

Chronology of Major Civic Events in China 1949-1999

Prepared by Tripod Staff

The following chronology deals only with major civic events. The events chosen are selected from a very large number of possibilities. Others might have made a different choice. Matters related to religion are not included. These will be published in another chronology in a later issue of Tripod.

- 1949 Mao Zedong proclaims the People's Republic of China.
Chiang Kai-shek flees to Taiwan after the People's
Liberation Army captures Nanjing.
- 1950 Chinese join North Korea in Korean War.
- 1951 Agrarian Reform Law.
Mao begins suppression of counter-revolutionaries.
China occupies Tibet.
Mao begins Anti-Corruption Campaign.
- 1954 First People's Congress; Mao named State Chairman.
China adopts its first constitution. Article 88 guarantees
freedom of religious belief.
- 1955 Mao announces collectivization of land.
Private businesses socialized.
- 1956 Hundred Flowers Campaign begins.
- 1957 End of Hundred Flowers Campaign; many critics arrested.
Anti-rightists campaign begins.
- 1958 The Great Leap Forward.
Communes set up.
- 1959-60 The Great Leap Forward leads to drop in harvest; famine
rampant throughout China. It is estimated that 20 million
died.
- 1960 Revolt in Tibet.
- 1964 Mao's *Little Red Book* published for general public.
China successfully explodes its first atomic bomb.

- 1966-76 Mao launches the Cultural Revolution beginning a decade of political and religious upheaval.
- 1966 Original Cultural Revolution, group dismissed. Radical new team set up. The final team known as “the Gang of Four.”
- 1967 Power struggles within the Party accelerate.
- 1970 Under the leadership of Zhou Enlai, political stability is gradually restored.
China launches its first satellite.
- 1971 Ping-pong diplomacy. Zhou Enlai meets US. table tennis team.
Kissinger makes first visit to Beijing.
PRC admitted to the United Nations.
- 1972 President and Mrs. Nixon and party of 113 visit China.
Prime Minister Tanaka of Japan visits Beijing.
- 1973 “Gang of Four” wields powerful influence. Confucius and Confucianism criticized. Lin Biao criticized.
Deng Xiaoping returns to political scene.
Tenth Party Congress held in Beijing Party has 28 million members.
- 1974 Lin Biao condemned as a “rightist.”
Zhou Enlai falls out of favor.
- 1975 Deng Xiaoping elected Vice-Chairman of Central Committee.
Zhou Enlai, seriously ill and pleads for country to undertake the Four Modernizations.
Zhou Enlai attacked and denounced.
Chiang Kai shek, 87, dies in Taiwan.
Mao levels criticism against Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping.
Deng presents plan to restore scientific work at Dazhai Conference.
- 1976 Zhou Enlai, 77, dies.
Nixon revisits China.
Deng Xiaoping dismissed. Hua Guofeng declared Party Chairman.
Large scale and violent demonstrations in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and other cities to criticize Mao’s associates and honor the memory of Zhou Enlai.
“Gang of Four” exercise power in many areas.
Mao Zedong dies.

- Hua Guofeng replaces Mao as chairman of the Communist Party.
 “Gang of Four” denounced.
 CPC begins the rehabilitation of victims of the Cultural Revolution.
- 1977 Selected works of Mao Zedong published.
 Deng Xiaoping restored to his post and gains power.
 “Gang of Four” expelled from Party.
- 1978 Third Plenum of 11th Central Committee adopts modernization program.
 Deng Xiaoping heads Political Consultative Conference.
 China students sent to study abroad.
 First Big Character posters appear on Beijing Democracy Wall.
- 1979 United States establishes diplomatic relations with China.
 Lunar New Year lures 250,000 Hong Kong Chinese to Mainland.
 Deng Xiaoping visits USA.
 National Congress proposes the stabilization of the nation’s population.
 Wei Jingsheng, initiator of Big Character poster campaign, sentenced to 15 years in prison for counter-revolutionary crimes and is stripped of his political rights.
- 1980 Party Central accelerates population control program.
 Trial of “Gang of Four.”
- 1981 “Gang of Four” sentenced. All are stripped of political rights.
 Deng Xiaoping elaborates “one country, two systems” concept aimed at reunification with Taiwan.
 10 point policy to set up economic zones in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces.
 China launches three space satellites and one carrier rocket.
- 1982 12th National Assembly adopts new CPC constitution.
 Spiritual Pollution Campaign launched.
 Population reaches 1,024,950,000.
- 1984 Premier Zhao visits US and Canada, a first since 1949.
 Economic restructuring and opening to outside world.
 Deng Xiaoping now 80.
 Deng Xiaoping defends China’s policy of openness as necessary to catch up with developed world
 President Zhao Ziyang and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

- sign Sino-British Declaration on the future of Hong Kong.
- 1985 Visits abroad continue and leaders encourage private enterprise to improve efficiency of businesses in China. CPC issues “Decisions on Reform of Educational System.” Premier Zhao Ziyang addresses the UN General Assembly on 40th anniversary of founding of the UN.
- 1986 China applies for full membership in GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.)
China leaders and people warmly welcome Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles to Beijing.
Number of counties and cities now open to foreigners in China reaches 436.
Deng Xiaoping criticizes bourgeois liberalization, student demonstrations and Fang Lizhi.
Fang Lizhi, astrophysicist, and writers Liu Binyan and Wang Ruowang expelled from the Party.
Thousands of students demonstrate from Beijing to Kunming in favor of democracy.
Party calls for more openness to outside world and more economic structural reforms.
Agreement sign between China and Portugal: China will resume sovereignty over Macao on December 20, 1999.
Thousands demonstrate in favor of independence of Tibet.
First Taiwan compatriots since 1949 visit Mainland.
Zhao Ziyang resigns as premier.
Li Peng appointed acting premier.
Hong Kong Basic Law Draft presented to the public for opinions.
First international convention on human rights ratified by China.
Gansu Province passes first law to forbid mentally retarded from bearing children.
- 1989 Fang Lizhi writes open letter to Deng Xiaoping asking for amnesty for all political prisoners to mark 40th anniversary of the People’s Republic.
China declares martial law in Tibet after monks attack police, government officials and businessmen.
Unrest mounts throughout the country with large-scale demonstrations for democratic reforms.
8,000 call on Li Peng to negotiate for more democracy.
100,000 demonstrate in Tiananmen Square.

- Beijing University students organize a union not controlled by the Communist Youth League.
 Students plan demonstration to coincide with Hu Yaobang's funeral.
 150 intellectuals petition Communist Party to refrain from violence and to dialogue with students instead.
 Students clash with police as students hold largest anti-government demonstrations in China's history.
 Newspaper censored for publishing truthful account of happenings.
 People's Army put on alert; 10,000 troops relocated to Beijing.
 Students' demonstrations in Tiananmen end in massacre.
 Zhao Ziyang ousted as CCP General Secretary and replaced by Jiang Zemin. Officials who supported the democracy movement are purged.
 Anti-corruption campaign launched to combat corruption among government officials.
- 1990 Martial Law lifted in China.
 Both Chinese and British governments accept the Basic Law for Hong Kong after 1997.
 Sino-British Liaison Group meets in Hong Kong for 15th meeting to discuss nationality issues and civil rights in Hong Kong after 1997.
 China lifts Martial Law on Tibet.
 China establishes diplomatic relations with several countries.
 China's population has now reached 1,141,907,793.
 The ratio of male to female is 106.27:100.
- 1991 Jiang Qing, 77, Mao Zedong's widow (Gang of Four) commits suicide.
 Jiang Zemin furthers cooperation with Soviet Union.
 Party and State leaders gather in the Great Hall of the People to celebrate 70th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party.
 China issues draft of "Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the PRC."
 State Council publishes "White paper on Human Rights in China."
- 1992 During southern tour Deng Xiaoping calls for radical economic market reforms.
 The 7th National People's Congress focuses on economic

development, reform and opening to the outside world.
Shen Tong, founder and chairman of US based Democracy for China Fund and pro-democracy movement student leader, arrested during visit to China. Later released.
China publishes White Paper on Tibet: "Tibet—Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation."
China introduces new market economy at 14th National Congress of the Communist Party.
Governor Patten of Hong Kong arrives in Beijing to discuss political reforms.

- 1993
- Xinhua (NCNA) reaffirms that China will not compromise on Chris Patten's political reforms bill.
China signs the International Convention Banning Chemical Weapons.
Noted dissident leader Wan Dan released on parole.
Other dissidents released and granted exit visas.
NPC approves draft for constitution of PRC.
Talks on China entering GATT resume.
Li Peng affirms that China will never change the "one country two systems" policy for Hong Kong.
Jiang Zemin elected President of the PRC.
Basic Law for Macau, SAR completed.
China defends its concept of human rights.
Sino-British talks open in Beijing on 1994-95 Hong Kong election.
Chinese government announces that it will relax its prohibition on college students leaving China.
Chinese army attacks anti-Chinese demonstrators in Lhasa.
USA extends most favored nation status to China (MFN).
Peasants riot in Sichuan over taxes and fees.
China executes 100 in Yunnan Province for drug trafficking.
Floods in southern and eastern China cause hundreds of deaths and leave tens of thousands homeless.
State Bureau issues document, "Introducing Foreign Experts in China."
14th Central Committee of CCP upholds Deng Xiaoping's theory of economic reforms.
China-Hong Kong relations on rough course.
Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin meet in Seattle.
State Council regulations aim at stemming bribes and building clean government.
China celebrates 100th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth.

- 1994
- Zhu Rongji announces tight money policy to combat inflation.
 - Wei Jingsheng barred from meeting with foreign reporters and diplomatic personnel for three years.
 - China keeps on being criticized for its human rights record and lack of press freedom.
 - China continues to carry on underground nuclear tests.
 - Fires in several factories underscore faulty construction and unsafe working conditions.
 - China attempts to strengthen workers' safety and improve working conditions.
 - China commemorates 2,545th year of Confucius' birth.
 - China begins Three Gorges Project, the largest hydroelectric and water control project in the world.
 - Dissidents given long prison sentences for counter-revolutionary crimes.
- 1995
- China Mainland population tops 1.2 billion mark.
 - Jiang Zemin promotes patriotic education and traditional culture to wipe out decadent influences from the West.
 - Serious crimes increase 61.9% over 1993. Number executed by the State not released.
 - Of 220,000 students who have gone overseas for further study only 75,000 have returned.
 - President Lee Teng-hui obtains visa to the USA to visit Alma Mater. Beijing furious.
 - Intellectuals, scientists and dissidents petition for an end to the persecution of the 1989 pro-democracy activists.
 - Chinese-British agreement on Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal after July 1, 1997.
 - Population growth lowest since 1949.
 - China adopts new labor law to protect workers' interests.
 - Beijing hosts United Nation's World Conference on Women.
 - Jiang Zemin lists reform, development and stability as the first of the country's goals.
 - Hong Kong rated as the world's freest economy on the Index of Economic Freedom.
 - Shenzhen decides to give up dual-price structures for foreigners.
 - Marxism, Leninist and Mao Zedong Thought to remain a compulsory part of the university curriculum into the next century.
- 1996
- Rural working conference plans agricultural development for

1996-2000.

Jiang Zemin welcomes the 11th Panchen Lama and a delegation from Zhaxi Lhumbo Lamasery to Zhongnanhai. China develops and enlarges its transportation services with new bridges and railroads, and extends communication services.

Regulations for the Management of Foreigners' Employment in China issued and to go into effect on May 11, 1996.

Publication of "Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Public Order."

Various earthquakes throughout the year claim many lives and leave thousands homeless.

The Environmental Protection Committee meets to discuss the enforcement of the Environmental Protection Law.

The Beijing Observatory announces the discovery of a super nova 65 million light years from the earth. This is the first ever discovered by a Chinese scientist in an external galaxy.

China opens up 40 more cities and counties to foreigners.

This brings the total to 1,260.

China launches successful nuclear tests then declares moratorium on future testing.

China conducts "war games" against Taiwan with missile tests to discourage people from voting for Lee Teng-hui.

State Council calls a meeting in Beijing to fight against corruption, robbery, fraud and burglary in the financial sector.

1997

Beijing intensifies its crackdown on Tibet's independence movement.

Turkish Uygur separatists set bombs in Yili, Xinjiang Province in retaliation for China's armed suppression of movement.

First Chinese freight shipped directly between the Mainland and Taiwan in 48 years.

China issues its third human rights white paper: *Progress in China's Human Rights Case in 1996*.

A contingent of 40 advance guards of the PLA arrives in Hong Kong.

Some 55,000 people participate in a candlelight vigil to commemorate the 8th anniversary of the crushing of the Pro-Democracy Movement in China in 1989.

At 15th National People's Congress, China makes changes and revisions in the criminal code and in national defense. It also upholds Deng Xiaoping's theory together with "Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought."

Hong Kong returns to Chinese sovereignty.
China completes the first phase of the Three Gorges Project.

1998 The Ninth National People's Congress votes to restructure the State Council, cutting the number of government officials in half in view of setting up a more efficient administrative system.

China frees Wang Dan, 1989 pro-democracy leader. He leaves for the United States for medical treatment.

Bill Clinton holds summit meeting with Jiang Zemin in Beijing.

Mary Robinson, US Commissioner for Human Rights, visits Beijing, Shanghai and Lhasa, Tibet.

1999 "China must stick to the Party's basic line for the next hundred years," says Jiang Zemin.

China calls on Macau to instill law and order in the enclave before its returns to China in December.

China steps up surveillance on corruption among high-ranking officials.

Thousands of farmers clash with police in Hunan Province during anti-corruption protest.

Dissidents challenge Party by setting up branches of the outlawed Democratic Party.

Experts find burial site for Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang, founder of Ming Dynasty.

Human rights protesters "greet" Jiang Zemin throughout his ten-day tour in Europe.

Bao Tong, former Central Committee member writes to leaders to encourage them to say they were wrong to crush the Tiananmen Square demonstrations.

10,000 members of Falun Gong sect protest. This is the largest protest since the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations.

Hong Kong requests Beijing to reinterpret its mini-constitution in an attempt to overturn a decision of the Court of Final Appeal to allow some 1.7 million migrants from the Mainland to enter Hong Kong.

Some 70,000 people attend candlelight ceremony on the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre.

Police arrest large number of Falun Gong members throughout China.

China celebrates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. Jiang Zemin takes his place along side of Mao and Deng.