

LESSON 2

China After World War II

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does conflict influence political relationships?

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

- final
- source

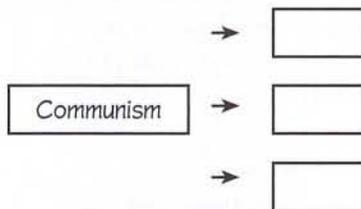
Content Vocabulary

- commune
- permanent revolution

TAKING NOTES

Key Ideas and Details

Categorizing As you read, use a chart like the one below to list communism's effects on China's international affairs.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

In 1949 Chiang Kai-shek finally lost control of China, and the Communist Mao Zedong announced the formation of the People's Republic of China. Mao's victory strengthened U.S. fears about the spread of communism. To build his socialist society in China, Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Neither program was especially successful at achieving its goals.

Civil War in China

GUIDING QUESTIONS *How did Mao use economic policies to try and establish a classless society? Why did Mao believe permanent revolution was necessary?*

At the end of World War II, two Chinese governments existed side by side. The Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek, based in southern and central China, was supported by the United States. The Communists, led by Mao Zedong, had built a strong base in northern China. By the end of World War II, 20 to 30 million Chinese were living under Communist rule. The People's Liberation Army of the Communists included nearly 1 million troops.

When efforts to form a coalition government in 1946 failed, a full-scale civil war broke out between the Nationalists and the Communists. In the countryside, promises of land attracted millions of peasants to the Communist Party. Many joined Mao's People's Liberation Army. In the cities, middle-class Chinese, who were alienated by Chiang's repressive policies, supported the Communists. Chiang's troops began to defect to the Communists. Sometimes whole divisions—officers and ordinary soldiers—changed sides.

By 1948, the People's Liberation Army had surrounded Beijing. The following spring it crossed the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) and occupied Shanghai. During the next few months, Chiang Kai-shek and 2 million followers fled to the island of Taiwan.

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong mounted the rostrum of the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing and made a victory statement to the thousands gathered in the square before him. “The Chinese people have stood up,” he said, “nobody will insult us again.”

commune in China during the 1950s, a group of collective farms, which contained more than 30,000 people who lived and worked together

final the last in a series, process, or progress

permanent revolution an atmosphere of constant revolutionary fervor favored by Mao Zedong to enable China to overcome the past and achieve the final stage of communism

▼ A Chinese woman and child hold up Mao's *Little Red Book* during the Cultural Revolution.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**

Describing What one word would you use to describe the *Little Red Book* during the Cultural Revolution? Why?

The Great Leap Forward

The Communist Party, under the leadership of its chairman, Mao Zedong, now ruled China. In 1955 the Chinese government launched a new program to build a socialist society. Virtually all private farmland was collectivized. Peasant families were allowed to keep small plots for their private use, but they worked chiefly in large collective farms. In addition, most industry and commerce was nationalized.

Chinese leaders hoped that collective farms would increase food production, allowing more people to work in industry. Food production, however, did not grow. Meanwhile, China's vast population continued to expand. By 1957, China had approximately 657 million people living within its borders.

In 1958 Mao began a more radical program known as the Great Leap Forward. Under this program, more than 700,000 existing collective farms, normally the size of a village, were combined into 26,000 vast **communes**. Each commune contained more than 30,000 people who lived and worked together. Since they had communal child care, more than 500,000 Chinese mothers worked beside their husbands in the fields by mid-1958.

Mao Zedong hoped his Great Leap Forward program would mobilize the people for a massive effort to speed up economic growth and reach the **final** stage of communism—the classless society—before the end of the twentieth century. The Communist Party's official slogan promised the following to the Chinese people: “Hard work for a few years, happiness for a thousand.”

Despite such slogans, the Great Leap Forward was an economic disaster. Bad weather, which resulted in droughts and floods, and the peasants' hatred of the new system, drove food production down. As a result, nearly 15 million people died of starvation. Many peasants were reportedly reduced to eating the bark off trees and, in some cases, to allowing infants to starve. In 1960 the government made some changes. It began to break up the communes and return to collective farms and some private plots.

The Cultural Revolution

Despite opposition within the Communist Party and the commune failure, Mao still dreamed of a classless society. In Mao's eyes, only **permanent revolution**, an atmosphere of constant revolutionary fervor, could enable the Chinese to overcome the past and achieve the final stage of communism.

In 1966 Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Chinese name literally meant “great revolution to create a proletarian (working class) culture.” A collection of Mao's thoughts, called the *Little Red Book*, became a sort of bible for the Chinese Communists. It was hailed as the most important **source** of knowledge in all areas. The book was in every hotel, in every school, and in factories, communes, and universities. Few people conversed without first referring to the *Little Red Book*.



To further the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards were formed. These were revolutionary groups composed of unhappy party members and discontented young people. They were urged to take to the streets to cleanse Chinese society of impure elements guilty of taking the capitalist road. In June 1966, all schools and universities in China were closed for six months to prepare for a new system of education based on Mao's ideas. Mao had launched China on a new forced march toward communism.

The Red Guards set out across the nation to eliminate the "Four Olds"—old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. The Red Guards destroyed temples, books written by foreigners, and foreign music. They tore down street signs and replaced them with ones carrying revolutionary names. The city of Shanghai even ordered that red (the revolutionary color) traffic lights would indicate that traffic could move, not stop.

Destruction of property was matched by vicious attacks on individuals who had supposedly deviated from Mao's thought. Those so accused were humiliated at public meetings, where they were forced to admit their "crimes." Many were brutally beaten, often fatally. Intellectuals and artists accused of being pro-Western were especially open to attack. Red Guards broke the fingers of one pianist for the "crime" of playing the works of Frederic Chopin, the nineteenth-century European composer. Nien Cheng, who worked for the British-owned Shell Oil Company in Shanghai, was imprisoned for seven years. She told of her experience in *Life and Death in Shanghai*.

From the start of its socialist revolution, the Communist Party had wanted to create a new kind of citizen, one who would give the utmost for the good of all China. In Mao's words, the people "should be resolute, fear no sacrifice, and surmount every difficulty to win victory."

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese government made some basic changes. Women could now take part in politics and had equal marital rights—a dramatic shift. Mao feared that loyalty to the family would interfere with loyalty to the state. During the Cultural Revolution, for example, children were encouraged to report negative comments their parents made about the government.

Mao found during the Cultural Revolution, however, that it is not easy to maintain a permanent revolution, or constant mood of revolutionary enthusiasm. Key groups, including Communist Party members and many military officers, did not share Mao's desire for permanent revolution. Many people, disgusted by the actions of the Red Guards, began to turn against the movement. In September 1976, Mao Zedong died at the age of 82. A group of practical-minded reformers, led by Deng Xiaoping (DUHNG SHYOW • PIHNG), seized power and soon brought the Cultural Revolution to an end.

 **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

Drawing Conclusions Why did the Red Guards specifically target intellectuals and artists?



▲ This poster urges the Chinese people to give energetic support to agriculture.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**

Making Inferences Why was agricultural reform particularly important to the Chinese Communists?

source a document or primary reference book that gives information

China and the Cold War

GUIDING QUESTION How was China affected by the Cold War?

In 1949 the Cold War spread from Europe to Asia when the Chinese Communists won the Chinese civil war and set up a new Communist regime. American fears about the spread of communism intensified, especially when the new Chinese Communist leaders made it clear that they supported “national wars of liberation”—or movements for revolution—in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. When Communist China signed a pact of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1950, some Americans began to speak of a Communist desire for world domination. When war broke out in Korea, the Cold War had arrived in Asia.

China’s involvement in the Korean War led to renewed Western fears of China. In turn, China became even more isolated from the major Western powers. The country was forced to rely almost entirely on the Soviet Union for technological and economic aid. Even that became more difficult as relations between China and the Soviet Union began to deteriorate in the late 1950s.

Several issues divided China and the Soviet Union. For one thing, the Chinese were not happy with the amount of economic aid provided by the Soviets. A more important issue, however, was their disagreement over the Cold War. The Chinese wanted the Soviets to go on the offensive to promote world revolution. Specifically, China wanted Soviet aid in retaking Taiwan from Chiang Kai-shek. The Soviets, however, were trying to improve relations with the West and refused.

In the 1960s, the dispute between China and the Soviet Union broke into the open. Military units on both sides of the frontier clashed on a number of occasions. Faced with internal problems and a serious security threat from the Soviets on its northern frontier, some Chinese leaders decided to improve relations with the United States. In 1972 President Richard Nixon made a state visit to China. The two sides agreed to improve relations. China’s long isolation from the West was coming to an end.

The end of the Cultural Revolution also affected Chinese foreign policy. In the late 1970s, under Deng Xiaoping, China sought to improve relations with the Western states. Diplomatic ties were established with the United States in 1979. In the 1980s, Chinese relations with the Soviet Union also gradually improved. By the 1990s, China emerged as an independent power and began to play an increasingly active role in Asian affairs.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing Why did Chinese-Soviet relations change after the Korean War?



▲ During Nixon’s visit to China, the United States and China competed in ping pong.

CRITICAL THINKING

Evaluating What was the significance of Nixon’s “ping pong diplomacy”?

John Dominie/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

LESSON 2 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary

1. Making Connections How did the Red Guard help sustain Mao’s permanent revolution?

Using Your Notes

2. Drawing Conclusions Use your notes to describe how communism affected China’s foreign policy.

Answering the Guiding Questions

3. Summarizing How did Mao use economic policies to try and establish a classless society?

4. Identifying Why did Mao believe permanent revolution was necessary?

5. Analyzing How was China affected by the Cold War?

Writing Activity

6. Narrative Imagine you are a Chinese peasant who was sent to a commune during the Great Leap Forward. Write an essay describing how this event has affected your life.