

MAOISM



Who was Chairman Mao? What is Maoism?

Mao Zedong, or Chairman Mao, was a Chinese communist and the founding father of the People's Republic of China. His way of thinking was very similar to Marxism-Leninism (a communist ideology adopted by the Soviet Union and other states during the Cold War with the basic belief that, to achieve communism, there needed to be a revolutionary, military/vanguard party, to lead the working class in overthrowing capitalism - followed by a dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e. the working class). The other main principle of Marxism-Leninism is anti-imperialism and oppression, and the view that the developing world and its exportation of capital is all part of imperialism (conquest)) but his views and policies concerning the Chinese Revolution are known specifically as Maoism.

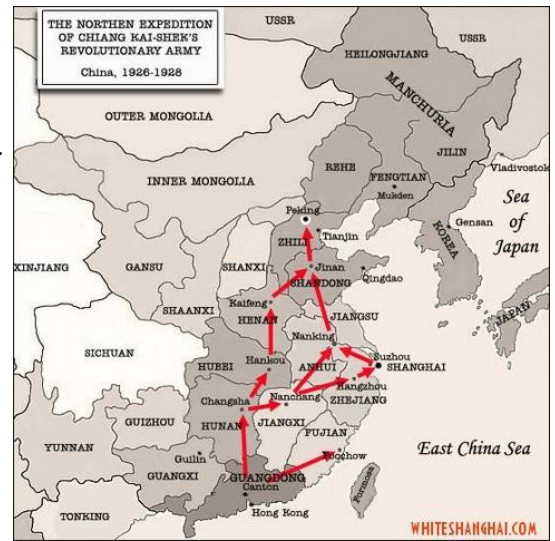
Mao's Life and the Course of Maoism?

Mao was born in 1893 in Shaoshan, Hunan. He was the son of a prosperous peasant farmer, and developed a nationalist and anti-imperialist outlook early in life. He was interested in military history and read widely, though his political views were mainly shaped by local protests. Mao grew up exposed to republicanism (the Xinhai Revolution, for example, was based in Changsha, where Mao attended middle school - in this revolution, the army rose against the governor, leaving the city in republican control (the people as opposed to an emperor)) and joined the rebel army as a private soldier (though was not involved in fighting). When the monarchy was abolished in a compromise between the Northern provinces, who were loyal to the emperor, and the rebels, the Republic of China was created, with monarchist general Yuan as president. Mao resigned from the army. He discovered socialism (the idea of social ownership) from newspaper articles, though was not fully convinced by the idea. He continued to study and read, and eventually went to study to be a teacher. His professor encouraged him to read a radical Nationalist newspaper, New Youth. Mao published his first article in New Youth in 1917, and joined a revolutionary group called the Society for the Study of Wang Fuzhi. He went on to, along with other young revolutionaries, from the Renovation of the People Study Society. After graduating, he continued to partake in revolutionary activities. Some key notes from his life follow:

- While working at Peking University Mao became more and more radical. He was influenced by Peter Kropotkin's anarchism and like many Chinese anarchists, called for complete social revolution in social relations and family structure (1919).
- He began teaching history at a primary school in Changsha and organised protests against the governor of the Hunan province, who was known for his corrupt and violent rule—during this time there was much protest against the Chinese government's weak resistance to Japanese expansion in China, which ignited the nationwide May Fourth and New Culture movements (blaming China's diplomatic defeats on social and cultural backwardness).
- Mao also published liberal articles, several of which advocated feminist views—influenced by his arranged marriage.
- He visited several regions before moving to Shanghai, meeting and befriending various revolutionaries, including members of the KMT or Chinese Nationalist Party, which was gaining increasing support and power.
- When the governor of the Hunan province fled, Mao was appointed headmaster of the junior section of the First Normal School, and remarried (1920).
- In 1921, when the Chinese Communist Party was founded, Mao set up a Changsha branch. He was one of 13 delegates in the first session of the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. He became party secretary for Hunan and built the party through various tactics, such as founding the Self Study University so readers could access revolutionary literature, and joining the YMCA Mass Education Movement to fight illiteracy, while editing textbooks to include radical sentiments. Mao became increasingly vocal about anti-imperialism during this time (1922).

- Mao was elected to the Party Committee and took up residence in Shanghai (1923) - the party reaffirmed their commitment to working with the KMT. When Mao returned to Shaoshan in 1924, he found the peasantry were restless and that some had seized land from wealthy landowners and founded communes. This convinced him of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, an idea advocated by the KMT leftists but not the Communists. He began studying left-wing texts but had to flee to Guanzhao to avoid authorities, in 1925.

- Party leader Sun Yat-sen was succeeded by Chiang Kai-shek, who moved to marginalise (treat inferior) the left-KMT and communist members, however Mao still supported his revolutionary army, who launched the Northern Expedition Attack in 1926, on warlords. This involved the peasants rising up and taking the land of wealthy landowners, which angered senior KMT figures (growing class and ideological divide within the movement).

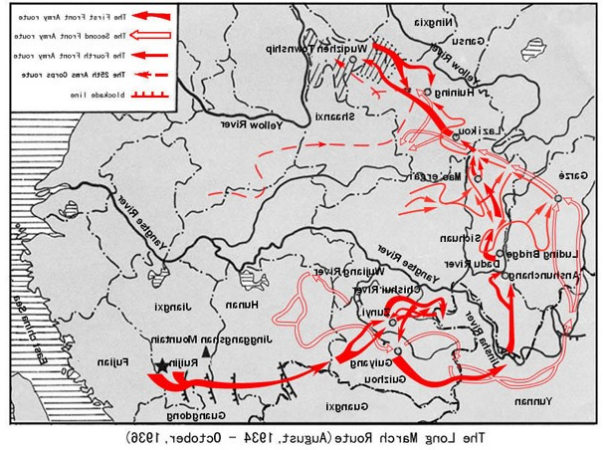


- Following the success of the Northern Expedition against the warlords, Chiang turned on the Communists, who by now numbered in the tens of thousands across China. The CCP continued supporting the Wuhan KMT government, a position Mao initially supported, but by the time of the CCP's Fifth Congress he had changed his mind, deciding to stake all hope on the peasant militia. The CCP founded the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of China, better known as the "Red Army", to battle Chiang. Mao was appointed commander-in-chief of the Red Army and led four regiments against Changsha in the Autumn Harvest Uprising, in the hope of sparking peasant uprisings across Hunan. Mao's army eventually had to accept defeat, though some believe this was sabotage by Mao to allow him to prevent a group of KMT soldiers from defecting to any other CCP leader.



- The CCP Central Committee, hiding in Shanghai, expelled Mao from their ranks and from the Hunan Provincial Committee, as punishment for his "military opportunism", for his focus on rural activity, and for being too lenient with "bad gentry". They nevertheless adopted three policies he had championed: the immediate formation of Workers' councils, the confiscation of all land without exemption, and the rejection of the KMT. Mao's response was to ignore them. He established a base in Jinggangshan City, united five villages as a self-governing state, and built a strong, efficient army.
- In 1928, there was much fighting against the KMT to retain the Jinggangshan City base, resulting in Mao joining with CCP General Zhu and managing to retain the base.
- Mao and Zhu moved their armies, but some troops became disobedient (the CCP became concerned, and, in keeping with orthodox Marxist thought, believed that only the urban proletariat could lead a successful revolution, so saw little need for Mao's peasant guerrillas; key CCP member Li Lisan ordered Mao to disband his army, but Mao refused. Li and Mao both saw the Chinese revolution as the key to world revolution, believing that a CCP victory would spark the overthrow of global imperialism and capitalism. In this, they disagreed with the official line of the Soviet government and Comintern. Officials in Moscow desired greater control over the CCP and removed Li from power. Mao disagreed with the new leadership, becoming their rival.
- In February 1930, Mao created the Southwest Jiangxi Provincial Soviet Government in the region under his control. He also suffered trauma when his wife and sister were captured and beheaded, later in the year—he then remarried He Zizhen, an 18 year old revolutionary. Members of the Jiangxi Soviet tried to overthrow Mao, and the CCP proclaimed the state to be the Soviet Republic of China—though Mao was proclaimed Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, his power was diminished, as he lost control of the Red Army. The Red Army fought the KMT army, who shifted focus to the defence of China against Japanese expansionism. The Red Army expanded their control and Mao proceeded with his land reform program. Chiang (KMT) began to view communists as a greater threat, and his fifth encirclement campaign led to the evacuation of Jiangxi by the Red Army.

- In 1934 the Red Army embarked on the 'Long March' in their escape of the KMT line - those who escape held a conference in the city of Zunyi (January 1935), where Mao was elected to Chairman of the Politburo, and de facto leader of both Party and Red Army, in part because his candidacy was supported by Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Insisting that they operate as a guerrilla force, he laid out a destination: the Shensi Soviet in Shaanxi, Northern China, from where the Communists could focus on fighting the Japanese. Mao believed that in focusing on the anti-imperialist struggle, the Communists would earn the trust of the Chinese people, who in turn would renounce the KMT. Continuing their Long March, Mao's soldiers fought off many KMT and other militia to reach the Shensi Soviet, and Mao became a dominant figure—he was named the chairman of the Military Commission in November, and was the Communist Party's undisputed leader, though he did not become party chairman until 1943.



- Mao's troops arrived at the Yan'an Soviet during October 1935 and settled in Pao An, until spring 1936. While there, they developed links with local communities, redistributed and farmed the land, offered medical treatment, and began literacy programs. He began his anti-Japanese expedition in 1937.
- Mao remarried again, moved into a cave-house and spent much of his time reading. He came to believe that the Red Army alone was unable to defeat the Japanese, and that a Communist-led "government of national defence" should be formed with the KMT and other "bourgeois nationalist" elements, to achieve this goal. A united front was formed in December 1937.
- In August 1938, the Red Army formed the New Fourth Army and the Eighth Route Army, which were nominally under the command of Chiang's National Revolutionary Army. In August 1940, the Red Army initiated the Hundred Regiments Campaign, in which 400,000 troops attacked the Japanese simultaneously in five provinces. It was a military success. Mao also authored several texts introducing Marxist theories and laying down ideas for China's Future.
- World War II spanned 1940 to 1945, and after the war, the US supported KMT against the People's Liberation Army led by Mao Zedong, in the civil war. The Soviet Union gave support to Mao. In 1948, under direct orders from Mao, the People's Liberation Army starved out the Kuomintang forces occupying the city of Changchun. In 1949, Chiang fled to Taiwan, after the KMT suffered great losses in battles. Mao proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China and in the winter of 1949 to 50 went to Moscow, where he formed a treaty with Stalin. He began pushing the Party to reform society and extend control. The United States placed a trade embargo on the People's Republic as a result of its involvement in the Korean War, lasting until Richard Nixon's improvements of relations.
- During the land reform campaigns, large numbers of landlords and rich peasants were beaten to death at mass meetings organised by the Communist Party as land was taken from them and given to poorer peasants, which significantly reduced economic inequality. Millions were killed in attacks, and even more sent to reform through labour camps, as part of Mao's campaign.
- Starting in 1951, Mao initiated two successive movements in an effort to rid urban areas of corruption by targeting wealthy capitalists and political opponents, known as the three-anti/five-anti campaigns. Whereas the three-anti campaign was a focused purge of government, industrial and party officials, the five-anti campaign set its sights slightly broader, targeting capitalist elements in general. Workers denounced their bosses, spouses turned on their spouses, and children informed on their parents; the victims were often humiliated at 'struggle sessions', where a targeted person would be verbally and physically abused until they confessed to crimes.
- Mao launched the First Five-Year Plan (1953–1958), which aimed to end Chinese dependence upon agriculture in order to become a world power. With the Soviet Union's assistance, new industrial plants were built and agricultural production reached a stage where China no longer needed the USSR's support. The declared success of the First-Five Year Plan was to encourage Mao to instigate the Second Five-Year Plan in 1958. Mao also launched a phase of rapid collectivization. The CCP introduced price controls as well as a Chinese character simplification aimed at increasing literacy. Large-scale industrialization projects were also undertaken. He pursued various programs as part of this.



The Great Leap Forward:

'The Great Leap Forward' was the main (economic and social) campaign led by the CCP from 1958 to 1962, launched by Chairman Mao, with the aim of reconstructing the country into a communist society through the formation of people's communes and the collectivisation of the agricultural industry. Private farming was prohibited and restrictions were placed on rural people's life. Mao decreed increased efforts to multiply grain yields and bring industry to the countryside, but the local officials competed to fulfil and exceed quotas, leaving their farmers



to starve. Rather than reporting these disasters, officials blamed bad weather and other unavoidable causes for the decline in food output. The famine resulted in millions of deaths, and though the economy initially grew, it then plummeted. It also led to the greatest destruction of real estate in human history. Despite the risks to their careers, some Communist Party members openly laid blame for the disaster at the feet of the Party leadership and took it as proof that China must rely more on education, acquiring technical expertise and applying bourgeois methods in developing the economy. There was also growing resistance during the campaign. Mao stepped down as State Chairman, though remained CCP Chairman. Liu Shaoqi took over as new PRC Chairman, and along with reformist Deng Xiaoping, focused on economic recovery. It was clear by 1962 the party no longer adopted the extremist ideology of the Great Leap, and held a number of conferences establishing and spreading their changed opinions. They also rehabilitated most of the deposed comrades who had criticized Mao. Mao openly made a self-criticism in the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference, and his ideology took a back seat until the Cultural Revolution of 1966. One key consequence of the Great Leap Forward was the further isolation of China and the Sino-Soviet split that took place during the period. The Sino Soviet split was the breaking of political relations between the PRC and USSR, due to their different interpretations of Marxism-Leninism, in particular Mao's public rejection of the USSR's policy of peaceful coexistence with the 'Western World'. The USSR had a network of Communist parties it supported; China now created its own rival network to battle it out for local control of the left in numerous countries.

The Cultural Revolution: This movement, launched by Mao Zedong, is often considered his 'comeback', and lasted from 1966 to 1976. It's aim was to remove the capitalist and traditional elements remaining in Chinese society, and to re-impose his ideology as dominant within the PRC. With the help of the CRG, Mao began to call on young people to rebel, proclaiming 'to rebel is justified'. He eliminated many of his rivals within the CCP and in educational, professional, and government institutions, through claims that bourgeois elements had infiltrated these groups, with the aim of restoring capitalism. Revisionists were removed through violent class struggle, carried out by the subsequently formed 'Red Guards' (these groups eventually spiralled out of Mao's control, and he would come to break them up). Power was taken from local governments and CCP branches, and revolutionary committees established. Mao's sayings were published into the Little Red Book (written by Lin Biao, Vice Chairman), and Mao declared the revolution over in 1969, though it did not truly end until Mao's death. The 'Gang of Four' were four Chinese Communist Party Officials who rose to power later on in the Cultural Revolution, making major decisions towards the end of the movement—though it is unclear which decisions were made by Mao and carried out by the Gang, and which were from their own planning. The Revolution damaged China's economy and traditional culture, and involved huge massacres, cannibalism and the destruction of historical relics and artifacts. 'Five Black Categories' were given to five political identities (landlords, rich farmers, rightists, etc), and millions were 'purged', exiled, or imprisoned once labelled this way. Schools and universities were closed, and over 10 million urban intellectual youths (including previous Red Guards) were sent to the countryside to 'learn' from the workers.



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In 1978, Deng Xiaoping became the new paramount leader of China and started the "Boluan Fanzheng" program which gradually dismantled the Maoist policies associated with the Cultural Revolution, and brought the country back to order. Deng then began a new phase of China by initiating the historic Reforms and Opening-Up program. In 1981, the CCP declared and acknowledged that the Cultural Revolution was a wrong decision and was "responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the people, the country, and the party since the founding of the People's Republic.



Death and the End of Maoism(ish): It was Mai’s death that led to the end of the revolution. The public went into mourning, and Chinese politician Hua Guofeng used an alleged message written by Mao to become his successor. Though he lacked political skill and posed no threat to the Gang of Four, the Gang’s radical ideas were opposed by many party reformers, and so the Gang of Four were arrested in a bloodless coup, and publicly denounced in 1976. Hua continued to support Maoism, though wanted to reverse the damage of the cultural revolution, while politician Deng Xiaoping wanted to propose new economic models. Party elders called for Deng’s return, and so he rose to power.



Maoism today? Maoist culture and thoughts are still part of life in China today. Formally, they have become part of the current political system—since Mao’s death, the political powers of China have openly viewed Mao positively. For example, Deng Xiaoping, when representing China’s Communist Party (CCP) at a convention on party history in 1981, declared that Mao’s “contributions to the Chinese revolution far outweigh his mistakes” (fearing that completely rejecting Mao would mean the repudiation of the CCP itself). President Xi often echoes some of Mao’s ideas, and has commanded party officials to “forever hold the banner of Ma Zedong thought”



There is also growing and significant support in general society and the public. Millions make pilgrimages to his home, and are nostalgic of the ‘simpler life’ and classless system he envisaged (and there were achievements during his reign—life expectancy in China nearly doubled, and women’s rights and literacy improved dramatically). They are unhappy with the current situation, in which the economy is dominated by monopoly industries controlled by officials—and many do not know the full story surrounding what happened, as certain topics are banned from schools and media. Today, China is an extremely unequal and commercialist society, which conflicts with many of the ideologies the current political powers speak about.



Some interesting terms/phrases/etc:

- The Four Olds—refers to the pre-communist elements of Chinese culture that the Red Guards attempted to destroy—Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Customs. These were contrasted with the Four New: New Customs, New Culture, New Habits, and New Ideas.
- 1989 Tiananmen massacre—also known as the June Fourth incident, this describes the student-led demonstrations held in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and the army troops that fired at the demonstrators to prevent their advance. The massacre occurred amidst the fight for democracy during the time of social change in post-Mao China.
- The East is Red—a Chinese revolutionary song that was the de-facto national anthem of the People’s Republic of China during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. One of the lyrics claims Mao loves the people and will be the guide to a new China.
- Five Black Categories—five political identities that should be considered enemies of the Cultural Revolution.
- Five Red Categories—the five social classes favoured by the Communist Party of China during the Cultural Revolution: peasants, workers, revolutionary soldiers within the People’s Liberation Army, revolutionary cadres (active members of the CPC in good standing), and revolutionary martyrs (family of deceased CPC members and PLC service personnel killed in action).
- Stinking Old Ninth—a derogatory expression for intellectuals, used during the Cultural Revolution, but originating much earlier.
- Down to the Countryside Movement—a program during the Cultural Revolution in which Mao Zedong sent privileged urban youth, many of whom were Red Guards, to farming villages or mountainous areas. Approximately 17 million youth were sent to rural areas as a result. The aim was to reeducate these youth so they could better integrate into the working class. Many students could not deal with the harsh life and died, or used their status and family’s money to bribe their way to a more comfortable lifestyle.
- Hundred Flowers Campaign—this movement, operated from 1956 to 1957, involved the Communist Party of China encouraging citizens to express their honest opinions of the party, though in actual fact it was an attempt to identify and silence critics of the party. Citizens were rounded up and condemned to prison camps as part of the Anti Rightist Campaign that followed (a political campaign which transitioned the country from a democracy to a de facto one party state).
- The East wind prevails over the West wind—a slogan coined by Mao in the early 1950s to describe how socialism will prevail over capitalism.
- Struggle Sessions—forms of public humiliation and torture used in the Mao era—generally, targets were forced to admit crimes before crowds, sometimes in the workplace and sometimes in big stadiums.