

# Epilogue

Deng Xiaoping's death on 19 February 1997 marked the end of an era, for he was nearly the last link with the early years of the CCP, but otherwise it brought little immediate change. Deng's wish to live to see the return of Xianggang to China was not granted, but that event took place as planned on 30 June 1997. The political leadership headed by President Jiang Zemin, which he had approved, remained in place. The economic modernization, which was his enduring legacy, forged ahead. Two of the most pressing economic tasks, the radical overhaul of state enterprises and the drastic reduction of the vast workforce relying on the 'iron rice bowl', or state employment, continued apace. The Three Gorges Dam project, the extraordinarily ambitious programme promoted by Li Peng to control the Yangzi river, remained on schedule despite the devastating floods of August 1998. In that same month the Chinese economy was not only strong enough to withstand the effects of the Asian crisis, but was even able to offer financial support to Russia. At the time of writing, it seems likely that Deng's legacy will remain intact into the twenty-first century.