

## China: Cultural Reformation and Economic Transformation

*Question:* Was Mao Zedong responsible for the economic achievements of Chinese society after 1949 or did he hinder that development?

*Hypothesis:* Mao Zedong, through his erratic behavior and need to be hero-worshipped, misused his power to mobilize Chinese society, which in turn led to incalculable suffering and turmoil, and that China's economy developed in spite of, not because of, Mao's leadership.

### I. Chronological Periods of Chinese History in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- A. Establishment of People's Republic of China (1949–1950)
  - 1. Mao Zedong (1893–1976), Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)  
Chairman of the Central Government Council 1949–1959
  - 2. Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), Premier and Foreign Minister 1949–1976
  
- B. Pro-Soviet period (1950–1956)
  - 1. First Five-Year Plan, 1953–1957
  - 2. Agriculture
    - a. 1953: beginning of socialization of agriculture (cooperative farms)
    - b. 1955: Mao ordered collectivization
  - 3. Mobilization of Chinese society
    - a. Korean War
    - b. Destruction of four pests: sparrows, mice, mosquitos, and flies
  - 4. Land Reform
    - a. “struggle meetings”
    - b. landlord deaths estimated to be in hundreds of thousands
  - 5. Denunciation of “capitalist roaders”
  
- C. “Let a hundred flowers bloom” (1956–1957)
  - 1. Encouragement of criticism of the Party
  - 2. Ended when Mao published an article calling critics “enemies” and “rightists”
    - a. “downward transfer” of intellectuals and cadres to villages
    - b. end their “separation from the masses”
  - 3. Exhibited tensions in leadership
    - a. between value of “mental” versus “manual” labor
    - b. between value of “expertise” versus “redness”
  
- D. Great Leap Forward (1958–1961)
  - 1. Decentralization of industrialization
    - a. “battle for steel”
  - 2. Merging of collective farms into 24,000 communes
    - a. commune = 20,000 people or more

- b. members organized into production brigades and teams
- c. communes subdivided later in 74,000 smaller units
- d. ending of private plots and other personal possessions
- 3. Falsifying of production reports
- 4. Famine 1959–1961 = up to 30 million deaths
- 5. Khrushchev withdrew all 30,000 Soviet engineers and technicians (1960)
- 6. “Better red than expert”

#### E. Relaxed Controls and Shifting Emphasis (1961–1966)

- 1. Liu Shaoqi (1898?–1969), Chairman of the Central Government Council 1959–68
- 2. Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), Party general secretary
- 3. Private plots restored (1962)

#### F. Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)

- 1. Mao’s attack on the Party
- 2. Development of cult of personality
  - a. Little Red Book
- 3. Red Guards (est. 13 million)
  - a. September 1966 – school closed for the year
  - b. October 1966 – massive demonstration in Tiananmen Square
  - c. rival group: Rebels (“Red Guards of Mao Zedong Thought”)
- 4. Mao urged destruction of “four olds”: ideas, culture, customs, habits
- 5. Jiang Qing (1914–1991) controlled arts, media, and education
- 6. GNP = 40% higher in 1970 than in 1965
- 7. Role of Lin Biao (1908–1971), Defense Minister 1959–1971 (coup plot?)
- 8. The Turn to Normalizing Relations with the U.S., 1972
- 9. Role of Zhou Enlai(dies January 8, 1976)
- 10. Mao dies, September 9, 1976

#### G. China after Mao (1976–2000)

- 1. Deng Xiaoping becomes most powerful political figure
  - a. ousts “Gang of Four” — Jiang Qing arrested October 1976
  - b. proteges become premiers and Party chairmen:
    - Hua Guofeng (1920– ), Premier and Party Chairman 1976–1980
    - Zhao Ziyang (1919– ), Premier 1980–1987
    - Li Peng (1928– ), Premier 1988–1998
- 2. Central control of economy relaxed
  - a. communes dismantled
  - b. shift toward market economy in countryside
- 3. Rehabilitation of mental labor
- 4. Party continues to suppress dissent
  - a. Tiananmen Square, May 1989
  - b. restraint of “leftist extremists”

## II. Evaluating the Pluses and Minuses of Mao Zedong’s Leadership