducing young women (all were carefully checked by the security bureau beforehand). The Air Force cultural work troupe was a further source of Mao's girlfriends, as were the attendants who served on his train.²⁸¹ One of Mao's favourite concubines, Zhang Yufeng (Chang Yu-feng), rose up the ranks from attending cabins to the Chairman's bedroom.

Mao took a Daoist approach in his indulgences with women, 'justifying his libertine ways as gathering *yin*, the female essence, to replenish his *yang*, in a millennial tradition of conserving male potency and health.'²⁸² Mao would sometimes sleep with three or more women at the one time.²⁸³ Mao's doctor Li Zhisui attributed this promiscuous behavior to the habits of the peasantry and was 'nauseated' by it: 'Mao's sexual indulgences, his Daoist illusions, his sully of so many naïve and innocent young women, were almost more than I could bear.'²⁸⁴ Mao was dismissive of much of Dr Li's advice, boasting to a visitor, 'I only follow half of what the doctor says and I expect him to follow me in the other half.'²⁸⁵ Mao was an incessant chain smoker whose teeth and fingers were deeply stained by tobacco. His personal hygiene was also, at best, sporadic. The Chairman's teeth were green and black as he preferred to rinse his mouth with tea rather than use a toothbrush.²⁸⁶ Mao loved to swim and spent much of his time in pools built especially for his use at each of his residences. This was the only time he had a bath. During winter he preferred to be rubbed down by a hot towel.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mao hated protocol and ritual, preferring to do things differently on each occasion. In his daily life during retreats in the countryside, Mao would make a point of going for walks in the hills and *always* returning by a different route.

It was with rebellious characters from Chinese literature that Mao most readily self-identified. The peasant rebel turned emperor, Liu Bang, and the Monkey King from *Journey to the West* were among his favourites. Admitting the contradictory nature of his personality, Mao once said that he had ‘the air of a king and the wiles of a monkey.’²⁸⁷

In an interview with Edgar Snow in 1970, Mao described himself as ‘*heshang dasan*’ (‘a monk holding an umbrella’). Mao’s interpreter wrongly translated this as ‘a lonely monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella.’²⁸⁸ This was taken by Snow as a profession of solitary puritanism, a commitment to simplicity and self-denial. ‘*Heshang dasan*,’ however, was only half of an ancient couplet, the other being ‘*wufa wutian*’ (‘without hair, without sky’). This is the classical equivalent of ‘without law, without god.’ What Mao was intending to say was that he was a rebel or outlaw bound by no preordained principles; a law unto himself.

- 269 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 472.
- 270 Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 79.
- 271 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 587.
- 272 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 318.
- 273 Rebecca Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 8.
- 274 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 320.
- 275 Harrison Salisbury, *The New Emperors*, 286.
- 276 Percy Craddock, interviewed in *Chairman Mao: The Last Emperor* (BBC, 1993); Percy Craddock, *Experiences of China* (London: John Murray, 1994), 92.
- 277 Cited in Geremie Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 148.
- 278 Frederick C. Teiwes, ‘Mao and his Followers,’ in Timothy Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, 138, 156.
- 279 Cited in Di McDonald, *Revolution: China* (HTAV, 2005), 83.
- 280 W.J.F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History*, 44, 63.
- 281 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 480.
- 282 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 475.
- 283 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 517.
- 284 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 364.
- 285 Cited in Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 318.
- 286 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 505.
- 287 Geremie R. Barme, ‘For Truly Great Men, Look to this Age Alone,’ in Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, 244.
- 288 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 120.

ACTIVITY

KEY PEOPLE

Read about Mao’s private life and discuss the following points with the class.

1. Mao’s secretary described the Cultural Revolution as ‘Karl Marx plus Emperor Qin.’ To what extent can we understand the Cultural Revolution as a combination of Imperial and communist influences?
2. Was Mao Zedong ‘a lonely monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella’ or ‘a monk holding an umbrella without hair, without sky’?
3. How reliable are behind-the-scenes accounts of famous people, such as Li Zhisui’s *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*? How might such memoirs be influenced by personal, commercial or political matters?
4. What aspects of Mao’s character do you find surprising or contradictory?

THE FALL OF LIN BIAO

Lin Biao: ‘Some people are creating trouble ... They are ambitious conspirators.’

Even though he had been deemed Mao’s closest comrade and chosen successor at the Ninth Party Congress, Lin Biao remained preoccupied with strengthening his privileged place at the Chairman’s court. Yet Lin had cause to doubt the permanence of his position. Mao was increasingly turning to Zhou Enlai during the period of party restructure and rebuilding, and had expressed doubt as to whether the authority vested in Lin and the army was appropriate. In Mao’s view the military had been too harsh in its treatment of cadres during the purges

of 1966–69.²⁸⁹ In March 1970, Mao expressed to fellow leading Communists some views on constitutional questions; these would frame the agenda for the forthcoming Fourth National People's Congress. Mao proposed that the constitution be revised to abolish the post of president, which had been vacant since the dismissal of Liu Shaoqi. Mao had no desire to hold the position himself and felt it was not essential for a revolutionary state.²⁹⁰ Initially no one objected; the Politburo, then the Central Committee, endorsed the proposition and the matter seemed settled. On 11 April 1970, Lin Biao phoned a number of fellow leaders, suggesting that the presidency be retained and filled by Mao. A hastily convened Politburo backed Lin's proposal; Mao immediately rejected it. The Chairman explained, 'I cannot do this job again; this suggestion is inappropriate.'²⁹¹ On six previous occasions, Mao had told Lin he saw no need for the presidency. The Chairman's refusal of the post in April was intended to be final and, again, the matter seemed resolved.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lin Biao once told his wife that he aspired to be 'Engels to Marx, Stalin to Lenin, and [Jiang Jieshi] to [Sun Yixian].'

THE LUSHAN PLENUM

A plenum of the CCP Central Committee convened on 23 August 1970 at Lushan, to review the constitutional matters discussed earlier in the year. The plenum revealed both the ongoing factionalism amongst the leadership and its inclination towards court intrigue. Near the end of the first day, Lin gave a seemingly unscripted speech in which he again proposed that the office of president be retained and that it should be held by Mao. Why did Lin continue to press the issue? One explanation is that he was trying to 'work towards the Chairman,' that is, flatter Mao and carry out his wishes by going further than Mao's publicly stated position. On the other hand, if Mao rejected the post himself, but was convinced that the office should be retained, Lin would be the likely candidate.²⁹² A crafty guerrilla tactician in both war and politics, Mao blurred proceedings by suggesting that if the party really wanted to retain the post it could do so, but he would not be president. The party couldn't force Mao to take on the role and Lin couldn't nominate himself as president – that would have been an affront to the Chairman. The presidential issue was therefore dead.

Questions of Mao's ideological brilliance became the smokescreen through which further factional struggles were waged. Lin proposed that the constitution recognise that Mao had developed Marxism-Leninism 'with genius, creativity and comprehensively.'²⁹³ This too had been a line previously marked by Mao for deletion from the old constitution, but featured prominently in Lin Biao's foreword to the *Little Red Book*. Zhang Chunqiao, knowing Mao's view on the matter, opposed Lin's amendment. Acting in collusion with Lin, Chen Boda then dropped a bombshell by declaring that a 'certain person' objecting to the term 'genius' in the constitution was heading a campaign to discredit Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding ideology of the People's Republic. Chen named Zhang as the guilty party and went on to accuse 'certain counter-revolutionaries' of being 'delighted' with Mao rejecting the presidency. 'That caused pandemonium,' writes Philip Short.²⁹⁴ On 25 August 1970, Mao called a full meeting of the Central Committee and subjected Chen Boda to a withering rebuke. Chen was denounced for 'rumour-mongering,' 'launching a surprise attack' and 'trying to blast Lushan to pieces.'²⁹⁵ The man who had been Mao's speech writer and ideological partner from the Yan'an days was charged with being an 'anti-Party element, sham Marxist, careerist and plotter.'²⁹⁶ For his violation of party unity, Chen was taken

289 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 711.

290 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 325.

291 Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 327.

292 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 488–9.

293 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 489.

294 Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 591.

295 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 592.

296 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 592.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Chen Boda episode is an example of what the Chinese call 'killing a chicken to frighten the monkeys.' According to folklore, a man once had a group of monkeys; troubled by their increasingly mischievous ways, he gathered them together and killed a chicken in their presence. He warned them, 'If you don't behave, you will share the fate of the chicken.' Thereafter, the man's monkeys did as they were told.

DID YOU KNOW?

Chen Boda later described the experience of being denounced at Lushan as like being 'hit on the head with an atom bomb.'

away and held in a high security prison. Given that a direct attack on Lin Biao was likely to cause trouble with the military, Mao allowed Chen to take a metaphorical bullet for the Chairman's heir apparent, Lin. But Lin was by no means out of the firing line.

Mao spent the rest of 1970 and early 1971 'throwing stones, mixing in sand, and digging up the cornerstone.'²⁹⁷ Throwing stones meant attacking Chen Boda and the military officialdom immediately below Lin; mixing sand and digging up the cornerstone involved appointing his own trusted men to strategic roles in the military and securing control of the armed forces in the Beijing region. Rightly sensing his fall from grace, Lin became chronically depressed and grew ever more troubled by his phobias. His credibility was tarnished further after he flatly refused to make a self-criticism in March 1971.²⁹⁸

THE PLOT AGAINST MAO

Not everyone in the Lin Biao camp was prepared to accept his demise. Lin's son, Lin Ligu (Lin Li-kuo, known by family and friends as 'Tiger'), initiated discussions amongst like-minded associates on how to safeguard the minister of defence. Lin Ligu was a high-ranking officer in the air force and had friends with access to military equipment. Going over their options, Tiger and friends concluded that the only viable course was to oust Mao from power. Lin Ligu hated the Chairman: 'Today he uses this force to attack that force; tomorrow he uses that force to attack this force. Today he uses sweet words and honeyed talk to those whom he entices, and tomorrow he puts them to death for some fabricated crime ... He is paranoid and a sadist.'²⁹⁹ Lin Ligu cynically mocked Mao's apparent Imperial manner: 'He is not a true Marxist-Leninist. Rather he is the greatest feudal tyrant in Chinese history ... wrapping himself in the guise of a Marxist-Leninist and behaving like the First Emperor.'³⁰⁰

Tiger Lin recruited a number of fellow officers and conspired to kill Mao Zedong. He may have even had the support of Moscow.³⁰¹ The plan was called 'Project 571' – the numbers in Mandarin Chinese sound similar to 'armed uprising.' In the code-words of Project 571, the conspirators were called the 'joint fleet,' Lin Biao 'the Chief' and Mao 'B-52.'³⁰² Elaborate schemes were drawn up for bringing down the B-52. Mao was touring a number of provinces from August to mid-September 1971, shoring up support amongst regional military commanders. The would-be assassins decided that an attack on the Chairman's train would be most effective. This could involve fighter-bomber strikes, flame-thrower attacks, exploding fuel depots, detonating a bridge as Mao's train made its crossing, or simply shooting Mao with a pistol.

LIN'S ESCAPE MISSION

Project 571 failed to launch. Word got out that Mao's security was at risk and the Chairman's train raced safely back to Beijing. Tiger meanwhile flew a small Trident jet to the seaside resort of Beidaiha, where his parents and sister were staying. Arriving on 13 September, Tiger planned to bundle up

297 Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 332.

298 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 578.

299 Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 334.

300 Cited in Barme, For 'Truly Great Men, Look to this Age Alone,' in Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, 261.

301 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 713.

302 A B-52 is an American bomber which can drop explosives from great heights.

his family and fly to Guangzhou where he hoped a rival party headquarters might be established.³⁰³ As Tiger was explaining the plan to his family, his sister Doudou (who hated Tiger), suspected that her father was being kidnapped. At 10.00 pm, Doudou informed the CCP security police, and a mad dash for the airport ensued.

Tiger, Lin Biao, Lin's wife and a handful of their associates sped away in an armoured limousine, pursued by PLA officers in a convoy of jeeps. Zhou Enlai issued orders to halt air flights out of Beidaiha. With minutes to spare, the Lins scrambled into Tiger's partly-refuelled Trident and took off in a northerly direction. The destination had evidently changed to the USSR, as it was closer than Guangzhou. Hearing the news and asked whether the jet should be shot down, Mao replied, 'Rain will fall, widows will remarry. What can we do? Let them go.'³⁰⁴ According to his doctor, 'Mao's face collapsed when Zhou Enlai told him that Lin Biao had fled.'³⁰⁵ He succumbed to a deep depression in the coming weeks. Around 2.00 am on 13 September 1971, the Trident carrying Lin Biao and his followers ran out of fuel and crashed in Outer Mongolia, killing all on board. When told of Lin's fate, Mao remarked, 'That's what you get for running away.'³⁰⁶

303 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 335.

304 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 492.

305 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 536.

306 Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 538.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did Marshall Lin Biao fall out of favour with Mao Zedong?
2. Summarise the events leading to Lin Biao's death. In your answer, refer to the role played by his son (Tiger) and the PLA.

ACTIVITY

FEATURE

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIN'S DOWNFALL

Although Lin Biao's death in September 1971 was not made public straight away, denunciations of Lin began to circulate amongst low-to-mid-ranking party officials later that year. Lin's absence at key rallies also made it clear to the public that something was amiss. By 1972, the press was regularly alluding to the Marshall as 'a swindler of the Liu Shaoqi type,' while Zhou Enlai made indirect references during speeches to a 'renegade and a traitor.' The traitor was finally named and exposed at the Tenth Party Congress of August 1973, although by then people had guessed it was Lin.

Lin Biao's demise shocked senior leaders and had a profound effect on how the leaders of the Cultural Revolution, and Party members in general, were viewed by the populace. Frederick Teiwes argues, 'It had a disorienting effect among ordinary

communists and cadres, intellectuals, and social groups more broadly.'³⁰⁷ How could someone who had been so close to Mao have turned out to be such a back-stabber and criminal? The Lin Biao affair stretched the credulity of many Chinese, wearied by decades of Maoist propaganda. According to one peasant, 'I had felt faithful to Mao, but that Lin Biao stuff affected my thinking.' A young student sent down to the countryside recalled, 'When Liu Shaoqi was dragged down we'd been very supportive ... But the Lin Biao affair provided us with a major lesson. We came to see that the leaders up there could say that something is round; tomorrow, that it's flat. We lost faith in the system.'³⁰⁸

307 Frederick C. Teiwes, 'Mao and his Followers,' in Timothy Cheek, *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, 153.

308 Cited in Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 585–7.

'PING PONG DIPLOMACY' AND PRESIDENT NIXON

Richard Nixon: 'We do not want 800 000 000 living in angry isolation. We want contact.'

Shortly after his election in 1969, US President Richard Nixon raised the possibility of opening ambassadorial talks with the People's Republic of China. Nixon hoped to counter the international influence of the Soviet Union and put pressure on Vietnam by easing hostilities with China. Little came of this until 1970, at which time Mao and Zhou Enlai began to show interest. The intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict in late 1969 provided critical impetus for opening avenues of communication with the United States. The Chinese leadership was looking for greater flexibility in its diplomacy and increased international standing. US support was crucial if the PRC was to replace Jiang Jieshi's Republic of China (Taiwan) as the Chinese representative to the United Nations Security Council. Easing US-China relations was no straightforward matter – the two nations had been bitter enemies since the Korean War. Overtures by the Chinese were therefore made through unusual channels.

On 1 October 1970, Edgar Snow and his wife were photographed alongside Mao during a parade at Tiananmen Square; it was an extraordinary

honour, especially for a foreigner who happened to be American. The US National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, later remarked, 'Unfortunately, what they conveyed was so oblique that our crude [Western] minds completely missed the point.'³⁰⁹ Mao hinted to Snow that he was open to the idea of a visit by Nixon and was pleased with his election to office. Mao mistakenly believed that Snow was

a CIA operative – the American socialist of course gave no 'report' to Washington.

So-called 'ping pong diplomacy' proved more fruitful in opening relations. In March–April 1971, China's premier table-tennis team travelled to Japan for an international competition. One day a member of the US team missed his ride to the venue and decided, much to the initial shock of those on board, to catch a lift on the Chinese bus. Overcoming their surprise and limited English, some of the Chinese players got talking with the friendly young American. He, in turn, mentioned that he would love to travel to China. The comment was reported to political minders, eventually reaching Mao and Zhou. On 6 April, China extended an invitation to the US table-tennis team for a series of exhibition matches.³¹⁰ The US team was honoured with a reception hosted by Zhou Enlai in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Zhou declared that the tour marked a 'recommencement of our friendship.' The visit made front page news in the US and was received warmly by the American public.

A flurry of communications ensued between the Chinese leadership and a small group of US officials trusted by Nixon and Kissinger. The negotiations were carried out in secret, with Pakistan acting as intermediary. During Kissinger's visit to Pakistan in July 1971, it was announced that he had come down with the flu and would spend a few days in bed; in reality he had flown to China, arriving on 9 July. Kissinger spent the coming days negotiating with Zhou Enlai about a possible visit to China by President Nixon. He flew back to Pakistan and the rest of the world was none the wiser. On 15 July, Nixon announced Kissinger's great diplomatic triumph on US national television – Nixon would



Statue of 'Ping Pong Mao.'

DID YOU KNOW?

When Henry Kissinger told Richard Nixon in the Oval Office that he had negotiated the first visit to China by a US president, Nixon reportedly opened his best bottle of brandy and said, 'Henry, let us drink to generations to come who may have a better chance to live in peace because of what we have done.'

visit China, the first US president to do so. A further sign of improved relations was given when China gained a seat on the UN Security Council, at Taiwan's expense, on 25 October 1971.³¹¹

Nixon visits China, 1972

What Richard Nixon described as 'the week that changed the world' got underway when he arrived in Beijing on 21 February 1972. Although Mao had been unwell in the preceding months, he had been practising standing up and sitting down in the week before the visit. According to Jonathan Fenby, 'The meeting was an Imperial audience, not a negotiation.'³¹² The Americans paid the Chairman a good many compliments, praising his written accomplishments and observing that his leadership had 'moved a nation.' Mao in return said that one of Nixon's books was 'not bad.' He quipped to Nixon, 'I voted for you during your election' and said he liked negotiating with



President Nixon meets with Mao Zedong in February 1972.

'rightists' as they tended to be straightforward in their dealings.³¹³ Kissinger later recalled of Mao, 'I have met no one ... who so distilled raw, concentrated will power.'³¹⁴ Mao, though apparently in a good mood, signalled an end to the audience when he was pressed to discuss finer points of diplomacy: 'Those questions are not questions to be discussed in my place. They should be discussed with the premier [Zhou]. I discuss the philosophical questions.'³¹⁵ The talks had nonetheless gone on for just over an hour – much longer than expected.

The Shanghai Communiqué

In the days that followed, Nixon and his wife did sightseeing while Zhou Enlai, Henry Kissinger and their diplomats hammered out a formal joint diplomatic statement. The resulting Shanghai Communiqué was released on 25 September 1972. Through the communiqué, China and the US stated their positions on issues such as Taiwan and proposed further Sino-US cultural and diplomatic exchanges.

It was a historic moment, marking the normalisation of relations between the People's Republic and the international community. In September 1972, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka followed Nixon by re-establishing diplomatic relations with China. A further nineteen nations likewise restored or established diplomatic contact with Beijing by the end of the year. Australia established relations in December 1972 and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited Beijing in November 1973.

While it took some years for the full economic benefits of China's new international relations to bloom, the first step had been taken. The Shanghai Communiqué also ensured that China would not face a military threat from two super-powers. The easing of diplomatic tensions further reflected a trend toward political moderation that contrasted starkly with the tense years during the height of the Cultural Revolution. It was under Mao's watch that important, historic steps in China's modernisation were realised.

DID YOU KNOW?

During a visit by Kissinger in 1973, Mao jestingly offered an unusual commodity for export: 'What we have in excess is women. Let them go to your place. They will create disasters. That way you can lessen our burdens.'

309 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 602.

310 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 88.

311 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 501.

312 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 504.

313 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 598.

314 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 604.

315 Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, 377.

MAO'S LAST YEARS

Mao Zedong: 'In my life, I have done two things. First I fought [Jiang Jieshi] ... and drove him to a few small islands ... The second thing I have done you all know. It was to launch the Cultural Revolution, which has now the support of few and is opposed by many. But this matter is not ended yet. It is a legacy which must be handed down to the next generation ... Heaven only knows what you will do.'

While Richard Nixon's visit cheered Mao immensely, the Lin Biao fiasco created a number of leadership problems that required attention. There were vacancies to fill due to the purge of Lin's associates and, due to Mao's advancing years, would-be successors were jostling for attention. Veteran Communist leaders were starting to fade: in 1972, Kang Sheng and Zhou Enlai were diagnosed with terminal bladder cancer, while Mao was having trouble with his heart, vision and breathing. His slurred speech was increasingly unintelligible to all but his nurse and mistress, Zhang Yufeng. In early 1975, Mao would be diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, which attacks the muscular system and leads to an inability to swallow or breathe. As the health of Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou deteriorated, the People's Republic came to adopt more moderate policies, while periodically lurching into radical politics.³¹⁶ Some leaders, particularly Jiang Qing, ensured that Cultural Revolution ideology remained on the agenda.

Jiang's ambitions were bolstered immediately prior to the Tenth Party Congress of 24–28 August 1973, when young Shanghai radical Wang Hongwen (Wang Hung-wen) was appointed as second vice-chairman of the CCP (immediately below Zhou and Mao). Wang had been summoned to Beijing for meetings with Mao in September 1972 and was given an exhaustive list of revolutionary readings to digest. A former cotton mill security guard, Wang was clearly being groomed for an important future. He was also a protégé of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyan.

Mao didn't give free rein to the radicals, however. In early February, Deng Xiaoping was granted permission to return to Beijing. On

29 March, he resumed duties as vice-premier with authority to manage foreign affairs.³¹⁷

The Tenth Party Congress, 1973

The Tenth Party Congress was notable for its appointment of radicals and recently-rehabilitated veteran cadres; it reflected Mao's love of both order and upheaval and his tendency to pit one side against the other. While a number of officials purged during 1966–69 were welcomed back, the military representation on the Central Committee was halved. Deng Xiaoping was reappointed to the Central Committee. Wang Hongwen and Zhou Enlai delivered the two key reports to the congress. The theme was reaffirming the Cultural Revolution and criticising Lin Biao. Yet behind the rhetorical façade, Zhou's practical policies for restoring the economy gained prominence. Zhou, with Deng Xiaoping's administrative help, had been busy outlining a 'Four Modernisations' program to improve 'agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology.'³¹⁸ The Four Modernisations were given full approval at the Fourth People's Congress of January 1975, at which Deng gave the keynote speech. Zhou was too sick to attend any more than the congress opening. By this time, Deng was vice-premier of the State Council and vice-chairman of the CCP, as well as chief of staff to the People's Liberation Army. From February 1975, Deng was chairing Politburo meetings. While increasingly frail, Mao's mind remained sharp and he saw in Deng 'a person of extraordinary ability.'³¹⁹ Wang Hongwen, meanwhile, had fallen from the Chairman's favour. Wang's political inexperience was revealed through his continued intrigues in collusion with Jiang's radicals. Mao concluded that Wang was a young fool.

'Criticize Confucius and Lin Biao'

The radicals had by no means allowed Premier Zhou's moderate policies to go unopposed. A campaign driven by Jiang Qing to 'Criticise Confucius' immediately followed the Tenth Party Congress. By associating Zhou with Confucius –

the Duke of Zhou was a heroic figure in Confucian writing – Jiang aimed to discredit the premier. Zhou and his supporters successfully rallied their own propaganda machine, and by early 1974 had turned the campaign into ‘Criticism Confucius and Lin Biao.’ Sufficiently muddled and lacking popular enthusiasm, the campaign fizzled out by the middle of the year.³²⁰ Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenxuan nevertheless continued to snipe at Deng and Zhou’s program into 1975. Zhang warned young Chinese against succumbing to bourgeois material incentives; true proletarians should resist the equivalent of ‘stinky tofu, which smells awful, but tastes great.’³²¹ Mao gave only lukewarm support to their efforts and grew suspicious of Jiang Qing’s ambitions. Rumour had it that Mrs. Mao had taken to comparing herself to Empress Wu Zetian. In the margins of a speech Jiang wrote to oppose the Four Modernisations, Mao scrawled, ‘Wide off the mark.’³²² Tiring of their factionalism, in mid-1974 Mao warned Jiang and her closest associates against acting as a ‘Gang of Four.’ Deng Xiaoping, meanwhile, frustrated Jiang’s influence over the Politburo by using ‘steamroller methods’ in swamping the radicals with paperwork and moving discussions of documents along promptly.³²³

The Death of Premier Zhou, 1976

Zhou Enlai succumbed to cancer on 8 January 1976. The premier’s death plunged China into mourning. Jan Wong, a Chinese-Canadian then studying in Beijing, said, ‘I had never seen such universal grief. It seemed everyone was weeping, men and women, old people and children ... Bus drivers, street sweepers and shop clerks all went about their chores with swollen red eyes.’³²⁴ Ordinary Chinese people, who saw Zhou as a symbol of moderation and restraint, wore white flowers and laid wreaths in his honour at the Monument to the People’s Heroes at Tiananmen Square. Millions lined the streets as his body was taken for cremation. Despite his long and prestigious service to the Communist Party and the People’s Republic, Zhou was not given a public memorial service. Deng delivered the eulogy at the funeral, his last public address for some time. Many hoped that Deng Xiaoping would carry on Zhou’s legacy but their hopes were soon dashed. Fearing that Deng would use his considerable authority to push the moderate agenda even further and ‘settle

accounts’³²⁵ with the Cultural Revolution, Mao told Deng to cease work a few days after Zhou’s funeral. There was no public announcement but the *People’s Daily* featured an article on ‘unrepentant’ power-holders taking the ‘capitalist road.’³²⁶

To everyone’s surprise, Mao appointed the relatively unknown Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng) as acting premier on 7 February. While his body was failing, Mao had made an astute choice in bringing Hua into the leadership team. He was an affable man, aligned with neither radicals nor Deng’s moderates, thus representing the safe middle ground. Conflict between the factions nonetheless continued, coming to a head in April; the brevity of official mourning for Zhou Enlai led to a spontaneous protest movement during the Qingming grave-tending festival.

Between 29 March and 4 April 1976, large numbers of people came to Tiananmen Square to lay wreaths for Zhou. The mounds of white paper flowers grew to an astonishing height. People took to reading and displaying allegorical poetry critical of Jiang’s Gang of Four and Mao

Zedong. Some declared that the reign of Emperor Qin had come to an end. By 5 April, hundreds of thousands of people had gathered at Tiananmen. Communist radicals managed to convince Mao that the protest represented a movement in support of Deng Xiaoping. That night, police and security forces removed the wreaths. The next day thousands of enraged people scuffled with the police and voiced their unhappiness outside the main government buildings. On the evening of 6 April, an announcement on Tiananmen’s public address system warned protestors to leave. Most did. At 9.30 pm, spotlights came on and 10 000 club-wielding militiamen forcibly dispersed those who remained.³²⁷

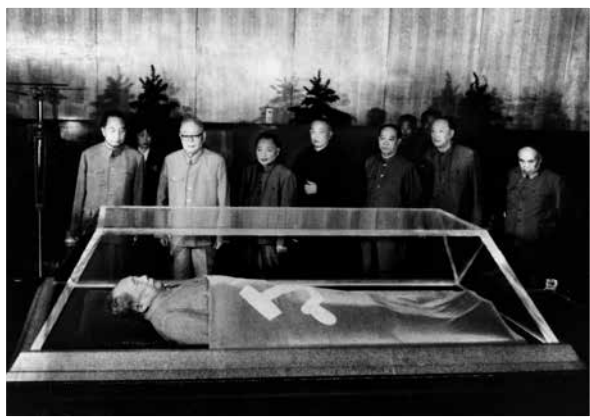
On 7 April, the Politburo formally named Hua Guofeng premier and vice-chairman of the party. To the delight of the radicals, Deng Xiaoping was relieved of all his posts (he retained his party membership). Deng went into hiding in Guangzhou under the protection of a regional PLA commander.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the CCP at the time, the 1976 Tiananmen protests were conducted by ‘a handful of class enemies,’ ‘a few bad elements, sporting crew cuts,’ and a ‘bad element wearing spectacles.’

At the end of April, Hua's designation as Mao successor was strengthened after the Chairman gave him a handwritten note: 'With you in charge, I am at ease.'³²⁸ In 1976, a number of CCP leaders, including eighty-nine-year-old Zhu De, passed away. On 28 July that year, one of worst earthquakes of the century hit the Hebei mining city of Tangshan. The official death toll was 242 000 but some sources suggest the real figure was close to 650 000.³²⁹ The city was almost obliterated. 'The 23 seconds of the earthquake were probably the most concentrated instant of destruction humanity has ever known.'³³⁰ Many Tangshan residents thought they had been victims of a nuclear attack. For those who believed in omens, the mammoth quake was a sure sign that the Mandate of Heaven was passing.

The Death of Mao Zedong, 1976



Chairman Mao Zedong being mourned at his funeral, Beijing, 1976.

In early September 1976, Mao suffered a severe heart attack. At ten past midnight on 9 September, he passed away. Although the Chairman was mourned widely, expressions of grief were more reserved than they had been for Zhou Enlai. A public memorial service attended by a million people was held in Tiananmen Square. Mao was laid to rest in a crystal coffin within a huge mausoleum in Tiananmen Square. There was still a sense of unease over what would happen next, especially with Jiang Qing holding considerable influence in the CCP. Acting in concert with a number of PLA marshalls, Hua Guofeng took only weeks to move against the Gang of Four. On 6 October 1976, Jiang Qing and

her cronies were arrested and imprisoned. There was much celebration at the news. Photographer Li Zhensheng recalled, 'The fall of the Gang of Four meant that the Cultural Revolution was over ... After ten years of fear and uncertainty, a spontaneous sense of joy overcame us all.'³³¹ For the time being, the People's Republic would be led by Chairman Hua Guofeng, who pledged to honour 'whatever policies' and 'whatever instructions' were bequeathed to him by Mao. By 1978, he had been replaced by Deng Xiaoping. Deng's revolutionary modernisation program, which was markedly different to Mao's, would see China rise to the status of an economic powerhouse. But that's another story.

The Trial of the Gang of Four

The Gang of Four – Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen – were brought to trial in November 1980. The trial proved quite a spectacle and excerpts were broadcast each night on Chinese and Western television. While the other defendants chose to remain silent, Jiang gave the performance of her career. She screeched and ranted at the judges. The judges chorused back, 'Shut up, Jiang Qing! Shut up!' Explaining her role in the Cultural Revolution, Madam Mao declared, 'I was Mao's dog. Whoever he told me to bite, I bit!' Jiang was sentenced to death but her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment 'to see how she behaved.' She committed suicide in custody on 14 May 1991.

316 *Morning Sun* documentary.

317 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 359.

318 Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism*, 95.

319 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 616.

320 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 224–5.

321 Craig Dietrich, *People's China*, 228.

322 Cited in Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 516.

323 Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 382.

324 Jan Wong, *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now* (Toronto: Anchor Books, 1996), 165.

325 Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 419.

326 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 765.

327 Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China*, 520.

328 Cited in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, 624.

329 Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*.

330 James Palmer, *The Death of Mao*, 124.

331 Li Zhensheng, *Red-color News Soldier*, 255. Many people celebrated with a meal consisting of three male crabs and a female crab.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of his life, Mao said that his two great accomplishments were Jiang Jieshi's defeat and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. That the Communists triumphed in 1949 is undisputed, but what of the Cultural Revolution? Why did this extreme movement come about? For Jung Chang the answer lies in a combination of power politics and Mao's destructive personality: the Cultural Revolution was about Mao taking 'revenge' on Liu Shaoqi for usurping his authority; furthermore, 'the most important thing for [Mao] was his power but he also loved violence and enjoyed seeing people he hated suffer.'³³² By contrast, Philip Short questions the usefulness of making a monster of Mao and simplifying his essence and the events around him: 'Do we really gain in understanding by denying his complexity, his genius and reducing him to a one-dimensional caricature? Mao was ... the reverse of a one-dimensional man.'³³³ Ideology mattered a great deal to Mao. The belief that his vision of a socialist society was being undermined by bourgeois attitudes and corruption amongst Communist officials played a decisive role in the Cultural Revolution. The unsatisfactory unfolding of the Socialist Education movement convinced the Chairman that the CCP was no longer responsive to Maoist doctrine and unable to fulfil the task of reinvigorating revolutionary values. Mao therefore turned to the Red Guards and Rebels, and encouraged them to rise up against those in authority and smash the Four Olds.

Although there is evidence that some people contributed reluctantly to the ensuing violence, it is clear that many embraced the opportunity to assert their profound dissatisfaction with Chinese society by making 'revolution in a big way.' Untold numbers suffered as society was turned upside-down by the rampagers. Many victims blame Mao: 'I hate Mao ... Mao began the Cultural Revolution. It was his Cultural Revolution, and for that, I hate him.'³³⁴ Yet the revolutionary onslaught, which by 1967 was descending into chaos, enjoyed widespread popular support. This

was partly because the masses were granted a degree of autonomy for the first time, and because the movement had some modernising influences on Chinese culture. As the Cultural Revolution wound down, measures were introduced to instil egalitarian values and restore order; young urban people were sent 'down to the countryside,' and party cadres to May Seventh Schools, to gain experience of rural life and physical labour. Despite acquiring some new understandings, most people greatly resented the experience: 'We became a nation of sacrificial victims,' writes Feng Jikai.³³⁵

Declarations of victory in the Cultural Revolution, voiced at the Ninth Party Congress of 1969, seemed hollow. The unintended outcomes proved to be more interesting 'accomplishments' of the period. Nie Yuanzi, whose big-character poster was personally endorsed by Mao, later reflected, 'Back then the eight hundred million people all shared the same brain. That is, Mao's brain. But through the Cultural Revolution, individuals found their own brain and were able to think independently. That was the greatest revolution and the biggest benefit.'³³⁶

Making sense of Mao remains central to understanding the Cultural Revolution. His rule was replete with triumph and tragedy. Mao was a revolutionary of profound genius, a gifted poet, a moderniser, champion of the poor, a man of crude habits, a monstrous Imperial tyrant and a Monkey King who sought to defy Heaven. Mao was 'without hair, without sky.' He remains a potent symbol for those who believe 'it is right to rebel.' His portrait still sits atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace at the entrance to the Forbidden City – a reminder of his unique contribution to modern China.

332 Jung Chang, interviewed by Rob Attar, 'China Goes to War,' *BBC History Magazine* (August 2006), 42–4.

333 Philip Short, cited in Peter Wilson, 'The Long March to Mao,' *The Australian*, 14 June 2005.

334 Bai Meihua, cited in Dahpon Ho, 'Omnipotent God-Emperor.'

335 Feng Jikai, *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China's Cultural Revolution* (San Francisco: China Books, 1996), v.

336 Nie Yuanzi, *As It Happened: Mao – A Life* (documentary).

CHAPTER REVIEW

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Acclaimed director Zhang Yimou's film *To Live* (Madman Cinema, 1994), based on Yu Hua's novel of the same name, is a story of one family's life during three decades of the Chinese Revolution. Xu Fugui and his wife Jiazhen experience both the joy of 'a quiet life together' and terrible tragedy amidst revolutionary China. Set in snapshot periods from the late 1940s through to the early 1970s, the film shows how everyday people lived their lives under Communist rule and how the Communist Party impinged on those lives in a variety of ways. Watch the film and discuss how it portrays the political, social and economic disruptions to ordinary life under Communist rule, as well as the aspects of 'normal' family life that continued throughout the period.



Mao's mausoleum at Tiananmen Square, Beijing.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the extract and complete the tasks that follow.

I think he was a great historic leader and a great historic criminal – both parts. And I think the reason I say criminal is he [claimed] to himself the right to conduct these enormous social experiments that involved upturning the lives of hundreds of millions of people when he himself did not know what the outcome was going to be. He thought it was OK for him to experiment like that. And I think that was criminal because it created famines in which tens of millions died, and it created the Cultural Revolution, in which no body knows how many died ... But he kept trying ... He was a great hero and great criminal all rolled up into one; he was a genius whose genius got completely out of control.

Sidney Rittenberg, interviewed in the documentary *The Revolutionary* (Stourwater Pictures, 2012).

1. Analyse Rittenberg's interpretation of Mao. In what ways was Mao 'a great hero and great criminal'?
2. Compare and contrast Rittenberg's assessment with one or more other views of Mao Zedong.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Read one or more of the following books and discuss it with your class, summarising the writer's experience of the Cultural Revolution.

Gao Yuan. *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University, 1987. Gao was a young middle school student from a small regional town who became a Red Guard. He participated in many of the campaigns of the period.

Jung Chang. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. London: HarperCollins, 1991. Chang was the daughter of high-ranking CCP officials. She and her family suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution.

Ma Bo. *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995. Ma travelled to Mongolia as a Red Guard, where he experienced a number of adversities.

Nien Cheng. *Life and Death in Shanghai*. London: HarperCollins, 1993. From an upper-middle class background, Nien was a former employee of British Shell who was arrested and imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution.

Wu Ningkun. *A Single Tear*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993. Wu returned to China in the early 1950s and took up work as a professor of English. He was persecuted during the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 and continued to suffer many hardships into the 1960s and 1970s.

CHAPTER REVIEW

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

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

- ‘The Cultural Revolution brought only division and disruption to the new society.’ Discuss, with reference to three or more groups in Chinese society.
- To what extent did Mao Zedong drive the Cultural Revolution? Which other leaders played a significant role?
- ‘The Cultural Revolution proved that Mao’s legacy was one of suffering and destruction.’ To what extent do you agree?
- How did the Chinese Communist Party change in the period 1961–71? What did the experiences of Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao and others demonstrate about the new regime?

KEY PEOPLE

Read the accounts of key people in the Cultural Revolution in this chapter. Draw a horizontal line on the board. At one end, write, ‘Unwilling participants,’ and at the other, write, ‘Enthusiastic participants.’ As a group, place the following individuals along the continuum, according to their level of commitment to the Cultural Revolution:

• Mao Zedong	• Mo Bo (former Red Guard)
• Liu Shaoqi	• Yang Rae (former school student)
• Lin Biao	• Deng Xiaoping
• Chen Yi	• Victims of violence
• Jiang Qing	• Nie Yuanzi.

CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

The creators of *Morning Sun*, an award-winning documentary on the Cultural Revolution (Long Bow Group, 2003), have produced an excellent website: www.morningsun.org/index.html. Here you can view footage and photographs of the period, explore multimedia features such as ‘consulting the Chairman’ through an annotated *Little Red Book*, read and listen to interviews with people who lived through the period, and view artworks such as posters and revolutionary musicals. The site is a useful resource for researching life during the Cultural Revolution and how the values of the era were represented.

FURTHER READING

Geremie R. Barme. *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*. London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

A study of the Cult of Mao, including its prevalence at the time and its manifestations today.

Timothy Cheek (ed.). *A Critical Introduction to Mao*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

An exceptional compilation of articles that offer a thoughtful, thorough and well-balanced overview of Mao Zedong's life, ideas and influence.

Paul Clark. *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

An interesting cultural history of the Cultural Revolution. Particularly useful for its analysis of revolutionary opera pieces.

Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder (eds.). *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

A valuable compilation of articles on the Cultural Revolution, drawing on new methodologies and reconceptualisations of the era.

Lee Feigon. *Mao: A Reinterpretation*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002.

Feigon offers an accessible and interesting re-evaluation of Mao. An excellent text for students, as it challenges assumptions and provides a comparison with Chang and Halliday.

Mobo Gao. *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution*. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2008.

A thought-provoking reassessment of the Cultural Revolution and the manner in which social memory, contemporary politics and the media have influenced understandings of Mao. Highly recommended. The author grew up in a Chinese peasant family and offers insights from this perspective.

Rebecca E. Karl. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

An assessment of Mao's global significance as a revolutionary figure.

Richard Curt Kraus. *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

A concise but insightful overview, which gives recognition to the complexities, gains, tragedies and turbulence of the era.

Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals. *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

A detailed academic study of the Cultural Revolution.

Ross Terrill. *Madam Mao: The White-Boned Demon*. Ringwood: Hale & Iremonger, 1995.

An engaging biography of Jiang Qing.

Li Zhisui. *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1994.

The memoirs of Mao's personal physician. An excellent source of Mao-era anecdotes and insights into the Chairman's private life.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

GLOSSARY

A

AGRARIAN REFORM LAW

Enacted in 1950, the law instituted radical land reform in the PRC through People's Tribunals and the judging of landlords.

ANHUI

A province in east-central China. Capital: Hefei.

ANNAM

Imperial Vietnam.

AUTHORITARIANISM

A dictatorial form of government in which the state is all-powerful.

AUTUMN HARVEST UPRISING

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

B

BAIHUA

The 'everyday' style of writing made popular in literature and media during the New Culture movement by Hu Shi, Lu Xun and others.

BANDIT ENCIRCLEMENT AND EXTERMINATION CAMPAIGNS

A series of five military campaigns from 1931–34 against Communist strongholds in rural areas. The fifth campaign, coordinated by General von Seeckt, proved successful and forced the CCP on the Long March.

BANNER ARMIES

The Manchu military structure, in which men from privileged families were organised into eight divisions, each with a different coloured banner. Bannermen received special privileges

and regular pay; their honoured role was hereditary.

BAREFOOT DOCTORS

A rudimentary healthcare scheme introduced during the Cultural Revolution whereby ordinary people were trained in basic medicine and sent to the countryside to treat peasants.

BLUE SHIRTS

The secret paramilitary organisation dedicated to advancing Jiang Jieshi's leadership. Drawn from graduates of the Huangpu Military Academy and directed by head of Nationalist secret police, Dai Li. Carried out assassinations and infiltrated organisations.

BOLSHEVIKS

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

BOXER PROTOCOL

The treaty imposed on the Qing following the failed Boxer Rebellion and war on foreign powers. The harshest treaty faced by the Qing, the protocol was the high point of imperialism in China. Signed 7 September 1901.

BOXER REBELLION

An anti-foreign, anti-Christian uprising staged by the Yi He Tuan ('Righteous and Harmonious Fists,' or Boxers) in 1899–1900. Originating in Shandong, the movement spread to the capital and culminated in a declaration of war by the Qing against foreign powers in China.

BUDDHISM

A religious tradition based on the teachings of Siddhartha (Buddha) and

his disciples. Through the teaching of the 'four noble truths,' Buddhists strive for compassion, insight through meditation and, ultimately, enlightenment. Buddhism came to China from India in the first century CE.

BUREAUCRATIC CAPITALISTS

Businessmen and industrialists whose close ties to the Japanese or GMD led them to be denounced under the PRC.

C

CADRE

A Communist official.

CANTON COMMUNE

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

CANTON SYSTEM

Until the First Opium War, Western traders in China had to abide by the Canton system. Their access to China was restricted to the southern port city of Canton (Guangzhou) and they had to conduct all transactions through selected Chinese traders, Cohung, who collected tariffs on behalf of the Qing.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The central coordinating body of the Chinese Communist Party. Members of the higher Politburo and Standing Committee are drawn from the Central Committee.

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP)

The CCP was established in Shanghai by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao in June 1921. Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai were early members. The CCP is the ruling party of the People's Republic of China and

exercises supreme political authority. The party was founded after Marxist ideas spread to China with the May Fourth movement of 1919; in the early days it received financial support and training from the Comintern in Moscow. Mao Zedong adapted the ideas of Marx and Lenin to the Chinese context, shifting the focus of revolutionary activity from urban workers to peasants. The main party organisations are the Politburo, Central Committee, Secretariat and Central Military Commission.

CHONGQING

A major port city on the Yangzi River in Sichuan which served as the Nationalist capital during the War of Resistance against Japan.

COHONG

The Chinese merchants' guild which controlled Western trade in China under the Qing dynasty until the Treaty of Nanjing. The Cohong acted on behalf of the Qing in collecting trade duties and in economic negotiations with foreigners.

COMINTERN

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

COMMISSAR

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

COMMUNISM

The doctrine of liberation of the proletariat (working class) and common ownership and control of the means of production. Most communist groups are, to a greater or lesser extent, based on Marxism-Leninism (see Marxism-Leninism).

CONFUCIANISM

A philosophical school of thought and ethics founded by Confucius, emphasising virtuous and respectful (filial) relationships within society, adherence to a strict social hierarchy

and submission to authority.

CONSERVATIVE

Someone resistant to change and reform; a supporter of past traditions. Extreme conservatives are described as reactionary.

'CRITICIZE CONFUCIUS AND LIN BIAO'

Confused mass campaign in 1974 which was in essence a smokescreen for mutual criticisms between Jiang Qing's radicals and Zhou Enlai's moderates.

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The campaign launched by Mao Zedong in 1966 to rectify the Communist Party, which he and others felt was 'following the capitalist road.' The 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' finally drew to a close in 1976 after the death of Mao.

D

DALAI LAMA

The Buddhist spiritual leader of Tibet. The current Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959.

DANWEI

A work unit, usually structured around one's place of employment or residence, which provided the first link between ordinary people and the Communist Party.

DAOISM

A philosophical and religious tradition, founded by Laozi, based on the teaching of 'the Way' or 'Dao,' emphasising renunciation, acceptance and harmony with the natural and given state of the world.

DAZHAI

A rural commune celebrated in the People's Republic as a model of successful socialist development.

'DEMOCRATIC PARTIES'

The non-CCP political parties permitted in Mao's PRC, including the GMD Revolutionary Committee and Democratic League.

DIXIE MISSION

The 1944 visit by American observers and diplomats to the Yan'an Soviet. Led by Colonel David Barrett, the Mission was impressed by the morale and practices of the Communists and made positive reports.

DOUBLE TENTH

The uprising by Tongmenghui-inspired New Army soldiers which eventually brought down the Qing Dynasty. It began on 10 October 1911 (tenth day of tenth month) in the city of Wuhan.

DOWAGER EMPRESS

The mother of the ruling emperor or the widow of the previous emperor.

E

EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY

The Communist Red Army that fought alongside the Nationalists against the Japanese after the Second United Front.

ELITE

A class or group which enjoys superior social, intellectual or economic status over others.

F

FANSHEN

The principle of 'turning over' which underpinned the land reform and social campaigns of the early years of the PRC.

FASCISM

Extreme right-wing ideology based on centralised authoritarian rule, militarism, adherence to nationalistic values and suppression of opponents.

FEBRUARY OUTLINE REPORT

An assessment of the Wu Han affair, released in early 1966 by Peng Zhen, mayor of Beijing, and his Five Man Cultural Revolution Group (an investigative commission.) The report concluded that the debate over *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* was a literary rather than a political matter.

FENG SHUI

The lines of energy and harmony between heavenly and earthly things. Translating as 'wind and water,' the study of feng shui aids in the selection of auspicious locations for human-made structures.

FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

A Stalin-inspired centralised economic model based on investment in heavy industry. Outlined in 1953 and publicly announced in 1955, it was created with the assistance of advisers and loans from the Soviet Union. Given low funding, agricultural collectivisation was implemented in three stages: Mutual Aid Teams, Lower Agricultural Cooperatives and Higher Agricultural Cooperatives.

FIVE ANTIS CAMPAIGN

Known as *wufan*, the 1952 campaign targeted tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property, cheating on government contracts and bribery, particularly among businessmen and industrialists.

FLYING TIGERS

Jiang Jieshi's air force, staffed by American mercenary pilots.

FORBIDDEN CITY

The Imperial residence in Beijing. A vast complex of palaces and courtyards where the emperor and his retinue lived.

FORUM ON WORK IN LITERATURE AND ART FOR THE ARMED FORCES

Led by Jiang Qing, the group investigated and advised on cultural matters on behalf of the PLA. Formed at the behest of Lin Biao in February 1966, the forum refuted the February Outline Report.

FOUR MODERNISATIONS

An outline of areas for improvement – national defence, agriculture, industry and science – drafted by Zhou Enlai and promoted by Deng Xiaoping. First introduced in 1975.

FUJIAN

A province on the south-eastern coast of China. Capital: Fuzhou.

G

GANG OF FOUR

The radical Maoist faction of the CCP which rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, consisting of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen.

GANSU

A province in north-central China. Capital: Lanzhou.

GRAND COUNCIL

A small group that advised the emperor.

GRAND SECRETARIAT

The highest-ranking administrative assistants to the Imperial Court.

GREAT LEAP FORWARD (GLF)

A series of campaigns encouraged by Mao Zedong that attempted to achieve vast economic output and improvement through revolutionary enthusiasm. Launched at the Eighth Party Congress and carried out between 1958 and 1961, the GLF included the smelting of steel in backyard furnaces, extreme collectivisation of agriculture through People's Communes and experimentation based on the theories of Trofim Lysenko. Statistical misinformation and mismanagement of agriculture led to a terrible famine which claimed around thirty-million lives.

GREEN GANG

A Shanghai criminal syndicate headed by 'Big Ears Du' and 'Pock-marked Huang'; responsible for many deaths during the Shanghai Massacre of 1927.

GUANGXI

Along with Guangdong, Guangxi was a base for the Nationalists under Sun Yixian. Now called the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, this area in south-west China is home to

the Zhuang ethnic group. Capital: Nanning.

GUERRILLA TACTICS

Unconventional warfare. Guerrilla fighters travel light, avoid direct confrontation with better-equipped and larger forces, rely on the support of local people and generally harass their enemy in order to wear them down. They tend to strike when least expected.

GUIZHOU

A province in south-west China. Capital: Guiyang.

GUOMINDANG (GMD)

The National People's Party (Nationalists) evolved from the Tongmenghui. In 1912, the Tongmenghui absorbed four smaller parties and became the Guomindang. The party's initial focus, under the guidance of Song Jiaoren, was campaigning and participating in the parliament of the Republic founded after the fall of the Qing. President Yuan Shikai, however, soon grew intolerant of the party's electoral success and its criticism of his rule; he therefore repressed the GMD. While it adhered to Sun Yixian's Three Principles, the Guomindang adopted a Leninist structure in 1923 following advice from the Comintern. A united front was formally made with the CCP in 1924. After the death of Sun in 1925, two factions emerged in the GMD: a conservative 'right' group headed by Hun Hanmin and a 'left' faction (more open to socialist ideals and working with the CCP) led by Wang Jingwei and Liao Zhongkai. Jiang Jieshi also wielded influence as the chief Nationalist military figure. After a series of complex developments, by 1928 Jiang had emerged as the leader of the GMD. The Nationalists ruled China until they were forced from power by the Communists in 1949. It was the Second Sino-Japanese War, however, that greatly undermined the stability of the Nationalist Decade.

H

HAI RUI DISMISSED FROM OFFICE

A play written in 1961 by Beijing's deputy mayor, Wu Han. It was taken to be an allegorical criticism of Mao's dismissal of Peng Dehuai. Debate over Wu Han's play proved to be the opening phase of the Cultural Revolution.

HAKKA

An ethnic minority of south-central China. Leader of the Taiping Rebellion, Hong Xiuquan, was of Hakka origin.

HEBEI

A province in north-east China. Capital: Shijiazhuang.

HEILONGJIANG

A province of far north-east China. Capital: Harbin.

HENAN

An east-central Chinese province. Capital: Zhengzhou.

HUANGPU MILITARY ACADEMY

The officer training institute of the Guomindang Nationalist Revolutionary Army, based at Guangzhou and founded under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi in May 1924. Until the breakdown of the First United Front, Communists could also attend the Academy; Zhou Enlai served as its political commissar.

HUBEI

A province in central China. Capital: Wuhan.

HUNAN

A province in south-central China. Capital: Changsha.

HUNDRED DAYS OF REFORM

The three-month period of reform from June–September 1898, initiated by Emperor Guangxu and advised by scholar Kang Youwei. Proposing modernisations in political institutions, education, economics and the military, the reforms came to an end following a coup by Dowager Empress Cixi.

HUNDRED FLOWERS CAMPAIGN

A brief period of debate and critical discussion amongst students and intellectuals in early-to-mid-1957, encouraged by Mao Zedong. When deep criticisms of the Communist Party emerged, the campaign was brought to an end with an Anti-Rightist drive.

I

IMPERIAL COURT

The inner government and circle of advisers who served the Chinese emperor. Imperial (royal) rule in China should not be confused with imperialism.

IMPERIALISM

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

J

JANUARY STORM

The period during the winter of 1967 in which radical Rebel and Red Guard groups made attempts – many successful – to overthrow the leadership of party committees, government departments and other organisations. The slogan of the January Storm was 'seize power!' The most dramatic power seizure was the toppling of the Shanghai city government and proclamation of the Shanghai People's Commune.

JIANGSU

An eastern coastal province of China. Capital: Nanjing.

JIANGXI

A province in south-east China. Capital: Nanchang.

JIANGXI SOVIET

A Communist community based around the town of Ruijin, established in 1928. Led by Chairman Mao, the soviet was abandoned at the start of the Long March following

Jiang's Fifth Bandit Encirclement and Extermination Campaign.

JINGGANGSHAN

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

L

LEFT-WING

Espousing progressive or liberal views; in favour of a strong public sector and welfare state. The term originated in the French National Assembly (1789–91), where the nobles sat to the president's right and the commoners to the left.

LEGATION

The areas under direct foreign occupation and administration in Chinese cities during the Qing and Republican eras. Legations were usually walled sections of port cities.

LIAONING

A province in north-east China. Capital: Shenyang (Mukden).

LI LISAN LINE

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

LONG MARCH

The year-long 12 000 kilometre journey made by the Chinese Communists when they fled their Jiangxi Soviet in October 1934. Many great difficulties were faced during the Long March including the Battle of Xiang River, capturing the Luding Bridge at Dadu, crossing the Great Snowy Mountains and High Grasslands, and numerous attacks by Nationalist forces. Of the 100 000 Communists who set out on the Long March, about 8000 survived. After the Zunyi Conference, Mao Zedong assumed leadership of the march. The Long Marchers eventually made their way to Shaanxi, where a new soviet was established at Yan'an.

LUSHAN PLENUM

A significant meeting of the CCP Central Committee in July–August 1959, which saw the downfall of Peng Dehuai and the reaffirmation of the Great Leap Forward.

LYSENKOISM

The theories of Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko, adopted by the Chinese with enthusiasm during the Great Leap Forward. Lysenko claimed to have refuted genetics, proposing that the characteristics of living things are acquired rather than inherited. This resulted in experimentation with deep ploughing and close planting of crops, radical pest extermination and unconventional cross-breeding of livestock. The approach had disastrous consequences.

M

MANCHUKUO

Translated as ‘land of the Manchus,’ Manchukuo was the Japanese protectorate established over Manchuria in 1931.

MANDARIN

High-ranking Imperial official drawn from the shenshi class. Mandarins gained their positions through completing the higher-level Confucian examinations. Mandare means ‘to command.’

MANDATE OF HEAVEN

The mystical authority through which an Imperial dynasty claimed its right to rule. Heaven, in the Chinese sense, was the divine force which governed all things in the world. If an emperor ruled wisely and honoured his duties, the Mandate of Heaven would grant him a prosperous reign. If he failed in his duties, Heaven would be displeased and give signs – such as a succession of natural disasters – that the dynasty should come to an end.

MAOIST VIRTUES

Diligence, courage, selflessness, struggle and self-sacrifice.

MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

The revolutionary ideology of Mao Zedong, emphasising a greater role for the peasantry, mass line leadership (‘from the people, to the people’), continuous revolution, practical application of Marxism to Chinese conditions (the Sinification of Marxism-Leninism), correct revolutionary consciousness and the celebration of Yan’an Virtues.

MARCO POLO BRIDGE INCIDENT

A confused event involving Japanese troops on the outskirts of Beijing on 7 July 1937. Japanese forces on training manoeuvres came into conflict with Chinese troops, sparking the second Sino-Japanese War.

MARRIAGE LAW

The first key legislation implemented by the government of the PRC in May 1950, granting a range of legal, economic and social rights to Chinese women.

MARXISM

The economic and political theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, holding that human actions and institutions are economically determined and that class struggle is needed to create historical change. The working class (proletariat) is alienated from the means of production, which is dominated and controlled by the merchant, middle and upper classes (the bourgeoisie.) According to Marxism, capitalism will ultimately be superseded by communism.

MARXISM-LENINISM

The modification of Marxism by Vladimir Lenin, in which imperialism by propertied classes was seen as the highest form of capitalism. According to Marxist-Leninists the three main social groups in nineteenth century Britain were: the proletariat (working class), the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the landlord class. Lenin advocated a proletarian revolution (driven largely by urban workers) and a ‘vanguard’ party – a professional, elite group

that would guide the working class to revolutionary consciousness.

MASS LINE

Mao’s notion of correct leadership ‘from the people, to the people.’ Communists should listen to ordinary people and their concerns, then take these insights and use them to inform policies and government practices.

MAY 16 CIRCULAR

A statement produced in mid-1966 which declared the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

MAY 30 ATROCIOUS INCIDENT

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

MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

The Chinese anti-imperialist demonstration movement sparked by the conditions set out in the Treaty of Versailles, 1919. Students outraged at the unjust treatment of China protested first at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, and later across the nation. The movement resulted in a period of questioning and intellectual inquiry.

MAY SEVENTH CADRE SCHOOLS

Labour camps for Communist officials, founded during the Cultural Revolution. Study of Mao Zedong Thought was combined with rigorous physical work.

MEMORIAL

A petition or message sent to the emperor.

MILITARY BUREAU OF STATISTICS

The Nationalist secret police, headed by Dai Li.

MUKDEN INCIDENT

The outbreak of fighting between Japanese and Chinese troops on 18 September 1931, leading to Japan’s invasion of Manchuria.

N

NATIONAL CAPITALISTS

Businessmen willing to support the Communists; tolerated in Mao's PRC.

NATIONAL CONGRESS

The national parliament or elected consultative body of the PRC.

NEO-CONFUCIAN

Staunch orthodox Confucianism, further influenced by Daoist and Buddhist ideals.

NEW ARMIES

Modern military units developed by the Qing during the period of New Government in 1901. Replacing Banner Armies, they trained with updated weapons and modern military principles, under regional rather than central command.

NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

The period of intellectual questioning and political radicalism that emerged towards the end of WWI. Intellectuals such as Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Li Dazhou and Chen Duxiu re-examined Chinese traditions (such as Confucianism) and incorporated everyday written language (baihua) into literary works. They explored the applicability of different political ideas, such as anarchism and Marxism, to China. The New Culture movement inspired and grew into the May Fourth movement.

NEW FOURTH ARMY

The Communist armed forces established from remnants of Jiangxi Soviet guerrillas in 1937, following the formation of the Second United Front.

'NEW GOVERNMENT' (XINZHENG)

A period of reform and institutional change initiated by the Qing in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion (1901–09.) It involved modernising education, political institutions and the military.

NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

A Guomindang campaign launched in 1934 to instill virtuousness and correct behaviour. Influenced by Confucian, Christian and fascist ideals.

NEW YOUTH

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

NINGXIA

An autonomous region of north-central China, home to the Muslim Hui minority. Capital: Yinchuan.

NORTHERN EXPEDITION

The military campaign waged by the Nationalist Revolutionary Army in 1926–28 that defeated warlord militarists and reunited China. Led by Jiang Jieshi.

O

OPIUM

Addictive narcotic.

ORTHODOX

Traditional; adhering to strict interpretations or beliefs.

P

PEASANT

Rural labourer.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNE

Comprising up to 100 000 people each, People's Communes were military-style brigades of production units set up by the Communists in rural China. They represented an extreme form of collectivisation in which Higher Agricultural Cooperatives were reorganised into Communes, private land ownership was abolished and people worked in exchange for work points. Communes provided communal kitchens, nurseries and Happiness Homes for the elderly.

PEOPLE'S DAILY

The chief national newspaper of the PRC.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP

Rule by the four revolutionary classes: peasantry, proletariat, petit-bourgeoisie and national capitalists. Proclaimed with the founding of the PRC.

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (PLA)

The Communist armed forces, formally established in May 1946. Known previously as the Red Army.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC)

Government established by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party in 1949. Still the official name for China.

PLENUM

A meeting of the Communist Central Committee.

PROVINCIAL

Pertaining to provinces.

PURGE

The removal of rivals or 'questionable' elements from the an organisation.

Q

QING

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

QINGHAI

A province in west-central China. Capital: Xining.

QUEUE

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

R

RADICAL

Favouring extreme or revolutionary ideas or practices. The opposite of reactionary.

RAPE OF NANJING

Atrocities committed by the Japanese between December 1937 and January

1938 after capturing the city of Nanjing. Three-hundred-thousand civilians were killed and 20 000 women and girls were raped.

REACTIONARY

Extremely conservative or opposed to change; a staunch believer in past traditions.

REBEL

Someone who defies or rises up against the ruling order. During the Cultural Revolution, 'Rebels' were radicals within organisations (particularly workplaces) who sought to overthrow the existing authorities.

RED GUARDS

Students from universities and high schools who declared loyalty to Chairman Mao and enacted a range of campaigns during the Cultural Revolution. Red Guards harassed, denounced and in some cases killed teachers, party officials and others in positions of authority. They also led campaigns to destroy the Four Olds (old ideas, culture, customs and habits), participated in mass rallies at Beijing and travelled throughout China to 'exchange experiences' with their peers.

REPUBLIC

Representative democracy in which the head of state is not a monarch.

REVISIONIST

In the context of the Chinese Revolution, someone whose Communist values or actions were questionable or lacking. The term was commonly used to discredit people during the Cultural Revolution.

RIGHT-WING

Conservative or reactionary; espousing individualism, capitalism and a limited role for government. The term originated in the French National Assembly (1789–91), where the nobles sat to the president's right and the commoners to the left.

S

SANFAN

See Three Antis.

SANMINZHUYI

Sun Yixian's 'Three Principles of the People': Democracy, Nationalism and People's Livelihood.

SELF-STRENGTHENING

A reform movement of the late Qing era (1860s–90s.) Leading exponents included Feng Guifen, Prince Gong, Zheng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. Self-Strengtheners believed in gaining knowledge of Western military technology and engineering while at the same time maintaining Confucian institutions and prioritising philosophical study.

SEVEN-THOUSAND (7000) CADRES' CONFERENCE

A meeting of the CCP Central Committee in January 1962 that endorsed the post-GLF recovery policies of Liu, Deng and Chen. At the conference, Mao expressed concerns about corruption within the Communist Party.

SHAAN-GAN-NING SOVIET

The full title of the Yan'an Soviet, taken from the names of the three provinces involved: Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia.

SHAANXI

A province of north-central China. Capital: Xi'an.

SHANDONG

An eastern province. Capital: Jinan.

SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUÉ

Issued on 28 February 1972, following President Nixon's visit to China, the Communiqué outlined the respective positions of China and the US on a range of issues (including Taiwan.) It marked the start of normalised Sino-American relations.

SHANGHAI PEOPLE'S COMMUNE

At the height of the 1967 January Storm of the Cultural Revolution, the Shanghai municipal government and party organisation were overthrown by radical 'Red Rebels' workers' group.

Encouraged by Zhang Chunqiao, the Rebels founded a Shanghai People's Commune on 5 February 1967, which, taking its inspiration from the Paris Commune of 1848, was proclaimed a direct revolutionary form of democratic governance. The Shanghai People's Commune lasted less than a month, as three-in-one revolutionary committees superseded previous power seizures by the end of February.

SHANXI

A province in north-central China. Capital: Taiyuan. Not to be confused with Shaanxi.

SICHUAN

A province in south-west China. Capital: Chengdu.

SINO

Chinese.

SIXTEEN POINTS

A directive released by the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee in August 1966, outlining the nature and goals of the Cultural Revolution.

SOCIALISM

Political theory advocating government or collective ownership and administration of industry/capital for the benefit of all. Emphasises a large role for government and the equal distribution of resources.

SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT

A series of campaigns in the early-to-mid-1960s aimed at stamping out corruption amongst Communist officials and encouraging socialist values in the wider society. The movement included a range of anti-corruption measures outlined in ten-point directives and the 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaigns.

SOVIET

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

council. In the October Revolution of 1917, the Russian Communists (Bolsheviks) came to power by association with the ideal of 'soviet power.' The Bolsheviks later changed the name of Russia to the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR). Soviet therefore became synonymous with 'Russian' until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

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

STATE COUNCIL

The government ministries of the PRC, headed by Premier Zhou Enlai until 1976.

SUN-JOFFE DECLARATION

A joint statement presented in early 1923 on behalf of the Guomindang and Comintern by Sun Yixian and Adolph Joffe. It outlined the groups' respective positions on key revolutionary ideologies (chiefly Marxism) and the goals of the forthcoming alliance (United Front) between the GMD and CCP. Sun and Joffe identified 'national independence' and 'national unity' as the key ideals to work towards.

T

TAIPING

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (1850–64) was the largest and most formidable rebellion faced by the Qing dynasty. The Taiping movement was founded by Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka man who had repeatedly failed his Imperial examinations and experienced delusional visions that he was the brother of Jesus Christ. Hong founded a religious sect, the Society of God Worshippers, which eventually evolved into the Taiping and attracted millions of followers. Nanjing was the capital of the Taiping government.

THOUGHT REFORM

A mass campaign of the early 1950s, in which intellectuals were made to read Marxist texts, engage in self-criticisms and make public declarations of their ideological shortcomings. Liang Shuming and the followers of Hu Shi were denounced.

THREE ANTIS CAMPAIGN

The *sanfan* campaign by Communists launched in 1951 against politically unreliable government officials and corrupt party cadres. It targeted 'corruption, waste and bureaucracy.'

THREE BAD YEARS

The worst years of famine (1959–61) following implementation of the Great Leap Forward.

THREE-IN-ONE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES

Committees made up of soldiers, radical Party cadres and Rebels (worker radicals) that assumed control of various organisations after the January Storm of 1967.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PEOPLE

Sun Yixian's revolutionary ideology based around the ideals of Democracy, Nationalism and People's Livelihood.

THREE THIRDS

The principle underpinning local government during the Yan'an era: one-third of members should be from the CCP, one-third from other revolutionary groups and one-third could be anyone apart from Japanese collaborators, supporters of Jiang Jieshi or exploitative landlords.

TIANANMEN INCIDENT

The violent dispersal of mass protests at Tiananmen Square in April 1976. Protestors mourned the death of Zhou Enlai and were critical of Jiang Qing's Gang of Four and Chairman Mao. The CCP blamed Deng Xiaoping for the disorder.

TONGMENGHUI

The revolutionary party of Sun Yixian, based around his Three Principles.

Founded in 1905, the Tongmenghui ('Revolutionary Alliance') combined a number of anti-Qing groups and organised several unsuccessful rebellions. The soldiers who began the 1911 Revolution were influenced by the Tongmenghui. Leadership was largely based in Japan.

TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP, ALLIANCE AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

An agreement made between the PRC and the Soviet Union in 1950, pledging mutual economic and military support.

TREATY OF NANJING

Signed in 1842 as a result of the First Opium War, the treaty granted considerable privileges in China to Britain. It was the first of the 'Unequal Treaties.'

TREATY OF SHIMONOSEKI

The 1895 treaty in which Japan was granted a large indemnity and control over Korea and Taiwan, thus ending the first Sino-Japanese War.

TREATY OF TIANJIN

Signed in 1860 (reaffirmed by the Convention of Beijing), the treaty granted privileges to Britain and France. A result of the Second Opium War (Arrow War.)

TREATY OF VERSAILLES

The post-WWI peace agreement, reached in 1919, which imposed harsh measures on Germany. Having joined the Allied war effort in 1917, China expected to recover German concessions in China. Chinese interests, however, were ignored and Japan was rewarded instead.

TRIBUTE SYSTEM

Imperial China maintained its influence over a number of neighbouring realms through the tribute system. Representatives of foreign nations would periodically visit the Chinese capital to bestow lavish gifts and swear allegiance to the Chinese emperor. Those offering tribute were expected to recognise the superiority of the Chinese realm.

TWENTY-ONE DEMANDS

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

U

UNITED FRONT

The terms of agreement and periods of cooperation between the Guomindang and CCP. The First United Front (1924–27), a three-way alliance between the GMD, CCP and Comintern, was brought to an end shortly after the White Terror. The Second United Front (1936–41), a military alliance against Japanese occupying forces, was a result of the Xi'an Incident and came to an end after Nationalist forces attacked the New Fourth Army for failing to obey orders.

UP TO THE MOUNTAINS, DOWN TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

A CCP campaign in early 1968 which sent urban youths to live and work in rural areas.

UTOPIANISM

Visionary schemes for producing perfection in social or political conditions. Often used to describe unachievable ideals, the term was popularised by Sir Thomas More's 1516 book, *Utopia*.

V

VICEROY

The governor of more than one province, granted extensive powers by the emperor.

W

WARLORDS

Regional military strongmen who emerged after the death of Yuan Shikai and ruled regional areas.

WEN-YEN

The highly complex written language used by Confucian scholars. Until

the popularising of *baihua* (everyday writing) during the New Culture movement, wen-yen dominated China's literary traditions.

WESTERN POWERS

The leading nations of the West in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

WUFAN

See Five Antis.

WUHAN UPRISING

See Double Tenth.

X

XI'AN INCIDENT

The dramatic arrest of Jiang Jieshi by Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang in December 1936, resulting in the Second United Front between the GMD and CCP (against the Japanese.)

XINJIANG

Uighur Autonomous Region in north-west China. Capital: Urumqi.

XINZHENG

See New Government.

XIZANG (TIBET)

Tibetan Autonomous Region in western China. Capital: Lhasa.

Y

YAN'AN

A town in the remote mountainous region of Shaanxi which provided the base for the Yan'an CCP Soviet after the Long March.

YAN'AN WAY

The policies, revolutionary ideals and mass mobilisation campaigns carried out by the Communists during the Yan'an Soviet era, particularly during the 1940s. Characterised by mass line leadership style, land reform, social reforms and economic self-sufficiency, the Yan'an Way epitomised the Maoist Virtues of diligence, courage, selflessness, struggle and self-sacrifice.

YUAN

The currency of the PRC. The term, which translates as 'institution,' was also used to denote the five main bureaus of Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government — Executive, Legislative, Control, Judicial and Examination.

YUNNAN

A province in south-west China. Capital: Kunming.

Z

ZHEJIANG

A province in eastern China. Capital: Hangzhou.

ZHENG FENG

The Maoist Rectification campaigns of the 1940s.

ZHONGGUO

Translating as 'Middle Kingdom' or 'Central Kingdom,' the term by which the Chinese refer to their realm.

ZHONGNANHAI

The compound in Beijing which holds the residences of high-ranking CCP officials.

WHO 'S WHO

Bo was a leading member of the Moscow-trained Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks or Returned Students Clique which assumed authority over the CCP Politburo in early 1931. Alongside Wang Ming, Bo was one of the major figures in the Communist leadership until the Zunyi Conference of 1935, after which time he lost influence. Bo remained a member of the Central Committee until his death in a plane crash in 1946.

**BO, GU (PO KU)
(1907–1946)**

A prominent member of the Chinese Communist Party, Bo held senior economic positions during the 1950s and early 1960s. A close associate of Liu Shaoqi, Bo served as finance minister (1949–53), vice-chairman of the State Planning Commission (1954–56) and chairman of the State Economic Commission (1956–66). Bo was purged in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution. He was rehabilitated after Mao's death and was a respected senior Communist statesman and member of the Politburo Standing Committee under Deng Xiaoping's rule.

**BO, YIBO (PO I-PO)
(1908–2007)**

Borodin, whose real name was Mikhail Markovich Grunzeberg, was a Comintern adviser to the Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party from 1923. Borodin played an important role in reorganising the Guomindang (GMD) along Leninist lines and had influence amongst the Left faction of the Nationalists. He was sent back to the Soviet Union in 1927 after the breakdown of the First United Front. Arrested in Stalin's Great Purge of the 1930s, Borodin spent the rest of his life in a Siberian labour camp.

**BORODIN, MIKHAIL
(1884–1952)**

Also known as Li De, Braun was a German-born Comintern operative who worked with the CCP during the 1930s. He was influential during the late Jiangxi Soviet period and advised on tactics during Jiang's final Encirclement Campaign. Braun was ousted by Mao after the Zunyi meeting during the Long March. Ridiculed as 'Straight on, head on Li,' Braun was blamed by Mao and figures in the Communist military for poor strategy during the first stages of the Long March.

**BRAUN, OTTO
(1900–1974)**

Cai was Chancellor of Beijing University from 1916 to 1926. Under his leadership the University employed a number of charismatic and innovative academics, including Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Lu Xun. Cai was an influential patron of those who led the New Culture and May Fourth movements.

**CAI, YUANPEI (T'SAI
YUAN-P'EI)
(1868–1940)**

**CAO, YIOU (TS'AO I-OU)
(1903–1989)**

Cao was sent by her husband, Kang Sheng, to the campus of Beijing University during the early weeks of the Cultural Revolution to ferment unrest amongst the radical-minded students. Shortly after Cao's visit, Nie Yuanzi put up her famed big character poster.

**CHEN, BODA (CH'EN
PO-TA)
(1904–1989)**

Chen served as Mao's personal secretary at Yan'an and became one of his chief speech writers, as well as his leading propagandist. Chen edited the Communist paper *Red Flag* and was known for his radical leftist views. Working closely with Kang Sheng and Jiang Qing, Chen became very influential during the Cultural Revolution. He headed the Cultural Revolution Group, was ranked fourth in the party hierarchy at the time of the Ninth Party Congress (1969) and was a member of the Politburo Standing Committee (1966–70). Chen had a stammer and a thick Fujian accent that made his speech often incomprehensible to those unused to it. Chen fell from power in 1970 after being caught up in the political intrigues of Lin Biao. Chen spent the coming years in prison but was released due to poor health towards the end of his life.

**CHEN, DUXIU (CH'EN
TU-HSIU)
(1879–1942)**

Chen Duxiu was a brilliant Marxist intellectual who was appointed to the staff of Beijing University by Cai Yuanpei. Chen was arguably the most influential scholar of the New Culture movement. He founded and edited the journal *New Youth* and, alongside Li Dazhao, founded the Chinese Communist Party. Chen served as the Party's general secretary from 1921 to 1927. After increasing disagreement with the Comintern, Chen lost the party leadership and led a breakaway Trotskyite opposition group. An orthodox Marxist, Chen was particularly critical of placing the peasantry at the forefront of the Chinese Communist movement. Chen was arrested and imprisoned by the Nationalists in 1933; he was pardoned and released in 1937. He died of cancer in 1942.

**CHEN, JIERU (CH'EN
CHIEH-JU)
(1906–1971)**

Chen Jieru, who usually went by the name Jennie, was Jiang Jieshi's second wife. Marrying Jiang in 1921, Jennie was sent to the United States for a 'study tour' in 1927 so that Jiang could marry Soong Meiling. Expecting to return and resume her marriage after a five-year break, Jennie was upset to discover in the press that Jiang had disowned her and planned to remain with Soong Meiling.

**CHEN, JIONGMING
(CH'EN CHIUNG-MING)
(1878–1933)**

Known as the Hakka General, Chen was a military man who based himself in southern China during the early Republican period. Chen headed a progressive regime, based at Guangdong, in alliance with Sun Yixian; differences over policy and ideology, however, led to a falling out between the Hakka warlord and the Nationalist leader. Sun Yixian and Jiang Jieshi waged a number of military campaigns against Chen, who was eventually defeated. He fled to Hong Kong where he died of typhus.

Participating in the Communists' Nanchang Uprising of 1927, Chen Yi joined with Mao's forces at Jinggangshan. Chen continued to play important roles in the CCP military, eventually rising to the top rank of PLA Marshall. A straight-talking man of strong views, Chen served as mayor of Shanghai (1949–58), vice-premier (1954) and foreign minister (after 1958). Despite his close ties to Zhou Enlai, Chen was struggled against during the Cultural Revolution. Chen died of cancer in 1972; at his funeral Mao indicated a willingness to work with some of the Communist old guard, many of whom had fallen from grace in the 1960s.

**CHEN, YI (CH'EN I)
(1901–1972)**

A Long March veteran and member of the Communist Politburo from 1934, Chen Yun was the party's leading economic planner after 1949. His influence was shown particularly in the First Five-Year Plan and in the post-Great Leap Forward recovery. When the Great Leap Forward was underway, Chen withdrew from active politics – a tactic he again employed during the Cultural Revolution. Chen was nonetheless subjected to struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution. He returned to influential positions under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s.

**CHEN, YUN (CH'EN YUN)
(1905–1995)**

Dai was Jiang Jieshi's infamous security chief. Dai headed a powerful and greatly-feared secret police organisation and was one of the most powerful men in Nationalist China. He had Jiang Jieshi's complete trust and was one of few men allowed openly to carry a handgun during private meetings with the Generalissimo. Dai was killed in a plane crash in 1946.

**DAI, LI (TAI LI)
(1897–1946)**

The Dalai Lama is the supreme spiritual leader of Tibet and was its political leader until 1959. The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, negotiated agreements which granted Tibet a degree of autonomy after the invasion of Chinese troops in 1950. He was forced to flee Tibet in 1959 following clashes with the Chinese Communists and now resides in India.

**DALAI LAMA (TENZIN
GYATSO)
(1935–)**

Deng Xiaoping became involved in Communist politics while on a study-work trip to France in 1920. He continued his revolutionary career after his return to China, joining the CCP in 1924, and rose to prominence as a military leader during the Long March and Chinese Civil War. Deng, appointed vice-premier in 1952, was a member of the Politburo Standing Committee and Party General Secretary from 1956. He headed the Anti-Rightist campaign which marked the end of the Hundred Flowers movement and campaigned strongly on Mao's behalf during the Great Leap Forward (GLF). From late 1960 onwards, Deng questioned the policies of the GLF and, alongside Liu Shaoqi, was instrumental in ensuring more pragmatic economic policies were followed after 1961. As 'China's Number Two Khrushchev,' Deng was purged during the Cultural Revolution. He and his family suffered many hardships as a result. Deng was nevertheless allowed to keep his party membership and was rehabilitated in 1973. He returned to influence under Zhou Enlai, resuming his vice-premiership, but was again purged after Zhou's death in 1976. After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping again rose to political

**DENG, XIAOPING
(TENG HSIAO-P'ING)
(1904–1997)**

prominence; he was restored to his positions in July 1977 and by 1978 was a powerful figure within the Chinese Communist Party. In 1980, Deng replaced Hua Guofeng as premier and was considered the CCP's 'paramount leader' until his death. Under Deng's rule, China undertook an ambitious program of economic reforms that sought to balance a socialist political system with a market economy. Deng called this 'socialism with Chinese characteristics.' To those who condemned China's economic restructure and rapid growth, Deng quipped, 'to get rich is glorious' and 'socialism is not poverty.' Though many Chinese appreciated Deng's comparatively liberal policies, calls for further democratic political reform and popular discontent amongst students led to the suppression of protests at Tiananmen Square in June 1989. As paramount leader, Deng was keen to open up China to the world economically and diplomatically; he would, however, tolerate no political dissent.

DING, LING (1904–1986)

Ding was a leading feminist activist, renowned author and member of the CCP. Her most famous work was *The Diary of Miss Sophie*, one of the most important novels of the May Fourth era. After Ding and her husband were arrested and imprisoned under the Nationalists, she joined the CCP at Yan'an. Ding was criticised during the Rectification campaign of 1942. She continued to fall foul of the party after the founding of the People's Republic, being imprisoned for a time during the Anti-Rightist campaign (late 1950s) and denounced during the Cultural Revolution. Ding was rehabilitated in 1979.

DONALD, WILLIAM HENRY (1875–1946)

Donald, an Australian, was an adviser to Zhang Xueliang, Jiang Jieshi and Soong Meiling. A journalist who could not speak Chinese, Donald was respected by leading figures in the Nationalist government. He played a prominent role in negotiations during the Xi'an Incident. He fell from favour with the Jiang and Soong families after criticising corruption amongst the Nationalists.

DU, YUESHENG (TU YUEH-SHENG) (1887–1951)

'Big Ears' Du Yuesheng was boss of Shanghai's Green Gang criminal secret society. A friend of Jiang Jieshi with close ties to the GMD right, Du's men carried out much of the killing during the Shanghai Massacre of 1927. A drug baron, money launderer, pimp and protection racketeer, Du was one of the most powerful and feared men in Shanghai. He later developed other lucrative business interests and used his contacts to smuggle goods into Free China during the Japanese occupation. After the fall of the Nationalist regime in 1949, Du fled to Hong Kong, thereby escaping CCP repression.

FENG, YUXIANG (FENG YU-HSIANG) (1882–1948)

Feng, the 'Christian General,' was one of China's most powerful warlords. Known for baptising his troops with a fire hose, Feng was based in north-western Shaanxi province and around Beijing. He joined forces with the Nationalists against fellow warlords during the Northern Expeditions, but was later an intermittent ally who repeatedly rebelled against the Nanjing regime. Having made ties with the Soviet Union, Feng was aboard a Russian ship when it caught fire — he died as a result.

Vasilii Kostantinovich Blyukher, who went by the pseudonym Galen, was a Soviet military adviser sent to China by the Comintern. General Galen made important contributions to the success of Jiang Jieshi's early military campaigns. He was sent back to the Soviet Union in 1927, where he held a number of senior military posts before being killed during Stalin's Great Purge of the late 1930s.

**GALEN, VASILII
(1889-1938)**

Gao led a Communist guerrilla base in China's northwest during the 1930s and was the leading CCP official in Manchuria after the founding of the People's Republic. Gao rose to sixth position in the Party's Politburo ranking. He was purged in 1954 after forming too-close ties with the Soviet Union and plotting against Liu Shaoqi in a supposed 'anti-Party' alliance with Rao Shushi. Gao committed suicide in prison soon after his arrest.

**GAO, GANG (KAO KANG)
(1905-1954)**

A Red Army commander who participated in the Nanchang Uprising and the Long March, He Long was one of ten Communist generals appointed to the top rank of Marshall in 1955. Having been a member of the Politburo, vice-premier and vice-chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission, He fell from Mao's grace at the start of the Cultural Revolution. Denied medication, he died from medical neglect.

**HE, LONG (HO LUNG)
(1896-1969)**

A member of the CCP from 1926, He Zizhen married Mao Zedong at Jiangxi in 1928; she was his third wife and gave him six children (several of whom died or were lost at a young age.) He Zizhen was one of the few women to go on the Long March; during the march she had to give away a newborn child and was severely wounded. The marriage faltered at Yan'an, as Mao's wife became increasingly agitated and mentally unstable. She was sent to the USSR for treatment for schizophrenia in 1937 and returned in 1947. By then Mao had married Jiang Qing. He Zizhen spent the remainder of her life in Shanghai. Mao met with her once more late in life and was shocked by her physical and mental condition. The pair never formally divorced.

**HE, ZIZHEN
(HO TZU-CHEN)
(1909-1984)**

Hu was a leading Guomindang figure who headed the party's right faction. Accused of involvement in an anti-Jiang plot in 1926, Hu was exiled for a time to Russia. He later returned and was put in charge of the Nationalists' Legislative Yuan at Nanjing. After falling out with Jiang, Hu went into opposition and ceased to wield political influence.

**HU, HANMIN
(HU HAN-MIN)
(1879-1936)**

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Hua Guofeng was CCP Secretary of Mao's home county of Xiangtan in Hunan. Hua steadily rose through the party ranks during the 1960s and was appointed to the Politburo in 1973. He was seen as a friendly and capable party man who avoided factional struggles. Hua was designated as Mao's successor in 1975 and served as CCP chairman from 1976 to 1981. Given a note by Mao which read, 'With you in charge, I am at ease,' Hua pledged to follow 'whatever' Mao 'said' and 'did.' By 1978 Deng Xiaoping had regained influence in the CCP and Hua's career was on the wane; by 1981 he had lost his major positions and, while still serving on the Central Committee, was in virtual retirement.

**HUA, GUOFENG
(HUA KUO-FENG)
(1921-2008)**

**HU, SHI (HU SHIH)
(1891–1962)**

A significant figure in the New Culture movement, Hu Shi popularised the use of vernacular language (*baihua*) in literature. Hu was a writer, teacher, diplomat and philosopher. As a young man he studied in the United States under John Dewey. In 1917, he returned to China and was appointed a professor of philosophy at Beijing University. Hu wrote many influential journal articles which were avidly read by the May Fourth generation. From 1938 to 1942, Hu served as the Nationalist ambassador to the US. From 1946 to 1949, he was chancellor of Beijing University. Once the Communists came to power, Hu returned to the US and later lived in Taiwan.

**HURLEY, PATRICK
(1883–1963)**

General Hurley, US presidential envoy, was sent to Yan'an and Chongqing to broker a peace agreement between the Communists and Nationalists in 1944–45. A brash man who lacked a sophisticated understanding of Chinese politics, Hurley blamed his failure on pro-Communist figures in the US State Department.

**JIANG, JIESHI
(CHIANG KAI-SHEK)
(1887–1975)**



After the death of Sun Yixian, Jiang Jieshi came to be the political leader of the Guomindang. Jiang had been Sun's top military adviser and, after receiving training in the Soviet Union, headed the Nationalists' Huangpu Military Academy. He led the Northern Expedition to unite China under Nationalist rule and brought the United Front with the CCP to a bloody end with the Shanghai Massacre of 1927. Jiang had ties to the powerful Shanghai business world as well as its organised criminal syndicates, which he used to his advantage. Outmanoeuvring the leaders of rival factions in the GMD, Jiang consolidated his leadership after 1928 and was recognised as China's ruler for the next twenty years. He was married three times. His first union was an arranged marriage which he did not like. He then married Chen Jieru and, later, Soong Meiling. During his rule, Jiang faced opposition from the Communists – whom he ruthlessly suppressed – and was dealt a huge blow after the Japanese invasion in 1937. Jiang's government made many important modernisations but was plagued by corruption and economic mismanagement. After WWII, Jiang's forces fell into a bitter civil war with the Chinese Communists. In 1949, Jiang fled China for Taiwan, where he ruled until his death. Jiang has often been known in the West as Chiang Kai-shek.

**JIANG, QING
(CHIANG CH'ING)
(1914–1991)**

Born Li Yunhe (and for a time known as Lan Ping), Jiang Qing was a Shanghai actress who came to assume great influence in the CCP. Jiang came to Yan'an in August 1937 and began a relationship with Mao; she became his fourth wife in November 1938 and they had one daughter, Li Na. The Party leadership agreed to the marriage on the condition that Jiang stay out of politics. This arrangement lasted until the early 1960s when Mao encouraged his wife to play a greater public and political role, particularly in investigating popular culture and the creative arts. Jiang went on to be one of the driving forces behind the extreme radicalism of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With fellow radicals Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wen yuan and Wang Hongwen, Jiang encouraged the Red Guard movement and sat on a number of important bodies, such as the Central Cultural Revolution

Committee. Jiang, the patron of the eight revolutionary model operas, imposed strict censorship over the arts during the 1960s. After Mao's death in 1976, Jiang and the other Gang of Four members were arrested and tried; her initial death sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. Jiang committed suicide in her cell in 1991. She continues to be vilified as the 'White-Boned Demon' in the official CCP press.

Kang joined the CCP in 1925. Head of the Communist secret police from the early 1930s, he oversaw the interrogations and purges of the Yan'an Rectification campaign in the early 1940s. Kang joined the Politburo in 1935 and in the 1950s strongly supported the Great Leap Forward. Kang, a long-time friend of Jiang Qing, returned to prominence during the Cultural Revolution as a staunch Maoist. His agents may have played a role in encouraging student radicalism and his wife met with Nie Yuanzi in May 1966. Kang sat on the Central Cultural Revolution Committee and by 1973 was ranked fifth in the Politburo hierarchy. He died of bladder cancer in 1975 and was posthumously expelled from the party for his role in the Cultural Revolution.

**KANG, SHENG
(K'ANG SHENG)
(1898-1975)**

Khrushchev succeeded Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union and headed the Soviet Communist Party from 1953 until 1964. Khrushchev worked his way up from being a humble worker to high administrative party positions, particularly in the Ukraine, under the patronage of the influential Stalinist Lazar Kaganovich. During World War II, Khrushchev served as a political commissar. Aligning himself with a number of other leading Communists against KGB chief Beria, Khrushchev secured the leadership of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. At the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, he made a shock denunciation of Stalin's crimes and thereafter carried out a partial de-Stalinisation program. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Khrushchev sought closer ties with the United States, thereby bringing the Soviet Union into disrepute with Mao and the CCP (already unhappy with Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin and his disdain for the Great Leap Forward). Relations between Mao and Khrushchev became increasingly strained in the coming years, culminating in the severing of formal diplomatic relations by 1964. By the mid-1960s, rivals in the Soviet Communist leadership had also grown disgruntled with Khrushchev's erratic ways, lacklustre policies and his handling of diplomatic crises such as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. In October 1964, he was ousted from power by Leonid Brezhnev. Maintaining his position on the Central Committee until 1966 and his Party membership for the remainder of his life, after 1966 Khrushchev enjoyed a comfortable retirement. He died of a heart attack.

**KHRUSHCHEV, NIKITA
(1894-1971)**



H.H. Kung served as finance minister and prime minister in the Nationalist government. A Shanghai banker with close ties to the Nationalist elite through his marriage to Ailing Soong (sister to the wives of Jiang Jieshi and Sun Yixian), Kung's fiscal policies led to severe inflation by the 1940s.

**KUNG, XIANGXI (K'UNG
HSIANG-HSI 'H.H. KUNG')
(1881-1967)**

LEI, FENG (1939–1962)

Lei was celebrated as a hero of socialist virtue during the Socialist Education movement and into the Cultural Revolution. Hailing from a poor peasant background, Lei suffered as a young child but received many opportunities following the founding of the People's Republic. He eventually joined the PLA as a truck driver. Lei was an extremely hard-working and helpful man who loved the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. After his accidental death in 1962, the PLA published Lei Feng's diary as a model for devoted Maoists. All Chinese were urged to 'Learn from Lei Feng' and be 'Chairman Mao's good fighters.' It has been suggested that Lei's diary was a PLA propagandist invention.

**LI, DAZHAO (LI TA-CHAO)
(1888–1927)**

Born to a peasant family, Li was keenly interested in politics from a young age. Intellectually gifted, he did well at school and undertook tertiary study in Japan from 1913 to 1917 before returning to China in 1918. Li became head librarian at Beijing University and taught history; he conducted Marxist reading circles and contributed radical articles to the journal *New Youth*. Mao Zedong served as Li's assistant at the library. While greatly influenced by Marxist thought, Li was also inspired by nationalist ideals and anarchism. He argued throughout his revolutionary career that the peasantry would need to play a central role if the revolutionary movement was to succeed in China. Li was one of the leading figures in the May Fourth movement and, with Chen Duxiu, was named co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921. Li's championing of the peasantry led to fierce debates with Chen, a more orthodox Marxist. As the United Front brought the CCP and GMD closer together, Li was elected to the Nationalist Central Executive Committee in 1924. During the White Terror of April 1927, Li was captured during a raid on the Soviet embassy in Beijing and was executed shortly after.

LI, DE

See Otto Braun.

**LI, LISAN (LI LI-SAN)
(1899–1967)**

Li unofficially headed the CCP after Qu Qiubai was dismissed as general-secretary in July 1928 (Li was propaganda chief while Xiang Zhongfa was the new general secretary). Li opposed Mao's rural guerrilla strategies at Jiangxi and instead insisted on campaigns directed at urban areas – a policy that came to be called the 'Li Lisan Line.' The failure of Li's 'line' led to his dismissal, at Stalin's urging, in late 1930. Li spent the next fifteen years in the Soviet Union. He returned after the founding of the People's Republic and for a time served as minister of labour. Li was tortured by Red Guards and committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution.

**LI, YUANHONG
(LI YUAN-HUNG)
(1864–1928)**

A high-ranking New Army officer of the Wuhan garrison, Li was put in charge of the Double Tenth uprising of 1911. In the republic, Li served as Yuan Shikai's vice-president and held the presidency in his own right from 1916–17 and 1922–23. Li's Beijing government struggled to impose its rule across the nation due to upheavals amongst regional warlords.

Mao Zedong's personal physician from the 1950s until his death, Dr Li later moved to the United States where he wrote a revealing biography of the Chairman's personal life.

**LI, ZHISUI (LI CHIH-SUI)
(1919–1995)**

Student and protégé of Kang Youwei, Liang was one of the prominent reformers behind the Hundred Days of Reform. He escaped the subsequent crackdown.

**LIANG, QICHAO (LIANG
CH'I-CH'AO) (1873–1929)**

Liao was a leading figure in the Guomindang left faction and a close ally of Wang Jingwei. He served as Sun Yixian's finance minister at Guangzhou. After Sun's death, Liao was considered one of the GMD top leaders alongside Hu Hanmin and Wang. Liao was assassinated in 1925, reportedly on the orders of right GMD leaders.

**LIAO, ZHONGKAI (LIAO
CHUNG-K'AI) (1877–1925)**

A member of the CCP from 1925, Lin was a veteran of the Long March and a brilliant military commander. During the Civil War, he led successful campaigns against the Nationalists in Manchuria and northern China; after 1949, he was made one of the ten PLA Marshalls. A staunch Maoist, Lin replaced Peng Dehuai as defence minister in 1959. Lin compiled the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* ('Little Red Book') and encouraged the 'Learn from the PLA' and 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaigns. Lin rose to extraordinary prominence during the Cultural Revolution and was a driving force behind the escalation of the Mao Cult. Such was Lin's status that he was designated Mao's 'closest comrade' and chosen successor. After 1970, however, he fell from favour after Mao had misgivings about the power vested in military officials. Lin died in a plane crash while fleeing to the Soviet Union following an ill-fated coup attempt by his son, 'Tiger' Lin Ligu, in 1971.

**LIN, BIAO (LIN PIAO)
(1907–1971)**



Liu, a prominent commander in the Red Army, backed Mao's leadership at Zunyi and played an important role in a number of Long March battles such as Luding Bridge. Popular legend has it that Liu secured safe passage for the Communists through Lolo land by sharing a drink of chicken's blood with a Yi chieftain. Called the 'One-eyed Dragon' on account of a war wound, Liu commanded PLA forces against the Japanese and Nationalists during the 1940s. He was made a Marshall in 1955. Publicly inactive from the mid-1960s, Liu remained a nominal member of the Politburo. He was for the most part untouched by the campaigns of the Cultural Revolution.

**LIU, BOCHENG (LIU
PO-CH'ENG) (1892–1986)**

A member of the CCP from 1921, Liu studied in the Soviet Union and later worked as a labour activist in China. A military commissar during the Long March and Civil War, Liu was a close ally of Mao Zedong from the Yan'an days. He would often give lectures on Maoist revolutionary theory during the Rectification campaigns. After 1949, Liu was ranked second in the Politburo after Mao; he became president of the PRC in 1959. Though he was expected to be Mao's successor, Liu fell out of favour with Mao during the post-GLF recovery period. Arguably the main target of the Cultural Revolution, he was

**LIU, SHAOQI (LIU
SHAO-CH'I) (1898–1969)**

removed from his positions in 1967 and expelled from the party in 1969. Liu died from mistreatment in November of the same year. He was officially rehabilitated in 1980.

**LU, XUN (LU HSUN)
(1881–1936)**

One of the great writers and thinkers of the New Culture movement and a prominent activist in the May Fourth movement, Lu taught at Beijing University under Cai Yuanpei. He was renowned for his lively, critical short stories written in vernacular Chinese. His acclaimed stories include *Diary of a Madman* and *The True Story of Ah Q*. Lu articulated the emotional distress of young Chinese and their disillusionment with Confucian values. He resigned from his university position in 1927 in protest at Jiang Jieshi's repression of radical students. Lu spent the rest of his life in Shanghai where he campaigned against imperialism and fascism and continued his writing.

**LUO, RUIQING (LO
JUI-CHING) (1906–1978)**

Head of security for Mao after 1949, General Luo was made chief of the PLA general staff in 1959. Although Mao said he always felt safe in Luo's company, the general's criticism of Lin Biao's efforts to indoctrinate PLA members with Mao Zedong Thought after the mid-1960s led to his demise. He was dismissed from his position in 1965 and suffered terribly during the Cultural Revolution. Luo broke both his legs after leaping from a high window to escape persecution. He continued to be struggled against despite his injuries and was imprisoned. Luo was rehabilitated after Mao's death.

**MAO, ZEDONG (MAO
TSE-TUNG) (1893–1976)**



Born to a successful Hunanese peasant family, Mao Zedong harboured greater ambitions than farming. Mao's father agreed to send his eldest son to school so that he could assist in the family business. Mao, however, rebelled against the tyranny of his father and chose to continue his studies rather than return to the farm. He also left behind a wife from an arranged marriage (made when he was fourteen and she was twenty). Mao lived in the Hunanese capital of Changsha from 1911 to 1918 while he considered a range of different studies; he eventually trained to be a teacher. Mao also served as a soldier in the Republican army for six months in 1911. While at Changsha, Mao read voraciously – both the Chinese classics and the leading Western political and philosophical works of the day. He formed study circles as well as a group promoting the benefits of rigorous physical exercise. After completing his studies, Mao moved to Beijing where he worked as a library assistant under Li Dazhao. Mao became involved in radical political discussion groups and was particularly taken with anarchism and Marxism. His lowly position and poor pay led Mao to return home to Hunan by the end of the year. While working as a primary school teacher, Mao published radical journals such as the *Xiang River Review*. Mao wrote articles in support of women's rights, as well as reviews of various political philosophies and commentaries on current issues. In early 1921, Mao married Yang Kaihui, the daughter of his philosophy teacher. In July that year, he attended the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai as the Hunan representative. Mao returned to Hunan and worked as a Communist labour organiser, encouraging unions and revolutionary agitation amongst local workers and students. He showed talent as a strike organiser. By 1923, Mao

had been elected to one of the nine seats on the CCP Central Committee. With the formation of the United Front in the same year, Mao, like many Communists, was given positions within GMD organisations. Mao held an alternative (non-voting) seat on the GMD Central Executive Committee and headed the Farmers' Movement Training Institute – a school for rural activists. In early 1927, he wrote a controversial assessment of the viability of peasant-based revolution: *Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. After a strike he was leading was suppressed by the governing Hunan warlord in 1925, Mao moved south to Guangzhou and was appointed secretary of the GMD Propaganda Department. After the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927, Mao led a band of Communist guerrillas in the Autumn Harvest Uprising in Hunan. Unsuccessful, Mao and his surviving followers sought refuge in the Jinggangshan region. Joined by Zhu De, Mao built up his band of Communist fighters and relocated to Ruijin in Jiangxi province where a Soviet (community) was established in 1929. Mao developed his revolutionary guerrilla theories further and, in November 1931, was appointed chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet. Leadership of the party was at this time in the hands of the Comintern-backed Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks. Mao also married He Zizhen during the Jiangxi period (his first wife was killed by Nationalist troops in 1930.) Jiang Jieshi's campaigns to encircle and exterminate Communist bases led to the Long March of 1934–35. During the Long March, at Zunyi in January 1935, Mao criticised the policies and tactics of the party leadership. From this time on, he steadily increased his sway over the party. Led by Mao, the survivors of the Long March founded a new Soviet at Yan'an in remote Shaanxi. As at Jiangxi, progressive social and economic policies were carried out and energetic military discipline was enforced. While at Yan'an, Mao further consolidated his position as Communist leader and theoretician through the Rectification campaigns. In 1939, Mao married Jiang Qing, a radical Shanghai actress, while He Zizhen was sent to the Soviet Union for medical and psychiatric treatment. The Yan'an Soviet grew considerably during the 1940s. After WWII, the Communist Red Army proved more than a match for the better-equipped but disenchanted Nationalist Army. Mao's daring tactics played an important role in the Communists' victory in the Civil War. In October 1949, Mao founded the People's Republic of China. Later that year he visited Moscow (his first overseas trip). Under the new regime, Mao was president of China (head of state) and chairman of the CCP. His policies and political whims profoundly shaped the People's Republic. Mao was largely responsible for, or played a key role in, many of the tumultuous campaigns and important events of the 1950s: the Korean War, Thought Reform, the Anti campaigns, the Gao Gang affair, the 1955 High Tide in collectivisation, the Hundred Flowers movement and the Anti-Rightist campaign. In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward – a bold series of social and economic policies. These ended in disaster and terrible famine. After first purging those who criticised his policies after the Lushan Plenum of 1959, most notably Marshall Peng Dehuai, Mao handed over the presidency of the PRC to Liu Shaoqi. The policies of the Communist leadership in the years following the Great Leap Forward were not to Mao's liking; party corruption and the degeneration of socialist values were also a concern. In 1966, Mao therefore launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and others,

Mao purged the Communist Party and plunged China into what is often called the Ten Lost Years. From this time until his death in 1976, Chairman Mao Zedong was deemed to be the source of all revolutionary wisdom and leadership in China. After his death, the radical Gang of Four was arrested and Deng Xiaoping gained leadership of the party. According to the official Chinese Communist assessment of the Chairman, Mao was seventy per cent right and thirty per cent wrong. He had failings, but was ultimately a great revolutionary. For others, he ranks among one of the most tyrannical figures of the twentieth century.

**MARING, HENDRICUS
(1883–1942)**

Hendricus Sneevliet, known as by his pseudonym Maring, was a Dutch Communist who served as a Comintern operative in China. Maring had been involved in trade union radicalism as a youth in Holland and later in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). In 1916, he joined the Communist Party of Holland. Maring attended the second congress of the Comintern in 1920 and thereby gained work as an operative in China. Even though many of his Chinese comrades found him an overbearing and disagreeable man, Maring organised the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921. He returned to Holland in the mid-1920s and founded his own revolutionary socialist party, which made ties with Trotskyite groups. In the 1930s, his party was active in labour agitation and strike movements. After the Nazi invasion of Holland during WWII, Maring led a resistance organisation. He was uncovered, arrested and executed by the Germans in April 1942.

**MARSHALL, GEORGE
(1880–1959)**

Marshall, President Truman's chief of staff, came to China at the end of WWII to mediate between Jiang Jieshi and Mao Zedong. Marshall brought both leaders together at Chongqing to draft terms of cooperation to avoid civil war. While a truce was made in the short term, his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. Marshall later served as US Secretary of State.

**NIE, YUANZI (NIE
YUAN-TZU) (1921–)**

Nie was a lecturer in philosophy at Beijing University and the secretary of her department's CCP branch. On 24 May 1966, Nie put up the big character poster 'What are You Up To in the Cultural Revolution?' which attacked the revolutionary credentials of Beijing University's chancellor, Lu Ping. Nie's poster radicalised students and the Red Guard movement, particularly after Mao had it published in the national press. Nie went on to be an influential student radical and a member of the CCP Central Committee at the Ninth Party Congress of 1969. Later she lost influence and was made to perform menial work at Beijing University. For her role in the Cultural Revolution Nie was sentenced to seventeen years in prison in 1983.

**PENG, DEHUI (P'ENG
TE-HUI) (1898–1974)**

A veteran of the Long March, Peng was a Red Army general who served as deputy commander of the Eight Route Army during the Sino-Japanese War and Civil War. Peng commanded Chinese forces in the Korean War after Lin Biao refused the post. As minister of defence and Politburo member, Peng readily spoke his mind; after criticising the widespread hunger and unrealistic policies of the Great Leap Forward at the Lushan Plenum of 1959, he was dismissed and replaced by Lin Biao. Peng suffered terribly during the Cultural

Revolution. He was purged from the CCP in December 1966 and beaten more than 130 times by Red Guards. He died from maltreatment in a prison hospital in November 1974. Peng was rehabilitated posthumously in 1978.

A member of the CCP from 1926, Peng worked alongside Liu Shaoqi as an underground labour agitator. After 1949, he wielded great influence as mayor and head of the party organisation in Beijing. Peng also served on the Politburo. In 1965, he led a five-man investigative group to examine the cultural, ideological and political implications of Wu Han's play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Peng and his group subsequently released the February Outline Report which ruled that the Wu Han matter was largely a literary debate. Peng thereafter became a major target of the Cultural Revolution and was purged in May 1966. He spent the next decade in prison. Peng was rehabilitated in December 1978 and went on to hold a number of high-ranking positions under Deng Xiaoping.

PENG, ZHEN (P'ENG CHEN) (1902-1997)

Qiu was a revolutionary feminist who campaigned against the Qing and the mistreatment of Chinese women. She escaped her arranged marriage by fleeing to Japan, where she spent time discussing revolutionary ideas. Qiu later returned to China and established a modern school for girls. She was executed for her role in an abortive anti-Qing uprising in Zhejiang province.

QIU, JIN (CH'IU CHIN) (1875-1907)

Qu, a Chinese Communist, spent much of the early 1920s receiving training and education in the Soviet Union. Known for his keen interest in Marxist theory and literature, Qu was general secretary of the CCP from August 1927 to June 1928. Replacing Chen Duxiu, Qu initiated a disastrous series of military campaigns against urban centres. Accused of 'left deviationism' at the Sixth Congress of the CCP, held in Moscow in 1928, he lost the leadership of the CCP to Xiang Zhongfa and Li Lisan. Due to illness, Qu was left at Jiangxi while the main CCP contingent began the Long March; he was captured and executed by the GMD in 1935.

QU, QIUBAI (CH'U CH'IU-PAI) (1899-1935)

A CCP member from the mid-1920s, Rao was appointed director of the Organisation Department of the Communist Central Committee in 1952. Along with Gao Gang, he was purged in 1954 for alleged involvement in an anti-Party conspiracy. Rao died in prison.

RAO, SHUSHI (JAO SHU-SHIH) (1903-1975)

A leading figure in the Guomindang, Song was instrumental in securing a sizeable victory for the GMD in the 1913 parliamentary elections and in preparing the party for modern republican politics. A determined critic of Yuan Shikai, Song was assassinated before he was able to assume a leadership role in the Chinese parliament.

SONG, JIAOREN (SUNG CHIAO-JEN) (1882-1913)

Ailing was the eldest of the three Soong sisters. Married to Shanghai financier H.H. Kung, she was known for her love of wealth. Ailing arranged the marriage between her sister Meiling and Jiang Jieshi.

SOONG, AILING (SUNG AI-LING) (1890-1973)

**SOONG, MEILING (SUNG
MEI-LING) (1897–2003)**

The youngest Soong sister, Meiling rose to prominence as the wife and adviser of Jiang Jieshi. Educated in the United States, Soong Meiling became one of the main spokespersons for Nationalist China. She was very active in the domestic war effort, organising and sponsoring women's associations, collections for soldiers and refugee relief. A close friend of Australian adviser W.H. Donald, Madam Jiang was popular with the Western media, especially in the United States.

**SOONG, QINGLING
(SUNG CH'ING-LING)
(1893–1981)**

Qingling, the middle Soong sister, was the wife of Sun Yixian. After her husband's death, Soong Qingling remained politically active with the Left GMD and encouraged the united front of Nationalists and Communists. After 1949, she remained in the People's Republic and held a number of high government positions; she was a leading non-Communist delegate and vice-chairperson to the National People's Congress of the PRC.

**SOONG, ZIWEN ('T.V.
SOONG'; SUNG TZU-WEN)
(1894–1971)**

Son of Charlie Soong and brother to Ailing, Qingling and Meiling, T.V. Soong was an extremely successful businessman who was educated in the US. His keen understanding of economics and the political connections of his family led to a number of high appointments in the Nationalist government including foreign minister, finance minister and prime minister. T.V. Soong was once said to have been the richest man in the world.

**STALIN, JOSEF
(1879–1953)**



Born Josef Dzhugashvili, Stalin was a Georgian who served as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1953. Stalin (a pseudonym meaning 'man of steel'), had served as commissar of nationalities under the Communist government which came to power in the October Revolution of 1917. Stalin steadily gained influence within the party by taking on seemingly innocuous administrative positions; he used these to further his own ambitions after the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924. By the late 1920s, Stalin had won out against his rivals, such as Trotsky, to secure leadership of the Communist Party. From 1928, Stalin launched a number of ambitious modernisation programs, Five-Year Plans, which put the Soviet Union through a crash course in mass industrialisation and agricultural collectivisation. While the Plans created opportunities for some, others suffered terribly as a result. Stalin turned on anyone he suspected of disloyalty; he ran a series of purges in the 1930s and 1940s which led to the imprisonment or death of almost all the 'Old Bolsheviks.' Stalin's influence in China was significant – through the Comintern, he held great sway amongst his Chinese comrades. He actively backed a number of Chinese Communist leaders, such as Qui Qiubai, Li Lisan and the Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks, but his influence lessened following Mao's rise to power during the Long March. Stalin nevertheless continued to exercise clout in China: he intervened in the Xi'an Incident to secure the release of Jiang Jieshi and maintained relations with the Nationalist government until 1949. Stalin and Mao brought their respective nations close together after the founding of the People's Republic. Mao visited Stalin in 1949 to negotiate a treaty of economic and military benefit to the new Chinese Communist state. After Stalin's death his successor, Khrushchev, denounced his cult of personality. The Chinese,

however, maintained that the Man of Steel was a revolutionary who had both successes and failings. He was not condemned outright in China.

General 'Vinegar' Joe Stilwell served as US adviser to the Nationalist government during WWII. He was commander-in-chief of American forces in the China-Burma-India region. Upon being made liaison officer between President Roosevelt and Generalissimo Jiang, Stilwell found himself increasingly in conflict with the Nationalist high command, particularly Jiang (who did not appreciate his plain speaking). Such was the animosity between the two that Stilwell was withdrawn to the US and replaced by General Wedemeyer in 1944.

**STILWELL, JOSEPH
(1883–1946)**

Sun Yixian was one of the most prominent revolutionary politicians of the late Qing and early republican periods. A doctor of medicine, Sun became involved in anti-Qing revolutionary groups in Japan, Hong Kong and amongst émigré Chinese communities. Sun formed the Revive China Society in 1894 and in 1905 united a number of revolutionary groups into the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance). Inspired by Sun's revolutionary ideology of the Three Principles – Nationalism, Democracy and People's Livelihood – the Revive China Society and Tongmenghui sponsored a number of unsuccessful uprisings against the Qing. Such was Sun's anti-Manchu notoriety that he was forced to spend a great deal of his time in exile overseas. The Wuhan uprising of 1911, which eventually brought down the Qing, was inspired by Sun's ideology and he was invited to be provisional president of the Republic. He stepped down in favour of Yuan Shikai in February 1912 and served as minister of railways. Yuan's repression of the GMD caused Sun to flee China again in late 1913. After Yuan's death, Sun returned to China and from 1917 led a number of military governments at Guangzhou, from where he hoped to launch a campaign to unite China. At first allied with mixed success with a number of warlords, including the Hakka General Chen Jiongming, Sun's fortunes improved once he made contact with the Soviet Comintern. Under the guidance of Soviet agents Joffe, Maring and Borodin, Sun Yixian's Guomindang joined a united front with the CCP and Comintern. In return, the Comintern provided funding and military and organisational advice. During talks at Beijing with northern warlords in 1924, Sun fell ill and was diagnosed with liver cancer. The much-lauded Father of the Republic died a few months later in March 1925.

**SUN, YIXIAN (SUN
YAT-SEN) (1866–1925)**



Married to Liu Shaoqi, Wang was a member of the CCP Central Committee General Office (administrative office). During the Socialist Education movement, Wang led a covert investigation into cadre corruption in the countryside and headed a work team sent to calm Red Guards during the early phase of the Cultural Revolution. She subsequently suffered terribly at the hands of Red Guards and was subjected to many struggle sessions and imprisonment. Wang was released from prison and rehabilitated in 1978. She spent the rest of her life working for mothers' charities, supporting campaigns against rural poverty and serving as vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Liu Shaoqi's ashes were returned to her in May 1980.

**WANG, GUANGMEI
(WANG KUANG-MEI)
(1921–2006)**

**WANG, HONGWEN
(WANG HUNG-WEN)
(1932–1992)**

Wang, a former cotton mill security guard and member of the Gang of Four, was a radical Shanghai labour organiser during the 'January Storm' of the Cultural Revolution. He was appointed to the Central Committee in 1969 and seemed to be groomed as Mao's successor during the early 1970s. Wang's involvement in the Gang of Four's factionalism led to his fall from Mao's favour, although he had risen to the position of vice-chairman of the CCP by 1976. Along with other Gang members, Wang was arrested and imprisoned for life after the death of Mao. He died in prison of liver disease.

**WANG, JIAXIANG
(WANG CHIA-HSIANG)
(1906–1974)**

A member of the CCP Politburo, Wang supported the Moscow-backed Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks in the early 1930s. During the Long March, Wang switched allegiance, backing Mao at the Zunyi Conference. Alongside Mao and Zhou Enlai, Wang directed the military commission which decided the tactics and route of the Long March after Zunyi. He served as vice-foreign minister after 1949. Purged during the Cultural Revolution, Wang was cleared to return to politics after the Tenth Party Congress of 1973.

**WANG, JINGWEI (WANG
CHING-WEI) (1883–1944)**

Wang became a member of the Tongmenghui during his time as a student in Japan; he went on to become a leading figure in the Guomindang and a close associate of Sun Yixian. Wang held a number of high positions in the Nationalist government and was the most influential of the left-faction leaders after Sun's death. He led the Wuhan GMD government in opposition to Jiang during the later phase of the Northern Expedition. Wang lost out to Jiang in the struggle for leadership of the GMD but retained strong support within the party. In 1938, he broke with Nanjing and headed a collaborationist government which cooperated with the Japanese.

**WANG, MING
(1904–1974)**

Leader of the Moscow-backed Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks (or Returned Students' Clique), Wang led the CCP after January 1931. In 1937, he sought to regain influence over the party at Yan'an, but Mao was able to secure his own leadership through the Rectification campaigns. In 1945, Wang lost his seat on the Politburo but remained a member of the CCP until 1956, after which time he lived in exile in the Soviet Union.

WU, HAN (1909–1969)

A historian of the Ming era, Wu was vice-mayor of Beijing in the early-to-mid-1960s and a close associate of Peng Zhen. Wu's play, *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, was taken as an allegorical criticism of Mao's purge of Peng Dehuai. The critique of Wu's play by Yao Wenyan was one of the opening acts in the Cultural Revolution. Subjected to countless denunciations and struggle sessions, Wu died in prison a physically and emotionally broken man.

**WU, PEIFU (WU P'EI-FU)
(1874–1939)**

Known as the Philosopher General, Wu was the most powerful warlord in central China during the 1920s. He was defeated by the Nationalist Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition.

Mao's second wife, Yang, bore him three sons: Anying, Anqing and Anlong. Mao met Yang through her father, who was his philosophy teacher. Yang was captured by the Nationalists in late 1930 and executed after she refused to reveal information on the whereabouts of her husband. Late in life, Mao looked back on his time with Yang fondly, dedicating a number of poems to her.

**YANG, KAIHUI (YANG
K'AI-HUI) (1901-1930)**

A radical Shanghai writer, Yao was a member of the Gang of Four. He came to prominence in the Cultural Revolution after his scathing polemical review of Wu Han's *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. He was the youngest member of the Cultural Revolution Small Group and was appointed to the CCP Politburo in 1969. Arrested along with the other members of the Gang of Four after Mao's death, Yao was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment in 1981.

**YAO, WENYUAN (YAO
WEN-YUAN) (1931-2005)**

Commander of the Qing's North China New Army, General Yuan showed his loyalty to Dowager Empress Cixi by informing her of her nephew's alleged plan to carry out her house arrest during the Hundred Days of Reform. During the 1911 Revolution, Yuan initially led his forces against the Republican rebels but then turned on the Qing once the Republicans offered him the presidency. Yuan effectively united China, implemented a range of reforms and was respected by Western powers. An ambitious man who preferred authority to democratic sentiment, Yuan undercut the republican parliament and suppressed his critics. His rule came undone after Japan imposed its Twenty-One Demands in 1915 and Yuan claimed the Imperial throne in 1916. His reign as emperor was opposed by regional governors and leading generals, who forced him to rule only as president only. He died a few months later of liver disease.

**YUAN, SHIKAI (YUAN
SHIH-K'AI) (1859-1916)**



A member of the CCP from 1938, Zhang was chief editor of the Shanghai Communist newspaper *Liberation Daily* from 1951 and secretary of the Shanghai CCP propaganda department from 1963. He became a close ally of Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution and was a member of the Gang of Four. Zhang, deputy head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, was prominent in encouraging the Shanghai Commune. He was elected to the Politburo in 1969 and Politburo Standing Committee in 1973. Zhang's radical polemics fuelled the Cultural Revolution. He was arrested with fellow Gang of Four members after Mao's death and sentenced to death; the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He refused to speak at his public trial.

**ZHANG, CHUNQIAO
(CHANG CH'UN-CHIAO)
(1917-2005)**

A student revolutionary during the May Fourth movement and founding member of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhang was a member of the Central Committee from 1921 and the Politburo from 1925. He founded and led the E-Yu-Wan Soviet. Zhang's Fourth Front Army and Mao's First Front Army met up during the Long March but Zhang was not keen on allowing Mao to lead the party. He took his men into Sichuan while Mao headed to Shaanxi. Zhang lost a great many men and was unsuccessful in his

**ZHANG, GUOTAO (CHANG
KUO-T'AO) (1897-1979)**

attempt to establish a new Red base. He later joined Mao at Yan'an. By 1937, Zhang held no positions in the party hierarchy so he left Yan'an and defected to the Nationalists. He eventually moved to Canada.

**ZHANG, XUELIANG
(CHANG HSUEH-LIANG)
(1900–2001)**

Son of a powerful Manchurian warlord – the Old Marshall – Zhang assumed his father's authority after his death and came to be known as the Young Marshall. A reformed opium addict and an international playboy in his youth, Zhang was a competent military commander held in high regard by his men. He pledged loyalty to Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government. Zhang and his army were forced from Manchuria by the Japanese in 1931. In 1935, his forces were garrisoned at Xi'an in the northern province of Shaanxi, ostensibly to wage war on the Communists at Yan'an. In December 1936, Zhang played a key role in the Xi'an Incident, in which Jiang Jieshi was arrested and pressured into a second United Front with the CCP. As a token of goodwill, Zhang returned to Nanjing with Jiang. He was thereupon taken into custody and spent nearly the rest of his life under house arrest. Taken to Taiwan after 1949, Zhang was released in 1991.

**ZHANG, ZUOLIN (CHANG
TSO-LIN) (1873–1928)**

Known as the Old Marshall and the Mukden Tiger, Zhang was warlord of Manchuria from 1916 to 1928; he also held considerable power over northern China during the warlord period. A staunch monarchist, Zhang remained loyal to Emperor Pu Yi and even tried to reinstate him on the throne in 1917. Under Zhang's administration, Manchuria developed into a prosperous centre for industries based on the region's rich natural resources. The Japanese, who had ambitions in Manchuria, engineered Zhang's death in 1928 by planting a bomb under his train as it ran along the Japanese-operated South Manchurian Railroad. After Zhang's death, his son, the Young Marshall (Zhang Xueliang), assumed his father's power.

**ZHOU, ENLAI (CHOU
EN-LAI) (1898–1976)**



A student radical during the May Fourth movement, in 1920 Zhou travelled to France where he participated in a student-worker exchange. He established a European branch of the CCP in 1922. Upon returning to China, Zhou served as political commissar at the Huangpu Military Academy and became a Communist labour organiser. He led the general strike which enabled the Nationalists to seize Shanghai in April 1927 with barely a struggle. Zhou just managed to escape the Shanghai Massacre. A member of the Politburo from 1927, Zhou initially backed the Comintern-endorsed CCP leaders (such as Wang Ming and Bo Gu). Zhou was chief political commissar of the Red Army after October 1932. He sided with Mao at the Zunyi meeting during the Long March. Zhou played an important role during talks with the Nationalists in the Yan'an period, such as during the Xi'an Incident and the Second United Front. After 1949, Zhou was premier of the People's Republic and prominent in foreign affairs. He was known for his keen political antennae, suave manner and willingness to work hard – these attributes allowed him to ride out the tumultuous campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. During the early 1970s, Zhou, assisted by his vice-premier Deng Xiaoping, began to implement his Four Modernisations reforms which would bring progress and economic stability. Stricken with cancer, Zhou died just a few months before Mao.

Zhu was Mao Zedong's chief military commander from the time of the Jiangxi Soviet. In his youth he was a minor warlord. Zhu later travelled to Europe where he met Zhou Enlai and became a committed Communist. He was one of the leaders of the 1927 Nanchang Uprising and joined with Mao at Jinggangshan in 1928. He was instrumental in drafting the Red Army's code of behaviour and was a master of mobile warfare. Under Mao, Zhu was commander-in-chief of the Red Army and a Marshall of the PLA after 1955. He held a seat on the Standing Committee of the Politburo. An elder statesman who had little active participation in politics under the People's Republic, Zhu was subject to mild rebuke during the Cultural Revolution but protected from further harassment on Mao's orders.

**ZHU, DE (CHU TE)
(1886–1976)**

A young anti-Qing revolutionary, Zou made a name for himself as the author of the fiercely anti-Manchu polemic *The Revolutionary Army*. He was arrested by Qing authorities and died in prison at the age of twenty-one.

**ZOU, RONG (TSOU
JUNG) (1885–1905)**

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