Assessing Responsibility for the Great Famine

IB History

***“The Great Leap Forward was a triumph of ideology over common sense.”***

**Introduction:**

The famine that followed the failure of the Great Leap Forward, aka the Great Famine, lead to the death of between 15-45 million deaths. As the Chairman of the CCP (undisputed leader of the PRC) and the initiator of the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong bears some responsibility for this tragedy. The purpose of this activity is to decide how much?

**The Scenario:**

In the style of The Good Place, we are going to have a trial to decide the eternal fate of Mao Zedong. Your table group is a crack prosecution team that needs to build the case for indicting Mao for his role in creating the Great Famine in China. Your team must decide to charge Mao for one of the below charges and create a legal brief to justify your indictment before the Judge (aka Mr. Johnson). If you select a charge but do not successfully demonstrate the prima facie case, the Chairman would avoid all accountability for the deaths of millions of Chinese citizens.

**Potential Charges (in order of severity)**

1. Murder: the killing of a human being(s) by a sane person, with intent, malice aforethought (prior intention to kill the particular victim or anyone who gets in the way) and with no legal excuse.
2. Manslaughter: the unlawful killing of another person without premeditation or so-called "malice aforethought" There are two levels of manslaughter: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary manslaughter includes killing in heat of passion or while committing a felony.
3. Involuntary Manslaughter: Involuntary manslaughter occurs when a death is caused by a violation of a non-felony and has no emotional connection to the victim.
4. Gross Negligence: carelessness which is in reckless disregard for the safety or lives of others, and is so great it appears to be a conscious violation of other people's rights to safety. It is more than simple inadvertence, but it is just shy of being intentionally evil.

**Expectations of Indictment Brief**

1. Clear charge with a 1 paragraph of justification
2. Summary of Evidence: 5-6 articles that you plan to introduce in trial to support your indictment
3. Quotes from Two Expert Witnesses (Historians) that you plan to call to support your charge
4. Sentence recommendation for Mao’s punishment if he was found guilty at trial