



# Communists Take Power in China

## MAIN IDEA

**REVOLUTION** After World War II, Chinese Communists defeated Nationalist forces and two separate Chinas emerged.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

China remains a Communist country and a major power in the world.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Mao Zedong
- Red Guards
- Jiang Jieshi
- Cultural Revolution
- commune

**SETTING THE STAGE** In World War II, China fought on the side of the victorious Allies. But the victory proved to be a hollow one for China. During the war, Japan's armies had occupied and devastated most of China's cities. China's civilian death toll alone was estimated between 10 to 22 million persons. This vast country suffered casualties second only to those of the Soviet Union. However, conflict did not end with the defeat of the Japanese. In 1945, opposing Chinese armies faced one another.

## TAKING NOTES

**Recognizing Effects**  
Use a chart to identify the causes and effects of the Communist Revolution in China.

Cause	Effect
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

## Communists vs. Nationalists

As you read in Chapter 30, a bitter civil war was raging between the Nationalists and the Communists when the Japanese invaded China in 1937. During World War II, the political opponents temporarily united to fight the Japanese. But they continued to jockey for position within China.

**World War II in China** Under their leader, **Mao Zedong** (MOW dzuh•dahng), the Communists had a stronghold in northwestern China. From there, they mobilized peasants for guerrilla war against the Japanese in the northeast. Thanks to their efforts to promote literacy and improve food production, the Communists won the peasants' loyalty. By 1945, they controlled much of northern China.

Meanwhile, the Nationalist forces under **Jiang Jieshi** (jee•ahng jee•shee) dominated southwestern China. Protected from the Japanese by rugged mountain ranges, Jiang gathered an army of 2.5 million men. From 1942 to 1945, the United States sent the Nationalists at least \$1.5 billion in aid to fight the Japanese. Instead of benefiting the army, however, these supplies and money often ended up in the hands of a few corrupt officers. Jiang's army actually fought few battles against the Japanese. Instead, the Nationalist army saved its strength for the coming battle against Mao's Red Army. After Japan surrendered, the Nationalists and Communists resumed fighting.

**Civil War Resumes** The renewed civil war lasted from 1946 to 1949. At first, the Nationalists had the advantage. Their army outnumbered the Communists' army by as much as three to one. And the United States continued its support by providing nearly \$2 billion in aid. The Nationalist forces, however, did little to win popular support. With China's economy collapsing, thousands of Nationalist soldiers deserted to the Communists. In spring 1949, China's major cities fell to



Chinese Political Opponents, 1945		
Nationalists		Communists
Jiang Jieshi	<b>Leader</b>	Mao Zedong
Southern China	<b>Area Ruled</b>	Northern China
United States	<b>Foreign Support</b>	Soviet Union
Defeat of Communists	<b>Domestic Policy</b>	National liberation
Weak due to inflation and failing economy	<b>Public Support</b>	Strong due to promised land reform for peasants
Ineffective, corrupt leadership and poor morale	<b>Military Organization</b>	Experienced, motivated guerrilla army

**SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts**

- Drawing Conclusions** Which party's domestic policy might appeal more to Chinese peasants?
- Forming and Supporting Opinions** Which aspect of the Communist approach do you think was most responsible for Mao's victory? Explain.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Recognizing Effects**

**A** How did the outcome of the Chinese civil war contribute to Cold War tensions?

the well-trained Red forces. Mao's troops were also enthusiastic about his promise to return land to the peasants. The remnants of Jiang's shattered army fled south. In October 1949, Mao Zedong gained control of the country. He proclaimed it the People's Republic of China. Jiang and other Nationalist leaders retreated to the island of Taiwan, which Westerners called Formosa.

Mao Zedong's victory fueled U.S. anti-Communist feelings. Those feelings only grew after the Chinese and Soviets signed a treaty of friendship in 1950. Many people in the United States viewed the takeover of China as another step in a Communist campaign to conquer the world. **A**

## The Two Chinas Affect the Cold War

China had split into two nations. One was the island of Taiwan, or Nationalist China, with an area of 13,000 square miles. The mainland, or People's Republic of China, had an area of more than 3.5 million square miles. The existence of two Chinas, and the conflicting international loyalties they inspired, intensified the Cold War.

**The Superpowers React** After Jiang Jieshi fled to Taiwan, the United States helped him set up a Nationalist government on that small island. It was called the Republic of China. The Soviets gave financial, military, and technical aid to Communist China. In addition, the Chinese and the Soviets pledged to come to each other's defense if either was attacked. The United States tried to halt Soviet expansion in Asia. For example, when Soviet forces occupied the northern half of Korea after World War II and set up a Communist government, the United States supported a separate state in the south.

**China Expands under the Communists** In the early years of Mao's reign, Chinese troops expanded into Tibet, India, and southern, or Inner, Mongolia. Northern, or Outer, Mongolia, which bordered the Soviet Union, remained in the Soviet sphere.

In a brutal assault in 1950 and 1951, China took control of Tibet. The Chinese promised autonomy to Tibetans, who followed their religious leader, the Dalai Lama. When China's control over Tibet tightened in the late 1950s, the Dalai Lama fled to India. India welcomed many Tibetan refugees after a failed revolt in Tibet in

## History Makers



**Mao Zedong**  
1893–1976

Born into a peasant family, Mao embraced Marxist socialism as a young man. Though he began as an urban labor organizer, Mao quickly realized the revolutionary potential of China's peasants. In 1927, Mao predicted:

*The force of the peasantry is like that of the raging winds and driving rain. . . . They will bury beneath them all forces of imperialism, militarism, corrupt officialdom, village bosses and evil gentry.*

Mao's first attempt to lead the peasants in revolt failed in 1927. But during the Japanese occupation, Mao and his followers won widespread peasant support by reducing rents and promising to redistribute land.

### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

**RESEARCH LINKS** For more on Mao Zedong, go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com)

1959. As a result, resentment between India and China grew. In 1962, they clashed briefly over the two countries' unclear border. The fighting stopped but resentment continued.

## The Communists Transform China

For decades, China had been in turmoil, engaged in civil war or fighting with Japan. So, when the Communists took power, they moved rapidly to strengthen their rule over China's 550 million people. They also aimed to restore China as a powerful nation.

**Communists Claim a New "Mandate of Heaven"** After taking control of China, the Communists began to tighten their hold. The party's 4.5 million members made up just 1 percent of the population. But they were a disciplined group. Like the Soviets, the Chinese Communists set up two parallel organizations, the Communist party and the national government. Mao headed both until 1959.

**Mao's Brand of Marxist Socialism** Mao was determined to reshape China's economy based on Marxist socialism. Eighty percent of the people lived in rural areas, but most owned no land. Instead, 10 percent of the rural population controlled 70 percent of the farmland. Under the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, Mao seized the holdings of these landlords. His forces killed more than a million landlords who resisted. He then divided the land among the peasants. Later, to further Mao's socialist principles, the government forced peasants to join collective farms. Each of these farms was comprised of 200 to 300 households.

Mao's changes also transformed industry and business. Gradually, private companies were nationalized, or brought under government ownership. In 1953, Mao launched a five-year plan that set high production goals for industry. By 1957, China's output of coal, cement, steel, and electricity had increased dramatically. **B**

**"The Great Leap Forward"** To expand the success of the first Five-Year Plan, Mao proclaimed the "Great Leap Forward" in early 1958. This plan called for still larger collective farms, or **communes**. By the end of 1958, about 26,000 communes had been created. The average commune sprawled over 15,000 acres and supported over 25,000 people. In the strictly controlled life of the communes, peasants worked the land together. They ate in communal dining rooms, slept in communal dormitories, and raised children in communal nurseries. And they owned nothing. The peasants had no incentive to work hard when only the state profited from their labor.

The Great Leap Forward was a giant step backward. Poor planning and inefficient "backyard," or home, industries hampered growth. The program was ended in 1961 after crop failures caused a famine that killed about 20 million people.

**New Policies and Mao's Response** China was facing external problems as well as internal ones in the late 1950s. The spirit of cooperation that had bound the Soviet Union and China began to fade. Each sought to lead the worldwide Communist movement. As they also shared the longest border in the world, they faced numerous territorial disputes.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Issues

**B** What aspects of Marxist socialism did Mao try to bring to China?



**The Red Guards**

The Red Guards were students, mainly teenagers. They pledged their devotion to Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution. From 1966 to 1968, 20 to 30 million Red Guards roamed China’s cities and countryside causing widespread chaos. To smash the old, non-Maoist way of life, they destroyed buildings and beat and even killed Mao’s alleged enemies. They lashed out at professors, government officials, factory managers, and even parents.

Eventually, even Mao turned on them. Most were exiled to the countryside. Others were arrested and some executed.

After the failure of the Great Leap Forward and the split with the Soviet Union, Mao reduced his role in government. Other leaders moved away from Mao’s strict socialist ideas. For example, farm families could live in their own homes and could sell crops they grew on small private plots. Factory workers could compete for wage increases and promotions.

Mao thought China’s new economic policies weakened the Communist goal of social equality. He was determined to revive the revolution. In 1966, he urged China’s young people to “learn revolution by making revolution.” Millions of high school and college students responded. They left their classrooms and formed militia units called **Red Guards**.

**The Cultural Revolution** The Red Guards led a major uprising known as the **Cultural Revolution**. Its goal was to establish a society of peasants and workers in which all were equal. The new hero was the peasant who worked with his hands. The life of the mind—intellectual and artistic activity—was considered useless and dangerous. To stamp out this threat, the Red Guards shut down colleges and schools. They targeted anyone who resisted the regime. Intellectuals had to “purify” themselves by doing hard labor in remote villages. Thousands were executed or imprisoned.

Chaos threatened farm production and closed down factories. Civil war seemed possible. By 1968, even Mao admitted that the Cultural Revolution had to stop. The army was ordered to put down the Red Guards. Zhou Enlai (joh ehn•leye), Chinese Communist party founder and premier since 1949, began to restore order. While China was struggling to become stable, the Cold War continued to rage. Two full-scale wars were fought—in Korea and in Vietnam. **C**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Drawing Conclusions**

**C** Why did the Cultural Revolution fail?

**SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Mao Zedong
- Jiang Jieshi
- commune
- Red Guards
- Cultural Revolution

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which effect of the Communist Revolution in China do you think had the most permanent impact? Explain.

Cause	Effect

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. How did the Chinese Communists increase their power during World War II?
4. What actions did the Nationalists take during World War II?
5. What was the goal of the Cultural Revolution?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **MAKING INFERENCES** Why did the United States support the Nationalists in the civil war in China?
7. **ANALYZING ISSUES** What policies or actions enabled the Communists to defeat the Nationalists in their long civil war?
8. **IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS** What circumstances prevented Mao’s Great Leap Forward from bringing economic prosperity to China?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **REVOLUTION** Write **summaries** of the reforms Mao Zedong proposed for China that could be placed on a propaganda poster.

**CONNECT TO TODAY** CREATING A COMPARISON CHART

Find political, economic, and demographic information on the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan and make a **comparison chart**.