

colonial rule and Japanese occupation. Over the next forty years, China and the “Asian Tigers” developed some of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world, but liberal democracy remained elusive.

The Communist Victory in China

Communism triumphed in China for many reasons. As a noted historian forcefully argued, however, “Japanese aggression was . . . the most important single factor in Mao’s rise to power.”¹ Half of Japan’s overseas armies were pinned down in China in 1945, in a long war that exhausted the established government and its supporters. Jiang Jieshi’s Nationalists had mobilized 14 million men, and a staggering 3 million Chinese soldiers had been killed or wounded. The war created massive Chinese deficits and runaway inflation, hurting morale and ruining lives. Mao and the Communists had avoided pitched battles and concentrated on winning peasant support and forming a broad anti-Japanese coalition. By reducing rents, promising land redistribution, enticing intellectuals, and spreading propaganda, Mao and the Communists emerged in peasant eyes as the true patriots, the genuine nationalists.

When Japan suddenly collapsed in August 1945, Communists and Nationalists both rushed to seize evacuated territory. Heavy fighting broke out in Manchuria, and civil war began in earnest in April 1946. By 1948 the demoralized Nationalist forces were disintegrating before the better-led, more determined Communists. The following year Jiang Jieshi and 2 million mainland Chinese fled to Taiwan, and in October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the People’s Republic of China.

Within three years the Communists consolidated their rule. The Communist government seized the holdings of landlords and rich peasants—10 percent of the farm population had owned between 70 and 80 percent of the land—and distributed it to 300 million poor peasants and landless laborers. This revolutionary land reform was extremely popular. Meanwhile, as Mao admitted in 1957, eight hundred thousand “class enemies” were summarily liquidated between 1949 and 1954; the true figure is probably much higher. All visible opposition from the old ruling groups was destroyed.

Finally, Mao and the Communists reunited China’s 550 million inhabitants in a strong centralized state. Claiming a new Mandate of Heaven, they set out to prove that China was once again a great power. This was the real significance of China’s participation in the Korean War. From 1950 to 1953, the Chinese army’s ability to fight the American “imperialists” to a bloody standstill on the Korean peninsula mobilized the masses and increased Chinese self-confidence.

Mao’s China

Wanting to assert Chinese power and prestige in world affairs, Mao and the party looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration in the early 1950s. Along with the gradual collectivization of agriculture, China adopted a typical Soviet-style five-year plan to develop large factories and heavy industry rapidly. Russian specialists built many Chinese plants. Soviet economic aid was also considerable. The first five-year plan was successful, as undeniable economic growth followed the Communists’ social revolution.

In the cultural and intellectual realms, too, the Chinese followed the Soviet example. Basic civil and political rights, which the Nationalists had seriously curtailed, were now simply abolished. Temples and churches were closed, and press freedom died. Soviet-style puritanism took hold, as the Communists quickly eradicated prostitution and drug abuse, which they had long regarded as humiliating marks of exploitation and national decline. They enthusiastically promoted Soviet-Marxian ideas concerning women and the family. Full equality, work outside the home, and state-supported child care became primary goals.

Great Leap Forward *Mao Zedong's acceleration of development in which industrial growth was to be based on small-scale backyard workshops run by peasants living in gigantic self-contained communes.*

Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution *A movement launched by Mao Zedong that attempted to purge the party of time-serving bureaucrats and recapture the revolutionary fervor of his guerrilla struggle.*

Red Guards *Radical cadres formed by young people who would attack anyone identified as an enemy of either the Communist Party or Chairman Mao.*

By the mid-1950s China seemed to be firmly set on the Marxist-Leninist course of development, but in 1958 it began to go its own way. Mao proclaimed a spectacular acceleration of development, a **Great Leap Forward** in which soaring industrial growth would be based on small-scale backyard workshops run by peasants living in gigantic self-contained communes. The creation of a new socialist personality that rejected individualism and traditional Confucian family values, such as filial piety and acceptance of parental authority, was a second goal.

The intended great leap produced an economic disaster, for frantic efforts with primitive technology often resulted only in chaos. In the countryside land went untilled as peasants turned to industrial production. As many as 20 million to 30 million people died in famines that swept the country in 1960–1961, one of the greatest human disasters in world history. When Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev criticized Chinese policy in 1960, Mao condemned him and his Russian colleagues as detestable “modern revisionists.” The Russians abruptly cut off economic and military aid, splitting the communist world apart.

Mao lost influence in the party after the Great Leap Forward fiasco and the Sino-Soviet split, but in 1965 the old revolutionary staged a dramatic comeback. Fearing that China was becoming bureaucratic, capitalistic, and “revisionist” like the Soviet Union, Mao launched the **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**. He sought to purge the party and to recapture the revolutionary fervor of his guerrilla struggle (see pages 864–865). The army and the nation's young people, especially students, responded enthusiastically, organizing themselves into radical cadres called **Red Guards**. The young people denounced their teachers and practiced rebellion in the name of revolution. One Red Guard manifesto exulted that “Revolution is rebellion, and rebellion is the soul of Mao Tse-tung's thought.”²

The Red Guards sought to erase all traces of “feudal” and “bourgeois” culture and thought. Ancient monuments and countless works of art, antiques, and books were destroyed. Party officials, professors, and intellectuals were exiled to remote villages to purify themselves with heavy labor. Universities were shut down for years. Thousands of people died, many of them executed, and millions more were sent to rural forced-labor camps. The Red Guards attracted enormous worldwide attention and served as an extreme model for the student rebellions in the West in the late 1960s (see page 959).

The Limits of Reform

Mao and the Red Guards succeeded in mobilizing the masses, shaking up the party, and creating greater social equality. But the Cultural Revolution also created growing chaos and a general crisis of confidence, especially in the cities. Persecuted intellectuals, technicians, and purged party officials launched a counterattack on the radicals and regained much of their influence by 1969. Thus China shifted to the right at the same time that Europe and the United States did. This shift in China opened the door to a limited but lasting reconciliation between China and the United States in 1972.

The moderates were led by Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), a long-time member of the Communist elite who had been branded a dangerous capitalist agent during the Cultural Revolution. After Mao's death in 1976, Deng and his supporters initiated a series of new policies, embodied in the ongoing campaign of the “Four Modernizations”—agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense.

China's 800 million peasants experienced the greatest and most beneficial change from this modernization campaign, what Deng proudly called China's “second revolution.” At first glance this may seem surprising. Peasant support had played a major role in the 1949 Communist victory. After 1949 land reform and rationing undoubtedly improved the diet of poor peasants. Subsequently, literacy campaigns taught rural people how to read, and “barefoot doctors”—local peasants trained to do simple



● **Chinese Students in 1989** These exuberant demonstrators in Tiananmen Square personify the idealism and optimism of China's prodemocracy movement. After some hesitation the Communist government crushed the student leaders and their supporters with tanks and executions, reaffirming its harsh, authoritarian character. (Erika Lansner/stockphoto.com)

Tiananmen Square *The site of a Chinese student revolt in 1989 at which Communists imposed martial law and arrested, injured, or killed hundreds of students.*

reversal, the continued lack of political freedom, and the conviction that Chinese society was becoming more corrupt led China's idealistic university students to spearhead demonstrations in April 1989.

The students evoked tremendous popular support, and more than a million people streamed into Beijing's central **Tiananmen Square** on May 17 supporting their demands. The government then declared martial law and ordered the army to clear the students. Masses of courageous Chinese citizens blocked the soldiers' entry into the city for two weeks, but in the early hours of June 4, 1989, tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square. At least 700 students died as a wave of repression, arrests, and executions descended on China. China's Communist leaders claimed they had saved the country from plots to destroy socialism and national unity.

In the months after Tiananmen Square communism fell in eastern Europe, the Soviet Union broke apart, and China's rulers felt vindicated. They believed their strong action had preserved Communist power, prevented chaos, and demonstrated the limits of permissible reform. After some hesitation Deng, and his successor Jiang Zemin, reaffirmed economic liberalization. Private enterprise and foreign investment boomed in the 1990s. Consumerism was encouraged, and the living standard rose. But critics of Communist rule were jailed, and every effort was made to ensure the People's Army would again crush the people if ordered. Thus China coupled growing economic freedom with continued political repression, embracing only one half of the trend toward global liberalization and rejecting the other.

These policies continued into the twenty-first century. In 2001, after long negotiations, China joined the World Trade Organization, giving it all the privileges and obligations of participation in the liberal global economy. Politically communist, China now has a full-blown capitalist economy. From 1978, when Deng Xiaoping took over and launched economic reforms, through 2008, the Chinese economy has

grown at an average annual rate of over 9 percent; foreign trade at an average of 16 percent. Average per capita income in China has doubled every ten years.

But China continues to have a miserable human rights record. In 2002 Hu Jintao succeeded the aging Jiang Zemin, and introduced modest legal reforms. He remains clearly committed, however, to maintaining a strong authoritarian state. As China prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, there was some hope that, as promised, China's Communist leaders would make significant human rights, labor rights, and press freedom reforms before the games began. In spring 2008, however, the Chinese harshly crushed demonstrations in Tibet (see the feature "Individuals in Society: The Dalai Lama" on page 1061), which sparked worldwide protest, including disruption of the Olympic torch global relay. As the Olympic Games opened in August 2008, the Chinese, with only perfunctory pressure from world leaders, had made no effort to institute democratic reforms.

The Asian "Economic Tigers"

China's exploding economy has replicated the rapid industrial progress that characterized first Japan and then Asia's "Economic Tigers" (or "Four Dragons")—Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea.



■ **Shaming of Enemies During the Cultural Revolution** During the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, young Chinese militants and Red Guards attacked people identified as enemies of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. Many of these "enemies" were intellectuals such as teachers and artists, but they could be neighbors and even parents who were considered bourgeois. Here a victim is paraded through the streets wearing a dunce cap with his crimes written on it. (*Wide World Photos*)

diagnosis and treatment—brought modern medicine to the countryside. But rigid collectivized agriculture failed to provide either the peasants or the country with adequate food. Levels of agricultural production and per capita food consumption were only slightly higher in the mid-1970s than in 1937, before the war with Japan.

Determined to modernize the economy, Deng looked to the peasants as natural allies. China's peasants were allowed to farm the land in small family units rather than in large collectives and to produce what they could produce best and "dare to be rich." Peasants responded enthusiastically, increasing food production by more than 50 percent between 1978 and 1984.

The successful use of free markets and family responsibility in agriculture encouraged further economic experimentation. Foreign capitalists were allowed to open factories in southern China, and they successfully exported Chinese products around the world. Chinese private enterprise was also permitted in cities, where snack shops, beauty parlors, and a host of small businesses sprang up. China's Communist Party leaders also drew on the business talent of wealthy "overseas" Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan who knew the world market, needed new sources of cheap labor, and played a key role in the emerging Greater China. The Chinese economy grew rapidly between 1978 and 1987, and per capita income doubled in these years.

Change, however, was also circumscribed. Most large-scale industry remained state owned, and cultural change proceeded slowly. Above all, the Communist Party zealously preserved its monopoly of political power. When the worldwide movement for greater democracy and political freedom in the late 1980s also took root in China, the government responded by banning all demonstrations and slowing the trend toward a freer economy. Inflation then soared to more than 30 percent a year. The economic