

Prescribed subject 2: the emergence and development of the people's republic of C...

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



Prescribed Subject 2: The emergence and development of the People's Republic of China (PRC), 1946 to 1964 1. (a) According to Source A, Mao wanted to start a technological revolution in China for several reasons. Firstly, he believed that after the anti-feudal land reform, agricultural co-operativization, and the socialist reconstruction of private industries, commerce, and handicrafts, a technological revolution would be the logical next step. Confirming this state of mind is Mao's quote about continuous revolutions, " Our revolutions come one after another. " Mao also believed, like Stalin before him, that it was imperative that China catch up technologically in the world as they were behind the world leaders in innovation. Using the United Kingdom as a measuring stick, he states, " Now we must start a technological revolution so that we may overtake Britain in fifteen years. " Furthermore, Mao believed that only once agricultural and industrial productions were increased they would be able to play a greater role in foreign affairs, supplementing China's role as a world power. Finally, Mao did not wish for the party members and the masses to lose their revolutionary fervour and become self-satisfied — Mao wanted a state of perpetual revolution to keep his subjects under a constantly occupied revolutionary state. (b) Although nothing is explicitly stated through this photograph, the rather unusual combination of an agricultural and militaristic livelihood insinuates several points. A point that is implied has to do with the people in this photo, or in this case, the women. By showing women playing a prominent role in the contemporary China, it could imply that they were essential for work in the commune. Another interesting observation that could be made is the presence of guns in the possession of these women.

Perhaps, it could be also stated that their role was being altered to include them in even military activities — a far cry from the ' traditional' child-bearing woman. Finally, it could be stated that since the women are using traditional farming equipment, like hoes, China could have been still deficient in the technology sector. This photo, therefore, may demonstrate the urgent need of technology in China. 2. The hope expressed by Mao in Source A was that the revolutionary sentiments continue to make themselves felt throughout China, with a new technological revolution promptly taking place in the country. Source B supports the idea of the technological revolution by portraying various people, like workers, peasants, businessmen, students, and soldiers coming together into a large commune, " which is to form [China's] basic social unit. " Obviously, as this coming together is a part of the Communist agenda, it not only helps spread the ideal throughout China but also shows that the people were ready for a technological revolution. By preserving this course of action, it is stated that, " industry, agriculture, and exchange are the people's basic working life, " helping ward off the conceit that Mao wishes to avoid. The consolidation and directing of the masses would protect this ambitious and continuously outreaching way of life for the Chinese people. Source C, unlike Source B's rather optimistic and ambiguous account by Chen Boda, is a more simplistic observation of the process of steel-making, an essential step forward on the journey to the technological revolution which Mao so desired. The fact that 90 million Chinese, a figure given to the readers on the heading, were involved in the ' back yard steel furnaces operation' shows that there were widespread roots for a technological revolution taking place in China. Very

importantly, it is definitely notable that the account portrays the people working on the steel furnaces as being very efficient, enthusiastic, and energetic. Excerpts like, " with scores of people bustling in and out of the rows of furnaces, " "...various groups of steel workers who are organised like military units, " " Beside the furnace several men, laughing and joking, work a huge home-made wooden bellows, " paint a picture of a successful precursor to a technological revolution with the masses readily involved in the momentous step forward proposed by Mao for the ' betterment' of China.

3. Source B Origin: Source B is an extract from an article by Chen Boda, a senior colleague of Mao's, in the Communist Party journal. The issue of Red Flag, the publication, was published July 1958. Purpose: The main purpose of this article was to inform the party members of the policy proposing to combine all aspects of life in each area into a communal settlement. This commune was said to embrace work, security, education, daily living standards, and more according to Boda. Although it is true that the main purpose of the article was to inform, there are certain persuasive elements also included — perhaps to encourage the readers into thinking in this pro-communal frame of mind as well. Value: A value of this document is that its originator served an important position as a senior Communist and a close colleague of Mao's — therefore having an insider's view of the party. Aside from the invaluable insight provided by Boda, being in an official Communist newspaper publication and presented to senior members at the commencement of the Great Leap forward, the account was likely to be an accurate view into the inner workings of the Party at the time. Limitations: Like many sources that originate from a person of power, there is always the

danger that the information presented will be persuasive in nature, propaganda designed to persuade people of the benefits that would come in a closely-knit widespread commune system. Predictably, because the source was designed to persuade, Source B does not divulge any potential disadvantages of such a commune in Mao's China. Source D Origin: Source D is written by a journalist and historian. It could be of note that the book's relatively modern publication date and even more recent revision date may have caused a more contemporary and modernist view in this historical source. Purpose: The purpose of this book is to inform the general public and academics of the history of China in that era. It aims to evaluate, assess, and record the events of the times, while striving to stay objective in its perspective at throughout the entirety of the book. Value: With years of careful research sure to have been conducted prior to its publication, Source D has the advantage of having a plethora of its own sources to base itself on. Also of significance is the fact that the author had the benefit of objectivity, with no intention of trying to persuade anyone, as well as many years of hindsight for additional support. Limitations: Although the limitations of Source D are not as hindering as the ones on Source B, there could still be a measure of subjectivity infused into the publication based solely on its American publication roots. Also, there could be a lack of sympathy in the source, based on previous American attitudes towards the issue of Mao's Communist China. As stated before however, these weaknesses are not especially detrimental to the usefulness of Source D. 4. According to all of the presented sources and my own knowledge, the assertion that the Great Leap Forward was, at first, a political success but an economic failure seems

to be quite an accurate one. According to Source A, which was a political document written by Mao and sent out to senior Communist officials in 1956, his aims for the continuation of 'revolutionary battles' were quite successful. Source A conveys Mao's desire to keep the party and the masses in a state of perpetual revolution and based on this viewpoint, Mao's Great Leap Forward was an initial political success. Source B, by Boda, explains the idea of a commune, which was a very significant feature of the Great Leap Forward. The idea of a commune, through which many different aspects of life was consolidated into, was initially, like the Great Leap itself, at first a political success, but was later deserted after being deemed a near-total economic failure in China. Source C is an eyewitness account that depicts the 'back yard steel furnace' phenomenon, an attempt to build and operate industrial functions on a local scale. While hindsight will tell historians that it was a massive failure based on an economical and pragmatic viewpoint, the clear level of enthusiasm and excitement displayed by the Chinese in the source points to a definite initial political success. Therefore, although there was a desirable revolutionary attitude going around at this juncture, because no backing technology existed to support it, the whole issue could be dismissed as a practical failure. While the previous sources were rather optimistic in their depictions, Source D paints a bleaker, and perhaps more realistic, picture of the situation in China. Although the communes had been greeted with great excitement, patriotism, and loyalty, with 600 million peasants joining in Mao's summons — the last time Chinese peasants would do so in such great numbers, despair made its way into the Chinese landscape. Widespread hunger, failed agricultural and industrial production

targets, and a revival of capitalist habits by the hungry peasants again paint a cautious optimistic picture of an initially enthusiastic political success but an untimely economic doom. Lastly, Source E further reinforces the idea of the Great Leap Forward's ultimate economic failure, though in a more subtle style. Although the Great Leap Forward was supposed to lead to agricultural and industrial advancement, based on the sample photo, it appears that this progress was not realized, especially in the agrarian sector. The working women are using primitive cultivation techniques and the guns present a hostile picture of the working environment. Alas, even the guns look more advanced than the supposed 'improved agricultural technology' that was supposed to be realized by the Great Leap Forward. The last of the sources portray a land that has not realized the promise of economic development, although political support could have been realized as per Mao's goals. Utilising my own store of knowledge, there are several other factors that point to a political success but utter economic failure of the Great Leap Forward. The impossibly optimistic second Five-Year Plan of Mao's China represents some of the unrealistic targets that were presented by the Party to its people, as does the impoverished lifestyle so widespread in a commune. The greatest of all points, however, may be the massive famine that killed tens of millions of people due to Mao's overambitious plans. The famines, 'natural disasters,' and other cataclysmic events that gripped China due to Mao's over-ambition resulted in countless people dying in China during these tumultuous years — obviously beneficial for neither communist politics nor economics. As an additional note, the withdrawal of Russian advisors that guided China through its development years and the ill-fated

Lysenko agricultural programme contributed significantly to the problem of the Great Leap Forward. Summarizing all the given evidenced and utilising some of my own background knowledge, it seems safe to state that while Mao's Great Leap Forward had its political glory days near its inception, the economic suffering that plagued the plan greatly hurt China in many ways — and the road to recovery would be a long one.