

From 1949 to the beginning essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Under the lead of Mao, China had been released by the old imperial system, and through a civil war, China has turned into a communism state called the new People's Republic of China. During the time Mao was in power, he introduced a great variety of changes, ranging from political and economic to social. The major and the most effective ones were The Rights of Women, Land Reform, Industrial Reform, The Hundred Flowers Campaign, Education and Health.

However, did these policies affect the majority positively, or were there any negative effects. The primary change brought by Mao was the Marriage Law in 1950. According to Brooman Josh, it had a huge direct social impact on the rights of 270 million females. (Brooman Josh 2000: 30) The Marriage Law was aimed to free women from the old traditional Chinese society. Throughout the history, the situation had been that the male was the head of the family, had complete control of his wives and property, and this tradition is what the Chinese had had for thousands of years. The law is based on " free choice of partners, on monogamy, on equal rights for both sexes, and on protection of the lawful interests of women and children shall be put into effect.

This change must have seriously shocked the majority of the Chinese, because accepting the law means to break away from the tradition. From the outline of the law, it seems that women were the only ones being affected, but in fact, men were also being influenced. To some extent, both women and men had been affected both positively and negatively. This law is extremely advantageous to the majority of the women, because the law allows them to have full rights to divorce, to own property and status, which initiated the prospects of women. However a number of women were fearful

of the change, for not sure whether the government would enforce the law properly.

Besides, the introduction of this law means that the concubines would loose everything. As for men, only the minority who had been influenced by the Western cultures would agree having equality between men and women. As for the others, it meant that they would loose their status, and control of property. The outcome of the Marriage Law seems to be quite successful in terms of its initial aim. On 29 September 1951 the People's Daily reported that the divorce is relatively rare, " Why would people want to be divorced when they married of their own volition? " (Sidel Ruth, Date unknown)

However, during the process of enforcing this law, people from the countryside would often find it difficult to accept, because they were firmly constrained by the old tradition, whereas in the more developed cities, people tend to be better educated and have more association with the Western people, and therefore would find it easier to accept any new ideology.

The younger generations would also find the change more comfortable than the elders, once again due to foreign influences. Prohibition of foot binding was also introduced along, as part of the Women Rights. However, people did not entirely like this idea, because even though being relieved from the pain, the other aspect of this is that women would no longer be as beautiful as they would have been, according to the Chinese tradition. As a result, it might be less acceptable by the elder generations. Technically, this policy was introduced so that females would no longer suffer from the pains of foot binding, but in fact, this leads to the next policy of economical change,

because before then, there was a lack of labor working in the field. As a result, Mao wanted women to work as well, for the good of country, and with the feet bound would make it extremely difficult for women to work in the field.

Followed by the Women's Rights, Mao decided that it was extremely crucial to rectify and reform China's economy, in order to rescue her out of the chaos that she was in at the time. Due to the fact that China had been agricultural based, Mao decided to undertake from the agricultural point of view. He introduced a new policy called the Land Reform, of which the aim was to redistribute land from rich landlords to peasants equally amongst the population of China. The first stage of this policy was to determine the "class" of each village member, including his financial position, job, education, and owned property.

After that, the government would organize a "Speak Bitterness Meeting", which allowed the peasants to denounce the landowners who had been extremely cruel to their tenants, then the Communist Party would decide on his fate, either take his land away and make him into a peasant, send him to a labor camp, send him to a "Thought Reform School", or even execute him. Afterwards, the land was redistributed equally, resulted in people having small holdings or plots of land. The result of this made the situation even worse. Before the enforcement of this policy, peasants used to be hired by the rich landlords, only working on a small section of the entire farming process, using the landlords' equipments. Now that each person has his own farmland, the majority did not have enough knowledge, equipment and money.

Brooman Josh writes “ After receiving their land, peasants were often bitterly disappointed when they realized they had no equipment to cultivate it, nor the money to buy equipment. (Brooman Josh 2000: 30) Whilst others had fields that were too small to cultivate. As a result, people worked together in the Mutual Aid Team, where people would share their knowledge, animals and equipment. In 1953, peasants were persuaded by the government and the Party to create lower-stage cooperatives, where thirty to fifty families would join their lands, in order to make a bigger, more efficient farm.

Technically, peasants still owned their land, which was on permanent loan to the cooperative (state), which would pay each family rent. In order to make a higher grain production, the lower-stage cooperatives joined into higher-stage cooperatives, which consisted of 200 to 300 families. However, the difference is that now the peasants had their land taken away and given to the state, which would then pay the peasants wages for their labor, rather than rents. Although this might have resulted that China did have a higher grain production, this has seriously created some social problems.

Firstly, according to Brooman Josh, the number of landlords being executed through the Speak Bitterness Meeting reached between 2 and 4 million. (Brooman Josh 2000: 30) Even though this number might seem to be quite small comparing to the population that China had, it's still quite huge, comparing to the fact that 6 million of Jews were killed during World War II. Secondly, the peasants must have been really upset, and confused about the purpose of this policy. Starting with no land, peasants gained some during the process, but lost it all at the end. This must have given them a very hard

time, uncertain whether to trust the government or not. Mao's ambitiousness was not finished.

He wanted to modernize the industry, improve the technology, making China competitive with the rest of the world, by running a Five Year Plan between 1953 to 1957, which was formerly used in the USSR. The dominant idea of this plan was to focus on the heavy industry, including steel, coal, iron, cement, electric, etc, instead of agriculture. The first step in the Five Year Plan was to nationalize the industry, by taking factories away from private people, and the factories would be owned by the government. In addition to this, banks were also to be nationalized. All the people were expected to work very hard in order to achieve the planned production, which would then be used to build the basic infrastructure, such as railways, hospitals and schools.

Other than that, the production was also to be used for weapon constructions, because at the mean time, China had a huge enemy, Chiang Kaishek who was in Taiwan, preparing for a counterattack. Results have shown that this Five Year Plan turned out to be extremely successful (see appendix 1). All production seems to have at least doubled by the end of the 5th year, in fact, exceeded the actual targets. This seems to be a huge improvement of economy in China, but at the same time, it created several social problems. Firstly, the workers were low paid, working for long hours and under harsh discipline, which was against the Communism idea " From each according to his ability: To each according to his needs.

” In other words, this has gone back to the proletariat system. Secondly, towns were overcrowded, causing food shortages and housing problems. More importantly, the towns were seriously polluted. Lastly, there was a lack of consumer goods such as clothing and appliances. As a result, the living standard of the Chinese had certainly dropped down, and people were not happy at all with their standard of living.

In addition, it was quite doubtful whether the Chinese really reached the amount of output as the result have shown. It was very likely that the results were faked up, because the leaders of each factory would have been executed if his factory did not reach the required production, so it is quite sensible to assume that some of the factories had made up their results. In the year of 1956, Mao set up a Hundred Flowers Campaign, which allowed people to have freedom of speech, perhaps criticizing the government or the Party. According to Brooman Josh, Mao said in a speech that “ It is only by using discussion, criticism and reasoning that we can really foster correct ideas, overcome wrong ideas and really settle issues. ” (Brooman Josh 2000: 33) The result of this campaign was that people ended up criticizing Mao so much that it was beyond his expectation.

According to Brooman Josh, One of the former warlord showed the sort of thing people were thinking and saying at the time “ Mao is a hot-tempered and not sober-minded; impetuous and not prudent; reckless and not self-assured; incisive and not thoughtful. He loves to be great and meritorious but needs to become more observant of the facts in order to learn the truth. He places confidence in false reports and meets only those who seek to please him. ” (Brooman Josh 2000: 33) After all, this suggests that not all

population were happy under the rule of Mao. Eventually, the criticisms made Mao extremely angry, and feared about his position.

As a result, he clamped down on people in no time. Freedom of speech was forbidden. Instead, he introduced censorship, and propaganda, which leads him into the direction of becoming a dictator. After all, the Hundred Flowers Campaign failed.

While Mao was still in power, he decided that education was a key element to the success in society. In 1956, an education system was established throughout the country with primary education compulsory. As for the number of middle schools had also increased. Although the majority of the peasants did not continue on to higher education, they were able to read. In fact, since education was made available for everyone at any ages, the average literacy rate in China had increased.

According to Han Suyin, “ In 1960 only 24 percent in urban areas were illiterate while 65 percent in rural areas remained illiterate. ” (P. 141, citing Han Suyin) However, this was a fantastic achievement. “ The majority was able to read at least 1500 characters, associating with their everyday life.

” (P. 141, citing Han Suyin) As a result, this seems to be a quite successful social improvement. The fact that people can read as a start could lead into even higher standard education, which allowed the people to be more knowledgeable in any sort of career. Health was another significant social change introduced by Mao. “ Before 1949, most of China’s peasants had virtually no access to modern medicine and very scant access to traditional medicine. ” (Pg.

124, citing J. Horn) Modern doctors aggregate in developed cities for larger profits. Traditional doctors, living in the rural areas, are often highly related with landlords and officials. As a result, peasants usually could not afford to see either type of doctors, and instead would go to someone who knew about acupunctures. With the health program enforced by Mao, peasants were trained to be doctors, which was funded by the government.

This resulted in the rapid increase of doctors available in the countryside, as well as creating a great number of alternative jobs for the peasants. After all, this has definitely benefited the poor peasants who could not afford to see the professional doctors. Other than that, as part of the health program, there was also the elimination of pests to improve the public sanitation.

Campaigns were set where everyone was expected to kill at least one fly and one rat. According to Walsh Ben, “ Each family member had to produce one rat’s tail a week as evidence of his/her contribution! ” (Walsh Ben 1998: 271)

In the long terms, the improvement of public hygiene had greatly decreased the cases of parasitic and infectious diseases.

To some extent, these changes had affected the Chinese both positively and negatively. During the process of changing, Mao had mainly focused on the economic development rather than the people’s feelings. Both Land Reform and Industrial Reforms created a great number of social problems. Overall, the living standard fell, consequently, creating a huge depression amongst the majority of population. Other than that, the forbidden of free of speech and the introduction of censorship made Mao even less popular amongst his people.

The only changes without any negative outcomes would probably be health and education. However, the success in economic improvement indicates that these changes were nevertheless worth it. All success has brought China into a new era, becoming more and more industrialized, and competitive with the rest of the world.