

PREFACE

The purpose of Chinese Characters I and II is to provide you with a foundation in the written language through the presentation of 600 carefully selected characters. The character forms introduced are those being used today in the People's Republic of China, where many of the traditional forms have been simplified to make the task of character learning easier.

You will find the study of Chinese characters to be both fascinating and rewarding. Learning to read one of the world's most "exotic" written languages will not only give you a great sense of personal satisfaction, but will also provide you with an important tool for vocabulary building. As you learn some of the combinations in which a character recurs you will gradually develop the ability to infer the meaning of new words containing that character.

Additionally, learning these 600 characters will thoroughly acquaint you with the basic principles of Chinese character structure which you need to know in order to look up unfamiliar characters in a Chinese-English dictionary.

Thus, the characters that you learn will serve as the point of departure for exercises in dictionary use. For this purpose, a character index system has been provided at the end of this book. This particular indexing system is the one used in the Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Communist Usage, which will be a standard reference for looking up characters both here and in the field.