The New Society

Founding of the People’s Republic of China, October 1, 1949

Land Reform, 1946-1956

Korean War, 1950-1953

Chinese Communist Party 共産党 (CCP): founded in the French Concessions area in Shanghai in 1921; encouraged to work within the Guomindang party structure during the years of the First United Front; after the purge of the leftists in 1927, the party switches to a rural approach to revolution; CCP decimated in Shanghai by 1931; undertakes in the Long March from 1934-1935, which becomes a formative experience for the Party leadership; enters the Second United Front with the GMD to fight the War against Japan; emerges victorious from the Civil War in 1949.

ganbu (Party cadres)

The New Marriage Law: promulgated in 1950; one of the first act of legislation produced under the PRC; gave women the right to divorce and own property in their own right.


Danwei (work unit): place of work in post-1949 China; functioned as an employer and also proved housing and social services for its employees.

Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976): son of a landlord from Hunan; became an early member of the CCP under the influence of Li Daozhao; worked at the Library at Peking University; after 1927, he advocated a peasant line of revolution; rose to leadership in the party in the 1930s during the formative experience of the Long March; established the People’s Republic of China in 1949; the supreme political leader in China until his death in 1976.

Peng Dehuai 彭德懷 (1898-1974): communist general; leader of the Chinese forces in the Korean War; veteran of the Long March; becomes an outspoken critic of Mao’s Great Leap Forward policies in 1959; purged from the Party for his criticisms.

General Douglas Macarthur (1880-1964): US general in charge of US involvement in the Korean War; argued for dropping 6 atom bombs along the border between North Korea and China; later recalled from his post for his overly zealous pursuit of the war.

“lean to one side” policy: Policy of allying with the USSR against the Western nations during the 1950s; the choice according to Mao was between socialism and imperialism; Mao chose to “lean to the side” of socialism.

Political campaigns of the 1950s:

“Resist America, Aid Korea” (1950): mass mobilization to encourage support for the war effort in Korea; first of four major campaigns in the 1950s; sets the prototype for later mass mobilizations; helps to generate widespread support for the fledgling PRC.

“Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries” (1951): aimed to root out Guomindang sympathizers, secret-society members, and religious-sect adherents; thousands arrested and executed during this campaign.
“Three Anti Campaign” (1951): aimed to eliminate the three vices of “corruption, waste, and obstructionist bureaucracy among Party members.

“Five Anti Campaign” (1952): launched against industrialists and businessmen; ended the independent operation of capitalists and helped consolidate CCP power over the economy.

“Hundred Flowers Movement” (1956-57): brief period of liberalization during which Mao called for the “blooming of a hundred flowers and the contending of a hundred schools of thought”; begun when Mao publishes an article on “The Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People”; encouraged intellectuals to criticize the Party; response exceeded government expectation and was then cut off. Those who did speak out were labeled as Rightists and jailed or sent to the countryside for ‘re-education.”

“Anti-Rightist Campaign” (1957): Begins in June 1957; represents a major attack on intellectuals and anyone who spoke out against the Party in the Hundred Flowers Movement. Many of those labeled as Rightists were again attacked during the Cultural Revolution. Hobbles the voices of intellectuals in PRC.