
UNIT 16 CHINA FROM REVOLUTION TO REFORM (1949-1978)*

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Post-Liberation China: The First Decade
 - 16.2.1 Land Reforms and Marriage Law
 - 16.2.2 Healthcare and Literacy
 - 16.2.3 Agriculture Cooperativization
 - 16.2.4 Soviet Role in Early Industrialization and Education
 - 16.2.5 Mao's Dissatisfaction with Soviet-style Economy
 - 16.2.6 The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Anti-Rightists Movement
- 16.3 The Great Leap Forward
 - 16.3.1 Politics in Command
 - 16.3.2 The Commune system
 - 16.3.3 Failure of the GLF
 - 16.3.4 Inner Party Struggle and the Rise of Lin Biao
 - 16.3.5 The GLF Moderated
- 16.4 Sino-Soviet Rift
- 16.5 The Socialist Education Movement
- 16.6 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
 - 16.6.1 Ideological Justification of the GPCR
 - 16.6.2 Attack on the Party
 - 16.6.3 Attack on the Intellectuals
 - 16.6.4 The Red Guards
 - 16.6.5 Persecution and Penalties
 - 16.6.6 End of the First Phase of the GPCR
 - 16.6.7 GPCR: The Later Phase and Lin Biao's Rise and Fall
 - 16.6.8 Zhou Enlai Back in Charge
 - 16.6.9 Beginnings of Sino-US Rapprochement
- 16.7 Mao's Death, Arrest of the 'Gang of Four' and the Emergence of Hua Guofeng
- 16.8 The Reform Era
- 16.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.10 Key Words
- 16.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

16.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- * how the Chinese leadership and Mao Zedong in particular tried to transform China from a feudal society into a modern socialist system;
- * the major developments and movements that took place in China from 1949 till 1978; and
- * why the years from 1949 to 1978 is called the Maoist period in China as Chairman Mao Zedong remained the supreme leader and the Chinese state was ruled through the Maoist interpretation of socialism whereby building an egalitarian society was the primary aim.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

On October 1, 1949 the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the military arm of the Communist Party of China (CPC) defeated the Guomindang (Kuomintang) army led by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang-Kaishek), after a long civil war and established the People's Republic of China. The Guomindang fled to the island province of Taiwan, which has continued to be *de facto* independent of the control of the PRC. The head of the CPC Chairman Mao Zedong delivered a speech at the symbolic Tiananmen (Gate of Heavenly Peace) Square in which he said "China has stood up". This Unit introduces you to the developments in China from 1949 to 1978.

16.2 POST-LIBERATION CHINA: THE FIRST DECADE

China's liberation, as proclaimed by the CPC was achieved after a long struggle against feudalism and imperialism. The immediate task of the new government was to begin the reconstruction of a country ruined by a long war against the Japanese and a divisive civil war. A Central People's Government was set up in Beijing (Peking) to carry out administrative work. Gradually, the administrative offices were re-established at all levels. Roads, bridges, railway lines, buildings which had been destroyed were re-built. The, then, Soviet Union which supported the CPC during the civil war and earlier came forward with a massive aid programme to help rebuild China. Never in the history of international relations has one nation helped another economically to the extent the Soviet Union helped China.

16.2.1 Land Reforms and Marriage Law

As the Chinese revolution was essentially a peasant revolution the CPC's commitment to the peasantry required it to improve the livelihood of the rural masses and address crucial issues of disparity, exploitation and abject poverty in the countryside. Between 1950 to 1952 a massive land reforms campaign was carried out throughout rural China. Named the Land Revolution this movement helped eliminate the existing sharp inequalities in rural China. However, it was accompanied by large-scale violence. Many rich landowners were officially executed or killed by locals during the implementation of land reforms.

An important measure adopted in 1950 was the passing of the Marriage Law intended to help poor peasant women. Chinese women, as in India then, had no security in terms of economic resources and were totally dependent on their male family members. In the rural area particularly, wives were often abandoned and had no legal recourse. The Marriage Law, therefore, provided women security and dignity within the family and society. Land reforms along with the Marriage Law helped in the transformation of rural China giving rights to the underprivileged.

16.2.2 Healthcare and Literacy

In the first decade of Liberation in areas of basic healthcare and literacy remarkable efforts were made which showed positive results. Preventive medicines and healthcare centres in villages brought down the mortality and morbidity rates drastically. Maternity and childcare benefits were provided to women during pregnancy, childbirth and in the early stages of child rearing. A large number of peasants were trained in a short span of time to work as paramedics in the countryside. Called *barefoot doctors* they provided primary healthcare to the rural folk for whom hospitals were often far away. Basic education and literacy were promoted in the rural areas and the peasantry which had been by and large illiterate received both formal and non-formal education and literacy rates in rural China shot up from 5 per cent to more than 50 per cent in one decade. Anti-illiteracy campaigns were carried out with great zeal by the front organizations of the CPC including the women's associations and youth and peasant organizations. The countryside and its women became the chief targets of literacy campaigns. Subsequently, a large number of primary schools were established leading to high levels of literacy all across China that we see today.

16.2.3 Agriculture Co-operativization

After land reforms which were completed by 1952 the CPC introduced co-operatives in the villages of China. First the 'Mutual Aid Teams' were formed whereby 4 to 5 families would pool in their land and help each other on their fields. In the next stage lower Agriculture Producers' Cooperatives (APCs) replaced the Mutual Aid Teams and these had 20 to 30 families pooling in their land, tools and labour. Within a couple of years the lower APCs were dismantled and in their place came the higher APCs with 200-300 households pooling in their assets for farming. Almost in the entire countryside the Agriculture Producers' Cooperatives were set up. In 1956 it was declared that 'transition to socialism' has taken place in rural China.

16.2.4 Soviet Role in Early Industrialization and Education

The First Five-Year Plan (1953-57) under Soviet guidance to industrialize China is believed to have been a great success. Numerous factories were set up and many infra-structure projects were undertaken. For all these capital, expertise and technology came from the Soviet Union. Soviet experts were sent to every branch of government and across China. For example, the top official positions in the Ministry of Education were held by Russians and the Chinese worked under them. Russian became China's second language. At Soviet instance the higher education system was also overhauled. Numerous technical training institutions at the tertiary level were set up to train a workforce for the coming

industrialization. The structure of higher education was rationalized by merging many universities and colleges.

16.2.5 Mao's Dissatisfaction with Soviet Style Economy

However, in the early years some problems appeared. This is indicated by the fact that the CPC itself, at the instance of Chairman Mao Zedong, launched the so-called "3-Anti" and "5-Anti" campaigns. These were essentially campaigns against corruption, waste, inefficiency, and the bureaucracy. The Soviet model of development which was to ensure speedy growth was creating inequality in Chinese society and imbalances in the economy. Mao Zedong was getting gradually disillusioned with these policies. In 1956 he attended the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) where General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev in his so-called secret speech strongly denounced his predecessor Joseph Stalin. (Stalin was seen by Mao and many others in the communist movement as a great and undisputed leader and many had drawn inspiration from him). This speech left Mao shell-shocked. His relations with the Soviet Union began to get uneasy since then.

16.2.6 The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Anti-Rightists Movement

Mao wanted to change the course of China's political economy. However, before trying anything he wanted to ensure that he had enough support from his people particularly the intellectuals. Mao always had an uneasy relationship with the intellectuals and often believed that they were not revolutionary enough and hence they were a stumbling block in the road to create a truly revolutionary society. In 1956 Mao launched the Hundred Flowers Campaign. The stated idea behind this campaign was free and open discussion on all matters pertaining to the Chinese nation, the government and the state policies. The slogan was 'Let a Hundred flowers Bloom, let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend' which implied fearless airing of all views and opinions. Launched in mid-1957 this movement lasted for three months when a large number of intellectuals criticized the policies of the government and many attacked the party and its ideology. It was called-off abruptly as in Mao's view the criticism was going out of control. Within days a counter movement called the **Anti-Rightists Campaign** was launched. During this several of those who expressed sharp criticism were persecuted in different ways. Some were sent to labour camps for "re-education", others were either imprisoned or removed from the jobs they were holding. Many were labelled as counter-revolutionaries or rightists. The campaign marked the end of free speech.

16.3 THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

In 1958 Chairman Mao decided to implement a new development strategy as an alternative. This was called the Great Leap Forward (GLF). According to some scholars, Mao did not have the agreement of senior CPC colleagues for this new venture but had gathered support of provincial leaders mainly those in the rural areas. Bitter confrontation with the Party's Politburo took place over the initiation of the GLF. This came to be known to the outside world much later. At that time the government-controlled media gave the impression of complete unity in the leadership.

16.3.1 Politics in Command

The GLF was a policy package in which human effort and revolutionary zeal were given precedence over capital, technology and expertise. Mao claimed that with the GLF China will be under 'Red and Expert' rule which meant that both ideology and growth will be given equal importance. In reality though 'Red' prevailed at the cost of expertise. In other words, politics/ideology got precedence over 'economics'. One slogan in this period was 'Politics in Command'.

During the GLF a large number of labour-intensive projects were undertaken to promote rural industrialization. Certain steps that were taken were not seen as rational by economists. For example, to enhance China's capacity in steel production backyard furnaces were built in millions of rural homes and any scrap steel collected from anywhere and everywhere was put there for the state authorities to take away to factories. For building an egalitarian society doing away with material incentives became one of the objectives of the GLF. This was done through a variety of ways. For example, for farm labourers who did more work and performed better moral incentives were offered. Instead of increase in wages they would be declared as 'model workers' by the state authorities. In order to bring about parity in rural incomes sideline occupations of farmers were done away with. Like in all rural societies during the off-season in agriculture farmers supplement their income by engaging in tasks like poultry farming, growing vegetables, fishing, handicrafts, etc. This meant that farmers' income was to come only from agricultural tasks.

16.3.2 The Commune System

The main component of the GLF was the establishment of Rural Communes in the Chinese countryside. The commune-system had a three-tier structure – Production Team, Production Brigade and Commune. A Production Team comprised of about 20-50 households and was the lowest economic unit. These households had to pool their land and cultivation. The crop would be sold to the state at a fixed price. The income, after deducting taxes, would be distributed to each working member of the Team on the basis of work-points earned by them. Work-points were awarded according to a pre-determined system by a work-point recorder who would be a Team member and also a party cadre. Work-points were also assigned based on the principle of egalitarianism to ensure that the income difference between farm workers was minimized. Every production team had a party committee whose task was to administer the entire process of production and income distribution.

Above the production team was the production brigade which included several production teams. If the production team was an economic unit the brigade was a social unit. Its responsibilities included providing primary healthcare, basic education and housing. Many production brigades together formed a commune which was a political unit. Communes had a government whose main task was maintaining law and order and tax collection. The Chinese government assigned quotas of crop production to each commune as a way to increase production to make the GLF successful. The commune quotas were then divided between brigades and brigade quotas between production teams. At the end of the harvest season each production team was to produce a certain amount of grain. If they exceeded the quota they were given moral incentives like being called a "model"

team, brigade or commune. These steps were taken with the hope that this would boost China's agricultural economy with food production going up. However, far from increasing agricultural production quite the opposite happened. The GLF was a failure.

16.3.3 Failure of the GLF

The quota system turned out to be an important reason for the failure of the GLF in the countryside. To reach the quota or to exceed it many party cadres grew the wrong crops on land that was not meant for them. This resulted in soil erosion. In many instances forest land was converted to agricultural land thus causing deforestation. Many cadres in order to win awards give false statistics for their produce. These administrative lapses notwithstanding what made the GLF a colossal blunder was the persistence of bad weather conditions leading to one of the worst famines that China went through in the modern era. Millions of Chinese died due to starvation and malnutrition. Most of the deaths occurred in the remote mountainous areas of China as food could not be transported to those places due to absence of roads and vehicles.

16.3.4 Inner-Party Struggle and Lin Biao's Rise

Failure of the GLF intensified the conflict within the leadership of the Communist Party. As early as 1959 Mao was criticized for this misadventure. His close associate, a Long March comrade Defence Minister Peng Dehuai, who made a scathing criticism of the GLF was purged from the party and he lost his position as Defence Minister. In his place a younger PLA officer named Lin Biao was brought in. Lin Biao began his tenure by giving a new orientation to the PLA. Whereas the former Defence Minister was making efforts to modernize the army with Soviet support to bring it out of its guerrilla warfare days Lin Biao made it more revolutionary toeing the Maoist line. Ideological indoctrination and politicization of the army became routine. By 1965 all ranks in the PLA were abolished to bring in a sense of equality among soldiers. The PLA was declared a model for all Chinese and 'Learn from the PLA' became a nation-wide campaign.

16.3.5 The GLF Moderated

Realizing the devastation and disruptions caused by the GLF the CPC decided to tone down some of the drastic measures initially taken. For instance, quotas for grain production were done away with and sideline income was allowed. However, it is essential to mention here that the GLF did have some positive elements particularly concerning women. In addition to maternity benefits during child-birth the communes set up day-care centres and mess halls to free women from household chores so that they could devote maximum time to production work and earn as many work-points as men. Such measures leading to income equality gave women equal status within the family and society.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) In the early years of the PRC what measures did the CPC government take to consolidate its rule? Answer in ten lines.

.....

.....

.....

2) What was the Great Leap Forward? Why did it fail?

16.4 SINO-SOVIET RIFT

In 1959 relations with the Soviet Union soured. That year the Soviet Union unilaterally revoked a proposed civil nuclear deal with China and China reacted by ordering all Soviet experts, who were in China in thousands, to leave the country within 72 hours. With the Soviet withdrawal the economic situation worsened as several projects were abandoned half-way and this included the construction of roads, bridges, airports, and shipyards. Translators and interpreters of Russian who numbered in the thousands found themselves jobless overnight. It is said that the famine of 1959-62 would not have killed so many if food could have been transported to them. The half-constructed roads left behind by the Russians as well as the transport vehicles which were in the process of manufacture were of no help. Relations between the two communist states reached a point of no-return in 1962 when during the Sino-Indian border war the Soviets stayed neutral by not siding with China. The years 1959 to 1962 were marked by turbulence and uncertainties. Mao was slowly getting isolated among the Party's top leadership.

16.5 SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Although many of the provisions of the GLF were diluted, the commune system was not dismantled during Mao's life time. However, the economic situation was grim but Mao continued with his revolutionary rhetoric of constructing an egalitarian society no matter what the cost. Mao felt that his socialist project was under threat and to maintain ideological purity of the society he launched the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) in 1962. Mao said that educated youth must go to the countryside to learn, as the slogan had it, 'Up to the mountains, down to the villages'. It is estimated that this policy of 'Rustication of the Youth' (*xiaofang*) saw at least 16 million young people sent to live and work in rural areas, often very remote ones, for an indefinite period. For all young people living in the cities this was mandatory. Refusal would mean not only to remain jobless but be labelled as a counter-revolutionary. According to Mao this measure was necessary as the educated class of China was oblivious to the hardships of the peasants and those living in remote and mountainous regions this experience of living and working with them will make them see the reality of their lives and bring about a transformation in their thinking and they would then become revolutionary intellectuals.

The SEM witnessed many qualified engineers working in pigsties, science researchers ploughing fields, doctoral students digging in hilly areas for road construction and so forth. Work had no connection with one's qualifications and skills. The SEM disrupted many families as husband, wife and grown-up children were often assigned to different parts of the country. Life in these far away areas was extremely hard in terms of food, housing and other amenities. However, on this issue of sending the youth away from the cities there is no evidence of any opposition from Mao's colleagues. Observers believe that had

this programme not been undertaken there would have been an uncontrollable upheaval all across China. A massive unemployment problem was staring Chinese society in its face. In this 'no-jobs, no growth' situation a backlash from the people had the potential of the CPC first losing the people's faith and then losing power. Seeing the possibility of this imminent danger the party leadership went along with Mao in endorsing the SEM.

Despite the consensus on youth rustication within the top party leadership there was discontent over the lack of growth and development in the country. The PLA became more involved in civilian matters. Their officials held mandatory classes for all citizens on political education and re-education. Refusal to attend could bring in punitive action. Classes on Marxism-Leninism- Mao Zedong Thought were held in offices, factories, universities, schools and neighbourhoods. For all working people in China the employing agency was called the work-unit (*danwei*). This offered cradle-to grave services for all. This was very positive in terms of social security to all employed people but was in many ways tyrannical. The work-unit provided individuals with a card called the *Hukou*, a sort of internal passport, which helped in availing facilities like rations, housing, children's schooling, etc. The *hukou* was a household registration system, with ancient roots, that made it almost impossible to change either their residence or jobs.

16.6 THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The rustication of millions of young people to gain experience of the lives of the poor peasants and other underprivileged people in the mountainous areas as well as large-scale political indoctrination in urban areas was not enough for Mao to consolidate a revolutionary socialist society. A more intense and extensive movement engulfed China in the years 1966-76. This was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). In comparison with this movement the earlier campaigns and movements appear mild.

16.6.1 Ideological Justification of the GPCR

Mao Zedong even at the end of the SEM firmly believed that seventeen years after Liberation socialism had not been internalized by Chinese society. He said that true socialism could not come to China because feudal and capitalist ideas have not disappeared even with the economic base being socialist. To fuel this viewpoint Mao formulated the concept of 'Continuous Revolution'. To launch this movement the basic premise was the 'Theory of Continuing the Revolution under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. According to Mao the establishment of a socialist society does not ensure that the character of that society would be revolutionary. Centuries of feudalism and decades of capitalism were ingrained in the minds of people and so socialist ideas and thought become secondary. Even in the period of socialism capitalism tries to stage a comeback. This, Mao said, has happened in the Soviet Union where capitalist restoration (or revisionism, as Mao preferred to call it) has taken place and China is under the same threat. The only way this danger can be thwarted is through class-struggle. The proletariat (working class) has to remain vigilant and carry on revolutionary class warfare to prevent a bourgeois society from emerging by fighting the so-called capitalist roaders. These "capitalist roaders" were none other than Mao's colleagues in the Party – Liu Shaoqi. President and Politburo

member, Party Secretary General Deng Xiaoping, Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen as well as many more who were all senior party functionaries.

16.6.2 Attack on the Party

Mao went to the extent of saying that the communist party itself had become the “citadel of the bourgeoisie” as capitalist roaders have wormed their way into it. In Marxism a communist party is the vanguard of the proletariat but here it was in the eyes of its own leader the ‘headquarters of the bourgeoisie’. Hence the important task for the proletarian revolutionaries was to “Bombard the Headquarters”. Chairman Mao wrote a poster with the above title in big-characters and urged others to do the same and that is how the movement was initiated operationally. The CPC became the major victim of attack during the Cultural Revolution.

16.6.3 Attack on Intellectuals

Capitalist and feudal elements, Mao believed, existed in greater numbers even outside the party. The entire educated class of China was the main stumbling block to socialism because they held on to a belief-system that was anti-revolutionary and anti-socialist. From the time of the Rectification Campaign in Yanan (1942-44) Mao Zedong had been suspicious of the intellectuals and this view was reinforced during the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1957. Mao’s attack and persecution of the intellectuals took a drastic and intense form during the Cultural Revolution.

16.6.4 The Red Guards

The GPCR is considered as one of the most bizarre political movements in modern China’s history. Realizing that Mao would not get enough support for the movement from party members Mao appealed to the youth of China to come out and take on the capitalist roaders. Their task would be to purify China ideologically by criticizing, condemning and attacking all bourgeois elements around them. Since they were young and had uncorrupted minds they were most suitable for this task. Responding to Mao’s call hundreds of thousands of young men and women, mostly students, and some as young as fourteen years of age, jumped into this movement. They were the Red Guards who were from all parts of China, were called Red Rebels by Mao. They were given the task of organizing the ‘struggle sessions’ against the so-called capitalist roaders. Various Red guard groups travelled from one part of China to another free of cost, identified the capitalist roaders in various units and organizations and ordered them to be present in a public place (in most cases in a school building) where a large group would collect and level charges on them of not being on the side of the proletariat and supporting capitalism. Many of the charges were flimsy and some were even false. For example, being friends with a person whose father served in the Guomindang army was seen as a sign of being against the working class. At the end of the session the accused was expected to accept his/her fault and give a written confession. Refusing would lead to severe humiliation including beating and torture in public as well as persecution. Many were sent to labour camps for ‘re-education’, others were imprisoned. Almost all who were called capitalist roaders lost their jobs and were labelled as traitor, counter-revolutionary, renegade, etc.

16.6.5 The Persecution and Penalties

Those connected with the party were the first victims of the GPCR: senior functionaries, accused of following the capitalist road, were stripped of their power, sent either to prison or to labour reform camps for rectification, Party committees were disbanded, and within months the entire party was in shambles. President Liu Shaoqi was imprisoned and died, a broken man, within two years. Premier Zhou Enlai was side-lined in the early phase of the movement. Deng Xiaoping, who later became China's paramount leader, was paraded on the streets of Beijing wearing a dunce cap with the caption: "I am capitalist-roader number two". All these actions were taken informally, there were no official orders except Mao's directives which were very general and vague, often in the form of a poster. Those attacked had no legal recourse.

More than the attack on the party the most devastating effect of this movement was on the intelligentsia of China. Most of the intellectuals, Mao knew, were on the side of development and not egalitarianism and so they were seen in the category of 'enemies of the people', as counter-revolutionaries. During the SEM many among them had suffered hardships living and working in remote and rural areas but in the GPCR they were attacked by Red Guards and the state authorities in the most unusual ways. Many scientists were prevented from continuing their research and their laboratories were shut down on the ground that this research was not for the benefit of the masses but for their own promotion and fame. Writings and manuscripts of social scientists and writers were burnt on the grounds that they were not for the proletarian cause.

Schools and universities practically shut down for ten years. Senior professors and administrators in schools and universities were attacked and removed from their positions. Those accused of harbouring bourgeois thought were given humiliating tasks to perform. For example, some university presidents (vice-chancellors) were forced to clean toilets. Several campuses were shifted out of cities and relocated in remote areas. Degrees were distributed on the basis of one's class background and not on the basis of examinations, which were anyway done away with. Academics and researchers who had just begun their careers lost ten years of their lives. The Cultural Revolution seriously jeopardized China's higher education system.

16.6.6 End of the First Phase of the Cultural Revolution

The first three years of the Cultural Revolution witnessed chaos and violence. Red Guards got free passes to travel by trains or buses to any part of China. They did not even spare China's minority regions like Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia: many instances of attacks on monks, Lamas and Imams were reported. For China's minorities also the Cultural Revolution was a nightmare. Periodically, Red Guards were invited to Beijing to attend rallies where they were greeted and addressed by Mao Zedong, Lin Biao and other leaders from the ramparts of the Tiananmen Square. Red Guards always carried with them a copy of *Quotations of Chairman Mao* also known as the Little Red Book. Possessing a copy of the Little Red Book was a matter of pride for the Red Guards (and later for Maoist groups the world over). Mao had relied upon Red Guards to usher in a truly revolutionary society but within a couple of years of their activism they split into factions and groups. Each Red Guard group wanted to show that it was more Maoist than the other. In 1968 pitched battles

broke out on the streets of Beijing and Shanghai creating a massive law and order issue. The civilian police, also in a disarray due to attacks on its senior officials, was unable to handle the situation. To bring about order Mao had no other choice but to use the PLA to restore normalcy. An already politicized PLA swung into action and disbanded all Red Guard groups in 1969. China came under PLA rule. The party and government were in shambles and there was no other institution except the PLA to take charge of China.

16.6.7 GPCR: The Later Phase and Lin Biao's Rise and Fall

Earlier in 1968 it was announced that Marshall Lin Biao would succeed Mao. This shocked the entire world and particularly the Maoist movements outside China as communist parties do not announce successors before a leader's death. This meant a greater role of the Chinese army in civilian affairs. The shattered party committees were re-organized as revolutionary committees but with strong PLA representation. The party was restored by the Ninth Congress of the CPC, August 1969, where Lin Biao announced that the GPCR had been successfully concluded. In his Report to the Congress Lin reiterated the theory of Continuous Revolution as China's guiding ideology. It was also stated that China requires many more cultural revolutions before it becomes a truly socialist society.

The chaotic and turbulent part of the GPCR was over by 1969 but the policies and measures adopted in the movement continued to be followed till 1976 when Mao died. With the entire party apparatus in disarray the affairs of the Chinese state was taken over by an "extra-constitutional authority" so to speak. Lin Biao was opposed by the Shanghai radicals, a group that included Mao's fourth wife, Jiang Qing, and a power struggle ensued between 1970-1971. In September 1971 the Chinese media informed the world that Lin Biao had staged an abortive coup against Chairman Mao, and had died in a plane crash while trying to flee to the Soviet Union. There were very few takers of this story. The accepted interpretation was that the PLA chief and Defence Minister was reluctant to share power with the Shanghai Radicals, was stripped of his powers and asked to leave the country in a plane and as it flew over Inner Mongolia it was shot down.

16.6.8 Zhou Enlai Back in Charge

Major changes were taking place in China and in the international arena in the first half of the 1970s. Seeing the massive disorder in China Mao brought back Zhou Enlai into administrative and foreign affairs. Although the Chinese Premier had never been ousted from power like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping (probably because of Mao's personal affection for him) he was sidelined in the initial years of the GPCR. At this juncture when everything was chaotic Zhou Enlai played a crucial role in the reconstruction of China's administrative system as well as the party apparatus. A process of rehabilitation of those attacked and disgraced during the Red Guard onslaught was initiated. Many party cadres who had lost their positions were brought back. Deng Xiaoping who had the reputation of being an organization man was one of those re-instated. (It is said that the Cultural Revolution Group was uneasy with Deng's rehabilitation and after Zhou Enlai's demise purged him once again in April 1976). Mao realizing that support of the intelligentsia was required if the country has to progress decided to also rehabilitate a large number of intellectuals.

16.6.9 Beginnings of Sino-US Rapprochement

Premier Zhou Enlai had vast experience in foreign policy and Mao needed him at a crucial time. After a brief war with the Soviet Union relations between the two countries were severely strained. The Chinese accused the Soviets of being an imperialist power too and China's imminent enemy. In 1971 China joined the United Nations as a permanent member with Taiwan (Republic of China) losing that position. In 1972 US president Richard Nixon made a semi-official visit to China. This was the beginning of Sino-U.S. rapprochement and by late 1978 diplomatic relations was established. China's trade and economic relations with the western world increased as did as people-to-people contacts but relations with the Soviet Union remained sour.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Give a brief account of the Socialist education movement.

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Discuss in ten lines the ideological stand behind the Cultural Revolution.

.....

.....

.....

.....

16.7 MAO'S DEATH: ARREST OF THE GANG OF FOUR AND EMERGENCE OF HUA GUOFENG

Mao Zedong died in September 1976 and within a few days all four members of the Cultural Revolution Group were arrested and put behind bars. They were then called the 'Gang of Four'. For Mao's successor a relatively lesser known provincial leader Hua Guofeng was appointed party chairman. Earlier in the year he was appointed as Premier when Zhou Enlai passed away. Observers said that he was a compromise candidate between those who supported the development model and the ones who wanted to hold on to Mao's egalitarian model. Hua was for a very short time chairman of the Military Affairs Commission (now called the Central Military Commission). No Chinese leader has so far held all three positions simultaneously. Once the Gang of Four was eliminated Deng Xiaoping returned to power but did not take any senior position.

16.8 THE REFORM ERA

In 1977 Hua Guofeng made it clear, at the Party's Eleventh Congress that he

would toe the Maoist line in policy matters when he said that “class-struggle is the key link”. The real breakthrough in China’s political history came in December 1978 when at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress Deng Xiaoping, who was only a Vice-Premier announced that China was henceforth going to follow the path of Four Modernizations. These were the modernizations of Industry, Agriculture, Science and Technology and national Defence. This implied a fundamental shift in policies. Mao’s egalitarianism was to give way to development. The four Modernizations later were renamed as Reform and Opening Up. This has policy has transformed China completely. Within three decades of pursuing massive economic growth and development China has become the world’s second largest economy, ahead of Japan and just behind the United States in terms of GDP. In the post-1978 era the Chinese state and society has gone through relative stability. Except for the Tiananmen Square tragedy no major upheaval has taken place. China’s legal system was strengthened and education, particularly higher education got a major boost with government support. Rapid economic development, however, has come with a price as some major issues have emerged in the last two decades which include regional imbalance, environmental degradation, rural-urban divide, corruption, income inequality, gender discrimination, among others.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Give a brief assessment of the Post-Mao reforms in China.

.....

.....

.....

16.9 LET US SUM UP

Since liberation we have seen two diametrically opposite Chinas. In the period up to 1978 we see first reconstruction and modest development under Soviet aegis. Land Reforms and Agricultural Co-operativization were implemented. Literacy and basic healthcare improved remarkably. Since the 1957 one witnesses a turbulent China when inner-party struggle is the norm but Mao being the supreme leader controls the state apparatus. His egalitarian policies become an impediment to growth and development. The Hundred Flowers Movement, the Anti-rightists Campaign, the Great Leap Forward, the Socialist Education Movement and finally the Cultural Revolution were all efforts to promote Maoist ideals of a true socialist state. The leadership that took over after Mao abandoned all these policies and adopted a development model which today has made China the second largest economy of the world.

16.10 KEY WORDS

- Egalitarianism** : Equality
- Proletarian:** : Of the working class
- Turbulent** : Disorderly and disturbing
- Rapprochement** : Initiation of normal relations

16.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 16.2
- 2) See Section 16.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 16.5
- 2) See Section 16.6

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 16.8

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS COURSE

- 1) Rana Mitter: *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction*
- 2) Immanuel C. Y. Hsu: *The Rise of Modern China*
- 3) Jean Chesneaux, (et al): *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*
- 4) Hu Sheng: *Imperialism and Chinese Politics*
- 5) Jack Gray: *Rebellions and Revolutions; China from the 1800s to the 1980s*