

(*If you want to better understand Mao as an SPS leader, compare with other SPS leaders; sometimes understanding comes with juxtaposition)

Note: intra-party factionalism/conflict between the radicals (Left; Mao – keep the revolutionary spirit alive) and the pragmatists (Right; Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Deng – development of China; strengthen China practically)

Progression of CCP rule: New Democracy (till 1953) → Socialist Transformation (1953-around 1956) → Socialist Construction (by 1956)

Honeymoon period of New Democracy, where Beijing implemented relaxed policies which was generous towards capitalist, rich peasants, and even the landlords who, though deprived of their estates, were permitted to retain their commercial and industrial interests may have shown CCP's confidence in nationwide support. This period ended with the outbreak of the Korean War. (differing contexts, differing responses by the CCP) – further lack of confidence of support may have come after the Hundred Flowers Campaign (note how the government responded).

Mao's political policies

- **Goals**
 - Consolidation and maintenance of power
 - Unification of China after years of decentralisation
 - Ideology: to create a socialist state
 - To create a one-party state
- **Administrative and government structure**
 - Expansion of control to Tibet and Xinjiang
 - Centralisation of administration during Mao's rule vs. decentralisation from late Qing period (change)
 - No warlords vs. KMT's compromise with the New Warlords (faced a barrage of problems to deal with, warlords could not be dealt with decisively; compare with CCP during Long March where they could)
 - *(continuity) provinces still the basis of ruling over China (huge land mass)
 - Policies:
 - China was to be a **unified** and not a federal state
 - It was divided into 6 massive regions, each having their own military command and which were directed by regional leaders
 - But consideration: large size of the regions means that threat was posed of creating independent regional leaders
 - So a change in administrative structure: 21 provinces, 5 2 regions and 2 municipalities
 - A tightly centralised system was adopted where provincial party secretaries supervised the dissemination of Central Committee orders
 - The government structure:
 - The position of chairman emerged stronger than before because the 6 vice-chairmanships had been reduced to one, Zhu De
 - Below the central government were district or county administrations (see above for provincial structure)
 - The Central Committee controlled executive power
 - ***party-state overlap**: party and government were closely interlocked and all important party members filled key positions in government as well as in

semi-official organisations such as trade unions, farm groups and mass organisations

- o Democratic centralism:
 - There would be popularly elected bodies at different levels of government
 - These assemblies would elect their own representative officials, pending the approval of the higher authorities (*the election part of this process was democratic while obedience to higher authorities suggested centralism ⑦ **CCP still had the final say**)
 - DC also came to mean free discussion in the formation of policy and tight, unswerving compliance to a decision once it had been made, regardless of one's original stand
 - E.g. in 1953 an election law was promulgated that allowed voting privileges to all citizens 18 and above; in early 1954 elections were held, with the village and township congresses electing their representatives to the district congresses, which then elected their delegates to the National People's Congress (the highest organ of state under the constitution)
 - Purpose of DC implementation?
 - Ideology? "democratic centralism" set forth in Mao's *New Democracy*, written in Yanan
 - Power? To placate the people – they have some sort of involvement/investment in governance?
- **Secret police & informers**
 - o The CCP turned China into a nation of informers
 - o Created by local party officials
 - o Neighbours spied on neighbours, workers snooped on their mates, 'watchers' who kept the local CCP informed of anyone or anything suspicious
 - o Those Chinese who had middle-class or non-revolutionary backgrounds knew that such movements would condemn them and were eager to prove their sincerity to the new regime by becoming especially eager to denounce others as bourgeois and imperialist lackeys
- **Propaganda and censorship**
- **Control over other political parties**
 - o The PRC allowed for a number of non-Communist parties to exist
 - o E.g. KMT Revolutionary Committee, made up of leftist KMT members who chose to stay in mainland China rather than join Chiang in Taiwan
 - o E.g. the Democratic League which had always sympathised with the CCP in their struggles with the KMT
 - o But ideologically speaking, CCP recognised neither the concept of a loyal opposition nor the freedom of political parties as understood in the West ⑦ existence of these parties was a façade of democracy; they possessed only the right to agree and cooperate with the CCP and the government
 - o ***creation of a one-party state**: all other political parties disappeared by 1952 due to a set of repressive measures that denied the right of any party to exist other than the CCP
- **Party control over the military**
 - o Roots in the Jiangxi Soviet days (see respective notes)
 - o The Red Army was renamed as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and it came under the CCP's Military Affairs Commission

- **Intra-party conflict** as shown by removal of Peng Dehuai:
 - Peng wanted to modernise the army, making it professional and a well-armed conventional army
 - He also wanted to depoliticise it to focus on military duties and not interfere with political issues
 - Wanted reduction in the military's size
 - Introduced a whole range of military schools and academies to reduce illiteracy and increase professionalism
 - Reintroduced officer rank insignias in 1955
 - Pay scales became differentiated
 - **But Peng was removed as Defence Minister in 1959 and replaced by Lin Biao (*Mao's favouring of 'redness' over 'technical expertise' – Lin Biao favoured People's War)**
- Military used for CCP's aims: unification with Tibet and Xinjiang
 - Tibet, Xinjiang and Qinghai autonomous prior to 1949
 - Army successfully brought Tibet under CCP control in 1950
 - Policies towards Tibet:
 - China sought to destroy Tibetan identity (differs from Han Chinese)
 - Through military invasion and flooding Tibet with Hans
 - Xinjiang reabsorbed into China in 1949
 - Policies towards Xinjiang (dominated by Muslim Uighurs of Turkish origin):
 - CCP stepped up migration measures to increase the Han presence
- **Suppression of political opponents: e.g. through indoctrination process/programme/brainwashing**
 - Process usually lasts from several months to a year depending on the severity of the objective
 - Takes place in a remote controlled camp where the individual, completely isolated from the outside world, is deprived of all sense of security
 - Characteristics of life in indoctrination programme: sense of impossibility of retreat, poor living and food conditions, and the imposition of heavy physical labour (to insure fatigue and weaken the will), study and criticism of each other's backgrounds (*all these happen in the first two months)
 - Next stage of three to four months: physical exertion is reduced; more study sessions are introduced where the focus is to make one understand the insignificance of the individuals and the omnipotence of the party
 - "the works of Mao and Stalin, Lenin and Marx became the new Bibles"
 - "the past is depicted as dark, corrupt and decadent while the new life under the Communist regime represented liberation and progress"
 - Class struggle and the inevitability of ultimate party victory were continuously imposed on the trainees to make them eventually accept the reality that it was impossible to hide or resist as the party would win anyway
 - Indoctrination ends in about four months
 - After indoctrination, a quarter of the graduated trainees will be sent for further schooling while the remaining go into society to organise and lead the public
 - Up to 9 million were imprisoned for thought reform during the Great Leap Forward and the death rate was nearly 10% after 1959
 - Control over the intellectuals:

- Freedoms promised in Mao's 'On New Democracy' lasted only 18 months before a campaign was launched to exert full command of China's intellectual life
 - In OND, Mao had appealed to the Chinese people against the oppressiveness of the KMT's censorship, suppression of intellectuals, brutality towards students, murders of political opponents and increasingly Fascist methods
- In 1957, universities and research institutes were taken over by the government
- Some intellectuals went through indoctrination
- **Ineffective indoctrination?** The available evidence seems to show that any effect was temporary, and that in the end, all the CCP earned was fear
 - Within three or four years, the educated classes of China, on whom the regime was dependent (especially for the First Five Year Plans to kickstart China's economic growth), were demoralised – cowed into obedience, they carried out their work perfunctorily and avoided the risks of offering advice or pursuing innovation
 - In 1956 Zhou Enlai admitted that the pressure had been counter-productive and proclaimed a new and more liberal policy
- **Indoctrination of society**
 - Through mass organisations
 - Based in ideology: a basic ingredient of Maoism is the continuous organisation of mass movements for the attainment of specific objectives predetermined by the party
 - Also aimed to enforce conformity within the Chinese population
 - E.g. All-China Federation of Democratic Youth with a membership of 18 million
 - E.g. All-China Federation of Trade Union with a membership of 10.2 million
 - E.g. All-China Democratic Women's Federation with membership of 76 million
 - E.g. Young Pioneers which was for children between the ages of 9 to 14 and this claimed a membership of 8 million
 - Through mass campaign
 - Through mass organisations, the government indoctrinated the people and organised them for demonstrations, parades and drives
 - E.g. Resist-America Aid-Korea Campaign in 1951
 - E.g. Three Anti-Movement in 1951 to combat corruption, waste and bureaucratism
 - Targeted within the CCP due to the worry that CCP cadres had corrupted themselves
 - E.g. Five Anti-Movement of 1952 – intended to *stimulate the economy* by attacking industrial sabotage, tax evasion, bribery, fraud and theft of government property
 - Also intended to target industrialists and businessmen to destroy the remnants of what Mao called the 'bureaucratic capitalistic class' so that the state can takeover enterprises in 1952
 - *****Evidence of a general trend from 1952: it was clear that after three years of Communist rule Mao felt able to**

openly turn against the classes which had been obliged to tolerate earlier in order to maintain continuity of administration

- E.g. 1966 Red Guard movement during the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution
- E.g. promotion of the new Socialist man
 - People were urged to mind not only their own business but to check on one another's thoughts and actions, to attend numerous political gatherings and to participate in "learning" and "struggle" sessions
 - The NSM was to have no regard for face, be prepared to make public confessions, and put the state before his family
 - The NSM would be irrevocably dedicated to advancing the cause of the proletarian revolution rather than seeking individual advancement or bringing honour to the family as in the feudal past
- Hundred Flowers Campaign, 1956
 - Context: the Hungarian Revolution in the same year
 - Mao's response: the CCP needs to let people let off steam – lest there be a Hungarian-type revolt in China – and it would be good to ferret out the real critics
 - Mao declared "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let hundred schools contend!"
 - Response from the intellectuals: many of them naively mistook the statement to mean a liberation of expression and spoke their minds
 - The severe criticism surpassed Mao's and the government's expectations
 - Mao's response: He clamped down on the criticism and dissent in an Anti-Rightist Campaign
 - Many critics were sent to corrective camps or were forced to sign a "socialist self-reform pact" to renew their pledge of allegiance
 - The government in 1957 initiated a "socialist education movement" among the industrial and agricultural population, followed by the dispatch of the military and civil leaders to physical labour as an example to the people
 - ***overt criticism by the people was intolerable to the regime**

○

Mao's economic policies

Problems CCP government faced when they came to power

- Inflation had rocketed beyond control
- Floods had affected 30-40% of the arable land and industrial and food output had plummeted to 56% and 75% of the pre-war peak, respectively
- **In this context, the first order of business was to rehabilitate the economic life of the nation and restore industrial and agricultural production to pre-war levels**
- **Dealing with the economic problems: attempts at promoting financial stability**
 - Government issued a People's Currency (renminbi) in May 1949, replacing the worthless (remember inflation under KMT?) KMT fabi
 - Banned the circulation of foreign currencies as a medium of exchange
 - Attempts at achieving price and wage stabilisation:
 - Drastic reduction of a "wage-point" system for payment of workers based on the prices of 5 items – rice, oil, coal, flour, and cotton cloth

- As the prices of these articles fluctuated from week to week, the “wage-point” rose and fell accordingly, so that the average salary of workers varied in money value but not in actual purchasing power
 - Similar methods were used to safeguard savings and bank deposits
- The PLA attempted to restore communications lines in order to facilitate the exchange of commodities
- A new taxation system was put in place involving agriculture, agricultural commercial, sales and income taxes
- **Successful:** by 1950 inflation was controlled, from 1000% in 1949 to 15% annually
- **Successful:** government budget was also balanced with ruthless control over government spending and its budgetary deficits were dealt with by selling of government bonds aided by mass patriotic campaigns (**but also helped by the lack of war; previously KMT had been unable to balance their budget because of the war situation from 1937 – CONTEXT!**)

Land revolution and agricultural collectivisation

- June 1950: the Agrarian Reform Law called for the abolition of “land ownership system of feudal exploitation” and the confiscation of landowners’ holdings and farm implements for redistribution to landless peasants
- **Theoretically**, the government allowed the landlords to keep their proportions of the redistributed land, and exempted from confiscation the rich peasants’ land that they had themselves cultivated (as had been done in Jiangxi Soviet; recall Mao’s promotion of moderate land reform)
- **But**, in practice many injustices were committed in local ‘accusation meetings’ where virulent denunciations of landlords and rich peasants took place under the guidance of overzealous party cadres and vengeful peasants – method of mobilising the peasants in ‘speak bitterness’ meetings ran the risk of emotions running high and out of control
- The CCP had two often conflicting aims: **to conduct the land reform justly and peacefully, and the desire to terrify the rural upper classes in order to neutralise them politically**
- **In the context of the outbreak of the Korean War**, the latter was emphasised (consolidation and maintenance of power was seen as more important)
 - Up to 800,000 to 5 million landlords were summarily shot after a brief public trial
 - **The gentry/landlord class was destroyed ➡ establishment of CCP control right to the village level (using economic policies to consolidate CCP power)**
- **Success? The great extensiveness of land reform:** by December 1952 the agrarian revolution had been completed and some 700 million *mou* of land had been redistributed to 300 million peasants
- On the whole, land revolution favoured the poor peasants at the expense of the landlords and rich peasants, while the middle-class peasants were the least affected of them all
- After the completion of land revolution, there was a drive towards collectivisation in 1953 i.e. **focus of agricultural policy shifted: land revolution ➡ collectivisation**
- Goals of collectivisation drive:
 - Raise production,
 - prevent the emergence of rich peasants (destroyed after land reform),
 - achieving greater agricultural specialisation and
 - proceeding faster towards the goal of socialist transformation
- Three stages of collectivisation:

- First and lowest: mutual aid teams where the teams pooled and loaned their implements and worked jointly and seasonally e.g. during spring planting and autumn harvest i.e. temporary cooperative farming
- Second: semisocialist agricultural producers' cooperatives in which members pooled not only their implements and labour but land as well, theoretically still retaining land ownership at this stage
- Third and last stage: fully socialised cooperatives in which all members collectively owned the land
- **Success of collectivisation?**
 - By the end of 1956, some 96% of all peasants' households had officially become members of the semi-socialist producers' cooperatives (remember this is the second stage)
- **Jack Gray: the most interesting thing about China's drive to collectivisation was the gradual development within each stage of collectivisation**
 - e.g. at the first stage: the seasonal mutual aid teams were encouraged to take up simple infrastructural developments between the busy seasons, so as to become operating organisations
 - e.g. encouraged to acquire common property (equipment or a field claimed from wasteland) to move one step closer towards collectivisation
 - **JG: If this policy had been maintained over several years collectivisation might have been achieved with no loss in absolute income to any peasant BUT the reality was that it was when the process had scarcely begun when it was overtaken by full collectivisation abruptly imposed from above i.e. the Great Leap Forward**

Industrial expansion

- ***ideological basis:** CCP recognised the critical role of industrialisation in building a socialist state (look back at what socialist state means)
 - In Mao's *On New Democracy*, Mao stipulated that the economic structure should consist of three sectors: the state economy in which the government should control the big industries, mines, enterprises, and public utilities; the agricultural economy in which individual farms should develop into collective farms; and the private economy in which individual farms should develop into collective farms
 - Of the three, the state sector was to assume the position of leadership and strive to increase production faster than the private sector so as to eliminate possible competition. It was also responsible for guiding the other sectors towards socialism. (affected the goals of the First Five Year Plan)
- By 1952 not only had the pre-war industrial and agricultural peaks been matched, but those of 1949 surpassed by 77.5%
- Preparatory work for a first five year plan began in 1951
- In 1952 a state planning committee was established
- First five year plan was put into practice only in 1955 – due to lack of statistical knowledge and experience – **shows deliberate and gradual development of the economy on the part of the CCP**
- The first five year plan:
 - Based on soviet experience
 - Resources were centrally allocated, including intermediate goods
 - In line with soviet precedent, priority in investment was given to heavy industry, followed by light industries and agriculture last

- within heavy industry the leading factor was steel production e.g. steel target was fixed first and all other parts of the Plan set in relation to it – even the target set for agriculture
- **aim:** to create urban, high-technology, capital intensive, large-scale enterprises
- **shortcoming?** No provision was made for local, small-scale-labour intensive forms of employment
- in agriculture:
 - trade in grain was taken over by the state in 1953
 - farmers were obliged to deliver a specified quantity of grain or of an equivalent crop to state purchasing agencies at a fixed price in order to ensure supplies at low prices to the growing industrial work-force (**aim of the Plan: to support and develop industry; agriculture would take this supportive role**)
- plan was helped greatly by large-scale Soviet assistance i.e. it was indispensable e.g. almost two hundred turnkey factories provided on credit by the soviet union
- Goal of the Plan: by the end of the planned period, the industrial output was supposed to double, the introduction of collective farms was to be effected, and the incorporation of private industry and commerce into state organisations was to be completed – towards the goal of **Socialist Transformation**
- **Success of the Plan in achieving startling economic growth (especially in industry) for China:** the year 1956 marked a spectacular advance in industrial output that topped the previous year by 25%
- **Success of the Plan:** although the pace slowed down somewhat in 1957, the Plan still overfulfilled the original targets by 17% according to the fixed prices of 1952

The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1961

Aims

- Rapid industrialisation
- Development of agriculture (though this was subordinate to industrial concerns)
- Create a socialist state (through industrialisation, achieve a proletariat base in China)
- Assert independence from the Soviet Union
 - From Soviet-style central planning of the economy to a more Maoist-based mass movement mobilising the people for the aims of the CCP on the economic front
 - Tensions had been rising between the two countries
- There was seen a need for a more rapid movement towards collectivisation because the government's efforts had been frustrated by the peasants' freedoms with collectivisation not being complete yet
 - E.g. failure of attempt to requisition grain from the peasants
 - A decision was taken by the government to speed up the process of collectivisation as experience of the previous year had suggested that greater control of the marketable surplus of agriculture was necessary, as the resale of grain to villages which claimed to be deficient in food supplies hampered the flow of grain to the cities
 - False reporting of grain deficiencies was difficult to prevent among a hundred million peasant families who consumed most of their produce and kept most of their stocks
 - E.g. an attempt in 1954 to increase quotas for grain procurement had failed; its only result was to discourage the sowing of grain – so pressure was applied

- However the opinion that pressurized collectivisation was destroying peasant incentives and endangering food supplies began to gain ground
- **There was a move away from collectivisation:** 35000 newly formed collectives were abolished
- **There was a backlash from Mao, who supported collectivisation in ideological terms:** he accused those advocating a slower pace of collectivisation to be acting like 'old women with bound feet' and dragging behind the masses, who he claimed were in favour of collectivisation (Mao losing touch with the ground?)
- **Mao also argued that** China's peasants might never reach the stage where they could afford modern inputs unless they first pooled their resources to increase production
- **Thus Mao was a major driving force behind the rapidity of collectivisation (remember the split in the party between the ideologues and the pragmatists?)**
- **The rapid move towards collectivisation** was also motivated by a widespread belief that popular participation in the process of development (i.e. mass mobilisation) was both socially and economically necessary
- A belief that the sheer will and determination of the masses would trump the need for resources and equipment to allow for rapid economic development

Characteristics of the GLF:

- **Unrealistic targets:**
 - Buoyed by optimism, exuberant planners repeatedly revised the production targets upward in hopes of achieving an unprecedented rate of growth
 - E.g. the steel quota was raised from 6.2 million tons in February 1958 to 8.5 million in May and 10.7 million in August; a general increase of 33% was confidently predicted for the year (1958)
- **Optimism/enthusiasm (from both Mao and the people):**
 - E.g. Mao talked about catching up with or even surpassing the British industrial capacity in 15 years
 - E.g. by the fall of 1958, some 600000 backyard furnaces sprang up throughout the country
 - The early success of the Leap created an euphoria in which everything seemed possible
- **Mass mobilisation:**
 - To achieve phenomenal records, everyone was urged to participate in industrial production and in so doing everybody regardless of his background – government official, peasant, student, professor, worker and etc. became a proletariat
- **The creation of People's Communes in the agricultural sector:**
 - Application of the idea that local communities should take the initiative in self-development
 - However, the populations of China's 2000 counties, now averaged between 300 and 400 hundred thousand people – this was far too large for the actual management of the new enterprises while on the other hand the existing collective farms were too small for the effective mobilisation of resources
 - Thus, existing collectives would be combined together into larger communes
 - The role of a commune/the roles in one:

- It was to be a collective, owned by its members and would make its own economic decisions (decentralisation of CCP control? Or implication is that centralisation would be achieved?)
- It assumed the administrative functions of the villages
 - It controlled the area's agricultural as well as industrial resources
 - It collected taxes
 - It operated schools, banks, nurseries, public kitchens and old folks' homes and etc.
- Was intended to increase agricultural and industrial output through collectivisation
- E.g. in the spring of 1958, piecemeal amalgamation of agricultural producers' cooperatives had already begun in some parts like Hopeh and parts of Manchuria and by July the movement reached a 'high tide' and the term People's Commune formally appeared
- E.g. by November 1958 there were 26000 communes embracing 98% of the farm population
- E.g. on the average each rural commune consisted of some 20 cooperatives of about 5000 households or 250000 people

Economic Policies:

Goals of the GLF, starting out:

- In early February 1958, the GLF was announced for the next three years, calling for a 19% increase in steel production, 18% in electricity, and 17% in coal output for 1958

Positives

- **Considerable increase in industrial production:**
 - The government proudly announced that at the end of 1958, industrial production of the year had surpassed that of 1957 by 65%
 - Machine tools production had trebled; coal and steel production had doubled; oil had increased by 50% and electricity by 40%
- **the simple methods of labour-intensive construction of flood control and irrigation works developed out of winter campaigns of 1957-1958 and subsequent years**
 - although these contributed little then, they have since contributed to the elimination of serious famine in China

Negative impacts

- **Despite increase in quantity in industrial production, there was a lack of quality in it:**
 - In August 1959, 3 million of the 11 million tons of steel produced in 1958 was pronounced unfit for industrial use – backyard furnaces simply did not perform the same function as the giant steel mill
- **Slower economic growth**
 - Western sources generally agree that Chinese economic growth in the 1950s was quite impressive but less so in the 1960s
 - China's Gross National Product rose from 73.8 billion yuan in 1952 to 123.4 billion in 1959, an increase of 70%, compared with 30% between 1959 and 1970

Political impact: good for the consolidation of the Party's power or not?

Social impact: on women?

Reasons for the failure of the Great Leap Forward

Firstly, why do we say it is a failure? Was it a failure in the first place?

- The Great Famine?
- The slowing of economic growth, far from Mao's aims of rapid growth?

Why did the GLF fail?

- **Unrealistic and rapidly increasing targets**
 - Local cadres were forced into promises they could only hope to fulfil by coercion
 - They responded to pressure from above with false claims of success, which misled even the Political Bureau, and committed the cadres and their communities to impossible tasks
- **The political roles of the commune compromised its economic autonomy; it simply became an extension of the Party** – 'failure' in the sense that Mao's aims were not achieved (of decentralisation, in a sense)
- **There was resistance towards the attempt to compromise the prosperous villages to improve the lot of the poorer ones by including both in the same unit of ownership and distribution**
 - the commune system tried to do what had been attempted within the original collectives through the attempt to equalise the assets of constituent brigades
 - it had failed earlier, so it was likely to fail now
- **it was simply too rapid a development to keep up (a break from the earlier gradual approach)**
 - the project came to depend on the massive withdrawal of resources from consumption for huge local investment in grandiose, often duplicated projects, projects of uncertain value
 - these were forced on the peasant communities by local authorities which were themselves under intense pressure from the higher levels
- **JG: the failure of the GLF, actually based on sound economic principles, was due to political reasons (failure to keep the pace of collectivisation and general pace of attempted encouragements to economic development)**

Due to failure, *opposition from within the Party to Mao's policies

- **early on, there were calls for caution:** at the Chengdu Conference, March 1958, it was agreed that the Leap must be concluded with more circumspection
- **but the context meant that the CCP was wary of any slacking in the pace of development plans:** there was a perceived deterioration in China's security with the US deciding to provide Taiwan with modern missiles, reviving the fear of war with the Nationalist regime
 - this, along with little assurance from the Soviets of protection with their missile capabilities
- **mao seemed to realise that the GLF was not working out; at the Lushan Conference in 1959:** Mao admitted he did not understand economics at the time
 - **however**, Defence Minister Peng Dehuai sent a letter criticising Mao and the GLF
 - peng was accused of being a bourgeois democrat and leading an anti-party plot
 - peng was replaced by lin biao; the senior ranks of the PLA were reshuffled
 - this incident stifled intra-party democracy in the CCP

ultimate catastrophe: the largest man-made famine in human history, the Great Chinese Famine, 1959-1962

- one third of China's arable land was stricken with drought and another sixth was flooded
- grain production, which had been about 185 million tonnes in 1957 and perhaps 200 million in the Leap harvests of 1958, sank to 170 million in 1959 and to 160 million in 1960
- the famine killed up to 30 million people
- parents sold their children while husbands sold off their wives for food and cannibalism too took place
- how the GLF made the famine hard to deal with (given the weather problems):
 - the indiscriminate creation of non-farming enterprises continued to stretch the rural labour force to such an extent that it could not easily be redeployed to deal with natural disasters
 - decentralisation to the new communes had made it more difficult to secure the movement of grain from surplus to deficit areas

reversal of the GLF in the changes to the agricultural system – 'cooling down' strategies

- communes were broken into smaller agricultural units
- the growing of industrial crops was relinquished in favour of food production
- peasants were allowed to operate on small private handicrafts and sell products at rural markets in 1962
- Liu Shaoqi decreased the capital investment in industries to aid the recovery of agriculture
 - From 1960-1964 many factories were closed on and there was a 50% drop in employment
 - Mao resented this as encouraging the return to capitalism (*prelude to the cultural revolution (which is important to understand in the context of the aftermath of the GLF)?)
- **Success of recovery?** By 1965 agricultural production had returned to 1957 levels
- **Success of recovery?** Industrial production grew up to 17% output of steel, electricity, cement and heavy trucks more than doubled that of 1957

Social policies

Education

- Aim: use education to support the drive towards industrialisation i.e. produce a large number of engineers and technicians in a short time
- Policies:
 - Liberal arts was discouraged in favour of technical education
 - Many technical institutes were created at the expense of general universities
 - The curriculum was revised and departments within the universities and institutes were reorganised to allow the students greater concentration on a specialty
 - *specialised knowledge in a narrow field was preferred to general education
 - **Success?** Studies show that China's quarter of a million scientists and engineers in 1960 had been trained since the Communist takeover in 1949
 - **Success?** In 1960 China graduated about 76% as many engineers as the US
- Aim 2: increase literacy rates and expand educational provision
- Policies:
 - Schools were set up for all children, except those in 'black' categories
 - Study groups and night schools were set up
 - The 'little teacher' scheme was established, whereby school children visited adult peasants and workers and shared their learning
 - Chinese characters were simplified for quick learning

- Pinyin was approved by the National People's Congress and in 1964 the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language released an official list of 2238 simplified Chinese characters (!!!)
- **Success?**
 - Literacy rates increased, reaching 50% of the population in 1960, 66% in 1964 and 70% by 1976
 - By 1957, most village children had some primary education and the number in secondary education had almost tripled
 - **But** education was neither compulsory nor free and was never a budget priority
 - **a big but** – during the Cultural Revolution most schools and universities closed down; teachers were persecuted against

Women's policies

a note about ideology:

- **ideology only becomes appealing or relevant in a certain context**
- **if the situation necessitates abandoning or postponing key parts of an ideology, the leader/party/government must be prepared to adjust or adapt ideology to the changing circumstances to be able to attain or retain power**
- **ideology which impedes the goal of gaining power will be abandoned or ignored in the quest for power i.e. power is paramount**

a note about less radical women's policies during the yenan period:

- **the priority of the CCP was to survive and if possible expand its power**
- **in this context, it was reluctant to do anything that might prove socially divisive and erode its sources of support**

to understand the significant changes brought by the CCP's women's policies, we must understand what came before:

- traditionally, women had been expected to stay at home and to obey their menfolk while the practices of concubinage, foot binding and arranged marriages gave women a second-class status

positive changes brought about in women's lives by CCP policies

- from 1950, the traditional practice of killing unwanted baby girls was officially outlawed
- footbinding was outlawed
- the 1950 Marriage Law forbade arranged marriages and child betrothals, the payment of dowries and concubinage
- official registration for marriage was introduced
- new laws made divorce permissible by mutual consent or on the complaint of either husband or wife
 - there was a huge increase in the number of divorces – 1.3 million divorce petitions were filed in 1953, many from ill-treated wives
- those who had been subject to an arranged marriage were allowed to petition for divorce
- in 1953 the Election Law gave women the right to vote and some joined the government and PLA – **political empowerment of women**
 - women provided 13% of the party membership and 14-23% of the deputies in the National People's Congress between 1954 and 1975

- o even though this may be a small proportion, *it marked a significant break from what came before, in which women were discouraged from public life (Context!)
- women were encouraged to actively train for jobs formerly held by men only
 - o the number of women in work increased from 8% to 32%
- in the 1950s, laws gave women the same property rights as men
 - o some were even granted land in their own name in the redistributions that followed the campaign against landlords (see earlier part about economic policies)
- in the communes (especially during GLF)
 - o communal eating and shared cleansing released women from traditional household chores
 - o in the larger factories in the towns, communal nurseries and kindergartens allowed them to escape child minding and return to work
- **these new laws theoretically gave women greater say over their lives and protected the rights of women**

drawbacks of the women's policies

- jobs for women could be physically demanding
 - o terrible conditions were experienced under the pressure of the GLF
- many women had to act as both workers and mothers
 - o *the traditional conception of the woman as housewife had not disappeared
- Interestingly, in Muslim and rural areas, government interference was resented and arranged marriages continued

Assessment of women's policies

- It is true that implementation of the programme was hindered because of fear of alienating male peasants and the priorities of a predominantly male leadership, and in the pre-1949 days the constant military danger to the communist areas
- However, there were certain achievements:
 - o The message of sexual/gender equality and the reform of family relationships was heard in the rural areas of northwestern China almost for the first time