

The revolution in China

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In the spring of 1946, civil war broke out in China. The Communists, led by Mao Tse-Tung, hardened by resistance to the Japanese, promised to redistribute land to the peasants. In spite of American aid, which had by now begun to focus more on Europe, the National Government of General Chang Kai-Shek had to leave the mainland in 1949 and take refuge on the island of Formosa. On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China was proclaimed, and Mao became President. The Communists held all the key jobs in the government. Opponents were systematically arrested or executed. This victory greatly strengthened the position of world Communism which now spread from the China Sea to the Elbe. But Communist China, which had certainly needed Soviet economic aid in the early years of the People's Republic, was not a mere satellite of the Soviet Union. It joined forces with the USSR in some Cold War conflicts but did not become part of the Soviet bloc.