Brave New World: Communism on Trial

CHAPTER OUTLINE
AND FOCUS QUESTIONS

The Postwar Soviet Union

How did Nikita Khrushchev change the system that the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin had put in place before his death in 1953? To what degree did his successors adopt Khrushchev’s policies?

The Disintegration of the Soviet Empire

What were the key components of perestroika, which Mikhail Gorbachev espoused during the 1980s? Why did it fail?

The East Is Red: China Under Communism

What were Mao Zedong’s chief goals for China, and what policies did he institute to try to achieve them?

“Serve the People”: Chinese Society Under Communism

What significant political, economic, and social changes have taken place in China since the death of Mao Zedong? How successful have they been at improving the quality of life in China?

CRITICAL THINKING

Why has communism survived in China when it failed to survive in Eastern Europe and Russia? Are Chinese leaders justified in claiming that without party leadership, the country would fall into chaos?

According to Karl Marx, capitalism is a system that involves the exploitation of man by man; under socialism, it is the other way around. That wry joke was typical of popular humor in post–World War II Moscow, where the dreams of a future utopia had faded in the grim reality of life in the Soviet Union.

For the average Soviet citizen after World War II, few images better displayed the shortcomings of the Soviet system than a long line of people queuing up outside an official state store selling consumer goods. Because the command economy was so inefficient, items of daily use were chronically in such short supply that when a particular item became available, people often lined up immediately to buy several for themselves and their friends.

Despite the evident weaknesses of the centralized Soviet economy, the Communist monopoly on power seemed secure, as did Moscow’s hold over its client states in Eastern Europe. In fact, for three decades after the end of World War II, the Soviet empire appeared to be a permanent feature of the international landscape. But by the early 1980s, it had become clear that there were cracks in the Kremlin wall. The Soviet economy was stagnant, the minority nationalities were restive, and Eastern European leaders were increasingly emboldened to test the waters of the global capitalist marketplace. In the United States, the newly elected president, Ronald Reagan, boldly predicted the imminent collapse of the “evil empire.”

At the time many observers questioned that prediction, but it soon seemed uncannily clairvoyant. Within a span of less than three years (1989–1991), the Soviet Union ceased to exist as a nation as Russia and other former Soviet republics declared their separate independence, Communist regimes in...
Eastern Europe were toppled, and the long-standing division of postwar Europe came to an end.

The fate of communism in China has been quite different. Despite some turbulence, the Communist Party has managed to retain power in China, even as that nation takes giant strides toward becoming an economic superpower. Yet as China’s leaders struggle to bring the nation into the modern age, many of the essential principles of Marxist-Leninist dogma have been tacitly abandoned, and cynicism among the nation’s youth is widespread. Whether communism will continue to provide a realistic framework for the challenges that lie ahead remains an open question. The “brave new world” forecast by Karl Marx remains but a figment of his imagination.

The Postwar Soviet Union

FOCUS QUESTIONS: How did Nikita Khrushchev change the system that the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin had put in place before his death in 1953? To what degree did his successors adopt Khrushchev’s policies?

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union was one of the world’s two superpowers, and its leader, Joseph Stalin, was in a position of strength. He and his Soviet colleagues were now in control of a vast empire (see Map 27.1) that included Eastern Europe, much of the Balkans, and new territory gained from Japan in East Asia.

From Stalin to Khrushchev

World War II devastated the Soviet Union. Twenty million citizens lost their lives, and cities such as Kiev (KEE-yev), Kharkov (KCHAR-kawf), and Leningrad suffered enormous physical destruction. As the lands that had been occupied by the German forces were liberated, the Soviet government turned its attention to restoring their economic structures. Nevertheless, in 1945, agricultural production was only 60 percent and steel output only 50 percent of prewar levels. The Soviet people faced incredibly difficult conditions: they worked longer hours than before the war, ate less, and were ill-housed and poorly clothed.

STALINISM IN ACTION In the immediate postwar years, the Soviet Union removed goods and materials from occupied Germany and extorted valuable raw materials from its satellite states in Eastern Europe. More important, however, to create a new industrial base, Stalin returned to the method he had used in the 1930s—the extraction of development capital from Soviet labor. Working hard for little pay and for precious few consumer goods, Soviet laborers were expected to produce goods for export with little in return for themselves. The incoming capital from abroad could then be used to purchase machinery and Western technology. The loss of millions of men in the war meant that much of this tremendous workload fell on Soviet women, who performed almost 40 percent of the heavy manual labor.

The pace of economic recovery in the years immediately after the war was impressive. By 1947, industrial production had attained 1939 levels; three years later, it had surpassed those levels by 40 percent. New power plants, canals, and giant factories were built, and industrial enterprises and oil fields were established in Siberia and Soviet Central Asia. Stalin’s new five-year plan, announced in 1946, reached its goals in less than five years.

Although Stalin’s economic strategy was successful in promoting growth in heavy industry, primarily for the benefit of the military, consumer goods remained scarce, and long-suffering Soviet citizens were still being asked to sacrifice for a better tomorrow. The development of thermonuclear weapons, MIG fighter planes, and the first space satellite (Sputnik) in the 1950s may have elevated the nation’s reputation as a world power abroad, but domestically, the people of the Soviet Union were shortchanged. Heavy industry grew at a rate three times that of personal consumption. Moreover, housing was in short supply, and living conditions were especially difficult in the overcrowded cities.

When World War II ended in 1945, Stalin had been in power for more than fifteen years. During that time, he had quashed all opposition to his rule and emerged as the undisputed master of the Soviet Union. Political terror enforced by several hundred thousand secret police ensured that he would remain in power. By the late 1940s, an estimated 9 million Soviet citizens were in Siberian concentration camps.

Increasingly distrustful of potential competitors, Stalin exercised sole authority and pitted his subordinates against one another. His morbid suspicions extended to even his closest colleagues. In 1948, Andrei Zhdanov (ahn-DRAY ZHDAH-nawf), his presumed successor and head of the Leningrad party organization, died under mysterious circumstances, almost certainly at Stalin’s order. Within weeks, the Leningrad party organization was purged of several top leaders, many of whom were accused of having traitorous connections with Western intelligence agencies.

In succeeding years, Stalin directed his suspicions at other members of the inner circle, including Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. Known as “Old Stone Butt” in the West for his stubborn defense of Soviet security interests, Molotov had been a loyal lieutenant since the early years of Stalin’s rise to power. Now Stalin distrusted Molotov and had his Jewish wife sent to a Siberian concentration camp. This intimidated virtually all of Stalin’s colleagues. As Stalin remarked mockingly on one occasion, “When I die, the imperialists will strangle all of you like a litter of kittens.”

Stalin died—presumably of natural causes—in 1953 and, after some bitter infighting within the party leadership, was succeeded by Georgy Malenkov, a veteran administrator and ambitious member of the Politburo (POL-it-byoor-oh), the party’s governing body. Malenkov came to power with a clear agenda. In foreign affairs, he hoped to promote an easing of Cold War tensions and improve relations with the Western powers. For Moscow’s Eastern European allies, he advocated a so-called new course in their mutual relations
During the struggle for power with Malenkov, Khrushchev had outmaneuvered his rival by calling for heightened defense expenditures and a continuing emphasis on heavy industry. Once in power, however, Khrushchev showed the political dexterity displayed by many American politicians and reversed his priorities. He now resumed the efforts of his predecessor to reduce tensions with the West and boost the standard of living of the Russian people. He moved vigorously to improve the performance of the Soviet economy and revitalize Soviet society. By nature, Khrushchev was a man of enormous energy and creativity. In an attempt to release the stranglehold of the central bureaucracy over the national economy, he abolished dozens of government ministries and split up the party and government apparatus. Khrushchev also attempted to rejuvenate the stagnating agricultural sector, long the Achilles’s heel of the Soviet economy. He attempted to spur production by increasing profit incentives and opened thousands of acres in Soviet Kazakhstan (ka-zak-STAN or kuh-zahk-STAHN) to cultivation.

Like any innovator, however, Khrushchev had to overcome the inherently conservative instincts of the Soviet bureaucracy, as well as of the mass of the Soviet population. His plan to remove the “dead hand” of the state, however laudable in intent, alienated much of the Soviet official class, and his effort to split the Communist Party angered those who saw it as the central force in the Soviet system. Khrushchev’s agricultural schemes inspired similar opposition. Although the Kazakhstan wheat lands would eventually demonstrate their importance, progress was slow, and his effort to
persuade Russians to eat more corn (an idea he had apparently picked up during a visit to the United States) earned him the mocking nickname "Cornman." The combination of disappointing agricultural production and high military spending hurt the Soviet economy. The industrial growth rate, which had soared in the early 1950s, now declined dramatically, from 13 percent annually in 1953 to 7.5 percent in 1964.

Khrushchev was probably best known for his policy of de-Stalinization. Khrushchev had risen in the party hierarchy as a Stalin protégé, but he had been deeply disturbed by his mentor’s excesses and, once in a position of authority, moved to excise the Stalinist legacy from Soviet society. The campaign began at the Twentieth National Congress of the Communist Party in February 1956, when Khrushchev gave a long speech in private criticizing some of Stalin’s major shortcomings. The speech apparently had not been intended for public distribution, but it was quickly leaked to the Western press and created a sensation throughout the world (see the box on p. 794). During the next few years, Khrushchev encouraged more freedom for writers, artists, and composers, arguing that “readers should be given the chance to make their own judgments” about the acceptability of controversial literature and that “police measures shouldn’t be used.” Under Khrushchev’s instructions, thousands of prisoners were released from concentration camps.

Khrushchev’s personality, however, did not endear him to higher Soviet officials, who frowned at his tendency to crack jokes and play the clown. Nor were the higher members of the party bureaucracy pleased when Khrushchev tried to curb their privileges. Foreign policy failures further damaged Khrushchev’s reputation among his colleagues. His plan to install missiles in Cuba was the final straw (see Chapter 26). While he was on vacation in 1964, a special meeting of the Soviet Politburo voted him out of office (citing “deteriorating health”) and forced him into retirement. Although a team of leaders succeeded him, real power came into the hands of Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982), the “trusted” supporter of Khrushchev who had engineered his downfall.

The Brezhnev Years (1964–1982)
The ouster of Nikita Khrushchev in October 1964 vividly demonstrated the challenges that would be encountered by any leader sufficiently bold to try to reform the Soviet system. In democratic countries, pressure on the government comes from various sources in society at large—the business community and labor unions, innumerable interest groups, and the general public. In the Soviet Union, pressure on government and party leaders originated from sources essentially operating inside the system—the government bureaucracy, the party apparatus, the KGB, and the armed forces.
Khrushchev Denounces Stalin

Three years after Stalin’s death, the new Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev, addressed the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party and denounced the former Soviet dictator for his crimes. This denunciation was the beginning of a policy of de-Stalinization. When it was secretly leaked to Western news organizations, it provoked excited debate in countries around the world and great consternation among conservative elements in the Soviet Union. One member of the Congress reportedly died of a heart attack shortly after the speech.

Khrushchev Addresses the Twentieth Party Congress, February 1956

A lot has been said about the cult of the individual and about its harmful consequences. . . . The cult of the person of Stalin . . . became at a certain specific stage the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious and grave perversions of Party principles, of Party democracy, of revolutionary legality.

Stalin absolutely did not tolerate collegiality in leadership and in work and . . . practiced brutal violence, not only toward everything which opposed him, but also toward that which seemed, to his capricious and despotic character, contrary to his concepts.

Stalin abandoned the method of ideological struggle for that of administrative violence, mass repressions and terror. . . . Arbitrary behavior by one person encouraged and permitted arbitrariness in others. Mass arrests and deportations of many thousands of people, execution without trial and without normal investigation created conditions of insecurity, fear, and even desperation.

Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality, and his abuse of power. . . . He often chose the path of repression and annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but also against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the Party and the Soviet government. . . .

Many Party, Soviet, and economic activists who were branded in 1937 and 1938 as “enemies” were actually never enemies, spies, wreckers, and so on, but were always honest communists; they were only so stigmatized, and often, no longer able to bear barbaric tortures, they charged themselves (at the order of the investigative judges-falsifiers) with all kinds of grave and unlikely crimes.

This was the result of the abuse of power by Stalin, who began to use mass terror against the Party cadres. . . . Stalin put the Party and the NKVD [the Soviet police agency] up to the use of mass terror when the exploiting classes had been liquidated in our country and when there were no serious reasons for the use of extraordinary mass terror. The terror was directed . . . against the honest workers of the Party and the Soviet state. . . .

Stalin was a very distrustful man, sickly, suspicious. . . . Everywhere and in everything he saw “enemies,” “two-facers,” and “spies.” Possessing unlimited power, he indulged in great willfulness and choked a person morally and physically. A situation was created where one could not express one’s own will. When Stalin said that one or another would be arrested, it was necessary to accept on faith that he was an “enemy of the people.” What proofs were offered? The confession of the arrested. . . . How is it possible that a person confesses to crimes that he had not committed? Only in one way—because of application of physical methods of pressuring him, tortures, bringing him to a state of unconsciousness, deprivation of his judgment, taking away of his human dignity.

What were the key charges that Khrushchev made against Stalin? Can it be said that Khrushchev corrected these problems?

Leonid Brezhnev, the new party chief, was undoubtedly aware of these realities of Soviet politics, and his long tenure in power was marked, above all, by the desire to avoid changes that might provoke instability, either at home or abroad. Brezhnev was himself a product of the Soviet system. He had entered the ranks of the party leadership under Stalin, and although he was not a particularly avid believer in party ideology—indeed, there were innumerable stories about his addiction to “bourgeois pleasures,” including expensive country houses and fast cars (many of them gifts from foreign leaders)—he was no partisan of reform.

Still, Brezhnev sought domestic stability. He and his prime minister, Alexei Kosygin, undertook what might be described as a program of “de-Khrushchevization,” returning the responsibility for long-term planning to the central ministries and reuniting the Communist Party apparatus. Despite some cautious attempts to stimulate the stagnant agricultural sector, there was no effort to revise the basic system of collective farms. In the industrial sector, the regime launched a series of reforms designed to give factory managers (themselves employees of the state) more responsibility for setting prices, wages, and production quotas. These “Kosygin reforms” had little effect, however, because they were stubbornly resisted by the bureaucracy and were adopted by relatively few enterprises in the vast state-owned industrial sector.

A CONTROLLED SOCIETY Brezhnev also initiated a significant retreat from Khrushchev’s policy of de-Stalinization. Criticism of the “Great Leader” had angered conservatives both within the party hierarchy and among the public at large, many of whom still revered Stalin as a hero and a defender of Russia against Nazi Germany. Many influential figures in the Kremlin feared that de-Stalinization could lead to
internal instability and a decline in public trust in the legitimacy of party leadership—the hallowed “dictatorship of the proletariat.” Early in Brezhnev’s reign, Stalin’s reputation began to revive. Although his alleged shortcomings were not totally ignored, he was now described in the official press as “an outstanding party leader” who had been primarily responsible for the successes achieved by the Soviet Union.

The regime also adopted a more restrictive policy toward dissidents in Soviet society. Critics of the Soviet system, such as the physicist Andrei Sakharov (ahn-DRAY SAH-khuh-rawf), were harassed and arrested or, like the famous writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn (SOH-l-zhuh-NEET-sin), forced to leave the country. There was also a return to the anti-Semitic policies and attitudes that had marked the Stalin era. Such indications of renewed repression aroused concern in the West and were instrumental in the inclusion of a statement on human rights in the 1975 Helsinki Accords (see Chapter 26).

Free expression was also restricted. The media were controlled by the state and presented only what the state wanted people to hear. The two major newspapers, Pravda (“Truth”) and Izvestia (“News”), were the agents of the party and the government, respectively. Cynics joked that there was no news in Pravda (PRAHV-duh) and no truth in Izvestia (iz-VESS-tee-uh). According to Western journalists, airplane accidents in the Soviet Union were rarely publicized, out of concern that they would raise questions about the quality of the Soviet airline industry. Shortly after the disaster at the Chernobyl (chur-NOH-buhl) nuclear plant in 1986, a Soviet official testily assured me that foreign news reports about the seriousness of the incident were just Western propaganda.

The government also made strenuous efforts to prevent the Soviet people from being exposed to harmful foreign ideas, especially modern art, literature, and rock music. When the Summer Olympic Games were held in Moscow in 1980, Soviet newspapers advised citizens to keep their children indoors to keep them from being polluted with “bourgeois” ideas passed on by foreign visitors. But the effort proved fruitless, as Soviet adolescents nonetheless became enamored of forbidden Western rock music and clothing styles.

For citizens of Western democracies, such a political atmosphere would seem highly oppressive, but for the Russian people, an emphasis on law and order was an accepted aspect of everyday life inherited from the tsarist period. It was firmly enshrined in the Soviet constitution, in which individual freedom was subordinated to the interests of the state (see the box on p. 796). Conformity was the rule in virtually every corner of Soviet society, from the educational system (characterized at all levels by rote memorization and political indoctrination) to child rearing (it was forbidden, for example, to be left-handed) and even to yearly vacations (most workers took their vacations at resorts run by their employer, where the daily schedule of activities was highly regimented). Young Americans studying in the Soviet Union reported that their Soviet friends were often shocked to hear U.S. citizens criticizing their own president.

A STAGNANT ECONOMY Soviet leaders also failed to achieve their objective of revitalizing the national economy. Whereas growth rates during the early Khrushchev era had been impressive (prompting Khrushchev during a 1956 reception at the Kremlin to chortle to an American guest, “We will bury you”), under Brezhnev industrial growth declined to an annual rate of less than 4 percent in the early 1970s and less than 3 percent in the period from 1975 to 1980. Successes in the agricultural sector were equally meager. Grain production rose from less than 90 million tons in the early 1950s to nearly 200 million tons in the 1970s but then stagnated at that level.

One of the primary problems with the Soviet economy was the absence of incentives. Salary structures offered little reward for hard labor and extraordinary achievement. Pay differentials operated in a much narrower range than in most Western societies, and there was little danger of being dismissed. According to the Soviet constitution, every Soviet citizen was guaranteed an opportunity to work.

There were, of course, some exceptions to this general rule. Athletic achievement was highly prized, and a gymnast of Olympic stature would receive great rewards in the form of prestige and lifestyle. Senior officials did not receive high salaries but were provided with countless perquisites, such as access to foreign goods, official automobiles with chauffeurs, and entry into prestigious institutions of higher learning for their children. For the elite, it was blat (influence) that most often differentiated them from the rest of the population. The average citizen, however, had little material incentive to produce beyond the minimum acceptable level. It is hardly surprising that per capita productivity was only about half that realized in most capitalist countries. At the same time, the rudeness of Soviet clerks and waiters became legendary.

The problem of incentives existed at the managerial level as well, where centralized planning discouraged initiative and innovation. Factory managers, for example, were assigned monthly and annual quotas by the Gosplan (gaws-PLAHN)—the “state plan” drawn up by the central planning commission. Because state-owned factories faced little or no competition, managers did not care whether their products were competitive in terms of price and quality, as long as the quota was attained. One of the key complaints of Soviet citizens was the low quality of domestic consumer goods. Knowledgeable consumers quickly discovered that products manufactured at the end of the month were often of lower quality (because factory workers had to rush to meet their quotas) and attempted to avoid purchasing them.

Often consumer goods were simply unavailable. Whenever Soviet citizens saw a queue forming in front of a store, they automatically got in line, often without even knowing what people were lining up for, because they never knew when that item might be available again. When they reached the head of the line, most would purchase several of the same item in order to swap with their friends and neighbors. This “queue psychology,” of course, was a time-consuming process and inevitably served to reduce the per capita rate of productivity.

Soviet citizens often tried to overcome the shortcomings of the system by resorting to the black market (buying “on the left,” in Soviet parlance). Private economic activities, of course, were illegal, but many workers took to moonlighting to augment their meager salaries. An employee in a state-run
In the Soviet Union, and in other countries modeled on the Soviet system, the national constitution was viewed not as a timeless document, but as a reflection of conditions at the time it was framed. As Soviet society advanced from a state of “raw communism” to a fully socialist society, new constitutions were drafted to reflect the changes taking place in society as a whole. The first two constitutions of the Soviet Union, promulgated in 1924 and 1936, declared that the state was a “dictatorship of the proletariat” guided by the Communist Party, the vanguard organization of the working class in the Soviet Union. But the so-called Brezhnev constitution of 1977 described the Soviet Union as a “state of all the people,” composed of workers, farmers, and “socialist intellectuals,” although it confirmed the role of Communist Party as the “leading force” in society. The provisions from the 1977 constitution presented here illustrate some of the freedoms and obligations of Soviet citizens. Especially noteworthy are Articles 39 and 62, which suggest that the interests and prestige of the state took precedence over individual liberties.

**The Soviet Constitution of 1977**

**Chapter 1: The Political System**

**Article 6.** The leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people.

The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the home and foreign policy of the USSR, directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic, and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism.

Another major obstacle to economic growth was inadequate technology. Except in the area of national defense, the overall level of Soviet technology was not comparable to that of the West or the advanced industrial societies of East Asia. Part of the problem stemmed from issues already described. With no competition, factory managers had little incentive to improve the quality of their products. But another reason was the high priority assigned to national defense. The military sector regularly received the most resources from the government and attracted the cream of the country’s scientific talent.

**Chapter 6: Equality of Citizens’ Rights**

**Article 35.** Women and men have equal rights in the USSR. Exercise of these rights is ensured by according women equal access with men to education and vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion, and in social and political, and cultural activity, and by the special labor and health protection measures for women; by providing conditions enabling mothers to work; by legal protection, and material and moral support for mothers and children, including paid leaves and other benefits for expectant mothers and mothers, and gradual reduction of working time for mothers with small children.

**Chapter 7: The Basic Rights, Freedoms, and Duties of Citizens of the USSR**

**Article 39.** Citizens of the USSR enjoy in full the social, economic, political, and personal rights and freedoms proclaimed and guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR and by Soviet laws. The socialist system ensures enlargement of the rights and freedoms of citizens and continuous improvement of their living standards as social, economic, and cultural development programs are fulfilled. Enjoyment by citizens of their rights and freedoms must not be to the detriment of the interests of society or the state, or infringe the rights of other citizens.

**Article 62.** Citizens of the USSR are obliged to safeguard the interests of the Soviet state, and to enhance its power and prestige. Defense of the Socialist Motherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the USSR. Betrayal of the Motherland is the gravest of crimes against the people.

Q: Which of these provisions would seem out of place if they were to appear in the Constitution of the United States?
his brief tenure as party chief, Andropov was a vocal advocate of reform, but most of his initiatives were limited to the familiar nostrums of punishment for wrongdoers and moral exhortations to Soviet citizens to work harder. At the same time, material incentives were still officially discouraged and generally ineffective. Andropov had been ailing when he was selected to succeed Brezhnev as party chief, and when he died after only a few months in office, little had been done to change the system. He was succeeded by a mediocre party stalwart, the elderly Konstantin Chernenko (kuhn-stuhn-TEEN chyrn-YEN-koh) (1911–1985). With the Soviet system in crisis, Moscow seemed stuck in a time warp. As one concerned observer told an American journalist, “I had a sense of foreboding, like before a storm. That there was something brewing in people and there would be a time when they would say, ‘That’s it. We can’t go on living like this. We can’t. We need to redo everything.’”

Cultural Expression in the Soviet Bloc

In his occasional musings about the future Communist utopia, Karl Marx had predicted that a new, classless society would replace the exploitative and hierarchical systems of feudalism and capitalism. Workers would engage in productive activities and share equally in the fruits of their labor. In their free time, they would produce a new, advanced culture, proletarian in character and egalitarian in content.

The reality in the post–World War II Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was somewhat different. Under Stalin, the Soviet cultural scene was a wasteland. Beginning in 1946, a series of government decrees made all forms of literary and scientific expression dependent on the state. All Soviet culture was expected to follow the party line. Historians, philosophers, and social scientists all grew accustomed to quoting Marx, Lenin, and, above all, Stalin as their chief authorities. Novels and plays, too, were supposed to portray Communist heroes and their efforts to create a better society. No criticism of existing social conditions was permitted. Even distinguished composers such as Dmitry Shostakovich (dih-MEE-tree shahs-tuh-KOH-vich) were compelled to heed Stalin’s criticisms, including his view that contemporary Western music was nothing but a “mishmash.” Some areas of intellectual activity were virtually abolished; the science of genetics disappeared, and few movies were made during Stalin’s final years.

Stalin’s death brought a modest respite from cultural repression. Writers and artists banned during the Stalin years were again allowed to publish. Still, Soviet authorities, including Khrushchev, were reluctant to allow cultural freedom to move far beyond official Soviet ideology.

These restrictions, however, did not prevent the emergence of some significant Soviet literature, although authors paid a heavy price if they alienated the Soviet authorities. Boris Pasternak (buh-REESS PASS-tur-nak) (1890–1960), who began his literary career as a poet, won the Nobel Prize in 1958 mainly for his celebrated novel Doctor Zhivago, written between 1945 and 1956 and published in Italy in 1957. But the Soviet government condemned Pasternak’s anti-Soviet tendencies, banned the novel, and would not allow him to accept the prize. The author had alienated the authorities by describing a society scarred by the excesses of Bolshevik revolutionary zeal.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) caused an even greater furor than Pasternak. Solzhenitsyn had spent eight years in forced labor camps for criticizing Stalin, and his novel One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, one of the works for which he won the Nobel Prize in 1970, was an account of life in those camps. Khrushchev allowed the book’s publication as part of his de-Stalinization campaign. In 1973, Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago, a detailed indictment of the whole system of Soviet oppression, was published in the West. Soviet authorities denounced Solzhenitsyn’s efforts to inform the world of Soviet crimes against humanity and expelled him from the Soviet Union in the same year.

Although restrictive policies continued into the late 1980s, some Soviet authors learned how to minimize battles with the censors by writing under the guise of humor or fantasy. Two of the most accomplished and popular Soviet novelists of the period, Yury Trifonov (YOOR-ee trih-FAH-nawf) (1925–1981) and Fazil Iskander (fah-ZUHL is-KAN-der) (b. 1929), focused on the daily struggle of Soviet citizens to live with dignity. Trifonov depicted the everyday life of ordinary Russians with grim realism, while Iskander used humor to poke fun at the incompetence of the Soviet regime.

In the Eastern European satellites, cultural freedom varied considerably from country to country. In Poland, intellectuals had access to Western publications as well as greater freedom to travel to the West. Hungarian and Yugoslav Communists, too, tolerated a certain level of intellectual activity that was not liked but at least not prohibited. Elsewhere, intellectuals were forced to conform to the regime’s demands. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (see Chapter 26), Czech Communists pursued a policy of strict cultural control.

The socialist camp also experienced the many facets of modern popular culture. By the early 1970s, there were 28

Stalinist Heroic: An Example of Socialist Realism. Under Stalin and his successors, art was assigned the task of indoctrinating the Soviet population on the public virtues, such as hard work, loyalty to the state, and patriotism. Grandiose statuary erected to commemorate the heroic efforts of the Red Army during World War II appeared in every Soviet city. Here is an example in Minsk, today the capital of Belarus.
The desire to create a classless society led to

CHAPTER 27

This shift in educational preferences demon-
strates yet another aspect of the social structure in the Com-
munist world: the emergence of a new privileged class, made up of members of the Communist Party, state officials, high-rank-
ing officers in the military and the secret police, and a few special professional groups. The new elite not only pos-
sessed political power but also received special privileges, including the right to purchase high-quality goods in special stores, paid vacations at special resorts, access to good hous-
ing and superior medical services, and advantages in educa-
tion and jobs for their children. In 1980, in one Soviet province, 70 percent of Communist Party members came from the families of managers, technicians, and government and party bureaucrats.

Ideals of equality did not include women. Men dominated the leadership positions of the Communist Parties. Women did have greater opportunities in the workforce and even in the professions, however. In the Soviet Union, women comprised 51 percent of the labor force in 1980; by the mid-1980s, they constituted 50 percent of the engineers, 80 percent of the doctors, and 75 percent of the teachers and teachers’ aides. But many of these were low-paying jobs; most female doctors, for example, worked in primary care and were paid less than skilled machinists. The chief administrators in hospi-
tals and schools were still men.

Moreover, although women made up nearly half of the workforce, they were still expected to fulfill their traditional roles in the home (see the box on p. 799). Most women worked what came to be known as the “double shift.” After spending eight hours in their jobs, they came home to do the housework and take care of the children. They might spend another two hours a day in long lines at a number of stores waiting to buy food and clothes. Because of the scarcity of housing, they had to use kitchens that were shared by a number of families.

Nearly three-quarters of a century after the Bolshevik Revolution, then, the Marxist dream of an advanced, egal-
tarian society was as far off as ever. Although in some respects conditions in the socialist camp were better than

Social Changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

The imposition of Marxist systems in Eastern Europe had far-reaching social consequences. Most Eastern European countries made the change from peasant societies to modern, industrialized economies. In Bulgaria, for example, 80 percent of the labor force was engaged in agriculture in 1950, but only 20 percent was still working there in 1980. Although the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites never achieved the high standards of living of the West, they did experience some improvement. In 1960, the average real income of Polish peasants was four times higher than before World War II. Consumer goods also became more widely available. In East Germany, only 17 percent of families had television sets in 1960, but 75 percent had acquired them by 1972.

According to Marxist doctrine, state control of industry and the elimination of private property were supposed to lead to a classless society. Although that ideal was never achieved, it did have important social consequences. For one thing, traditional ruling classes were stripped of their special status after 1945. The Potocki family in Poland, for example, which had owned 9 million acres of land before the war, lost all of its possessions, and family members were reduced to the ranks of common laborers.

EDUCATION The desire to create a classless society led to noticeable changes in education. In some countries, laws mandated quota systems based on class. In East Germany, for example, 50 percent of the students in secondary schools had to be children of workers and peasants. The sons of manual workers constituted 53 percent of university students in Yugoslavia in 1964 and 40 percent in East Germany, com-
pared with only 15 percent in Italy and 5.3 percent in West Germany. Social mobility also increased. In Poland in 1961, half of all white-collar workers came from blue-collar families. A significant number of judges, professors, and industrial managers stemmed from working-class backgrounds.

Education became crucial in preparing for new jobs in the Communist system and led to higher enrollments in both secondary schools and universities. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the number of students in secondary schools tripled between 1945 and 1970, and the number of university students quadrupled between the 1930s and the 1960s. The type of education that students received also changed. In Hungary before World War II, 40 percent of students studied law, 9 percent engineering and technology, and 5 percent agriculture. In 1970, 35 percent were in engineering and technology, 9 percent in agriculture, and only 4 percent in law.

By the 1970s, the new managers of society, regardless of class background, realized the importance of higher education and used their power to gain special privileges for their children. By 1971, 60 percent of the children of white-collar workers attended university, and even though blue-collar families constituted 60 percent of the population, only 36 per-
cent of their children attended institutions of higher learning. Even East Germany dropped its requirement that 50 percent of secondary students had to be the offspring of workers and peasants.

THE NEW ELITE This shift in educational preferences demonstra-
tes yet another aspect of the social structure in the Com-
munist world: the emergence of a new privileged class, made up of members of the Communist Party, state officials, high-rank-
ing officers in the military and the secret police, and a few special professional groups. The new elite not only pos-
sessed political power but also received special privileges, including the right to purchase high-quality goods in special stores, paid vacations at special resorts, access to good hous-
ing and superior medical services, and advantages in educa-
tion and jobs for their children. In 1980, in one Soviet province, 70 percent of Communist Party members came from the families of managers, technicians, and government and party bureaucrats.

Ideals of equality did not include women. Men dominated the leadership positions of the Communist Parties. Women did have greater opportunities in the workforce and even in the professions, however. In the Soviet Union, women comprised 51 percent of the labor force in 1980; by the mid-1980s, they constituted 50 percent of the engineers, 80 percent of the doctors, and 75 percent of the teachers and teachers’ aides. But many of these were low-paying jobs; most female doctors, for example, worked in primary care and were paid less than skilled machinists. The chief administrators in hospi-
tals and schools were still men.

Moreover, although women made up nearly half of the workforce, they were still expected to fulfill their traditional roles in the home (see the box on p. 799). Most women worked what came to be known as the “double shift.” After spending eight hours in their jobs, they came home to do the housework and take care of the children. They might spend another two hours a day in long lines at a number of stores waiting to buy food and clothes. Because of the scarcity of housing, they had to use kitchens that were shared by a number of families.

Nearly three-quarters of a century after the Bolshevik Revolution, then, the Marxist dream of an advanced, egal-
tarian society was as far off as ever. Although in some respects conditions in the socialist camp were better than
One of the major problems for Soviet women was the need to balance work and family roles, a problem noticeably ignored by authorities. This selection is taken from a series of interviews of thirteen women in Moscow conducted by Swedish investigators in the late 1970s. As is evident in this interview with Anna, a young wife and mother, these Soviet women took pride in their achievements but were also frustrated with their lives. It is hardly surprising that the conflicting pressures on women caught between the demands of the family and the state’s push for industrialization would result in a drop in birthrates and a change in family structure.

**Moscow Women: Interview with Anna**

[Anna is twenty-one and married, has a three-month-old daughter, and lives with her husband and daughter in a one-room apartment with a balcony and a large bathroom. Anna works as a hairdresser; her husband is an unemployed writer.]

*Are there other kinds of jobs dominated by women?*

Of course! Preschool teachers are exclusively women. Also beauticians. But I guess that’s about all. Here women work in every profession, from tractor drivers to engineers. But I think there ought to be more jobs specifically for women so that there are some differences. In this century women have to be equal to men. Now women wear pants, have short hair, and hold important jobs, just like men. There are almost no differences left. Except in the home.

*Do women and men have the same goal in life?*

Of course. Women want to get out of the house and have careers, just the same as men do. It gives women a lot of advantages, higher wages, and so on. In that sense we have the same goal, but socially I don’t think so. The family is, after all, more important for a woman. A man can live without his family, and then, of course, it was only natural that things turned out the way they did. It’s hard for a man to live without his family when he’s used to being taken care of all the time. Of course there are men who can endure, who continue to be faithful, etc., but for most men it isn’t easy. For that reason I think a woman ought to go where her husband does . . .

That’s the way it is. Women have certain obligations, men others. One has to understand that at an early age. Girls have to learn to take care of a household and help at home. Boys too, but not as much as girls. Boys ought to be with their fathers and learn how to do masculine chores. . . .

It’s so difficult to be a woman here. With emancipation, we lead such abnormal, twisted lives, because women have to work the same as men do. As a result, women have very little time for themselves to work on their femininity.

What does this interview reveal about the role of women in the Soviet Union in the 1970s? In what ways did that role differ from that of women in the West during the same period?

Before World War II, many problems and inequities were as intransigent as ever.

**The Disintegration of the Soviet Empire**

FOCUS QUESTIONS: What were the key components of perestroika, which Mikhail Gorbachev espoused during the 1980s? Why did it fail?

On the death of Konstantin Chernenko in 1985, party leaders selected a talented and youthful Soviet official, Mikhail Gorbachev, to succeed him. The new Soviet leader had shown early signs of promise. Born into a peasant family in 1931, Gorbachev combined farmwork with school and received the Order of the Red Banner for his agricultural efforts. This award and his good school record enabled him to study law at the University of Moscow. After receiving his law degree in 1955, he returned to his native southern Russia, where he eventually became first secretary of the Communist Party in the city of Stavropol (STAH-vruh-puhl or stav-ROH-puhl)—he had joined the party in 1952—and then first secretary of the regional party committee. In 1978, Gorbachev was made a member of the party’s Central Committee in Moscow. Two years later, he became a full member of the ruling Politburo and secretary of the Central Committee.
During the early 1980s, Gorbachev began to realize the immensity of Soviet problems and the crucial need to transform the system. During a visit to Canada in 1983, he discovered to his astonishment that Canadian farmers worked hard on their own initiative. “We’ll never have this for fifty years,” he reportedly remarked. On his return to Moscow, he set up a number of committees to evaluate the situation and recommend measures to improve the system.

The Gorbachev Era

With his election as party general secretary in 1985, Gorbachev seemed intent on taking earlier reforms to their logical conclusions. The cornerstone of his program was perestroika (per-uh-estroh-kuh), or “restructuring.” At first it meant only a reordering of economic policy, as Gorbachev called for the beginning of a market economy with limited free enterprise and some private property (see the comparative illustration above). Initial economic reforms were difficult to implement, however. Radicals criticized Gorbachev for his caution and demanded decisive measures; conservatives feared that rapid changes would be too painful. In his attempt to achieve compromise, Gorbachev often pursued partial liberalization, which satisfied neither faction and also failed to work, producing only more discontent.

Gorbachev soon perceived that in the Soviet system, the economy was intimately tied to the social and political spheres. Any efforts to reform the economy without political or social reform would be doomed to failure. One of the most important instruments of perestroika was glasnost (GLAHZ-nohst), or “openness.” Soviet citizens and officials were encouraged to openly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union. The effects of this policy could be seen in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist Party, which began to report news of disasters such as the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986 and collisions of ships in the Black Sea. This more liberal approach was soon extended to include reports of official corruption, sloppy factory work, and protests against government policy. The arts also benefited from the new policy as previously banned works were now published and motion pictures were allowed to depict negative aspects of Soviet life. Music based on Western styles, such as jazz and rock, could now be performed openly. Religious activities, long banned by the government, were once again tolerated.

Political reforms were equally revolutionary. In June 1987, the principle of two-candidate elections was introduced; previously, voters had been presented with only one choice. Most dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov, who had spent years in internal exile, were released. At the Communist Party conference in 1988, Gorbachev called for the creation of a new Soviet parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies, whose members were to be chosen in competitive elections.
One of Gorbachev’s most serious problems stemmed from the nature of the Soviet Union. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a truly multiethnic country, containing 92 nationalities and 112 recognized languages. Previously, the iron hand of the Communist Party, centered in Moscow, had kept a lid on the centuries-old ethnic tensions that had periodically erupted throughout the history of the region. As Gorbachev released this iron grip, tensions resurfaced, a by-product of glasnost that Gorbachev had not anticipated. Ethnic groups took advantage of the new openness to protest what they perceived to be ethnically motivated slights. As violence erupted, the Soviet army, in disarray since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, had difficulty controlling the situation. In some cases, independence movements and ethnic causes became linked, as in Azerbaijan (az-ur-by-JAHN), where the National Front became the spokesgroup for the Muslim Azerbaijanis in the conflict with Christian Armenians.

The period from 1988 to 1990 witnessed the emergence of nationalist movements throughout the constituent republics of the Soviet Union. Often motivated by ethnic concerns, many of them called for independence from Russian-based rule centered in Moscow. Such movements sprang up first in Georgia in late 1988 and then in Latvia (LAT-vee-uh), Estonia (ES-toh-nee-uh), Moldova (mohl-DAY-vee-uh), Uzbekistan (ooz-BEK-ih-stan), Azerbaijan, and Lithuania (ih-thuh-WAY-nee-ee-uh).

In December 1989, the Communist Party of Lithuania declared itself independent of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev made it clear that he supported self-determination but not secession, which he believed would be detrimental to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, on March 11, 1990, the Lithuanian Supreme Council unilaterally declared that the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic was now the independent Lithuanian Republic. Four days later, the Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies, though recognizing a general right to secede from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, proclaimed the Lithuanian declaration null and void, insisting that proper procedures must be followed before secession would be allowed. The Lithuanians paid this no mind.

**The Disintegration of the Soviet Empire** In 1990 and 1991, Gorbachev struggled to deal with Lithuania and the other problems unleashed by his reforms. On the one hand, he tried to appease the conservative forces who complained about the growing disorder within the Soviet Union. On the other hand, he tried to accommodate the liberal forces, especially those in the Soviet republics, who increasingly favored a new kind of decentralized Soviet federation. Gorbachev especially labored to cooperate more closely with Boris Yeltsin (YELT-sun) (1931–2007), who was elected president of the Russian Republic in June 1991.

By that time, conservatives within the army, government, KGB, and military industries had grown increasingly worried about the possible dissolution of the Soviet Union and its impact on their own fortunes. On August 19, 1991, a group of these discontented rightists arrested Gorbachev and attempted to seize power. Gorbachev’s unwillingness to work with the conspirators and the brave resistance in Moscow of...
Yeltsin and thousands of Russians who had grown accustomed to their new liberties caused the coup to fall apart rapidly. The actions of these right-wing plotters served to accelerate the very process they had hoped to stop—the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Despite desperate pleas from Gorbachev, the Soviet republics soon opted for complete independence. On December 1, 1991, Ukraine voted for independence. A week later, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (bell-uh-ROOSS) announced that the Soviet Union had “ceased to exist” and would be replaced by a “commonwealth of independent states.” Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991, and turned over his responsibilities as commander in chief to Yeltsin, the president of Russia. By the end of 1991, one of the largest empires in world history had come to an end, and fifteen new nations had embarked on an uncertain future (see Map 27.2).

**Eastern Europe: From Satellites to Sovereign Nations**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union had an immediate impact on its neighbors to the west. First to respond, as in 1956, was Poland, where popular protests at high food prices had erupted in the early 1980s, leading to the rise of an independent labor movement called Solidarity. Led by Lech Walesa (LEK vah-WENT-sah) (b. 1943), Solidarity rapidly became an influential force for change and a threat to the government’s monopoly of power. The union was outlawed in 1981, but martial law did not solve Poland’s serious economic problems. In 1988, the Communist government bowed to the inevitable and permitted free national elections to take place, resulting in the election of Walesa as president of Poland in December 1990. In contrast to 1956, when Khrushchev had intervened to prevent the collapse of the Soviet satellite system in Eastern Europe, in the late 1980s, Moscow—inspired by Gorbachev’s policy of encouraging “new thinking” to improve relations with the Western powers—took no action to reverse the verdict in Warsaw.

In Hungary, as in Poland, the process of transition had begun many years earlier. After crushing the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Communist government of János Kádár had tried to assuage popular opinion by enacting a series of far-reaching economic reforms (labeled “communism with a capitalist face-lift”). But as the 1980s progressed, the economy sagged, and in 1989, the regime permitted the formation of opposition political parties, leading eventually to the formation of a non-Communist coalition government in elections held in March 1990.

The transition in Czechoslovakia was more abrupt. After Soviet troops crushed the Prague Spring in 1968, hard-line Communists under Gustav Husák followed a policy of massive repression to maintain their power. In 1977, dissident intellectuals formed an organization called Charter 77 as a vehicle for protest against violations of human rights. Regardless of the repressive atmosphere, dissident activities continued to grow during the 1980s, and when massive demonstrations broke out in several major cities in 1989, President Husák’s government, lacking popular support, collapsed. At the end of December, he was replaced by Václav Havel (VAHT-slahf HAH-vul) (b. 1936), a dissident playwright who had been a leading figure in Charter 77.
But the most dramatic events took place in East Germany, where a persistent economic slump and the ongoing oppression by the regime of Erich Honecker led to a flight of refugees and mass demonstrations against the regime in the summer and fall of 1989. Capitulating to popular pressure, the Communist government opened its entire border with the West. The Berlin Wall, the most tangible symbol of the Cold War, became the site of a massive celebration; most of it was dismantled by joyful Germans from both sides of the border.

In March 1990, free elections led to the formation of a non-Communist government that rapidly carried out a program of political and economic reunification with West Germany.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and its satellite system in Eastern Europe brought a dramatic end to the Cold War. By the beginning of the 1990s, a generation of global rivalry between two ideological systems had come to a close, and world leaders turned their attention to the construction of what U.S. President George H. W. Bush called the New World Order. But what sort of new order would it be?

**Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?**

What caused the sudden disintegration of the Soviet system? It is popular in some quarters in the United States to argue that the ambitious defense policies adopted by the Reagan administration forced Moscow into an arms race that it could not afford and that ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet economy. This contention has some superficial plausibility as Soviet leaders did indeed react to Reagan’s “Star Wars” program by increasing their own defense expenditures, which put a strain on the Soviet budget.

Most knowledgeable observers, however, believe that the fall of the Soviet Union was primarily a consequence of conditions inherent in the system, several of which have been pointed out in this chapter. For years, if not decades, leaders in the Kremlin had disguised or ignored the massive inefficiencies in the Soviet economy. In the 1980s, time began to run out. The perceptive Mikhail Gorbachev tried to stem the decline by instituting radical reforms, but by then it was too late.

An additional factor should also be considered. One of the most vulnerable aspects of the Soviet Union was its multiethnic character, with only a little more than half of the total population composed of ethnic Russians. Many of the minority nationalities were becoming increasingly restive and were demanding more autonomy or even independence for their regions. By the end of the 1980s, such demands brought about the final collapse of the system. The Soviet empire died at least partly from imperial overreach.

**The East Is Red: China Under Communism**

FOCUS QUESTION: What were Mao Zedong’s chief goals for China, and what policies did he institute to try to achieve them?

“A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate and kind, courteous, restrained, and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.”6 With these words—written in 1926, at a time when the Communists, in cooperation with Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Party, were embarked on their Northern Expedition to defeat the warlords and reunify China—the young revolutionary Mao Zedong warned his colleagues that the road to victory in the struggle to build a Communist society would be arduous and would inevitably involve acts of violence against the class enemy.

In the fall of 1949, China was at peace for the first time in twelve years. The newly victorious Communist Party, under the leadership of its chairman, Mao Zedong, turned its attention to consolidating its power base and healing the wounds of war. Its long-term goal was to construct a socialist society, but its leaders realized that popular support for the revolution was based on the party’s platform of honest government, land reform, social justice, and peace rather than on the utopian goal of a classless society. Accordingly, the new regime temporarily set aside Mao Zedong’s stirring exhortation of 1926 and followed Soviet precedent by adopting a moderate program of political and economic recovery known as New Democracy.

**New Democracy**

With New Democracy—patterned roughly after Lenin’s New Economic Policy in Soviet Russia in the 1920s (see Chapter 23)—the new Chinese leadership tacitly recognized that time and extensive indoctrination would be needed to convince the Chinese people of the superiority of socialism. In the meantime, the party would rely on capitalist profit incentives to spur productivity. Manufacturing and commercial firms were permitted to remain under private ownership, although with stringent government regulations. To win the support of the poorer peasants, who made up the majority of the population, a land redistribution program was adopted, but the collectivization of agriculture was postponed.

In a number of key respects, New Democracy was a success. About two-thirds of the peasant households in the country received land and thus had reason to be grateful to the new regime. Spurred by official tolerance for capitalist activities and the end of internal conflict, the national economy

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*CHRONOLOGY*  The Soviet Bloc and Its Demise

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<td>Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization speech</td>
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<td>Disintegration of Soviet Union</td>
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Land Reform in Action

One of the great achievements of the new Communist regime in China was the land reform program, which resulted in the distribution of farmland to almost two-thirds of the rural population. The program consequently won the gratitude of millions of Chinese. But it also had a dark side as local land reform tribunals routinely convicted “wicked landlords” of crimes against the people and then put them to death. The following passage, written by a foreign observer, describes the process in one village.

Revolution in a Chinese Village

T’ien-ming [a Party cadre] called all the active young cadres and the militiamen of Long Bow [village] together and announced to them the policy of the county government, which was to confront all enemy collaborators and their backers at public meetings, expose their crimes, and turn them over to the county authorities for punishment. He proposed that they start with Kuo Te-yu, the puppet village head. Having moved the group to anger with a description of Te-yu’s crimes, T’ien-ming reviewed the painful life led by the poor peasants during the occupation and recalled how hard they had all worked and how as soon as they harvested all the grain the puppet officials, backed by army bayonets, took what they wanted, turned over huge quantities to the Japanese devils, forced the peasants to haul it away, and flogged those who refused.

As the silent crowd contracted toward the spot where the accused man stood, T’ien-ming stepped forward. . . . “This is our chance. Remember how we were oppressed. The traitors seized our property. They beat us and kicked us. . . . “Let us speak out the bitter memories. Let us see that the blood debt is repaid. . . .” He paused for a moment. The peasants were listening to every word but gave no sign as to how they felt. . . . “Come now, who has evidence against this man?” Again there was silence.

Kuei-ts’ai, the new vice-chairman of the village, found it intolerable. He jumped up [and] struck Kuo Te-yu on the jaw with the back of his hand. “Tell the meeting how much you stole,” he demanded.

The blow jarred the ragged crowd. It was as if an electric spark had tensed every muscle. Not in living memory had any peasant ever struck an official. . . .

The people in the square waited fascinated as if watching a play. They did not realize that in order for the plot to unfold they themselves had to mount the stage and speak out what was on their minds.

That evening T’ien-ming and Kuei-ts’ai called together the small groups of poor peasants from various parts of the village and sought to learn what it was that was really holding them back. They soon found the root of the trouble was fear of the old established political forces, and their military backers. The old reluctance to move against the power of the gentry, the fear of ultimate defeat and terrible reprisal that had been seared into the consciousness of so many generations, lay like a cloud over the peasants’ minds and hearts.

Emboldened by T’ien-ming’s words, other peasants began to speak out. They recalled what Te-yu had done to them personally. Several vowed to speak up and accuse him the next morning. After the meeting broke up, the passage of time worked its own leaven. In many a hovel and tumble-down house talk continued well past midnight. Some people were so excited they did not sleep at all. . . .

On the following day the meeting was livelier by far. It began with a sharp argument as to who would make the first accusation, and T’ien-ming found it difficult to keep order. Before Te-yu had a chance to reply to any questions, a crowd of young men, among whom were several militiamen, surged forward ready to beat him.

Q What was the Communist Party’s purpose in carrying out land reform in China? How did the tactics employed here support that strategy?

The Transition to Socialism

Originally, party leaders intended to follow the Leninist formula of delaying the building of a fully socialist society until China had a sufficient industrial base to permit the mechanization of agriculture. In 1953, they launched the nation’s first five-year plan (patterned after similar Soviet plans), which called for substantial increases in industrial output. Lenin had believed that mechanization would induce Russian peasants to join collective farms, because the farms, with their greater size and efficiency, could purchase expensive farm machinery that individual farmers could not afford. But the difficulty of providing tractors and reapers for millions of rural villages

began to rebound, although agricultural production still lagged behind both official targets and the growing population, which was increasing at an annual rate of more than 2 percent. But not all benefited. In the course of carrying out land redistribution, thousands if not millions of landlords and well-to-do farmers lost their lands, their personal property, their freedom, and sometimes their lives. Many of those who died were tried and convicted of “crimes against the people” in tribunals set up under official sponsorship in towns and villages around the country. As Mao himself later conceded, many were innocent of any crime, but in the eyes of the party, their deaths were necessary to destroy the power of the landed gentry in the countryside (see the box above).
eventually convinced Mao that it would take years, if not decades, for China’s infant industrial base to meet the needs of a modernizing agricultural sector. He therefore decided to begin collectivization immediately, in the hope that collective
farms would increase food production and release land, labor, and capital for the industrial sector. Accordingly, beginning in
1955, virtually all private farmland was collectivized (although peasant families were allowed to retain small private
plots for their own use), and most businesses and industries were nationalized.

Collectivization was achieved without arousing the massive peasant unrest that had taken place in the Soviet Union during
the 1930s, perhaps because the Chinese government followed a policy of persuasion rather than compulsion (Mao Zedong
remarked that Stalin had “drained the pond to catch the fish”) and because the Communist land redistribution program had
already earned the support of millions of rural Chinese. But the hoped-for production increases did not materialize, and in
1958, at Mao’s insistence urging, party leaders approved a more radical program known as the Great Leap Forward. Existing
rural collectives, normally the size of a traditional village, were combined into vast “people’s communes,” each containing
more than 30,000 people. These communes were to be responsible for all administrative and economic tasks at the local level.
The party’s official slogan promised “Hard work for a few years, happiness for a thousand.”

Some party members were concerned that this ambitious program would threaten the government’s rural base of support, but Mao argued that Chinese peasants were naturally revolutionary in spirit. The Chinese rural masses, he said, are
first of all, poor, and secondly, blank. That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want
to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written
on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.

Those words, of course, were socialism and communism.

The communes were a disaster. Administrative bottlenecks, bad weather, and peasant resistance to the new system (which,
among other things, attempted to eliminate work incentives and destroy the traditional family as the basic unit of Chinese society) combined to drive food production downward, and over the next few years, as many as 15 million people may
have died of starvation. Many peasants were reportedly reduced to eating the bark off trees and in some cases allowing infants to starve. In 1960, the experiment was essentially abandoned. Although the commune structure was retained, ownership and management were returned to the collective level. Mao was severely criticized by some of his more pragmatic collea-
gues (one remarked bitingly that “one cannot reach Heaven in a single step”), causing him to complain that he had been
relegated to the sidelines “like a Buddha on a shelf.”

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

But Mao was not yet ready to abandon either his power or his dream of a totally egalitarian society. In 1966, he returned
to the attack, mobilizing discontented youth and disgruntled
party members into revolutionary units, soon to be known as Red Guards, who were urged to take to the streets to cleanse
Chinese society—from local schools and factories to government
ministries in Beijing—of impure elements who (in Mao’s mind, at least) were guilty of “taking the capitalist road.” Supported by his wife, Jiang Qing (jyang CHING), and other radical party figures, Mao launched China on a
new forced march toward communism.

The so-called Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (literally, a “great revolution to create a proletarian culture”) lasted for ten years, from 1966 to 1976. Some Western observers interpreted it as a simple power struggle between
Mao Zedong and some of his key rivals such as Liu Shaoqi (lyoo show-CHEE (“ow” as in “how”)) (Liu Shao-ch’i), Mao’s designated successor, and Deng Xiaoping (DUHNG show-PING (“ow” as in “how”)) (Teng Hsiao-p’ing), the
party’s general secretary. Both were removed from their positions, and Liu later died, allegedly of torture, in a Chinese
prison. But real policy disagreements were involved. Mao and his supporters feared that capitalist values and the remnants of “feudalist” Confucian ideas would undermine ideological fervor and betray the revolutionary cause. He was convinced that only an atmosphere of uninterrupted revolution could enable the Chinese to overcome the lethargy of the past and achieve the final stage of utopian communism.

“I care not,” he once wrote, “that the winds blow and the waves beat. It is better than standing idly in a courtyard.”

His opponents argued for a more pragmatic strategy that gave priority to nation building over the ultimate Communist
goal of spiritual transformation. But with Mao’s supporters
now in power, the party carried out vast economic and edu-
cational reforms that virtually eliminated any remaining profit
incentives, established a new school system that emphasized
“Mao Zedong thought,” and stressed practical education at the
elementary level at the expense of specialized training in science and the humanities in the universities. School learning was discouraged as a legacy of capitalism, and Mao’s famous
Little Red Book (officially, Quotations of Chairman Mao Zedong, a slim volume of Maoist aphorisms to encourage good behavior and revolutionary zeal) was hailed as the most important source of knowledge in all areas.

The radicals’ efforts to destroy all vestiges of traditional society were reminiscent of the Reign of Terror in revolution-
ary France, when the Jacobins sought to destroy organized
religion and even created a new revolutionary calendar. Red Guards rampaged through the country attempting to eradi-
cate the “four olds” (old thought, old culture, old customs,
and old habits). They destroyed temples and religious sculptures; they tore down street signs and replaced them with
new ones carrying revolutionary names. At one point, the
city of Shanghai even ordered that the significance of colors in stoplights be changed so that red (the revolutionary color)
would indicate that traffic could move. That experiment was
soon abandoned.

But a mood of revolutionary ferment and enthusiasm is difficult to sustain. Key groups, including bureaucrats, urban professionals, and many military officers, did not share Mao’s
belief in the benefits of uninterrupted revolution and constant turmoil. Many were alienated by the arbitrary actions of the Red Guards, who indiscriminately accused and brutalized their victims in a society where legal safeguards had almost entirely vanished (see the box on p. 807). Inevitably, the sense of anarchy and uncertainty caused popular support for the movement to erode, and when the end came with Mao’s death in 1976, the vast majority of the population may well have welcomed its demise.

Personal accounts by young Chinese who took part in the Cultural Revolution show that their initial enthusiasm often turned to disillusionment. In *Son of the Revolution*, Liang Heng (lee-ahng HUHNG) tells how at first he helped friends organize Red Guard groups: “I thought it was a great idea. We would be following Chairman Mao just like the grown-ups, and Father would be proud of me. I suppose I too resented the teachers who had controlled and criticized me for so long, and I looked forward to a little revenge.” Later he had reason to repent. His sister ran off to join the local Red Guard group. Prior to her departure, she denounced her mother and the rest of her family as “rightists” and enemies of the revolution. Their home was regularly raided by Red Guards, and their father was severely beaten and tortured for having three neckties and “Western shirts.” Books, paintings, and writings were piled in the center of the floor and burned before his eyes. On leaving, a few of the Red Guards helped themselves to his monthly salary and his transistor radio.

**From Mao to Deng**

Mao Zedong died in September 1976 at the age of eighty-three. After a short but bitter succession struggle, the pragmatists led by Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) seized power from the radicals and formally brought the Cultural Revolution to an end. Mao’s widow, Jiang Qing, and three other radicals (derisively called the “Gang of Four” by their opponents) were placed on trial and sentenced to death or to long prison terms. The egalitarian policies of the previous decade were reversed, and a new program emphasizing economic modernization was introduced.

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, who placed his supporters in key positions throughout the party and the government, attention focused on what were called the Four Modernizations: industry, agriculture, technology, and national defense. Deng had been a leader of the faction that opposed Mao’s program of rapid socialist transformation, and during the Cultural Revolution, he had been forced to perform menial labor to “sincerely correct his errors.” But Deng continued to espouse the pragmatic approach, which he often likened to the Chinese aphorism “cross the river by feeling the stones.” Reportedly, he also once remarked, “Black cat, white cat, what does it matter so long as it catches the mice?” Under the program of Four Modernizations, many of the restrictions against private activities and profit incentives were eliminated, and people were encouraged to work hard to benefit themselves and Chinese society. The familiar slogan “Serve the people”
In 1966, Mao Zedong unleashed the power of revolution on China. Rebellious youth in the form of Red Guards rampaged through all levels of society, exposing anti-Maoist elements, suspected “capitalist roaders,” and those identified with the previous ruling class. In this poignant excerpt, Nien Cheng (nee-uhn CHUHNG), the widow of an official of Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, describes a visit by Red Guards to her home during the height of the Cultural Revolution.

**Nien Cheng, Life and Death in Shanghai**

Suddenly the doorbell began to ring incessantly. At the same time, there was furious pounding of many fists on my front gate, accompanied by the confused sound of hysterical voices shouting slogans. The cacophony told me that the time of waiting was over and that I must face the threat of the Red Guards and the destruction of my home. . . .

Outside, the sound of voices became louder. “Open the gate! Open the gate! Are you all dead? Why don’t you open the gate?” Someone was swearing and kicking the wooden gate. The horn of the truck was blasting too. . . .

I stood up to put the book on the shelf. A copy of the Constitution of the People’s Republic caught my eye. Taking it in my hand and picking up the bunch of keys I had ready on my desk, I went downstairs.

At the same moment, the Red Guards pushed open the front door and entered the house. There were thirty or forty senior high school students, aged between fifteen and twenty, led by two men and one woman much older.

The leading Red Guard, a gangling youth with angry eyes, stepped forward and said to me, “We are the Red Guards. We have come to take revolutionary action against you!”

Though I knew it was futile, I held up the copy of the Constitution and said calmly, “It’s against the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China to enter a private house without a search warrant.”

The young man snatched the document out of my hand and threw it on the floor. With his eyes blazing, he said, “The Constitution is abolished. It was a document written by the Revisionists within the Communist Party. We recognize only the teachings of our Great Leader Chairman Mao.” . . .

Another young man used a stick to smash the mirror hanging over the blackwood chest facing the front door.

Mounting the stairs, I was astonished to see several Red Guards taking pieces of my porcelain collection out of their padded boxes. One young man had arranged a set of four Kangxi wine cups in a row on the floor and was stepping on them. I was just in time to hear the crunch of delicate porcelain under the sole of his shoe. The sound pierced my heart. Impulsively I leapt forward and caught his leg just as he raised his foot to crush the next cup. He toppled. We fell in a heap together. . . . The other Red Guards dropped what they were doing and gathered around us, shouting at me angrily for interfering in their revolutionary activities.

The young man whose revolutionary work of destruction I had interrupted said angrily, “You shut up! These things belong to the old culture. They are the useless toys of the feudal emperors and the modern capitalist class and have no significance to us, the proletarian class. They cannot be compared to cameras and binoculars, which are useful for our struggle in time of war. Our Great Leader Chairman Mao taught us, ‘If we do not destroy, we cannot establish.’ The old culture must be destroyed to make way for the new socialist culture.”

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**Make Revolution!**

In 1966, Mao Zedong unleashed the power of revolution on China. Rebellious youth in the form of Red Guards rampaged through all levels of society, exposing anti-Maoist elements, suspected “capitalist roaders,” and those identified with the previous ruling class. In this poignant excerpt, Nien Cheng (nee-uhn CHUHNG), the widow of an official of Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, describes a visit by Red Guards to her home during the height of the Cultural Revolution.

**Q** How do the tactics of the Red Guards compare with those employed by the land reform cadres in the box on p. 804? To what degree did they succeed in remaking the character of the Chinese people?

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was replaced by a new one repugnant to the tenets of Mao Zedong thought: “Create wealth for the people.”

Crucial to the program’s success was the government’s ability to attract foreign technology and capital. For more than two decades, China had been isolated from technological advances taking place elsewhere in the world. Now, to make up for lost time, the government abandoned its policy of self-reliance and sought to improve relations with the rest of the world. It encouraged foreign investment and sent thousands of students and specialists abroad to study capitalist techniques.

By adopting this pragmatic approach in the years after 1976, China made great strides in ending its chronic problems of poverty and underdevelopment. Per capita income roughly doubled during the 1980s; housing, education, and sanitation improved, and both agricultural and industrial output skyrocketed.

But critics, both Chinese and foreign, complained that Deng’s program had failed to achieve a “fifth modernization”: democracy. Official sources denied such charges and spoke proudly of restoring “socialist legality” by doing away with the arbitrary punishments applied during the Cultural Revolution. Deng himself encouraged the Chinese people to speak out against earlier excesses. In the late 1970s, ordinary citizens pasted “big character posters” criticizing the abuses of the past on the so-called Democracy Wall near Tiananmen (tee-AHN-ahn-muhn) Square in downtown Beijing.

Yet it soon became clear that the new leaders would not tolerate any direct criticism of the Communist Party or of Marxist-
Leninist ideology. Dissidents were suppressed, and some were sentenced to long prison terms. Among them was the well-known astrophysicist Fang Lizhi (FAHNG lee-JURR) (Fang Li-chih), who spoke out publicly against official corruption and the continuing influence of Marxist-Leninist concepts in post-Mao China, telling an audience in Hong Kong that “China will not be able to modernize if it does not break the shackles of Maoist and Stalinist-style socialism.” Fang immediately felt the weight of official displeasure. He was refused permission to travel abroad, and articles that he submitted to official periodicals were rejected.

The problem began to intensify in the late 1980s as more Chinese began to study abroad and more information about Western society reached educated individuals inside the country. Rising expectations aroused by the economic improvements of the early 1980s led to increasing pressure from students and other urban residents for better living conditions, relaxed restrictions on study abroad, and increased freedom to select employment after graduation.

Incident at Tiananmen Square
As long as economic conditions for the majority of Chinese were improving, other classes did not share the students’ discontent, and the government was able to isolate them from other elements in society. But in the late 1980s, an overheated economy led to rising inflation and growing discontent among salaried workers, especially in the cities. At the same time, corruption, nepotism, and favored treatment for senior officials and party members were provoking increasing criticism. In May 1989, student protesters carried placards demanding “Science and Democracy” (reminiscent of the slogan of the May Fourth Movement, whose seventieth anniversary was celebrated in the spring of 1989), an end to official corruption, and the resignation of China’s aging party leadership (see the comparative illustration below). These demands received widespread support from the urban population (although notably less in rural areas) and led to massive demonstrations in Tiananmen Square (see the box on p. 809).
In the spring of 1989, thousands of students gathered in Tiananmen Square in downtown Beijing to provide moral support to their many compatriots who had gone on a hunger strike in an effort to compel the Chinese government to reduce the level of official corruption and enact democratic reforms, opening the political process to the Chinese people. The first selection is from an editorial published on April 26 by the official newspaper People’s Daily. Fearing that the student demonstrations would get out of hand, as had happened during the Cultural Revolution, the editorial condemned the protests for being contrary to the Communist Party. The second selection is from a statement by Zhao Ziyang, the party general secretary, who argued that many of the students’ demands were justified. On May 17, student leaders distributed flyers explaining the goals of the movement to participants and passersby, including the author of this chapter. The third selection is from one of these flyers.

People’s Daily Editorial, April 26, 1989

This is a well-planned plot . . . to confuse the people and throw the country into turmoil. . . . Its real aim is to reject the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system at the most fundamental level. . . . This is a most serious political struggle that concerns the whole Party and nation.

Statement by Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang Before Party Colleagues, May 4, 1989

Let me tell you how I see all this. I think the student movement has two important characteristics. First, the students’ slogans call for things like supporting the Constitution, promoting democracy, and fighting corruption. These demands all echo positions of the Party and the government. Second, a great many people from all parts of society are out there joining the demonstrations and backing the students. . . . This has grown into a nationwide protest. I think the best way to bring the thing to a quick end is to focus on the mainstream views of the majority.

The demonstrations divided the Chinese leaders. Reformist elements around party general secretary Zhao Ziyang (JOW dzee-YAHNG) were sympathetic to the protesters, but veteran leaders such as Deng Xiaoping saw the student demands for more democracy as a disguised call for an end to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule. After some hesitation, the government sent tanks and troops into Tiananmen Square to crush the demonstrators. Dissidents were arrested, and the regime once again began to stress ideological purity and socialist values. Although the crackdown came under widespread criticism abroad, Chinese leaders insisted that economic reforms could only take place in conditions of party leadership and political stability.

Deng Xiaoping and other aging party leaders turned to the army to protect their base of power and suppress what they described as “counterrevolutionary elements.” Deng was undoubtedly counting on the fact that many Chinese, particularly in rural areas, feared a recurrence of the disorder of the Cultural Revolution and craved economic prosperity more than political reform. In the months following the

“Why Do We Have to Undergo a Hunger Strike?”

By 2:00 P.M. today, the hunger strike carried out by the petition group in Tiananmen Square has been under way for 96 hours. By this morning, more than 600 participants have fainted. When these democracy fighters were lifted into the ambulances, no one who was present was not moved to tears.

Our petition group now undergoing the hunger strike demands that at a minimum the government agree to the following two points:

1. To engage on a sincere and equal basis in a dialogue with the “higher education dialogue group.” In addition, to broadcast the actual dialogue in its entirety. We absolutely refuse to agree to a partial broadcast, to empty gestures, or to fabrications that dupe the people.

2. To evaluate in a fair and realistic way the patriotic democratic movement. Discard the label of “troublemaking” and redress the reputation of the patriotic democratic movement.

It is our view that the request for a dialogue between the people’s government and the people is not an unreasonable one. Our party always follows the principle of seeking truths from actual facts. It is therefore only natural that the evaluation of this patriotic democratic movement should be done in accordance with the principle of seeking truths from actual facts.

Our classmates who are going through the hunger strike are the good sons and daughters of the people! One by one, they have fallen. In the meantime, our “public servants” are completely unmoved. Please, let us ask where your conscience is.

Q: What were the key demands of the protesters in Tiananmen Square? Why were they rejected by the Chinese government?
confrontation, the government issued new regulations requiring courses on Marxist-Leninist ideology in the schools, sought out dissidents within the intellectual community, and made it clear that while economic reforms would continue, the CCP’s monopoly of power would not be allowed to decay. Harsh punishments were imposed on those accused of undermining the Communist system and supporting its enemies abroad.

Back to Confucius?

In the 1990s, the government began to nurture urban support by reducing the rate of inflation and guaranteeing the availability of consumer goods in great demand among the rising middle class. Under Deng Xiaoping’s successor, Jiang Zemin (JAHNG zuh-MIN) (b. 1926), who occupied the positions of both party chief and president of China, the government promoted rapid economic growth while cracking down harshly on political dissent. That policy paid dividends in bringing about a perceptible economic growth while cracking down on political dissent. That policy paid dividends in bringing about a perceptible economic growth while cracking down on political dissent.

Partly out of fear that such developments could undermine the socialist system and the rule of the CCP, conservative leaders attempted to curb Western influence and restore faith in Marxism-Leninism. In what may have been a tacit recognition that Marxist exhortations were no longer an effective means of enforcing social discipline, the party sought to make use of Confucianism. Ceremonies celebrating the birth of Confucius now received official sanction, and the virtues promoted by the Master, such as righteousness, propriety, and filial piety, were widely cited as an antidote to the tide of antisocial behavior. As a further indication of its willingness to employ traditional themes to further its national interest, the Chinese government has begun to sponsor the establishment of Confucian centers in countries around the world to promote its view that Confucian humanism is destined to replace traditional religious faiths in coming decades.

In effect, Chinese leaders have tacitly conceded that Marxism is increasingly irrelevant to today’s China, which responds much more forcefully to the siren call of nationalism. In a striking departure from the precepts of Marxist internationalism, official sources in Beijing cite Confucian tradition to support their assertion that China is unique and will not follow the path of “peaceful evolution” (to use their term) toward a future democratic capitalist society.

That attitude is also reflected in foreign policy, as China is playing an increasingly active role in the region. To some of its neighbors, including Japan, India, and Russia, China’s new posture is disquieting and raises suspicions that China is once again preparing to flex its muscle as it did in the imperial era. The first example of this new attitude took place as early as 1979, when Chinese forces briefly invaded Vietnam as punishment for the Vietnamese occupation of neighboring Cambodia. In the 1990s, China aroused concern in the region by claiming sole ownership over the Spratly (sprat-LEE) Islands in the South China Sea and over the Diaoyu (DYOW-you) Islands (also claimed by Japan, which calls them the Senkakus) near Taiwan (see Map 27.3).

To Chinese leaders, however, such actions represent legitimate efforts to resume China’s rightful

MAP 27.3 The People’s Republic of China. This map shows China’s current boundaries. Major regions are indicated in capital letters.

In which regions are there movements against Chinese rule?
role in the affairs of the region. After a century of humiliation at the hands of the Western powers and neighboring Japan, the nation, in Mao’s famous words of 1949, “has stood up” and no one will be permitted to humiliate it again. For the moment, at least, a fervent patriotism seems to be on the rise in China, actively promoted by the party as a means of holding the country together. The decision by the International Olympic Committee to award the 2008 Summer Games to Beijing led to widespread celebration throughout the country. The event served to symbolize China’s emergence as a major national power on the world stage.

Pumping up the spirit of patriotism, however, is not the solution to all problems. Unrest is growing among China’s national minorities: in Xinjiang (SHIN-jyahng), where restless Muslim peoples are observing with curiosity the emergence of independent Islamic states in Central Asia, and in Tibet, where the official policy of quelling separatist sentiment has led to the violent suppression of Tibetan culture and an influx of thousands of ethnic Chinese immigrants. In the meantime, the Falun Gong (FAH-loon GONG) religious movement, which the government has attempted to eliminate as a potentially serious threat to its authority, is an additional indication that with the disintegration of the old Maoist utopia, the Chinese people will need more than a pallid version of Marxism-Leninism or a revived Confucianism to fill the gap.

Whether the current leadership will be able to prevent further erosion of the party’s power and prestige is unclear. In the short term, efforts to slow the process of change may succeed because many Chinese are understandably fearful of punishment and concerned for their careers. And high economic growth rates can sometimes obscure a multitude of problems as many individuals will opt to chase the fruits of materialism rather than the less tangible benefits of personal freedom. But in the long run, the party leadership must resolve the contradiction between political authoritarianism and economic prosperity.

New leaders installed in 2002 and 2003 appeared aware of the magnitude of the problem. Hu Jintao (HOO jin-TOW (“ow” as in “how”)) (b. 1943), who replaced Jiang Zemin as CCP general secretary and head of state, called for further reforms to open up Chinese society and bridge the yawning gap between rich and poor. In recent years, the government has shown a growing tolerance for the public exchange of ideas, which has surfaced with the proliferation of bookstores, avant-garde theater, experimental art exhibits, and the Internet. In 2005, an estimated 27 percent of all Chinese citizens possessed a cellphone, and the number has increased dramatically since then. Today, despite the government’s efforts to restrict access to certain websites, more people are “surfing the Net” in China than in any other country except the United States. The Internet is wildly popular with those under thirty, who use it for online games, downloading videos and music, and instant messaging. The challenge, however, continues to be daunting. At the CCP’s Seventeenth National Congress, held in October 2007, President Hu emphasized the importance of adopting a “scientific view of development,” a vague concept calling for social harmony, improved material prosperity, and a reduction in the growing income gap between rich and poor in Chinese society. But he insisted that the Communist Party must remain the sole political force in charge of carrying out the revolution. Ever fearful of chaos, party leaders are convinced that only a firm hand at the tiller can keep the ship of state from crashing onto the rocks.

**CHRONOLOGY  China Under Communist Rule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Democracy</td>
<td>1949–1955</td>
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<tr>
<td>Era of collectivization</td>
<td>1955–1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Leap Forward</td>
<td>1958–1960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution</td>
<td>1966–1976</td>
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<td>Death of Mao Zedong</td>
<td>1976</td>
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<td>Era of Deng Xiaoping</td>
<td>1978–1997</td>
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<td>Tiananmen Square incident</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>Presidency of Jiang Zemin</td>
<td>1993–2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao becomes president</td>
<td>2002</td>
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The Potala Palace in Tibet. Tibet was a distant and reluctant appendage of the Chinese Empire during the Qing dynasty. Since the rise to power of the Communist Party in 1949, the regime in Beijing has consistently sought to integrate the region into the People’s Republic of China. Resistance to Chinese rule, however, has been widespread. In recent years, the Dalai Lama, the leading religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism, has attempted without success to persuade Chinese leaders to allow a measure of autonomy for the Tibetan people. In 2008, massive riots by frustrated Tibetans took place in the capital city of Lhasa (LAH-suh) just prior to the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The Potala Palace, symbol of Tibetan identity, was constructed in the seventeenth century in Lhasa and serves today as the foremost symbol of the national and cultural aspirations of the Tibetan people.
When the Communist Party came to power in 1949, Chinese leaders made it clear that their policies would differ from the Soviet model in one key respect. Whereas the Bolsheviks had distrusted nonrevolutionary elements in Russia and relied almost exclusively on the use of force to achieve their objectives, the CCP sought to win support from the mass of the population by carrying out reforms that could win popular support. This “mass line” policy, as it was called, worked fairly well until the late 1950s, when Mao and his radical allies adopted policies such as the Great Leap Forward that began to alienate much of the population. Ideological purity was valued over expertise in building an advanced and prosperous society.

**Economics in Command**

When he came to power in the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping recognized the need to restore credibility to a system on the verge of breakdown and hoped that rapid economic growth would satisfy the Chinese people and prevent them from demanding political freedoms. The post-Mao leaders clearly placed economic performance over ideological purity. To stimulate the stagnant industrial sector, which had been under state control since the end of the New Democracy era, they reduced bureaucratic controls over state industries and allowed local managers to have more say over prices, salaries, and quality control. Productivity was encouraged by permitting bonuses for extra effort, a policy that had been discouraged during the Cultural Revolution. The regime also tolerated the emergence of a small private sector. The unemployed were encouraged to set up restaurants, bicycle or radio repair shops, and handicraft shops on their own initiative (see the comparative illustration on p. 800).

Finally, the regime opened up the country to foreign investment and technology. Special economic zones were established in urban centers near the coast (ironically, many were located in the old nineteenth-century treaty ports), where lucrative concessions were offered to encourage foreign firms to build factories. The tourist industry was encouraged, and students were sent abroad to study.

The new leaders especially stressed educational reform. The system adopted during the Cultural Revolution, emphasizing practical education and ideology at the expense of higher education and modern science, was rapidly abandoned (Mao’s Little Red Book was even withdrawn from circulation and could no longer be found on bookshelves), and a new system based generally on the Western model was instituted. Admission to higher education was based on success in merit examinations, and courses on science and mathematics received high priority.

**AGRICULTURAL REFORM**

No economic reform program could succeed unless it included the countryside. Three decades of socialism had done little to increase food production or to lay the basis for a modern agricultural sector. China, with a population now numbering one billion, could still barely feed itself. Peasants had little incentive to work and few opportunities to increase production through mechanization, the use of fertilizer, or better irrigation.

Under Deng Xiaoping, agricultural policy made a rapid about-face. Under the new rural responsibility system, adopted shortly after Deng had consolidated his authority, collectives leased land to peasant families, who paid the collective a quota as rent. Anything produced on the land beyond that payment could be sold on the private market or consumed. To soak up excess labor in the villages, the government encouraged the formation of so-called sideline industries, a modern equivalent of the traditional cottage industries in premodern China. Peasants raised fish or shrimp, made consumer goods, and even assembled living room furniture and appliances for sale to their newly affluent compatriots.

The reform program had a striking effect on rural production. Grain production increased rapidly, and farm income doubled during the 1980s. Yet it also created problems. In the first place, income at the village level became more unequal as some enterprising farmers (known locally as “ten-thousand-dollar households”) earned profits several times those realized by their less fortunate or less industrious neighbors. When some farmers discovered that they could earn more by growing cash crops or other specialized commodities, they devoted less land to rice and other grain crops, thereby threatening to reduce the supply of China’s most crucial staple. Finally, the agricultural policy threatened to undermine the government’s population control program, which party leaders viewed as crucial to the success of the Four Modernizations.

Since a misguided period in the mid-1950s when Mao Zedong had argued that more labor would result in higher productivity, China has been attempting to limit its population growth. By 1970, the government had launched a stringent family planning program—including education, incentives, and penalties for noncompliance—to persuade the Chinese people to limit themselves to one child per family. The program did have some success, and population growth was reduced drastically in the early 1980s. The rural responsibility system, however, undermined the program because it encouraged farm families to pay the penalties for having additional children in the belief that their labor would increase family income and provide the parents with a form of social security for their old age.

**EVALUATING THE FOUR MODERNIZATIONS**

Still, the overall effects of the modernization program were impressive. The standard of living improved for the majority of the population. Whereas a decade earlier, the average Chinese had struggled to earn enough to buy a bicycle, radio, watch, or washing machine, by the late 1980s, many were beginning to purchase videocassette recorders, refrigerators, and color televisions. The CCP had begun to assert its authority over the whole country and had made some progress in improving the quality of people’s lives.
Silk Workers of the World, Unite! In recent years, many critics have charged that Chinese factories are able to market their goods at cheap prices abroad because their workers are paid low wages and often must labor in abysmal working conditions. The silk industry, which produces one of China's key high-end exports, is a case in point. At this factory in Wuxi, women workers spend ten-hour days with their hands immersed in boiling water as they unwind filaments from cocoons onto a spool of silk yarn. Their blistered red hands testify to the difficulty of their painful task.

As a result of these developments, China now possesses a large and increasingly affluent middle class and a burgeoning domestic market for consumer goods. More than 80 percent of all urban Chinese now own a color television set, a refrigerator, and a washing machine. One-third own their homes, and nearly as many have an air conditioner. For the more affluent, a private automobile is increasingly a possibility, and in 2010, more vehicles were sold in China than in the United States.

But as Chinese leaders have discovered, rapid economic change never comes without cost. The closing of state-run factories led to the dismissal of millions of workers each year, and the private sector, although growing at more than 20 percent annually, initially struggled to absorb them. Poor working conditions and low salaries in Chinese factories resulted in periodic outbreaks of labor unrest. Demographic conditions, however, are changing. The reduction in birthrates since the 1980s is creating a labor shortage, which is putting upward pressure on workers' salaries. As a result, China is facing inflation in the marketplace and increased competition from exports produced by factories located in lower-wage countries in South and Southeast Asia.

Discontent has also been increasing in the countryside, where farmers earn only about half as much as their urban counterparts (the government tried to increase the official purchase price for grain but rescinded the order when it became too expensive). China's entry into the World Trade Organization was greeted with great optimism but has been of little benefit to farmers facing the challenges of cheap foreign imports. Taxes and local corruption add to their complaints, and land seizures by the government or by local officials are a major source of anger in rural communities. In desperation, millions of rural Chinese have left for the big cities, where many of them are unable to find steady employment and are forced to live in squalid conditions in crowded tenements or in the sprawling suburbs. Millions of others remain on their farms and attempt to augment their income by producing for the market or, despite the risk of stringent penalties, by increasing the size of their families. A new land reform law passed in 2008 authorizes farmers to lease or transfer land use rights, although in principle all land in rural areas belongs to the local government.

Another factor hindering China's rush to economic advancement is the impact on the environment. With the rising population, fertile land is in increasingly short supply (China's population has doubled since 1950, but only two-thirds as much irrigable land is available). Soil erosion is a major problem, especially in the north, where the desert is encroaching on farmlands. Water is also a problem. An ambitious plan to transport water by canals from the Yangtze River to the more arid northern provinces has run into a number of roadblocks. Another massive project to construct dams on the Yangtze River has sparked protests from environmentalists, as well as from local peoples forced to migrate from the area. Air pollution is ten times the level in the United States, contributing to growing health concerns. To add to the challenge, more than 700,000 new cars and trucks appear on the country's roads each year. To reduce congestion on roadways, China is constructing an extensive rail network for high-speed bullet trains that will connect all the major regions in the country.
Social Problems

At the root of Marxist-Leninist ideology is the idea of building a new citizen free from the prejudices, ignorance, and superstition of the “feudal” era and the capitalist desire for self-gratification. This new citizen would be characterized not only by a sense of racial and sexual equality but also by the selfless desire to contribute his or her utmost for the good of all.

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY  
From the very start, the Chinese Communist government intended to bring an end to the Confucian legacy in modern China. Women were given the vote and encouraged to become active in the political process. At the local level, an increasing number of women became active in the CCP and in collective organizations. In 1950, a new marriage law guaranteed women equal rights with men. Most important, perhaps, it permitted women for the first time to initiate divorce proceedings against their husbands. Within a year, nearly one million divorces had been granted.

At first, the new government moved carefully on family issues to avoid unnecessarily alienating its supporters in the countryside. When collective farms were established in the mid-1950s, payment for hours worked in the form of ration coupons was made not to the individual but to the family head, thus maintaining the traditionally dominant position of the patriarch. When people’s communes were established in the late 1950s, however, payments went to the individual.

During the political radicalism of the Great Leap Forward, children were encouraged to report to the authorities any comments by their parents that criticized the system. Such practices continued during the Cultural Revolution, when people’s communes established the late 1950s, however, payments went to the individual.

During the political radicalism of the Great Leap Forward, children were encouraged to report to the authorities any comments by their parents that criticized the system. Such practices continued during the Cultural Revolution, when people’s communes established the late 1950s, however, payments went to the individual.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES  
The post-Mao era brought a decisive shift away from revolutionary utopianism and back toward the pragmatic approach to nation building. For most people, that meant improved living conditions and a qualified return to family traditions. For the first time, millions of Chinese saw the prospect of a house or an urban apartment with a washing machine, television set, and indoor plumbing. Young people whose parents had given them patriotic names such as Build the Country, Protect Mao Zedong, and Assist Korea began to choose more elegant and cosmopolitan names for their own children. Some names, such as Surplus Grain or Bring a Younger Brother, expressed hope for the future.

The new attitudes were also reflected in physical appearance. For a generation after the civil war, clothing had been restricted to the traditional baggy “Mao suit” in olive drab or dark blue, but by the 1980s, young people craved such fashionable Western items as designer jeans, trendy sneakers, and sweat suits (or reasonable facsimiles). Cosmetic surgery to create a more buxom figure or a more Western facial look became increasingly common among affluent young women in the cities. Many had the epicanthic fold over their eyelids removed or their noses enlarged—a curious decision in view of the tradition of referring derogatorily to foreigners as “big noses” (see the comparative essay “Family and Society in an Era of Change” on p. 815).

Religious practices and beliefs have also changed. As the government has become more tolerant of organized religion,
Family and Society in an Era of Change

One of the paradoxes of the modern world is that at a time of political stability and economic prosperity for many people in the advanced capitalist societies, public cynicism about the system is increasingly widespread. Alienation and drug use are at dangerously high levels, and the rate of criminal activities in most areas remains much higher than in the years immediately after World War II.

Although various reasons have been advanced to explain this paradox, many observers contend that the decline of the traditional family system is responsible for many contemporary social problems. There has been a steady rise in the percentage of illegitimate births and single-parent families in countries throughout the Western world. In the United States, approximately half of all marriages end in divorce. Even in two-parent families, more and more parents work full time, leaving the children to fend for themselves on their return from school. In many countries in Europe, the birth rate has dropped to alarming levels, leading to a severe labor shortage that is attracting a rising number of immigrants from other parts of the world.

Observers point to several factors to explain these conditions: the growing emphasis in advanced capitalist states on an individualistic lifestyle devoted to instant gratification, a phenomenon promoted vigorously by the advertising media; the rise of the feminist movement, which has freed women from the servitude imposed on their predecessors, but at the expense of removing them from full-time responsibility for the care of the next generation; and the increasing mobility of contemporary life, which disrupts traditional family ties and creates a sense of rootlessness and impersonality in the individual’s relationship to the surrounding environment.

These trends are not unique to Western civilization. The traditional nuclear family is also under attack in many societies around the world. Even in East Asia, where the Confucian tradition of family solidarity has been endlessly touted as a major factor in the region’s economic success, the incidence of divorce and illegitimate births is on the rise, as is the percentage of women in the workforce. Older citizens frequently complain that the Asian youth of today are too materialistic, faddish, and steeped in the individualistic values of the West. Such criticisms are now voiced in mainland China as well as in the capitalist societies around its perimeter (see Chapter 30).

In societies less exposed to the individualistic lifestyle portrayed so prominently in Western culture, traditional attitudes about the family continue to hold sway. In the Middle East, governmental and religious figures seek to prevent the Western media from undermining accepted mores. Success is sometimes elusive, however, as the situation in Iran demonstrates. Despite the zealous guardians of Islamic morality, many young Iranians are clamoring for the individual freedoms that have been denied to them since the Islamic Revolution took place more than three decades ago (see Chapter 29).

To what degree and in what ways are young people in China becoming more like their counterparts in the West?
Love and Marriage in China

“We can do what men do.” So said Chairman Mao as he “liberated” and masculinized Chinese women to work alongside men. Women’s individuality and sexuality were sacrificed for the collective good of his new socialist society. Marriage, which had traditionally been arranged by families for financial gain, was now dictated by duty to the state. The Western concept of romantic love did not enter into a Chinese marriage, as this interview of a schoolteacher by the reporter Zhang Xinxin (JANG SHEEN-SHEEN) in the mid-1980s illustrates. According to recent surveys, the same is true today.

Zhang Xinxin, Chinese Lives

My husband and I never did any courting—honestly! We registered our marriage a week after we’d met. He was just out of the forces and a worker in a building outfit. They’d been given a foreign-aid assignment in Zambia, and he was selected. He wanted to get his private life fixed up before he went, and someone introduced us. Seeing how he looked really honest, I accepted him.

No, you can’t say I didn’t know anything about him. The person who introduced us told me he was a Party member who’d been an organization commissar. Any comrade who’s good enough to be an organization cadre is politically reliable. Nothing special about our standing of living—it’s what we’ve earned. He’s still a worker, but we live all right, don’t we?

He went off with the army as soon as we’d registered our marriage and been given the wedding certificates. He was away three years. We didn’t have the wedding itself before he went because we hadn’t got a room yet.

Those three years were a test for us. The main problem was that my family was against it. They thought I was still only a kid and I’d picked the wrong man. What did they have against him? His family was too poor. Of course I won in the end—we’d registered and got our wedding certificates. We were legally married whether we had the family ceremony or not.

We had our wedding after he came back in the winter of 1973. His leaders and mine all came to congratulate us and give us presents. The usual presents those days were busts of Chairman Mao. I was twenty-six and he was twenty-nine.

I never really wanted to take the college entrance exams. Then in 1978 the school leadership got us all to put our names forward. They said they weren’t going to hold us back: the more of us who passed, the better it would be for the school. So I put my name forward, crammed for six weeks, and passed. I already had two kids then. . . .

I reckoned the chance for study was too good to miss. And my husband was looking after the kids all by himself. I usually only came back once a fortnight. So I couldn’t let him down.

My instructors urged me to take the exams for graduate school, but I didn’t. I was already thirty-four, so what was the point of more study? There was another reason too. I didn’t want an even wider gap between us: he hadn’t even finished junior middle school when he joined the army.

It’s bad if the gap’s too wide. For example, there’s a definite difference in our tastes in music and art, I have to admit that. But what really matters? Now we’ve set up this family we have to preserve it. Besides, look at all the sacrifices he had to make to see me through college. Men comrades all like a game of cards and that, but he was stuck with looking after the kids. He still doesn’t get any time for himself—ıt’s all work for him.

We’ve got a duty to each other. Our differences? The less said about them the better. We’ve always treated each other with the greatest respect.

Of course some people have made suggestions, but my advice to him is to respect himself and respect me. I’m not going to be like those men who ditch their wives when they go up in the world.

I’m the head of our school now. With this change in my status I’ve got to show even more responsibility for the family. Besides, I know how much he’s done to get me where I am today. I’ve also got some duties in the municipal Women’s Federation and Political Consultative Conference. No, I’m not being modest. I haven’t done anything worth talking about, only my duty.

We’ve got to do a lot more educating people. There have been two cases of divorce in our school this year.

Do you think the marriage described here is successful? Why or why not? What do you think this woman feels about her marriage?
medical insurance to the poorest members of Chinese society. Yet much more needs to be done. As the population ages, the lack of a retirement system represents a potential time bomb.

**China’s Changing Culture**

During the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese culture was strongly influenced by currents from the West (see Chapter 24). The rise to power of the Communists in 1949 added a new dimension to the debate over the future of culture in China. The new leaders rejected the Western attitude of “art for art’s sake” and, like their Soviet counterparts, viewed culture as an important instrument of indoctrination. The standard would no longer be aesthetic quality or the personal preference of the artist but “art for life’s sake,” whereby culture would serve the interests of socialism.

**CULTURE IN A REVOLUTIONARY ERA**  At first, the new emphasis on socialist realism did not entirely extinguish the influence of traditional culture. Mao and his colleagues tolerated—and even encouraged—efforts by artists to synthesize traditional ideas with socialist concepts and Western techniques. During the Cultural Revolution, however, all forms of traditional culture came to be viewed as reactionary. Socialist realism became the only acceptable standard in literature, art, and music. All forms of traditional expression were forbidden, and the deification of Mao and his central role in building a Communist paradise became virtually the only acceptable form of artistic expression.

Characteristic of the changing cultural climate in China was the experience of author Ding Ling (DING LING). Born in 1904 and educated in a school for women set up by leftist intellectuals during the hectic years after the May Fourth Movement, she began writing in her early twenties. After her husband, a struggling young poet and member of the CCP, was executed by Chiang Kai-shek’s government in 1931, she became involved in party activities and sublimated her talent to the revolutionary cause.

In the late 1930s, Ding Ling settled in Yan’an, where she became a leader in the women’s and literary associations of the CCP. Though she remained dedicated to revolution, years of service to the party did not stifle her individuality, and in 1942, she wrote critically of the incompetence, arrogance, and hypocrisy of many party officials, as well as the treatment of women in areas under Communist authority. Such comments raised eyebrows, but she was able to survive criticism and in 1948 wrote her most famous novel, *The Sun Shines over the Sangan River*, which described the CCP’s land reform program in favorable terms. It was awarded the Stalin Prize three years later.

During the early 1950s, Ding Ling was one of the most prominent literary lights of the new China, but in the more ideological climate at the end of the decade, she was attacked for her individualism and her previous criticism of the party. Although temporarily rehabilitated, during the Cultural Revolution she was sentenced to hard labor on a commune in the far north and was not released until the late 1970s after the death of Mao Zedong. Although crippled and in poor health, she began writing a biography of her mother that examined the role of women in twentieth-century China. She died in 1981. Ding Ling’s fate mirrored the fate of thousands of progressive Chinese intellectuals who, despite their efforts, were not able to satisfy the constantly changing demands of a repressive regime.

**ART AND MUSIC**  After Mao’s death, Chinese culture was finally released from the shackles of socialist realism. In painting, where for a decade the only acceptable standard for excellence was praise for the party and its policies, the new permissiveness led to a revival of interest in both traditional and Western forms. Although some painters continued to blend Eastern and Western styles, others imitated trends from abroad, experimenting with a wide range of previously prohibited art styles, including Cubism and abstract painting.

In the late 1980s, two avant-garde art exhibits shocked the Chinese public and provoked the wrath of the party. An exhibition of nude paintings, the first ever held in China, attracted many viewers but reportedly offended the modesty of many Chinese.
The limits of freedom of expression were most apparent in literature. During the early 1980s, party leaders encouraged Chinese writers to express their views on the mistakes of the past, and a new “literature of the wounded” began to describe the brutal and arbitrary character of the Cultural Revolution.

One of the most prominent writers was Bai Hua (by HWA) (b. 1930), whose film script Bitter Love described the life of a young Chinese painter who joined the revolutionary movement during the 1940s but whose work was condemned as counterrevolutionary during the Cultural Revolution. In describing the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, Bai Hua was only responding to Deng Xiaoping’s appeal for intellectuals to speak out, but he was soon criticized for failing to point out the essentially beneficial role of the CCP in recent Chinese history. The film was withdrawn from circulation in 1981, and Bai Hua was compelled to recant his errors and to state that the great ideas of Mao Zedong on art and literature were “still of universal guiding significance today.”

As the attack on Bai Hua illustrates, many party leaders remained suspicious of the impact that “decadent” bourgeois culture could have on the socialist foundations of Chinese society. The official press periodically warned that China should adopt only the “positive” aspects of Western culture (notably, its technology and its work ethic) and not the “negative” elements such as drug use, pornography, and hedonism.

One of the chief targets of China’s recent “spiritual civilization” campaign is author Wang Shuo (wahng SHWOH) (b. 1958), whose writings have been banned for exhibiting a sense of “moral decay.” In his novels Playing for Thrills (1989) and Please Don’t Call Me Human (2000), Wang highlighted the seamier side of contemporary urban society, peopled with hustlers, ex-convicts, and other assorted hoodlums. Spiritually depleted, hedonistic, and amoral in their approach to life, his characters represent the polar opposite of the socialist ideal.

Conservatives were especially incensed by the tendency of many writers to dwell on the shortcomings of the socialist system and to come uncomfortably close to direct criticism of the role of the CCP. One such writer is Mo Yan (muh YAHN) (b. 1956), whose novels The Garlic Ballads (1988) and Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out (2008) expose the rampant corruption of contemporary Chinese society, the roots of which he attributes to one-party rule. Yu Hua (yoo HWA) (b. 1960), another outstanding novelist, uses narratives marked by exaggerated and grotesque humor to criticize the cruelty of the Communist regime in To Live (2003). In Brothers (2009), he lambastes the vulgarity and moral depravity of China’s newly rich.

Today, Chinese culture has been dramatically transformed by the nation’s adoption of a market economy and the invasive spread of the Internet. A new mass literature, much of it written by and intended for China’s new urban youth, explores the aspirations and frustrations of a generation obsessed with material consumption and the right of individual expression. Lost in the din are the voices of China’s rural poor.

**Confucius and Marx: The Tenacity of Tradition**

Why has communism survived in China, albeit in a substantially altered form, when it failed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? One of the primary factors is probably cultural. Although the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism originated in Europe, many of its main precepts, such as the primacy of the community over the individual and the denial of the concept of private property, run counter to trends in Western civilization. This inherent conflict is especially evident in the societies of central Europe, which were strongly influenced by Enlightenment philosophy and the Industrial Revolution. These forces were weaker farther to the east, although they had begun to penetrate tsarist Russia by the end of the nineteenth century.

In contrast, Marxism-Leninism found a more receptive climate in China and other countries in the region influenced by Confucian tradition. In its political culture, the Communist system exhibits many of the same characteristics as traditional Confucianism—a single truth, an elite governing class, and an emphasis on obedience to the community and its governing representatives. Although a significant and influential minority of the Chinese population—primarily urban and educated—finds the idea of personal freedom against the power of the state appealing, such concepts have little meaning in rural villages, where the interests of the community have always been emphasized over the desires of the individual. It is no accident that Chinese leaders now seek to reintroduce the precepts of State Confucianism to bolster a fading belief in the existence of a future Communist paradise.

Party leaders today are banking on the hope that China can be governed as it has always been—by an elite class of highly trained professionals dedicated to pursuing a predefined objective. In fact, however, real changes are taking place in China today. Although the youthful protesters in Tiananmen Square were comparable in some respects to the reformist
elements of the early republic, the China of today is fundamentally different from that of the early twentieth century. Literacy rates and the standard of living are far higher, the pressures of outside powers are less threatening, and China has entered its own industrial and technological revolution. Many Chinese depend more on independent talk radio and the Internet for news and views than on the official media.

Whereas Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and even Mao Zedong broke their lances on the rocks of centuries of tradition, poverty, and ignorance, the present leaders rule a country much more aware of the world and China’s place in it. Although the shift in popular expectations may be gradual, China today is embarked on a journey to a future for which the past no longer provides a roadmap.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

For four decades after the end of World War II, the two major Communist powers appeared to have become permanent features on the international landscape. Suddenly, though, in the late 1980s, the Soviet Union entered a period of internal crisis that shook the foundations of Soviet society. In 1991 the system collapsed, to be replaced by a series of independent states based primarily on ethnic and cultural differences that had existed long before the Bolshevik Revolution. China went through an even longer era of instability, beginning with the Cultural Revolution in 1966, but it managed to survive under a hybrid system that combines features of a Leninist command economy with capitalist practices adapted from the modern West.

CHAPTER TIMELINE

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Upon Reflection

Q How have six decades of Communist rule affected the concept of the family in China? How does the current state of the family in China compare with the family in other parts of the world?

Q What strategies were used by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China as they sought to build Communist societies in their countries? In what ways were the strategies different, and in what ways were they similar? To what degree were they successful?

Q How has the current generation of leadership in China made use of traditional values to solidify Communist control over the country? To what degree has this approach contradicted the theories of Karl Marx?

Key Terms

- new course (p. 791)
- de-Stalinization (p. 793)
- Glosplan (p. 795)
- perestroika (p. 800)
- glasnost (p. 800)
- New Democracy (p. 803)
- Great Leap Forward (p. 805)
- Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (p. 805)
- uninterrupted revolution (p. 805)
- Four Modernizations (p. 806)
- rural responsibility system (p. 812)

Suggested Reading


Go to the CourseMate website at www.cengagebrain.com for additional study tools and review materials—including audio and video clips—for this chapter.