

II.F.19

The Development of Modern States

The People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong from 1949 to 1976 – The new “Middle Kingdom”

Dr. Ingeborg Braisch / Ellen Black



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Mao Zedong ruft am 1. Oktober 1949 die Volksrepublik China auf dem Tiananmen-Platz in Peking aus. Das einstige Machtzentrum des kaiserlichen Chinas steht nun in den alten Farben Gelb und Rot, die jetzt für das Neue stehen: Mao und der Kommunismus versprechen, China zu alter Größe zu führen – und die Massen in die Zukunft zu führen. Der Beitrag zeigt, wie Mao das Selbstverständnis Chinas nutzt und formt. Chinesische Propagandaplakate sind Ausdruck seiner ideologischen Vision, Zeitzeugen berichten von den erschütternden Ergebnissen des „Großen Sprungs nach vorn“ und der „Proletarischen Kulturrevolution“.

KOMPETENZPROFIL

Klassenstufe: 10–13

Dauer: 90 Unterrichtsstunden

Kompetenzen: Orientierungskompetenz, Reflexionskompetenz, interkulturelles Lernen, Methoden- und Medienkompetenz

Thematische Bereiche: „Jahrhundert der Demütigung“, Gründung der VR China, Mao Zedongs „Diktatur der Volksdemokratie“, „Hundert-Blumen“-Kampagne, der „Große Sprung nach vorn“, die „Große Proletarische Kulturrevolution“

Medien: Reden, Zeitungsberichte, chinesische Propagandaplakate, Fotos, Auszüge aus Romanen und Filmen, Glossar

Auf einen Blick

1./2. Stunde

Thema: The perception of others and self-image of China

M 1 Glossary of the history of the PRC – Abbreviations and terms

M 2 What is China? – The perception of others

M 3 What is China? – Self-image

Inhalt: Students are dealing with ideas about China.

3./4. Stunde

Thema: The End of the “Century of Humiliation” and the founding of the PRC

M 4 Beijing, a day in the fall of 1949 – The founding of the PRC (1)

M 5 Beijing, a day in the fall of 1949 – The founding of the PRC (2)

M 6 A journey through Chinese history – The “Century of Humiliation”

Inhalt: A propaganda poster and an eyewitness describe the historic moment of the founding of the PRC. Students explore the prelude to this event.

5./6. Stunde

Thema: The “Dictatorship of the People’s Democracy”

M 7 Mao’s “Dictatorship of the People’s Democracy” – The “New Democracy”

M 8 Fan shen – Implementation of the “New Democracy”

M 9 “Let a hundred flowers bloom” – Criticism and repression in the PRC China

M 10 “Let a hundred flowers bloom” – Criticism and repression in the PRC China

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Inhalt: Students work on Mao’s concept of revolution, dictatorship and democracy – its implementation in practice and dealing with critics.

7./8. Stunde

Thema:	The “Great Leap Forward” and its consequences
M 11	Economy in the PRC – The “Great Leap Forward” and the “Policy of the Three Red Banners”
M 12	Economy in the PRC – The people's communes
M 13	Economy in the PRC – Consequences of the “Great Leap Forward”
Inhalt:	Articles from 1958 Chinese newspapers and posters glorify the complete collectivisation. An eyewitness reports on the terrible consequences of the “Great Leap Forward”.

9./10. Stunde

Thema:	The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”
M 14	The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” – “To rebel is justified”
M 15	The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” – Mao's “Red Guards”
Inhalt:	A report by a former Red Guard describes Mao's intentions and the brutality of the youth. Two articles highlight Mao's personality cult.

Glossary of the history of the PRC – Abbreviations and terms

M 1

The following is a glossary of Chinese symbols, terms and names that are used in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Abbreviations

GMD	Guomindang	SU	Soviet Union
HistoMat	Historical materialism	USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	PLA	People's Liberation Army
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union	PRC	People's Republic of China
M-L	Marxism-Leninism	CC	Central Committee

Terminology

The following overview helps with the pronunciation of Chinese characters:
 c = [ts] ch = [tsch] j = [dj] q = [tj] sh = [sch] u = [ü], nach y x = [ch] z = [ds] sh = [sch]

Ant	symbol, stands for order, obedience, love of the fatherland and diligence
Blue = Indigo	colour, means loyalty and obedience
Bourgeoisie	M-L: According to the teachings of M-L the wealthy bourgeoisie, the ruling class in the phase of capitalism, which owns the means of production and exploits the proletariat, i.e. the working class. The term already appears in the <i>Communist Manifesto</i> by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels from 1848.
Chiang Kai-shek	(1887-1975), since 1925 leader of the GMD, until 1949 commander-in-chief of the army and president of China, 1949–1975 president of the Republic of China on Taiwan
Nikita S. Khrushchev	(1894-1971), 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU from 1953–1964, Prime Minister of the USSR from 1958–1964
dang'an	Personal dossier, in which since 1949 the good or bad political attitude of the individual was registered; since the 1960s, the membership of one of the red, good (poor and middle peasants, workers, revolutionary soldiers, cadres and "martyrs") or five black, bad classes (large landowners, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, rights)
danwei	Work unit, after the family the smallest socialist unit, understood as the place of work and residence, e. g. a state-owned factory with factory housing
dazibao	Wall newspaper
Deng Xiaoping	(1904–1997), participant in the "Long March", overthrown by Mao during the Cultural Revolution, again in 1976, rehabilitated in 1977, Prime Minister in 1980, begins the "Four Modernisations"
dragon	Symbol, a supernatural, sometimes dangerous but above all benevolent wise force that brings luck and wealth and provides rain and fertility. It also embodies the male principle. With five claws, it symbolises the emperor.
feudalism	L.-M: In HistoMat the epoch before capitalism, in Maoism the relationship between poor peasants and landlords

What is China? – The perception of others

M 2

An idea that someone else has of a person, a group of people or a nation is called a foreign image.

How is China perceived from the outside?



Grafik erstellt mit <http://www.worlcloud.com/>

Tasks

1. Collect terms and associations related to China. What image do you have of China?
2. The word cloud lists keywords and titles of books, newspapers, films and TV documentaries. Research their contents or meanings and summarise the ideas that are reflected in them: What image of China does Western society have?
3. Analyze the green and compare the meaning of the colours mentioned as well as the symbols of the dragon and the dragon in Western and Chinese culture. Make assumptions about the causes of different perceptions.

M 5

Beijing, a day in the fall of 1949 – The founding of the People's Republic of China (2)

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China before the Gate of Heavenly Peace on Tiananmen Square.

Excerpt from the memoirs of Li Zhisui (1994)

On October 1, 1949 [...] we arrived in Tiananmen Square a little before noon [...]. When we arrived, the square was already swarming with people, carefully chosen from all walks of life. [...] I had a perfect view of the podium from which the leaders would proclaim the establishment of the People's Republic. Above the sea of people thousands of banners were unfurled¹, waving in the autumn breeze, their colours transforming the shabby city. [...] at ten o'clock sharp², Mao Zedong, and the other top leaders appeared at the podium overlooking the square. The effect was electric. Mao had been my hero since my father first told me he was China's messiah, and this was my first glimpse of my hero [...]. He wore a dark brown Sun Yatsen suit³ (only later would the style be referred to as the Mao suit) and a worker's cap for this civil occasion and stood among a number of non-communist political personalities as testimony to⁴ the reality of the united front [...]. Mao was a truly magnetic force. Mao did not speak standard Mandarin. But the Hunan dialect he speaks is easy for Mandarin speakers to understand, and its rhythm and tones are pleasant to the ear. Mao's voice was soft, almost lilting⁶, and the effect of his speech was riveting⁷. "The Chinese people have stood up," he proclaimed, and the crowd went wild, thundering in applause, shouting over and over, "Long live the People's Republic of China! Long live the Chinese Communist Party!" I was so full of joy my heart nearly burst out of my throat, and tears welled up in my eyes. I was so proud of China, so full of hope, so happy the exploitation and suffering⁸, the aggression from foreigners, would be gone forever. I had no doubt that Mao was the great leader of the revolution, the maker of a new Chinese Republic.

Zhisui, Li: *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician*. London: Chatto & Windus 1994, S. 51 f.

1 unfurled: entfaltet – 2 at ten o'clock sharp: um Punkt 10.00 Uhr – 3 my first glimpse = mein erster Blick auf/Erdruck von – 4 testimony to: hier: uniformartiger, schlichter Anzug – 4 as testimony to: als Zeugnis für – 5 Hunan: Provinz im Süden Chinas, Heimat Mao Zedongs – 6 lilting: trällernd – 7 riveting: fesselnd, faszinierend – 8 the exploitation and suffering: die Ausbeutung und das Leid

Describe the depiction of this event in the memoirs of the young Peking doctor Li Zhisui, who later became one of Mao's personal physicians. In 1988, he went to the United States and published his autobiography in 1994.

Fan shen – The implementation of the “New Democracy”

M 8

“Fan shen” means “to turn over while lying down,” as a metaphor for “to free oneself,” “to revolutionise.” The following poster by an unknown artist from the year 1949 shows the confrontation between peasants and a landlord in a village.

Poster “Public trial of evil tyrant” (1949)



© PC1949s003 PrivateCollection/chinese posters.net

Help box

The flag of the People's Republic of China was adopted in 1949. It has a red background with a large yellow star in the upper left corner, representing the Communist Party of China (CPC). The four smaller yellow stars surrounding the large star represent the workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. Red symbolises communism and luck. Yellow is a reminder of the imperial era and its renewal and transformation. The number five is a particularly important number that promises happiness and success.

The translation of the text on the red banner is roughly, “The great day of the public trial of the evil and cruel tyrant.” The timeline of the China School Academy at Heidelberg University provides information on the land reform from 1946–1953 (<https://www.china-schul-akademie.de/learn/aldattule/zeitleiste>). The propaganda film shows the burning of old lease agreements and the handing over of land.

Automatic text

Tasks

1. Narrate and describe the image.
2. Interpret the image in the sense of Mao's “Dictatorship of the People's Democracy”.
3. Discuss the connection between Mao's concept of democracy with our contemporary understanding of democracy and dictatorship.

M 10

“Let a hundred flowers bloom” – Criticism and repression in the People’s Republic of China 1956/57 (2)

On 15 July 1957, Chang Po-chün, the vice chairman of the Democratic League and Minister of Communications, gave a speech to the National People’s Congress, which was published in the important newspaper Renmin Ribao (People’s Daily) on 16 July 1957.

“I bow my head and confess my guilt before the people (15 July 1957)”

I am a criminal, because I have committed serious political offences. You are lenient¹ and allow me to stand before you, [...] to admit my mistakes and my guilt and to proclaim² that I am firmly determined³ to transform myself. [...] I am deeply grateful to the members of parliament who reported me and exposed my vile⁴ words and actions. The reason that I erred⁵ so much and committed these crimes is because I come from the landlord⁶ class and was brought up in the spirit of feudalism and the bourgeoisie. In 1949, I betrayed the glorious CCP: I organised a third party as a middle way between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao. In 1951, I practised self-criticism, but instead of learning from it and studying the theories of Marxism-Leninism intensively, I did not take them seriously and thought in a revisionist⁷ way. I even went so far as to claim that socialism and democracy were contradictory⁸ to each other. Furthermore, I made the mistake of considering the scientific⁹ technology of the capitalist countries and their so-called ‘democracy’ to be their strength. And I came to the erroneous⁷ conclusion: if we combine socialism, capitalist science, technology and ‘democracy’, it would be better for our national life. Since last year, I have been advocating⁸ these revisionist ideas of the bourgeois rightists in private conversations and I put the Central Committee of the CCP, democratic parties and people’s organisations on the same level as the National People’s Congress. I was clearly trying to replace the dictatorship of the proletariat and the People’s Congress with the democracy of the bourgeoisie. In doing so, I violated the constitution and advocated the restoration of capitalism. [...] Often, I disrespected the leadership of the CCP and endangered the organisation of the leading party [...] The entire nation demands my severe punishment as a rightist⁹ deviant¹⁰. This is absolutely correct, and I am prepared to accept the punishment. I hate my own wickedness¹¹. [...] Members of parliament, with this self-criticism, show that I bow my head and confess my guilt before the people! [...] Members of parliament should continue to strictly criticise my wrong words and actions in the future.

Autorentext: Robert K. Ross, Robert K., Rossbank, John K., (Foreword): *Communist China 1955–1959. Policy Documents with Analysis*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press 1962, Document 18, S. 337–341.

1 **lenient**: nachsichtig – 2 **to proclaim**: ausrufen, verkünden – 3 **determined**: entschlossen – 4 **vile**: abscheulich – 5 **to err**: auf Abwege geraten – 6 **contradictory**: widersprüchlich – 7 **erroneous**: falsch, irrtümlich – 8 **to advocate sth**: für etwas eintreten – 9 **rightist**: rechtsgerichtet – 10 **deviant**: hier: Abweichler – 11 **wickedness**: Bosheit, Schlechtigkeit

Task

Infer from the content of the speech what happened when intellectuals began to take Mao’s and Lu Dingyi’s appeals seriously. What crimes does Chang confess to? What are the reasons given for this?

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