

Communist  
governments social  
and agricultural  
reforms brought wide  
spread benefit...

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



How accurate is it to say that the communist governments social and agricultural reforms brought wide spread benefits to the Chinese people in the years 1949-57? The communist government in the years 1949-1957 brought many reforms to both social sides and agricultural sides of China which helped and benefited many people. It is accurate to a small extent that the people of China benefited from these reforms which is shown in the early 1950's but the effect decreased by the end of 1957. Even though agricultural reform destroyed the ruling elite which allowed the peasants to gain in land and crops, however there was still inequality within the classes. Social reform generally allowed the women in China to benefit in the early stages as their lives were changed by additions such as the marriage law there was still limitations to these benefits as Mao Zedong and his concubines undermined all the laws and rights women were given. In terms of women benefiting, the rights granted to women during the 1950's were a great success in social reforms compared to the agricultural reforms.

Before 1949, women were sold as concubines, they fell into prostitution, had arranged marriages and little could be done about divorce. However in 1950 Mao introduced the marriage law which banned these arranged marriages and concubines. Women also had equal rights as the men in terms of owning the property, the right to divorce and to have jobs, some even within the CCP. Women benefited greatly in a social viewpoint as women were granted equal pay and those living lives as prostitutes had the chance to start anew and were sent to re-habilitation. All these changes showed a significant improvement prior to the lives they had in 1949. Another way in which Mao

made changes for women was through the establishment of the Women's Federation for Chinese women which was set up in 1949.

This federation protected women's right and promoted equality. But however it is inaccurate as Mao still had many concubine and he did not follow the law he introduced and to him women were still "property" which was never to be let go, and also the fact that in each region the laws and regulations were set about differently so women in different regions were treated differently, some better than others. Another way in which Mao tried to bring widespread benefits to the people of China was banning the use of drugs and getting rid of the dealers, addicts and pimps. Before 1949 Opium was high on the addiction list but from 1949 opium was targeted with the dealers were killed and addicts had to go through withdrawal. He managed this by introducing the Danwei which controlled neighbourhoods watching who goes in and who goes out to make sure things such as prostitution were not happening. The Danwei were crucial in Mao getting control of the public and during this time over 700, 000 people were executed.

Also during the period of the Korean War Mao bought in a system of resident certificates which meant that anyone over the age of 15 had to have one so they could have permission to move around towns and villages. Also in 1953 the new democratic youth league had 9 million members and was set up to encourage mass participation. This effect on the population of China varied between regions so it can be inaccurate to say that all the social reforms

brought into China by Mao had wide spread benefits. \* In terms of land and agricultural reform which started to be applied in 1949 had some benefits.

In the earlier stages it was mainly the peasants who managed to benefit. By 1952 the completion of land reform enabled 60% of the population to benefit and 40% of the land to be redistributed. This allowed Mao to gain support as many of the peasant's benefited from this movement. But there was still inequality as the rich peasants were not targeted but the ruling elite were eliminated by being labelled as the 'village bullies' this involved people such as landlords being beaten and having to be involved in struggle meetings.

This led to village anarchy as many didn't have enough to survive on and 1/6 families suffered death. Again the effects that land reform had on the people of China varied from region to region, and although the poorer peasants benefited to a degree the effectiveness wasn't in every region and inequality was still there. \* The collectivisation of agriculture was introduced as like the USSR there was a need for mass production and the release of labour, however this policy only benefited the Chinese people to a small extent. Mao was aware of the USSR's disastrous collectivisation policy and broke it down into 3 stages. Mutual aid teams were sent to villages in 1951, this was composed of ten or less households in which households would pool together labour and equipment though this meant cooperation between households the ownership of land and products remained private. APC's were encouraged established at the beginning of 1951, in which 30-50 households would contribute labour, equipment and animals in which they would receive

a share in the proportion they contributed. However no APC's existed in south-east China before 1954.

Though it benefited the richer peasantry who were paid compensation for use of their equipment or animals, it gave little incentive to the poorer peasantry and so to a limited extent is it accurate to say the agricultural reforms brought widespread benefits for the people. It was mainly the wealthier peasants that did benefit and the use of APC was not even of widespread use until 1953. Resistance was met by Mao with the policy of 'Rash Advance' however this was met with a rise in capitalism with the richer peasants hiring labour and buying land, which brought on the policy of 'Rash Retreat'.

Already the agricultural reforms policies were being shaped to comply with the party's needs rather than the general people, particularly the peasantry. Opposition mounted, leading to the slaughter of animals rather than handing it over to the APC's. Mao's self interest in his aims were apparent as he admitted 'the peasants want freedom, but we want socialism'.

The Conference of local party secretaries in July 1955 marked a change in the CCP policy, this decided the end of private ownership, breaking the link Mao had between the party and the peasantry. By 1956, 88% of peasants were members of APC's, and this new regime would exercise more control than any of China's dynasties. Overall the collectivisation of agriculture met huge peasant resistance, the reforms had looked promising in early 1951 which did bring benefits to the people but still to a limited extent as mostly

the richer peasantry benefited. However from 1955 onwards the ending of state ownership infuriated the people and ignited resistance, the benefit or incentive was no longer there for the peasantry, by 1957 the new regime rather than benefiting the people had tightened party control through the forced APCs; this served the party and Mao's interest not the people, therefore it is not accurate to say it had widespread benefits for the people but limited benefits during 1949-53. \*\* In conclusion it is not accurate to say the government's social and agricultural reforms had widespread benefits for the people. By 1957 the government had exercised huge control over the people through means of agricultural reform. However it is not fair to say the people did not benefit at all.

Prior to 1949, the country was used to gangs, brutality of warlords and the oppression of women. In 1950 women were granted a new lease of freedom and equality and this was a social policy that did benefit women to a significant extent. Gangs which had reached a number of 1 million in 1949 were dealt with as was the problem of prostitution and of drug use. However Mao himself showed denial to this policy by still objectifying women as objects through his great number of concubines. The agricultural reforms such as the land reform did benefit the poorer peasantry with 60% of the peasantry benefiting by 1952; however there was still social inequality among classes.

The collectivisation policy benefited the richer peasants but when Mao introduced a turn in policy in the shape of APC's removing private ownership,

it did not benefit the people but the party. Huge numbers of the gentry and landlords were executed or humiliated through 'struggle meetings' and the equivalent use of gulags was already becoming apparent. In conclusion during 1949 and the early 1950's the Chinese people were welcomed with the idea of hope from social and agricultural reforms, however by 1957 the CCP had tightened its control on the Chinese people and the repression of the Chinese people was evident, therefore is it only accurate to a limited extent that the reforms brought widespread benefits to the people by 1957.

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