

## RISE OF COMMUNISM IN CHINA

**Nationalism** was also a powerful influence in China at the end of World War I. Chinese nationalists were able to overthrow the Qing Dynasty in 1912, a dynasty that had ruled China since the 1600s. The new government was called the **Republic of China**, which declared that one of its aims would be an end to foreign control in China's affairs. The leading political party was called the Kuomintang, or the Nationalist Party, led by a man named Sun Yixian. Unfortunately, the new government was not able to either bring order to China or help the Chinese people. Many people were killed as robbers and thieves roamed the countryside. Agriculture was wrecked and many Chinese faced famine. World War I took the attention of most people away from the problems of China, and at the end of the war, European politicians signed the Treaty of Versailles, restoring the government of Sun Yixian and giving Japan control of some Chinese territory.

Many young Chinese were angry about the treaty and wanted an end to what they felt was the failed government of Sun Yixian and the Kuomintang. They were disillusioned with western style democracy and looked to Russia and their Communist Revolution as an alternative. In 1921 a group of young Chinese men, including a young teacher, **Mao Zedong**, met in Shanghai to form the first **Chinese Communist Party**.

After Sun Yixian died, the new head of the Kuomintang, Jiang Jieshi, tried to make alliances with the new Chinese Communist Party, and for some years the two groups worked together to try and bring order to China. Eventually though, Jiang Jieshi and the Kuomintang government turned on the communists and many of them were killed. In 1929, Jiang Jieshi announced the formation of his new government, the **Nationalist Republic of China**.

Mao Zedong survived the attack on the communists by Jiang Jieshi's government and he decided that his future and the future of the communist party in China would be found in the countryside with support from the peasants. A civil war began between Mao and his communist followers and the

Nationalist government of Jiang Jieshi. In 1933 Mao led his followers, over 600,000 people, into the mountains to escape being defeated by the nationalist government. They walked nearly 6,000 miles to avoid capture. This journey is known as the **long March**, and Chinese communists today look back at this time as a sign of Mao's dedication to his cause and to what he felt was the cause of the Chinese people.

The Chinese communists and the Nationalist forces had to call a temporary truce during World War II as both groups fought to keep the Japanese from taking over China. At the war's end the truce ended. Civil war between the two groups raged from 1946 until 1949, when Mao's communists, now called the **Red Army**, swept the Nationalist government from power. In October 1949, Mao proclaimed the creation of the **People's Republic of China**, a communist government that now led one of the largest countries in the world.

Mao tried to reorganize all of China along communist lines of collective ownership of farms and factories. Private ownership was eliminated and production quotas were set for agriculture and industry. He decided in 1958 to organize all farms into large **collectives**, where all ownership and decision making would be in the hands of the government. This program was known as the **Great Leap Forward** because Mao thought tremendous positive changes would follow. In fact, many Chinese farmers did not like the large farms. They missed their own land and because they no longer owned anything themselves, they had little reason to work very hard. A series of crop failures in the late 1950s made everything even worse, and China went through a period of famine. The Great Leap Forward was abandoned in 1960.

After the failure of this program, some in China began to suggest that private ownership might not be a bad idea. Farmers and factory workers began to do some work for themselves and Mao saw his ideal of a classless society, one where everyone was treated exactly the same and no one had more than anyone else, drifting away. His response was to announce the **Cultural Revolution** in 1966. He urged students to leave school and make war on anything in Chinese society that looked like it was encouraging class differences. Many students were organized into an army known as the **Red Guards**. It was their job to single out and remove anyone who was preventing China from becoming a really classless society. Mao wanted China to become a nation of farmers and workers, all of whom would be equal. Leaders in the Chinese community who seemed to be in higher positions were attacked. Business managers, college professors, even government officials who were not in step with the Cultural Revolution were thrown out. Some were put into prison; others were actually killed. The result was chaos. The Cultural Revolution raged on for almost ten years, at which time even Mao himself had to admit it had been a mistake. In 1976 the Red Guard was ended and gradually order returned to China.

Mao died in 1976 and by 1980 **Deng Xiaoping** was named the leader of China. Though Deng had been with

Mao since the days of the Long March, he was more moderate in his ideas about the path China should follow. He began to allow farmers to own some of their own land and make decisions about what they would grow. He allowed some private businesses to organize, and he opened China to foreign investment and technological advances. He found that openness to western business also meant that the Chinese people were also exposed to western ideas. In 1989, when communist governments were under siege in a number of places around the world, China went through a period of student protests that resulted in a huge demonstration in **Beijing's Tiananmen Square**. Over 10,000 students gathered to protest what they felt was corruption in the Chinese government. They called for a move toward democracy. The world watched as Deng Xiaoping ordered thousands of soldiers into Beijing to end the protest. The students even went so far as to raise a statue they called the **Goddess of Democracy**, modeled on America's Statue of Liberty. On June 4, 1989, the Chinese government ordered the soldiers in Tiananmen Square to break up the demonstration. They fired on the students, destroyed the statue of the Goddess of Democracy, and arrested thousands of people. The brief pro-democracy movement was destroyed as well, and Deng Xiaoping was left in control. He held power until his death in 1997.

China still remains a communist country to this day. However, they have made significant improvements in the civil rights for their people. They are moving to allowing more freedoms for their individual citizens, although the government still heavily regulates and controls other aspects of their lives.

After you have read highlighted the important information, please answer the following questions:

- 1) Who was the leader of the Communist Revolution in China? (He held power until his death in 1976)
- 2) What was the Long March?
- 3) Why was the Great Leap Forward unsuccessful?
- 4) What was the period of time called when Mao tried to eliminate anyone who opposed his communist government?
  - a. Who did he force to join the "Red Guards?"
- 5) Which jobs did Mao think would lead China to become the most prosperous?
- 6) Who became China's new leader after Mao died?
- 7) What happened to the students protesting at Tiananmen Square in 1989? What were they protesting about?