

The Cold War: Reading Essentials and Study Guide: Lesson 2

Reading Essentials and Study Guide The Cold War

Lesson 2 *China After World War II*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does conflict influence political relationships?

Reading HELPDESK

Content Vocabulary

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

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

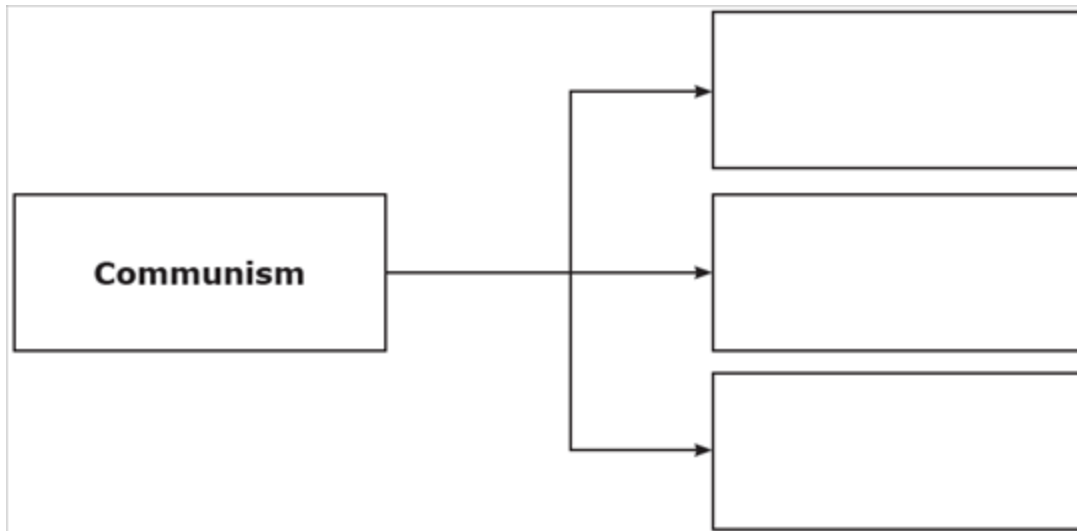
Academic Vocabulary

final the last in a series, process, or progress

source a document or primary reference book that gives information

TAKING NOTES: Categorizing

1. *ACTIVITY* As you read, use the chart below to list communism's effects on China's international affairs.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

In 1949 Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Chinese National government, finally lost control of China.

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The victorious Mao Zedong, a communist, announced the creation of the People's Republic of China. Mao's victory added to U.S. fears about the spread of communism. Mao Zedong started programs called the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Neither program was very successful in 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 was based in southern and central China. The United States supported it. The Communists, led by Mao Zedong, had built a strong base in North China. By the end of World War II, 20 to 30 million Chinese lived under Communist rule. The People's Liberation Army of the Communists included nearly 1 million troops.

In 1946 the governments tried to get together and form a coalition government. Their efforts failed, and a full-scale, or total, civil war broke out between the Nationalists and the Communists. Promises of land attracted millions of peasants to the Communist Party. Many joined Mao's People's Liberation Army. In the cities, many middle-class Chinese were alienated by Chiang's repressive, or controlling, policies. They turned to the Communists. Chiang's troops began to defect. They left Nationalist China to join the Communists. Sometimes whole divisions—large groups of ordinary soldiers and their officers—changed sides.

The People's Liberation Army had surrounded Beijing by 1948. The following spring it crossed the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) and occupied the city of Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek and 2 million followers fled to the island of Taiwan over the next few months. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong mounted the platform at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing. He made a victory statement to the thousands of people gathered in the square before him. He promised that because the Chinese people had fought for their rights, nobody would insult them again or not show them respect.

The Great Leap Forward

The Communist Party, led by Chairman Mao Zedong, now ruled China. In 1955 the government began a new program to build a socialist society, in which land and businesses came under government control. Almost all private farmland was collectivized, or organized under the control of the government. Peasant families were allowed to keep small plots of land for their private use. However, they worked mainly in large collective farms. Also, most industry and commerce was nationalized, or placed under government control.

Chinese leaders hoped that collective farms would increase food production, and then more people could work in industry. Food production did not grow, however. Instead, China's huge population was growing. By 1957, China was home to approximately 657 million people.

Mao began a more radical program in 1958. It was called the Great Leap Forward. This program

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combined collective farms into larger units. The 700,000 existing collective farms were normally the size of a village. These were combined into 26,000 vast **communes**. Each commune contained more than 30,000 people who lived and worked together. They had communal childcare, so more than 500,000 Chinese mothers worked next to their husbands in the fields by mid-1958.

Mao Zedong hoped his Great Leap Forward program would result in a massive effort by the Chinese people. This would speed up China's economic growth and would bring China to the **final** stage of communism—the **classless society**. (A classless society would not have different groups divided by wealth, job, and education.) He dreamed that this would happen before the end of the twentieth century. The party's official slogan was "Hard work for a few years, happiness for a thousand." It recognized the people's current effort and promised prosperity in the future.

In reality, the Great Leap Forward was an economic disaster. Bad weather, including droughts (long periods without rain) and floods, made growing food nearly impossible. The peasants' hatred of the new system also reduced food production. As a result, nearly 15 million people died of starvation. According to some reports, many peasants ate the bark off trees for food, and in some cases, babies were left to starve. The government made some changes in 1960. It began to break up the communes. It returned the land back to collective farms and some private plots.

The Cultural Revolution

Mao's plan failed, and he faced opposition within the Communist Party. However, Mao still dreamed of a classless society. In Mao's opinion, the only way the classless society could be reached was through **permanent revolution**. That is, the people had to feel revolutionary fervor, or have very strong positive feelings or beliefs about the Chinese revolution. They must be constantly working toward that new society. If they did not, they would return to past ways, and they would not achieve the classless society, which was the final stage of communism.

In 1966 Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the Chinese the full name was "great revolution to create a proletarian [working class] culture." Mao published a collection of his ideas in the *Little Red Book*. This book became a sort of bible for the Chinese Communists. It was thought to be the most important **source** of knowledge in all areas. The book was in every hotel and every school and in factories, communes, and universities. People usually began conversations by mentioning the *Little Red Book* and talking about ideas in it. The Red Guards were formed to promote the Cultural Revolution. They were made up of unhappy party members and discontented young people. The Red Guards were urged to take to the streets, or take violent action. Their job was to cleanse Chinese society of "impure" elements—that is, anyone who was guilty of supporting capitalism. In June 1966 all schools and universities were closed for six months. They prepared for a new system of education based on Mao's ideas. Mao had launched China on a new forced march toward communism.

Red Guards went 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 that had revolutionary

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names. The city of Shanghai even ordered that red (the revolutionary color) traffic lights would indicate that traffic could move, not stop.

The Red Guards did not just destroy property. They viciously attacked individuals who had supposedly deviated from, or did not follow correctly, Mao's ideas. Those accused of doing so were humiliated at public meetings. There they were forced to admit their "crimes." Many victims were brutally beaten, often to death. Intellectuals and artists accused of being pro-Western were especially open to attack. Red Guards broke the fingers of one pianist. That pianist had committed 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 wanted to create a new kind of citizen. These citizens would be willing to give the utmost for the good of all China. Mao claimed that the citizens of China should be willing to sacrifice everything and work through any difficulty for the victory of the revolution.

The Chinese government made some important changes during the 1950s and 1960s. Women could now take part in politics. Also, women had equal marital rights. These were both dramatic changes. Mao feared that loyalty to the family would interfere with, or get in the way of, loyalty to the state. As a result, during the Cultural Revolution, children were encouraged to report negative comments their parents made about the government.

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

PROGRESS CHECK

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

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China and the Cold War

GUIDING QUESTION How was China affected by the Cold War?

In 1949 the Chinese Communists won the Chinese civil war and set up a new Communist regime. 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. As a result, American fears about the spread of communism grew stronger. Then 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. Finally, war broke out when Communist North Korea invaded South Korea. The Cold War had arrived in Asia.

China's involvement in the Korean War led to renewed Western fears of China. As a result, China became even more isolated from the major Western powers. China was forced to rely almost entirely on the Soviet Union. China looked to the Soviets for both technological and economic aid. However, relations between China and the Soviet Union began to have some problems in the late 1950s. This made it more difficult for China to get help from Soviet Union.

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. They wanted more. More important 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 taking Taiwan from Chiang Kai-shek. The Soviets were trying to improve relations with the West at the time. As a result, they refused to help China with this task.

In the 1960s, the conflict between China and the Soviet Union became violent. The military of the two countries fought several battles on the Chinese-Soviet border. Now the Chinese were faced with internal problems and a serious security threat on its northern frontier from the Soviets. As a result, some Chinese leaders decided to improve China's relationship with the United States. In 1972 U.S. President Richard Nixon visited China. The two sides agreed to work toward improved 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, Deng Xiaoping wanted to improve Chinese relations with 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. It began to play an increasingly active role in Asian affairs.

PROGRESS CHECK

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

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

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

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Answer Key

1. Signed a pact of friendship with the Soviets; sent troops to North Korea; isolated from major Western powers.
2. They were seen as the elite and pro-Western. They were viewed as not being supportive of a classless society.
3. As China became more dependent on the Soviet Union, their relationship began to decline. The Chinese were disappointed with Soviet economic and military aid.