

How successful was the great leap forward in achieving mao's aims

[Countries](#), [China](#)



Only months after Mao Zedong launched the great leap forward, things started to go wrong. Everywhere, party workers urged people to produce more and to produce it faster. As a result, old and overworked machines fell apart under the strain. Factory workers fell asleep at their benches and suffered accidents through carelessness brought on by exhaustion. It wasn't only the factories that the Great Leap forward failed to take off. The backyard steel campaign also failed. Three million of the eleven million tonnes of steel made in backyard furnaces were too impure for industrial use and had to be thrown away as scrap.

But worse was to come. So many furnaces were built that, eventually, one person in ten was employed in making steel. This took people away from the fields, reducing the amount of food that could be grown. The furnaces also used so much of the country's coal supplies that railway locomotives had no fuel to run on. And so much extra steel was made that there were not enough railway trains to take it to the industrial centres where it was needed. The great leap forward failed in the countryside as bad as it did in the towns.

The weather in 1958 was excellent there were still two problems that prevented the harvest from being a good one. Firstly, so many peasants were working in industry, in particular the backyard steel making, that there were too few people to harvest the crops properly. Secondly, party officials ignored this and claimed that the grain harvest had been a record 260 million tonnes. As a result of this many communal eating halls started giving the peasants very generous meals, using up valuable food stocks.

None of this would have mattered if the next year's harvest had been superb. But the weather in 1959 was worse. In some parts of China there were floods, in other parts there was drought the result was a harvest of only 170 million tonnes. Before long, people were going hungry. Some began to starve. To complete the farming crisis, the weather in 1960 was even worse than in 1959. The bad weather, combined with the anarchy caused by the Great Leap forward, reduced the harvest to 144 million tonnes.

This led to a major famine, killing around 9 million people in 1960 alone. The government set up a rationing system under which most people were given a maximum of 125 grams of grain a day, but the death toll continued to rise. Between 1959 and 1962 some 20 million Chinese died of starvation and related diseases. In 1959 Mao Zedong admitted that the great leap forward had failed in a speech to the party leaders. The three bitter years or as the Chinese called them the famine years of 1959-61, were partly the result of Mao Zedong's great leap forward policies.

Of course some party leaders blamed Mao personally for what had happened, and demanded his resignation. Mao was still popular among the masses of the Chinese public for them to get rid of him easily. So the party leaders simply persuaded him to hand over the post of head of state to Liu Shaoqi, leaving him with only one post that of party chairman. This was now done by a group of more moderate leaders - head of state Liu Shaoqi, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and party secretary Deng Xiaoping. Now that they controlled the government, the moderates introduced more realistic economic policies.

Late in 1960 they abandoned the Great Leap Forward. Communes were reduced in size to make them more manageable. Peasants working in backyard steel production were sent back to the fields. Peasants were allowed their own private plots again, and to sell part of what they grew at market for their own profit. Town workers wages were increased. Although the moderates now ran the economy, this did not mean that Mao Zedong had lost his grip. Mao was still regarded by most of the Chinese public as a greater revolutionary hero.

And although the moderates did not allow him a say in running the economy, he continued to have great influence over the masses of the people. He used this influence in 1966 to rid of the moderates by starting a new political revolution that would soon be known throughout the world as the Cultural Revolution. So Mao Zedong's great plans for China had failed, he was not head of state anymore but the people's liberation army of four million men supported him, all the ranks had been abolished so the soldiers were equal.

Each soldier was given a copy of the newly published book 'quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong', or mostly known as 'the little red book' and were then ordered to study it. So even though nobody in the government supported his ideas the people's liberation army did. So in conclusion Mao's plans for China did not work out as well as he thought they would, maybe his plans would have worked better if he had foreseen what mistakes he was making and the outcome of his actions.