

Mao Zedong, Collected Works of

Máo Zé dōng wén jí 毛泽东文集

The collected works of Mao Zedong, leader of the Chinese Communist Party from the 1930s to his death in 1976, are composed of his writings on political, military, economic, and philosophical affairs. Originally presented as the basis of Mao Zedong Thought, after his death this concept was revised to include the ideas of other CCP revolutionaries prior to 1949.

The collected works of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong Thought, now defined as a scientific ideological system developed by early CCP revolutionaries applying Marxism-Leninism in a Chinese context, were an inspiration to revolutionaries around the world in the 1960s and 1970s as well as a linchpin of China's Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Since Mao Zedong Thought began to be recognized as a unique and critical component of party ideology in the early 1940s, many collections of his works have been published in China. During the Revolutionary War period prior to 1949, several collections were published in China but, because of limited resources and wartime conditions, not in substantial numbers. The best-known collection is the four-volume *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, published between 1952 (Volume 1) and 1960 (Volume 4) (and in English in the 1960s).

The *Selected Works* consists of carefully chosen and significantly edited pieces written by Mao between 1926—during the First United Front, a period from

1923 to 1927 during which the CCP united with the Nationalist Party (Guomindang) in an attempt to unite China—and September 1949, less than a month before the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1 October. The pieces contain a wide range of political and political-economic analyses, beginning with “Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society” (March 1926) and including analyses of domestic and international situations, military writings discussing strategies and tactics from the revolutionary period, and some of his best-known philosophical writings, such as “On Practice” (July 1937) and “On Contradiction” (August 1937). They also include what later became known as the “Three Constantly Read Articles”: “In Memory of Norman Bethune” (December 1930), “Serve the People” (September 1944), and “The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountain” (June 1945), which celebrated the revolutionary spirit of working for the public good and overcoming obstacles regardless of costs.

In the early 1960s additional collections, most famously the *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Zedong*, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong*, and numerous versions of *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (known in the West as the “Little Red Book”), were published, many under the sponsorship of Mao's then-designated successor, Defense Minister Lin Biao (who later died allegedly fleeing after an attempted coup against Mao). But the Little Red Book isolated brief quotes from Mao's work to be memorized and applied universally, thus virtually eliminating any real meaning. While providing an underlying basis for unity, the book allowed the quotes to be reduced



An English copy of the Little Red Book, Mao Zedong's famous book of quotations.

to slogans used in internecine (relating to conflict within a group) struggles. Two lesser-known but more substantial collections entitled *Long Live the Thought of Mao Zedong!* were published by unnamed sources during the Cultural Revolution. They contain Mao's previously unpublished but significant works and speeches.

After Mao's death the fifth volume of the *Selected Works*, including selected works through 1957, was published in 1977 in part as an unsuccessful effort by Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, to strengthen his own position. Finally, between 1993 and 1999 an additional eight-volume *Mao Zedong Works* was published, including over eight hundred works not included in the *Selected Works* but specifically excluding works associated with the Cultural Revolution, which the Chinese Communist Party in 1981 had labeled a mistake initiated by Mao.

Richard LEVY

Further Reading

- Kao, Michael Y. M., & Leung, John (Eds.). (1986 & 1992). *The writings of Mao Zedong 1949–1976*, Vol. 1 & 2. White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Mao Zedong Internet Archive (n.d.). Retrieved September 8, 2008, from <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/index.htm>
- Takeuchi Minoru (1970–1972). *Mao Zedong ji* [Collected writings of Mao Zedong]. Tokyo: Hokubasha.

