

IGCSE History

Conflict Crisis and Change: China 1911-1989

Revision Notes

Chapter 1: China 1918-34

During this period two main parties emerged that were to have a major influence on developments in China in the years after 1934 - the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Kuomintang

This was the People's National Party.

Origins

This had been set up in 1912 by Sun Yet-sen based on his Three Principles, Nationalism, Socialism and Democracy:

- Nationalism: The Chinese people must regain their pride and devotion to their country. This would help them to get rid of the foreigners who had humiliated China.
- Democracy: China like the western nations must have a government elected by the people.
- Socialism: The lives of the poor must be improved, industry and transport should be modernised and 'land must be given to the tiller'. This meant that landlords' land should be given to peasants.

Warlords

Sun Yat-sen was determined to rid China of foreign influence and remove the power of the warlords, generals and military governors who had set up their own governments in various provinces and used their armies to enforce their authority. From 1916, these warlords fought each other for control of China. There were hundreds of warlords and most were interested only in their own power and wealth, and not helping the people under their rule. They imposed high taxes and governed often with great brutality.

Changes in the Kuomintang

In the years 1917-22 Sun's attempts to strengthen the Kuomintang base in Southern China from which to defeat the warlords and unite China had been unsuccessful. Finally, in 1923, he turned to Russia, which was now under communist control, for help. The Russians trained Kuomintang soldiers and provided arms, money and supplies. In return Sun allowed communists to join his party and worked with the newly formed Chinese Communist Party. In 1925, Sun died of cancer. Sun was succeeded by a young general, Chiang Kai-shek who had been appointed head of the Kuomintang army in 1923.

The Northern Expedition

Chiang's first task was to remove the warlords. This was achieved through the Northern Expedition of 1926-8. Chiang sent political agents to whip up support among the ordinary people by promising a 'national revolution'. The expedition was a great success...

- Peasants and workers welcomed Chiang's armies because they believed that they would be treated better by Chiang and the Kuomintang.
- The communists helped with the expedition. One of the Kuomintang armies was led by communists, capturing Hankow in 1926. The communists worked among the people in the cities that were captured, organising trade unions and helping peasants to get rid of their landlords.
- There was little resistance from many of the warlords as their armies had little enthusiasm. Many mutinied and joined the Kuomintang.

The campaign began in June 1926. The GMD army moved north-east and occupied Hunan and Hupei provinces. This gave it control of the cities of Nanjing and Shanghai. By mid 1927 all of China south of the Yangtze was in GMD hands. In early 1928 Chiang continued the Northern Expedition and in June occupied Beijing. China now appeared to be reunified and Chiang's government was recognised by foreign powers.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party was set up in Shanghai by Mao Zedong and twelve others.

The early CCP

- From 1918 to 1920 Marxist groups were formed in Beijing. In 1921 agents from the Comintern (an international communist organisation founded in Moscow) arrived in China.
- Mao had studied the writings of Karl Marx who believed that in an ideal world all property and goods should be shared and no one would be allowed to own property. In 1918 he had set up the 'Society for the Study of Marxism' which was well attended.
- The newly formed party worked hard to help workers to form unions in order to improve their wages and working conditions.
- In the meantime, the CCP worked closely with the Kuomintang to drive out the warlords and unite the country.

The influence of the CCP soon grew.

- The influence of Soviet Russia led the CCP to concentrate upon peasants and workers. The Kuomintang tended to ignore them.
- The CCP led by Mao offered land reform, taking land away from landlords and giving it to peasants. 95% of the Chinese people were peasants, the CCP represented peasants and 2,000,000 people joined CCP organisations in 1926-7 after the beginning of the Northern Expedition. This probably represented about 10,000,000 people altogether.
- Mao Zedong supported a revolt by peasants in Hunan province in 1927. It failed, but many peasants turned to the CCP as a means of dealing with landlords. The Kuomintang represented landlords and consequently attracted few peasants.

The Shanghai Massacres

Unlike Sun, Chiang had never been keen on the alliance with the communists.

- He feared their growing influence in cities which had been captured from the warlords. Support for the CCP grew as well with hundreds of thousands of new members, many of them in Shanghai.
- Wuhan was chosen as the new capital, which would be in the communist dominated area of China.
- Chiang became increasingly concerned that the Kuomintang was becoming more and more left wing. He came under pressure from the business interests in the Kuomintang to take action against the CCP.

In 1927, he turned on the communists. As the Kuomintang armies approached Shanghai and prepared to attack it, the workers of Shanghai rebelled against the warlord who controlled the area. This rebellion was organised by the local communists who set up a communist council to run the city. When Chiang's army arrived several days later, it rounded up all the communists it could find and executed them. One method used to identify communists was to check the neck of suspects for the red stain left by the red scarves worn by communists in the fighting against the landlords. In the wet weather, the dye ran.

Later in the same year, the Kuomintang crushed the communists in Guangzhou and executed many in the streets.

Reorganising the CCP 1927-34

Many communists escaped the massacres of 1927. Some went underground in the main cities whilst the largest group fled to the mountains in the province of Kiangsi. Here, Mao set up the Kiangsi Soviet and set up the Red Army which had 11,000 members by 1930. Within a few years the communists had gained the support of many of the peasants.

- In 1930 a Land Law was passed which divided up the cultivated land among the farming population. Millions of peasants owned their own land for the first time.
- Taxes on land were reduced and Peasant Councils were set up to give peasants some say in running their own affairs.
- The strict discipline of the Red Army meant peasants were treated with respect.

The Eight Rules of the Red Army

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

The Red Army were trained in 'hit and run' guerrilla tactics. This involved ambushing the enemy at its weakest point and then retreating into the countryside. Mao was determined to avoid directly fighting the Kuomintang who were better armed and supplied and had more men.

Mao on the tactics of the Red Army, 1930

When the enemy advances, we retreat.
 When the enemy halts, we harass.
 When the enemy retires, we attack.
 When the enemy retreats, we pursue.

However, Mao faced opposition from within the CCP. He realised that any future communist rebellion would need the support of the peasants. Others followed the views of Marx and were determined to win over the industrial workers. Mao was dismissed from the CCP Committee in Shanghai. Moreover, when, in 1930, the Red Army of the Central Committee attacked several large cities, they were a disastrous failure with little support from the local workers.

China under the Kuomintang 1928-34

During this period Chiang tried to re-unify China but was only partially successful.

Attempts to reunify China

From April 1928 he began a second Northern Expedition. After a short campaign Chiang's forces entered Beijing and he transferred his capital to Nanking, the richest part of the country. Here, he began a modernisation campaign which involved the construction of new factories, railways and roads. Education was improved and foreign trade increased. However, Chiang only had limited success:

- He only really controlled the Lower Yangtse Valley. The north-east, especially Manchuria, was controlled by the Japanese from 1931 whilst large areas of Kiangsi were under communist rule.
- Chiang did little for the peasants who remained poor, having to pay too much in taxes.
- He made no attempt to turn China into a democracy and ruled as a dictator.
- His popularity fell as he made little attempt to force Japan out of Manchuria.

The extermination campaigns

Chiang was determined to crush the communists in Kiangsi province. Between 1930 and 1934 he launched five massive extermination campaigns. Although his armies greatly outnumbered the communists, the first four were total failures due to the guerrilla tactics used by Mao's forces. Nevertheless, there were drawbacks to these tactics. When Mao lured the Kuomintang units into communist-held areas, they were able to capture communist villages as they advanced. As a result, more than a million peasants starved to death or were killed. Mao was criticised for using cowardly tactics.

Chapter 2: The triumph of Mao and the CCP 1934-49

During these years, Mao was able to defeat Chiang and the Kuomintang and set up a communist republic.

The Long March

This played a very important role in Mao's eventual success.

Reasons for the March

In the summer of 1933, Chiang launched his fifth extermination campaign, using new tactics suggested by General Hans von Seeckt, a German military adviser. Seeckt advised using 'blockhouse' tactics. The Kuomintang army surrounded the Kiangsi Soviet with half a million troops and advanced slowly building blockhouses (concrete shelters), digging trenches and putting up barbed wire fences. This prevented food getting in or out to the communists and reduced the area they controlled. By October 1934, the communists had lost half their territory as well as 60,000 troops.

Meanwhile, the communists in Kiangsi abandoned their tactics of retreating and attacking using guerrilla tactics due to the influence of Otto Braun, a Soviet agent. Instead the Red Army fought a series of disastrous pitched battles against the advancing Kuomintang armies. For example, in April 1934, the Red Army lost 8,000 men in the Battle of Guanchang. By the summer of 1934, the Red Army was surrounded by four lines of blockhouses and close to starvation. Mao wanted to attack the Kuomintang from the rear but was overruled by Braun who, instead, suggested the Red Army should force its way through the enemy lines and retreat to communist base at Yen-an in Northern Shensi.

Events of the Long March

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|--|--|
| <p>October 1934 The break out</p> | <p>On 16 October 1934 87,000 soldiers of the Red Army began the retreat led by Otto Braun. They took as much equipment, guns etc as they could carry. It took them six weeks to break out of the ring of blockhouses. At the end of November 1934, the Red Army reached the Xiang River where they lost over half their number when fighting the Kuomintang.</p> |
| <p>January 1935 Mao takes over</p> | <p>Braun was blamed for this defeat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He had allowed them to carry too much equipment which slowed down their retreat. • The retreat was in a straight line which made it easy for the enemy to predict the movements of the Red Army. <p>Therefore, in January 1935, the leaders of the CCP held a meeting and handed over the leadership of the march to Mao and Zhu De.</p> |
| <p>January-October 1935 Progress in 1935</p> | <p>Under their leadership, they took off in a new direction, often changing routes and splitting their forces in order to confuse the Kuomintang. One of the most famous events was the crossing of the Dadu River. Here, 22 soldiers swung across the river gorge on chains while under enemy fire. Their actions secured a crossing for the rest of the Red Army.</p> |
| <p>October 1935 Arrival</p> | <p>After fighting a dozen battles, crossing 24 rivers, and 18 mountain ranges, covering an average of 24 miles a day and a total of 6,000 miles, fewer than 30,000 reached their destination in October 1935.</p> |

Its importance

The Long March was important for several reasons:

- The communists had survived and found a new base. The new base was remote enough for the GMD to be unable to attack it. It was also safe from attack by the Japanese. This helped to increase the CCP's standing in China even further.
- Mao was hailed as the great hero of the March and was re-established as the unchallenged leader of the CCP
- Many Chinese people now saw the CCP as great heroes and began to support them. The Long March became part of Chinese Communist mythology. Many paintings were produced showing Mao marching at the head of the column over the mountains of western China.
- The good behaviour of the Red Army in the provinces they crossed had impressed many local people, especially peasants, who were more inclined to support the CCP.

War with Japan, 1937-45

During the years China experienced not only civil war between the CCP and the Kuomintang but also war with Japan.

Reasons for war

In 1931, the Japanese invaded the northern province of Manchuria. Chiang did little to stop the Japanese as he was preoccupied with the threat from the CCP and the Red Army.

Although many Chinese people wanted Chiang to declare war on the Japanese, he believed that national unity had to be achieved before attacking the Japanese. In 1936 he organised another extermination campaign against the communists, determined to drive them out of their new base in Yen-an. However, the Kuomintang troops, commanded by Zhang Xueliang, were mainly from Manchuria and were more interested in the recovery of their province from Japan. In 1936, Zhang made an agreement with the communists not to fight each other.

Chiang opposed this agreement but in December 1936 was kidnapped by Zhang's troops and kept prisoner for two weeks. He was eventually released when he agreed to form a United Front with the communists against Japan. The Russian government agreed to give military aid.

Meanwhile the Japanese continued to expand south into the rest of China. In July 1937 Japan attacked Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge, near Peking. This was the start of a full scale war which lasted until 1945. By the start of 1938 there were one million Japanese troops in China and by the end of the year they had

occupied many of China's great ports as well as her industrial and commercial centres.

For the next five years the Japanese lacked the resources and manpower to make further inroads into China. Indeed, from 1941 they were preoccupied with the Pacific War with the USA. Even in the areas they occupied, the Japanese did not have total control. This allowed the Chinese to move back into some areas and, more especially, take control of the countryside. The Japanese controlled the large cities, ports and airfields whilst most of the countryside was in the hands of the Chinese, either the Kuomintang or the CCP or both.

The Kuomintang during the war with Japan

Chiang and the Kuomintang emerged weaker as a result of the war with Japan. Chiang was seen as unpatriotic in his initial reaction to the Japanese threat and his later lukewarm acceptance of the United Front. Moreover, many people in Kuomintang controlled areas did not like Chiang's rule.

- Chiang retreated before the Japanese invasion and gave up the capital of Nanjing. He moved the government to Sichuan province. In Sichuan Chiang was cut off from the industrialised westernised areas of China, which were his main power base. Consequently the GMD could do little to fight back against Japan. The GMD appeared to be unwilling to attack the Japanese.
- The GMD government became increasingly corrupt as officials competed for personal power and influence. Inflation grew rapidly and the power of Warlords increased.
- Chiang governed like a military dictator with the name of the 'Generalissimo' with a private army of 'Blueshirts' which hunted down and tortured enemies of the Kuomintang, especially the communists.
- Chiang did little to improve China's welfare problems. There was a lack of medical care, poor housing and a shortage of schools.
- He did nothing to reduce the rents paid by peasants or to increase peasant ownership. The Kuomintang had little support in the countryside from peasants. It was seen as the party of bankers, merchants, businessmen and landowners.

The CCP

The communists emerged from the war with Japan stronger than the Kuomintang. The Japanese could not guard all the areas which they conquered as they went south. This meant that the communists could often move into the occupied areas and take control. Indeed, from 1937 onwards they carried out a successful guerrilla operation against the Japanese, gradually moving eastwards from Yen-an and taking control of many parts of Northern China. In 1940 the communists began a campaign known as the Hundred Regiments Battle in which they attacked the Japanese controlled railway system and paralysed Japanese transport.

Small Red Army units struck deep into Japanese-held territory, hit important targets, and then retreated back into safety. The communists worked among the peasants and soon controlled the countryside. They never met the Japanese head-on, melting away if attacked. When the Japanese were weak, or caught unawares, they were suddenly attacked.

The Japanese retaliated in 1941 with the Three All Campaign - kill all, burn all, destroy all. Their aim was to turn people against the communists in areas which supported them, by burning down their villages and crops and killing the peasants. This campaign had the opposite effect. It drove many peasants to support the communists. In 1937 the communists held 30,000 square miles of China, with two million people. By 1945, when the Japanese surrendered, the communists controlled 300,000 square miles and 95 million people.

Furthermore, life in the communist liberated areas was generally far better than in those areas under the control of the Kuomintang:

- Big estates were confiscated from rich lands and shared among the peasants.
- Rents and taxes were reduced and peasants were given interest-free loans.
- Out-dated and undesirable practices were abolished especially in the lives of women. For example foot binding which involved the practice of binding girl's feet tight in bandages so they grew up with small feet.
- Women's Associations were set up to help women to free themselves from violent husbands.
- The Red Army was very disciplined and never treated the peasants badly. In return, the peasants kept the Red Army informed about Japanese activities. The Red Army also helped in the fields and around the villages.

The Civil War, 1945-49

The defeat of Japan, in 1945, was followed by four years of civil war between the CCP and the Kuomintang. Most people thought the Kuomintang would win. They had a powerful American-trained and American-equipped army of three million men. Moreover, they held all the main cities and railway lines and many of the richest areas. In comparison, the communists seemed weak. They were only strong in the countryside and did not control one city. They had no air force, few railways and an army of only one million men.

Events of the civil war

In December 1945, the USA sent General Marshall to try to prevent a civil war in China. Marshall failed to reach agreement with the two sides, and hostilities broke out in early 1946.

- In June 1946 a million Kuomintang troops launched a big offensive in Northern China. By March 1947 they had won a series of victories and captured Yanan, the communist capital.
- However, the CCP, led by Lin Biao, avoided pitched battles with the Kuomintang and used guerrilla tactics. For example, they attacked enemy bases and railway lines at night and ambushed Kuomintang patrols.
- These tactics enabled the People's Liberation Army (PLA), previously the Red Army, to take control of large areas of central and northern China where thousands of peasants supported the CCP.
- By 1948, the Red Army was big enough to fight the Kuomintang head-on. In the Battle of Huai-Hai the Kuomintang lost half a million men and masses of equipment.
- The PLA now had control of Central China and was able to capture Beijing and Shanghai.
- In January 1949, Chiang and 200,000 of his troops, fled to the island of Taiwan, realising he had lost the civil war.
- On 1 October 1949, the communists were able to set up the People's Republic of China.

Reasons for success of the CCP

The communist victory was due to a combination of CCP strengths and Kuomintang weaknesses.

| CCP strengths | Kuomintang weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The leadership of Mao who ensured that the PLA was well behaved. He was seen as the liberator for the tactics he had used against the Japanese during the Second World War.• The support of the peasants who were impressed with the policies of the CCP and the behaviour of the PLA which contrasted to the soldiers of the Kuomintang who treated the peasants badly.• Successful guerrilla tactics 1946-48.• The Red Army had grown to 1,000,000 men by 1945 because of peasant support. By 1949 the CCP claimed that it was 4,000,000. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chiang's government was unpopular because it was seen as corrupt. Aid from the USA went into the pockets of Chiang and his family.• High inflation and the brutality of the Blueshirts in Kuomintang controlled areas. The Kuomintang was seen as the party of the landlords.• The American government, which had given Chiang \$200 million in aid since 1945, could see that the Kuomintang were going to be defeated and, in 1947, cut off all aid.• At the same time the GMD forces had fallen to 1,500,000 as many deserted to the PLA. |

Chapter 3: Change under Mao, 1949-63

Mao totally transformed China in the years 1949-63.

Early changes 1949-53

Mao introduced economic, social and political changes.

Problems

When Mao took over China in 1949, he took over the country's problems:

| Political | Economic | Social | Foreign |
|---|---|--|---|
| The communists had to prove that they were capable of providing a strong and effective government. Opposition to the government had to be removed or brought under control. | It was very poor. Industrial production was 50% down on the best pre-war figure and food production was down by 25%. Manchuria, China's most industrialised region, had been occupied by the Japanese. There was rapid inflation. | Most of the people were peasants who could not read or write. The Chinese people did not want change. They mistrusted all modern ideas in farming, industry, education, medicine and women's rights. | Most of the world refused to recognise the communists. The USA continued to recognise the Kuomintang in Taiwan. Only the Soviet Union would help the new China. |

Political change

From 1949 China became a one party state. All other parties were suppressed in a series of purges from 1950 to 1952. Anyone who showed any opposition to communism was labelled a counter-revolutionary or an imperialist. To avoid accusations, Chinese increasingly tried to prove their loyalty by accusing others. In 1951 the Party began a movement for 'thought reform'. It was called the Movement for the Study of Mao Zedong's Thought. This involved close study of his writings, combined with public self-criticism at Party meetings.

To gain further control, the Party organised mass campaigns:

- In 1950 the 'The Three Mountains' campaign against feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.
- In 1951 a 'Three Antis Campaign' was launched against corruption, waste and too much bureaucracy.
- This was followed, in 1952, by the 'Five Antis Campaign' which was to get rid of bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property and spying. People found guilty of any of these crimes were sent to labour camps to be re-educated with thought reform.
- Possibly the strangest example of Party campaigns was the 'Swat the Fly' campaign which lasted throughout the 1950s. Every citizen was asked to kill at least ten flies a day.

Mao was determined to gain control of the cities, where the GMD had been at its strongest. 65,000 people were killed in Guangzhou and 28,000 in Shanghai. All organisations were closed down, including churches and all religions were attacked. Maoist slogans began to appear on walls all over China for the first time. Possible rivals to Mao were dismissed from office. One, Gao Gang, committed suicide. As many as one million opponents were executed between 1949 and 1951.

Land reform

In the years before 1949, Mao had already begun the process of giving land to the peasants in the areas controlled by the CCP. Moreover, during the civil war most landowners had supported the Kuomintang. One of Mao's first tasks was to take away the power which the landlords had exercised over the peasants. The Agrarian Reform Law was passed in June 1950 to speed up the process of land reform.

CCP members were sent out to the countryside to organise the peasants against the landlords. The peasants were encouraged to hold mass meetings at which landowners were denounced. These 'People's Courts' or 'speak bitterness' campaigns became increasingly violent and often ended with the execution of the landlords. By 1952 two and three quarter million landlords had been killed. Land was taken from those who had more than they needed for their own use and given to those who had none. Between 1950 and 1952 more than 47 million hectares (nearly half the cultivated land) was taken from the landlords and given to 300 million peasants.

Land reform proved a disappointment to many peasants as they did not have the equipment and finance to cultivate aid. Many set up mutual aid teams of about ten holdings in which they worked together on the land and shared animals and tools.

The economy

The communist government brought in a series of measures to deal with the grave economic situation.

- The state took over major banks, the railways and much heavy industry.
- In 1951 a People's Bank was opened which replaced private banks and controlled the issue of money. It was able to remove inflation by the mid-1950s by insisting on buying and selling at low fixed prices.
- The government dealt with food shortages by making farmers sell 20% of their grain to the government at a fixed low price. Moreover, they had to pay an Agricultural Tax

Women

Mao was determined to change old attitudes to women who had been seen as second-class citizens. In the traditional Chinese families, marriages were arranged and wives were expected to completely obey their husbands. The Marriage Law of 1950 placed women legally on an equal basis with men and broke the power of the traditional male-dominated family which had kept women in subjection.

- It prohibited child marriage and matchmaking for money
- It carefully laid down the rights of women and children.
- It also provided for equal pay and maternity benefits as well as child care at the workplace so that women were encouraged to work outside the home.

The first Five-Year Plan, 1953-57

During this period Mao introduced further changes in agriculture and industry.

Reasons for the first Five Year Plan

By 1952 the Chinese economy had been brought under control. Inflation was down from 1000% to 15%, a new currency, the yuan, had been introduced, public expenditure had been reduced and taxes on city dwellers had been increased. Moreover, the GMD had already set up a national Resources Committee and 200,000 of its workers had stayed in China. In addition, Mao was able to call upon Soviet advisers as well as a loan of \$3billion. Finally, from 1949-57, the population of China's cities was grew rapidly, from 57 to 100 million.

The first Five Year Plan

The main areas of concentration were coal, steel and petro-chemicals. Seven hundred new production plants were built in central China and Manchuria. Most targets were achieved, with the notable exceptions of oil and merchant ships. For example, coal production increased from 63.5 million tons in 1952 to 124 million in 1957. During this period, all remaining private industry was taken over by the government. All businesses still in Chinese hands were taxed so heavily until their owners gladly handed them over.

National expenditure rose from 6,810 million yuan in 1952 to 29,020 million yuan in 1957. Economic growth ran at 9% per annum during the first Plan. The Plan was aided by the presence of 10,000 advisers from Soviet Russia as well as Russian machinery and equipment. In addition some 13,000 Chinese students were trainees in the Soviet Union.

However, light industry, such as cotton-making and food-processing, was neglected in favour of heavy industry. This meant there was a slow growth in the standard of living with a shortage of consumer goods, especially bicycles.

Co-operatives

Mao followed the Soviet model of collectivisation with his lower-stage co-operatives, followed in later years by higher-stage co-operatives.

- Peasant farms were too small to be efficient and would not be able to provide for the needs of the rapidly growing cities.
- Mao also feared that if the peasants kept their land, they would eventually become a new class of landowners, only interested in making a profit for themselves.

From 1953 the CCP encouraged peasants to join lower-stage co-operatives farms of 30-50 families where they would pool their land, equipment and labour. Although the land still technically belonged to the individual peasants, it was on permanent loan to the co-operative, which paid each family a rent for its use.

However, the first Five-Year Plan went much further by encouraging the lower-stage co-operatives to merge into far larger high-stage co-operatives which consisted of 200-300 families. By 1956 these co-operatives had been set up in most areas of China. Families were not paid rent for their land and only received wages for their labour. Their equipment, land and animals were now the property of the co-operative with the exception of a small plot of land which was used for growing vegetables and keeping chickens. Within six years of the Agrarian Reform Law, the peasants were once again landless.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign, 1956-7

In 1956 Mao launched what became known as the Hundred Flowers Campaign which allowed free discussion and criticism of the government and its work.

Reasons for the campaign

There has been much debate about Mao's motives for the Campaign.

- Mao had travelled widely throughout China during the early 1950s and had always been received very warmly. He appears to have believed that it was now possible to allow greater freedom of expression in China.
- By 1956 the CCP was losing much of its early unpopularity. The city population rose by 40 million leading to over-population, food shortages and housing problems as well as a shortage of consumer goods.
- Moreover many peasants were not keen on the higher-stage co-operatives in which they lost ownership of their land.
- Mao had also heard that local CCP officials had been accused of acting heavy-handedly and wanted to hear other opinions.
- In 1954 President Liu Shaoqi had delivered a report to the Congress of the CCP in which he mentioned Mao's name 104 times. At the next Congress in 1956 Liu mentioned Mao only four times.
- On the face of it, therefore, Mao was calling for a great debate on the Five Year Plan, but in reality the campaign may well not have been sincere, but simply an attempt to discover any potential opponents.
- In the autumn of 1956 Wang Meng, a 22-year old son of a professor of philosophy at Beijing, published a short novel *Young Man Who Has Just arrived at the Organisation Department* which attacked laziness and incompetence in the communist bureaucracy.

Reactions

Early in 1957 Mao urged Communist Party officials to be prepared to undergo criticism from the people with the statement, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought content'. He meant that free speech was healthy and should be encouraged.

There was a rush to respond and criticism of Mao, the government and the CCP gathered momentum. Many people openly criticised the Plan, especially university lecturers, artists, writers and teachers. Party individuals and policies were attacked as being corrupt, inefficient or unrealistic. Even Mao himself was included. Leading figures in government, education and the arts were attacked for their failures.

The anti-Rightist campaign

This was too much for Mao who, in June 1957, suddenly cracked down on his critics. Everything went into reverse. A time of free expression was replaced by an anti-Rightist campaign designed to flush out any critics of the CCP and the government and purge the Party.

- The leading critics were forced to retract their statements.
- University lecturers, school teachers, economists, writers and artists had to make public confessions and submit themselves to 're-education'. They were sent off to camps in the countryside for 'thought reform'.
- Others were sacked from their jobs.
- People were forbidden to speak freely and the press was censored.

Mao's reaction has led to different schools of thought about the motives for his Hundred Flowers Campaign.

- One school of thought argues that he genuinely encouraged free speech and criticism but was shocked by the reaction and then clamped down on his critics.
- The other school of thought believes that the Campaign was a deliberate plan by Mao to flush out critics of the government and CCP.

The Great Leap Forward

In 1958 Mao decided on a second five-year plan which became known as the Great Leap Forward.

Reasons

He decided on the Great Leap Forward for several reasons:

- After ten years of communism Mao wanted another revolution in order to hand control of agriculture and industry. He believed that these were being run by middle class 'experts' who were similar to the mandarin class under the emperors.
- China's vast resource of manpower were not being used effectively. There was still much unemployment in towns, cities and the countryside. In the countryside peasants would be fully employed on large irrigation and flood control projects and would also develop small-scale industries.
- He was determined to turn China into a powerful industrial nation as quickly as possible. Much had already been achieved but the pace was too slow and the money to set up new factories was scarce. If China was short of money, it was not short of people. Why not use the muscle power of the peasants? Mao intended that the Chinese economy would overtake that of Britain within fifteen years and that of the USA in twenty or thirty.

Party propaganda

A key element in the Great Leap Forward was Party propaganda. Posters, slogans and newspaper articles were used to encourage mass enthusiasm as well as long hours of work no matter what the conditions or the weather. Wherever people worked, loudspeakers played revolutionary music and stirring speeches encouraging workers to go beyond their targets.

As a result of Party propaganda, many impressive construction projects were finished in record time.

Industry

In cities, industries which required a lot of workers but little money were set up to solve the problem of unemployment. New, higher targets for industry and agriculture were introduced. Central planning was abandoned in favour of local organisation. Small commune factories were set up to make all kinds of industrial products such as cement, ball-bearings and chemical fertiliser.

Great emphasis was placed on the manufacture of steel and the establishment of 600,000 'backyard' steel furnaces in towns and villages all over China. Before long, these little furnaces had turned out 11 million tonnes of steel which was 65 per cent more than the output for 1957.

Communes

Mao also decided on a new method of organising agricultural life - the commune. Collective farms were joined into 24,000 communes with an average population of 30,000 people. The people in the communes were organised into brigades of workers of between 1000 and 2000 and then into teams of workers of 50 to 200 people. The government tried to persuade people to join communes through a tremendous propaganda campaign. By the end of 1958, the whole of China was organised into communes with about 700 million people (90 per cent of the population) organised into 26,578 communes. Peasants had to hand over even their small plots of land, as well as even their furniture.

They seemed the ideal way to organise China's vast peasant labour force:

- They were large enough to tackle large projects such as irrigation works and to run their own local schools and clinics
- They also set up their own local industries to mine coal and iron and make steel in blast furnaces.

Life in the commune was supposed to be lived communally. Peasants were to eat in mess halls whilst nurseries were provided for children.

Results

The Great Leap Forward tried to do too much, too soon and led to huge mistakes.

| Industry | Agriculture | Communes |
|--|--|--|
| Thousands of small factories proved to be inefficient and wasteful. Much of the 'backyard' iron and steel was of such a poor quality that it could not be used. The furnaces took too much of the country's coal supplies which meant that many steam locomotives could not operate. Party workers urged people to work faster to produce more. As a result, old and overworked machines fell apart and factory workers fell asleep at their machines due to exhaustion. | Food production also slumped because too many peasants had been moved from farming to industry. By 1961, China was having to buy grain from abroad whilst only strict rationing prevented a famine. The situation was not helped by three years of disastrous harvest caused by floods and droughts. The GLF together with bad weather reduced the harvest of 1960 by 144 million tonnes. Between 1959 and 1962 some 20 million Chinese died of starvation and related diseases. | These were not the success that Mao had hoped for. Many proved to be too large to be run efficiently. Peasants resented the loss of private plots and the attack on family life. Indeed, at first, members of the commune were not allowed to own any private property. They all received the same wages. Even families were broken up to make certain that all who could work did so. |

Why it failed

There were several reasons for the failure of the Great Leap Forward.

- A series of natural disasters badly affected the harvests. In 1960 north and central China had their worst drought for a hundred years. The Yellow River, which irrigates half the cultivated land in the country, dried up. Further south there was serious and widespread flooding.
- Mao also fell out with the Soviet leader, Khrushchev. Khrushchev strongly disapproved of what Mao was doing and, in 1960, ordered all scientists and engineers working in China to return home. As a result, China was seriously short of technicians and the expertise needed to build up its economy. Factories under construction could not be finished without Soviet assistance and some factories already built had to be closed down as the supply of spare parts from the Soviet Union dried up.
- The main responsibility for the failure lay with Mao. He was in too much of a hurry and did not give enough thought to the practical problems that would be created by the Great Leap Forward.
- The most important reason is that it was nonsensical. Major industrial development needed capital investment, technology and planning; Mao rejected all of these as revisionist. He was afraid that if he allowed the creation of a class of experts he would lose control of the revolution.

Retreat from the Great Leap Forward, 1959-62

Mao took part of the blame for the failure of the Great Leap Forward and, in late 1958, resigned as China's head of state. China was now controlled by three leading communists:

- President Liu Shao-chi
- Prime Minister Chou En-lai
- The CCP General Secretary, Deng Xiaoping.

These three introduced new policies which abandoned the Great Leap Forward.

- Thousands of factories were closed down. Other factories were grouped together and technicians and professional advisers were sent in. People were encouraged to set up their own businesses and bonuses were given for increased output.
- Millions were returned from manufacturing to farming. To encourage greater food production, private garden plots were returned to peasants.
- Communes were reduced to one-third of their original size.

Chapter 4: The impact of the Cultural Revolution

In 1966 Mao summoned the young people of China to the same central square in Beijing where, in 1949, he had announced the victory of the CCP in the civil war. Now, however, he had a different message. He told the students that the communist revolution was in danger from leaders of the CCP. These young people, who were known as the Red Guards, were told that they had the task of saving the revolution. The events which followed became known as the Cultural Revolution.

Motives for the Cultural Revolution

Mao had several motives for carrying out the Cultural Revolution.

Power struggle

After the Great Leap Forward Mao's own political position was weakened whilst his economic policies had been rejected. So one of his initial aims in the Cultural Revolution was to defeat his opponents, regain his political supremacy and ensure that his economic policies were accepted.

From 1962 to 1966 the leaders of the CCP argued with one another about which road they should follow in developing China. The moderates, led by Liu Shao-chi and Deng Xiaoping, wanted to introduce more incentives to get the peasants in the communes working hard. They wanted, for example, to let the peasants have larger private plots and pay them wages according to how much work they did. They also believed in going back to the ideas of the first Five-Year Plan to build up industry on Russian lines. To manage industry more effectively, they wanted to create a new class of skilled managers.

Mao totally opposed these policies. He argued that these changes were turning China into a sick and selfish society where people were more concerned about themselves than their neighbours. The peasants were working harder on their own land than they were on the communes. In the cities, the young were more interested in the latest fashions in clothes and pop music than in studying how to become good communists.

Purify communism

Communist Party officials were the worst culprits in Mao's eyes. Instead of setting an example by serving the people, they were using their power for their own ends such as obtaining seaside holidays, extra rations of food and clothing and bigger flats for their families to live in.

Mao wanted a purer form of communism and gave this priority over economic efficiency. Incentives for individual work destroyed his ideal of equality. He wanted a decentralised industry which encouraged maximum participation of all the workers. If that meant less use of modern technology then it was a price worth paying. Throughout the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his supporters used certain

labels to attack and discredit their opponents such as ‘Capitalist’ or ‘Revisionist Contra-Revolutionary’.

Mao totally opposed the policies of moderates in the Party and, in 1962, he launched a Socialist Education Movement to get people back on to the right road for communism. He also launched a ‘four clean-up campaign’ to get rid of corruption and bad management in the Party and to discourage people who showed signs of ‘capitalist’ behaviour. One example was peasants who spent more time on their private plots than on the communal land.

Mao also argued for change in Chinese culture. In January 1964, a new drama festival was launched in Shanghai. The sponsor of the festival was Chiang Ching (Mao’s third wife). The aim was to produce new socialist dramas. This drama group changed the nature of Chinese opera with its Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes which depicted political struggles in present-day China and replaced traditional Chinese opera.

Education

The Cultural Revolution also aimed to change the education of ordinary Chinese people. Education needed to be more revolutionary, less academic and more practical and more influenced by the peasants. In June 1964, Mao complained that education had produced ‘high and mighty bureaucrats’ who did not reflect the ideals of the communist revolution. During the Cultural Revolution city dwellers, intellectuals, university lecturers and the like were sent to the countryside to learn from the peasants by working on the farms.

Mao’s comeback

From 1962 to 1966 Mao continually encouraged the members of the CCP to keep in touch with the ordinary people but with little support. However, in 1965, Mao gained the support of Lin Biao, the Minister of Defence. Lin abolished all ranks in the People’s Liberation Army whilst every soldier was given a copy of a new book, ‘Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong’ which became known as the Little Red Book. Mao now had the support of four million soldiers in the People’s Liberation Army.

In 1966, Mao announced his return to public life with a 15 kilometre swim in the Changjiang river in front of a large crowd and shortly afterwards he launched the Cultural Revolution. To achieve all his aims, Mao drew on the traditional Chinese adulation of a God-like emperor to build a cult of personality. His main instruments of power were the youthful ‘Red Guards’ and behind them the Peoples Liberation Army.

Key features

The Cultural Revolution began among schoolchildren and students in Beijing in the summer of 1966. It involved attacks on Party officials and on existing cultural and educational policies.

The Red Guards

The support of the People's Liberation Army was crucial but Mao also decided to mobilise young people to promote his policies. The Cultural Revolution actually began among schoolchildren and students in Beijing. Schools and colleges were shut down for six months so that the curriculum could be rewritten to make young people more aware of communist ideals.

At the end of May 1966 the first Red Guard Unit was formed under the slogan 'We are the critics of the old world; we are the builders of the new'. Mao encouraged all their activities. For example, they were given the right to travel free on the Chinese railways so that they could visit places connected to the Long March or take part in massive rallies. The police were under orders not to oppose them.

The Red Guards began with a 'Four Olds' campaign against old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. They expressed their criticisms in hundreds of wall posters and marched through Beijing in monster parades numbering over a million at a time. They attacked anything which seemed to be 'capitalist' or 'bourgeois'.

Before long, the Red Guards were using violence to achieve their aims.

- They shaved off the hair of girls with Western hairstyles and ripped off Western-style clothes.
- They smashed the windows of shops selling Western merchandise such as jazz records, chess sets or cosmetics.
- They burnt down bookshops and libraries and closed museums and art galleries, churches, temples and theatres.
- They stopped couples from holding hands in public.
- In August 1967 the British Embassy in Beijing was stormed by Red Guards.

By 1967 law and order had broken down in many parts of China as Red Guards fought against 'reactionaries' with the death of as many as 400,000. Many more were beaten up, tortured or imprisoned. However, there were only a few places, such as Shanghai, where the Red Guards established full control.

Attacks on the Party

Urged on by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, the Red Guards turned their attention to what she called 'black dogs, slippery backsliders and rotten eggs' with the Communist Party. Their main target was Lin Shao-chi who had taken over from Mao as Head of State. He was accused of being 'No 1 enemy of Communism'. The Red Guards broke into his house, physically attacked him and forced him to write his own confession. Eventually, in 1969, he was expelled from the Party and died shortly afterwards as a result of being refused medical treatment for diabetes and pneumonia.

The Red Guards attacked hundreds of thousands of other party officials. Many died whilst others committed suicide. The Red Guards targeted almost anyone in a position of authority such as school teachers, doctors and factory managers. Artists and musicians who had been influenced by foreign ideas were also attacked more especially the music writer Ding Ling.

The cult of Mao

During the Cultural Revolution, the cult of Mao developed. Mao was worshipped as the new emperor. Peasant and factory workers gathered together before work in front of a portrait of Mao and read messages from his 'little red book'. 740 million copies of the book were printed in the years 1966 to 1969. The meeting closed with everybody sating 'May the Chairman live ten thousand years'.

Everywhere in China there were statues and portraits of Chairman Mao whilst loudspeakers blared out the songs of the Cultural Revolution. Many bowed before his picture after getting up in the morning and before getting into bed at night.

The end of the Red Guards

In September 1967, Mao attempted to restore order to China. Schools and colleges were reopened and he called on young people to return to their studies. The PLA was used to restore order in areas of Red Guard violence. To get rid of the Red Guards, who were causing chaos in the cities, he sent them into the countryside to re-educate themselves by learning from the peasants. By 1969 law and order had been restored in most areas and the Cultural Revolution was over.

Effects

The Cultural Revolution had brought chaos to China and caused the death of thousands.

| Industry | Education | Countryside | Government |
|---|---|---|--|
| Factories were reorganised to give power to the workers. Prizes and bonuses for town workers were abolished. All workers were given equal wages. Instead special importance was placed on teamwork. Technicians were dismissed and production fell. Transport ground to a halt. | This was seriously disrupted. Students refused to sit examinations as they showed up inequalities between them. Students of all ages were now made to learn from peasants and factory workers by spending part of their education in factories or on farms. University places went to students who supported the Cultural Revolution. | Students and graduates were sent to work alongside peasants. Private plots of land were taken away from the peasants who were only allowed one fruit tree outside their house, four chickens and one pig. They closed down the country markets along with thousands of family shops and restaurants. However more primary schools were provided for peasant children. | Opponents were killed or sent into exile. Deng Xiaoping, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, was removed from his post. Revolutionary Committees, dominated by the PLA, were set up to run the country. However, 95% of Party officials were eventually given their jobs back. However, they were now regularly sent to the fields and factories to keep in touch with the people. |

Mao 1969-76

When Mao announced in 1969 that the Cultural Revolution was over, he was in a strong position. Most of the moderates had been expelled from the Party and the government and his own supporters controlled the top positions.

In 1969, at a Party conference, Mao named Lin Biao as second-in-command. However, Lin Biao began to doubt Mao whilst Mao feared that Lin might try to oust him as leader. Mao got rid of several Party leaders who supported Lin. In retaliation, Lin, in 1971, drew up a plan to overthrow Mao which was code-named 'Project 571'. The plot was discovered. Lin and his plotters tried to escape by aircraft but it crashed in the desert in Mongolia.

Chapter 5: Change under Deng Xiaoping

By the middle of 1977 Deng Xiaoping had emerged as the real leader of China.

The Gang of Four

This was the name given to four leading members of the Communist Party who tried to seize power in 1976.

Right v left

During the early 1970s there was a growing power struggle between right-wing moderates and left-wing radicals for control of the Communist Party and the government of China.

| The Left | The Right |
|---|---|
| <p>This was led by Mao's wife, Chiang Ching (Jiang Qing) and three radical politicians from Shanghai, known as the Gang of Four. The other three were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhang Chunqiao (Chang Chun-chiao) • Yao Wenyuan (Yao Wen-yuan) • Wang Hongwen (Wang Hun-wen) <p>They were supported by the Communist Youth League and had control of the press and radio. The Left very much followed the thoughts of Mao and wanted to continue the political struggle between the social classes. Capitalists and reactionaries of all kinds much be removed. China must follow the mass line by serving the people and giving them a full say in the decision-making process. Indeed the Left put all their energy into a series of campaigns against bourgeois and outdated ideas in China's education system.</p> | <p>The Right were led by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Prime Minister Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) • the Deputy Prime Minister, Deng Xiaoping. Deng had been expelled from the Party during the Cultural Revolution but was brought back into power in the 1973 elections. <p>Zhou and Deng were supported by the Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army. The Right wanted an end to political arguments and struggles that had dominated Chinese life since 1966. Instead, they wanted the Party and the government to work together to reform and modernise all aspects of Chinese life, especially the economy. They supported Zhou's plan for Four Modernisations of China's industry, farming, defence and science.</p> |

Rise of Gang of Four

The Right suffered a real setback in 1976, when Zhou died and was succeeded by Deng. He had been a popular leader and thousands of people went to Tienanmen Square in Beijing to lay wreaths and put up posters in his memory. On 5 April 1976 visitors to the Square found that the wreaths had been removed and the posters taken down. 10,000 people rioted to show their support for Zhou and Deng, followed by about 200 arrests.

In other cities, such as Shanghai and Kunming, there were similar protests of support for Zhou. The Left, however, cleverly blamed the riots on Deng and removed him from the Party and government. They replaced Deng with Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng) who was a relatively unknown politician. Indeed he was nicknamed the 'helicopter' because of his rapid rise to power.

The Gang of Four now seemed in control of the Communist Party and the government. When Mao died, September 1976, the Gang of Four prepared to take full power.

The fall of the Gang of Four

The Gang of Four were out-manoeuvred by the Politburo, the central body of the Communist Party. The Politburo gave the post of Party Chairman, following Mao's death, to Hua Guofeng, the new Prime Minister. Hua was in a very powerful position as he now controlled the Party and the armed forces. He had the Gang of Four arrested in October 1976:

- There was some evidence that they had been plotting against Hua.
- The Gang of Four was hated by millions of Chinese for its brutal and extreme left wing views. Many demanded severe punishments of the Gang of Four.

Their arrest was followed by yet another political campaign. In the press, on the radio and in posters, the Gang of Four were criticised and attacked. Jiang Qing was even portrayed as a cruel, scheming pornographer. In the winter of 1980-81, the Gang of Four were put on trial. All four were found guilty and sentenced to long terms in prison.

Emergence of Deng

Between 1976 and 1980 the moderates slowly gained control of China. Deng Xiaoping returned to power in 1977 as Deputy Chairman of the Party as well as Deputy Prime Minister. He quickly gained great influence among the other Party leaders. Under Deng, China began a period of moderate policies following all the upheaval under Mao. Deng was determined to carry out the Four Modernisations of Zhou.

These reforms were launched at the Third Plenum of the Communist Party in December 1978. It marked the beginning of this new era in Chinese history as well as confirming the political dominance of Deng.

Modernisation under Deng

Over the next ten years Deng brought in a series of reforms which transformed the economy and society of China.

Reasons

Deng's main concern was to improve and modernise the Chinese economy.

- Many of the machines were old-fashioned and many Chinese factories were old-fashioned and inefficient, running at a loss.
- The co-operative farms were failing to produce enough food. In 1982 China had to import 13.7 million tons of grain to feed its population.
- There was grinding poverty made worse by serious droughts and floods in two provinces in 1980-81.

The way to attack poverty was to increase output in industry and agriculture.

Industry

Deng saw that China needed to increase production and modernise industry to support its huge population which was close to one billion (1000 million). In 1979 a new and ambitious Ten-Year Plan was introduced. Many new factories were built and workers were paid bonuses for extra output. People were free to own their own businesses. To satisfy demand, record numbers of consumer goods, such as bicycles, watches and sewing machines, were produced. Foreigners were encouraged to visit China and invest their money, even from the old enemy, the USA.

There was far less control from the centre. Deng told the factory managers to run their factories profitably and to produce what people wanted to buy. It was discovered that in one area there were two million pairs of shoes piled up in warehouses. Nobody was buying them because the style was old-fashioned, yet the factories were still producing them because the managers were under order to do so. Now, under Deng's instructions, many factories switched to goods that would sell in shops, such as television sets, motor cycles and washing machines.

Deng also created 'special enterprise zones' (SEZ) and 'open' coastal sites. The SEZs were to encourage western firms to establish themselves in areas such as Eastern and Southern coastal regions through the promise of cheap land and local labour. These foreign businesses were expected to train Chinese personnel and to give priority to using Chinese raw materials.

Nevertheless there were problems.

- A television set cost two years' wages and a bicycle a month's pay in the mid 1980s.
- Unemployment, according to Western estimates, stood at 12% in 1983.
- Modernisation brought Western-style problems of rising crime and even football hooliganism.
- Inequalities in wealth and wages increased the potential for social conflict. In 1985, for example, the Beijing bus drivers went on strike because they found themselves only earning half the wages of the taxi drivers.

Agriculture

In the countryside the size of peasant plots was increased. A Responsibility System for commune land was started in 1978, by which families were given responsibility for cultivating areas of land within their commune. They signed contracts promising to produce fixed amounts of food for sale to the state, and were allowed to sell any surplus at market for a profit.

By 1983 China had 44,000 markets as farmers could sell their produce privately. The income of agricultural workers tripled between 1977 and 1983.

Education

Deng also reversed the educational reforms of the Cultural Revolution. Under Mao, students were admitted to university if they had a good political record. Examinations were boycotted because they were seen as creating an unequal society. Deng restored tough examinations for university places. Success in academic subjects once again became essential.

Special key schools for the best students were set up to provide China with the skills needed to prosper. Moreover, the time spent on political education and manual labour was reduced.

Birth control

Deng was determined to reduce the rate of population growth. In 1979 he introduced the 'one-child' family policy. During the Great Leap Forward, a birth control campaign was introduced which urged late marriage and birth control. During the Cultural Revolution the campaign was abandoned and the birth rate began to rise again. It was estimated that by the year 2000 China's population would be 1.282 billion. Moreover, a 1982 census of the population showed that three quarters of the population worked in agriculture and that population was increasing by twelve million a year.

The 'one-child' policy was launched with massive publicity. It was a series of measures to discourage couples from having more than one child.

- The minimum age for marriage was set at 20 for women and 22 for men.
- Couples wanting to marry had to get the consent of their commune and take a written test in family planning.
- To discourage couples from having more than one child, those with only one child only were given generous family allowances and more ration coupons.
- Single children found it easier to get into higher education, whilst their parents got housing priority and larger plots of land.
- For people willing to be sterilised there were also extra holidays and cash payments.

It had been effective in towns where it was easier for the authorities to police it and issue 'single-child family' certificates. Not so successful in rural areas where it had been difficult to enforce. The birth rate did slow down but the policy was not popular:

- It encouraged late and compulsory abortion.
- In China only sons are supposed to continue the family line. The birth of a daughter had been greeted with disappointment. There is even evidence of discrimination against girls, including withholding food and health care.

Westernisation

After Deng's return to power, China became a much more open society. On television, the Chinese were able to see the Pope or the US president. They could buy foreign books in translation and listen to foreign music. There was more entertainment and fewer political meetings. In their communist newspapers, the Chinese could read about the darker side of life in China such as industrial accidents, crimes and Party officials who had used their power for their own ends.

Deng realised that economic recovery would be helped by Western technology and expertise. He sent students abroad to study engineering and technology. He encouraged foreign companies to set up projects in China in partnership with state-owned Chinese businesses. These projects ranged from textile factories and hotel construction to oil prospecting.

Chapter 6: The Development of the Democracy Movement

In June 1989 dramatic events in Tiananmen Square brought an end to what was known as the Democracy Movement in China.

Deng's opposition to political reform

Although Deng believed in economic reform and Westernisation he was very conservative in his approach to political change.

'Four cardinal principles'

He was influenced by what he called the 'four cardinal principles'. These were:

- 'Keeping to the socialist road'
- 'upholding the people's democratic dictatorship'
- 'upholding leadership by the Communist Party'
- 'upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought'

In other words Deng wanted to maintain the dictatorship of the Communist Party - the belief that the Communist Party was entitled to expect the absolute obedience of the people.

Political policies

Deng was an economic reformer but a Communist hard liner. He believed that China had gone through the bitter experience of the Cultural Revolution and needed a rest from politics, from political argument and debate. This was expressed in a resolution in 1980 by the National People's Congress which condemned the view that people had the right to speak freely and even criticise the government. Deng believed popular democracy would undermine his programme of economic reform.

In addition, Deng wanted to restore the authority and control of the CCP after the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. He wanted to show that the CCP was still capable of governing China and had the right to expect the loyalty of the people.

The 'democracy wall' movement

In the late 1970s Deng faced a new political challenge from those that wanted to see Deng's reforms taken further and who wanted more democratic freedoms within the Chinese political system. The challenge was named the 'democracy wall' movement.

The 'democracy wall'

This movement, led by students and young people, got under way early in 1979. Wall posters began to appear in the Avenue of Eternal Peace, near Tiananmen Square on a two hundred feet long brick wall. The avenue was a common gathering place for students, who established the practice of affixing to the wall a mass of literature from small letters to posters. Some posters were political graffiti. The writings covered every possible subject and gave students an opportunity to express anti-government and anti-Party feelings. Every so often the government forbade the use of the wall and tore down the posters.

Wei Jingsheng

The greatest agitation came from those people who had suffered severely during the Cultural Revolution but who had not really benefited from Deng's new policies. One example was Wei Jingsheng who had been arrested by Jiang Qing. He was a very accomplished writer and, on 25 March 1979, published an article with the title 'Democracy or New Dictatorship' which made a strong attack on Deng. He accused Deng of using the 'Democracy Movement' for the failures of his economic policies.

The bitterness of the attack shocked Deng. In the summer of 1979 the authorities cracked down on posters. Wei was brought to trial and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.

The democracy movement

Wei was regarded as the first martyr of the 'democracy movement'. It was never an organised party but it represented those intellectuals who saw in Deng's reforms the opportunity to modernise the political system as well as the economy. The movement urged Deng to follow the principles of the Communist Party and commit himself to the rule of the people, more especially the adoption of democracy.

It also accused the government of China of being corrupt. For example, in the late 1970s a notorious case of racketeering came to light in Heilongjiang (Heilunkiang) province when it was revealed that the managers of a state-owned fuel and power company had been pocketing large sums of public money. The culprits, who were all members of the CCP, were put on trial and executed. It was a journalist who had revealed the corruption.

Indeed, many of the subsequent student demonstrations of the 1980s were due to the belief that the CCP was corrupt. They demanded greater political democracy and economic opportunity.

- Major disturbances occurred in 1986 in universities in Hefei, Wuhan and Shanghai. Thousands of protestors followed Fang Lizhi (Fang Li-chih) who was a professor at Hefei and was demanding open government and democracy. The government arrested the ringleaders and dismissed Fang. However, Deng also removed Hu Yaobang (Hu Yao-pang), the General Secretary of the CCP.

- On 5 January 1987 students at Beijing University burnt copies of local CCP newspapers and carried posters through the streets opposing ‘conservatives and reactionaries’.

Deng’s reaction

For long periods Deng’s government tolerated the democracy movement, only turning on it if and when it was directly challenged, such as the attacks by Wei Jingsheng. His punishment was meant as a warning to the democracy movement. After his crushing of the 1986 demonstrations Deng insisted that genuine democracy was not an option for China. He insisted that there was no need for greater participation by the people in the politics of China. The uninformed people should be content to let their enlightened government lead them.

Growing opposition and unrest

Deng faced increasing opposition in the mid and later 1980s.

- The democracy movement was disappointed at his rejection of democracy and his repression of student meetings.
- His economic reforms proved to be very disappointing to many people. There had been a serious downturn in industrial and agricultural production together with inflation which had reduced worker’s real wages. Moreover the growing population and the continuing movement of people from the countryside into the urban areas had led to severe overcrowding in the major cities.
- Students felt that despite the promise of progress and reform, the CCP under Deng had failed to deliver.
- There was also disappointment with the lack of job opportunities. A great number had entered higher education in the later 1970s only to find that, by the end of the 1980s, the jobs were not available. There was also resentment that such jobs as were available were given to members of the CCP.

Tiananmen Square Massacre, 1989

This massacre was the climax to the tensions that had been building up in the previous ten years which, in turn, were a reaction to the failure of Deng's reforms.

Events leading to the massacre

There were various events in 1989 which culminated in the massacre.

| | |
|--|--|
| April the death of Hu Yaobang | He died on 15 April. Hua had been sympathetic to the democracy movement but had been removed in January 1987 for daring to support the student protests. He had been treated harshly and died from a heart attack. Large crowds gathered in Tiananmen Square for his memorial service. Three students tried to give a petition to the Premier Li Peng. His refusal to accept the petition sparked off a series of sit-ins and boycotts of university classes. Students from 40 universities joined their fellow students in Tiananmen Square. Transport workers showed their support by allowing the students to travel free to Beijing. |
| May hunger strike | By the second week of May a group of 300 students had gone on hunger strike. The government made contact with the hunger strikers, urging them to call it off. The hunger strikers refused because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were achieving world wide publicity with camera crews and journalists from every continent reporting the events. • Gorbachev was due to visit Beijing. He was very popular because of his reforms in the Soviet Union. Moreover the students were convinced that the authorities would not dare crush the demonstration during his visit. |
| 19 May Zhao Ziyang | On the sixth day of the hunger strike, Zhao Ziyang asked the students to end the hunger strike. In tears, he promised that the issues over which they were protesting would be resolved. That same evening Zhao was dismissed from his post. Deng had decided that the demonstrations would be ended by force and introduced martial law. However, then the students voted to end the hunger strike but continue the protests. |
| Further support | When news broke of the decision to continue, thousands who had earlier given up, returned to the Square. This included many residents of Beijing who blocked the roads and avenues leading to Tiananmen Square to prevent the troops from imposing martial law. The troops were withdrawn to the outskirts of Beijing. |
| Early June troops move in | Deng was now more determined than ever to end the protests. Crack troops, led by specially appointed commanders, advanced on Beijing. By 2 June 350,000 PLA soldiers surrounded Tiananmen Square and controlled the routes leading to it, ignoring the protests of the local people. |

The massacre, 3-4 June 1989

The PLA commanders described the action as a ‘full military campaign’ to overcome the resistance of ‘rebels’ and recapture the Square. The troops were told to reclaim the Square at all costs.

- At 10.00 pm on the night of 3 June the first shots were fired at the demonstrators and by midday 4 June the occupation was over.
- At regular intervals groups of students were marched away and later imprisoned.
- No one knows the number of casualties although it includes PLA soldiers beaten to death by the angry crowds and could be well into the thousands.
- The government had imposed a news blackout but information about the massacre was leaked out.

Why was the massacre carried out?

Deng could have used riot police, water cannons and tear gas to disperse the protestors. This was the usual method of dealing with students riots in Asian countries. The students were unarmed and not fully united and determined. However, Deng seems to have wanted a violent end to the protest. The massacre was very much in the Chinese tradition of crushing opposition by the severest means in order to act as a deterrent as well as highlighting that this opposition was illegitimate. The use of tanks and bullets was to show the Chinese people the determination of the government not to tolerate opposition. There are other explanations for the severity of Deng’s actions:

- The Chinese government insisted that the students had foreign support and were trying to undo the communist revolution.
- Deng saw the student movement as a genuine threat to his leadership.
- There was a power struggle to see who would take over once Deng retired or died. This was between Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng. Li Peng encouraged force against the students, believing this would win him the support of Deng.

Results of the massacre

In the following weeks, demonstrators who had escaped from the Square were rounded up and imprisoned. The ringleaders were given especially heavy sentences.

CCP officials who had shown any support for the democracy movement were dismissed whilst those who had opposed the demonstrations were promoted.

The Chinese authorities later disclosed that 23 students had been killed accidentally.

The demonstration marked the end of the democracy movement in China. At the Fourteenth Party Congress of the CCP, held in October 1992, the dictatorship of the Communist Party was confirmed. No criticism or opposition was to be permitted.

The massacre confirmed that the economic reforms of Deng would not be followed by political change.

