

Mao - Greatest Mass Murderer in History?



 globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/mao-murder.htm

from	to	event	low	high
1949	1953	Totalization Period	4,000,000	8,427,000
1949	1976	<u>Laogai Camps</u>	20,000,000	27,000,000
1958	1960	<u>Great Leap Forward</u>	7,474,000	45,000,000
1960	1962	<u>Great Famine</u>	10,729,000	
1966	1976	<u>Cultural Revolution</u>	40,000	30,000,000
1979	1989	Liberalization		874,000
			42,243,000	110,427,000

Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun, according to Chairman Mao. One frequently hears assertions that Mao was the top mass murderer in human history with 60+ million bodies behind him.

But in some cases (notably Stalin's and Mao's cases), it may be difficult to distinguish between the millions who died indirectly because of their political decisions, versus those who were killed as a deliberate result of policy. That is, there is a fundamental difference between the deliberate mass murder in Hitler's death camps, and deaths in Mao's China due to incompetent policies.

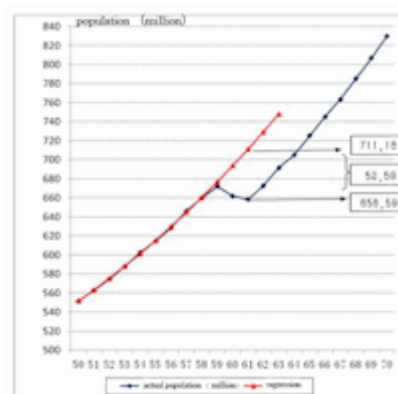
What is wanted is a distinction between culpable sins of commission, and sins of omission, but in the real world the bright line between the two is dreadfully blurred. Under US domestic law, murder is a specific intent crimes - "the conscious objective to cause the death of the victim". In New York state, Murder in the First Degree entails the perpetrator causing the death of the victim by personally causing the victim's death [or by commanding another person to cause the death of the victim]; while Murder in the Second Degree People does not require that the death was caused intentionally.

Reckless indifference manslaughter, manslaughter in the second degree, and criminally negligent homicide are general intent crimes, distinguished by the level of recklessness. Murder requires a greater degree of recklessness than Manslaughter, and Murder has an additional element of  depraved indifference to human life,  not required for manslaughter.

In New York state, Manslaughter requires that the defendant engage in conduct which creates or contributes to a substantial and unjustifiable risk that another person's death will occur. Murder in the second degree requires that the defendant engage in conduct which creates a grave and unjustifiable risk that another person's death will occur.

The FBI defines negligent manslaughter as the killing of another person through gross negligence. The FBI provides circumstances for justifiable homicide. The killing can only be defined as justifiable when the offender is in the act of committing a felony that put the victim(s) (citizen or officer) in danger of immediate fatal injuries. In the military, this is known as combat

Mao is widely credited in the West with tens of millions of killings (49,000,000 to 78,000,000) but the sources are generally vague and contradictory. Some sources are impossibly precise - exactly 7,474,000 deaths in the Cultural Revolution??? Indeed, there is little agreement even on the periodization of these events [eg, some sources treat the Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine as a single event, others treat them separately], much less on the body count. None of this is to detract from the sheer awfulness of these events, but rather to emphasize how dreadful was this chapter of history.



It is noteworthy that while the Great Famine is well attested in Chinese demographic records, the other purported episodes of mass murder are singularly absent in this record. The US Census Bureau data report a population trough in the 44 [1972] to 30 [1986] age bracket, and another in the 59 [1957] to 55 [1961] age bracket. While the latter is clearly an echo of the Great Famine, the former period is not associated with any notable upheaval. There are serious questions as to whether China, a developing country and authoritarian state, has the institutional capacity and political will to publish accurate statistics. there are serious deficiencies in the way the Chinese government gathers, measures, and presents its data. Statistical work remains highly decentralized, and the quality and methods of statistical work vary across reporting units in China.

How many Chinese have been executed, starved or otherwise killed during the years of turmoil since the regime triumphed in 1949? Sinologist Stuart Schram reckoned that the true toll might have run as high as 3,000,000. Columbia University China Expert Donald Klein placed the total as low as 2,000,000; others say 6,000,000 or 8,000,000. Of course, those figures are all classic examples of the unverifiable statistic.

from	to	event	Rummel	Courtois
1946	1949	Rural purges		2-5,000,000
1949	1953	Totalization Period	8,427,000	
1949	1976	<u>Laogai Camps</u>		20,000,000
1950	1957	Urban purges		0.6-1.200,000
1950	1959	Tibet	1,000,000	
1958	1960	<u>Great Leap Forward</u>	7,474,000	20-43,000,000
1960	1962	Great Famine	10,729,000	
1966	1976	<u>Cultural Revolution</u>	7,731,000	2-7,000,000
1979	1989	Liberalization	874,000	

- China's Bloody Century By R.J. Rummel, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991.
- Le Livre Noir du Communisme Stephane Courtois, 1999

Tufts Professor Donald Klein expressed "provocation" over 16 September 1976 New York Times statement by Robert Fitch that Chinese communists had killed 32-61 million since 1949, and thus Mao was the "greatest despot and mass murderer in human history." Klein estimated 95 pct of his fellow China watchers would agree these figures "pure, unadulterated, unsubstantiated bunk." Klein contended that the best estimates put the figure in the 1-3 million range - which is shocking enough; but efforts to grasp the significance of Mao and the Chinese revolution are repeatedly damaged by polemicists from far right or left.

By one account, "During his first five years from 1949 to 1953 he is said to have systematically killed between 4 to 6 million people by sentencing them to die or by sending them to reform through labor camps. He organized mass repressions, established execution quotas, and defended his actions in these early years as necessary for securing power for The People's Republic of China."

"Frank Dikötter, a Hong Kong-based historian, said he found that during the time that Mao was enforcing the Great Leap Forward ... from 1958 to 1962, when the nation was facing a famine, compared the systematic torture, brutality, starvation and killing of Chinese peasants to the Second World War in its magnitude. At least 45 million people were worked, starved or beaten to death in China over these four years... His book, Mao's Great Famine; The Story of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe..."

The Great Famine is officially defined by the Chinese government to be three years, 1959-1961, when mortality rates were the highest. Lee Edwards claimed that "Deaths from hunger reached more than 50 percent in some Chinese villages. The total number of dead from 1959 to 1961 was between 30 million and 40 million -- the population of California."

During China's Great Famine, between 16.5 to 45 million individuals perished in rural areas by another estimate. The existing literature on the causes of the Great Famine has formed a consensus that a fall in aggregate food production in 1959 followed by high government procurement from rural areas were key contributors to the famine.

Xin Meng et al found "... a surprising positive correlation between mortality rates and productivity across rural areas during the famine.... a procurement policy that was inflexible (i.e., procurement could not adjust to contemporaneous production) and progressive (i.e., procurement was a larger share of expected production in productive regions) was ... a quantitatively important contributor to overall famine mortality.... the inflexibility of the centrally planned procurement system was an important contributing factor to the famine. "

Estimates of the death toll during the Cultural Revolution range from 40,000 to 7,000,000 depending the source, but living witnesses saw very few people die during those years. Frank Dikötter reported that the cultural revolution took "about two or three million as we can tell from what has been published on that topic so far on the basis of official and semi-official sources." By another estimate, Cultural Revolution caused the death of 30 million people, but many died of hunger.

The targets of criticism include: intellectuals, landlords, businessmen, monks, nuns, priests, old people and children, and even revered as "teachers of all ages" by future rulers Confucius , etc., and even those in power were publicly criticized, including Liu Shaoqi, Peng Dehuai and so on. Countless people were affected during this period, among which Daxing County was the most appalling . From August 27 to September 1, 1966, 13 communes and 48 brigades in Daxing County successively killed 325 " four types of elements " and their family members. The oldest was 80 years old, the youngest was only 38 days old, and 22 households were killed. According to estimates by Chinese scholars, 200,000 people committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution due to unbearable humiliation and beatings.

In the the 100 flowers movement, the government persecuted 500,000 who were considered to be "dangerous thinkers". Mao personally took the lead in the movement, which was launched under the classical slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let the hundred schools of thought contend." At first the party's repeated invitation to air constructive views freely and openly was met with caution. By mid-1957, however, the movement unexpectedly mounted, bringing denunciation and criticism against the party in general and the excesses of its cadres in particular. Startled and embarrassed, leaders

turned on the critics as "bourgeois rightists" and launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The Hundred Flowers Campaign, sometimes called the Double Hundred Campaign, apparently had a sobering effect on the CCP leadership.

Lee Edwards reported that "Harry Wu, who spent 19 years in labor camps, has estimated that from the 1950s through the 1980s, 50 million Chinese passed through the Chinese version of the Soviet gulag. He reported that twenty million died as a result of the primitive living conditions and 14-hour work days."

It is particularly difficult to pin down the deaths of the Cultural Revolution Mao. Even assuming that the numbers are correct, Mao started it, but after a few months he had lost control over the events. The Cultural Revolution indirectly caused starvation, but the number of people who died of that starvation is probably lower than some Westerners claim (judging from living witnesses) and Mao can only be considered indirectly responsible for them.