

# INTRODUCTION TO READING MAO



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This compilation of postings is not a study guide, nor a dissection of policies and position. It provides an introduction to engagement with the separate volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung / Mao Zedong*. There are occasional tangential attention on contextual issues relevant to the issues raised. It represents an appreciation of Mao's contribution, partial in its scope and partial in its ambition to encourage the reading of Mao Zedong.

Stylistic it remains *mostly* with the original Wade Giles format for names and places which may be less familiar to those accustomed to the Pinyin expression.

2024

# Introduction to Reading Mao



August 15, 2020

## *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*

Volume I opens on differences in social structure, presenting an analysis of the classes in Chinese society and the peasant movement in Hunan. The author already had behind him many years engaged in revolutionary struggle. As Mao explores the topics of communism and revolution, he questions why red political power can exist in China.

Volume one was published in Beijing on October 12th 1951, the English-language edition appeared in 1961. The first volume of the Selected Works included a total of 17 articles ranging from 1925 until the outbreak of the war of resistance against Japan. It was first printed by Xinhua Printing Factory, Peking First Branch Factory. It was sold at a price of 15,000 yuan and 200,000 copies printed. Volume 1 Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung. It can be accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/index.htm>.

The selection takes a look at the struggle in the Ching Kang Mountains, including the independent regime in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area and the August defeat and the situation in the area under the independent regime. Topics include the internal political situation, reasons for the emergence and survival of red political power and the problem of military bases.

Mao examines the characteristics of China's revolutionary war and strategic defensive tactics, including concentration of troops, mobile warfare, and strategic retreat. The Communist Party's call for a united effort to wage resistance against Japan throughout his writing is emphasised. The contents covers some of the experiences of the revolutionary civil war, ending with the more philosophical considerations, *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*, written in July 1937.

**Extract**

On the Relation Between Knowledge and Practice, Between Knowing and Doing

*There used to be a number of comrades in our Party who were dogmatists and who for a long period rejected the experience of the Chinese revolution, denying the truth that “Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action” and overawing people with words and phrases from Marxist works, torn out of context. There were also a number of comrades who were empiricists and who for a long period restricted themselves to their own fragmentary experience and did not understand the importance of theory for revolutionary practice or see the revolution as a whole, but worked blindly though industriously. The erroneous ideas of these two types of comrades, and particularly of the dogmatists, caused enormous losses to the Chinese revolution during 1931-34, and yet the dogmatists cloaking themselves as Marxists, confused a great many comrades. “On Practice” was written in order to expose the subjectivist errors of dogmatism and empiricism in the Party, and especially the error of dogmatism, from the standpoint of the Marxist theory of knowledge. It was entitled “On Practice” because its stress was on exposing the dogmatist kind of subjectivism, which belittles practice. The ideas contained in this essay were presented by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in a lecture at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yen-an.*

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***Mao’s Road to Power***

What pre-dates the material released in Volume 1 are found, for the English-language reader, in two main non-official produced collections of Mao’s writings.

Endeavouring to set the gold-standard is the series, published by M.E. Sharpe, is *Mao’s Road to Power – Revolutionary Writings, 1912-1949*. Edited (initially) by Stuart Schram.

The first volume that appeared in 1992, collected Mao’s writings from what was characterised as “*The Pre-Marxist Period, 1912-1920*”. [[Reviewed by](#) Australian academic Nick Knight and

author of *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought* (Lexington Books, 2007)].

The publisher's content description states:

*"Volume 1 includes translations of the entire contents of the authoritative "Mao Zedong Zaoqi Wengao 1912.6-1920.11" ("Draft writings from Mao Zedong's early period, June 1912-November 1920"), published in Beijing in 1990, plus some 15 additional texts for the same period which have been attributed to Mao. Among the items thus made available in English are his first surviving work, a middle school essay of 1912 in praise of Shang Yang; his very extensive "Classroom Notes" of late 1913 on the lectures of his most influential teachers, Yang Changji and "Yuan the Big Beard"; a dozen letters to his then close friend Xiao Zisheng (Siao-yu), who described a shared odyssey in "Mao-Tse-tung and I were Beggars"; his marginal annotations of 1918 to the German philosopher Friedrich Paulsen's work on ethics, in which Mao proclaimed himself a believer in "individualism" and an admirer of Nietzsche; and many important letters, articles, and other writings documenting his evolution from liberalism to anarchism and finally to Marxism in 1919-1920."*

Note:

### **Mao Tse-Tung & I Were Beggars by Xiao Yu**

These personal recollections by a youthful friend from the formative years of Mao Tse-tung featured a begging trip through central China made by the two close friends during the summer of 1917. Mao frequently referred to this experience in interviews with journalists.

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The other main source was produced last century in a collection of Mao's pre-1949 documents compiled, edited and published by the U.S. Government's Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) writings under the title, *Collected Works of Mao Tsetung (1917-1949)*. Published in 1978, the collection was drawn from translations of selected Chinese-language documents obtained during the Cultural Revolution. They were put online by the now defunct [Maoist Internationalist Movement](#).

A second compendium of hitherto unpublished speeches and articles of Chairmen Mao was produced by the American Joint Publications Research Service entitled, MISCELLANY OF MAO TSE-TUNG THOUGHT (1949-1968). Released in two volumes in February 1974, it translated selected items from two Red Guard publications *Mao Zedong sixiang wanui* (Long Live Mao Zedong Thought) originally published, without additional publication information or attribution, in 1967 and 1969.

Later disclosed as the labour of “Wang Chaoxing, an instructor in the Philosophy Department at Wuhan University, compiled hundreds of Mao’s speeches and writings that covered the Communist Party Chairman’s life up to 1968. The Second Steel Division, a rebel Red Guard faction based at the university, subsequently obtained and printed the documents for internal circulation in May 1968.” [Cold War History Project].

A ‘Postscript’ to the original Chinese edition cautioned

*“Because the manuscripts have gone through several stages of copying and because our level of competence is limited, errors are unavoidable. Accordingly, we hope that all readers will refrain from making public reference to these materials or passing them to unauthorized hands, and will use them only for Internal reference. If in the future they are made public, the public version will be considered the standard version.”*

The English language MISCELLANY translation excluded those “already generally available in English-language” and published in chronological order irrespective of the Chinese language volume in which they were published.

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Kranti Publications/ Foreign Language Press (Paris)

An unofficial collection, Volume 6 of Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, curated and produced by the Indian publishing house, Kranti Publications in 1990, contained a compendium of work dating from 1917-1946 that had not appeared in the Chinese authorised edition.

Although scantily bibliographical sourced, it nevertheless was stimulating in its selection of material that had been omitted or new material seeped out from China. This was followed by other volumes: Volume 7 covers the period from the founding of the People's Republic (October 1949) until the Great Leap Forward (1958) and contains 478 documents, mainly composed of his letters and telegrams, that are not included in the "Official" Volume 5 of the *Selected Works* that covered this period. The series finished with volume 9.

Long out of print, in 2020 all volumes made available in enhanced corrected reprints by Paris-based MLM publishing house, Foreign Language Press from

<http://flpress.storenvy.com/>

The texts from the Red Guard Wanui editions *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought* were included throughout *selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Volumes 5 to 9) Foreign Languages Press, Paris and in Schram's *Mao Talks to the People* and on the Marxist Internet Archive website.

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January 2, 2024

## Volume 2 Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung

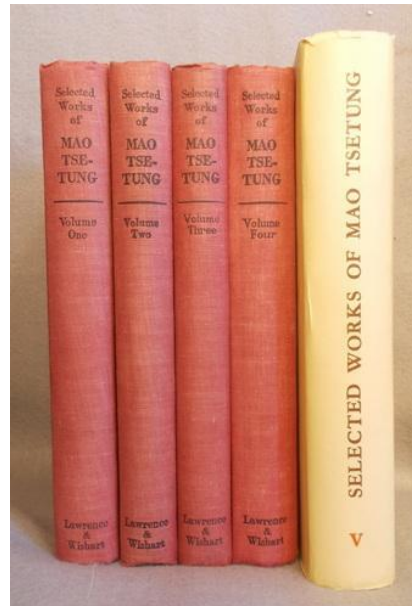
The frequency in which writings from Volume 2 of the *“Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung”* are referenced in US military educational programmes, subject of thesis at military college and known by counter-insurgency strategists should surprise no one familiar with the Period of the War of Resistance Against Japan. Although Mao’s dictum of always ‘putting politics in command’ is often quoted, but more often not adhered too. So without that military success proves transitory.

The second volume of the *Selected Works* covers the strategic period of 1937-41 providing 40 articles by Mao Zedong in the early days of the War of Resistance Against Japan. It was formally published and distributed by the People’s Publishing House on April 10, 1952.

Although London Lawrence & Wishart did publish an English edition 1954-56, an official English translation of the 1960 second Chinese edition of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* appeared in 1965.

[A reprint](#) was made available by the MLM Publishing House Foreign Languages Press, Paris in 2021.

Volume two opens with its principal theme, *“Policies, Measures and Perspectives for Resisting the Japanese Invasion”* and when *“Of China’s two major contradictions, the national contradiction between China and Japan is still primary and the internal class contradiction in China is still subordinate.”* However, these circumstances did not lessen the *“purpose of uniting the people*



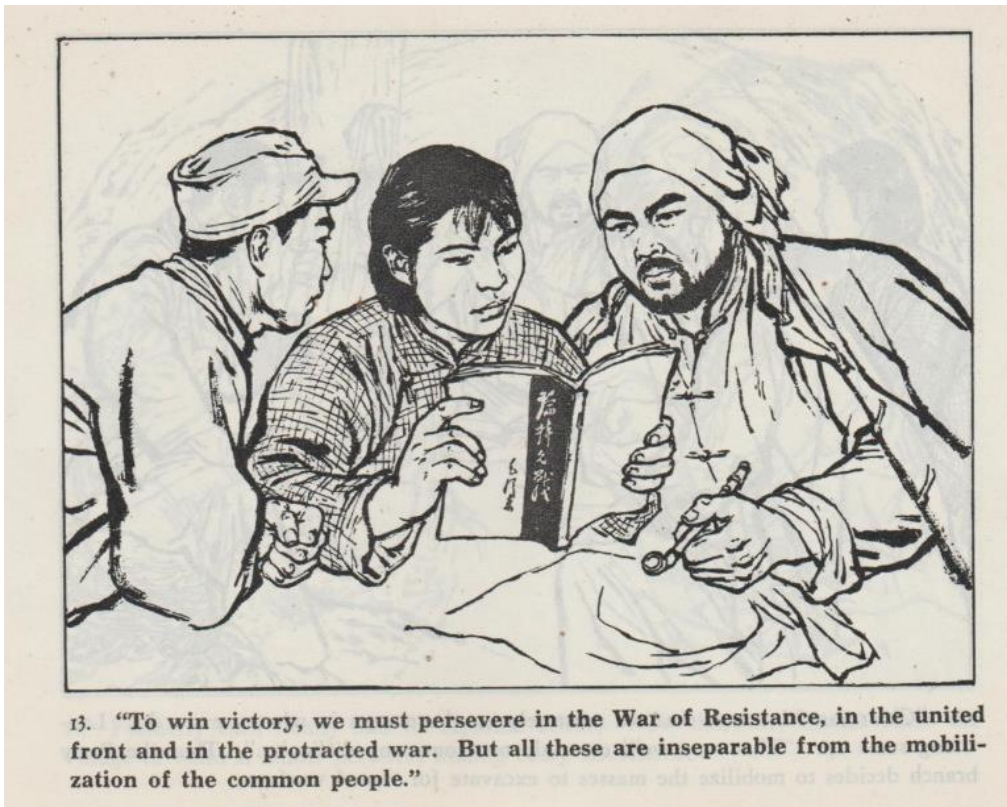


throughout the country to persevere in the War of Resistance and for the purpose of continuing effectively to overcome the danger of capitulation and the anti-Communist counter-current of the big landlords and the big bourgeoisie.”

Framing the role of the Communist Party of China in the war of resistance runs throughout the volume. Mao’s writings did not lose sight of the first question raised by Mao at the beginning of Volume One as it illuminates the political analysis that guided the Chinese communists during this period. There is a sophisticated and nuance political analysis that the resistance had a dual nature, the objective was not just to defend the Chinese people but also to build a New and better China, a better society. Despite the context of the Second China Japan war, Mao’s writings in Volume 2 are not solely a primer on protracted war. It covers the thoughts of Mao Zedong’s on revolution, communism, war tactics, national unity, and patriotism in the context of the day. The volume first discusses the policies, measures, and perspectives for resisting the invasion of Japan; mobilization of China’s forces for victory in the war of resistance; and tasks following the establishment of Kuomintang-communist co-operation. Included in these selected writings are issues on the situation and tasks in the anti-Japanese war following the fall of Shanghai and Taiyuan, including the opposition to class capitulationism and the relation between class and national capitulationism.

Volume two contains writing that examines the problems of strategy in the guerrilla war against Japan, and the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army independent guerrilla warfare behind the enemy lines that set out to establish anti-Japanese base areas. Concerns include types and conditions for establishing base areas and expansion of base areas. The text also considers the role of the Chinese Communist Party in the national war, as well as patriotism and internationalism, party discipline and democracy, and expansion of the communist party and prevention of infiltration by enemy agents. These were important questions in the context of the revolutionary struggle.

## A Persistent Line



Tunnel Warfare (Foreign Language Press, Beijing 1972)

Adapted by Che Mei and Pi Lei. Illustrations by Chekiang Fine Arts Institute Drawing Group. Studying a copy of Chairman Mao's essay *On Protracted War* are Kao Chuan-Pao milita commander, Lin Hsia party branch committee member and Kao Lao-Chung village party secretary.

*"As far back as 1933, the Chinese Communist Party issued a declaration stating that it was ready to conclude an agreement for resisting Japan with any section of the Kuomintang army on three conditions, namely, that attacks on the Red Army be stopped, that democratic freedoms be granted to the people and that the people be armed. This declaration was made because after the September 18th Incident in 1931, resistance to the Japanese imperialist invasion became the primary task of the Chinese people."* [Urgent Tasks 1937](#).



In 1935, Mao Zedong proposed the idea of a protracted war against Japan in his article *On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism*, in which he pointed out: “to defeat the enemy, we must prepare for a protracted war.” The report was given at the conference of Party activists which followed the Wayaobu Conference in Northern Shaanxi, an important enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held on

December 17, 1935. Chaired by Mao Zedong, the conference examined the new changes in China’s class relations, discussed the issues concerning a national united front, a national defence government, and the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, and concluded with a strategy for a national united front against Japanese aggression. A resolution on the prevailing political situation and the tasks of the party was adopted at the conference. It outlined the major tasks of the Chinese Communist Party, namely mobilizing, uniting, and organizing all revolutionary forces nationwide in the fight against Japanese imperialism.

That the war against Japanese aggression was a protracted war was mentioned by Mao in an interview of July 1936 with American correspondent Edgar Snow.

By August 1937, the strategy of fighting a protracted war became the general strategic policy of the Chinese Communist Party-led war of resistance.

Throughout the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression the Chinese communists call was to fully mobilize and rely on the masses to fight the people’s war. This mobilization saw the creation of Anti-Japanese base areas behind enemy lines with village guerrillas, militias and regular troops involved in action in north China’s Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong provinces, and in southern Jiangsu, southern and central Anhui Provinces behind enemy lines.

### “On Protracted War” (May, 1938)

One of the most important articles in Volume Two is the much studied article called *“On Protracted War”* (May, 1938). It is subject to much commentary by admirers and opponents alike as it outlines the military strategy often simplified to say that “when the enemy advances, we retreat; when the enemy stops we harass and when the enemy retreats we attack.” Mao returns to the subject in other major statements on “Problems of War and Strategy”, “The Question of Independence and Initiative Within the United Front”, “Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan” and “On New Democracy”. These all signposts the challenges and obstacles addressed by the communist leadership on a strategic level.

*On Protracted War* was a series of speeches delivered by Mao Zedong at a symposium held by the Yen-an Association for the Study of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression from May 26 to June 3, 1938. It was not a technical manual, nor just a treatise on warfare as it addresses three major issues and questions raised about why the Chinese War of Resistance is a protracted one, how to strategically fight a protracted war, and why the final victory belongs to China after a long period of resistance. It laid out a systematic military and political strategy for China’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

In the speeches, 21 questions were addressed. In discussing the first nine questions, the focus was on explaining why the war would be protracted, and why the final victory would belong to China, thus repudiating the theories of national subjugation and quick victory. In response to the next 12 questions, Mao examined the ways and means to pursue and finally win a protracted war, highlighting the importance of a people’s war and available strategies and tactics for such a war. He argued that only by waging a people’s war could victory be ensured. Mao went on to explain the primacy of mobile warfare and the supplementary role of guerrilla warfare.

It predicted a three-stage scenario. The first stage would be characterized by the enemy’s strategic offensive and our strategic defensive response. The second stage would witness

the enemy's strategic consolidation and our preparation for a counter-offensive. In the third stage we would be on the strategic offensive while the enemy would be in strategic retreat.

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Sketching events in China

[For the Mobilization of all the Nation's Forces for victory in the War of Resistance](#) (1937)

The background and the context to three volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* was a war on two fronts, the declared one against Imperial Japan and the constant threat of internal oppressors represented by the long-time opponents in the Kuomintang. Any reading of the historical development and policies advocated by the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong illustrates why, by the end of the war, the Communist Party of China /CPC enjoyed popularity in large parts of China, whereas Chiang Kai-shek had made himself and his cause so unpopular that he fled into self-imposed exile on Taiwan. In the cauldron of national war of liberation, the revolutionary victory of 1949 was forged.

The Lugou Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937, is recognized as the start of Japan's full-scale invasion of China, and China's whole-nation resistance against the Japanese invaders.

The acceleration of the War of Resistance to Japan saw the technologically superior Japanese forces seized Beijing. They captured the commercial hub of Shanghai in November 1937, but the fierce battle it required made it clear that China intended to mount a resolute defence. For the defence of Shanghai, the Nationalists committed and lost the majority of their best troops (the German divisions) to give the rest of China a fighting chance to organise resistance. The Imperial Japanese Army expected to conquer all of China in 3 months, but conquering Shanghai itself already took 3 months itself. The communists in north-central China waged a guerrilla war against the Japanese in Manchuria and north China that continued for the next eight years.

The Imperial Japanese Army responded to the Chinese resistance with increasingly brutal atrocities, the most notorious of which

occurred after it entered the Chinese nationalist capital of Nanjing (or Nanking) in December 1937. Over a six-week span, the Japanese military massacred between 200,000 and 300,000 soldiers and civilians and sexually assaulted tens of thousands of women.

As Japan pressed south and west in 1938, a Kuomintang defeat seemed inevitable as they retreated to the interior of China. By the beginning of 1938 Japan had extended its territory from the north of China into Shanghai, Nanjing, Xuzhou, Wuhan and vast areas of the middle and coastal areas of China. However, while Japanese forces made little progress beyond the port cities and urban areas south of Beijing, Japan consolidated their gains in the south of China, taking both Chinese and foreign administered cities; including, Canton, Xiamen, and Hong Kong.

Japanese 'shock and awe campaigns' in killed thousands and reduced buildings to rubble. In CPC infiltrated areas, Japan carried out the "three-alls policy" a campaign of "Kill all, burn all, loot all". Villagers throughout China were slaughtered, their food stolen, and their homes burned to the ground. Barbarous "mopping up" operations against communist-led base areas in central Hopei province were launched and resisted in tunnel warfare closely co-ordinated with Eighth Route Army units and people's militias

The nationalist resistance

There is a "Cold War" myth that while the Kuomintang /KMT military defended China *against Japan* during WWII, the CPC built up strength for the civil war that it won in 1949.

Chiang's misplaced confidence that his large but ill-equipped armies could match Japanese military skills. Chiang ruthlessly order the destruction of the dykes on the Yellow River to stop the Japanese advance, which left more than half a million Chinese dead and 4.8 million as refugees. Japanese bombing of Chinese cities and atrocities against civilians led to an enormous loss of life. The retreat to Wuhan and then retreat ending in the southwest of China and establish a war-time headquarters in Chongqing. Here the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Nationalist regime was an open secret acknowledged by its allies.

The need for China to resolve internal differences in order to present a United Front against the principal enemy, the Japanese imperialist aggressors was never addressed in good faith by the dominant factions in the Kuomintang. Despite the precarious United Front, the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, adopted a defensive strategy, conserving their strength for a future conflict with the Communists, which many perceived as prioritising intra-national conflict over national survival. The substantial belief was that the KMT spent roughly as much time fighting the communist forces as they did fighting the Japanese. As support for Chiang waned, the Nationalist government became increasingly ineffective and hostile towards the Chinese people. Its operations and policies were at the expensive of the Chinese people such as when millions died after Chiang's decision to seize peasant grain to feed the army exacerbated a famine in Henan Province in 1942 and 1943.

Domestically Chiang's security chief Dai Li (referred to as the "Chinese Himmler") ran a terror organisation that killed and tortured thousands of Chinese suspected of treason or of being communist. Wang Jingwei also had his security thugs, including Li Shiqun, a Shanghai gangster, whose Gestapo-like headquarters at "Number 76" in Shanghai proved too much even for the Japanese supervisors. Li was invited to dine at a hotel with Japanese secret policemen and died a day later from poison in his fish course. Chiang's resistance to the Japanese during the 1941-45 Pacific war saw the Western allies wilfully silent to the campaign of terror that went with it.

Militarily driven out of the most prosperous parts of China, politically, the Nationalist government was unable to fund and support an organized resistance against the Japanese. The Kuomintang took part in Anti-Japanese campaigns, but nothing was retrieved. In conventional warfare, with army payrolls inflated by "ghost soldiers", they lost, fighting and dying, suffered heavy losses in the endeavour.

The war encouraged the political fragmentation of Chinese territory as Japanese encroachments grew. In the north and east, the Japanese conquered large areas, where they installed and collaborated with puppet regimes, including the last emperor,

Puyi puppet emperor of the Japanese-controlled state of Manchukuo / Manchuria from 1934 to 1945. In the south and east, rival warlords maintained an uneasy relationship with Chiang's nationalists. In Nanjing, Chiang's former colleague Wang Jingwei set up a rival nationalist government under Japanese supervision in 1940. Puppet troops allied with the Japanese forces.

The Chinese did not collapse entirely, unlike the European forces in Burma, Malaya and the East Indies, or the Americans in the Philippines. Japan routed the French out of Indochina within ONE week. The British out of Malaysia and Singapore within 2 months, the Japan's 30,000 soldiers defeating the British 90,000 soldiers. In the Philippines 150,000 American troops managed to hold 130,000 Japanese troops for 5 months before capitulating and losing Philippines. Combined British, Dutch, USA, and Australian Forces, 150,000 of them, fought against 50,000 Japanese troops and were routed within 3 months. China remained the main battlefield for the Imperial Japanese Army, and Nationalist troops substantially contributed to the Allied Burma campaign.

It was effectively the end of 1941 that the United States and the United Kingdom joined the fight against Japan, After Pearl Harbour, the flow of equipment, money and military advisors to China increased along with its global stature. The Soviet Union supplied arms to the Chinese nationalists, despite their battles with the communists. In 1940 and 1941, the Americans extended credits to China to purchase military supplies and included the country in the Lend-Lease program

While American bombers used Chinese air bases to strike Japanese targets, the Chinese continued to shoulder the burden of the ground war as Allied attention initially stayed focused on Europe. Now faced with a wider war, the Japanese army remained bogged down in China a fact that explains why the Japanese expansion in the Pacific theatre ran out of steam in 1942.

Japan gained ground in the south and seized air bases during its ["Ichi-Go" offensive](#) in 1944, but Nationalist China repelled



two Japanese offensives in the summer of 1945. After the Soviet Union entered the war and overwhelmed Japanese positions in Manchuria and the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered.

In China, the Imperial Japanese Army after 8 years and 1.5 million casualties, won most battles but lost the war. China even under the corrupt despised Nationalist regime did not surrender, nor were Chinese forces completely defeated. Japan had possession of roughly 25% of China's enormous territory and more than a third of its entire population. 1945 saw the Republic of China being given a permanent Security Council seat in the newly formed United Nations as part of the Big Four in, what is referred to in China today as the Global Anti-Fascist War.

The Cold War myth is that whereas Nationalist forces continued to be weakened from engagements with the Japanese, communist forces grew in size and support from the more rural parts of unoccupied China. Guerilla attacks by the communist-led forces against the Japanese gave the perception that they were a more effective option. A judgement that was shared by the American authorities:

*“The Foreign Service reports on the rival forces battling the occupying Japanese — Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalists and Mao Zedong’s Communists — that observed the corruption and weakness of the former, came under particular scrutiny: “Selfish and corrupt, incapable and obstructive,” were a few of the words used to describe the Chiang Government in a 1944 memo to General Stilwell. In July 1944, John Service managed to get to Mao’s headquarters in Yanan. He wrote that he felt he had “come into a different country,” one marked by hard work, cooperation and “the absence of banditry.”*

[See Herbert Feis (1953) *The China Triangle: the American effort in China from Pearl Harbour to the Marshal Mission*. Princeton University Press. Discussed at <https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2019/07/09/just-read-the-china-triangle/>

Also: Volume 4 of the Selected Works <https://emaoism.wordpress.com/2020/04/29/volume-4-of-the-selected-works/>



operations, and destroying railways during the War of Resistance Against Japan. For example, the Hong Kong-Guangdong area was under Japanese occupation, but it was also home to anti-Japanese guerrillas such as the East River (Dongjiang) Column and Hong Kong Kowloon Brigade, which were commanded by the southern branch of the Chinese Communist Party.

Appropriate large scale operations, like the one Hundred Regiments offensive occurred later in the war. According to the CPC's own estimates, it began the war with 30,000 troops. By Victory Day, it had 1.2 million regular troops and around 2.6 million to 3 million militia under its command.

The issue with comparing Nationalist and Communist contributions to the anti-Japanese war effort is that it is distracting from efforts to educate people about the one indisputable truth: the role *China as a whole* played in World War II. Following 1949, her former allies one-sidedly restricted acknowledgement to Taiwan's authorities for what the Chinese people had done and suffered in resisting Imperial Japan.

The anti-communist lies were contradicted by contemporary sources, and the advance of the Chinese revolution. Contemporary accounts of China through Western eyes which added texture and subjective judgement to visits to the communist territory of North West China included "*With Chinese Communists*" by Professor Stanton Lautenschlager of Cheelou University, alternatively known as Shantung Christian College (London Edinburgh House Press 1941). Sympathetic accounts appeared as in the 1944 dispatches of Israel Epstein's "*I Visit Yen'an*" (Beijing Foreign Language Press 2003). Among the lesser known reportage of the war of resistance against Japanese occupation, *Scorched Earth* by Edgar Snow, a two volume Left Book Club publication in 1941 dedicated to New Zealander Rewi Alley.

Rewi Alley (1897-1988) an official Friend of China and prolific publicist was a New Zealand-born writer and political activist. A member of the Chinese Communist Party, he dedicated 60 years of his life to the cause as he arrived in China in 1927 from New

Zealand and lived and worked there for the rest of his life. A close associate of Agnes Smedley, Song Qingling, and Edgar Snow, Rewi Alley became involved in the underground Chinese Communist Party and was instrumental in setting up the Chinese Industrial Co-operative Movement captured in his published account *"Gung Ho"*.

"In 1938, together with Chinese patriots, Alley set up the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives and initiated the Gung Ho Movement, aiming to mobilize workers and refugees to support the Chinese army by boosting production of manufactured goods. To promote this undertaking, Alley gave up his comfortable life in Shanghai and travelled, on foot or on a bicycle, more than 30,000 kilometers across 16 provinces. It was a life-risking trip full of hardships – bombing, traffic accident, illness, manhunt and betrayal, yet Alley never wavered in his determination..... During the Gung Ho Movement, Alley realized that in order to provide technical and managerial professionals for the cooperatives, there must be organized, scheduled training for workers, and vocational education became an urgent task. In 1942, Alley and British journalist George Hogg jointly founded the Bailie Polytechnic School in Shuangshipu, Shaanxi Province (which was later relocated to Shandan County, Gansu Province in 1944)." [China's Cause is My Own Cause — Rewi Alley's Sixty Years in China. *Global Times* Aug 13, 2021]

The better known account of the liberated area in North-West China, are those of the journalist Harrison Forman who met Mao and the communist leadership during his time in China. His account *"Report From Red China"* (London, Robert Hale Ltd 1946) had a Chinese edition, *China's Liberated Areas* published in April 1946.

Harrison Forman, an American explorer, photographer and war correspondent, after his many visits to China, provided his account of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression.

In 1937, on the eve of the July 7th Incident, Forman was in northern Shaanxi for the first time to interview the Red Army, which was preparing to march to the front line to fight against

Japanese aggression. After his meetings with Peng Dehuai, He Long and other Red Army generals, Forman expressed his appreciation for the Communist Party of China (CPC)'s policy of cooperation with the Kuomintang (KMT) and the establishment of a national united front against Japanese aggression.



In 1940, Forman came back to China, to Chongqing as a correspondent of *The New York Times*, *The Times* and BBC, eager to go to Yanan, which was under military blockade, and to find answers to the many baffling questions that had been lingering on his mind: What was it like in the blocked area? Was it true that the CPC was, as the KMT government portrayed, treacherous and refused to resist Japanese aggression? How did the CPC survive the blockade of both the Japanese and KMT armies?

In May 1944, Forman and 20 other Chinese and foreign journalists finally made their way into the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. During his visit, Forman observed close-up how the Eighth Route Army fought and lived. *Report from Red China*, presenting Yanan to the world with a detailed account of Forman's interactions with Chinese Communists.

After spending five months with Chinese Communists, Forman was convinced that the CPC leadership had the support of the people. Forman witnessed that the army also took part in the production activities in the area, forging a close bond with the

local people. He reached that conclusion based on his observation of the militia fighters. He said that the 2.2 million militia fighters were the backbone of the war against Japanese aggression in northern and central China. They received arms from the CPC. From what he saw, the attitude of the militia gave the clearest answer to his question of what the people thought about the CPC: an armed people would not tolerate an unpopular government and an imposed army for long.

*A judgement endorsed in today's China: "Forman made an impassioned speech in Yan'an. He said, "As a journalist, it is my job to find out the truth...We were told that the Eighth Route Army did not fight...that the people feared and hated the Eighth Route Army...Today, these lies have all been exposed by facts. I have seen the Eighth Route Army soldiers fighting a heroic battle...and that they are loved by the people...By my writings and photos, I will tell the world the heroic deeds of the Eighth Route Army that I saw." ...In a time of rampant lies, the publication of Report from Red China proved to the world that no military or media blockade could wear down the will of Eighth Route Army soldiers, or weaken the CPC's influence.*

[“CPC Has Won the Respect and Cooperation of the People”—China’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in the Eyes of Western Journalists. *Global Times* May 06, 2021]

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When did it start?

Traditional to the western academic the Second World War was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although conflicts reflecting the ideological clash between what would become the Allied and Axis blocs began earlier. The vast majority of the world’s countries—including all of the great powers—eventually formed two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most global war in history; it directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, marked by 50 to 85 million fatalities, most of which were civilians in the Soviet Union and China.

There is an argument to be made that the Second World War can be dated back to August of 1931 with the first Japanese foreign aggression—the Army invaded the resource-rich region of Manchuria in northeast China in 1931 and installed a puppet government. With China engulfed in a civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's ruling Chinese Nationalist Party and communist forces, the Imperial Japanese Army further encroached into northern China in the ensuing years as the nationalist government continued a strategy of “first internal pacification, then external resistance” that entailed eliminating the CCP before confronting Japanese aggression. Only with the Xi'an Incident when nationalist generals led by Zhang Xueliang held Chiang captive for two weeks in December 1936, and negotiation with Zhou Enlai assisted by Lin Boqu, did Chiang reluctantly commit to making a “Second United Front” during which the Chinese Civil War was in theory suspended, uniting the Communists and Nationalists against the Japanese occupation. This second alliance, known as the national united front against Japanese aggression, followed the first cooperative attempt by the KMT and the CPC to overthrow the rule of the northern warlords from January 1924 to July 1927.

Characteristically, Chiang returned to Nanjing and Zhang was placed under house arrest, and the generals who had assisted him were executed. The Second United Front had a commitment by Chiang that was nominal at best and was all but dissolved in 1941 when Chiang Kai-shek staged the Southern Anhui Incident in January 1941, in which thousands of the communist New Fourth Army troops were annihilated.

Others see the war between China and Japan as the beginnings of the Second World War from July 7, 1937. The conflict is often termed the second Sino-Japanese War, and known in China as the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression. When the Imperial Japanese forces staged the Lugouqiao Incident (referred to in the West as the ‘Marco Polo Bridge Incident’) in their attempt to annex the whole of China by armed force, it proved the spark that ignited the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Between 1937 and 1945, China and Japan were at total war. More than two years before conflict erupted with the invasion and

occupation of Poland in the European theatre, and four years before the American participation in the Pacific theatre, Japan had been engaged in the Asian theatre. Throughout the Second World War the bulk of Imperial Japanese army was deployed in China.

Interestingly, the practice of the present Chinese authorities refers to 14 years that lasted from 1931 to 1945. The conflict, which has been known for generations in China as the “eight-year war of resistance against Japanese aggression”, was usually recorded as starting in 1937 and ending in 1945. However, since 2017, President Xi Jinping’s government renamed the conflict the “14-year war of resistance against Japanese aggression” In 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, spoke at 75th commemoration of the Chinese nation’s great spirit, stressing patriotism and heroism in the effort to achieve China’s national rejuvenation.

### **The price paid**

When Japan was finally defeated in 1945, China was on the winning side, but lay devastated, having suffered massive destruction of industrial infrastructure and agricultural production. The war left an incredible scale of devastation. According to Rana Mitter, historians have calculated that the war forced 100 million Chinese, approximately one-sixth of the country’s population, to become refugees in their own country, and only the Soviet Union surpassed China’s World War II death toll.

[See also: An Z. The Historical Contribution and Loss of China in the War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression. *Global Media Journal* 2018, 16:31.]

A commentary in *China Daily* stated;

“The war was not merely a struggle between the Chinese people and the Japanese militarists or merely a local war between China and Japan. Viewed from the general situation of the international anti-Fascist struggle, China’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression was an important part of the war against aggression waged by people throughout the world, and the China theater was a major theater of decisive importance to World War II.”



[The observation](#) was that,

More important still, the Chinese people through great sacrifices pinned down Japan's million troops on the Chinese battlefield so that it could not enhance its military forces in the Far East and the Pacific Ocean. As a result, it greatly reduced the pressure on the Allied forces. When the Pacific war broke out, Japan's military strength totalled 2.1 million soldiers, of which 1.4 million were sent to China.

At this time less than 400,000 Japanese soldiers were fighting on the several million-square-kilometre Pacific battlefield. Thus, 67 percent of the total Japanese military strength was tied up in China during the most dangerous period of the Pacific war.

In other words, the Japanese military force that China (one nation) resisted trebled that more than 10 nations headed by the United States resisted. The leaders of the Allies knew this well. Franklin D. Roosevelt, then US President, once commented that without China, or if China had been defeated, many more Japanese divisions would have been deployed to other areas and they would have been able to occupy Australia and India immediately without any trouble, and then push to the Middle East.

That narrative has been repeated as other Chinese media reports highlighted,

"It's important to remember the suffering and loss of World War II, but one must not forget the war in China in extent, consequences and legacy. People from all across the country found themselves embroiled in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945).

China was the main battlefield against Japanese fascism. Before the Pacific War (1941-1943), Japan deployed about 80-94 percent of its troops in China, and after 1941, Japan still kept over 50 percent of its soldiers in China.

When Japan surrendered, a total of 1.86 million Japanese troops were deployed in China, accounting for nearly 52 percent of the total number of combatants sent abroad.

During the war over 1.5 million Japanese troops died in China, while more than 35 million Chinese military and civilians died during the war, accounting for nearly 8 percent of China's total population in 1928.

China says it suffered more than 100 billion U.S. dollars of direct economic losses and 500 billion U.S. dollars of indirect economic losses (at the price in 1937)."

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-09-03/Xi-delivers-speech-at-symposium-to-mark-WWII-victory-anniversary-Tud3lrn8Y0/index.html>

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### Further Reading

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Dagfinn Gatu (2006) *Village China at War: The Impact of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945*-NIAS Press, (NIAS Monographs)

David S.G. Goodman (2000) *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers)

Iris Chang (1998) *The Rape of Nanking: the forgotten holocaust of World War Two* (Penguin)

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Stuart Schram, editor (2004) *Mao's Road to Power : Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949, Volume 6 – The New Stage, August 1937 – 1938* (ME Sharpe, New York)

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February 24, 2024

# Volume 3 Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung

Foreign Language Press, Peking / Beijing 1975

Even though Mao's writings cover a big canvas, there is a theme that is not explicitly covered in Volume 3 but hiding in plain sight with the proposition of *Mao Zedong*/Mao Tse-Tung to reform the method and system of study within the Communist Party of China. For it was "... during the period from 1942 to 1945, the subject of this volume, that Mao underwent the most decisive and dramatic change in his status, culminating in an apotheosis which made him no longer simply primus inter pares [meaning first among equals] but the incarnation and symbol of the Chinese Revolution—the Chairman."

Timothy Cheek (ed) *Mao's Road to Power. Volume VIII Introduction: The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1942–July 1945 xxxi*

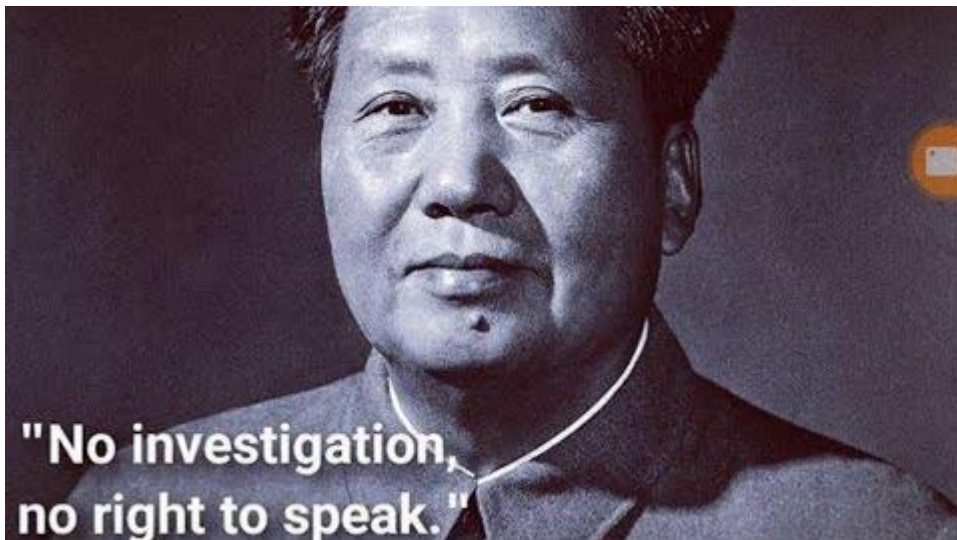
The English translation of the second Chinese edition was published by the People's Publishing House April 1960. It comprises a selection of just 30 articles covering from March 1941 to August 1945. At 290 pages it seems a slim volume. In contrast, *Mao's Road to Power* Vol. 8: From Rectification to Coalition Government, 1942 - July 1945 covers the period 1942 to 1945 has over 200 articles. A reprint of the 1965 English language edition was produced in 2021 by Foreign Languages Press, Paris. [B09 - Mao Tsetung Volume 3.indd \(foreignlanguages.press\)](#)

Amidst the war of resistance against Japanese aggression, Volume 3 opens with an article on rural surveys followed by an article on "Reform Our Study". Other educational articles pepper the selection, like "Rectify the Party's style of work", "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing", "Our Study and the Current Situation". Articles like, "Some Questions concerning leadership" and "Get Organised!" underlines this focus on party building.

Repeatedly Mao challenged the errors he saw in the party's life:

“ A communist must never be opinionated or domineering, or think that he is good in everything, while others are good in nothing; he must never shut himself up in his little room, or brag and boast and lord it over others.” *Speech at the Border Region Assembly 1941*

The lingering impression that remains when the final page is turn, is that exhortation that, investigation and study are essential to political work and that “communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of anything, using their own heads and carefully think over whether or not it corresponds to reality and is really well founded; on no account should they follow blindly and encourage slavishness.” Bluntly put.



The final section of the compilation of “*Quotations from Chairman Mao TseTung*” was Study. Even when engaged in a life and death struggle, the importance of methodology and research remains. Whilst the seminal report made at the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China “On Coalition Government” (April 1945) occupies a quarter of the pages, and the possible destiny of China is being fought out, it is other works that generally possess the most recognition factor especially Mao’s 1942 “Talks at the Yen-an on Literature and Art” remains studied and read by cultural workers ever since.

Mao highly valued the role of investigation, and the importance of investigations to the formation of his view of class struggle and to his strategy-making is doubtless. Mao’s rural surveys, or

investigations were politically important as in the Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927); in 1966 *Chen Boda* /Chen Po-ta, Mao's secretary published [an article](#) analysing its message and importance. Repeatedly examples of this drive for evidence, analysis and conclusion were seen in work undertaken and sponsored by Mao for informed decisions. Work like the Preliminary Conclusions of the Land Investigation Campaign (1933); the 1942 "*Economics and Financial Problems of the Anti-Japanese War*" has only the brief introductory section included in Volume 3, the first full English translation appeared in 1980, *Mao Zedong & The Political Economy of The Border Region* edited by Andrew Watson, and internally reprinted excerpts from Mao's statements on investigation and research were distributed in 1961 by Hebei CPC Provincial Committee. All evidence that a constant theme applied throughout Mao's political life is that studying Marxism is a lifelong endeavour, and that in history its practical application has always driven theoretical understanding.

[mao-zedong-on-investigation-and-research Download](#)

While in his report *On Coalition Government*, Mao presented a wide-sweeping detailed summing up of the war against Japanese aggression and an analysis of the then current international and domestic situation, Mao would also explain extremely complex ideas simply. In his concluding speech at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress, he told the tale of "*The Foolish Old Man Who Removed The Mountains*" to explain why the Chinese people would achieve complete victory. He pointed the way forward on the basis of a coalition government. A proposal rejected by Chiang Kai-shek and the subsequent Third Revolutionary Civil War saw, within a period of four years, victory over the US backed Kuomintang. [More on that in Volume 4]

The future course for China was being set out:

The 1943 publication of *Jiang Jieshi* /Chiang Kai-shek's book, *China's Destiny*, asserted his claim to be the sole legitimate father and guide of the Chinese people, as the inheritor of Sun Yatsen's legacy, there was only Mao's position as a Chinese

national leader in the Anti-Japanese War of National Liberation that challenged the Kuomintang leader.

The volume reflects a range of concerns that has its focus on communist organisation and purpose, policy and application, asking pointed questions and providing explanations to unfolding developments in the struggle to maintain a united front and advance the revolutionary cause. The specific programme of New Democracy for a New China “*that is independent, free, democratic, united, prosperous and powerful*” was in stark contrast to the experienced reality of Kuomintang ruling clique dissected in many of Mao’s commentaries.

Consideration in an appreciation of Mao’s writings should be the context of his engagement in the international setting of a world at war, the domestic relations with the Kuomintang government, military matters in the war with Japan and the renewed military clashes with Kuomintang and other Chinese forces, and, finally, CPC leadership and Party building. While the selection examines questions regarding methods of leadership, economic and financial problems in the anti-Japanese war, reduction of rent, and the need for comrades to do economic work, topics include the fundamental demands of the Chinese people, international and domestic situation, and policy of the Communist Party, with articles discussing military strategy against both the Japanese and the Kuomintang – these are the subject of the third volume of the selected works.

Mao, as the incarnation and symbol of the Chinese Revolution

*The Selected Works of Mao Zedong* represent the Party speaking. Like the other volumes, the selected texts establish a party canon; they represent a body of ideas and concepts, an agreed history of the party and its development and progress. This particular volume covers a period of Party life that marked the consolidation of Mao’s leadership that accompanied the 1942 Rectification Campaign that solidified his prominence and dominance within the collective leadership of the Party. This was clearly signalled at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of China in April 1945. When Mao spoke that “Two possible

destinies await China” he mapped out why “*China’s centre of gravity lies right here where we are and nowhere else.*”

On a tangential but important consideration is that the Rectification Campaign had a cultural legacy on Party culture, and not just obviously with the exhortation to “cure the sickness and save the patient”. The recognition that Mao’s political line was the correct line became personalised in Mao’s leadership.

When Mao was elected chairman of the Politburo and of the Secretariat in March 1943, the terms of his appointment to this second post contained a curious provision: Mao alone, as chairman, could out-vote the other two members of the Secretariat in case of disagreement. This was the first step toward setting Mao above and apart from all other Party members. The *Liberation Daily* had signalled this final rise to charismatic authority in a series of articles in July 1943 that called on the Party to study Mao’s Thought. Key endorsements by senior Party leaders followed and rose to a crescendo at the Seventh Party Congress. A volume of Mao’s *Selected Works* was published in the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Border Region in 1944. A sympathetic Friend of China, Anna Louise Strong used the phrase “the Thought of Mao Tse-tung” as a title for an article on Mao for oversea audience in 1945. Mao’s position was acknowledged and promoted on all fronts.

The “*Resolution of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee on Certain Historical Questions*” (April 20, 1945) saw the various claims of “line errors” committed by the ‘internationalists’, especially Wang Ming, codified and the lessons supporting Mao’s policies and the charismatic nature of Mao’s wisdom endorsed.

It was at the Seventh Party Congress in April 1945 that came apotheosis: Mao Tse-tung / *Mao Zedong’s* thought was written into the Party statutes as the guide to all work, and Mao was hailed as the greatest theoretical genius in China’s history for his achievement in creating such a remarkable doctrine.

*“Over the past twenty-four years of heroic struggle and especially in the heroic war of presence of the past eight years,*



*our Party, has together with together with the Chinese people, travelled a torturous path amidst countless difficulties and hardships. Under the leadership of Comrade Mao Zedong, it has finally achieved brilliant success and opened up the prospect of a bright future for the Chinese nation and people.”*

*Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969) veteran communist and one of five CPC Secretaries, addressed the Communist Party with the Report on the Revision of the Party Constitution delivered at the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in Yanan from April 23 to June 11, 1945. [In January 1950, it was published by the People’s Publishing House under the title, *On the Party*. The speech was included in the FLP, Beijing 1980 collection, Three Essays on Party-Building by Liu Shaoqi]*

*At the Seventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao TseTung Thought was written into the Party constitution as the guide to all the Party’s work, characterized by Liu Shaoqi as “the greatest achievement and glory of our Party and our people,” which would “bring blessings to China for generations and generations.” Mao TseTung Thought, Liu declared, was “the highest expression of the wisdom of the Chinese nation.” Mao was “not only the greatest revolutionary and statesman in all of Chinese history”; he was “also the greatest theoretician and scientist in all of Chinese history.”*

The sentiments expressed would not be out of place with anything expressed at the height of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-Sixties.

*“..... Having adopted Mao Zedong Thought — the theory which integrates Marxism-Leninism with the practice of the Chinese revolution — as the guide in all its work, our Party has formulated a revolutionary programme and revolutionary policies which fully represent the interests of the Chinese nation and people. It has not only waged a resolute struggle against the enemies of the Chinese nation and people and against all the reactionary political groups that act contrary to their interests, but has also crushed every kind of opportunism within the Party itself.” [Liu Shaoqi, *On the Party*]*

What was advertised at the 7th Congress was the leadership sensing approaching victory, as Liu emphasised,

*“our Party is a party that has a great leader of its own. He is none other than Comrade Mao Zedong, the organizer and leader of our Party and of the present-day Chinese revolution. Comrade Mao Zedong is an outstanding representative of the heroic proletariat of our country and of the fine traditions of our nation. He is a talented and creative Marxist, integrating, as he does, the universal truth of Marxism — the most advanced ideology in the history of mankind — with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. He has thus raised the ideology of the Chinese nation to a rational height unknown before and has shown the suffering Chinese nation and people the only correct road leading to complete liberation — the road of Mao Zedong.”*

This was the fruit of the party work undertaken, when Liu spoke of the *“very solid theoretical foundation of sinified Marxism-Leninism”* he acknowledged not only the practical consequence of the 1942 Rectification campaign that saw the ideological leadership of Mao Zedong consolidated within the party but the changes and progress of the Communist Party of China in the previous decade.

*“Numerous historical events in the past have shown that whenever the revolution was under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung and the Thought of Mao Tse-tung it succeeded and developed; but whenever it departed from that leadership, it failed or had to retreat”* [1950 edition, the third edition revised in order to make the English translation conform more exactly to the Chinese original.]

Liu even suggests a universalism to “the Thought of Mao Tse-tung—which has guided, and is guiding, the Chinese people to achieve complete emancipation.” observing that: *“It will make great and useful contributions to the struggle for the emancipation of the peoples of all countries in general, and of the peoples in the East in particular.”* [1950 edition p31]

### Zunyi Conference

Mao’s leadership is conventional dated from a meeting in January 1935 during the Long March. This meeting saw the Extended Conference of the Political Bureau, also called Zunyi

Conference after the city in Guizhou Province. The Zunyi Conference is rightly regarded an important event in the history of the Communist Party of China. The three-day session was held to reflect on the defeat of the Red Army in its fifth battle against the national army of the Republic of China and the poor military strategy that had crippled them in the early period of the Long March (1934-1936). It confirmed the military principles of Mao Zedong, and elected him a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. It replaced the top commanding right of Bo Gu and Li De with the Central Commanding Group consisting of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Wang Jiaxiang. Amongst those present were Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Lin Biao, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun, Liu Bocheng, Wang Jiaxiang, Peng Dehuai, and Nie Rongzhen.

As Benjamin Yang notes in his 1986 *China Quarterly* article, “Mao for the first time became one of the five top leaders of the entire Party and won the right to decide all important Party and army actions. More than that, he developed a reputation as the only man who had represented a correct Party line in the past and who had the potential to lead the Revolution to victory in the future...this first step led Mao to the supreme leadership.”

[The Zunyi Conference as One Step in Mao's Rise to Power: A Survey of Historical Studies of the Chinese Communist Party. *The China Quarterly*, June 1986, pp. 235 – 271]

According to the official narrative of the Communist Party of China, the Zunyi Conference was a pivotal moment in the development of the Red Army and for the party itself.

Mao Zedong, took over leadership of the CPC Central Committee after the Red Army suffered a huge loss in the fifth anti-encirclement battle against Kuomintang forces, and was forced to take on the Long March. The events of 1934-35 marked one of the CPC's lowest periods – but also its rebirth and rejuvenation. The leadership of Mao and the courage of Red Army soldiers, who were hailed as heroes and martyrs, was pivotal to this rebirth.

“On January 15, 1935, the “Zunyi Conference” held by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China established Mao Zedong's leadership position in the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of China and the Red Army, and saved the Party and the Red Army at an extremely critical moment. It saved the Chinese revolution and was a vital turning point in the party's history.”

Zunyi Conference: A critical turning point in the history of the Chinese Communist Party  
.Chinanews, February 21st, 2021

Western scholarship argues that the results of the Zunyi meeting was initially limited to a substantial degree to military affairs. Mao's formal military role was determined at the historic conference where he gained the support of the majority of the party leadership. The Zunyi conference was a crucial stepping stone on Mao's path to leadership, but its results depended on what followed. In the period following, Mao was able to continuously increase his political support and his de facto political prominence became apparent.

Frederick Teiwes' monograph, *The Formation of the Maoist Leadership* (SOAS 1994) details that transition amidst the struggles to the 7th Congress, including the pivotal Sixth Plenum of the Six Central Committee in September-November 1938. A standard reference for the topic is Raymond F. Wylie. *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory, 1935-1945*. California: Stanford University Press. 1980. Equally insightful are Noriyuki Tokuda's study, *Yenan Rectrification Movement*, and Mark Selden's 1971 work, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*, revisited in the 1995 publication *China in Revolution* where Selden offers an expanded *critical edition*, the central themes therein and reconsiders them in light of major new theoretical and documentary understandings of the Chinese communist revolution.

The Rectification Campaign was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Mao's strategic leadership was to lead a successful Chinese Revolution. By 1941, he made plain that in his view 'the arrow of Marxism-Leninism must be used to hit the target of the Chinese revolution. He attacked those in the Party who, in his view, preferred to translate ready-made formulas from the Soviet Union. The Rectification Campaign of 1942-1943 was designed in part to change the thinking of such

“Internationalists,” or to eliminate them from positions of influence, and the Western liberalism among the ‘May Fourth generation’ that had recently joined the Party. Rectification Campaign was designed to strengthen and consolidate the Party. The point Mao repeated was that *“ideological education is the key link to be grasped in uniting the whole Party for great political struggles. Unless this is done, the Party cannot accomplish any of its political tasks.”*

“The campaign for the Rectification of Three Styles was launched in 1941-42 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung. It was an ideological remoulding campaign conducted throughout the Party, aimed at exposing and rectifying all incorrect ideas and practices displayed by Party members in various -fields of work. The principal expressions of such incorrect ideas and practices were sectarianism in the organisational work of the Party, dogmatism in studies and formalism in the propaganda work.”

[Lui Shao-chi, *On the Party. Explanatory Notes. FLP Peking 1950 p190*]

On the one hand, it was obviously desirable to strengthen the coherence and discipline of the CCP, which had accepted hundreds of thousands of new members in the chaotic conditions of the anti-Japanese war, many of whom were poorly educated or even illiterate and not well informed on the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. On the other hand, a relative flood of educated youth and left-wing writers from the cities brought problems of an intellectual elite out of touch with rural life and issues. Party membership had risen from 40,000 in 1937 to 800,000 in 1940, so by 1941 some 95 percent of the Party rank and file were newcomers. Twenty years of shifting ‘lines’, changing leaders, and military defeats had greatly weakened the cohesion of the Party; it was essential for its new leader, Mao, to weld it together and at the same time consolidate his own position.

For the Party leadership it was an ideological remoulding campaign conducted throughout the Party, aimed at exposing and rectifying all incorrect ideas and practices displayed by party members in various fields of work. The principal expressions of such incorrect ideas and practices were sectarianism in the

organisational work of the Party, dogmatism in studies and formalism in the propaganda work.

#### Reform our Study (1941)

Mao had evoked many of the principal themes of rectification in a May 1941 speech to high-level cadres. In a May 1941 address, Mao stressed the importance of linking the “universal truth of Marxism-Leninism” to the “concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution.” This speech “Reform our Study” elaborated in greater detail the concept of the sinification of Marxism. At the same time, however, it was marked by sharp criticism of those in the Party who contented themselves with bookish study of Marxism and made no effort to understand the Chinese reality that they were tasked with transforming. For this reason, it was published only in early 1942, in the context of the Rectification Campaign which was to play a central role in the affairs of the CCP for the following two years

#### Rectify the Party’s style of work (1942)

More than a thousand Party members crowded a Yen-an lecture hall on February 1, 1942, to hear Mao Tse-Tung inaugurate speech with themes on the rectification of study style, Party style, and writing style.

Mao launched a broad three-front attack on errors in the Party’s style of work and thought. He slashed at subjectivism in thought, sectarianism (separation from the masses) in Party relations, and formalism in literature and art. As he ended his speech, Mao advised that the audience and the entire Party work vigorously to correct their ways of thought and action.

The theme of Rectification Campaign was the union of “the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete reality of the Chinese Revolution.” A specific target for Rectification Campaign was the political line of the important “Returned Students” group around Wang Ming, the Party’s leading Comintern representative.

The attack on ‘subjectivism’, one of the three major evils against which the campaign was directed, was designed specifically to correct ‘dogmatism’, the tendency to apply theory blindly – to

reform the glib parrots of Marxist phraseology who were unable to apply their knowledge to the practical solution of a land reform problem in the neighbouring village. Mao also attacked the opposite facet of 'subjectivism', which is 'empiricism', or the tendency to neglect theory altogether.

Subjectivism, bureaucratism, and sectarianism were dealt with in three articles by Mao Tse-tung originally delivered as speeches. They are 'Reform our study', 'Rectify the Party's style of work', and 'Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing' [referred to as "eight-legged essay"] and appear in Volume three. And here the importance of context and presentation are clear; it is the practical application of the observations and principles referenced that transcends these speeches from the mere academic or style criticism to a cultural rebuilding of activists' outlook and behaviour. This was made explicit by Liu Shaqi's listing of

"Comrade Mao Tse-tung's Resolution of the Kutien Conference, the second part of On the New Stage, The Editorial Statement Initiating the Publication of "The Communist", Reform Our Study, Rectification of Three Styles Campaign (of Study, of Party Organisation, and of Writing), Against the Stereotyped Use of Party Jargon, Decisions by the Central Committee on the Furtherance of the Rectification of Three Styles Campaign (April 3rd, 1943), Decisions by the Central Committee On Methods of Leadership (June 1st, 1943) and other works are the crystallisation of his Party-building line" *[On the Party 1950 p25]*

The entire Party went to school.

Reform was evidently carried out through small study groups which worked their way through the Party supplied study documents available in English translation in Boyd Compton's book *Mao's China: Party Reform Documents, 1943-44* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1952) a collection and translations of the main documents used. It went through three stages: first, a period of study during which twenty-two set documents were discussed throughout the Party; then a period of examination when the work of Party groups was measured against the standards laid down in the documents; finally, each

person wrote a critical summary of his own style of work and submitted it for group examination. Similarly, the lower organs submitted overall reports for examination by the senior Party bodies.

The 1942-44 movement was not called a purge. No personalities in power at the time were mentioned in Reform Documents to dramatize errors; however, in contrast to the essentially pervasive educational style of the Rectification campaign there was also Keng Sheng operating essentially a coercive investigation and “anti-spy” campaign within the party at the same time. What began as cadre screening developed in the effort to weed out fabricated subversives “red banner” underground, supposedly comprising largely those who worked in underground CPC organisations in the Kuomintang areas. Eventually complaints about the abuses, excesses and injustices of the campaign were brought to Mao. His response emphasized leniency and reform, strictly forbid all illegal methods and rejected indiscriminate arrests and killing. A examination of the investigations led to the conclusion that 90% had been wrongly dealt with, and ended the investigation whose objective had the approval of Mao and the leadership but not Keng’s methods. There is no reference in Volume 3 to this episode or Mao’s subsequent public apology at Party meetings.

The impact of the Rectification movement is still acknowledged by China’s authorities today in their interpretation of what constitutes Mao Zedong Thought, as illustrated in an extract from China.org.cn [updated : 2021-07-20]

*“Mao’s leadership over the whole Party was established at the Zunyi Meeting held in January 1935. The thought named after him matured after much reflection in theory and exposure to practice between the late Agrarian Revolution and during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. During this period, Mao led the whole Party in studying Marxist theories and conducting a party-wide rectification campaign to free their minds. They reviewed the experience and lessons of the Chinese revolution and gained a full understanding of the dynamics of the democratic revolution, which resulted in a complete set of views on philosophy, the military, the united front and the Party*



*development. Mao Zedong, in particular, conducted a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the basic theory, guidelines and program for the new democratic revolution, and of the policies and strategies the CPC should adopt.”*

This period is safe for today's ruling party to praise Mao's thinking and practise as it is seen as a matter of history past. A landmark resolution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) released in November 2021 reviewed the Party's achievements in different periods and stated that,

*“In the period of the new-democratic revolution, Chinese communists, with Comrade Mao Zedong as their chief representative, adapting the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism to China's specific realities, established Mao Zedong Thought, which charted the correct course for securing victory in the new-democratic revolution”.*

They are less complementary about Mao's thinking and practise post-1949.

April 29, 2020

## Volume 4 Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung

The first English language edition published in April 1961 is available

at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/sw-in-pdf/sw-flp-1965-v4.pdf>. This was a translation of the first Chinese edition of the fourth volume of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, published by the People's Publishing House in April 1960. It was reviewed in the academic journal, *The China Quarterly*, under the heading, quite accurately, of The Years of Triumph [review by Chün-tu Hsüeh.. *The China Quarterly* No. 11 (Jul. – Sep., 1962), pp. 225-235]

Volume 4 covers the third revolutionary civil war period August 1945 – September 1949 and included a total of 70 articles by Mao Zedong after the Second Sino-Japanese War and before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The specific editing work was led by Chen Boda, assisted by Hu Qiaomu and Tian Jiaying, and all compiled manuscripts were revised and authorized for publication by Mao Zedong himself.

The volume first considers China's policy following victory in the war of resistance against Japan and the response of Mao Zedong on Chiang Kai-shek's meddling with the surrender of Japanese forces and his plans for a counter-revolutionary civil war. The articles also discuss the role of rent reduction and production on the defence of liberated areas and the policy for work in the liberated areas.

— Mao's social investigation report (December 1942) was published in an English-language edition as *Mao Zedong and the Political Economy of the Border Region: A Translation of Mao's Economic and Financial Problems*. Translated and edited by Andrew Watson. Cambridge University Press, 1980. Mao's earlier study on rural conditions in Xunwu (1930) translated by Roger Thompson, was published in 1990 by Stanford University Press as *Report from Xunwu*.

Volume 4 is interesting for Mao Zedong's call for his comrades to continue the armed struggle against the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, particularly taking note of the support that Chiang Kai-shek is getting from the United States. *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* contains five commentaries written by Mao Tse-tung on the U.S. State Department's White Paper and Dean Acheson's Letter of Transmittal. The 1,054-page 'white paper' was titled *United States relations with China, with special reference to the period 1944-49*. Published in early August 1949, it outlined the situation in China, detailed American involvement and assistance to the Chinese (that is Chiang Kai-shek) and suggested reasons for the failure of the Chinese Nationalist government was that it was so corrupt, inefficient, and unpopular that no amount of U.S. aid could save it.

Mao wrote in 'Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle' , "Farewell, Leighton Stuart!", "Why It Is Necessary to Discuss the White Paper", "'Friendship' or Aggression?" and "The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History" to exposed the imperialist nature of United States policy towards China, criticized the illusions about U.S. imperialism harboured by some of the bourgeois intellectuals in China and gave a theoretical explanation of the reasons for the rise of the Chinese revolution and for its victory.

In a fair summary, [Mao wrote](#),

"Acheson's White Paper admits that the U.S. imperialists are at a complete loss as to what to do about the present situation in China. The Kuomintang is so impotent that no amount of help can save it from inevitable doom; the U.S. imperialists are losing grip over things and feel helpless."

The text also elaborates on the concept of operations for the [Liaohsi-Shenyang and Huai-hai campaigns](#); strengthening the party committee system; and the demand to include punishment for Japanese and Kuomintang war criminals.

About Eighty (80) of the individual quotations on communism, revolution, civil war, and patriotism in the " *Quotations of Mao*



*Tse-Tung*” were actually taken from the articles contained in this volume.

Mao’s work does not have rarity value: During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the People’s Publishing House published 870 different editions of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Volumes 1-4), with a total of 325 million paperbacks and 2.55 million hardcover copies of the Chinese editions created. [From Wikipedia]

The *Selected Works* were also translated into a 14 different foreign languages. [Pathe newsreel](#) filmed in June 1964, the launch of the fourth Volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* in the Russian Language edition published by the Foreign Languages Press. The reception of Volume Four of Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung in its Albanian language edition is discussed here, in this article:

[Prifti, Kristaq \(1965\)](#) *Comments on the Publication of the Fourth Volume of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung in Albania*. *Rruga e Partise* (The Party Road) #1 January 1965 pp63-74.

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March 2, 2024

## Volume 5 “Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung”: a disowned legacy

*The Period of the Socialist Revolution and Socialist Reconstruction*

“We are living in a period of great social change. Chinese society has been in the midst of great changes for a long time. The War of Resistance Against Japan was one period of great change and the War of Liberation another. But the present changes are much more profound in character than the earlier ones. We are now building socialism.”

Speech at the CPC’S National Conference on Propaganda Work, *March 12, 1957*



### Volume 5

The fifth volume of the Selected Works included 70 articles by *Mao Zedong/ Mao Tse-Tung* after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. It was published and distributed by People’s Publishing House within seven months of Mao’s death, to a grand fanfare on April 15, 1977. A reprint second edition appeared in 2021 from Foreign Languages Press, Paris. [B12 – Mao Tsetung Volume 5 – 1st Printing.indd \(foreignlanguages.press\)](#)

There is an interesting tale to the decision taken to publish; [Hua Guofeng](#) insisted on the publication of the fifth volume of the Selected Works. He moved quickly to associate himself with its publication, sanctioning Mao and his “With You in charge, I’m at ease” succession, to strengthen his own position. Hua delivered a separate guidance to the volume with its call, “[Continue the Revolution Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the End: A Study of Volume V of the Selected Works of Mao Tsetung](#) (1977). Basically, its tone was that “*The victories won by our Party during the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution should all be attributed to Chairman Mao’s leadership.*”

There is an unofficial [Selected Works of Mao Zedong’, Volume VII](#) from Kranti Publications in 1991, that covers the period from the founding of the People’s Republic (October 1949) until the Great Leap Forward (1958). This volume was reprinted by the MLM publishing House, Foreign Languages Press (Paris) with corrections names and words changed from the Wade-Giles to the Pinyin spelling, with new indexes of names and places. It contains 478 documents that are not included in the “Official” Volume V of the Selected Works. Unlike the “Official” Volume V reflecting on as his ideas regarding the development of the economy, this volume is mainly composed of his correspondence and telegrams showing all the difficulties that the chairman of the newly founded People’s Republic of China had to face, including the danger of imperialist aggressions as seen during the Korean War (1950-1953), the delicate situation of national minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet and the complexity of diplomacy.

A fifth book had been planned as early as 1960, to include selected writings from since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (“The Chinese People Have Stood Up” being the opening article in the volume), During Mao’s lifetime, there was no publication of *Volume Five*, which would cover his writings after 1949. Although there was a draft version of *Volume Five*, ready for pre-screening by Mao, but Mao disapproved of this idea, believing that it was too early to elevate his post-1949 writings to the status of the *Selected Works*. Mao had resisted its production as he felt his essays and speeches on building

socialist society were still evolving compared to the views contained in the earlier volumes.

[The following section is heavily drawing on Bing, N. C. (2022). *Party Literature Work, Ideology, and the Central Party Literature Office of the Communist Party of China*. *China Report*, 58(1), 41-59].

So, the compilation and editing of this volume went through various version The project was reactivated and deactivated a couple of times by contending political groups, ranging from the Cultural Revolution radicals to the moderates led by Deng Xiaoping, all with the same objective of using the project to strengthen their legitimacy. The radicals, drafted a proof copy of *Volume Five* but was halted by Mao in late 1969. The partisan account of the interim Chinese leader, Hua Guofeng was that,

“In 1969, Chairman Mao delegated Comrades Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng to take charge of the compilation of Volume V of the Selected Works. Interference and sabotage by the revisionist line, however, prevented this volume from being published. This interference and sabotage came first from Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta and later in the past few years from the anti-Party “gang of four” of Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao, Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan. Around the time of Chairman Mao’s death, especially, the “gang of four” did their utmost to seize leadership over the compilation and publication of Chairman Mao’s works, so as to hinder and sabotage the publication of Volume V and subsequent volumes.” *Hua Guofeng (1977)*

The project was in abeyance until 1975, the State Council Political Research Office, under the leadership of Deng and Hu Qiaomu, re-started work on *Volume Five*. However, towards the end of 1975, Deng and his allies were purged, and the project stalled again. But they left behind a core group of staff on *Volume Five* called ‘Materials Group’.

Mao died next year in September; in October 1976, the Party issued a ‘Decision to Publish *Volume Five of Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and to Prepare for the Publication of *Collected Works of Mao Zedong*’. Under the new Hua Guofeng leadership work had accelerated, an Office for the Committee on the Editing and Publication of the Works of Chairman Mao was formed, led

by Hua's ally Wang Dongxing. It absorbed the aforementioned 'Materials Group' together with some of Hua's staff and within a month, *Volume Five* was published (April 1977), covering 70 texts written between 1949 and 1957.

The articles in Volume 5 reflected the questions of the day and contents advised, "Always Keep to the Style of Plain Living and Hard Struggle" (1949), "Don't Hit Out in All Directions" (1950) but "Strike Surely, Accurately and Relentlessly in Suppressing Counter-Revolutionaries" (1950/51) and "Let Us Unite and Clearly Distinguish Between Ourselves and the Enemy" (1952).

There was the concern to "Combat Bourgeois Ideas in the Party" (1953) and "Refute Right Deviationist Views That Depart From the General Line" (1953).

Post-1949 the economic focus shift from wartime to socialist transformation as reflected in Mao's articles, "Strive to Build a Great Socialist Country" (1954), "The Debate on the Cooperative Transformation of Agriculture and the Current Class Struggle" (1955) and "Editor's Notes From Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside" (1955)

There were major contributions to the nature of contradictions and policy priorities, "On the Ten Major Relationships" (1956) and "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (1957). "*Wenhui Daily's* Bourgeois Orientation Should Be Criticized", "Beat Back the Attacks of the Bourgeois Rightists" (1957) and "The Chinese Communist Party Is the Core of Leadership of the Whole Chinese People" (1957).





Hua aimed to appropriate Mao's legacy with the quick publication of *Volume Five*. Yet, the political fortune of *Volume Five* soon declined, after Deng Xiaoping gained power at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978. It had a short shelf-life, withdrawn from circulation in 1982. What made the volume toxic for the new Chinese leadership that emerged was that the editorial introduction, text selections and annotations of *Volume Five* adhered to what was deemed by Deng and his supporters as reflecting the erroneous 'two-whatever' political line, or, in a supportive perspective, as Hua stated, "*The fundamental concept running through this volume is to uphold and develop the Marxist principle of continued revolution.*"

The 'PUBLICATION NOTE' in Volume V (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1977) noted, .....In the new historical period since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Comrade Mao Tsetung, consistently upholding the principle of integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the revolution, inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism as he led our Party and our people in a series of struggles; these were struggles to carry out the socialist revolution and socialist construction, to oppose the revisionist lines of Kao-Jao, Peng Teh-huai, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao, to fight against imperialism and the reactionaries of all countries and to combat

modern revisionism with the Soviet revisionist renegade clique as its centre. During this period Comrade Mao Tsetung's greatest contributions to theory were to sum up systematically the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China and abroad, analyse the contradictions, classes and class struggle in socialist society by means of the fundamental concept of materialist dialectics, the unity of opposites, and thereby to reveal the law of development of socialist society and create the great theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The new ideas, new theses, of Comrade Mao Tsetung concerning the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat have greatly enriched the treasure-house of Marxist-Leninist theory in the realms of philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism. They not only chart the Chinese people's true road for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration and building socialism, but are also of great and lasting world significance. ...

It was in these writings that Comrade Mao Tsetung for the first time put forward: the scientific thesis that the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist road and the capitalist road, will still exist for a long time after the basic completion of the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production; the teachings about correctly distinguishing and handling the two types of contradictions in socialist society that are different in nature, those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people; the great theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat; and the ideas underlying the general line for building socialism. Later, particularly during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Comrade Mao Tsetung continued to enrich and develop this body of brilliant thought on the basis of the practical experience of the revolution.

Comrade Mao Tsetung was the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our time. Mao Tsetung Thought is the victorious banner under which our Party, our army and our people will fight in unity and continue the revolution; it is a treasure shared in common by the international proletariat and the revolutionary people of all

countries. Comrade Mao Tsetung's thought and teachings will live for ever.

Some of Comrade Mao Tsetung's writings from the period of the socialist revolution and socialist construction contained in the Selected Works have been published before; others have not, and they include documents drafted by him, his manuscripts and official records of his speeches. Some necessary technical editing of the records of the speeches was done in the course of compilation.

Committee for Editing and Publishing the Works of Chairman Mao Tsetung, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. 1<sup>st</sup> March 1977

There is another context to the period, selected material reflected a judgement that was being abandoned by the post-Mao leadership under Deng that disowned the anti-revisionist struggle:

“From the time of the writings in Volume V up to the present, a momentous change has taken place in the international communist movement, that is, the socialist camp no longer exists as a result of the degeneration of the Soviet Union into social-imperialism through the betrayal of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev cliques. As early as 1956 Chairman Mao sharply pointed out that Khrushchev and company, while having thrown away the “sword” of Stalin, had also thrown away the “sword” of Lenin by and large, thus discarding Leninism by and large. Confronted with the frenzied attack by modern revisionists, Chairman Mao resolutely defended Stalin and safeguarded Marxism-Leninism. We must carry out Chairman Mao's behests and carry the struggle against Soviet social-imperialism through to the end.” (Hua 1977)

There are raised the question of the “authenticity” of the texts appearing in this volume.

Generally, those opposed to the post-Mao authorities argue it was produced whilst the coup for the leadership of the Communist Party of China was still in progress. After the death of Mao there was developing disenchantment with developments in China in Western radical circles and the disintegration of the Marxist-Leninist anti-revisionist movement

that became more sceptical about the direction of movement of the Hua/Deng regimes.

Produced within a year of the Chairman's death was probably too short a time for serious political 'revision' to have occurred but critics of the new regime argue this has to be considered when referring to contentious issues that appear in Volume 5.

There is caution expressed in Western academic work as differences textually occur if one compares, for instance, the essay "On the Ten Major Relationships" contained therein, the "official" version, with the "unofficial" version that emerged during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Then there was the flourishing of the non-official publications of Mao's works by different Red Guards groups. These post-1949 Mao's writings were seized by the Red Guards during their raids into houses of disgraced officials and published as various editions of *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui / Long Live the Thought of Mao Zedong*. Much of Mao's contributions are records of oral speeches transcribed, which is authentic text when faced with differing records?

*Selected Works* are not reproductions of historical text –

There is a clear framing of the importance attached to the Party endorsed publication of *Selected Works*. Party literature work plays a crucial role for each generation of Chinese communist leadership to assert its ideological 'line' and build its canon. It is an integral part of the ideological apparatus of the Communist Party of China.

Herein lie the differences between purely historical scholarship and party literature work. Chinese official historiographers never disputed that some texts in the officially published *Selected Works* were altered and different from their first appearance.

But viewed from the nature of party literature work, this was perfectly defensible. In Volume 5 there is open acknowledgement of revision e.g. On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People, a speech at the Eleventh Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Conference in February

27, 1957 notes “*Comrade Mao Tsetung went over the verbatim record and made certain additions before its publication in the People’s Daily on June 19, 1957.*”

The publication was to serve the purpose of political education and ideological guidance for the whole Party and for the nation. Moreover, the revision of these texts was carried out by the author (Mao) himself, which was deemed acceptable, as the altered texts reflected the author’s latest thinking.

‘Party literature work,’ in this sense, is about the collection, selection, editing and compiling, publication, publicity and research of key texts and documents of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the purpose of which is to define, maintain, regulate and adjust the parameter of the ‘correct’ ideological line determined by the party leadership. Mao was intensively involved in the editing work of his own *Selected Works*.

Qi Benyu’s *Memoirs* (2023) recalls the complex process of the editing and production of the “Selected Works of Mao Zedong”, the repeated checking, original sources consulted, amendments suggested, reviewing and attention paid, re-reading. He recalls from his experience working with Chen Boda, Hu Qiaomu and Tian Jiaying on the drafting and production of the first three volumes of selected works,

When compiled, “it was sent to the Chairman and several other key central leaders such as Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De for their perusal, as well as to several secretaries of the Central Secretariat, including Ren Bishi, for their comments on additions and deletions.”

“... take the Report on the Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan as an example, was read and proofread, proofread and re-read, each proofreading read a dozen times, one, two, three proofreadings so altogether, often read more than thirty times. This way, the final draft of “Selected Works of Mao Zedong” had no typos, no wrong punctuation.”

Qi Benyu’s *Memoirs* (2023) translated by Nick G. Chairperson, Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) and available at [Banned Thought website](#).

Volume 5, published without Mao's oversight, and abandoned by the Deng regime, dropped out of the Party Canon, erased from consideration because of supposed political errors unacceptable to China's new direction.

The other consideration is that post-Mao there was the move to resite Mao Zedong Thought as the Party's achievement, the product of many and in a state of constant adaption. Post-Mao Chinese communist historiography tended to subtly stress that the *Selected Works* should be more appropriately understood as crystallisation of the 'collective wisdom' of various Chinese communist leaders and thinkers, although the centrality of Mao was undeniable. This 'collective wisdom' served the new regime by ruling that sinicisation of Marxism–Leninism was essentially processed through Mao's adaptation of Marxism–Leninism into the Chinese situation (the concept recognised since the 1940s as Mao Zedong Thought) and allowed for the further advancement of such adaptation in the twentieth century in the form of Deng Xiaoping Theory.

The first four volumes of the official *Selected Works* constitute the canon that embodies Mao Zedong Thought. In the texts of Deng's *Selected Works* some pre-1978 texts predictably were altered to be consistent with the new line, but since Deng was still alive, as the author, he could approve of these alterations, repeating Mao's precedent in preparing his own *Selected Works*. Each subsequent party leader has been presented as adding to the ideological treasury of the party. The 21<sup>st</sup> century saw this emergence to incorporate the ideological doctrine created during General Secretary Xi Jinping's leadership of the Communist Party of China advertised as the combination Chinese Marxism and national rejuvenation, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Although there was an intention to continue the production of the *Selected Works* nothing else appeared in this series after Volume 5. Hua had been replaced by Deng Xiaoping and the official Chinese view, defined in June 1981, was that Mao's leadership was basically correct until the summer of 1957, but from then on it was mixed at best and frequently wrong. It is

stated that Mao's two major innovations of his later years, the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution, were ill-conceived and led to disastrous consequences. In a leadership dominated by returned capitalist-roaders there was no agreement with Hua's exhortations that "*we must make an earnest study of Volume V of the Selected Works of Mao Tsetung and bring about a new upsurge in the study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought so as to arm ourselves better ideologically.*"



Work by Mao Zedong continued to be published, eventually published 22 thematic collections of Mao's writings. Among the thematic volumes, one, [Mao Zedong On Diplomacy](#), (Beijing: FLP, 1998), was distributed by the State publisher, Foreign Language Press with a translation of the original Chinese edition of 1994.

In order to make known Mao Zedong's contributions to China's foreign affairs and compiled, with the approval of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, a collection of 160 of Mao Zedong's writings, speeches, talks, comments and telegrams concerning diplomacy from July 1937 to May 1974. Most were published for the first time. It acknowledged Mao as "a great diplomatic strategist of modern times" and states,

"This book records Mao Zedong's fundamental views on international situations and diplomatic strategies as well as his

strategic and tactical concepts in and theoretical contributions to foreign affairs.

In compiling this book, the editors have remained loyal to the original editions or manuscripts of the articles included in this book. A few changes in language were made in the original manuscripts or articles published before. Transcripts of speeches and talks were edited, with errors of fact corrected and titles added. Notes on the sources are provided at the end of all the articles. Explanatory and editorial notes are also provided.”

The formula remains the same: “socialism with Chinese characteristics”

The difficulties in continuing Mao’s *Selected Works* beyond the first four volumes was that in the regime’s view further publication of Mao’s writings would be a historical documentation of his errors and mistakes, and hardly an instrument in the services of state. Plans to publish *Collected Works*, revise and republish *Volume Five*, and further publish *Volume Six* and after were all indefinitely suspended by the mid-1980s.

New work by Mao did appear from two massive multi-volume projects: *Mao Zedong’s Manuscripts since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China* (published between 1987 and 1993) and “*Mao Zedong Annals*” (9 volumes published between 1993 and 1999) chronicling Mao’s life.

These were not previously available to the public and did not have a wide distribution until Xinhua News Agency reported (26th December 2023) that to mark the 130th anniversary of Mao’s birth, the Central Party Literature Press issued reedited versions of both series.

In the first, internal distributed edition ‘apolitical’ editing made it one of the most unique collections of Mao texts, many of which were openly published for the first time. *Manuscripts* was meant for research and study by senior cadres and academic specialists and, hence, its limited circulation.

Covering both pre- and post-1949 writings of Mao, *these volumes are* supplement to the *Selected Works*. A substantial



portion from the disavowed *Volume Five of Selected Works* that were deemed politically salvageable after appropriate editing and annotations that resolved the dilemma that Editors could not alter the texts (other than minor errors and stylistic issues) even if politically ‘incorrect’ passages were present in an overall ‘correct’ text. The publication does not constitute a revival in the Party-State approach to the Thought of Mao Zedong having disowned any development around constituting an ideological pole of attraction based on Maoism by communists in and outside China.

In the claim for legitimacy, and continuity in the modern Chinese state and ruling class, the foundational appeal is reduced to “historical contributions” – **and in accord with the times** – rather than contemporary relevance or application; it provides the statist ideological sheen, a counterpoise to the democratic façade touted by competing capitalist powers.

“The publication of these two series of works is important for the study of Comrade Mao Zedong’s ideological theories, working methods and practical activities throughout his life, especially after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the achievements, experiences and arduous explorations of the Communist Party of China in leading the new democratic revolution, especially the socialist revolution and socialist construction, the formation and development process of the scientific system of Mao Zedong Thought, and the historical contributions made by Mao Zedong Thought to the opening up of the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

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September 26, 2021

## Volume 9 of Selected Works

In 2021 Foreign Languages Press published a 2nd Edition of the Volume IX of Mao Zedong's Selected Works. <https://foreignlanguages.press/works-of-maoism/>

It is the last volume of the original volumes VI to IX published by Indian comrades from Kranti Publications and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu from 1990 to 1994. It covers the time period of 1963 to 1968, with a few texts from 1969 to 1971.

*The Indian editors observed that in the context of the development of countries in eastern Europe and Socialist Russia, and even in China, adopting the capitalist road, the study of Mao's writings assume greater significance. On the other hand, the class struggles in the third world, including the Philippines and Peru reinforce the relevance of Mao's thought for the revolutions in the oppressed countries. In India, since the days of Naxalbari, Mao's thought has been, and it continues to be, the guiding star. (1994 draft on From Marx to Mao website).*

Volume 9 contains a selection of material from a critical time in China: the Socialist Education Movement and the first years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR).

The practices and lessons learned from the Cultural Revolution, trying to arm the people with questions, insight and understanding in order to continue the struggle for socialism, are the cornerstone of the development of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to Maoism.

The texts from the Socialist Education Movement, the last Party-led mass movement, are essential to understanding why Mao saw it necessary to launch the Cultural Revolution. The sharp line struggle that emerged from it brought into clear focus that there was the emergence of a new bureaucratic capitalist class in the Party under socialism, and that this line struggle could not be combated by mass movements led by the Party itself.

The Great Debate, Sino-Soviet Split, the Polemic – call it what you want to emphasis – was a very valuable episode in the defence

and rejuvenation of Marxist thought. It challenged the growing revisionism, shining a searchlight on the dangers within the international communist movement and launched a resistance in a rallying call to oppose and reject the attempts to divert the freedom struggle into the accommodation and absorption of the concerns of monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

What remains the most insightful starting point to understand the contours of that anti-revisionist approach remains the 1965 collection produced by FLP Peking, *“The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement”* and associated publications. The modern MLM publishing house FLP release *The Documents of the CPC, The Great Debate 2 Volumes* in 2021, bringing it back in print alongside internet access.

That struggle looms over as the backdrop to the domestic dramas unleashed in the Socialist Education Movement and the early years of the Cultural Revolution covered in this selection of the conversations, texts and interjections by Mao Zedong.

During the Cultural Revolution a nationwide programme devoted to studying the works of Chairman Mao were launched. When it was in high tide, Mao himself observed:

*“The Selected Works of Mao, how much of it is mine! It is a work of blood. The struggle in the soviets was very acute. Because of the errors of the Wang Ming line, we had to embark on the 25,000 li Long March. These things in Selected Works of Mao were taught to us by the masses and paid for with blood sacrifices.*  
Volume 9 (2021) Foreign Languages Press, Paris p66

The GPCR was the manifestation of Mao’s realization that the only way to win the struggle for socialism was the elevated consciousness of the masses and their ability to rectify the Party: to target the real enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat within the highest levels of party leadership. The question of why the capitalist-roaders in China were victorious in the end has many answers in the fierce struggles during all of the mass movements, from the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959) to the Socialist Education Movement, culminating in the GPCR.

Mao spoke in August 1964 of what was at stake:

*“Mao Zedong [Talking about the first criterion for successors]: Are you going to study Marxism-Leninism, or revisionism?”*

*Yuanxin: Naturally, I’m studying Marxism-Leninism.*

*Mao Zedong: Don’t be too sure, who knows what you’re studying? Do you know what Marxism-Leninism is?”*

*Yuanxin: Marxism-Leninism means that you must carry on the class struggle, that you must carry out revolution.*

*Mao Zedong: The basic idea of Marxism-Leninism is that you must carry out revolution. But what is revolution? Revolution is the proletariat overthrowing the capitalists, the peasants overthrowing the landlords, and then afterwards setting up a workers’ and peasants’ political power, and moreover continuing to consolidate it. At present, the task of the revolution has not yet been completed; it has not yet been finally determined who in the end will overthrow whom. In the Soviet Union, is not Khrushchev in power, is not the bourgeoisie in power? We too, have cases in which political power is in the grip of the bourgeoisie; there are production brigades, factories, and xian committees, as well as district and provincial committees, in which they have their people, there are deputy heads of public security departments who are their men. Who is leading the Ministry of Culture? The cinema and the theater are entirely in their service, and not in the service of the majority of the people. Who do you say is exercising leadership? To study Marxism-Leninism is to study the class struggle. The class struggle is everywhere; it is in your Institute, a counter-revolutionary has appeared in your Institute, are you aware of this or not? He wrote a reactionary diary filling a dozen or so notebooks, every day he cursed us, shouldn’t he be considered a counter-revolutionary element? Are you people not completely insensitive to class struggle? Isn’t it right there beside you? If there were no counter-revolution, then why would we still need revolution?”*

*Volume 9 (2021) Foreign Languages Press, Paris p140*

The scholarship to compile the first edition of Volume mined the existing sources, the improvements in the second edition included the replacement of some texts with the official translation published in Beijing Review and correction to

chronological dating and order of publication (see *Some Technical Points Volume 9* (2021) Foreign Languages Press, Paris piii).

Drawing on state published official sources including Hongqi (Red Flag), the unofficial Wansui editions and a variety of familiar western publications (like the JPRS collection, drawing on the work of Stuart Schram, Jerome Chen's *Mao's Papers*, Edgar Snow's 1965 interview, memoir of Andre Malraux), Volume 9 has made available, at an affordable price, texts consigned to disparate second hand markets. It could provide a revelation to a new generation studying Mao. His words, expression of concern, advice and reasoning conjure up a vastly different impression than that of the stereotypical bad leader tope beloved of western coverage. Such revolutionary scholarship restores Mao to his place as a leading revolutionary of the last century, and relevant to this.

The collation of Mao's texts in Volume 9 provides a source of study material for activists, and provides a commentary on the issues of a struggle mistakenly portrayed as little more than a chaotic miscalculation amongst a political elite. Its chronological arrangement illustrates the unfolding concerns raised through the Socialist education Movement and the rapid mass criticism from below unleashed during the Cultural Revolution.

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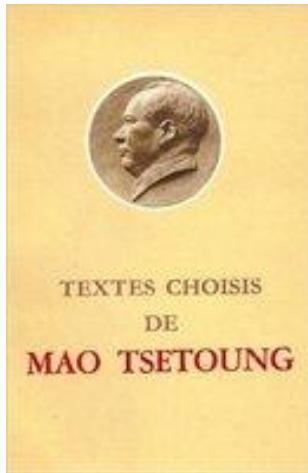
AUGUST 15, 2016

## Reading Mao Zedong



In the tumultuous social struggles of twentieth century China, Mao Zedong strides the battlegrounds through defeat and victories. When you read the writings of Mao Zedong, you are confronted with his revolutionary theories on politics, history and economics, his tactical choices for securing the development of the party and revolutionary movement, and his strategic vision of a new social and economic order for China. Today, access to the writings, in many different language editions, by Mao Zedong is facilitated by internet access.

Mao Zedong, previously transliterated as Mao Tsetung, was a Communist revolutionary, leading guerrilla warfare strategist, and political philosopher. Chairman Mao was active in the Chinese Revolution, leading the anti-imperialist struggle against Japanese occupation and in the following civil war. He was part architect and founding father of the People's Republic of China from its establishment in 1949, and the building of socialism, initiating the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s, providing guidance and direction until his death in 1976.



Reading Mao can be complicated by his status as “the Great Helmsman”, one-time charismatic font of all wisdom and having “Mao Zedong Thought” designation as “the crystallization of the collective wisdom” of the Communist Party of China (*On the Question of Party History* 1981).

Take one volume that serves as part of the body of what represents “Mao Zedong Thought” – Maoism is a term not used by the Chinese, but rather reflects the view of those outside China, that sees Mao’s theoretical and practical contribution as both universal in significance and application and should be recognised as a third stage in the development of communist thought.

*Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse Tung* appeared in its Chinese edition in 1964 before the launch of the Cultural Revolution.

In June 1964 two versions of *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung* were published: edition A, intended for cadre party study and a smaller edition B, an abridged edition meant for the general public. Most of the texts were drawn from the existing four-volume *Selected Works*. *Selected Readings* did include Mao’s 1957 speech “On Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People”, some material from the Socialist education campaign and ended with “Where Do Correct ideas Come From” of May 1963. Edition A was the basis for an official English translation in 1967; although in 1971 another English-edition was referred to as the ‘first edition’ (incorporated the new established correct spelling for the name ‘Mao Tsetung’).

“Most of the pieces published in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung* have been changed considerably since they were originally written or spoken. However, it is extremely important for us to know their present form, the form in which they are helping to shape China today. Although the selection was completed before the beginning of the new movement, the writings contained in it are those most studied in the Cultural

Revolution. It includes “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” and several other important pieces produced since 1948 which have not been in any previous Chinese collection.

The “Readings,” although abbreviated, convey some idea of the intelligence and breadth of probably the greatest man in the Twentieth Century.”

*Martin Bernal, author of the Black Athena trilogy, The New York Review of Books January 16, 1969.*

When reading the writings of Mao Zedong the obvious reality is that all official texts *are* selected texts, chosen with a purpose outside of historical record (or accuracy), so there is a difference between the original Mao speech or writings and their later published version. The revision in the editing was openly acknowledged in the publication of *Selected Works*, the extent of the rewriting was not. The political function of Mao’s writings underpinning the People’s Republic of China, propagating particular policies, campaigns and study focus meant that the published word (with its official stamp of approval) acted as “the ideological coinage of the State”. (Martin, 1982)

Political editing provided conformity to Mao’s writings as the stylistic refinements, not least omitting Mao’s lively, earthy and colourful expression in speech, meant the published text took on a more official tone and character. These are translated texts without the idiom of the original language however there was an also evident political consideration: the linguistic pruning of the term “comrade” and who and when it was applied was a symbolic device as persons who were in political disfavour were cast in more negative terms. Larger issues were at stake: dependent on the current state of relations with the Soviet Union, the singularities of the Chinese revolutionary experience were down play in the interest of Sino-Soviet friendship, or a greater emphasis in the direction of the Soviet role. For instance, in Volume Five, texts dealing with Mao’s visit to the Soviet Union, as well as his 1953 obituary for Stalin were not included. In earlier volumes, references to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Stalin were added partly to reinforce a political correctness in communist relations.



*Selected Works* obviously means omissions as well as inclusion. The delay and dispute in the publication of Volume Five, when a first draft had been available since late 1967, was because it was the focus of factional struggle as what interpretation would prevail over its content legitimizing the politics of that contentious period in modern Chinese history; would the judgements of the Cultural Revolution remain? What adjustments would have to be accommodated? Like elsewhere (in any politicians' memoirs), political editing, not guided by historical and academic criteria, shapes the editorial process. So with *Volume Five*, earlier versions, with their radical commentaries, annotations and their text selection, compiled by Chen Boda and later under Yao Wenyuan, were rejected. The published Volume Five, even with an almost total lack of commentaries and footnote interpretation, still served to endorse the (then contemporary) 'Four Modernizations' economic focus. However it was withdrawn from circulation, regarded as tainted by Chairman Hua Guofeng's ideological stress on Mao's notion of "Continuing the revolution...." Interestingly a key text in Volume Five was a speech given by Mao in April 1956, "On Ten Great Relationships" in which criticism of the Soviet model had been retained unlike in earlier published versions.

Yet, while many of Mao Zedong's important writings were from a period and conditions that no longer apply, they are the source of constant study, revisited and on reading lists the world over. Mao's theoretical contribution to a theoretical synthesis of China's unique experience in protracted revolutionary struggle with the tenants of Marxism-Leninism illustrated that complicated problems facing those making revolution cannot be solved by reciting the general principles of Marxism-Leninism or by copying foreign (or even China's) experience in every detail. Mao's admirers aboard failed too often to hear that lesson.

The judgement in "*On the Question of Party History*" (1981) was still to read Mao:

"This is not only because one cannot cut the past off from the present and failure to understand the past will hamper our understanding of present day problems, but also because many of our basic theories, principles and scientific approaches set forth in these works are of universal significance and provides us

with invaluable guidance now and will continue to do so in the future. Therefore, we must continue to uphold Mao Zedong Thought, study it in earnest and apply its stand, viewpoint and method in studying the new situation and solving the new problems arising in the course of practice.”

#### ONLINE Sources

##### *From Marx to Mao*

Mao Tse-tung (Zedong) Internet Library ~ Established May 1, 1997 <http://www.marx2mao.com/>

Published by Foreign Languages Press, Peking, the Selected Works of Mao Zedong were compiled and translated by the official Beijing committee. As noted previously, these are the heavily edited, authoritative word of Mao and the doctrine of the Communist Party of China.

Between 1951 and 1953, the first three volumes of Selected Works, covering Mao's participation and leadership of the Chinese Communist movement up to 1945 and the defeat of Japanese imperialism, were published. All selections from volumes I, II and III of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung are English translations based on the second Chinese edition of these volumes. Selections from volumes IV and V are translations from the first Chinese edition. Volume Four was published in 1960 concluding with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The publication of Volume Five, which covered the mass campaigns of the 1950s and beginning of the anti-revisionist struggle, appeared in April 1977 after Mao's death.

##### *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy*

Besides Volume V of Selected Works, an English-language collection of Mao's writing on diplomacy was produced by Foreign Language Press in 1998. This was a translation of the 1994 Chinese language edition compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Party Literature Research Centre. Running to 498 pages, the speeches, talks and articles are drawn from 1938-1974.



*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* more popularly known as “The Little Red Book” appeared in the Cultural Revolution period having first been produced for the People’s Liberation Army educational programme in the early 1960s. The iconic collection of quotes, devoid of their original historical and political context, reduced the complexities

and richness of Mao Tsetung thought to a Chinese classical format of quotable wisdom.

<https://cpindiaml.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/redbook.pdf>  
Or in HTML format to individual sections at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/index.htm>

*Marxists Internet Archive =*

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/index.htm>

Contains the official *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*: Volume I – V and the Wansi-inspired volumes published in India by Kranti Publications, Hyderabad. Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Volume VI – IX

*Selected Military Writings of Mao Tsetung*

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/military-writings/index.htm>

The Reference Writers section provides full text access to wide-ranging writers and thinkers including selections from Chinese political leaders Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, Peng Zhen and Deng Xiaoping. It includes the documents compiled, edited and published in 1978 by the US governments’ Joint Publication Research Service (JPRS).



A translation of 'Wansui' material was provided by the American government funded Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS] in 1974. It was translated from a Chinese language collection brought out by Red Guards under the title *Mao Tse-tung ssu-hsiang wan-sui* ['Long Live the Thought of Mao TseTung']. There were two editions of materials, entitled Mao Tse-tung ssu-hsiang wan-sui the first in 1967 and then republished in an enlarged form in 1969. For an analysis of the differences between the two Wansui editions and a study of the writings themselves, see Richard Levy, "New Light on Mao," *The China Quarterly* 61 (1975). It contained mostly unofficial transcripts of Mao's speeches and interviews from 1960 onwards that are not represented in the official 'Selected Works'.

In 1978, a collection of Mao's pre-1949 writings was produced by the JPRS. These documents were compiled, edited and published by the U.S. Government's Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) in 1978. According to JPRS, these documents are "selected speeches, articles, essays, reports, letters, interviews, declarations, decrees, telegrams, poems, (and) inscriptions of Mao Tse-tung covering a multitude of subjects." In introductory notes, JPRS notes that "All articles signed by Mao Tse-tung, whether individually or jointly with others, are included." Further, "all unsigned articles which have been verified as his work are also available." Finally, JPRS indicates that "all works

which have already appeared in the (Foreign Language Press) edition of Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung or Selected Readings of Mao Tse-tung's Works are not included."

<http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/classics/mao/cwcia/index.html>

In contrast to the dearth of translated material, the publication of Chinese language editions of Mao's writings has gone on unabated. The Party Literature Research Centre of the Central Committee published the multi-volume '*Mao Zedong Works*'. The first volume appeared in 1993 on the Centenary of Mao's birth, and Xinhua News Agency announced publication of the 8th volume in July 1999. The multi-volume work contains over 800 pieces not previously published in the Chinese edition of "*Selected Works of Mao Zedong*", although only key items from 1966 onwards are included because the Cultural Revolution "launched by Chairman Mao, was a mistake of overall importance".<sup>[1]</sup>

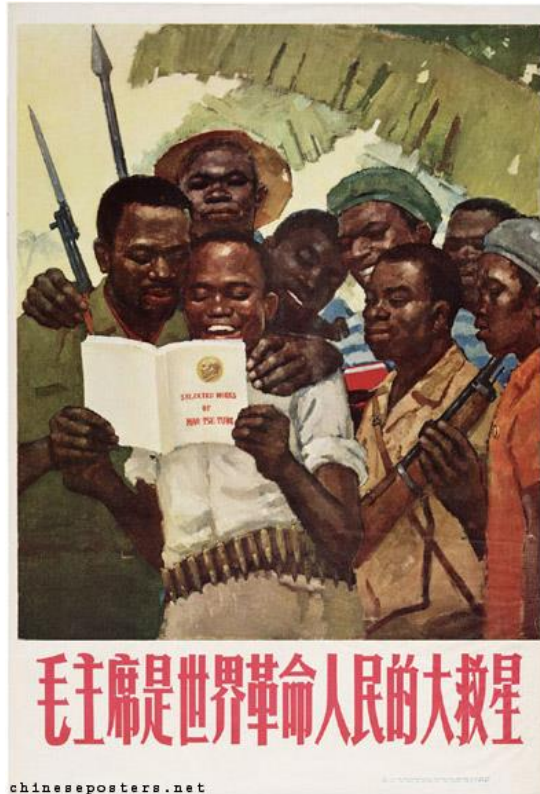
The main contemporary source for new English language material has been repackaged in Western scholarship rather than disseminated in English by Chinese publishers. Since John Bryan Starr and Nancy Anne Dyer compiled a bibliography and index, entitled *Post-Liberation works of Mao Zedong* (1976)<sup>[2]</sup>, two volumes of post-liberation writings by Mao have appeared translated from Chinese sources, under the title, *The Writings of Mao Zedong: 1949-1976* edited by Michael Y.M.Kau and John K Leung<sup>[3]</sup> covering the years 1949-1957.

An earlier published volume from Oxford University Press in 1970 was a more compact introduction that drew upon 1940s editions of Mao's Selected Works as well as *Wansui* material was the *Mao Papers: anthology and bibliography* edited by Jerome Ch'en.

Some of Mao's earlier work has also appeared with a study of Mao's philosophical concerns in an English language version in Nick Knight (ed) (1990) *Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism: Writings on Philosophy*<sup>[4]</sup> and *Mao Zedong, Report from Xunwu* (1930) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Re-published in China in 1982, Mao's 1930 investigative report of the rural county of Xunwu in southern China reflects detailed empirical social research undertaken by Mao, and a study from the 1940s was produced by Andrew Watson (1980) *Mao Zedong and the political economy of the border region*<sup>[6]</sup>

Mao's speeches during the early period of the Great Leap Forward have been translated in Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek, Eugene Wu (eds) *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: from the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward* (1989)<sup>[7]</sup>.



A collection of Mao's critical reading comments on Soviet political economy textbooks was translated by Moss Roberts, annotated by Richard Levy and with an Introduction by James Peck and published as *A Critique of Soviet Economics* (1977)<sup>[8]</sup>. Drawn from unauthorized material that circulated in China during the Cultural Revolution, *Mao's talk on Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* was probably given at the Chengchou Conference in November 1958, while his *written critique* was done in 1959. <http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/CSE58.html>

Prominent among English-language treatment of Mao's career is the work of Professor Stuart Schram. He has consistently explored Mao writings through his studies presenting the development of Mao's political thinking in relation to the situation in China and the changing conditions in the course of the struggles in which Mao was engaged. Mao Zedong Thought, not as an immutable truth, has been presented to an English reading audience in Stuart Schram's various publications.

UK publishers Penguin published *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung*, first published in 1963 by Frederick A. Praeger, in paperback in an enlarged revised edition in 1969. A political biography, *Mao Tse-Tung*, was published by Penguin in 1966, and is still in print. *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: talks and letters, 1956-1971* (Penguin 1974) drew upon material unofficially compiled and collected in the Wansi collections made available through Red Guard sources during the Cultural Revolution.

Professor Schram initially led a project to publish the collected works of Mao Zedong. Under the series title, *Mao's Road To Power, Revolutionary writings 1912-1949* (New York: M.E. Sharpe) (the series completed under the editorship of Timothy Creek). The analyses of Schram which stressed Mao's early immersion in Chinese classical literature, drawing upon Mao's numerous allusions to these in his talks and writings, developed the notion that Mao's political philosophy, steeped in Chinese tradition, and his political practice, not least leading a successful peasant-based revolution, was substantially different from orthodox Marxism as sanctioned in the Soviet Union.

In Mao studies a group of radical academics (Richard Pfeffer, Andrew Walder and Mark Selden) engaged in scholarly dispute with the non-Marxist Sinologists Stuart Schram and Benjamin Schwartz in the journal of *Modern China* 1976/1977 to challenge this evaluation as being based on a rigid understanding of what constituted Maoist canon.

Paul Healy and Nick Knight offer an alternative, Marxist-orientated perspective in studying Mao's career compared to the atheoretical textual attention of Professor Schram in the volume edited with Arif Dirlik (1997) *Critical perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought*<sup>91</sup>

The radical argument drew upon Mao's clearly self-professed allegiance to Marxism, drawing upon the anti-authoritarianism of the Cultural Revolution period as well as the earlier Yanan writings of Mao that resonated with the Marx of 'German Ideology' and the (then) newly emerging body of writings by the early Marx, in particular '*Grundrisse*'. Maoist-inclined intellectuals e.g. David Fernbach and Martin Nicolas provided many of the translations of these works. Mao's criticism of 'Soviet revisionism' and articulation of a generative class thesis under

socialist state structures drew support from those attracted to an alternative vision from that provided by a Soviet Union that seemed little different from its Cold War adversaries.



#### ENDNOTES

[1] "All volumes of 'Mao Zedong Works' published." Xinhua News Agency July 1st 1999.

[2] Berkeley. Center for Chinese Studies, University of California  
 [3] Vol 1 September 1949-December 1955 (1986) New York: M.E.Sharpe : Vol 2 January 1956 December 1957 (1992) New York: M.E.Sharpe

[4] Nick Knight (ed) (1990) Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism: Writings on Philosophy 1937. New York: M.E.Sharpe.

[5] Translated, and with an introduction and notes by Roger R. Thompson (1990) Stanford, Calif: Standard University Press

[6] Andrew Watson (1980) Mao Zedong and the political economy of the border region: a translation of Mao's economic and financial problems, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek, Eugene Wu (eds) The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: from the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward (1989) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[8] A Critique of Soviet Economics (1977) London: Monthly Review Press.

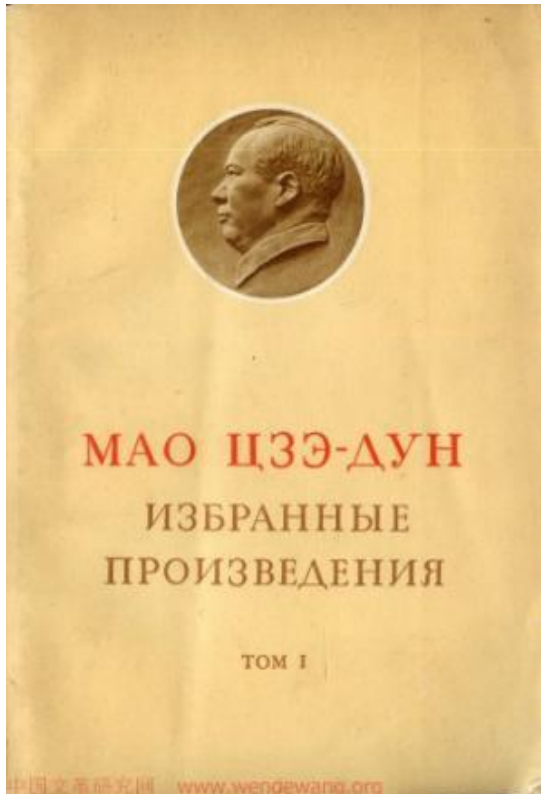
[9] Dirlik (1997) New Jersey: Humanities Press. See: 'Mao Zedong's Thought and Critical Scholarship' pp3-20



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## Problems in Reading Mao

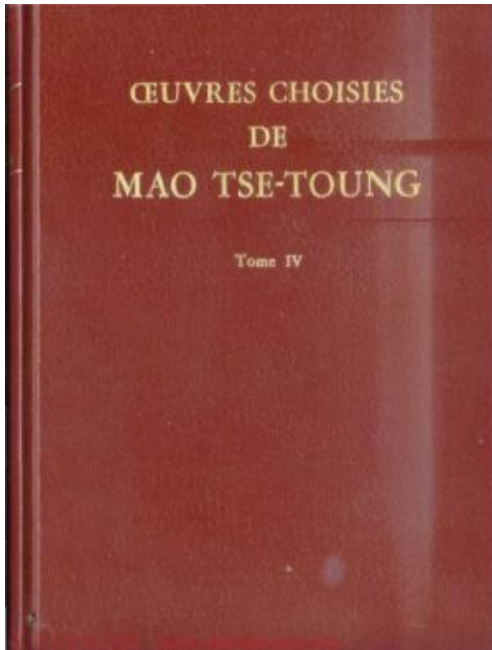
Planning to release the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Volume IX, the Paris-based publishing house Foreign Language Press “discovered some surprises in our endeavour to put out the best text we could.” [\[i\]](#)



They encountered issues of scholarship that are tackled in any intellectual production from the simplest blog to the authority in the field: can the reader trust the text? There are always caveats in any approach to reading that question its reliability, accuracy, value and purpose. Some of the concerns raised in an earlier posting [Reading Mao](#) but dealt with in a more focus and informative manner by the FLP editors.

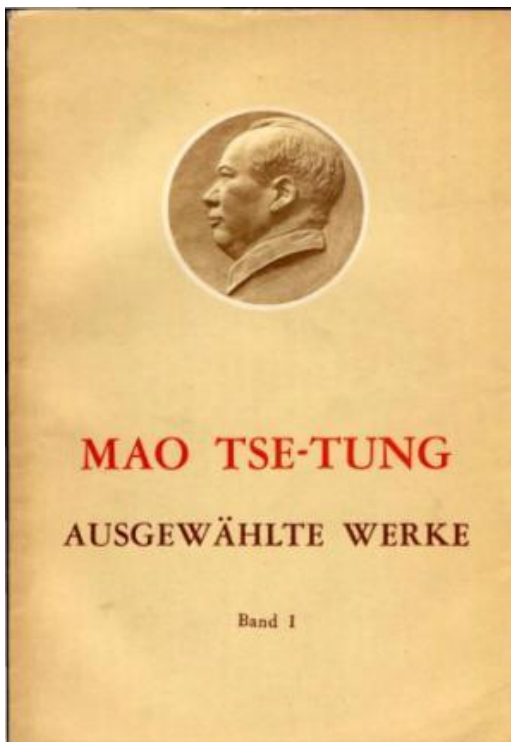
### II Authenticity

Despite his charismatic authority and creative Marxism, Mao frequently acknowledged he was no superman and worked with and through others as the collective development of ideas, the collective editing and bureaucratic, as well as personal, approval before publication under Mao's name illustrated. Many academics drawn to textual analysis and comparison, often preoccupied with the differences between the 'speaking notes' and the official version, have commented on this collective production in the evaluation of the work of Mao Zedong. Such collaboration, commonplace if hidden and seldom advertised, produces an intellectual co-operation that lies behind influential work [\[ii\]](#) as in the critique of Soviet economics attributed to Mao that emerged in 1967. As Timothy Cheek noted these “are Hu



*Sheng's notes from Mao's 1960 study group - Hu Sheng rearranged Mao's comments and added sub-headings; Mao never reviewed them." [iii]*

Banned Thought website makes [available](#) the translated, and Chinese edition of the text. It notes the "standard" Monthly Review English language version many of Mao's comments to comrades about Soviet economics are not included along with the notes he made while reading the Soviet textbook. This explains why this English language book are so much shorter than even the "Short" Chinese language edition.



Deng Liquin, who prepared the original "Short" Chinese edition, included all of Mao's comments, but much shorter extracts from the full Soviet texts that Mao was criticizing. Like the attribution to Hu Sheng, Deng Liquin's text was edited based on his extensive conversations with Mao.

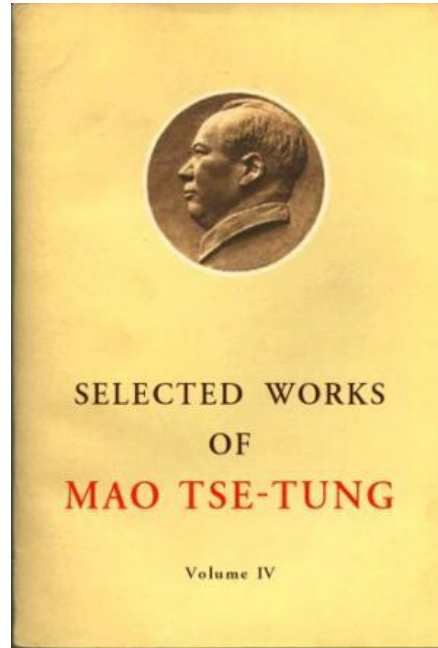
As with anything published under Mao's name, Harrison says questions have also been raised about the accuracy of the translations of Mao's comments in some places. Part of the process of how these texts were produced, basically somebody's edited notes or minutes of recorded talk and conversations involving Mao, rather than by his hand, serves to illustrate why so much attention was given in the production of officially released work of Mao Zedong.

When Mao spoke publically, he spoke for the party. The gonzo culture of western political reporting with its proliferation of politician's arbitrary comments, political leaks and ill-thought out boasts was alien to the Chinese political process. The emergence of unauthorised raw texts, uncensored and not necessarily prepared by Mao himself excited sinologists and raised the issue of authenticity and ownership. There is the argument that the only authorised work of Mao Zedong is that released during his lifetime – the first four volumes of Selected Works, the Selected Readings and military essays released by Mao. His best-selling Quotations – The little Red Book of popular culture – was published under the direction and guidance of Lin Biao and like any other text somebody's political interpretation by selection of the compilations of texts presented.

*Authorised English language edition*

<b>Selected Readings</b>	(1971) 1926 -1965
Volume 1	(1975) 1926-1937
Volume 2	(1967) 1937- 1941
Volume 3	(1975) 1941 -1945
Volume 4	(1969) 1945 – 1949
Volume 5	(1977) 1949 -1957
<b>On Diplomacy</b>	(1998) 1938 – 1974

Some would advise readers to use some appropriate caution with the last two volume, considering that those who produced it were leading China back to capitalism by this time. Those who thought that the Chinese revisionists would not be publishing more of Chairman Mao's *Selected Works* (or that they couldn't be trusted if they did) had attempts to try to determine what might have been produced from the material that had emerged unofficially during the Cultural Revolution. In the publication of four further (unofficial) volumes of *Selected Works*, these Indian compilations, partially utilising the work of Stuart Scram, pioneered the popularisation of Mao before what was, mainly consumed by academics, the steady authorised release of material from the post-Mao regime.



Unauthorised additions to the state published series appeared as subsequent volumes under the title of *Selected Works* were published in India in the 1990s by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad.

These were republished, and corrected as second editions by Foreign Language Press, Paris.

Volume 6	1917 -1946
Volume 7	1947 – 1957
Volume 8	1958 – 1962
Volume 9	1963 – 1970

Kranti Publications/ Foreign Language Press (Paris) drew upon variety unauthorised sources to continue the series *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Other compilations of work attributed to Mao were published by western publishers, notable *Mao Tsetung Unrehearsed (1974) 1956 – 1971* compiled and

translated by Stuart Schram that utilised the *sixiang wansui* editions.

Volume 6 of Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, produced by the Indian publishing house, Kranti Publications in 1990, contained a compendium of work dating from 1917-1946 that had not appeared in the Chinese authorised edition. Unfortunately scanty bibliographical source, it nevertheless was stimulating in its selection of material that had been omitted or new material seeped out from China.

This was followed by other volumes: Volume 7 covers the period from the founding of the People's Republic (October 1949) until the Great Leap Forward (1958) and contains 478 documents, mainly composed of his letters and telegrams, that are not included in the "Official" Volume 5 of the Selected Works that covered this period.

Volume 8 gathers texts documenting a critical and dynamic period in the People's Republic: 1958-1962 and includes the main documents from the Lushan Meeting in 1959, where the two-lines first emerged in open struggle in party meetings.

Volume 9, originally released in December 1994, covers the next stage in the developments that led to the initiation of the Socialist Education Movement and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution taking the narrative up to 1970.

The editors at Kranti Publications noted

"During the great proletariat cultural revolution a nationwide programme of studying the works of chairman Mao were launched and it was in high tide. Then Mao himself observed: *"The Selected Works of Mao, how much of it is mine! It is a work of blood. The struggle in the soviets was very acute. Because of the errors of the Wang Ming line we had to embark on the 25,000 li Long March. These things in Selected Works of Mao were taught to us by the masses and paid for with blood sacrifices"*.<sup>[iv]</sup>

Long out of print, in 2020/21 these volumes were made available in corrected reprints by the overtly MLM publishing house, Foreign Language Press. When announcing the release of

the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* Vol. IX, FLP's editorial team observed the challenge of scholarship in the service of revolutionary advance when it explained the difficulties with sourcing material for those pioneering editors at Kranti Publications.

### Source material

Since his death, any official evaluation of Mao has been framed by the document [on party history](#) adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the CPC on June 27, 1981. It has more nuances argument than its critics credit but still the bottom line was to draw a line in the mid-1950s and state that anything after that period associated with Mao was ultra-leftist and disastrous for Chinese society.

Basically everything the modern Maoist appreciates in Mao, the politics of the mass line and supervisory mass campaigns, the anti-revisionist stance, radical encourage for anti-imperialists, the Cultural Revolution's emphasis on 'continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat' has been condemned by the Chinese leadership since his death.

However as it turned out, the 1981 Resolution would not end work on Mao's life. Memoirs by military figures and Mao staff members, biographical studies of senior figures, and selective issue of Party documents added to the knowledge of Mao's actions and words. Besides Chinese authored memoirs, (amongst them two translated for English-speaking market) Quan Yanchi (1992) and Zhong Wenxian (ed) (1986), [\[v\]](#) work by oversea authors became available: Ross Terrill's and Philip Short's biography of Mao were published by Chinese publishing houses.

The fresh attention to Mao was low-key and factual. It stressed his human side, *Guangming Ribao* ran an article detailing Mao's grave health problems — including a respiratory ailment due to his smoking — from the spring of 1971 until his death. What was not permitted was any positive evaluation or reference to what had been condemned as Mao's political leftism.

A powerful "*Mao re*" (Mao fever) of the early 1990s produced a cultural, good-humoured remembrance of the former leader.

Sometimes the use of Mao was commercial, his image on lighters and wristwatches along with the posters, busts and tourist-targeted reproduction copies of Quotations. Such trivial uses will go on being made of Mao image. Sometimes it was superstitious, satiric, or nostalgic. Seldom was it politically.

Another Mao fever that began in 2003. This was the year of the 110th anniversary of Mao's birth, the publication of a solid official party history biography of Mao, of many films, performances and other events marking the anniversary. On this occasion, Hu Jintao paying lip service said Mao still offered China "precious spiritual wealth." In forty-eight days, the special website devoted to the 110th Mao anniversary received half a million hits. The thought of Mao remained strong in the mass culture of China, manifest in popular nostalgia if absent from its political and economic policies. It is Mao who still resonates in the spiritually sterile and morally corrupt capitalist society of post-Mao China. How far Maoist nostalgia is reflective and not restorative is another question.



With profound proletarian class feelings toward our great leader Chairman Mao, the revolutionary workers and staff members of the Peking Foreign Languages Printing Press print Chairman Mao's works, maintaining high quality.

Obviously the source for material by Mao comes from China. All foreign language editions and collections draw upon official and

unofficial compilations of texts. There is still no complete Chinese edition of Mao's works – Professor Takeuchi Minoru [\[vi\]](#) spent decades producing a Japanese language collection of Mao's pre-1949 writings in 20 volumes, and Stuart Schram (continued by Timothy Creek) English language series **Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912-49** runs to twelve published volumes. [\[vii\]](#)

Many western publications – especially those including texts not found in the first four volumes of Selected Works – draw upon the explosion of material collected and produced during the Cultural Revolution when large unofficial collections of Mao's papers, popularly title “Long Live Mao Zedong Thought” – the various *sixiang wansui* editions – contained instructions, letters, talks and quotations seldom checked for authenticity or accuracy without bibliographical conventions. These *sixiang wansui* volumes from 1967 and 1969 emerged from the Institute of International Relations in Taipei. They were compiled from *neibu* (restricted circulation) [\[viii\]](#) material captured when Red Guards occupied ministries or other government offices, and raids on homes of leading officials. Many of these texts appear to be lecture notes taken down by anonymous hands.

These raw texts contribute to the party's historiography and Mao's role in it but they are very much the product of daily politics. These were treated as largely trustworthy not least when translated and popularised in *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* by Stuart Schram (in UK published as *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed. Talks and Letters: 1956-71*). There are still other sources to mine, the little known sources, often non-Chinese sourced that could be traced e.g. Anna Louise Strong: *Three Interviews with Chairman Mao Zedong*. [\[ix\]](#)

Not surprisingly there are significant differences and details within the *Wansui* volumes which provided access to Mao's unofficial work published without being shaped or polished by consideration or subject to political editing and concerns. The breadth and depth of material reproduced in Taiwan in the early 1970s had previously been unavailable to western scholars and were uneven in quality and indifferent to bibliographical filters and checks.



There was the American government's publication in 1978 of *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)* produced by the Joint Publications Research Service [x] based on a ten volume Chinese language edition, *Mao Tse-tung Chi* that appeared in Hong Kong in 1975 . However any item official published in Selected Works or Selected Readings were not included. Again the main source were the unofficial Red Guard collections *Mao Tse-tung Ssu-shiang Wan-sui* (Long live Mao Tse-tung thought).

### After Mao

Without great fanfare and promotion, and not intended for a mass readership, nevertheless there has been detailed and thematically organized collections of Mao works published. China state publications provide the bedrock of material of work by Mao published in China after his death, and seeded many an academic's publishing record.

The body of available material expanded through selective official publication of individual items like letters and various thematic volumes which are published exclusively in Chinese language editions, either openly or for restricted circulation (*neibu*) mainly from the Central Committee supervised Department for Research on Party literature.

The Central Committee's Research Institute on Party Literature remains responsible for releasing new material. The official publication of Mao's work had been significant as defining the political orthodoxy. Its release was a carefully choreographed and deliberate statement. This was a function of the *Selected Works* version published during Mao's lifetime when revised texts were produced under Mao's supervision and often with his active participation. Mao's *Selected Works* were not simply a historical collection recording what was said at the time. They have been subject to collective editing reflecting their purpose as a political instrument as party orthodox and promotion of ideological training. For instance, Volume V of Selected Writings had only 70 articles from the period 1949-1957 when Western academics identified 750 possible entries for inclusion and actually selected 522 to publish. [xi] Drawn up under the brief tenure of Hua Guofeng, Volume V was quickly suppressed partly because of its "errors" in its stance of upholding the "continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the revolution".

As with previous work, after Mao's death the assumption must be that public editions of Mao's writings are still released to support current party policy. Even though the contents are incomplete and extremely selective in relation to the total corpus of Mao's work, notable was the lack of appearance of Mao's more radical advocacy, a shunning of the "ultra-leftist" positions associated with Mao's later years (seemingly any thought after the aged of 63). [\[xii\]](#)

Back in 1988, Timothy Cheek discussed the massive amount of material released with 23 volumes of talks and writings attributed to Mao, amounting to over 5,500 pages. [\[xiii\]](#) Unlike the hundreds of millions of copies involved in the print run of officially sponsored Mao publications in his life time, and the 28 million copies of Volume V of Selected Work published in 1977-78, these new releases were more modest in number and not as widely circulated beyond the orbit of the sinologist field. Such releases fed new publications of Mao's writing in English by academic publishers such as *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward* [\[xiv\]](#).

In all, the release from the 1980s onwards were part of a Chinese party/state sanction scholarly and historicist drive that saw a release of new volumes of Mao's writings that specialist libraries like at Harvard (USA) and western academics secured access regardless of their circulation status. Some of the sources referenced by scholars include:

1983 Selected Correspondences of Mao Zedong

1983 Selected Materials regarding Mao Zedong's Journalistic work

1983 Collected writings of Mao Zedong on the investigations in the countryside.

1986 Mao Zedong Reader in two volume edition published covering 1921-1964 with copious (488) and lengthy end notes.

1986 a collection of 14 articles on Mao's reading habits was published: Mao Zedong's Reading Life (Mao Zedong de dushu shenghuo , Sanlian Shudian, Beijing 1986)

1987 a research guide to 14,000 items in two volumes, Index to research on Mao Zedong's life and works ( Mao Zedong shengping, zhuzuo yanjiu suoyin. Guofeng Daxue Chubanshe, Beijing 1987) was published. A testimony to the interest and extent of material generated around Mao.

1987 A Collection of Mao Zedong's Comments and Notes on Philosophical Writings is another volume of the series of Mao Zedong's special works edited by the CPC Central Committee's Party Literature Research Center (with the cooperation of other units). It is a collection of Mao Zedong's notes on and extracts from the philosophical writings on Marxism which he studied between the 1930's and 1960's. "*Most of them have never been published before.*" [\[xv\]](#)

1987 – 1996 Mao Zedong's Manuscript since the founding of the People's Republic (Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao .Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987-1996). This multivolume collection has three volumes covering the period of the Cultural revolution: Volume 11: January 1964 – December 1965 to Volume 13: January 1969 – July 1976

1991 Draft Writings by Mao Zedong for the Early Period, June 1912-November 1920. Mao Zedong Zaoqi Wengao, 1912.6-1920.11 Changsha: Hunan Chaubanshe.

1993-1999. The Party Literature Research Centre of the Central Committee published the multi-volume '*Mao Zedong Works*'. The first volume appeared in 1993 on the Centenary of Mao's birth, and Xinhua News Agency announced publication of the 8th volume in July 1999. The multi-volume work contains over 800 pieces not previously published in the Chinese edition of "*Selected Works of Mao Zedong*", although only key items from 1966 onwards are included because the Cultural Revolution "*launched by Chairman Mao, was a mistake of overall importance*".[\[xvi\]](#)

1993 Mao Zedong's Military Writings six volumes (Mao Zedong junshi wenji .Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1993).

1994 Selection of Materials by Mao Zedong on Foreign Affairs (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1994) In the former, over five-sixths of the documentation covers the post-

1949 period, the last being from his May 25, 1974 talk with former British Prime Minister Edward Heath. An English-language collection of Mao's writing *On Diplomacy* was produced by Foreign Language Press in 1998.

1995 A Collection of Reports and Speeches by Mao Zedong to the Seventh Party Congress (Mao Zedong zai qida de baogao he jianghua ji . Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995).

Also, Nancy Hearst and Tony Saich suggested that (although unseen) a limited circulation 60-volume edition of pre-1949 Mao texts apparently exists. [\[xvii\]](#)

1998 Complete Books of Mao Zedong, 6 volumes (ed) Jiang Jiannong. Mao Zedong Chuan Shu, Shijiazhuang: Hebi Renmin Chubanshe

2013 Mao Zedong Nianpu 1949-1976 of six volumes of previously obscure materials from the central party archives press published to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, Guangming Daily (23/12/2013) reported the publication of the Mao Nianpu (or Mao Zedong Chronology) (1949-1976). Compiled by the CCCPC Party Literature Research Office, it comprised six volumes and about three million words, covering Mao's life and achievements during the twenty-seven years from the founding of the People's Republic of China to his death.

Adam Cathcart commented that in *Mao Zedong Nianpu* a single editor was responsible for editing the entire Cultural Revolution period, covered in a single volume of 653 pages of text covering ten years (1966-1976), and suggests Mao's dwindling physical activity could be partially to account for the relative lack of density of the entries. Judicious selection based on the 1981 resolution may leave other writings safely in the archives?

At the same time, the Chronicle of Mao Zedong (1893-1949) (three volumes) published in December 1993 has been revised and issued across the country.

## Turning Mao's Chinese into English

The reworking on Mao related text, as in the scholarship undertaken by FLP, is a constant feature as in finding the original source of a document that was only available as an excerpt in the 1st edition of the Selected Works Vol. 9 and replace the excerpt with it in the 2nd edition. But there are frustrations too as FLP Twitter account noted: *“wish we found this a week earlier. [Rab Rab Press](#), a tiny publisher from Finland, has released in June 2020 a new translation of the last meeting of Mao with Red Guards leaders that corrects so many parts that the JPRS translation one has wrongly translated.”*

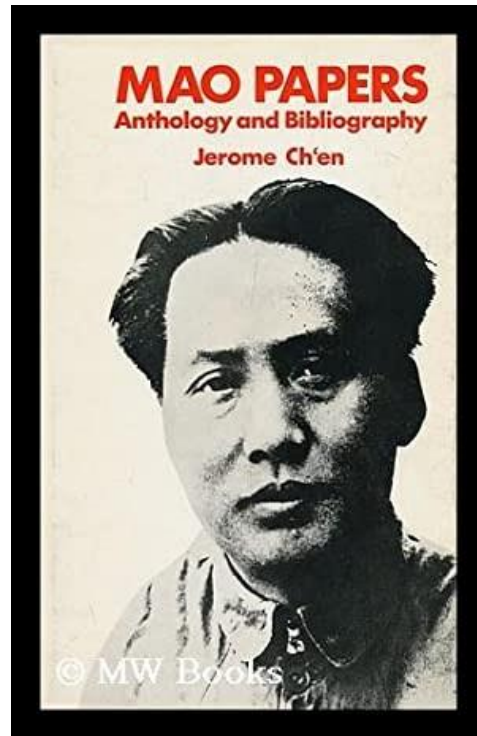
Foreign Language Press has taken on the challenge with an announcement regarding the future of their work on the Mao's writings. Work has already begun on Volume X with several hundreds of page of Mao's writings, interviews, letters and instructions from 1966 to 1976 that have yet to be released in English. They hope to publish in 2021. [\[xviii\]](#)

The readability of the translated work requires an understanding of the nuances of Chinese terms and expressions while ensuring that what is read is both accurate and conveys what was said. A good translation requires more than transliteration in the translation, a good English renderings of Mao's Chinese, translate into “accuracy and nuance, tone and register.” These concerns were evident in the 1930s according to this account by Edgar Snow.

In his Red Star over China Snow writes: “Seated next to me was Wu Liang-ping, a young Soviet ‘functionary’, who acted as interpreter during my ‘formal’ interviews with Mao Tse-tung. I wrote down in full in English Mao Tse-tung’s answers to my questions, and these were then translated into Chinese and corrected by Mao, who is noted for his insistence upon accuracy of detail. With the assistance of Mr. Wu, the interviews were then re-translated into English.” In 1979 Wu Liang-ping wrote an additional explanation: “At the request of Mao Tse-tung, Snow compiled the notes on Mao’s revolutionary experience and wrote an account that was, after having been translated into Chinese by Huang Hua, scrutinized and revised slightly by Mao. Huang Hua translated these revisions into English, and returned the draft to Snow.” [\[xix\]](#)

Reviewing the English language series *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings*, Brantly Womack judged “they lack the genius of the official Chinese translations. The translations in the official *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* are remarkable for their ability to transcend the literal text and to get the original point across better with a different construction or wording.” [xx]

Foreign Language Press alluded to the questions raised on which version of the available texts are more authentic, or more authoritative, in its consideration of using the texts in the collection published as *Mao Papers, Anthology and Bibliography* edited by Jerome Chen (1970).



It was also a practical concern as FLP's second editions of the “*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*” compiled in early 1990s by comrades from Kranti Publications, corrects typographical and formatting errors. In *Mao Papers* the editor had undertaken his own translation and ignored pre-existing official version of English language published texts. A noted and respected translator of Mao, the sinologist Stuart Scram (1924 -2012) noted in his review of the publication of these independent translations – “many of which are highly elliptical and difficult to interpret” – errors in dating and distorting editorial choices. [xxi]

The FLP highlight some of these concerns in Jerome Chen's use of material that have to be addressed by any compiler of Mao's writings. [xxii] This small, if energised MLM publishing house noted in its politically-driven scholarship:

“You can trace our evolution in Mao's *Selected Works*. Volume VI is basically a reprint with some corrections of the more obvious typographical errors; Volume VII was much more thoroughly copyedited and we replaced all the Wade-Giles Chinese with *pinyin* and included an index of names and places; Volume

VIII included, in addition to the corrections made in previous volumes, corrections in the sourcing of the texts in particular; and Volume IX... in Volume IX we uncovered a whole host of problems. Texts that were translated incorrectly, placed out of context, chopped up and moved into other texts and dated and sourced incorrectly. The more deeply we dug, the more errors we discovered, and found ourselves irretrievably behind schedule.” [\[xxiii\]](#)

On translating Mao, academic author Thomas Kampen, listed the difficulties the task involves [\[xxiv\]](#)

Many aspects have to be considered:

- 1) Many of Mao’s speeches were not intended for publication.
- 2) Many speeches were not based on detailed manuscripts.
- 3) Many listeners were not from Hunan and were not familiar with his pronunciation.
- 4) Notes were handwritten and not always legible.
- 5) The speeches sometimes lasted for several hours (people may have been exhausted).
- 6) Ambiguity was not always intended; participants were aware of the speeches by other leaders or RMRB/Hong Qi editorials of the time.

The officially published works of Mao have gone through an editorial process and polishing not unknown in western publishing circles where fiction texts receive the blue pencil while maintaining the mythology of the lone writer, and why employ a sub-editor in a newspaper office, who would go without the benefit of peer review in academic study that brings items to the author’s attention? As FLP notes, the source material for unofficial publication of work attributed to Mao are “*compilations of documents published in other compilations translated from... Chinese compilations*”.

A background case study illustrating the problems suggested to in the endeavour to bring Mao’s work to a wider audience. Just two small episodes illustrates the complexities involved in presenting Mao for professional academics:

Is what you read, what was written – the problem of mistranslation was explored upon in a blog by Leeds University

lecture, Adam Cathcart with regard to Mao's addresses to the Chengdu conference of March 1958 when "*Mao gave no fewer than six speeches at the Chengdu meeting — none of which was publicised at the time.*" [\[xxv\]](#)

Once you have a translated quote, is it understood and used appropriately with accuracy? The academic response [\[xxvi\]](#) provoked by the lies and distortion contained in the worldwide best-selling hatchett job on Mao by Jung Chang and her husband, Jon Halliday, was a public condemnation of "poor scholarship" that is discussed quietly online in numerous forums. For instance, Did Mao say let half the people starve? Academic consensus growing that Frank Dikotter, author of a best-selling trilogy on modern Chinese history, got Mao's quote seriously wrong does not stop it been repeated and reproduced elsewhere. The hunt for the killer quote was dissect and framed within an academic discussion. [\[xxvii\]](#)

The discussion did bring forth a self-criticism from an eminent scholar in the field of Chinese studies, Michael Schoenhals,

"...perhaps you would like to believe that the authors of *Mao's Last Revolution* (HUP 2006) can be trusted when, on p. 102, they have Mao saying "the more people you kill, the more revolutionary you are"? Don't! I was responsible for that translation of Mao's abstruse remark "越杀人就越要革命" and the translation is *wrong*. A correct translation .... should read "The greater the number of people murdered, the greater the wish [on the part of the survivors] for a revolution." A world of difference!"

The evidence of the diversity of material since 1949 might question the need for the translation of every item produced in his life-time, after all it would take an equal amount to read and study it!

Not all entries need equal attention and study as the volumes are full of sleight, single sentences entries, recording comments and letters, diplomatic greetings and observation written by Mao e.g a simple opinion is editorial elevated to be taken as an evaluation of the movie "The Song of the Gardener" - Mao's comment in November 1974 was: *I think it is a good show.*



An explanatory note from the editor explains that prior to this, the “Gang of Four” had criticised the movie “The Gardener” in Hunan in November 1974. [\[xxviii\]](#)

Its inclusion may serve a wider agenda of the Chinese authorities seeking to disassociate Mao from the “Gang of Four” by citing differences in opinion but much further contextual research would be required, and what criteria is invoked in the judgement – artistic, political, politeness? The numerous occurrence of such entries reinforces the need to evaluate and select what is given prominence in any published work.

The original producers of the unauthorised Volume Six acknowledged the limitations of “the works included in this volume, we have neither the means nor the competence to vouch safe about their authenticity and completeness.” Upfront there were warnings for the reader to be wary – “We fondly hope that much more additional material could come to light enabling us to substantially improve on this” – but in that absence the intention was to “further stimulating the study of Mao’s works.” [\[xxix\]](#)

They pointed out the weakness in that there was poor bibliographic control. *..Except indicating the primary source quoted in the originals, no attempt is made to annotate or edit the texts in any respect or in any manner.* So maybe “Works” is accurate, rather than writings, as much of what is available consists of manuscripts of notes and contemptuous recording by others.

### **Political Interpretation**

“No verdict on a man who changed either the course of events or accepted patterns of thought (and Mao changed both) can ever be called final. Many such individuals are re-evaluated, and argued about, decades or even centuries after their disappearance.” Stuart Schram 1982 in a lecture in Hong Kong.

The fashion to paint Mao as one-dimensionally and unremittingly evil was not Deng’s, nor was the idea of maintaining Mao’s legacy: Deng Xiaoping had a different agenda for China’s development that was reformist, state capitalist and market-driven.

In saying that we should use as our guide genuine Mao Zedong Thought taken as an integral whole, I mean that we should have a correct and comprehensive understanding of Mao Zedong Thought as a system and that we should be proficient at studying it, mastering it, and applying it as a guide to our work. Only in this way can we be sure that we are not fragmenting Mao Zedong Thought, distorting or debasing it. We can then see that what Comrade Mao Zedong said with regard to a specific question at a given time and under particular circumstances was correct, and that what he said with regard to the same question at a different time and under different circumstances was also correct, despite occasional differences in the extent of elaboration, in emphasis and even in the formulation of his ideas. So we must acquire a correct understanding of Mao Zedong Thought as an integral system instead of just citing a few specific words or sentences.[\[xxx\]](#)

One approach of the post-Mao leadership was to quote an earlier Mao in contrast to his later self as demonstrated in the Beijing Review article, “Chairman Mao on Mao Zedong Thought”. [\[xxxi\]](#) It sought to establish a legitimatising source and symbol it could use against the Mao that would issue calls to bombard the headquarters against the capitalist roaders. The perspective was reinforced that condemned and shelved Mao’s erroneous thinking. Li Rui, briefly in the mid-1950s, the personal secretary to Mao Zedong on industrial affairs, noted for his criticisms of the Great Leap Forward, so not an unpartisan observer, commented on the wider impact of such thinking:

As a historical phenomenon, Mao Zedong’s erroneous thinking in his later years also generated considerable worldwide impact.

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong Thought was declared to be the “third milestone” in the evolution of Marxism, focusing on this erroneous thinking in his later years. Left-wing parties and groups in some countries not only accepted his theories but also put them into practice. The ways in which the Cultural Revolution was conducted were once followed by radicals in a dozen countries and regions and at one time created a stir, such as the “Red May Storm” in France, the “Khmer Rouge” in Southeast Asia, and the “Shining Path” in Latin America. This indicated that Mao Zedong’s erroneous thinking in his later years

already went beyond national boundaries and its study is of international importance. [xxxii]

Political Interpretation in China is hostile to the sentiments expressed worldwide by revolutionaries was voiced by the Australian E.F. Hill:

“This is meant to be no more than a note prompted by another note. I adhere to the view that Mao Zedong made a unique contribution to the international cause of Communism and the liberation of mankind. His writings should be deeply studied and independently thought over using the general principles and putting on one side those things peculiarity confined to China.” [xxxiii]

In a 1956 conversation with representatives of some Latin American communist parties, Mao Zedong warns them about mechanically copying the experiences of the Chinese revolution:

“The experience of the Chinese revolution, that is, building rural base areas, encircling the cities from the countryside and finally seizing the cities, may not be wholly applicable to many of your countries, though it can serve for your reference. I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically. The experience of any foreign country can serve only for reference and must not be regarded as dogma. The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries—the two must be integrated.” [xxxiv]

Studying Mao can be a fulltime occupation and the field of scholarship has generated library shelves throughout the world. The official publication of Mao has continued with the specific intent to tame and shape his legacy. The “collective wisdom” created and applied throughout the Chinese Revolution is institutionalise in the party, relativizing his thought away from its dominance as Deng Xiaoping began the de-mythologizing of Mao that keeps him as a symbol. Whilst the 1987 new material for the Study of Mao Zedong’s Philosophical Thinking was advertised as “something which has great theoretical and practical significance” in *Red Flag*, little sweeps into party practice.

The process of articulating and systematizing what became known as the Thought of Mao Zedong within China began in the mid-1930s amidst the shift from a rural class-based revolution to a national united front against Japanese imperialism; the application of Marxism to Chinese conditions. It was this intellectual contribution that was the discourse of Western academics when they debated the subject of Maoism.[\[xxxv\]](#) Events moved on, and different interpretations arose...

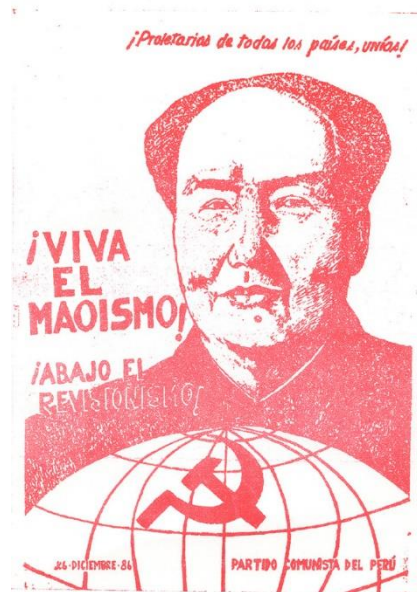
The analyses of Stuart Schram which stressed Mao's early immersion in Chinese classical literature, drawing upon Mao's numerous allusions to these in his talks and writings, developed the notion that Mao's political philosophy, steeped in Chinese tradition, and his political practice, not least leading a successful peasant-based revolution, was substantially different from orthodox Marxism as sanctioned in the Soviet Union.

In Mao studies a group of radical academics (Richard Pfeffer, Andrew Walder and Mark Selden) engaged in scholarly dispute with the non-Marxist Sinologists Stuart Schram and Benjamin Schwartz in the journal of *Modern China* 1976/1977 to challenge this evaluation as being based on a rigid understanding of what constituted Maoist canon.

Paul Healy and Nick Knight offer an alternative, Marxist-orientated perspective in studying Mao's career compared to the atheoretical textual attention of Professor Schram in the volume edited with Arif Dirlik (1997) *Critical perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* [\[xxxvi\]](#)

The radical argument drew upon Mao's clearly self-professed allegiance to Marxism, drawing upon the anti-authoritarianism of the Cultural Revolution period as well as the earlier Yanan writings of Mao that resonated with the Marx of 'German Ideology' and the (then) newly emerging body of writings by the early Marx, in particular '*Grundrisse*'. Maoist-inclined intellectuals e.g. David Fernbach and Martin Nicolas provided many of the translations of these works. Mao's criticism of 'Soviet revisionism' and articulation of a generative class thesis under socialist state structures drew support from those attracted to an alternative vision from that provided by a Soviet Union that seemed little different from its capitalist Cold War adversaries.

The early years of this century saw intellectual ferment among self-identifying Maoist focusing on the ideological judgements behind terminology issues – to use Mao Zedong Thought or Maoism.[\[xxxvii\]](#) That contention in recent years has swivelled to encompass a contention that basically Mao Zedong was not even a maoist. One current associated with the positions of the chairman of Partido Comunista del Peru (CPP), Chairman Gonzalo, argues that it needs someone like Gonzalo to systematize and formulate the universal lessons learned from the revolutionary struggle in China led by Mao, critics ask in what way have CPP and Gonzalo systematized and formulated Mao’s thinking questioning whether a few authoritative text produced by the PCP suffice as the basis for such an assertion when contested by other Maoists. [\[xxxviii\]](#)



“For most Maoists, the practices and lessons learned from the Cultural Revolution are the cornerstone of the development of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to Maoism. The launching of the GPCR was Mao’s response to the emergence of a new bureaucratic capitalist class in the Party under socialism. He believed that the only way to win the struggle for socialism was the elevated consciousness of the masses and their ability to rectify the Party: to target the real enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat within the Party leadership itself. In the end, the masses were unable to accomplish this, in spite of—as you can read in the many documents in this volume—all of his efforts to enable them to do so.”[\[xxxix\]](#)

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[iii] Timothy Cheek, The 'Genius' Mao: a treasure trove of 23 newly available volumes of post-1949 Mao Zedong texts. *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 19/20, 1988.

[iv] *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Volume 9 (1993) Kranti Publications

[v] Quan Yanchi (1992) *Mao Zedong Man, Not God*. Translated by Wang Wenjiong and English text edited by Gale Hadfield. Paperback: 213 pages. Foreign Languages Press. 9787119014456 and Zhong Wenxian (ed) (1986) *Mao Zedong: Biography - Assessment -Reminiscences*. 238 pages. Foreign Languages Press .083511886X

[vi] *Mao Zedong Ji* (Collected Writings of Mao Zedong) edited by Takeuchi Minoru. 10 volumes. (Tokyo: Sososha 2nd ed. 1983) + *Mao Zedong Ji: Bujuan* (Supplement to Collected Writings of Mao Zedong ) edited by Takeuchi Minoru. 10 volumes. (Tokyo : Sososha 1983-1986)

[vii] See <https://emaoism.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/nick-knight.pdf>

[viii] Neibu – The concept of restricted circulation based on political criteria is a much discussed source by western academics who are less forthcoming about the private government briefings and seminars, the newsletters of restricted circulation based on financial criteria, and research products from the financial markets circulated by connections and restricted access to archives that all contribute to the ecology of information circulation in the west.

[ix] *The China Quarterly*, No. 103 (Sep., 1985), pp. 489-509

[x] The Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) was a United States government defense-funded organization that was absorbed into the monitoring service, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

[xi] Michael Y.M.Kau and John K Leung, *The Writing of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*: Vol 1 September 1949-December 1955 (1986) New York: M.E. Sharpe: Vol 2 January 1956- December 1957 (1992) New York: M.E. Sharpe

[xii] See Li Rui (1996) An Initial Study on Mao Zedong's Erroneous "Left" Thinking in His Later Years. *Chinese Law & Government*, 29:4, 6-11

[xiii] Timothy Cheek, The 'Genius' Mao: a treasure trove of 23 newly available volumes of post-1949 Mao Zedong texts. *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 19/20, 1988

[xiv] *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward* edited by Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu. Harvard University, 1989

[xv] Noted Shi Zhongquan in *Hongqi* [Red Flag] No 17, 1 Sept 1987 pp 3-9

[xvi] "All volumes of 'Mao Zedong Works' published." *Xinhua News Agency* July 1st 1999.

[xvii] Newly Available Sources on CCP History from the People's Republic of China in *New perspectives on state socialism of China* (eds) Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich. 1997

[xviii] Announcing the upcoming release of the Selected Works of Mao Zedong Vol. IX. [December 26, 2020](#)

[xix] <https://emaoism.wordpress.com/2015/04/26/52-republication-of-mao-zedongs-autobiography/>

[xx] Brantly Womack, Mao before Maoism. *The China Journal* No.46 July 2001:95-117. His 1977 Ph.D. thesis at the University of Chicago was published in 1982: *Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917-1935* Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii. Subsequently published by China Renmin University Press (2006) translated as *Mao Zedong Zhengzhi Sixiang de Jichu (1917-1935)* 毛泽东政治思想的基础 (1917-1935).

[xxi] *The China Quarterly* 46 June 1971: 366-369

[xxii] For detail criticism see "Announcing the upcoming release of the Selected Works of Mao Zedong Vol. IX." [December 26, 2020](#)

[xxiii] Announcing the upcoming release of the Selected Works of Mao Zedong Vol. IX. [December 26, 2020](#)

[xxiv] <https://networks.h-net.org/node/3544/discussions/99266/looking-great-leap-smoking-gun-document> &nbsp; December 9, 2015

[xxv] See <https://adamcathcart.com/2019/01/07/mistranslating-mao-in-chengdu-1958/>

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[xxvii] See: Looking for Great Leap “smoking gun”.<https://networks.h-net.org/node/3544/discussions/99266/looking-great-leap-smoking-gun-document>

[xxviii] *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the founding of the state* vol.13 Jan. 1969-July 1976

[xxix] *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Volume 6, Kranti publications 1990 [Publisher's Note]

[xxx] Speech at the Third Plenary Session of the Tenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. July 21, 1977. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Volume II 1975-1982. See also, Deng Xiaoping (1960) *Correctly Disseminate Mao Zedong Thought* <https://emaivism.wordpress.com/2015/04/21/1960-correctly-disseminate-mao-zedong-thought/>

[xxxi] *Beijing Review*, #2, Jan. 14, 1980, pp. 23-26 or <https://emaivism.wordpress.com/2015/04/25/chairman-mao-on-mao-zedong-thought/>

[xxxii] Li Rui (1996) An Initial Study on Mao Zedong's Erroneous “Left” Thinking in His Later Years, *Chinese Law & Government*, 29:4, 6-11

[xxxiii] <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/australia/hill-mao.htm>



A more extended and argued piece can be found in the work of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile, [Evaluation of the Work of Mao Tsetung](#) [published in *Revolution*, Journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1980].

[xxxiv] [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5\\_54.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_54.htm)

[xxxv] See: What is Maoism? A Symposium, [Problems of Communism](#), September 1966 Issue and the earlier disagreements voiced in the pages of *The China Quarterly*: Karl Wittvogel, “The Legend of Maoism” *China Quarterly* Nos 1-2 (1960) and Benjamin Schwartz, “The Legend of the ‘Legend of Maoism’” *China Quarterly* No.2 (April-June 1960).

[xxxvi] Dirlik (1997) New Jersey: Humanities Press. See: ‘Mao Zedong’s Thought and Critical Scholarship’ pp3-20

[xxxvii] See J. Moufawad-Paul, *Critique of Maoist Reason* FLP 2020

[xxxviii] PCP articles found in *Collected Works of the PCP 1968-1987* FLP 2016. Drawing a line of demarcation in 21st Maoism, the veteran Philippine Marxist, Joma Ma. Sison, in an interview spoke critically on those taking such positions in the contemporary world communist movement. Published by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, 18 November 2019 <https://ndfp.org/questions-on-mao-zedong-thought-maoism/>

[xxxix] Announcing the upcoming release of the Selected Works of Mao Zedong Vol. IX. [December 26, 2020](#)

# Building a bibliography

JANUARY 1, 2019

Research Note: bibliographic information on essays and articles that look at various aspects of Mao Zedong Thought. Of course, each item will have its own sources and selected further readings to build the library of material dedicated to explore Mao and his legacy.



*Mao Zedong Thought Lives:*

*Volume 1 ~ Essays in Commemoration of Mao's Centennial.*

Eds. Jose Maria Sison & Stefan Engels (1995) Utrecht: Center for Social Studies, & Essen: *Verlag Neuer Weg*.

*Contents* | Mao Zedong Thought Lives

Stefan Engels | Mao Zedong's Teachings on the Mode of Thinking

Alice G. Guillermo | Mao Zedong's Revolutionary Aesthetics and 'its influence on the Philippine Struggle

Armando Liwanag | Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as Guide to the Philippine Revolution

Otto Vargas | Reflections on a Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong

William Hinton | Mao's Socialist line in Chinese Agriculture

William Hinton | Can Dragons Swap pearls with the Dragon god of the Seas?

D.Y.Hsu & P.Y.Ching | Labor reform – Mao vs, Liu-Deng

D.Y.Hsu & P.Y.Ching | Mass Movement: Mao's Socialist Strategy for Change

Joshua S.S. Muldavin | From Mao to Deng: The Development of Underdevelopment in China

Carol Andreas | Women in the 20th Century China: The Maoist Legacy

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