

Impact of cultural revolution on china

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



What effects did the Cultural Revolution have on life in rural China?

Introduction

In 1966, China's Communist leader Mao Zedong launched a movement in which became to be known as the Cultural Revolution in order to reassert his authority over the Chinese government. Mao called on the nation's youth which formed the Red Guard and was Mao's personal army to purge the impure elements of Chinese society. The Cultural Revolution continued for a decade until Mao's death in 1976. The Cultural Revolution had such a tormented and violent legacy that it still resided in Chinese politics during the post-revolution era.

The Cultural Revolution was a great political movement that took place in the People's Republic of China in 1966. Mao Zedong was the in charge of starting this movement as he wanted to enforce communism more on the country by trying to remove capitalist and certain elements from the current Chinese society that were affecting his party negatively. This revolution helped Mao Zedong back into power even after the failed five year plan of the 'Great Leap Forward'. This movement significantly affected China economically and socially which in turn had heavy negative effects on China's position politically.

Many of the youths of China started to form the Red Guard groups as an appeal to Mao to help bring more control and spreading of his influence. These groups conducted a mass purge even on senior officers who were so called accused of being more in favour to the capitalist side rather than following the road of communism that Mao Zedong wants all of China to

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follow. This group grew significantly and rapidly as more youths were influenced to join the cause in helping Mao and his movement.

“ During this turbulent decade, many events happened in China with the most notably the Red Guard movement, nationwide revolutionary rebels and great chaos, the fall of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the Lin Biao affair and the movement of millions of youths and intellectuals to the rural country sides. During the different events and stages of the Cultural Revolution, millions of people were killed or who have suffered unspeakable hardships both physically and psychologically.” (Chang, 1999)

Context

The Cultural Revolution affected the Chinese system as a whole which resulted in many consequences. In the short run, political instability and the economy produced a slower economic growth which resulted in a significant decline in government expenditure and services. Although there were many problems in the main city's the rural and countryside areas life prospered during the Cultural Revolution as many educated youths who joined Mao's movement and became a Red Guard moved to the rural areas. “ This first generation of educated rural youth helped village production brigades begin to mechanize agriculture, develop irrigation on a large scale, introduce chemical fertilizer, and experiment with new seeds, crops, and methods, and they also staffed the more than 2, 500 small factories and other enterprises set up by Jimo villages during the Cultural Revolution decade.” (Han, 2008)

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao who is in charge of the Communist Party implemented a policy which was known as the Down to the Countryside Movement, which was to move the educated youths from the urban areas down to the rural and countryside areas to live and learn. These youths were educated by farmers in understanding a greater role in agrarian labor. These educated youths which were mostly the Red Guards were moved out of the urban areas so that there would be less social disruption than in the urban areas during this conflict. Each individual youth learned the many ways of agrarian labor and were inducted into this new society.

As the Cultural Revolution continued on there were a large number of experienced health personnel that were deployed to the countryside. Farmers were given the opportunity of medical training and the building of health centers was established in the countryside to help further improvement of life in the rural areas. This process led to a high improvement in health and life expectancy of the general population in rural areas. " There were massive expansion of rural middle schools and the development of rural-oriented vocational education during the Cultural Revolution decade." (Han, 2008)

" Agricultural production began to substantially improve and rural industry took off in Jimo County. The expansion of rural schools and especially the new vocational education programs provided village youth with the training required to modernize agriculture and develop small factories." (Han, 2008)

By June of 1966 many schools and universities all over China had closed down due to the majority of students spending all their time joining the

Cultural Revolution movement and becoming a Red Guard for Mao. Millions of these youths were ordered to take part in attacking other citizens and high elite personal that are not wanting or following the movement's ideologies.

Many of the rural villages start to rise up and challenged village officials face to face with public debates, posters and mass meetings. In the first time ever in China, farmers were able to stand up and fight against the government and criticize them for all their faults especially during the Great Leap Forward years. The government officials in charge of the villages were significantly outnumbered and succumbed to the new communes of farmers. Government officials and leaders had lost all of their power and influence during the Cultural Revolution. " Enthusiastic urban youths in middle schools and colleges formed Red Guard organizations and served as Mao's crusading army against the traditional party and state establishment before all 17 million in total were sent to the countryside to receive reeducation from local peasants. Deprived of regular school education in their formative years, most members of this cultural revolution generation were at a loss in the competition for employment in the post-Revolution reform era." (Guo, Song & Zhou, 2006)

Government officials had no choice but to either leave back to the city or reform to the movement's ways and activities. Many of them did reform and started new life's and worked as farmers. They had to follow the rules implemented by the farmer's communes and their new democratic culture

which was now being heavily implemented by all villages in the rural areas during the Cultural Revolution period.

As time passed on during the Cultural Revolution period, ordinary farmers were empowered and were given more control in the management of the affairs of production teams and brigades. During the revolution years the farmers started many committees which were democratically election. This helped provide the farmers with fair and equal election. With the elected leaders of each committee, production plans and budgets were greatly improved thus improving economic activities and providing a higher growth rate. This improved life greatly in the rural areas during the Cultural Revolution.

“ Hence Mao’s idea of a spiral of growth in the villages beginning from simple, labor-intensive, nil-gestation investment and leading on to the modernization of rural China.” (Gray, 2006)

Conclusion

In conclusion life during the Cultural Revolution period in China for the rural areas was quite successful. With a high number of youths that moved to the rural areas during the down to the countryside movement, the rural areas had a significant increase in overall production and economic growth as new societies were created and increase in infrastructure and services most notably agricultural factories were built. Although this revolution had terrible consequences during the short term such as millions of people suffering or

being killed the revolution proved beneficial in its long term as it impacted the entire country for decades to come.

“ The Cultural Revolution involved virtually all Chinese people and indirectly many other countries in the world. During the Cultural Revolution, revolutionary art, music and dramas were pursued and major reforms in education, factory management, economic planning, medical care and other areas of Chinese life were carried out. Many of these actually brought bitterness and injury to the Chinese people. During this turbulent decade, China also encountered difficulties, setbacks and isolation in the international relations area in the late 1960s and only made some efforts to try and improve its relations with other countries and expand its diplomatic base in the 1970s.” (Chang, 1999)

“ This 10 yearlong class struggle on a massive scale caused unprecedented damage to traditional culture and to the nation’s economy. To a great extent, it was the disaster of the Cultural Revolution that prompted post-Mao Chinese communist leaders ahead of their soviet counterparts to implement pragmatic economic reforms. Major policies that the post-Mao government has adopted, even today may still be best understood as a reaction to the racial politics of the Cultural Revolution. “(Guo, Song & Zhou, 2006)

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