Mao Zedong - Great Leap Forward - Cultural Revolution
Great Leap Forward

• The Great Leap Forward (GLF) was part of two policy initiatives; the other was called the “Hundred Flowers” campaign.

• The idea that rapid transfer to a total communist system would be more efficient and fairer than capitalism. The people would be willing to work harder for a socialist government that truly represented them than a capitalist system that only served the rich.

• This would be done through the Soviet leader Lenin’s “Five Year Plans.”

• In the process, the state would replace the family as the main unit of agricultural production.
Great Leap Forward - 2

- The questions among the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders was how rapid the transfer from private ownership to state ownership should occur - those who wanted a rapid transfer prevailed.
- The Agricultural Production Cooperatives (APCs) were units of 12 people or two families. They were soon merged into 26,000 communes - which consisted of about 99% of the peasant population.
- Fearing giving Mao a bad report, local officials almost always gave exaggerated reports on their successes (crop yields).
- As for steel production, useful farm equipment was smelted down to create useless hunks of metal.
Great Leap Forward - 3

• The bad policies, the false reports made to avoid punishment, and bad weather made the conditions for famine prime.

• Between 1958-63, at least 20 million Chinese died from famine.

• It particularly hurt the young: the median age of those dying was 17.6 in 1957; in 1963 it was 9.7.

• As the prominent historian Jonathan Spence sums it, “The Great Leap Forward launched in the name of strengthening the nation by summoning all the people’s energies, had turned back on itself and ended by devouring its young.”
Great Leap Forward - Collective Farming
Great Leap Forward - Youth Marching
Great Leap Forward

FRANK DIKÖTTER
MAO’S GREAT FAMINE
THE HISTORY OF CHINA’S MOST DEVASTATING CATASTROPHE
The Hundred Flowers Campaign

- In 1956, there was an anti-communist uprising in Soviet controlled Hungary. The Soviet military (The Red Army) put the revolt down.
- This event inspired Mao to change a policy and he called for Chinese intellectuals to be allowed to criticize the government as a “hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend.”
- Intellectuals took his word, and the criticism was severe. This took Mao by surprise.
- His reaction was a series of purges; he now saw disagreement as a sign of disloyalty.
The Cultural Revolution (1966-69)

- Mao was blamed for the disaster of the Great Leap Forward; so he was benched. **Liu Shaoqi** and **Deng Xiaoping** were trying to get the economy back on track.

- However, Mao wanted to reassert his power. He wrote an article that criticized a play about a Ming dynasty official that lost his position for making accusations against a decadent emperor. Mao interpreted the play as an allegorical attack on him.

- In the Cultural Revolution, Mao incited the students to gain experience with revolution by being revolutionaries. Mao told them that “revisionist” had lost the vision of a classless communist utopia.

- Mao’s “16-Point Directive” called for students to purge society of “all people in authority who are taking the capitalist road” and reminding them that “revolution was ‘an act of violence whereby one class overthrows the power of another.’”
The students, with little further guidance, attacked teachers and parents. They destroyed emblems of the past and tradition, like museums and temples.

Within a year, the Cultural Revolution devolved into street warfare. Students were now fighting one another over who was more devoted to the revolution.

Liu Shaoqi (chairman of the PRC), branded as a revisionist, was imprisoned and soon after died in 1969.

In 1969, Mao announces that the Cultural Revolution had come to a successful conclusion. Mao was back in power.
The Cultural Revolution - 3

• Analysis: Some historians say Mao instigated the students as a way to settle a score with Liu Shaoqi who forced Mao out of the limelight after the Great Leap

• Others argue that the Cultural Revolution was necessary to save China from what was happening in the Soviet Union. A new elite class of bureaucrats with special perks emerged in the Soviet Union.

• To avoid this, a revolution within a revolution was needed to purge the “revisionists.”

• Nonetheless, about 400,000 people died as a result of the cultural revolution.

• Some historians say the Cultural Revolution died with Mao’s own death in 1976.
The Cultural Revolution - Portrait of Mao and Chinese youth reading from the "Little Red Book."
Cultural Revolution - The Youthful Masses
Cultural Revolution - Humiliating a teacher
Cultural Revolution - Destroying vestiges of the past
Tiananmen Square

- April 1989 - student protests erupted in Beijing in the wake of the unexpected death of **Hu Yaobang**. Hu was General Secretary of the CCP and was loved and respected by students. He was seen as a champion of reform and a prime candidate to succeed Deng.
- May 4th, national youth day, the protests intensified. Wall posters and speeches accused that officials in charge were corrupt and that it was their duty to take heroic action.
- Protests were not only in Beijing, but in many other Chinese cities. It was only after that the protests in other cities ended, and they continued in Beijing, that the government saw that they had to act.
- The government tried to keep low key, but by early June, they sent in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to clear Tiananmen Square.
Tiananmen Square Massacre

• The events on June 4th, 1989 vary, depending on if you are asking the protestors or the Chinese government.

• Between several hundred and a couple of thousand citizens were killed.

• Even today, the Chinese government denies that a massacre occurred; and it is illegal to place any memorials on Tiananmen Square.

• This is one event, though, that received media attention. World opinion of China was damaged - as its human rights record is still discussed by international organizations such as Amnesty International.
Tiananmen Square - Summer 1989
Tiananmen Square - June 4th Massacre (1989)
Tiananmen Square Protestors