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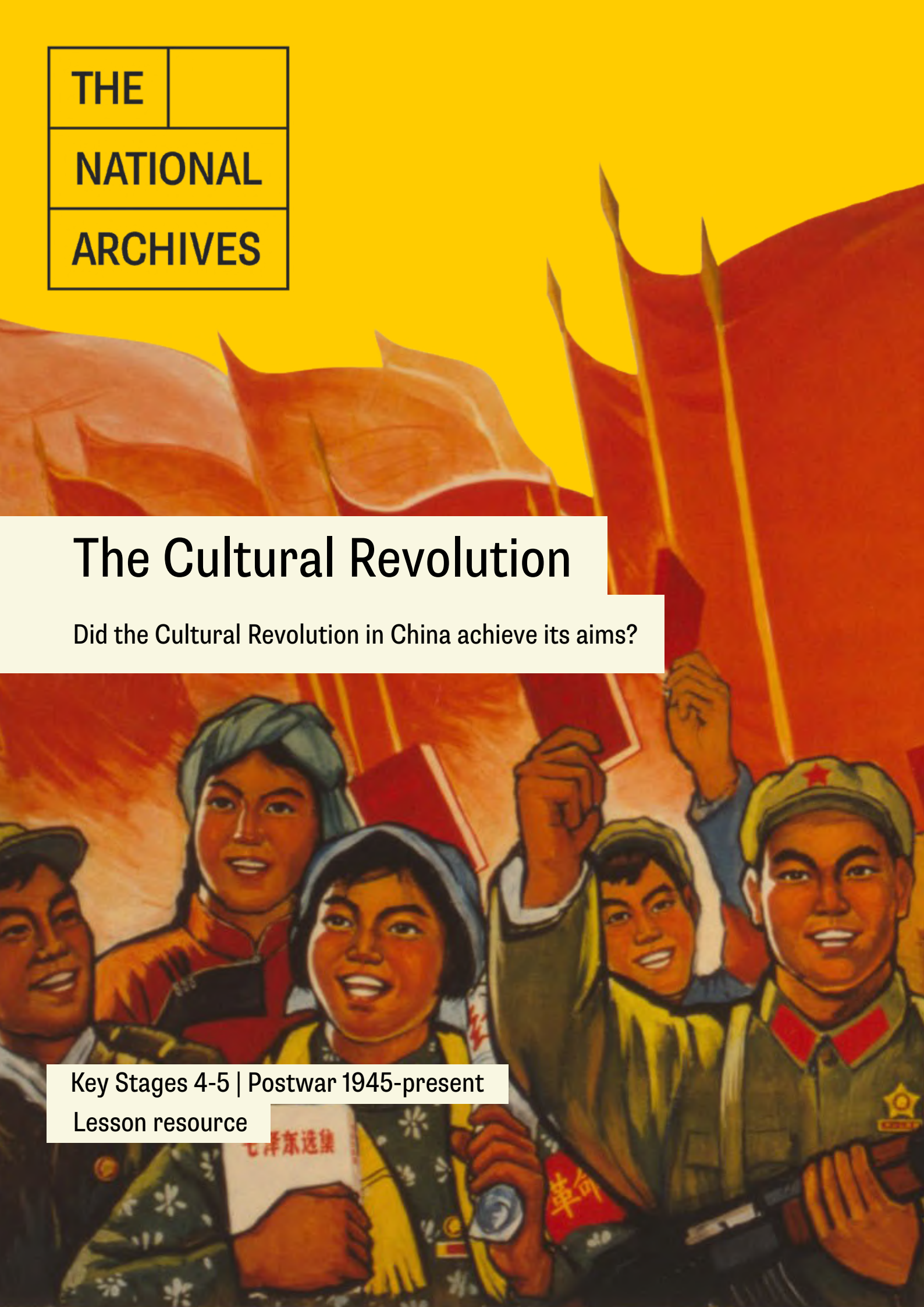
ARCHIVES

The Cultural Revolution

Did the Cultural Revolution in China achieve its aims?

Key Stages 4-5 | Postwar 1945-present

Lesson resource



Introduction

The Cultural Revolution took place in China from 1966 to 1976. It was not a revolution to overthrow the government or people in power. Instead, it was a political movement initiated by Mao Zedong, who was Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and leader of China. It aimed to purge capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society and to reassert Mao's authority. It caused an estimated 500,000 to 2 million deaths and deeply impacted China and its people.

To achieve the objectives of the Cultural Revolution, Mao mobilised young people to form Red Guard groups, following his ideas as written down in his famous Little Red Book. The cult of Mao soared to new heights and his image was seen throughout China. The Red Guard targeted people that represented the 'Four Olds': old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. This included intellectuals, scientists, and senior officials.

The violence exhibited by the Red Guard soon spiralled out of control, and Mao had to send in the People's Liberation Army to restore order. The Cultural Revolution, however, did not end until his death in 1976.

Use the original sources in this lesson to explore the Cultural Revolution. How and why did it come about, and what were some of its impacts?

Note: People's Liberation Army = the military of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Republic of China.

Suitable for:

KS 4 - 5

Time period:

Postwar 1945-present

Connections to the Curriculum:

Key stage 4:

- Edexcel GCSE History:
 - Mao's China, 1945–76
- OCR GCSE History:
 - International Relations: the changing international order 1918–1975
 - China 1950–1981: The People and the State

Key stage 5:

- AQA A-level History:
 - The Transformation of China, 1936–1997
- Edexcel A-level History:
 - The making of modern China, 1860–1997
 - Mao's China, 1949–76
- OCR A-level History:
 - China and its Rulers 1839–1989
 - Japan 1853–1937

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Teachers' notes

This lesson deals with the early years of the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-67).

This is part three of a series of three lessons on 20th century Chinese history:

1. [May Fourth Movement 1919](#)
2. [Chinese Civil War](#)
3. [The Cultural Revolution](#)

This lesson is divided into different themes/tasks. These could be used together, split into multiple lessons, or you could pick just one or two that you'd like students to focus on. Students could work individually on the source questions or in small groups and report back to the class. The tasks cover propaganda, the Down to Countryside movement, purges of party officials, evaluation of aims/success, as well as an interactive map that highlights the chaos and violence of this period. It is important that teachers look at the map before introducing it to students as it contains details of documents that describe violent scenes.

A database of the documents featured on the map is available. Teachers could use this to develop their own tasks linked to their descriptions. For example, which events reflect aims of the Cultural Revolution in terms of the attack on 'old ideas', 'old culture', 'old customs' and 'old habits'?

It is worth highlighting the issue of perspective during this lesson. The majority of sources come from a British government perspective in the Foreign Office. Other sources include Chinese propaganda. What other sources of information could be used to explore the Cultural Revolution?

Sometimes, British government officials are reporting on or quoting sources from the Chinese Communist Party, allowing students to hear from those perspectives as well. It is also worth discussing why these sources have been quoted by the Foreign Office. Again, ask students to consider: Why does The National Archives have these sources? How does the perspective of the source affect how we interpret it?

Discussion questions:

- Did the Cultural Revolution achieve its aims?
- What caused the Cultural Revolution to spiral into chaos and violence?
- What were the impacts of the Cultural Revolution on China and its people?

¹ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/may-fourth-movement-1919/>

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-chinese-civil-war/>

³ <https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-cultural-revolution/>

Teachers' notes

Sources:

Banner image: 'Proletarian revolutionaries unite under the great red banner of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung': propaganda poster from 1967. Everett Collection Inc / Alamy Stock Photo

Starter source a: Interactive map hosted on external website.

Starter source b: Photos of the aftermath of the burning of the British Legation in Beijing by Red Guards, 23 August 1967. Catalogue ref: FCO 78/13 (10)

Source 1a: Photograph taken of posters along the Nanking Road during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, Shanghai, China. robertharding / Alamy Stock Photo

Source 1b: Cultural Revolution poster from the People's Republic of China. Alamy Stock Photo

Source 1c: Extract from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. This is a selection of quotations compiled over the previous six months by British officials, taken from various sources. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 1d: Introduction from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. This is a selection of quotations compiled over the previous six months by British officials, taken from various sources. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 2a: Map showing movement of youths between provinces and from town to country. Published as part of an information report to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2318

Source 2b: Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 2c: "An Appeal to all Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants" poster, 14 January 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 3: This is a report of the confession of President Liu Shaoqi, the former second-in-command of the Chinese Communist Party who has been targeted by the Cultural Revolution. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 4a: Extract from a speech given by Jiang Qing, wife of Mao and deputy director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, to two revolutionary groups in Anhui. 5 September, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110-2319

Source 4b: Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Source 4c: Extracts from a British information report titled 'World Reactions to China's Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards - Part II', 14 February 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Background

The Cultural Revolution in China was a social and political movement from 1966 to 1976. Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), initiated it with the aim of reasserting his authority and strengthening the revolutionary spirit in the country.

Origins (Hundred Flowers Campaign and Great Leap Forward)

The Cultural Revolution had its roots in China's earlier political history after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In 1956, Mao Tse-tung proposed a new Party policy on science and culture with the slogan 'Let all flowers bloom together and diverse schools contend'. The policy became known as the 'Double-Hundred Policy' (also known as the Hundred Flowers Campaign). This came from the earlier slogans 'let a hundred flowers bloom' and 'let a hundred schools of thought contend'. The former was aimed at artists and writers, urging them to express themselves freely (within the boundaries of social realism). The latter was aimed at scientists and intellectuals, encouraging scientific developments.

At first, intellectuals did not criticise the policy due to their earlier experience of persecution. However, Mao and others persistently encouraged them to voice their political opinions. By the summer of 1956, newspapers started publishing criticisms of the government. This included criticisms of bureaucracy, social realism, and neglect of Marxist humanitarian principles. The intelligentsia gained greater confidence as they witnessed the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, led by anti-Stalinists, which showed the potential for transformation within the Soviet system and prompted similar aspirations in China.

Mao Zedong's leadership had faced challenges during the Great Leap Forward, his five-year plan of forced agricultural collectivisation and rural industrialisation initiated in 1958. It resulted in economic setbacks and widespread famine. In an effort to regain power and his revolutionary capability, Mao launched the Cultural Revolution.

Aims of the Cultural Revolution

The primary goal of the Cultural Revolution was to remove what Mao identified as bourgeois influences and counter-revolutionary tendencies within the Chinese Communist Party and society as a whole. Mao aimed to ensure his supremacy within the party and revive revolutionary fervour to confront established power structures and dismantle the 'Four Olds': 'old ideas', 'old culture', 'old customs', and 'old habits'.

Mao mobilised young people, primarily students, to form Red Guard groups. These groups targeted intellectuals, party officials, and individuals associated with the pre-Communist era. They engaged in widespread purges, public humiliation, and destruction of cultural artefacts and symbols. The movement soon descended into chaos, with different factions emerging and vying for power. Conflicts between Red Guard factions, the army, and other political groups became increasingly violent. As the situation spiralled out of control, Mao called upon the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to restore order. This intervention led to the suppression of the Red Guards and the

Background

reestablishment of centralised control.

End of the Cultural Revolution

Lin Biao, a key military figure and Mao's designated successor, rose to prominence during this period. However, his ambitions clashed with Mao's, leading to his downfall in 1971. Mao's death in 1976 marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution had a deep impact on Chinese society and politics. Many high-ranking officials, intellectuals, and individuals associated with the pre-Communist era were purged. There was disruption of governance and significant loss of life. The Cultural Revolution also resulted in economic turmoil and stagnation as the focus shifted from economic development to political struggle. Social structures were disrupted, families were torn apart, and traditional values were suppressed. Numerous historical and cultural artefacts, including ancient temples, books, and artworks, were destroyed.

The Cultural Revolution remains a sensitive and controversial topic in China. Its legacy continues to shape Chinese politics and society, and its memory is subject to state control and historical reinterpretation.

¹ The "Double-Hundred" Policy – The State Council Information Office the People's Republic of China

² Deshpande, G. P. "China's Great Cultural Revolution." *Economic and Political Weekly* 1, no. 11 (1966): 453–55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4357141>.

Tasks

Before you begin

Brainstorm/discuss: What do you know about the Cultural Revolution? What do you know about Mao? Make a list of five ideas you have that you can refer back to at the end of the lesson.

Starter task: Interactive map

Starter task a

This map shows violent incidents in 1967 related to the Cultural Revolution, as reported on by British government officials in a series of Foreign Office files.

The interactive version of this map is hosted on an external site that does not yet meet our criteria for accessibility. In the meantime, we provide an [accessible spreadsheet of all events featured on the map](#).¹

[View the interactive map here](#).²

Please note that some of the descriptions in the map may be distressing to read. The descriptions contain references to death and injury, often on a large scale. Please be aware of this when presenting to students or other users.

1967 was the year Mao referred to as 'all-around civil war'. This period was marked by chaos, with cities, counties, provinces, and even factories splitting into factions that often clashed. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) was told to join the Cultural Revolution early in the year in a bid to restore order, but it too began splitting into factions and adding to the violence.

The Cultural Revolution was a violent moment in history that caused an estimated 500,000 to 2 million deaths. This map can help visualise why and how this violence occurred.

*Note: This map does not reflect the exact location of any of these incidents. Where very vague location information is provided, the point has been placed randomly within the province/city.

Starter task b

Photos of the aftermath of the burning of the British Legation in Beijing by Red Guards, 23 August 1967. Catalogue ref: FCO 78/13 (10)

¹ <https://cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/cultural-revolution-arcgis-data-for-download.xlsx>

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-cultural-revolution/the-cultural-revolution-starter-task-a/>

Tasks

In August 1967, the British Legation in Beijing – the precursor to the British embassy – was stormed by an angry crowd. Crowds had been gathering regularly outside of the compound with messages opposing British imperialism. During this time, Britain still held on to the colony of Hong Kong, which had been ceded by China in the 19th century. In 1967, Hong Kong was rocked by anti-government protests, which the British government had been suppressing through mass arrests and newspaper shutdowns. On August 20 1967, the crowd outside the legation issued an ultimatum for the British government in Hong Kong to release detained Chinese journalists.

Two days later, a crowd of thousands stormed the legation. They set fire to the cars outside and smashed furniture and windows. The staff inside, sustaining injuries from the crowd but no casualties, were eventually able to escape with the help of the People's Liberation Army.

- Look at Starter task a (the map). Choose three points from different parts of the map at random. Compare them using the questions below:
- What happened?
- Why do you think this event happened?
- How would you have felt if you had read about this event in the news in 1967?
- Use the pie charts attached to the map to see which groups were involved. What does this tell you about who was involved in the Cultural Revolution?
- Can you spot any similarities and different between the events you have explored using the map?
- Look at Starter task b (the photos). Can you find the burning of the British legation on the map?
- Why do you think the British legation [diplomatic mission similar to an embassy] was burned by protestors?
- What does this event infer about the role of Red Guard in the Cultural Revolution?
- How could an event such as this affect international diplomacy?
- Use the map to find out about other missions which were attacked during the Cultural Revolution.
- What does this map and this photo tell you about the Cultural Revolution?

Task 1: Propaganda

Look at sources 1a-d. These sources are about propaganda from the Chinese Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution.

- Define the term 'propaganda'.
- What visual techniques (including colour) are used in the propaganda posters (1a & 1b) to communicate their messages?
- Look at the poster transcripts. Explain how the characters add to the messages of each poster.
- Why do you think propaganda like this was used during the Cultural Revolution to promote a cult of personality around Mao Zedong?
- How was Mao portrayed in official propaganda during the Cultural Revolution? Use sources 1c & 1d to explain.

Tasks

- Referring to all sources 1a-1d: why did the Chinese Communist Party put so much effort into creating propaganda?
- What questions should we ask when considering propaganda as historical source material?

Source 1a

Photograph taken of posters along the Nanking Road during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, Shanghai, China. robertharding / Alamy Stock Photo

Source 1b

Cultural Revolution poster from the People's Republic of China. Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo

Source 1c

Extract from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. This is a selection of quotations compiled over the previous six months by British officials, taken from various sources. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 1d

Introduction from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. This is a selection of quotations compiled over the previous six months by British officials, taken from various sources. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Task 2: Down to the Countryside Movement

Look at sources 2a-c, which all relate to the movement of young people in China from towns and cities into the countryside to do manual labour. This is known as the 'Down to the Countryside Movement'.

- Look at Source 2a. What percentage of China's provinces had youths move from towns to the countryside?
- How far did young people generally have to go when moving from one province to another? (You see the distances using online map distance calculators.)
- How would you feel if you had to move that far?
- Look at Source 2b. Why did Mao believe that young people had to go into the countryside?
- Look at Source 2c. What did people living in the countryside think about Mao's policies? Name at least three complaints that they had.
- What consequences do you think the Down to the Countryside Movement would have had?

Tasks

Source 2a

Map showing movement of youths between provinces and from town to country. Published as part of a report to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office titled 'Movement of Population in China', published September 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2318

Source 2b

Extract from minutes from a meeting held with the Cultural Revolution Group and Red Flag fighters on 17 November 1966. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Source 2c

"An Appeal to all Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants" poster, 14 January 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Task 3: Purging officials

This is a report of the confession of President Liu Shaoqi, the former second-in-command of the Chinese Communist Party who has been targeted by the Cultural Revolution.

- How would you describe the general nature of Liu's crimes?
- What do you think a 'self-examination' is?
- In your opinion, why do you think the CCP is prosecuting Liu?
- What does this source suggest about the purges during the Cultural Revolution? [Use these terms to help explain: confession; wallposter; self-examination; evidence; cult of personality; denunciation.]

Source 3

This is a report of the confession of President Liu Shaoqi, the former second-in-command of the Chinese Communist Party who has been targeted by the Cultural Revolution. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Liu Shaoqi (here anglicised as Liu Shao-ch'i) was head of state from 1959 to 1968 and was named Mao's successor in 1961. However, he began clashing with Mao during the 1960s, especially with economic issues, criticising Mao's Great Leap Forward. As part of an internal power struggle, he was labelled a traitor to the revolution and was placed under house arrest in 1967. In 1968, he was expelled from the CCP. He died in prison in 1969.

Tasks

Task 4: Success?

These sources are evaluations of the Cultural Revolution from different perspectives: the Chinese Communist Party (Source 4a), British government officials (Source 4b), and countries around the world (Source 4c). (It's useful to note that all of these perspectives were translated and selected by British government sources.) Look through each piece of evidence and form your opinion to answer the question: did the Cultural Revolution achieve its aims?

- How would you describe the language and tone of Jiang Qing, speech (Source 4a)?
- How does she justify a 'proletarian dictatorship'?
- How does this explain her view on the Cultural Revolution?
- How do British officials describe the impact of the Cultural Revolution in Source 4b?
- Apart from economic effects of the Cultural Revolution, can you think of its possible effects on education, cultural life, and the arts?
- What are the similarities and differences in perspective from other countries on the Cultural Revolution in Source 4c?
- Do you think the Cultural Revolution was successful in achieving its aims? Give your reasons with reference to source documents found in this lesson.

Source 4a

Extract from a speech given by Jiang Qing (here anglicised as Chiang Ching), wife of Mao and deputy director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, to two revolutionary groups in Anhui. 5 September, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Source 4b

Extract from British report titled 'The Power Struggle in China' published 2 February 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Source 4c

Extracts from two British information reports titled 'World Reactions to China's Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards – Part II' and 'Parts III', 14 February 1967 and 1 December 1967. Catalogue reference: FO 1110/2317 and FO 1110/2319

Starter task a: Interactive map URL: <https://nationalarchives.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/b1e357099b2844ec87c7dd8c5ecc8303>

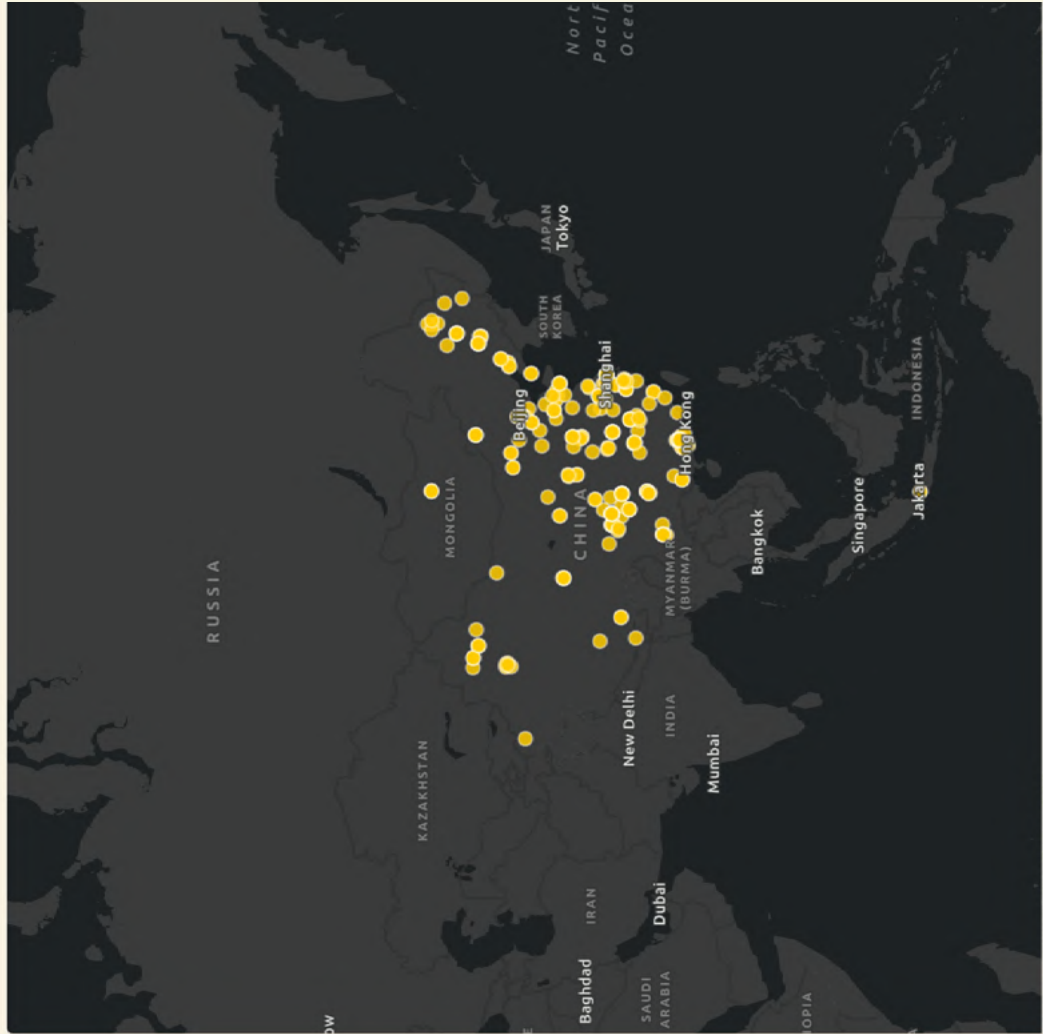
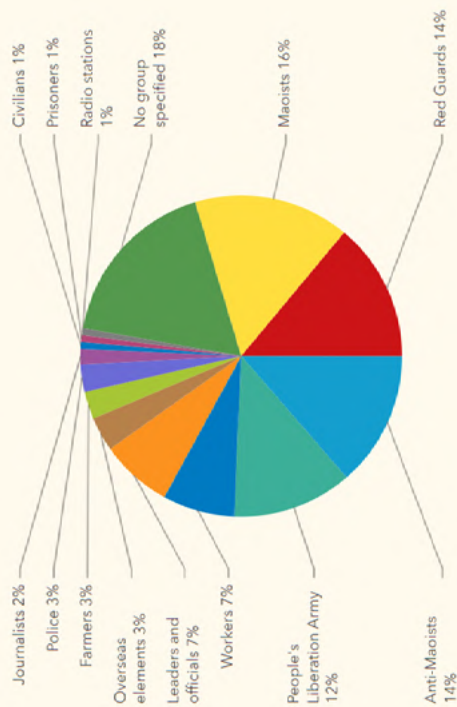
1967: Mapping a Year in the Cultural Revolution

This map shows violent incidents in 1967 related to the Cultural Revolution, as reported on by British government officials in a series of Foreign Office files.

Please note that some of the descriptions in the map may be distressing to read. The descriptions contain references to death and injury, often on a large scale. Please be aware of this when presenting to students or other users.

The Cultural Revolution took place in China from 1966 to 1976. It was not a revolution to overthrow the government or people in power. Instead, it was a political movement initiated by Mao Zedong, who was Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and leader of China. It aimed to purge capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society and to reassert Mao's authority.

Proportion of groups involved in violent incidents



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Starter task b: Photos of the aftermath of the burning of the British Legation in Beijing, 23 August 1967. Catalogue ref: FCO 78/13 (10)



Source 1a: Photograph of posters along Nanking Road during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, Shanghai. robertharding / Alamy Stock Photo



Source 1a: Translated transcript

[Poster on the right:]

A quotation from Chairman Mao:

'On the ideological front, one of our important tasks now is to embark on a criticism of revisionism.'

—'Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work'

[Poster on the left:]

[The red Chinese characters at the bottom:]

All of China's 700 million people are critics.

[The books held by two of the men:]

Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung

[The broadsheet held by one of the men:]

'How to be a Good Communist is a book of lies. It is out of touch with the class conflict in the real world, out of touch with revolution, out of touch with the political struggles of the masses. It makes no mention of political regimes as the fundamental issue of revolutions. It makes no mention of the issue of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It advocates an idealist concept of self-cultivation. It promotes bourgeois individualism in an oblique manner. It promotes slavery. It objects to Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. If you follow what this book says in self-cultivation, you will move closer and closer towards revisionism. We must thoroughly criticise this book and eliminate its adverse effects. Criticism of this book is vitally integral to criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line.'

—'The Bourgeois Reactionary Line in the Issue of Cadres Must Undergo Thorough Criticism' [an article published in the Red Flag in 1967]

Source 1b: Cultural Revolution poster from the People's Republic of China. Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo



Source 1b: Translated transcript

[The red Chinese characters at the bottom:]

This is a vast world where much can be accomplished.

[The framed words against a black background:]

A quotation from Chairman Mao:

'It is absolutely necessary for young intellectuals to go to the countryside to be re-educated by poor and lower-middle peasants.'

Source 1c: Extract from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

Air hostesses

"Air hostess Tsao Chun-ling has overcome selfish ideas and now propagates Mao's thoughts in an exemplary manner. During a flight from Lanchow to Peking, she greeted the passengers by leading them in cheering 'A long, long life to Chairman Mao' and then held a combat-self-interest-and-repudiate-revisionism session which lasted for most of the flight. When she was called upon to turn the aircraft into a position for the dissemination of Mao's thought, she worried that her educational, theoretical and political level was not high enough. However, aided by a study of the relevant quotations from Chairman Mao, she learned to dance, recite poems and ballads and sing Peking and Yuehchu Opera and to use them as instruments for the propagation of Chairman Mao's thought" (NCNA, November 17, 1967)

"One of our guides never fastened her seat belt; she told me that no safety precautions were necessary because the pilot could make no mistake, inspired as she was by Chairman Mao. The air hostesses even danced in the corridors of the aircraft, and on several occasions led communal singing of their favourite Maoist tunes. 'Mao, the helmsman' was a great favourite and very infectious at that." (A recent visitor to China, London Observer, September 3, 1967)

Source 1c: Transcript

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Source 1d: Introduction from report titled 'Eulogies of Mao Tse-Tung', published 19 December 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

YB 452 (Mao - 1)

December 19, 1967.

EULOGIES OF MAO TSE-TUNG.

During the past few months official Chinese sources, as well as Red Guard newspapers and posters, have revealed opposition to Mao Tse-tung's policies during the past years. At the same time tributes to Mao have been paid by top-ranking leaders and ordinary people in greater volume than ever before.

This exercise may be intended to boost Mao's image in order to counteract the damaging effect of revealed opposition, and to strengthen his position in the belief that at this time his is the only personality which can unite and propel the Chinese people forward. These expressions of loyalty and admiration are, however, couched in such sycophantic language that their sincerity is questionable, and the possibility that they are published as a device to bring Mao into ridicule cannot be ignored. In any case, whether sincere or not, the fact that they may make China look ridiculous in the eyes of the world has not escaped some of China's more sophisticated leaders.

Source 1d: Transcript

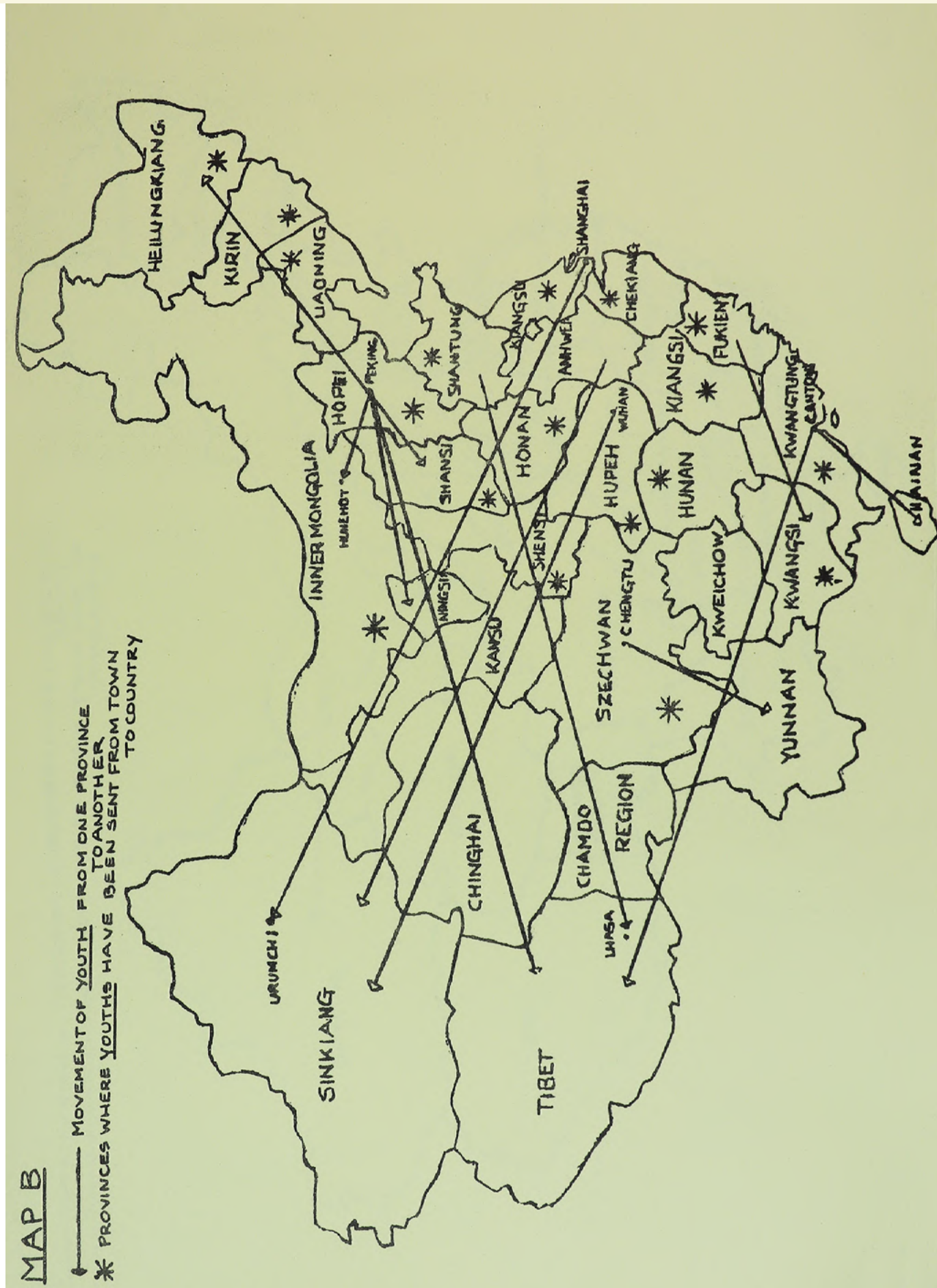
December 19, 1967.

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Source 2a: Map showing movement of youths between provinces and from town to country, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2318



Source 2a: Transcript

MAP B

[Arrow]: Movement of youth from one province to another.

[Asterisk]: Provinces where youth have been sent from town to country.

Map description

Map of China with arrows going between different cities and provinces.

Arrows go from:

- Shanghai to Urumchi (Xinjiang).
- Anhui to Xinjiang.
- Wuhan (Hubei) to Xinjiang.
- Beijing to Hohhot (Inner Mongolia).
- Beijing to Ningxia.
- Beijing to Tibet.
- Shandong to Lhasa (Tibet).
- Guangzhou to Tibet.
- Guangzhou to Hainan.
- Chengdu (Sichuan) to Yunnan.
- Fukien to Guangxi.
- Between Heilongjiang and Shanxi.

Provinces labelled with an asterisk:

- Fujian
- Guangdong
- Guangxi
- Hebei
- Heilongjiang
- Henan
- Hubei
- Hunan
- Inner Mongolia
- Jiangsu
- Jiangxi
- Jilin
- Liaoning
- Shandong
- Shanxi
- Shaanxi
- Sichuan
- Zhejiang

Source 2b: Extract from meeting with the Cultural Revolution Group and Red Flag fighters on 17 November 1966. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Chairman Mao points out: "If the intellectuals don't unite with the worker and peasant masses, then they will be incomplete". Young students should gradually complete the process of uniting with the masses, and all University and Middle School students should modestly learn from workers and peasants and should serve the workers and peasants heart and soul. Students who go on the great liaison to the factories should in an integrated fashion, as far as possible, take part in productive labour and strictly observe labour discipline. Ch'en Po-ta gives a final instruction: "After you have discussed and approved this document and added the Sixteen Points and the Emergency Directives of the Military Affairs Commission, and when the C.C. have passed (pi shih) it, it will then become the guiding document for the C.R. in the factories, mines and enterprises."

Source 2b: Transcript

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Source 2c: "An Appeal to all Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants" January 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

III.

"An Appeal to all Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants"

A poster in Shanghai dated 14 January and signed by Nan Hui Hsien (south of Shanghai) 'Wake Revolution' groups and the representatives of the same group who had gone to Peking to complain.

A preamble criticised Liu and Teng and their Shanghai executives, Ts'ao and Ch'en of the Municipal Party Committee, for failing to implement the policy of eradicating the "Three Differences" between town and country.

A list of 35 grievances followed:

- (a) Politically. We are Second-Class Citizens.
- (i) Why is the countryside used as the general rubbish-bin of the towns? No matter what the crime, anyone in need of remoulding is sent out to the country, some for reform through labour.
- (ii) There are no proper teachers /University teachers? ta hsien shen/ in the countryside. They are all in the towns. Thus, education in the countryside is not on the same level as in the towns. And even if some do come to the country, they just sit in the office all day.
- (v) Why are all the big hospitals and medical services concentrated in the town? We countryfolk, who have only the mobile medical services, also have to pay for all medical attention. Some people say this is because we country people are never ill. This is untrue.
- (vi) Why are all the administrative offices centred in the town? All the officials are very comfortable there, and are reluctant to come out into the country. They are unwilling to come out and investigate the real situation, or to get down to grass-roots. They are out of touch with us.
- (vii) The PLA is composed of the sons and daughters of the whole people. We all say we uphold the glorious PLA, but why is it that the task of supporting the Army and giving preferential treatment to the families of soldiers falls only on our shoulders? Nor do we get credit for it, and have never had one single (plaque of honour?) for our services. A small group of people in the towns get them all. We demand that (plaques of honour?) should immediately be distributed to us!
- (viii) Workers have their unions, soldiers have theirs, and Party workers have a body to represent their interests. Why don't we have unions?

Source 2c: Transcript

“An Appeal to all Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants”

A poster in Shanghai dated 14 January and signed by Nan Hui Hsien (south of Shanghai) ‘make Revolution’ groups and the representatives of the same group who had gone to Peking to complain.

A preamble criticised Liu and Teng and their Shanghai executives, Ts’ao and Ch’en of the Municipal Party Committee, for failing to implement the policy of eradicating the “Three Differences” between town and country.

A list of 35 grievances followed:

(a) Politically. We are Second-Class Citizens.

(i) Why is the countryside used as the general rubbish-bin of the towns? No matter what the crime, anyone in need of remoulding is sent out to the country, some for reform through labour.

(ii) There are no proper teachers in the countryside. They are all in the towns. Thus, education in the countryside is not on the same level as in the towns. And even if some do come to the country, they just sit in the office all day.

...

(v) Why are all the big hospitals and medical services concentrated in the town? We countryfolk, who have only the mobile medical services, also have to pay for all medical attention. Some people say this is because we country people are never ill. This is untrue.

(vi) Why are all the administrative offices centred in the town? All the officials are very comfortable there, and are reluctant to come out into the country. They are unwilling to come out and investigate the real situation, or to get down to grass-roots. They are out of touch with us.

(vii) The PLA [People’s Liberation Army] is composed of the sons and daughters of the whole people. We all say we uphold the glorious PLA, but why is it that the task of supporting the Army and giving preferential treatment to the families of soldiers falls only on our shoulders? Nor do we get credit for it, and have never had one single (plaque of honour?) for our services. A small group of people in the towns get them all. We demand that (plaques of honour?) should immediately be distributed to us!

(viii) Workers have their unions, soldiers have theirs, and Party workers have a body to represent their interests. Why don’t we have unions?

Source 3: This is a report of the confession of President Liu Shaoqi, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

APPENDIX B.
Liu Shao-ch'i's Confession (Wallposter August 1).

An Answer to the Fifth Questions Why in Chi Pen-yu's Article published in Fifth Edition of Red Flag and People's Daily of 1 April, 1967.

(For ease of reference the Chi Pen-yu questions have been inserted before Liu Shao-ch'i's answers).

Comrades of the Revolutionary Rebels of Chung Nan Hai:

On the Xth of X month 1967 you issued an urgent order that Liu Shao-ch'i should present a written self-examination before the Xth of X month specifically replying to the eight questions posed in Chi Pen-yu's essay. My answer is as follows:-

1. Why, after the victory in the anti-Japanese war, did you put forward the capitalist line of the "new phase of peace and democracy"?

2. After the victory in the anti-Japanese war, in January 1946 our Party made a ceasefire agreement with the K.M.T. Afterwards the old Political Consultative Conference was assembled and it proposed a "programme for peaceful national construction" (Ho P'ing Chien Kuo Kang Ling). In the ceasefire order of our Party of the 20 January was a reference to the "new phase of peace and democracy". On the first of February, in accordance with the opinions of the Central Committee's discussion, I wrote a directive about the "new phase of peace and democracy". This directive contains errors.

3. Why, in 1962, did you once again publish that great poisonous weed "How to be a Good Communist", which is a book opposed to revolution, to class struggle, to seizing political power, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to Marxist/Leninism, to Mao Tse-tung's thought and which propagates the bourgeois world view and a reactionary bourgeois idealist philosophy?

6. In 1962 when "How to be a Good Communist" was reprinted, this was endorsed and revised for me by someone else. I saw that it was published in Red Flag and People's Daily. I ought to take the main responsibility.

4. Why, in the socialist education movement, did you promote and advocate a line which in form was "left" but in reality "right" opportunism, and why did you sabotage the socialist education movement?

7. In the summer of 1954 I made speeches in several cities, in some of which were tendencies which were "left" in form but "right" in fact. In my self-examination of the 23rd of October last year I have already given a detailed explanation. There is no need to do so again. The "peach garden" experience was at the time comparatively good. It was not an example of "left" in form and "right" in substance.

5. Why, during the Proletarian Cultural Revolution" have you colluded with another very big person in authority within the Party going the capitalist road and advocated and promoted the bourgeois reactionary line?

8. In the Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as to why I have advocated and promoted the bourgeois reactionary line, I myself am also not clear about this. Nor have I read any essay which can fully explain why I have made errors of line. After the 11th Plenum of the 8th Party Congress criticised my errors, there were also others who committed errors of a similar nature, but they also do not know why. I am going to endeavour to study Chairman Mao's works and carefully peruse other books which Chairman Mao directs me to read as well as the relevant essays in newspapers, in order to be able to get this question fully clear from the ideological viewpoint, and moreover sincerely to hold a self-examination among the revolutionary masses. Only then shall I be able to reply as to why I committed errors of line in this Proletarian Cultural Revolution and how to correct this error.

With greetings, Proletarian Cultural Revolution greetings, long live the invincible great thought of Mao Tse-tung! Long live the Great Leader, Great Teacher, Great Commander, Great Helmsman Mao Tse-tung.

Liu Shao-ch'i
67. X. X.

Source 3: Transcript

Liu Shao-ch'i's Confession (Wallposter August 1)

...

On the Xth of X month 1967 you issued an urgent order that Liu Shao-ch'i should present a written self-examination before the Xth of X month specifically replying to the eight questions posed in Chi Pen-yu's essay. My answer is as follows:

...

[Why, after liberation, did you make every effort to oppose the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce? Why did you oppose agricultural co-operatives and cut them back?]

3. After liberation I made every effort to advocate the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce. I did not oppose this. In 1951 I approved an article sent from Shanshi about agricultural co-operatives: this approval was wrong. At a meeting of the Central Committee I listened to a report on the question of co-operatives by Teng Tzu-hui and I did not refute his mistaken opinions. Thereupon he promoted them widely and cut back 200,000 co-operatives. Afterwards Chairman Mao criticised the errors of Teng Tzu-hui and published a very important essay on agricultural co-operatives thus bringing about a high tide of agricultural co-operatives.

...

[Why, in the socialist education movement, did you promote and advocate a line which in form was "left" but in reality "right" opportunism, and why did you sabotage the socialist education movement?]

7. In the summer of 1964 I made speeches in several cities, in some of which were tendencies which were "left" in form but "right" in fact. In my self-examination of the 23rd of October last year I have already given a detailed explanation. There is no need to do so again. The "peach garden" experience was at the time comparatively good. It was not an example of "left" in form and "right" in substance.

[Why, during the Proletarian Cultural Revolution have you colluded with another very big person in authority within the Party going the capitalist road and advocated and promoted the bourgeois reactionary line?]

8. In the Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as to why I have advocated and promoted the bourgeois reactionary line, I myself am also not clear about this. Nor have I read any essay which can fully explain why I have made errors of line. After the 11th Plenum of the 8th Party Congress criticised my errors, there were also others who committed errors of a similar nature, but they also do not know why. I am going to endeavour to study Chairman Mao's works and carefully peruse other books which Chairman Mao directs me to read as well as the relevant essays in newspapers, in order to be able to get this question fully clear from the ideological viewpoint, and moreover

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sincerely to hold a self-examination among the revolutionary masses. Only then shall I be able to reply as to why I committed errors of line in this Proletarian Cultural Revolution and how to correct this error.

With greetings, Proletarian Cultural Revolution greetings, long live the invincible great thought of Mao Tse-tung! Long live the Great Leader, Great Teacher, Great Commander, Great Helmsman Mao Tse-tung.

Liu Shao-ch'i

Source 4a: Extract from a speech given by Jiang Qing to two revolutionary groups, 5 September, 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2319

APPENDIX D

Chiang Ching Speech of 5 September, 1967

to Representatives of mass organisations in Anhwei Province

Following is the text of Chiang Ching's speech to representatives of the two main revolutionary groups in Anhwei.

"I reckon that the situation of the Cultural Revolution throughout the whole country is excellent. Of course if you look at the situation in isolation in some individual areas don't you feel that it is rather serious, but in fact this is not so. We should look at the situation as a whole and from the historical point of view there is a great difference between the situation this time last year and the present time. This time last year those in authority in the Party going the capitalist road and their minions in the Provinces had a certain amount of freedom of action. Now they are paralysed and have been overthrown by revolutionary young generals. The fact that they are paralysed is no bad thing because the "small handful" cannot move. Some areas have set up Revolutionary Committees. At present the Central Committee is solving the problems in one Province after another and in one city after another. From last year to this year there has been a big change in the situation and we are carrying on the large-scale criticism of the top person. We are now gradually expanding this criticism throughout the whole country and we should open fire on the top person on each front and thoroughly criticise him and make him stink. You must do this so that every household knows of it, so that he will stink even more than Trotsky in the Soviet Union. In this way China will never change colour.

At present we do not want clashes. In clashes people always get hurt and bad elements smash up State property. Why do they want to harm State property? On the question of "a peaceful response to an armed attack" we should not forget the class content nor lose sight of the circumstances and the conditions. When you return both sides should "resist by peaceful means" and put out an olive branch and not go round waving cudgels.

To sum it all up, I feel that the situation is excellent. We have tempered the young people and tempered the young generals, tempered the revolutionary cadres and tempered the older generation.

In some areas the situation is complicated but this is quite normal. Besides it is also rather uneven but this again is perfectly normal. In general the situation is developing favourably. To ensure this you need certain factors. These are the leadership of the Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao. This is the most important aspect. You also need the pillar of the proletarian dictatorship, the People's Liberation Army, to protect the proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is essential to set up gradually local Revolutionary Committees and to get on with revolutionary alliances and revolutionary triple alliances so that we can carry out struggle, criticism and reform and coordinate the large-scale criticism movement throughout the whole country.

Source 4a: Transcript

Chiang Ching Speech of 5 September, 1967 to Representatives of mass organisations in Anhwei Province

Following is the text of Chiang Ching's speech to representatives of the two main revolutionary groups in Anhwei.

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At present we do not want clashes. In clashes people always get hurt and bad elements smash up State property. Why do they want to harm State property? On the question of "a peaceful response to an armed attack" we should not forget the class content nor lose sight of the circumstances and the conditions. When you return both sides should "resist by peaceful means" and put out an olive branch and not go round waving cudgels.

To sum it all up, I feel that the situation is excellent. We have tempered the young people and tempered the young generals, tempered the revolutionary cadres and tempered the older generation.

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Source 4b: Extract from British report titled 'The Power Struggle in China' published 2 February 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317

Chaotic results of the Cultural Revolution

The cultural revolution has caused much disruption in ordinary life and work particularly in the urban areas. Party and Government offices have been raided by Red Guards, the schools have been closed, industrial production in some factories halted and the transportation system disrupted by the movement of Red Guards and, latterly, by workers' delegations on their way to Peking to present grievances. The most serious effects have been noted during the last 2 months when the cultural revolution was extended to the factories and farms. The damage to the Chinese economy is difficult to assess but clearly has been considerable. It will take some time to sort out the chaos.

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Source 4c: 'World Reactions to China's Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards - Part II & III', 1967. Catalogue ref: FO 1110/2317 and FO 1110/2319

The East German agency on January 7, 1967, commented:

"The most recent events in China confirm in a most alarming manner what had been said for many months by Communist and workers' parties in the whole world. That the alleged Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.... was neither great and proletarian nor has it anything to do with culture or even with a revolution."

Pakistan: The Karachi paper The Leader on January 11, 67 published an article on the clashes in China in which it said that:

" Neighbours of China, like Pakistan, which are developing close relations with China... have to be alarmed by the developments in the Chinese cities."

The paper also stated:

"If the quarrel in China is ideological, it should have been settled through the party caucus or the People's Congress and not through young volunteers or street mobs, whether they be Red Guards, workers or students!"

Iraq: The paper Al - Arab on August 31, 1966, stated:

"A cultural revolution has never meant the destruction of religious, social and cultural traditions which do not conflict with cultural, social and economic progress at all To launch oppressive campaigns against religious social and cultural traditions in the name of the cultural revolution.....is not the right thing to do and it will not do the Chinese people any good."

Malagasy Republic: President Tsiranana of the Malagasy Republic said in an interview with the Courier de Madagascar in March 1967 that some Chinese leaders has come to realise the mistake of allowing Red Guards to run wild. But if the young people had erred, the fault was with their leaders. He said he believed the main reason for the cultural revolution was that the Chinese leaders were trying to hide the regimes internal difficulties.

Indian Communist Party: Moscow radio of November 13, 1966, reported that the Delhi paper New Age was publishing a series of articles by Adhikari, a member of the Central Secretariat of the Indian CP, in which he had stated:

"The Cultural revolution uses the cult of the teaching of Mao Tse-tung to destroy all opposition and criticism made in the ranks of the party in connection with economic difficulties and shortcomings, and declares that the teaching of Mao Tse-tung provides the final solution to all the problems of life in all fields. This contradicts Marxism."

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Iraq: The paper Al-Arab on August 31, 1966, stated:

“A cultural revolution has never meant the destruction of religious, social and cultural traditions which do not conflict with cultural, social and economic progress at all...To launch oppressive campaigns against religious social and cultural traditions in the name of the cultural revolution...is not the right thing to do and it will not do the Chinese people any good.”

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