

HUA GUOFENG

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HUA GUOFENG WAS BORN IN SHANXI PROVINCE, CHINA, IN 1921. AN ANTI-JAPANESE RESISTANCE FIGHTER AND MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, HE WAS THE PREMIER OF CHINA WHEN CHAIRMAN MAO DIED AND GOVERNED FROM 1976 TO 1980. OFTEN PURPOSEFULLY WRITTEN OUT OF HISTORY BY HIS SUCCESSORS, HE WAS IN MANY WAYS THE ARCHITECT OF THE GREATEST ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

WHEN CHAIRMAN MAO ZEDONG DIED IN SEPTEMBER 1976, HE LEFT AN IMPOVERISHED CHINA AND DIVIDED COMMUNIST PARTY. BUT OVER THE NEXT 40 YEARS, THE "SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS" POLICIES LED TO AN ECONOMIC MIRACLE.

A 9.5% ANNUAL ECONOMIC GROWTH LIFTED 800 MILLION PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY AND MADE CHINA THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY.

CHINA'S GDP

1976

2016

MUCH OF THE CREDIT GOES TO DENG XIAOPING AND ZHAO ZIYANG, REFORMERS WHO TOOK POWER IN 1980.

BUT AT LEAST SOME CREDIT SHOULD GO TO HUA GUOFENG, OFTEN FORGOTTEN, WHO WAS PREMIER OF CHINA FOR FOUR YEARS FOLLOWING MAO'S DEATH IN 1976.

HUA'S ROLE WAS PURPOSELY DOWNPLAYED BY DENG AND OTHER REFORMERS, WHO ACCUSED HIM OF BEING TOO CLOSE TO MAO.

"Whatever Chairman Mao said, we will say and whatever Chairman Mao did, we will do"
- HUA GUOFENG

BUT AFTER MAO'S DEATH, HUA HELPED ARREST HIS HARD-LINE FOLLOWERS.

HE ALSO IMMEDIATELY PUSHED FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS - TO INDUSTRY, RAILROADS, BANKING, TECHNOLOGY, AND MORE - IN ORDER TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF LIVING AND RESPOND TO MARKET FORCES. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF "SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS". HE ALSO OPENED UP LITERARY AND ARTISTIC FREEDOMS.

HUA DID NOT WIN THE PROPAGANDA WAR, AND SO HIS STORY IS OFTEN FORGOTTEN, BUT THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS HE PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE CHINESE ECONOMIC MIRACLE OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY.



WORLD HISTORY PROJECT
BIOGRAPHIES

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