

The New China

China changed after the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911. Under Sun Yat-sen China became more westernized. They did this in an effort to force out the Europeans and Japanese who had established spheres of influence in the country. Sun Yat-sen promoted his Three Principles of the People—nationalism, socialism, and democracy. It was hoped that nationalism would help unite the people against foreign interests and give them a Chinese identity; socialism would lead to greater economic equality, especially land redistribution; and democracy would lead to the ability of the Chinese people to chart their own future.

Sun Yat-sen did not live long enough to see his plans implemented. His successor however, Chiang Kai-shek, established the Kuomintang as the ruling party in China. Throughout the 1920's and the 1930's, two forces wreaked havoc on Chiang's plans. The Japanese invaded Manchuria in the 1930's. And the Communists that allied with Russia. The Communists joined the Kuomintang in its fight against the Japanese, but at the same time were bitter rivals of the Kuomintang in the struggle to control the future of China.

1. Who was Sun Yat-sen and what were his three principles?
2. What are the two forces that were hurting China in the 1920's and 1930's?

The Rise of Communism

A civil war was fought for four years involving the Kuomintang and the communists in China. The civil war split China in two. By 1949, the communists under Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) had rallied millions of peasants in Northern China and swept southward moving the Kuomintang farther south until they fled to Taiwan, where they established the Republic of China. Mainland China would become the People's Republic of China under Mao Tse-tung. The two China's have been separate ever since, and both claim to be the "real" China. Taiwan developed into an economic powerhouse, but lost its credibility when the UN and the U.S recognized the People's Republic of China as the true China.

1. What did the civil war do to China?
2. How was the "real" China chosen?

Mao Tse-tung

Mao Tse-tung collectivized agriculture and industry. He instituted sweeping reform using policies that were similar to Stalin's five-year plans. Most of these plans were relatively successful, and China greatly increased productivity, especially in steel production.

By the late 1950's Mao implemented his Great Leap Forward, in which huge communes were created as a way of creating a true Marxist state. The plan aimed at using mainland China's supply of cheap labor to rapidly industrialize the country. Some historians claim that it was more like a Great Leap Backward. The successes of Mao's early reforms of the fifties were erased, and agriculture and industry failed to produce results.

The period between 1959 and 1961, in which a combination of poor economic policies and rounds of natural disasters caused widespread famine was known as the “three years of disaster.” The famine was largely a result of a series of unfortunate natural disasters compounded by some planning errors. The lack of production and food caused a massive starvation caused over 15 million deaths in three years.

The Chinese economy was in disarray. The first problem he attempted to fix was the military. He had to do this because the Soviet Union no longer supported them. The progress was quick and substantial; China introduced elements of capitalism that seemed to help the economy. In 1964 China successfully tested its first atomic bomb giving them nuclear powers.

To refocus on the government Mao instituted the Cultural Revolution. Many universities were shut down for four years. The students and faculty were sent to work in the fields in an effort to change their elitist attitudes. Anyone that opposed was arrested or killed. When the universities reopened the curriculum was reorganized to include only communist studies and vocational training. This officially ended in 1969. Mao Tse-tung died in 1976 and was replaced by Deng Xiaoping, who ruled until the early 1990’s.

1. What are some reforms that Mao Tse-tung implemented?
2. What was the Great Leap Forward? Did it work?
3. What was the Cultural Revolution?

Deng Xiaoping

In September 1976, Mao Zedong died at the age of 83. A group of reformers led by Deng Xiaoping seized power and ended the Cultural Revolution. Under Deng, the government followed the policy called the four modernizations, which focused on industry, agriculture, technology, and defense. For twenty years China had been isolated from the advances that were taking place in the rest of the world, and wanted to westernize.

Thousands of students were sent abroad to study science, technology and modern business techniques. The agricultural policy of collective farms had changed. The farms could now lease land to peasant families who paid rent. Farmers could also sell surplus goods for profit. The new government also focused on industrialization. Industrial output skyrocketed. Family income doubled throughout the 1980s. This helped the standard of living rise among people. Citizens moved from very poor peasants, to being able to buy new modern technology.

1. Who was Deng Xiaoping?
2. What were his reforms, and how did they improve China?

Movement for Democracy

Despite the achievements, many people complained that Deng's program failed to achieve a fifth modernization: democracy. The leader did not allow direct critics of the communist party. Those who called for democracy were often sentenced to long terms in prison. The problem began to intensify in the 1980s. Many students brought western ideas from their study abroad and began to challenge communism. The economic improvements in the 1980s led to pressure from students for better living conditions and more freedom to choose jobs after graduation.

1. What did Deng's programs fail to do?
2. What happened to people who demanded democracy? Why?

Tiananmen Square

In May 1989, student protests called for an end to corruption and demanded the resignation of China's aging communist leaders. These demands received widespread support from the people in the cities and led to massive demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Some communist leaders were divided on how to respond. Deng saw the student's demand for democracy as a demand for an end of the communist party. He ordered tanks and troops into Tiananmen Square to crush the demonstrators. This was known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Democracy remained a dream, hundreds of people were killed and this was seen as a violation of human rights.

1. Why were students protesting?
2. What happened at the Tiananmen Square Massacre?