

6. The Great Leap Forward

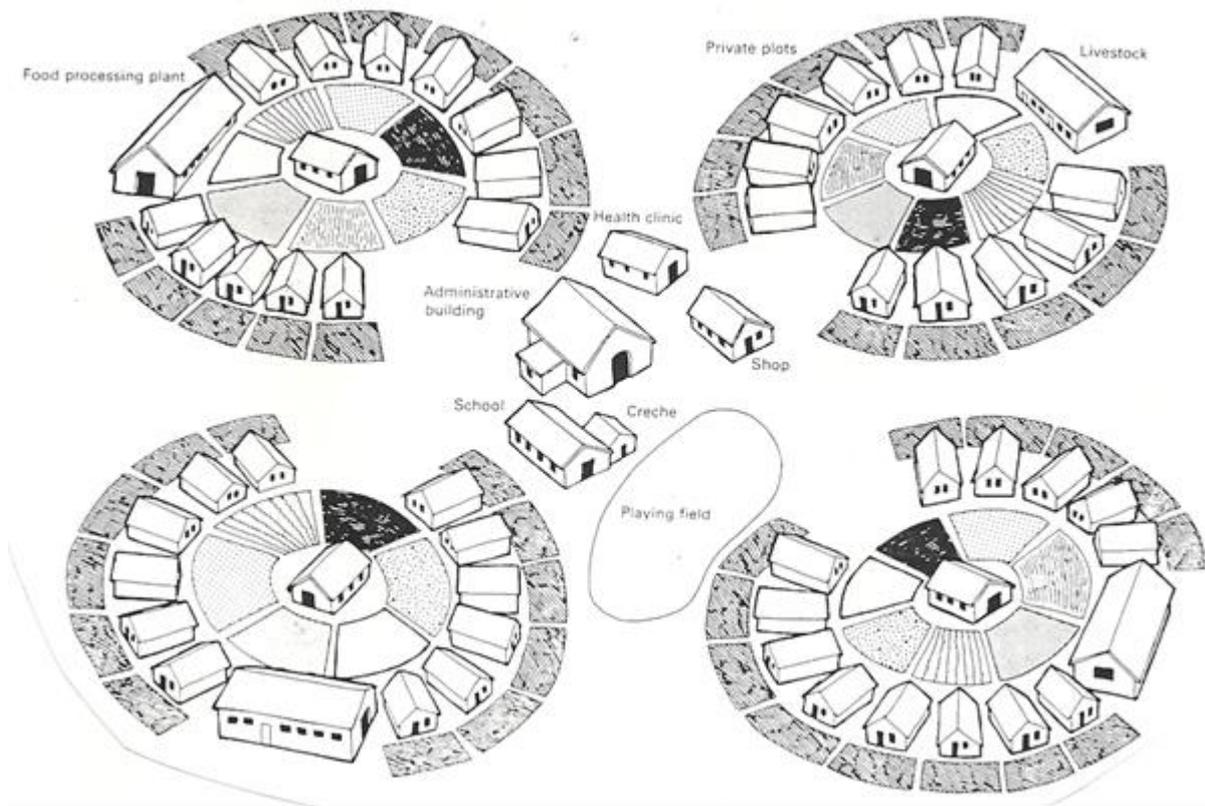
Edited extracts from Michael Lynch – *The People's Republic of China since 1949*
and Robert Whitfield – *The Impact of Mao*

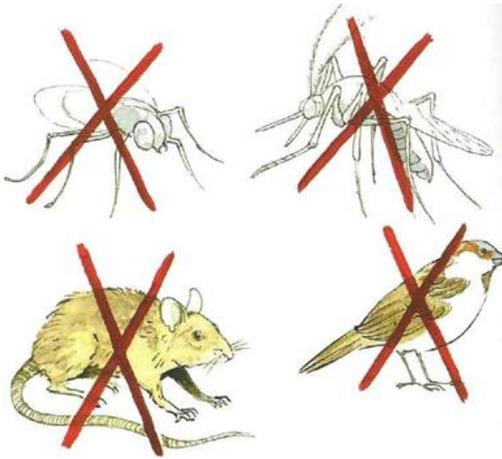
By the mid-1950s the organisers of the First Five-Year Plan had become aware that China had a severe labour shortage. Despite the migration from the land, those employed in industry still constituted a minority of the Chinese working population. The industrial workforce would have to be greatly increased if targets were to be met. It was further recognised that, although the peasants were undoubtedly producing more food, this was not finding its way to the urban workers. The common view among the economic planners was that this was the fault of the peasants: they were indulging themselves by over-eating and by having larger families which meant more mouths had to be fed. The authorities were convinced that the peasantry must be brought under strict central control and direction.

Mao's aims

The Great Leap Forward was China's second Five Year Plan. Unlike the first plan, however, the driving force in the effort to achieve production targets for agriculture and industry was not to be a centralised State bureaucracy. Instead, Mao envisaged a decentralisation of control to local Party cadres whose task it would be to mobilise the energies and practical experience of the Chinese people. In this way Mao believed it would be possible for China to achieve rapid and sustained economic growth that would take China very quickly from the stage of Socialism to the stage of fully developed Communism. During 1958, Mao became increasingly caught up in the euphoria of his belief that communist rule could finally unlock China's vast potential and transform the country into the world's leading economic power. In the autumn of 1957, he declared that China would be producing 40 million tonnes of steel by the 1970s, a figure that was twice as high as the one that had been approved by the Central Committee only two months before (and nearly eight times as high as China's actual steel output at the end of the First Five Year Plan). As Mao's confidence grew his expectations were raised even higher; by the autumn of 1958 he was predicting a steel output of 100 million tonnes by 1962 and 700 million tonnes by the early 1970s. As with steel targets, so too with agriculture; in December 1958 he set a target for grain production of 430 million tonnes, more than twice as much as had ever been produced in even the best years.

For Mao, the keys to unlocking China's potential were as follows: The grouping of agricultural cooperatives (collective farms) into even larger units known as people's communes. A commune consisted, on average, of about 20,000 people. The communes, once established, became the basic unit of rural society, taking over the functions of local government and becoming military units. Every member of a commune aged between 15 and 50 was a member of the people's militia and the platoons to which they belonged were also the basic work units. Mao's aim in establishing the communes was to abolish the private, family sphere of peasant life. The peasants' private plots of land were taken over by the commune and all work was organised in a communal, military style. Children were cared for in kindergartens run by the commune (thereby releasing women for manual labour), old people were cared for in communal 'happiness homes' and all meals were provided in mess halls. Family ties were dismissed as 'bourgeois emotional attachments'.





The Four Noes campaign

During the Great Leap Forward, Mao launched the Four Noes campaign to eradicate pests: flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows. On the false grounds that sparrows consumed large quantities of seed and grain, people were urged to prevent the birds from landing on the ground or on buildings by keeping up a barrage of noise until the birds dropped dead from exhaustion.

The campaign against sparrows was so effective that the ecological balance was upset and caterpillars, on which the birds did actually feed, became more prevalent and consumed large areas of crops.

Under the slogan 'Walking on two legs', communes were ordered to become centres of industrial as well as agricultural production. 'Backyard furnaces' were established to produce iron and steel in communes, schools, colleges and other institutions that had little or no previous experience of iron smelting. Metal implements of all kinds, from cooking pots and cutlery to iron fences, radiators and even locks, were requisitioned to be melted down into pig iron, while wooden furniture, doors and trees were used as fuel. Large-scale civil engineering projects such as bridges, canals and dams were built largely by mobilising tens of thousands of labourers to dig and build by hand rather than using machines.

A huge furnace was erected in the parking lot. At night the sky was lit up, and the noise of the crowds around the furnace could be heard 300 yards away in my room. My family's woks went into the furnace, together with all our cast-iron cooking utensils. We did not suffer from their loss, as we did not need them anymore. No private cooking was allowed now, and everyone had to eat in the canteen. The furnaces were insatiable. Gone was my parents' bed, a soft comfortable one with iron springs. Gone also were the iron railings from the city pavements, and anything else that was iron. I hardly saw my parents for months. They often did not come home at all, they had to make sure that the temperature in their office furnaces never dropped.

From Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*

When Mao talked about decentralising the economic planning process and mobilising the energies of China's 600 million people, he was showing once again his frustration with an over-cautious bureaucracy. By 1958 Mao had concluded that Communism in China could be built in a way that ignored the economic realities of the country's development. The economic laws that guided the actions of the professional planners amid, in Mao's view, be ignored. The speed with which communes were established and the exaggerated production figures which local officials - anxious to avoid being labelled 'rightists' - reported to the government confirmed Mao in his belief that he had set China on the right course. As his confidence and euphoria grew, so too did the targets that he set. By the end of 1958 Mao's confidence was virtually boundless. For millions of ordinary Chinese, however, Mao's Utopian dreams were rapidly becoming a nightmarish struggle for survival.

Factors that influenced Mao's thinking

There were a number of inter-connected factors that lay behind the decision to launch the Great Leap Forward. In order to understand this range of factors, you need to examine the context in which the decisions were made.

The economic context

Despite the successes of Chinese agriculture and industry in achieving most of the targets in the First Five Year Plan, a number of problems had been revealed. Although industrial production overall had risen by 18.7 per cent during the period of the plan, the rise in agricultural production of only 3.8 per cent had been much less impressive. The priority for Mao and the CPC leadership was for industrial growth but, unless Chinese farmers could produce much more food and do so in a more efficient way, industrialisation would be held back. Industrial cities could only expand if there was enough surplus food available to feed a growing urban population, and industrial enterprises could only grow if more peasants could be freed from agricultural labour to work in factories. One possible solution to this problem was the one used by Stalin in the USSR in the 1930s: the forcible requisitioning of food and punitive action against the peasants. With a membership that was overwhelmingly rural - over 70 per cent of members - this was not an option that the CPC could realistically adopt. Within the CPC leadership in 1957 and early 1958 there was a debate over the best course of action to follow. The cautious approach, favoured by Chen Yun and Zhou Enlai, was to offer peasants material incentives - higher prices and more access to consumer goods - to persuade them to produce and sell more food. This would be underpinned by providing machinery and fertilisers to make farming more productive. A more radical approach was put forward by Mao and supported by Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. This involved a

propaganda campaign to encourage the peasants to work harder and the mass mobilisation of peasant labour through the communes.

The political context

Mao was the instigator and driving force behind the Great Leap Forward. As undisputed leader of the CPC, he had become accustomed to imposing his will on the Party and the Party had become accustomed to giving way. The experience of the Hundred Flowers campaign and the subsequent anti-rightist campaign had not only intimidated China's intellectuals, the CPC at all levels had been unnerved as well. Therefore, although favouring a more cautious approach, not for the first time Zhou Enlai fell into line with Mao's wishes over the Great Leap Forward and was even obliged to make a self-criticism for his past 'right conservatist' errors. If someone of the stature of Zhou Enlai could not oppose Mao over this hair-brained leap into the unknown, then lower-level Party officials had also learned that their own survival depended on telling Mao what he wanted to hear. Mao's regime lacked any checks and balances. There was nobody with the courage or the authority to stand up to him and ensure that the Party followed a policy based on reasoned argument.

Rivalries within the CPC leadership also played their part in the story of the Great Leap Forward. In February 1958, responsibility for the oversight of economic planning was transferred from the State bureaucracy of the PRC to the Communist Party. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi, both leading figures within the Party, gained at the expense of Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun whose power lay within the central government. At a local level, Party cadres took over from technical experts as the driving force behind increased production. This reflected the priorities of the Great Leap Forward - technical expertise, which in any case was distrusted by Mao, was regarded as a block on development. For Mao, it was more important to be 'red' than to be an expert; in other words, political objectives were more important than economic ones.

The international context

The launch of Sputnik, the first satellite, into space by the USSR in October 1957 excited admiration around the world. For Mao this demonstrated the superiority of Soviet technology and the social system on which it was based, and buoyed his growing optimism. It was no accident that the first commune in China, established in Henan province in April 1958, was named the Sputnik commune.

However, despite admiration for Soviet technology, there were growing strains in the relationship between the PRC and the USSR. When Mao declared the formation of the PRC in October 1949, he said that the Chinese people had 'stood up' and that a century of foreign aggression towards China had finally come to an end. In the early years of the republic, Mao accepted 'fraternal' assistance from the USSR in the form of technical assistance and loans, but the Chinese nationalist in Mao always found this dependence on a foreign power humiliating. Moreover, by 1957 and in the light of the experience of the First Five Year Plan, there was a growing feeling among the CPC leadership that the Soviet model of development was not appropriate for China. What Mao was looking for was a specifically Chinese solution to the problem of rapid industrialisation. Communes seemed to provide the solution he was looking for.

Mao wanted China to become a great power, armed with nuclear weapons and capable of regaining control of Taiwan - something that would certainly bring a clash with the USA. In a secret agreement between China and the USSR in 1957, the Soviet leader Khrushchev promised to give China access to nuclear weapons technology. At the same time, however, he began to expound the doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West, a policy that placed a high priority on improving relations with the USA. For Mao this was a betrayal of international socialist solidarity. Mao became increasingly convinced that China would have to stand alone in its efforts to develop its economy and achieve great power status. The Great Leap Forward was, in part, an assertion by Mao of Chinese independence from the USSR.

The ideological context

A recurring theme in Mao's career was his fear that the Chinese communist revolution was in danger of losing its vitality and becoming bogged down in bureaucratic administration. For Mao, the crucial reference point was the time spent in Yanan in the 1930s and 1940s. This was seen as a period when the Communist Party had been closest to the masses, when its revolutionary fervour had not yet been tarnished with 'bureaucratism', and when the Party had, by mobilising the mass of the peasants, been able not merely to survive against overwhelming odds but eventually to conquer its enemies. Mao frequently harked back to the Yanan experience for inspiration and direction and he did so again in 1957 and 1958.

As Chairman of the Party, Mao was removed from the day-to-day business of government and policy making. His way of asserting himself was to stress the importance of ideology, an area which he had made his own sphere. In the context of the Great Leap Forward, three aspects of his ideology were particularly relevant:

His view that, through political will and mass mobilisation, economic laws ignored and material conditions overcome. In 1958, Mao believed that, with correct political leadership and application of technology, China's 600 million people could be mobilised to overcome their existing poverty and scarcity and make a 'great leap forward' into prosperity and plenty. Linked to his belief in the power of human will, Mao also developed his thoughts on the concept of 'continuing revolution'. Mao had long believed that the peasants were the most revolutionary class in China and that the key to China's economic and political development lay in the countryside. The emphasis on rural communes in the Great Leap Forward reflected Mao's determination to prove that the peasantry could lead the drive towards a communist future.

Our revolutions come one after another. Starting from the seizure of power in the whole country in 1949, there followed in quick succession the anti-feudal land reform, the agricultural co-operativisation, and the socialist reconstruction of private industries, commerce and handicrafts. Now we must start a technological revolution so that we may overtake Britain in fifteen or more years. After fifteen years, when our foodstuffs and iron and steel have become more plentiful, we shall take a much greater initiative. Our revolutions are like battles. After a victory, we must at once put forward a new task. In this way, cadres and the masses will forever be filled with revolutionary fervour, instead of conceit.

Chairman Mao, January 1958. *From Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*

The Great Leap Forward was, for Mao, another stage in China's 'continuing revolution', using methods that had seemingly been used effectively before in Yanan and elsewhere. In official statements from the Party Central Committee and Mao himself, the impetus for the move towards large communes had come from the peasants themselves. In late 1957 in some areas millions of peasants had been mobilised to undertake large-scale projects in water conservation and irrigation. Because men were taken away from the fields to undertake this work, women took their places. This led to the establishment of communal organisations for feeding and childcare. So the idea of communes was born, although in reality it was enthusiastic local CPC cadres who had been, behind the creation of the first communes. Nevertheless this confirmed in Mao his belief that 'Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution.' A four-month tour of China's provinces in early 1958, in which he sought 'truth from facts', further reinforced his view that communes were an essential part of Chinese revolutionary ideology. In reality, what he learned on his tour was only what the local Party cadres wanted him to hear. Nevertheless, convinced that he was better informed and more ideologically correct than the more cautious members of the Politburo, he was able to override their doubts and set increasingly radical and unrealistic targets for the Great Leap Forward.

Some communes were held up as models or examples for all the others to copy. The most famous of these was the Dazhai Commune. In the mid-1960s the Dazhai commune in Shaanxi province (see below) was publicised as a model commune which all were encouraged to copy. It was in a remote and mountainous region which had alternate periods of drought, torrential rainfall and harsh winds. The 295 people of Dazhai all worked hard to build terraced fields and increase the grain yield from 0.75 to 7.5 tonnes per hectare.



Above a Chinese propaganda poster "Learn from Dazhai"

Eventually they bought tractors and trucks and built a school and new houses with electric light and piped water. According to their leaders their success was due to putting into practice the thoughts of Mao Zedong. However, in 1980 the 'People's Daily' confessed that Dazhai had not really relied on its own efforts to terraced rocky hills and dig irrigation ditches. They had received huge amounts of government money and even the help of the army to build a showpiece commune.

The Famine

Great Leap Forward famine death estimates		
Deaths (m)	Author(s)	Year
23	Peng	1987
30	Becker	1996
32.5	Cao	2005
36	Yang	2008
38	Chang and Halliday	2005
38	Rummel	2008
42	Dikötter	2010

The collectivisation programme that was begun in 1958 entailed a vast social transformation which resulted in the greatest famine in Chinese history. The disruption caused by the ending of private farming was a major cause of hunger since it discouraged the individual peasant from producing food beyond his own immediate needs. But that was only part of the story. Mao often talked about learning from the peasants' practical experience. In direct contradiction to this policy, however, he drew up an eight-point agricultural constitution based on the discredited theories of the Soviet 'scientist' Lysenko, which farmers were forced to follow in order to increase food production. Among the eight points of this constitution were the instructions to plant crops closer together and to plough the soil much deeper than was normal practice. Both of these

policies had disastrous results for grain yields. Chinese scientists were in thrall to Trofim Lysenko, the Soviet researcher whom Stalin regarded as the voice of scientific truth. It was later realised and admitted that Lysenko's ideas were worthless. Indeed, it was already known in the USSR that Lysenko's theories about producing 'super-crops' had proved wholly fraudulent and had contributed to the Soviet famines of the 1930s. But such was the influence of the USSR in the early years of the PRC that the Chinese regarded Lysenko as infallible. A generation of Chinese researchers were trained in the notion that he could do no wrong. A Beijing doctor recorded: 'We were told that the Soviets had discovered and invented everything, even the aeroplane. We had to change textbooks and rename things in Lysenko's honour'. Mao made Lysenkoism official policy in 1958 when he personally drafted an eight-point agricultural 'constitution' based on the theories of crop growth advanced by Lysenko and his Chinese disciples, which farmers were forced to follow.

Failure of the Great Leap Forward was guaranteed. A project based on the total denial of the actual capacity of China's agricultural and industrial base, a refusal to be bound by economic laws and an assertion that economic targets could be based on political necessity rather than rational calculation was bound to fail.

There were, however, a number of specific factors that contributed to the failure:

Weather conditions in 1959 made the situation worse. Floods in the south of China and a drought in the north (which continued into 1960) significantly reduced the harvest.

The anti-rightist campaign of 1957 had resulted in the purge of many crucial experts, particularly the statisticians who had been responsible for collecting and analysing production figures during the First Five Year Plan. This campaign had also seriously unnerved Party cadres at all levels and led them to conclude that their survival depended on telling Mao what he wanted to hear. Reports of production figures from the communes were seriously inflated and this contributed to the atmosphere of euphoria in the early stages of the Great Leap Forward.

The Great Leap Forward involved a monumental waste of both human and material resources. This was largely due to the competing demands that were placed on the communes. Frequent military training took peasants away from their work. Work teams were often too busy trying to fulfil their steel targets to work in the fields; the result was that ripened grain was often left to rot because there was no one available to harvest it. Melting down farm implements to make steel left the peasants with too few tools with which to cultivate the land. On many communes land was actually left uncultivated because it was assumed that so much food would be grown using the new methods that there would not be enough granary space to store it.

The break with the USSR in 1960 led to the withdrawal of thousands of Soviet experts who had been helping the Chinese to develop their economy through planning. The Soviet Union also stopped making loans to the PRC to help finance economic growth. However, as the Great Leap Forward was already failing before the Soviet Union withdrew its help, this was not a major cause of the failure. On the other hand, previous dependence on the Soviet Union for technical expertise and heavy machinery still had to be paid for; even though food was in desperately short supply in China, millions of tonnes of grain continued to be exported to the USSR to repay earlier loans.

Mao had over-estimated the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Chinese people. Many peasants were reluctant to pool their resources and slaughtered their animals rather than hand them over to the communes. There were instances of peasants hoarding grain for their own consumption. In previous land reforms, the CPC had been careful to win the active cooperation of the peasants and to proceed cautiously when it was clear that the peasants were reluctant to give up their private plots. During the Great Leap Forward, however, political

pressure and compulsion drove the process of forming communes. Far from this being the result of a spontaneous movement by the peasants themselves, enthusiastic local CPC cadres, taking their lead from Mao,

China's Agricultural Record, 1952-62			
Year	Grain Production (millions tonnes)	Meat Production (millions tonnes)	Index of Gross Output Value of Agriculture
1952	163.9	3.4	100.0
1953	166.8	3.8	103.1
1954	169.5	3.9	106.6
1955	183.9	3.3	114.7
1956	192.8	3.4	120.5
1957	195.1	4.0	124.8
1958	200.0	4.3	127.8
1959	170.0	2.6	110.4
1960	143.5	1.3	96.4
1961	147.5	1.2	94.1
1962	160.0	1.9	99.9

forced the pace of change. When it became clear that many communes had been set up without adequate preparation and were not working effectively, Mao blamed over-zealous local cadres for the failure and tried to restrain some of the more enthusiastic local leaders. This failure of the political system, however, was Mao's own responsibility. Regional and local officials took their lead from him. The anti-rightist campaign had ensured that no Party cadre would dare question the direction of Party policy or the official claims of success. The Great Leap Forward was launched and driven forward at Mao's insistence: its failure was primarily due to him.

The bewildered local peasant communities, their way of life already dislocated by collectivisation, proved incapable of adapting to the threat of famine. Constrained by the state regulations imposed from on high, many areas became defeatist in the face of impending doom. Those peasants who showed initiative by trying to circumvent the new laws and return to their old ways of production risked severe punishment. Chinese prisons and penal colonies were expanded to incarcerate the great numbers of starving peasants who fell foul of the authorities. In these camps, the equivalent of the Soviet gulag prison system, hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, starved to death.

It was certainly the case that millions died in the countryside. Hunger was not unknown in the urban areas but it was in the rural provinces of China that the famine was at its worst. Henan (Honan) and Anhui (Anhui) were particularly badly affected. Gansu (Kansu), Sichuan (Szechwan), Hebei (Hopei) and Xinjiang (Sinkiang) were other areas that experienced appalling suffering. Parents sold their children and husbands sold their wives for food. Women prostituted themselves to obtain food for their families, and there were many instances of peasants offering themselves as slaves to anyone who would feed them. The following account of cannibalism in Liaoning province is typical of the experiences that later came to light:

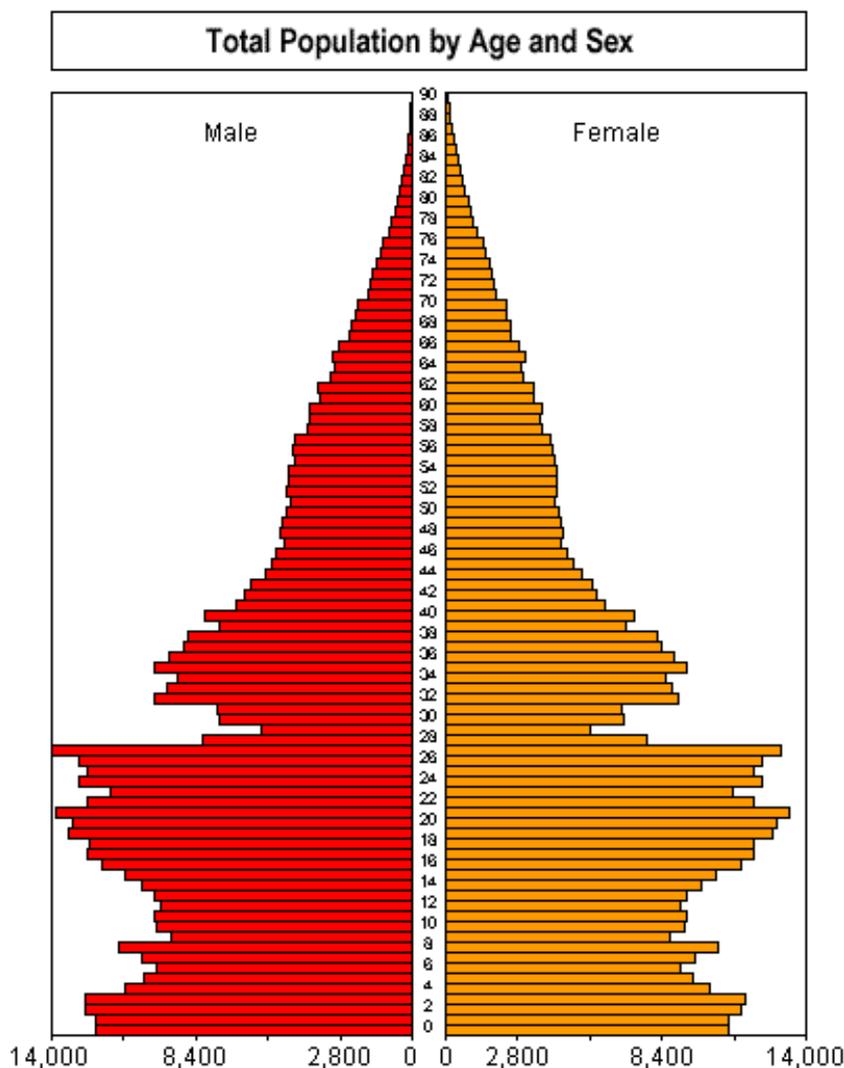
A peasant woman, unable to stand the incessant crying for food of her two-year-old daughter, and thinking perhaps to end her suffering, had strangled her. She had given the girl's body to her husband, asking him to bury it. Instead, out of his mind with hunger, he put the body in the cooking pot with what little food they had foraged. He had forced his wife to eat a bowl of the resulting stew. His wife, in a fit of remorse, had reported her husband's crime to the authorities. The fact that she came forward voluntarily made no difference. Although there was no law against cannibalism in the criminal code of the People's Republic, the Ministry of Public Security treated such cases, which were all too common, with the utmost severity. Both husband and wife were arrested and summarily executed.

Arguably, it was Tibet that experienced the greatest degree of misery; 20 per cent of its population was wiped out by starvation. In Qinghai (Tsinghai) province, the birthplace of the Dalai Lama, over half the population died from hunger. It was a tragedy that the Panchen Lama described in 1962 as a deliberate act of genocide. Had the grip of the central government not been so tight the desperation of these provinces might well have produced civil war. What deepened the tragedy was that many government advisers were fully aware of the facts. They knew that Lysenkoism was nonsense and that people were dying by the million, but they dared not speak out. Indeed, the reverse happened; Party cadres and officials reported back to Beijing that production targets were being met and that the Great Leap Forward was on course. Sir Percy Craddock, British Ambassador in China in the 1960s, commented:

Sycophantic provincial leaders cooked the books; immense increases, two or three fold, were reported; and, in obedience to the bogus figures, an impoverished province such as Anhui delivered grain it desperately needed itself to the state, or even for export abroad as surplus. On his inspection tours Mao saw the close-planted fields that he wanted to see; the local officials moved in extra shoots from other fields and moved them back when he had gone.

It was rarely that a person of note would admit what was really happening. When Peng Dehuai (Peng Teh-huai), the Minister of Defence, dared to do so at a Party gathering in Lushan in 1959 he was denounced by his fellow ministers and dismissed. But eventually, such was the scale of China's wretchedness, the truth came out. Even Mao himself accepted it. But his reaction was characteristic. Rather than acknowledge that his own ideas had contributed to the disaster, he rounded on his officials, accusing them of incompetence. Yet no matter how culpable those lower down in the Communist hierarchy may have been, the responsibility lay with Mao Zedong. It was in pursuit of his instructions regarding the restructuring of the Chinese peasantry and in accordance with his mistaken notions of science that his officials had set in motion a process that culminated in the horrific deaths of thirty million Chinese. (see the population pyramid for China in 1990 below)

Early in 1960 the Great Leap Forward was called off. Communes were re-organised and made smaller: in 1962 there were 76 000 communes in China, in 1958 there had been just 26 000. The land was now owned by the production teams rather than the communes. The peasants were given back their own small private plots for growing vegetables. In many communes the canteens were closed down. Once again peasants were paid according to how much work they did.



Industry

Such was the scale of the famine of the late 1950s and early 1960s that it has tended to overshadow analyses of the Great Leap Forward. However, at the time agriculture was very much a secondary concern for Mao; it was industrialisation that mattered. He resolved to achieve industrial 'lift-off' for China by harnessing what he regarded as the nation's greatest resource - its massive population. Mao's belief was that the Chinese people could, with their own hands, create a modern industrial economy, powerful enough to compete with the capitalist West. The classic expression of this was Mao's insistence on 'backyard furnaces'; China would draw its supplies of iron and steel not from large foundries and steel mills but from primitive smelting devices that every family was encouraged to build on its premises. Here was a communal activity in which all the Chinese could participate, conscious that by their own efforts they were helping to build the new society.

Mao, like Stalin, was greatly impressed by the grand project. Size mattered. It was the scale of a construction rather than its economic value which appealed to him. He was convinced that by sheer manpower China could solve all the problems of industrial development. It is true that prodigious feats were achieved by the force of manual labour. Mechanical diggers were shunned in favour of the earth being moved by the hands of the workers. Giant span bridges, canals and dams were constructed. These were lauded by the CCP as the visible

proof of China's resurgence under Communism. The building of Tiananmen Square in Beijing was begun in 1957 and completed within two years. This was an enormous project that involved clearing a hundred-acre site of its teeming homes, shops and markets and laying a vast concrete-paved level space, open to the south, but with two huge new buildings to the east and west and the Forbidden City to the north.



But while such feats thrilled the Chinese and impressed foreigners, the Plan as a whole did not reach its objectives. It did not succeed because it ignored basic economics. Mass labour does not necessarily result in mass production. Avoiding the sophisticated industrial techniques of the decadent West may have met the demands of revolutionary ideology but it did not make economic sense. Enthusiasm was not enough. Good will did not produce good steel. Both in the quantity of its raw materials and the quality of its finished products, China, under the Great Leap Forward, fell a long way short of meeting its domestic industrial requirements. The notion of its being internationally competitive was wildly unrealistic.

China's Economic Performance, 1952-62

Year	Index of National Income	Growth of National Income (%)	Inflation
1952	100.0		-0.4
1953	114.0	14.0	3.4
1954	120.6	5.8	2.3
1955	128.3	6.4	1.0
1956	146.4	14.1	0
1957	153.0	4.5	1.5
1958	186.7	22.0	0.2
1959	202.1	8.2	0.9
1960	199.2	-1.4	3.1
1961	140.0	-29.7	16.2
1962	130.9	-6.5	3.8

The common belief in the CCP was that applied Communism would always produce an effective system of production and fair shares for all. When it did not, Mao interpreted the lack of achievement not as a failure of Communism itself, but as the result of sabotage by bourgeois elements and backsliders. His response to the news of failure was to blame the messenger. The first stage was to deny the bad results and then to search for the culprits responsible for administering the policies wrongly, either through incompetence or sabotage.

Questions

1. What were Mao's aims in launching The Great Leap Forward? Make sure to explain the economic, political, ideological and international context.
2. Explain how the Great Leap Forward was a particularly Chinese response to the problem of modernization *and* a break from the Soviet inspired First Five Year Plan.
3. What caused the famine? Make sure to refer to the following in your answer: The end of private farming, Lysenkoism, command economy, dangers of dissent and other factors.