

# **XXth Century Chinese revolutions - II - China, Maoism and popular power, 1949-1969**

Tuesday 8 September 2009, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 1 May 2008).

**This essay has been published in *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*. Ness, Immanuel (ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2009, vol. II, pp. 705-712. Some few corrections (missing words...) has been introduced here.**

**A much longer French version of the essay is posted online on ESSF as well: [La Chine du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en révolutions - II - 1949-1969 : crises et transformations sociales en République populaire](#)**

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With the proclamation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) found itself at the head of a country three times larger than Western Europe, with a population of some 500 million. The internal situation was favorable to the revolutionary regime. At the end of a long series of civil and foreign wars, the population sought and relied on the new leaders for peace while the ongoing people's mobilization opened the way for an in-depth reform of society.

In December 1949, while fighting against the Guomindang nationalists still raged in the south, Mao Zedong flew to Moscow to meet Stalin. The USSR may have been the first country to recognize the People's Republic, but it had not yet abrogated the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty, signed with Mao's opponent, Chiang Kai-shek. For three consecutive weeks, the two heads of state played a game of cat and mouse before the Soviets agreed to prepare a new treaty - signed on February 14, 1950 by Zhou Enlai and A. Y. Vyichinski, foreign ministers respectively of China and the USSR.

After the victory of October 1949, distrust was the rule between the Russian and Chinese leaderships. Mao noted how Stalin looked down upon his experience ("He thought our revolution was fake," he said) and did not want to commit to supporting China if it were attacked by the United States. However, it was Beijing that indirectly came to the help of Moscow when the Korean War

broke out on June 25, 1950. The Korean War was not propitious timing for the Chinese leaders, who would have preferred to prioritize consolidation of the regime, revival of the economy (industry was ruined, famine hit the central plains), and reconquest of Taiwan. Faced with the advance of American forces in North Korea, the Politburo of the CPC was split on Chinese intervention. But the decision was made to join the war effort when US troops approached China's northern border, with Peng Dehuai leading the Chinese counteroffensive. Following four months of intensive and bloody fighting, the front line was stabilized around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Two years later, the armistice was eventually signed, on July 27, 1953, with up to 800,000 Chinese killed or injured.

The Korean War overshadowed and dominated the whole period following the 1949 Chinese communist victory. The confrontation (revolution/counterrevolution) assumed an international dimension, the United States building a security belt around China, with important military bases in South Korea, Japan (Okinawa), the Philippines, Thailand, and South Vietnam. For the United Nations, under the hegemony of the United States, there was only one China: that of Guomindang, retrenched in Taiwan.

Faced with a new US imperial threat, China reverted to the Soviet bloc. But the seeds of Sino-Soviet conflict of the 1960s were already sown as Mao and the Chinese leadership lost trust in Moscow, Stalin's promises of military aid failing to materialize. The Russian leadership, on this occasion, gauged the power and the capacity of China to act independently with trepidation.

The first and primary consequence of the Korean War was disorganizing the effort to consolidate the new regime, leading to a hardening of policy.

## **The Social Upheaval: 1949-1953**

In China, the Korean War provoked vast anti-imperialist demonstrations. Workers sacrificed part of their wages and peasants increased production to support the war effort at the front. In this context, the campaign launched by the Maoist regime to liquidate the counterrevolutionaries took a particularly violent turn. Over a period of six months, 710,000 people were executed (or driven to suicide) for their links, no matter how tenuous, with the Guomindang. Probably more than 1.5 million others were confined to camps of "reform by labor."

### **Landlords and Rural Notables**

China's agrarian reform itself also took a violent turn in a society where class divisions in villages were wide: poor peasants did not forget the arrogance, contempt, stinginess, and inhumanity (at their expense) of the wealthy. Poor peasants could not forget the manner in which large landlords, traders, and notables had provoked deadly famine by speculating on cereals - refusing to return rice to the famished villagers to sell at a good profit in the cities. They could not forget all the militant members of peasant associations summarily tortured and assassinated by police, the army, or the goons of the rich. They remembered the dispossession by powerful owners of children and young women from powerless families. Social relationships in the countryside were not brutal everywhere, but the domination of the wealthy over poor peasants was widespread. It was time for the historical settling of scores.

Where class divisions in the villages were narrow, and no one was really rich, social tensions were nevertheless acute because of extreme poverty, where notables and clan networks were the first target of the CCP. To address the complexity and the regional variations of rural stratification, the CCP classified families into five categories, from landless to landlords. In some places, middle or even poor peasants could suffer repression.

The CCP organized and encouraged mass meetings against landlords and the wealthy, at the risk, in its own words, of “excesses.” But the collective anger of poor peasants was not feigned. The revolutionary violence in the countryside was social, much more than a simple police operation. Beyond settling scores, it paved the way to a real change of power, the overthrow of the old order. In most villages, one landlord, sometimes several, was killed, summarily beaten to death, or publicly executed. Many fled or were shielded from people’s vengeance. At the end of 1950, the class that ruled the rural world for centuries ceased to exist as a coherent social layer.

## **Urban Bourgeoisie**

In the urban centers social antagonisms, even if profound, were less acute than in rural regions. Moreover, in 1949, the CCP, stemming from the rural people’s war, was quite incapable of supporting industrialization. In the framework of the “New Democracy,” the CCP tried to win the private entrepreneurs’ favor. But in 1952, the bourgeoisie felt strong enough to take the initiative against the new regime through sabotaging and blocking implementation of government policies, refusing orders given by the administration. Class struggle reasserted itself. On June 6, 1952, Mao Zedong announced that the entrepreneurs were becoming a target of political struggle.

In the cities, the Communist Party launched three mass mobilization campaigns to remold the urban society. The first two targeted the underworld and capitalist class, the bourgeois elites: the “Three Anti” (against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy) and the “Five Anti” (against corruption, fiscal evasion, fraud, embezzlement, and leakage of state secrets) campaigns. Once again, most were not classical police operations and their implementation varied according to region or the fluctuating relationship of forces among factions of the CCP. Everyone was called to inform the authorities: workers denounced their superiors, cadres denounced each other, wives denounced husbands and children their parents. Psychological pressure was so great that the majority of human losses were suicides and not executions.

The fines imposed on private firms for illicit activities during these campaigns amounted to US\$2 billion, a colossal amount at the time. The majority of the large traders and entrepreneurs withdrew to Hong Kong (transferring their means of production) or abroad. The capital drain actually began as early as 1946 in reaction to Guomindang rule. A certain number of large capitalists, however, remained and sometimes benefited from a very favorable situation. The activity of microentrepreneurs (craftsmen, hawkers, peddlers, and so on) was both repressed and tolerated by the regime. Chinese capitalists were not physically liquidated and some collaborated to their own social disappearance. Following the “Five Anti” campaign, the bourgeoisie (merchants and industrialists) ceased to exist as a coherent class dominating the modern economic sector. Seven years after victory, in 1956, the nationalization of industries and trade sanctioned the capitalist class’s disappearance as an autonomous social force.

As the old order was uprooted, the power structures of the Guomindang were dismantled, both in the urban centers and in the countryside.

The third campaign - reform of thought - targeted mostly urban intellectuals, in particular those trained in the West. Conceived ideologically as the “movement of rectification,” implemented in Yen’an (Yan’an) during the war to consolidate the Maoist leadership’s authority, the campaign denounced individualism, elitism, indifference to politics, and pro-Americanism. This campaign was implemented in different ways to the “Three” and “Five Anti” campaigns: through successive self-criticism implemented by small discussion groups, combined with police repression. As such, intellectuals found themselves under the firm control of the Communist Party.

“Class origin” became an important criterion to gain access to education, political positions, or good

employment. Not without perverse effects, children of rich families (or classified as such) became forever “responsible” for who their parents were before 1949. But the symbolical upheaval of the social hierarchy had a radical ideological importance in a society where “inferior” classes were despised, at everyone’s beck and call. The process was not merely symbolic. In parallel to the disintegration of the old dominating classes, the status of the dominated classes was substantially modified as new social layers developed.

## **Peasantry**

The fact that the peasantry played an important role was not peculiar to the Chinese Revolution. Before the Long March, the Comintern enjoined the CCP to work among the peasantry, but for a long time the Chinese Politburo turned a deaf ear to the advice of its Russian comrades. The CCP became the principal political force organizing the peasantry – which was not the case in Russia, where the influence of revolutionary socialists or anarchists (or, more simply, of local non-politicized rural elites) was much more significant than communist influence.

In the years following the conquest for power, the CCP was careful not to impose a Stalinist type of forced collectivization. The party started through the creation of “mutual aid” teams, paving the way to the formation of cooperatives of “inferior” level and relatively modest size. The approach evokes what Lenin envisaged retrospectively in one of his last critical and self-critical writings, constituting his “testament”: “On Cooperation” (January 4, 1923). The approach helped to consolidate the new status of the poor peasantry, while offering the peasant class a future in the revolution rather than demanding their transformation into agricultural workers in state farms. But in order to block any rural migration, the peasants had no right to change their residence without authorization.

### **Working Class**

With the rapid industrialization policy initiated by the Maoist regime, the working class was considerably reinforced: from 3 million before 1949 to 15 million by 1952 and nearly 70 million in 1978. The change was not only quantitative, as a new state-directed industrial sector was born together with a new working class with a radically different status than had prevailed before 1949.

Workers were recruited in the framework of a policy of massive salarization (“low wages, many jobs”). Only urban workers benefited from the new administrative status of “worker and employee.” As a general rule, peasants had no right to migrate in search of work in cities. Once obtained, employment became a guaranteed right. Low wages were offset by social benefits (including residence, health service, life employment, old-age pension). Each worker was assigned to an enterprise and to a work unit as in other countries civil servants are assigned to a position. Workers reaching retirement age could frequently pass on their status to a family member. Benefiting from important privileges in relation to the rest of the population – notwithstanding political cadres – the working class was for a long time a solid social base of the regime.

## **Women**

In the 1920s in Chinese progressive circles, it was commonplace to denounce both “feudal” and “patriarchal” oppression. The emancipation of women and the criticism of Confucian conservatism were considered essential to modernization. Laws in favor of gender equality were adopted under the Soviet Republic of Jiangxi. The establishment and development of feminist organizations were crucial in the national and civil war eras. Membership in the CCP-led Women’s Democratic Federation reached 20 million in 1949 and 76 million in 1956.

In 1950, the law on marriage was among the first two pieces of legislation (with agrarian reform) promulgated under the young People’s Republic. This new legislation insured in theory, and often

concretely, the free choice of partner, monogamy, women's equal rights, and protection of the legal interest of women and children. The law opposed traditional arranged marriages and permitted administrative divorce by mutual consent. Thanks to measures of agrarian reform, women gained the right to own land. The law's implementation faced strong social resistance – including within the CCP – but was supported by a strong women's movement.

### **Cadres and Bureaucracy**

Two parallel power structures were established in China: the administration and the Communist Party. Cadres in both structures emerged from the revolutionary struggle. Those among them from well-to-do family backgrounds sacrificed wealth and social status to advance the revolution and were not privileged similarly to the old dominant classes. Henceforward, those in both cadres enjoyed mostly modest privileges but, more importantly, a quasi-absolute monopoly of political power. Even before the victory, the CCP cadres constituted a thin “bureaucracy of war” in “liberated zones.” After 1949, the politico-administrative structure was considerably enlarged with the reconstruction of the state at the national level and the development of a vast public economic sector. These new social strata assumed an unprecedented place in Chinese society, rapidly gaining consistency and giving birth to a ruling social elite.

### **Army**

To relieve the population, as early as the 1930s soldiers were called to produce food when possible. In the postwar reconstruction, the movement for an autarchic economy within the Red Army (initiated at the beginning of the 1940s) was extended. The army was essential in the aftermath of 1949, but continually occupied an ambivalent position in the Maoist structures of power. As the backbone of the revolutionary struggle, the army was the only institution that resisted all crises, including the “Cultural Revolution.” Nevertheless, up to the end it remained subordinate to the political leadership. In the words of Mao Zedong, “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,” and always, “the party commands the gun.” This role of the army, both central and subordinated, is typical of the Maoist revolution.

## **A Succession of Crises**

The new Maoist government in 1949 was a radical revolutionary and dynamic force. But in 1966 – less than 20 years later – the society was shaken to the core by a paroxysmal crisis: the misnamed “Cultural Revolution.” The tumultuous history of the People's Republic in the first two decades has been interpreted variously: apologetically, critically but progressively, and in a bluntly reactionary way (considering revolution illegitimate). There was to the ultimate dead end of Maoism various causes ranging from the weight of the past to international pressures. But there are also recurrent political questions that help understand the succession of unresolved crises leading to the explosion of 1966: pluralism, legality and socialist democracy, and one-party rule.

During the 1950s, debates occurred within the Communist Party on the independence of unions and other mass movements like the Women's Federation. But the CCP reaffirmed its direct leadership, refusing to grant any political autonomy. These organizations were responsible for implementing official policy and also, thanks to their genuine social roots, for informing the leaders on the people's state of mind – or their grievances. But this conception of the cadres “listening to the masses,” of a two-way transmission belt, was inoperable, at least in times of peace.

### **The Hundred Flowers**

In 1954-5, strong tensions emerged between numerous intellectuals and the Communist Party. The latter reacted by repression, incarcerating even some close fellow travelers like Hu Feng. The leadership of the CCP anxiously monitored the crises that hit the eastern bloc (for example, in Hungary and Poland) in 1953-6, wondering about the implications of the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's report at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1957, in the same speech, Mao denounced both the vestiges of bourgeois ideology and the gravity of the "bureaucratic style of work" hampering "socialist development." Given Mao's popularity, he had the legitimacy to exert pressure on the apparatus, seeking political and cultural liberalization and launching the slogan "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend." Mao could not foresee the extent to which his words would be acted upon.

In May-June 1957, the CCP became the target of a wave of criticism concerning the recruitment process of its members (who then numbered over 10 million), the abuse of cadre privileges, authoritarianism in its organisms, and domination of the party. Students rapidly took over where intellectuals had left off, denouncing the dogmatism of study and demanding respect for constitutional rights: freedom of speech and expression. In response to this flurry of criticism, on June 8, 1957 the *People's Daily* denounced the "poisonous weeds." In Wuhan, worker activists brutally intervened on June 12 and 13 to reestablish order after two days of near rioting.

The repression of the Hundred Flowers severed the CCP from an important sector among intellectuals and students - a missed opportunity that deeply influenced the future course of events. The main leader (in title at least) of the Federation of Unions, Lai Ruoyu, again raised the demand for trade union independence: to no avail. The issue of socialist legality was eluded by the party leadership: recognition of civic rights was only a question of political opportunity. Such an approach had far-reaching consequences in all spheres of life, especially in the women's emancipation struggle. Under the circumstances, the women's movements were unable to intervene as an autonomous force to shatter deeply rooted patriarchal ideologies. Whatever the progress in women's rights, the "other revolution" of gender equality remained largely an unreachable utopia.

### **Rapid Collectivization and the Great Leap Forward**

The Hundred Flowers movement had barely ended when another crisis of even greater proportions erupted, threatening the relationship between the party and the peasantry as well as the political balance within the CCP.

In 1956-7, new social tensions manifested themselves in the countryside and enterprises. A meager harvest provoked peasant discontent and poor working conditions pushed dockers in Canton (Guangzhou) to launch a strike. As a whole, the regime resolved the crises and the protest movements remained localized, but the social unrest was a warning signal. After its seizure of power, lacking experience, the CCP had initially copied the Stalinist model of heavy industrialization. In the late 1950s, the CCP had to define a "Chinese way" that was adapted to the peasantry and to the demographic density of the country, since by 1958-60 China's population had reached 700 million.

The economic orientation elaborated by the CCP in 1956-7 sought to respond to real needs. To prevent the impending formation of a huge megalopolis in the coastal urban areas (similar to, if not worst than, those in the early twentieth century in the Global South), the CCP found it necessary to avoid the European model of urbanization, industrialization, and massive rural-urban migration. However, in spite of strict controls, rural migration started spontaneously, to the point of instigating conflict between undocumented labor of rural origin and urban workers with "official" status.

To avoid mass relocation of the population, the CCP favored local development through the creation

of large peasant cooperatives, the introduction of infrastructures and services in the countryside, and the creation of industries in small towns and rural centers. To increase women's participation in the workforce, many canteens, nurseries, and children's playgrounds were opened. Ideologically, the ideal of the abolition of wage labor was again raised. China had to become a vast federation of communes, largely decentralized and self-sufficient, linked together through the powerful apparatus of the Communist Party and its mass organizations.

The CCP leadership assigned to this new economic model unrealizable goals (to "overtake Great Britain in 15 years," in Mao's words), which quickly proved highly problematic. The regime chose to resort to mobilization methods that were successful in times of war, but not in peacetime. In China, the policy of the "Great Leap" placed intolerable burdens on the administration and the population. The policy left no time to prepare, coordinate, or plan economic measures. After an initial success, it retreated into chaos and failure. Micro-industrial production (iron, steel, tools) proved to be of low quality, and harvests and transport were disorganized. In 1959-61, various regions of the country were hit by scarcity and deadly famine, aggravated by a succession of natural catastrophes, with the tragic consequence of possibly 30 million deaths.

The Communist Party leadership lacked the capacity to respond quickly to the disaster. In the absence of independent mass organizations and democratic political institutions, the CCP did not perceive the development of the crisis in time. Tensions between the Communist Party and peasantry reached breaking point and upheavals erupted in some areas. Belatedly, appeasement measures were taken. In 1961-62, at the initiative of leaders such as Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, a new, more modest concept of cooperatives was adopted, leaving space for family production. Emphasis was placed on the development of light industry to assist agriculture rather than on heavy industry.

The failure of the Great Leap deeply impacted the leadership of the CCP. Mao Zedong offered a half self-criticism. Previously, he had enjoyed a unique position in the summits of the party on account of his role during the revolutionary struggle and a cult of personality that had been built up from the early 1940s. With the Great Leap's failure, CCP cadres realized the Great Helmsman could commit catastrophic errors.

In the early 1960s, Mao's authority in the party and the authority of the party in society were seriously weakened, while social tensions remained highly acute. Adding to the crisis, from 1958 the Sino-Soviet conflict rapidly worsened. Moscow called back Russian experts from China, then negotiated and signed a treaty on nuclear tests with Britain and the US, excluding China. For the Maoist leadership, the USSR gradually replaced the US as the country's "main enemy."

### **The "Cultural Revolution"**

The post-Great Leap conflicts in the CCP leadership could not be contained within the party. In 1965, the political confrontation became public under the guise of cultural polemics - hence the title of "Great Cultural Proletarian Revolution." But much more was at stake than terminology. Each faction began launching mass mobilizations to strengthen its hand, opening Pandora's box and giving way to extensive social contradictions. The resulting crisis in China was so explosive that it destroyed a large part of the state apparatus.

In spite of the many failures, the country undeniably experienced significant economic growth and real social progress. But the Maoist revolution nourished radical egalitarian aspirations while inequalities among villages, between the countryside and cities, and between social sectors remained enormous. Many students did not find jobs corresponding to their diplomas. Poor peasants entered into conflicts with richer peasants, just as, in the cities, undocumented workers clashed with

those benefiting from a protected status. The privileges and authority of the cadres and the authoritarianism of the bureaucracy were denounced. The socioeconomic contradictions culminated in massive street demonstrations, larger than at any time since 1949.

Student protests flared in mid-1966 as numerous groups attacked professors and teachers they considered to be "revisionists," protected by their pre-1949 bourgeois social status and still enjoying privileges. Eventually the "rebels" turned against the party itself, denouncing its "fascist" control. Some called for "big democracy" and "freedom." In August, Mao Zedong seized the occasion to launch the slogan "Bombard the Headquarters" – a declaration of war against the CCP's number two, Liu Shaoqi. Mao called for the creation of Red Guards' organizations and revolutionary committees. Seeking to limit the rebel movement to the cities, Mao used the Red Guard as a bulldozer to reestablish his position in the CCP leadership and reorient the party policy in the spirit of the Great Leap.

Nevertheless, the crisis went far beyond the limits initially foreseen. High-level cadres were thrown to the Red Guards, including Beijing's mayor, Peng Zhen. In November the movement reached the working class, which freed itself in various places from party control. From December 1966 to January 1967, the industrial metropolis of Shanghai was the scene of violent confrontations and a spontaneous general strike where unofficial workers played an important role. The troubles spread to the countryside, and in July and August 1967 spread to a growing number of localities, leading to the disintegration of the CCP and the administration. The party leadership was severely divided as local civil wars broke out. But the rebellion too sank into confusion, as democratic and social aspirations for the "Cultural Revolution" were going round in circles, lacking political direction and undermined by factional hyper-violence.

In the eyes of all the tendencies within the CCP leadership, the reconstruction of the party and administration was an urgent requirement, for which the army was the sole institution that could maintain coherence. But it would take time. In spring and summer 1968, violence increased in many areas across the country. In the midst of political confusion, certain groups were still formulating radical propositions, as in Hunan, where the treason of Mao was denounced and calls made for a generalized system of democratically elected "communes" to prevent the return of a "new class of red capitalists." Indeed, by then, Mao Zedong was calling unambiguously for a return to order and stability.

### **The Reconstruction of a Bureaucratic Order**

In September 1968, in their tens of thousands, former students who had become Red Guards were sent to the countryside for reeducation and work. In some factories resistance continued, but only rear-guard opposition.

For months the "rebels" of the "Cultural Revolution" had lived the exhilarating experience of a rare freedom of action, traveling throughout China to propagate the call for revolt. For sure, they were manipulated by various factions of the CCP (in particular Mao). They engaged in blind violence and committed irreparable acts against the elderly, including numerous veterans of the revolutionary struggle, who were accused of being "revisionists," beaten, sometimes tortured, and forced to make humiliating self-denunciations. But they gained a spirit of independence, radical aspirations, and political experience. If many old Red Guards withdrew from activism, some participated ten years later in the origin of the 1978 democratic movement.

The CCP was in ruins at the close of the 1966–8 period, with eight of the 11 members of the Politburo in prison or reeducation. Out of 63 members of the central committee, 43 disappeared and nine were severely criticized: a process that occurred at all levels of the party. In many places the



CCP structure ceased to function. The apparatus of cadres was reconstituted through long seminars within the “May 7 Schools.” But years were needed to reconstruct the party throughout China.

In 1969, the ninth Congress of the CCP could not put an end to the crisis as a new conflict erupted between Mao Zedong and Lin Biao, commander in chief of the army, previously considered the best of the Maoists. Lin Biao died in September 1971 while fleeing in an airplane to the USSR, and more than 100 generals were removed from office.

At the beginning of the 1970s, many historical leaders of the Chinese revolution were out of contention, including Liu Shaoqi (who died in exile in 1969), Peng Dehuai (tortured by the Red Guards), Lin Biao, and Deng Xiaoping. The way was open for the accession to power, after the tenth Congress in 1973, of the “Group of Shanghai,” also called by its adversaries the “Gang of Four,” who were centered around Mao’s last wife, Jiang Qing.

### **Paradoxical Legacy**

After the death of Mao in 1976, it was the Gang of Four’s turn to be thrown from power. “Historical” Maoism had died a decade before, in the delirium of Mao’s personality cult and betrayal of the anti-bureaucratic aspirations expressed in the Cultural Revolution. No coherent “left turn” was available after 1969, and in 1971 Nixon traveled to Peking (while the US military was escalating the war in Vietnam), announcing normalization of the Sino-American relationship. The reign of Jiang Qing, an ossified dictatorship, finally discredited the “left,” paving the way for the return of Deng Xiaoping and other surviving “rightists.”

In the 1980s, counterrevolution took the form of a sustained and controlled transition to capitalism. A “reverse” social transformation occurred, as radical as the post-1949 era. The state sector of the economy was largely dismantled, privatized, or administered according to neoliberal capitalist criteria. A new class of entrepreneurs formed, composed of bureaucrats committed to personal enrichment and allied to Chinese transnational capital in Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, and elsewhere.

The protected status of the established working class was methodically dismantled, giving way to a layer of technicians and skilled workers and a new and young proletariat, a mass of unstable labor from rural regions, often denied any social or labor rights. After benefiting from decollectivization initiated in the early 1980s, the peasantry found itself faced with many of the same threats of dispossession as its counterparts in other countries of the Global South. Social inequality increased brutally: the poor were again ignored, and the rich honored.

Over the twentieth century, the growth of the Chinese bourgeoisie was hindered by the Guomindang dictatorship before being crushed by the revolution. But – through an irony of history – by the early twenty-first century Chinese capitalism had reaped the benefits of Mao’s radicalism. Without it the country would have fallen under the exclusive dependency of Japan or, most probably, the grip of American imperialism. Without Maoism, as in many other “Third World” countries, China’s modern capital could not free itself from rural traditional landowning, a legacy of the past. It can be said that, thanks to the CCP-led revolution (and its eventual failure), Chinese capitalism received a second historical chance. But the memory of the revolution can also serve as a political ferment for social resistance against the growing inequalities and uncertainties of life.

**Pierre Rousset**

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\* Cite this article: Rousset, Pierre. "China, Maoism and popular power, 1949-1969." The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest. Ness, Immanuel (ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2009. Blackwell Reference Online. 08 September 2009  
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