

# HOW DID CHINA BECOME A COMMUNIST COUNTRY?

## Communism Defined

Communism is a system in which goods are owned by everyone, and there is no private nor individual property. The goal of communism is to have a classless society in which everything belongs equally to the people. Only five countries today have communist governments. China is one of those. This article will examine the events in China that led to a communist government. Although China's government is not purely communist today, it does have communist roots.

## China's Civil War

From 1945-1949, two groups competed for control of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang, often referred to as the Nationalists. Prior to World War II, the Kuomintang held power, but were gradually challenged by the newly developed Chinese Communist Party (CCP). During World War II, Japan invaded China, and the Kuomintang and CCP united to defeat Japan. After World War II, the two groups tried to work together to create a government, but broke apart, each fighting for control of China. The Chinese Communist Party prevailed.

## How Did the Chinese Communist Party Win?

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was led by Mao Zedong, who ruled China until his death in 1976. During the civil war, the CCP had the help and support of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a union of socialist republics. The CCP had new ideas about the structure of China that appealed to a large number of people. The communists planned to take land away from private land owners and redistribute the land to peasants, resulting in more land ownership for all. This idea was very popular with peasants. Mao also believed that women should have more rights and be able to choose whom they wanted to marry. He is famously quoted as saying, "Women hold up half the sky." The CCP had a policy during the civil war to treat all prisoners of war fairly. They did not hold prisoners hostage and released captured Nationalists' soldiers go home or choose to stay and fight for the CCP.

The Kuomintang or Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, were forced to spend tax revenue on the war effort, diverting those funds from the needs of the people. This policy was very unpopular. The peasants felt ignored by the Kuomintang government and were opposed to the nationalists' belief of keeping land ownership as it was. The Kuomintang also punished peasants for participating in land redistribution—the favored policy of the communist party. The Kuomintang also drafted citizens to fight in the war against their will. This led many peasants to fight instead against the Kuomintang.

Ultimately, in 1949, the CCP won and established the People's Republic of China. The Kuomintang fled to the island of Taiwan and established the Republic of China. Both groups claimed to

represent China's true government. The civil war was over, but there was never a peace treaty signed between the two groups.

### **One China Policy**

Today, Taiwan governs itself independently from China, but it is not recognized as an independent country by most of the world. Prior to 1979, the United States only recognized the Republic of China in Taiwan as the true government of China. The Republic of China (Taiwan) even represented China in the United Nations. In 1979, however, this changed when the United States issued a statement stating there is only one China, the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan is part of that China, not an independent country. This is referred to as the One China Policy. Although the United States has a separate trade agreement with Taiwan, the US does not recognize the authority of Taiwan today as the true government of China.

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