

P R O B L E M S O F

Art and
Literature

by Mao Tse-tung



INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

PROBLEMS OF
ART AND
LITERATURE

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International Publishers, New York

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

EDITOR'S NOTE

A conference on the Problems of Art and Literature as related to the struggle for liberation in China was held from May 2 to May 23, 1942, in Yen-an, then the capital of the Liberation Movement. Writers and artists from all parts of China came to participate in the Yen-an Conference—from Japanese-occupied Shanghai and Nanking, from Kuomintang Chungking, as well as from the liberated provinces.

The conference seems to have been conducted in a leisurely manner; only three formal plenary sessions were held, the rest of the time being devoted to individual study and group discussions.

Mao Tse-tung, Communist and Liberation leader, opened the conference on May 2 with a short introduction presenting the fundamental questions of the Liberation struggle and the role of writers and artists in this struggle (see pages 7-14). He spoke again, on May 23, and this time extensively, at the closing session of the conference, analyzing the work of the conference and giving detailed answers to the moot questions which were raised during the three weeks' debates and discussions (see pages 15-48).

It is worth noting that this writers' and artists' mobilization in May, 1942, was held five months after Pearl Harbor. The organization of a nation-wide conference on literature and art during that very critical period for China—the military and political struggle against the Japanese invaders and for Chinese unity—attests to the confidence of the Liberation Movement and the understanding of the need and manner of mobilizing all the popular forces, including the cultural, in the waging of a war of national liberation.

Introduction

Comrades: You have been invited to this meeting so that we may discuss the correct relationship between literature and art, on the one hand, and revolutionary work in general, on the other, with a view to properly developing our revolutionary literature and art, and making them more effective in support of our other revolutionary activities. By this means, we shall be able to defeat our national enemies and fulfill our task of national liberation.

Our struggle for the liberation of the Chinese nation is being waged on a number of fronts, and on the cultural as well as on the military front. While victory over our enemies depends primarily upon soldiers with guns in their hands, nevertheless troops alone are not enough. We must also have a cultural army in order to accomplish our task of uniting the nation and defeating the enemy.

A cultural army, an army that has been of great help to the Chinese revolution, has been formed since the May Fourth Movement.* It has gradually limited the sphere of imperialist influence and weakened the feudal and slavish cultural forces which accommodate themselves to imperialist aggression. Now the reactionaries are able to oppose the new culture only by resorting to the so-called method of "quantity versus quality." In other words, reactionaries, who have the means, can afford to produce great quantities of so-called works of literature and art, even if they cannot produce anything of good quality.

*Students' movement which started May 4, 1917.—*Ed.*

Ever since the May Fourth Movement, the literature and art sector of our cultural front has shown outstanding accomplishments. The revolutionary movement in literature and art made vast strides during the civil war years.* Although this movement and the military activities of the Red Army proceeded in the same general direction, they were not actually co-ordinated. The two brother armies were forced to fight their battles separately because the reactionaries kept them apart.† Since our war of resistance against Japan began, more and more revolutionary writers and artists have come to Yen-an and our other war bases. That is good. The fact that they have come to these areas, however, does not necessarily mean that they have allied themselves with the people's movements there. Yet, if we want to make progress in our revolutionary work, we must amalgamate the two forces.

We have called this meeting for the express purpose of making literature and art part of our revolutionary machinery, so that they may become a powerful weapon with which to unite and educate our people, to attack and destroy the enemy, and to help our people fight the enemy unitedly. What questions must be solved in order to achieve this objective? The questions of our position, our attitude, our public, our work and our study.

The question of our position: Our standpoint is the standpoint of the proletariat and the masses. Members of the Communist Party must adopt the standpoint of the party, and of party policy. Is it true that many writers and artists still lack a clear and correct understanding of our position? I think so. Many of our comrades often slip into an incorrect position.

The question of our attitude: After the question of our

*1927-1936.—Ed.

†The Red Army was encircled in Kiangsi province, while cultural workers were in Shanghai or Peiping.—Ed.

position comes the question of our attitude toward concrete matters. Take, for instance, the question of whether to praise or to expose? It is a matter of attitude. What attitude should we adopt? I say that we should adopt either one or both, depending upon the subject under consideration. There are three kinds of people: our enemies, our allies, and ourselves—the proletariat and its vanguard. We should have a different attitude toward each of these three categories.

Should we praise our enemies, the Japanese fascists and all other enemies of the people? Certainly not, for they are evil reactionaries even though they may, technically, have some strong points. They may, for example, have excellent guns and artillery, but these good weapons in their hands become instruments of reaction. Our military forces have the task of seizing these weapons and turning them against the enemy. Our cultural army must undertake the task of exposing the atrocities and treacheries of our enemies, of making it clear that their defeat is inevitable, and of encouraging all anti-Japanese forces to rally with one heart and spirit in determined battle against our enemies.

With respect to our friends and our different allies, our attitude should be one of coalition and of criticism; there are different kinds of coalition and different kinds of criticism. We support their resistance against Japan; we must praise their accomplishments. But at the same time we must criticize those who are not active in the war of resistance and oppose those who take sides against the Communists and the people, and those who are gradually following the road to reaction.

Our attitude toward the masses, toward their work and struggle, and toward the people's army and party obviously must be one of praise. The people, of course, also have shortcomings. Among the proletariat many still possess a

petty-bourgeois ideology. Some of the peasants and members of the petty bourgeoisie have remnants of a backward ideology. This hinders them in their struggle. We must patiently devote ourselves to the long-range task of educating them. We must help them throw off their burden so that they may advance with great strides. They have reformed or are reforming themselves in the course of the struggle, and our literature and art should describe the change instead of viewing them from one angle only, of jeering at their mistakes, or even showing open hostility to them. Our work must help unite the masses to enable them to advance; to rally them with a single heart and spirit for the struggle ahead; to help them rid themselves of their backwardness and develop their revolutionary qualities. Our work should not be in the opposite direction.

The question of our public: For whom should literature and art be created? The answer is different in the Shansi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region and in our anti-Japanese bases in north and central China from what it is in the general rear* and in pre-war Shanghai. Before the war the public for revolutionary works of literature and art in Shanghai consisted mainly of students, professional and white-collar workers. Since the war, the reading public in the general rear has grown somewhat but in the main still consists of the same groups since here the government keeps revolutionary literature and art out of the reach of workers, peasants, and soldiers.

In our areas, the situation is entirely different. Here the workers, peasants, and soldiers, side by side with our cadres in the party, government, and army, form the reading public and audience for our revolutionary literature and art. We have students too at our bases, but they are not the old-type students. If they are not already our cadres, they will be in the future. All sorts of cadres—soldiers in

*Kuomintang areas.—*Ed.*

the army, workers in the factories, and peasants in the villages—all want to read books and newspapers as soon as they have learned to read. Even those who cannot yet read want to see plays and look at pictures; they want to sing and hear music. They form the public for our literature and art.

Take the cadres, for example. Do not think for a moment that they represent merely a small segment of the population. They outnumber the readers of any single book in the general rear where a book is published in an edition of only 2,000 copies. Even if a book were issued in three editions, it would total only 6,000 copies. But in Yen-an alone, we have more than 10,000 cadres who can read. Moreover, most of our cadres are revolutionaries who have been forged through long years of experience and suffering. They hail from all four corners of the country, and they will be sent to work in difficult areas. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to educate these people, and our writers and artists ought to try to do an excellent job among them.

Since literature and art are created for the workers, peasants, soldiers, and for the cadres among them, the problem arises of how to understand and get to know the people. In order to understand and know all sorts of things and to understand and become acquainted with all sorts of people, one must do extensive work among them wherever they are to be found—in party and government organs, in villages and factories, in the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies. Writers and artists should, of course, pursue their creative activities, but their first and foremost duty is to get to know the people and to understand their ways.

What have our writers and artists been doing in this respect? I do not think that they have learned to know or understand the people. Not knowing the people, they are like heroes without a battlefield. Writers and artists are

not only unfamiliar with the subjects they describe and with their reading public, but, in some cases, are even completely estranged from them. Our writers and artists do not know the workers, peasants, and soldiers, or the cadres emerging from among them. What do they not understand? The language. They speak the language of the intellectuals, not the language of the masses.

I have said before that many of our comrades like to talk about "popularization," but just what does "popularization" mean? It means that our writers and artists must weld their ideas and emotions with those of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. In order to bring about this unity, we must start by learning the language of the masses. If we do not even understand the language of the masses, how can we possibly talk about creating literature and art.

When I spoke of heroes without a battlefield, I meant that the masses are not able to appreciate theories if they are abstract. The more you try to show off, the more you strut and preen as a great talent or a great hero, the harder you try to put yourself over, the more emphatically will the people reject your work. If you want the masses to understand you, if you want to fuse yourself with the masses, you must be determined to undergo a long and sometimes even painful tempering process.

Let me tell you of my own experience; let me tell you how my feelings toward the people changed. I was once a student and in school I acquired student habits and manners. For instance, I was embarrassed when I had to carry my luggage on a bamboo pole in the presence of my fellow students. They were so refined that they could not stand having any weight press upon their shoulders and disdained the very thought of carrying anything in their hands! At that time I was convinced that only intellectuals were clean, that workers, peasants, and soldiers were unclean. I would, therefore, readily borrow clothes from an intellectual but

never from a worker, or a peasant, or a soldier because I thought that their clothes would be unclean.

During the revolution I began to live among workers, peasants, and soldiers. Gradually I began to know them, and they also began to know me. Then, and then only, did the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sentiments inculcated in me by the bourgeois schools change fundamentally! Ever since then, whenever I compare unreformed intellectuals with workers, peasants, and soldiers, I realize that not only were the minds of those intellectuals unclean but that their bodies were also unclean. The cleanest people in the world are the workers and peasants. Even though their hands may be soiled and their feet smeared with cow dung, nevertheless they are cleaner than the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. That is what I mean by a transformation of sentiments—a changing over from one class to another.

If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want the masses to welcome their work, they must bring about such a transformation in their thinking and their sentiments. Otherwise they cannot do an effective job; for their work will never be spread among the people.

The question of learning: This is a question of studying the principles of Marxism-Leninism and society. Anyone who considers himself a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary writer, especially a writer who belongs to the Communist Party, must have a general knowledge of Marxism-Leninism. At present, however, many of our comrades fail to understand even the most fundamental concepts of Marxism-Leninism. It is, for example, a fundamental concept that objective conditions determine the subjective, that the objective conditions of class struggle and national struggle determine our thinking and our sentiments. In fact, these comrades reverse this principle. They say that everything begins with "love." Speaking of love, there can be only love of a class, or class-love, in a class society. Yet these

comrades seek a love that stands above all class distinctions; they seek abstract love, abstract freedom, abstract truth, abstract human nature, etc., and thereby prove how deeply they have been influenced by the bourgeoisie. We must uproot this influence and bring an open mind to the study of Marxism-Leninism.

It is true that writers and artists must learn more about the methods of creative work but Marxism-Leninism is a science which every revolutionary must study, and writers and artists are no exception. Writers and artists must also study our society—they must study the various classes composing society, their relation to each other, their conditions, attitudes, and psychology. Only when they have thoroughly understood all these factors can they give our literature and art a rich content and a correct orientation.

Today I have made only a few introductory remarks regarding these problems. I hope, however, that all of us will discuss these problems and other related issues.

Comrades! We have held three meetings this month. In our search for truth, scores of us, party members and non-party people, have held enthusiastic discussions in which we explored all angles of the problem. Thus we have succeeded in crystallizing the issues. I believe this will prove beneficial to the whole literary and art movement.

In discussing a problem, we must base ourselves on facts and not on abstract definitions. We should be using the wrong method if we were to analyze literature and art on the basis of textbook definitions; if we were to outline the course of present-day literary and art movements in terms of such definitions; and if we were to use them as a yardstick to judge the various opinions expressed at these meetings. But we are Marxists. Marxism has taught us to proceed from objective, real facts when considering problems, not from abstract definitions. By analyzing these facts we are able to arrive at directives, policies, and methods. We must proceed along similar lines in discussing the movement in literature and art.

What are the facts at present? The facts are that China has been fighting against Japan for the past five years. An anti-fascist war is being waged on a world-wide scale. The big landlords and the big bourgeoisie in China are following a passive policy in the war against Japan but their domestic policy is oppressive. We have had a revolutionary literary and art movement since May 4, 1919; this movement, although it has many weaknesses and shortcomings, has made great contributions to the revolution during

the past twenty-three years. The Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army have established many democratic anti-Japanese bases, and many writers and artists have joined these armies. The conditions and tasks of the writers and artists at our bases differ fundamentally from those in the general rear. Problems have been raised and have been and are being debated by workers in literature and art in Yen-an and other anti-Japanese bases. These are actual, irrefutable facts. We must consider our problems on the basis of these facts.

What then is the core of our problem? In my opinion, our problem is fundamentally one of how to align ourselves on the side of the masses. If this problem remains unsolved, or if it is not solved properly, our writers and artists will never fit into their environment or be able to fulfill their tasks competently, for they will encounter innumerable conflicts, inner as well as external.

My discussion will center around this key question but I shall also touch upon related matters.

First let us see for whom our literature and art are intended. At first glance, it would seem that this problem has already been solved by our comrade writers and artists at the various democratic anti-Japanese bases, and that no further discussion is needed. Actually, this is not the case. Many of our comrades have found no clear-cut solution. As a result, their feelings, their finished work, their actions, and their opinions on a policy for literature and art are more or less at variance with the needs of the people and the demands of the actual struggle. While some temporary opportunists and spies have undoubtedly been planted in the ranks of our writers and artists by the enemy and the Kuomintang secret service, nevertheless many intellectuals, writers, artists, and other literary and art workers in general, who have joined with the Communist Party, the Eighth Route Army, and the New Fourth Army in the great strug-

gle for liberation, are, with the exceptions mentioned, all working for a common cause. Our literature, our theater, our music, and our art have made great progress because of their efforts. Many began their activities only after the outbreak of the war. Many others were engaged in revolutionary activities long before the war and have suffered painful and bitter experiences. Their activities and works have exercised a great influence upon the masses.

Why then do we say that even some of these comrades are not yet quite sure for whom their literature and art are intended? Can it be that some of them believe that revolutionary literature and art are created not for the masses of the people but for the exploiting and oppressing classes?

The exploiters and oppressors have a feudal literature and art that serve the landlord class and belonged to the ruling class in China's feudal stage but that still wields considerable influence today. There are also literature and art that serve the bourgeoisie—capitalist literature and art. Writers like Liang Shih-chiu, whom Lu Hsün criticized severely, maintain that literature and art stand above class distinctions. In reality, these writers promote bourgeois literature and art and oppose proletarian literature and art. Then there are also literature and art that promote the interests of imperialism and thus represent a slavish culture, so that they may be called slavish literature and art. Writers like Chou Cho-jen and Chang Chih-ping are exponents of this slavish culture. There is still another kind of literature and art—created by the secret service; it appears to be “very revolutionary” but in essence actually fits into one of the above three categories.

Our literature and art are not created for any of the foregoing groups, but for the masses. We have already said that the new culture of China, at the present stage of development, is the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal culture of the masses under the leadership of the proletariat.

Whatever is for the masses must of necessity be under the leadership of the proletariat. Whatever is under the leadership of the bourgeoisie cannot possibly belong to the masses. Our new literature and art—component parts of this new culture—are no exception. We do not refuse to use the old forms employed by the feudal and bourgeois classes, but once we take over these forms, we remold them and give them new content; thus they become revolutionary and serve the people.

Who are the masses? Over 90 per cent of our population are workers, peasants, soldiers, and the petty bourgeoisie. Our literature and art, therefore, must first serve the working class which leads the revolution; second, the peasantry, the largest and most resolute ally of the working class in the revolution; third, the armed forces of the workers and peasants—the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies and other people's militia—the mainstay of our fighting forces; fourth, the petty bourgeoisie, which is also an ally in the revolution and can co-operate with us on a long-range program. These four groups of people constitute the majority of the Chinese people. They are the broad masses of the people. We should also co-operate with those landlords and capitalists who are still resisting the Japanese, but bearing in mind always that they are opposed to democracy for the masses. They have their own literature and art; ours are not designed for them nor do they accept ours.

Our literature and art are for the four groups of people that make up the broad masses. Of these, the workers, peasants, and soldiers are of prime importance. The petty bourgeoisie may have a higher cultural level than the others but it is the weakest group, both in numbers and in revolutionary stamina. Our literature and art, therefore, are intended primarily for the workers, peasants, and

soldiers, and only secondarily for the petty bourgeoisie. The reverse would be incorrect.

It is precisely with regard to this point that some comrades have not yet arrived at a clear-cut solution as to what kind of people comprise their public. I do not mean that they err in theory. Not one of these comrades, either in theory or in words, considers the workers, peasants, and soldiers less important than the petty bourgeoisie. But have not some of them, in practice and in action, been treating the petty bourgeoisie as though it were more important than the workers, peasants, and soldiers? I think they have.

Many comrades spend a great deal of time and effort studying intellectuals, analyzing their psychology, describing them, and excusing and even defending their shortcomings! In doing this, they fail to put themselves and these petty-bourgeois intellectuals in close contact with the workers, peasants, and soldiers; to participate in the actual struggle of the workers, peasants, and soldiers; and to portray and educate them. Many of our comrades have a petty-bourgeois background and are intellectuals themselves. They, therefore, enjoy associating with others like themselves and consequently devote themselves to studying and describing these intellectuals. If the same were done from the standpoint of the proletariat, then it would be vital. But it is not done so, or not entirely so. These comrades study and describe from the standpoint of the petty bourgeoisie, creating works that are the expression of the petty bourgeoisie. We have seen this in many works of literature and art, which often show abundant sympathy for intellectuals with petty-bourgeois backgrounds, or which even sympathize with and advocate the weaknesses of the petty bourgeoisie.

Such comrades do not have real contact with the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Lacking an understanding

and a study of them and having few close friends among them, they are unable to characterize these groups adequately. Even when their characters wear the garb of workers, peasants, or soldiers, they invariably turn out to be petty bourgeois.

There are times when these comrades may show affection for the workers, peasants, soldiers, and the cadres coming from their ranks. But at other times and in other respects, they do not like the common people. They dislike their emotions and gestures or such rugged forms of their literature and art, as are still in their infancy (wall newspapers, murals, folk songs, folk lore, and the vernacular). And even if they do happen to display some liking for these things, it is because they are curious, or would like to use them as props in their own creations, or else because they are searching out the backward aspects of these forms of literature and art. At other times, they openly despise and reject such literature and art, preferring petty-bourgeois intellectuals and their outpourings and, in some cases, even the bourgeoisie. These comrades are comfortably sitting on their bottoms on the petty bourgeois side of the fence or, to put it more elegantly, their profound souls dwell in the realm of the petty bourgeoisie.

These comrades have not yet understood the question of our public nor have they arrived at a clear-cut solution. This is true not only of some of the recent arrivals in Yen-an but also of those who have spent many years at the front, at our bases, in the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies.

It may take eight or ten years to solve this problem completely. But no matter how long it takes, we must settle this question, and settle it once and for all. Our writers and artists must make it their duty to shift their roots, gradually move toward the workers, peasants, and soldiers by penetrating deeply into their lives, by taking an active part in their struggle, and by studying Marxism-

Leninism and society. That is the only way to create a real literature and a real art of and for the workers, peasants, and soldiers.

The question of our public is a fundamental question of principle. Up until now, the arguments, differences, opposition, and disunity among many of our comrades did not revolve about this fundamental question of principle but about secondary questions or even questions having nothing to do with principles. On this problem of principle there is no quarrel, for the debaters on both sides share to some degree a common distaste for the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and tend to isolate themselves from the people. I say "to some degree" because our comrades show their aloofness from the masses and their lack of respect for workers, peasants, and soldiers in a somewhat different way from that of the Kuomintang. Such tendencies, however, definitely exist in our ranks, and unless this fundamental issue is settled, the rest of our questions cannot be solved easily.

Sectarianism in literature and art, for example, is also a question of principle. If we hope to eradicate sectarianism, we must raise and put into effect the slogan: "Work for the workers and peasants; work for the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies; go to the masses!" Otherwise, we shall never rid ourselves of sectarianism.

Lu Hsün once said that disunity within the revolutionary cultural front is due to the lack of a common objective. This common objective is to work for the workers and peasants.

The problem existed in Shanghai at that time and exists in Chungking at present. In those places, it is hard to settle the question because revolutionary writers and artists are suppressed. They are not free to go to the masses. In our areas, the situation is entirely different. We encourage revolutionary writers and artists to reach the workers,

peasants, and soldiers. Here they are at liberty to mingle with the masses; they have complete freedom to create a real revolutionary literature and art. In our region they are therefore able to come closer to a solution. But to come closer to a solution is not the same as thoroughly and completely solving the question.

In order to solve it once and for all, we must study Marxism-Leninism and society. By Marxism-Leninism we mean the real, living Marxism-Leninism which can be applied to the life and struggle of the people; we do not mean Marxism-Leninism that is merely stored in bound volumes. If we transfer Marxism-Leninism from books to the masses and transform it into living Marxism-Leninism, there will be no room for sectarianism. Then not only will the problem of sectarianism be solved but many other problems as well.

2

After the question of our public has been solved, the next question is: how can we work for the people? This is the question known by our comrades as raising the cultural standard of the people, or education.

In the past, some of our comrades have neglected or belittled the question of education and have exaggerated out of proportion the question of raising the cultural standard. We should, of course, pay attention to raising the standard, but it is incorrect to overemphasize it.

The lack of a clear-cut solution to the question of our people crops up again when we consider this new problem. If we do not clearly understand for whom we work, we can have no criterion for raising the standard, or for propaganda. It becomes even more impossible to discover the correct relationship between the two. Since our literature and art are to be created for the workers, peasants, and

soldiers, then our educational campaign must be carried out among them, and raising the standard means raising their standard.

What are we going to propagandize among them? A feudal ideology? A bourgeois ideology? Or perhaps a petty-bourgeois ideology? No. We must propagandize only the ideology of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Therefore, before undertaking the task of educating the workers, peasants, and soldiers, we must first study them.

This applies also to raising the standard. We must have a basis from which to proceed. Take a water bucket, for instance. How are you going to raise it up in the air if you do not lift it from the ground? Similarly, if we want to raise the standard of literature and art, from what basis shall we proceed? From the feudal level? From the bourgeois level? From the petty-bourgeois level? No, certainly not. We must proceed from the present cultural level of the workers, peasants, and soldiers; from the basis of their primitive forms of literature and art. We do not seek to raise the level of the workers, peasants, and soldiers to that of either the feudal class, the bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie. We want instead to help them along their own line of development. Thus, it becomes our task to study the workers, peasants, and soldiers.

Only by understanding this point can we understand the questions of our public and of education and of raising the standard. Only then can we determine their mutual relation correctly. But whether we are concerned with education or with raising the standard, we must seek out a fountainhead for them. No matter what their level, works of literature and art are the result of the artistic work of the human mind as it reflects and portrays the life of the people. Thus, revolutionary literature and art are the result of the reflection and portrayal of the life of the people in the minds of revolutionary writers and artists.

The life of the people provides a rich source of raw materials for literature and art. The raw materials are in their natural, crude state but they are most lively, rich, and fundamental. They put fabricated literature and art to shame. The life of the people is the only fountainhead with an inexhaustible supply of material for creative literature and art. And since it is the only fountainhead, there cannot be any other.

Some may ask, "Are not the published works of literature and art, are not classical and foreign literature and art also fountainheads?" The answer is that they may be regarded as source materials but they are second-hand, not first-hand, source materials. Should you put them above first-hand material, you would be turning things upside down. Books and other published works are not fountainheads but the flow that comes from the fountain. They were conceived and produced by our forefathers and foreign writers and artists who sought and found literature and art in the life of their contemporaries and in the society of their time. We may use their works, but use them with a critical attitude, as examples of technique for the literature and art in which we depict the life of the people today. And it certainly makes a difference whether or not we use such examples. It is the difference between being civilized and barbaric, between being crude and refined, between being advanced and elementary, and between being fast and slow. Naturally we cannot refuse to use examples from our ancestors and from foreign writers, even if they come from feudal or bourgeois classes. But they should never be considered as anything other than examples, certainly not as substitutes, for they cannot possibly be substitutes. The uncritical acceptance and imitation of classic or foreign literature and art as well as their use as substitutes will lead to a most worthless and harmful dogmatism in literature

and art comparable to that in military, political, philosophical, or economic affairs.

The revolutionary and genuinely worthy writers and artists of China, therefore, must go among the masses; they must devote themselves unconditionally and wholeheartedly to them; they must live among them for a long time. They must join the flaming struggle. They must go to the only existing inexhaustible fountainhead to investigate, to observe, to study, and to analyze the various personalities, the different classes, the various social groups, the different active forms of life and struggle, all the natural sources of literature and art. Only then can they start the creative or productive process. Thus they will weave the raw materials into their production and will combine the study process with the creative process. If they do otherwise, our writers and artists will lose their objective, for how can they produce anything without raw or semi-finished materials? They would be merely empty-headed writers or artists against whom the late Lu Hsün, in his last testament, so earnestly cautioned his son.

Nature provides the only source material for literature and art in their finished form. And although it is incomparably richer and more poignant in content than art, nevertheless people are not satisfied with nature and ask for art. Why? Because, while both are beautiful, the creative forms of literature and art supersede nature in that they are more systematic, more concise, more typical, more idealized, and therefore more universal.

The real living Lenin was infinitely more vigorous and more interesting than the Lenin of a novel, play, or film. But the living Lenin had to do too many things from morning till night for us to learn all the details, and some of these things were no different from the everyday chores of other people. Furthermore, very few people had the opportunity of meeting Lenin while he was alive and now that

he is dead no one can meet him any more. Therefore, the Lenin of novels, plays, or films has advantages over Lenin in the flesh.

The revolutionary novel, play, and film can create all kinds of characters drawn from life to inspire the masses to push history forward. There are, for example, many people who suffer from starvation and oppression while, at the same time, there are people who exploit and oppress their fellow men. This state of affairs is so general and widespread that people have begun to take it for granted. But it is the function of literature and art to crystallize these everyday phenomena in an organized, systematic form. Such literature and art can stir the people into action, awaken them, and impel them to unite to carry on an organized struggle through which the masses will take destiny into their own hands. If literature and art continued to exist in nature but not in a creative form, then literature and art could not fulfill this function and we could not achieve our ends effectively and quickly, if we could achieve them at all.

Literature and art for educational purposes and literature and art for raising the standard are both creative. The only difference between them is one of degree. Literature and art for educational purposes are not polished but rather crude; thus, they are easily and quickly understood by the broad masses at present. Literature and art for the purpose of raising the standard are more carefully polished and refined; thus, they are not as rapidly or as thoroughly absorbed by the masses at present.

At present, at a time when they have to fight fiercely against the enemy, the most urgent issue confronting workers, peasants, and soldiers is that of illiteracy. They are illiterate and uncultured as a result of long feudal and bourgeois domination. They urgently require that an educational movement be started among them, using the kind

of cultural knowledge and literary and art works that meet their immediate needs and that they can quickly absorb. Such a movement would heighten their enthusiasm for the struggle and increase their confidence in ultimate victory. It would also strengthen their solidarity and make them of one heart and mind in combating the enemy.

Our primary duty to them is not to "add flowers to the embroidery" but to "send coal to the snowbound." Our first and foremost concern, therefore, must be to educate rather than try to raise the standard; it would be very wrong for us to underestimate and overlook the work of education.

Nevertheless, we cannot draw a dividing line between education and raising the cultural standard. If those engaged in education did not have higher standards than their audience, the educational campaign would be meaningless. And if education were to remain on the same level constantly, for months and years, and if it never got beyond the everlasting *Little Cowherd*,* or the text of "The man, the hand, the mouth, the knife, the cow, the sheep," † then the educators and their audience would remain on the same level. What then is the significance of education?

The people want education but they also want to have their standards raised. They want them raised from month to month, from year to year. Whenever education is conducted among the people, the standard of the people is raised. This does not take place in thin air or behind closed doors. It takes place on the basis established by educational work. Not only is the standard raised through education, however; in the process the direction which education should take is also established.

*A Chinese folk play concerning a cowherd's romance which dates back several hundred years.—*Ed.*

†A quotation from the first page of a standard Chinese primer.—*Ed.*

In China, the revolution and revolutionary culture have not developed evenly but have been extended gradually. In some places education is being conducted and consequently the standard is being raised, but in other places educational work has not even begun. Experience gathered in this work in one place, therefore, may be applied to other places, so as to provide the guidance that will prevent us from getting lost en route. Similarly, many experiences of the Soviet Union may provide guidance for our educational work and for raising the standard.

To sum up: raising the standard depends upon education and education must be conducted in order to raise the standard. But the guiding principle of all work to raise the standard cannot be one of patterning ourselves indiscriminately upon the experiences of others for that would produce only destructive results.

Not only do the masses directly need the standard raised, but they also need it raised indirectly, by raising the standard among the cadres. The cadres are the most advanced elements of the people. They have already received the kind of education that we are trying to bring to the masses. Since they are more developed, they cannot be satisfied with education at a mass level; they are not satisfied with the *Little Cowherd*, etc. It is imperative that they be provided with literature and art on a comparatively higher standard; it would be a mistake to overlook this point.

For the time being, however, this kind of need is felt only by the cadres and is not universally felt by our people. Satisfying this need is one of our tasks but it does not constitute our whole program, or even the core of our present program. We must realize that whatever we do for the cadres is also being done in the interest of the masses, since only the cadres can educate and guide the masses. If we violate this principle, if we do not assist the cadres in

educating and guiding the people, then our work of raising the standard would be as aimless as if we shot an arrow without aiming at a target. It would depart from our fundamental principle of working for the people.

To sum up: we see that the raw material of literature and art found in the life of the people is processed and polished by our revolutionary writers and artists, who turn it into creative literature and art for the masses. Some of this literature and art is of a somewhat higher level, having been developed from mass literature and art of a lower level, and filling the needs of those who have reached a higher degree of development, particularly the cadres among the masses. The mass literature and art of a higher level guide the mass literature and art of a lower level (but not of low taste) required at present by the broad masses of the people. But whether our literature and art are on a higher or lower level, they are meant to serve the broad masses of the people, especially the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Our literature and art are created for the people and are meant to be utilized by the people.

Since we have settled the question of the mutual relationship between raising the standard and education, the problem of the correct relation between writers and artists, on the one hand, and our educators, on the other, may readily be solved.

Our writers and artists are working primarily for the masses and not merely for the cadres. Thus, Maxim Gorky edited histories of factories, guided corps of village newspaper reporters, and taught the youth. Lu Hsün devoted much time to corresponding with young students.

Our literary experts must give their attention to the wall newspapers of the masses and to news reporting in the army and in the rural areas. Our drama experts must give their attention to the small repertory theatrical groups in the army and the rural areas; our music experts to mass

singing; and our art experts to popular art. All these experts must maintain close contact with the comrades propagandizing literature and art of the lower levels among the masses. The experts must not only help and guide these comrades but must at the same time learn from them and draw from them material about the masses so that they may enrich their experience and continue to develop. In this way their special work will not be done in an ivory tower isolated from the people and reality, nor will it be devoid of content and vitality.

We must respect the experts, for their work is valuable to us. But we must remind them that revolutionary writers and artists can contribute work of significance only when they identify themselves with the masses, when they give expression to the thoughts and feelings of the masses, when they are the loyal spokesmen of the masses.

You can educate the masses only by representing them. You can teach the masses only by becoming their pupil. If you consider yourselves masters of the people or lords towering above the "lowly," then the masses will have no use for you, no matter how great your talent, and your work will have no future.

Can this position be called "utilitarianism?"*

Materialists are not opposed to utilitarianism in itself, but they are strongly opposed to the utilitarianism of the feudal, bourgeois, and petty-bourgeois classes, and they are opposed to those who denounce utilitarianism with their lips when they are Pharisees at heart, the most selfish and short-sighted utilitarians.

There is no such thing as "super-utilitarianism" or a utilitarianism above class distinctions. In a class society, there can be only the utilitarianism of one class or another.

*At preceding meetings some argued that this type of work constituted "education" rather than "art," labeling it "utilitarianism."—*Ed.*

We are the revolutionary utilitarians of the proletariat. Our starting point is unification of the present and future interests of the broad masses that form more than 90 per cent of China's population. Our revolutionary utilitarianism, therefore, has a very broad and very long-range goal. We are not utilitarians of the guild type who are concerned with partial, immediate interests.

Consider, for instance, a piece of literature admired only by the author, several of his friends, and perhaps a small group of people outside his immediate circle. The masses may not need it and it may even be harmful to them. But if the writer persists in forcing it on the public and uses it for propaganda purposes among the masses in his own interests or in the interests of his own little group at the same time accusing the masses of utilitarianism, he is not only flagrantly insulting the masses but indeed indicates that he does not have a correct estimate of himself.

Whatever makes for the greater good of the majority of the people may be considered superior. Your work of art may be like "Yang Ch'un Pai Hsieh"* that only aristocrats can enjoy while the masses may still be singing "Hsia Li Pa Jen."† If you do not raise the cultural level of the masses and if, instead, you do nothing but blame them for their backwardness, then you are indulging in futile criticism.

Our problem is to unify the process of raising the standard and our education. Without this unification, any literature and art produced on a higher level will inevitably fall into the very narrowest utilitarianism. Even though you may proclaim your work to be pure and superior art, it will be only self-styled art and the masses will not accept it.

*A song about 2,000 years old describing snow in the spring.—*Ed.*

†An equally ancient folk song, about a man from Szechuan who lives in Lower Village.—*Ed.*

Having settled upon a fundamental policy, and having decided how to work for the workers, peasants, and soldiers, we have at the same time disposed of the other problems of our position, our attitude, our public, our subject matter; the presentation of bright and dark sides; the question: unity or disunity; utilitarianism or super-utilitarianism; narrow utilitarianism and far-sighted utilitarianism.

If we agree upon this fundamental policy, then our cultural workers, our schools of literature and art, our cultural publications, our cultural organizations, and all our activities in the field of literature and art must adhere to this policy. Any departure from this policy would be mistaken and anything that contradicts this policy must be corrected.

3

Since we realize that our literature and art must serve the masses, then we can go a step further and discuss (1) the inner-party problem of the relation between the literature and art work of the party and party work as a whole; and (2) the problem of our relations with those outside the party, *i.e.*, the relation between party writers and artists and non-party writers and artists; in other words, the problem of a united front in literature and art.

Let us consider the first problem. All culture or all present-day literature and art belong to a certain class, to a certain party or to a certain political line. There is no such thing as art for art's sake, or literature and art that lie above class distinctions or above partisan interests. There is no such things as literature and art running parallel to politics or being independent of politics. They are in reality non-existent.

In a society with class and party distinctions, literature and art belong to a class or party, which means that they

respond to the political demands of a class or party as well as to the revolutionary task of a given revolutionary period. When literature and art deviate from this principle, they divorce themselves from the basic needs of the people.

The literature and art of the proletariat are part of the revolutionary program of the proletariat. As Lenin pointed out, they are "a screw in the machine." Thus the role of the party's work in literature and art is determined by the over-all revolutionary program of the party. Deviation from this principle inevitably leads to dualism and pluralism, and eventually to such views as Trotsky advocated: Marxist politics but bourgeois art.

We are not in favor of overemphasizing the importance of literature and art but neither must we underestimate it. Although literature and art are subordinate to politics, they in turn exert a tremendous influence upon politics. Revolutionary literature and art are part of a revolutionary program. They are like the aforementioned screws. They may be of greater or lesser importance, of primary or secondary value when compared with other parts of the machine, but they are nevertheless indispensable to the machine; they are indispensable parts of the entire revolutionary movement. If we had no literature and art, even of the most general kind, we should not be able to carry on the revolution or to achieve victory. It would be a mistake not to recognize this fact.

Furthermore, when we say that literature and art are subordinate to politics, we mean class politics and mass politics, not the so-called politics of a few politicians. Politics, whether revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, represent the struggle between two opposing classes, not the behavior of isolated individuals. The war of an ideology and the war of literature and art, especially the war of a revolutionary ideology and the war of revolutionary literature and art, must be subordinate to the political war be-

cause the needs of a class and of the masses can be expressed in concentrated form only through politics.

Revolutionary political experts who have mastered the science or art of revolutionary politics are merely leaders of the hundreds of thousands of political experts among the masses. Their task is to crystallize and pass on the ideas of the political experts among the masses and give these ideas to the masses in a form which they can understand and put into practice. They must not be like the aristocratic "political experts" who build a wagon in a closed room or who pretend to be oracles of wisdom and think they have a world monopoly of something very exclusive.

Herein lies the basic difference between the political experts of the proletariat and those of the propertied classes. Herein also lies the basic difference between the politics of the proletariat and the politics of the propertied classes. It would be incorrect to neglect this point or to regard the politics and the political experts of the proletariat as narrow-minded and vulgar.

Let us now consider the problem of a united front in literature and art. Since literature and art are subordinate to politics, and since the key problem of Chinese politics today is that of resisting Japan, it becomes the prime duty of our party workers in literature and art to unite on an anti-Japanese platform with all writers and artists outside the party (from party sympathizers, petty-bourgeois writers and artists to writers and artists of the bourgeois and landlord classes).

We should also rally them around the issue of democracy. Some of these writers and artists will not support this cause, so that unity in this sphere necessarily will be somewhat limited.

Furthermore, we should strive for unity on specific problems confronting writers and artists, such as the question of practice and approach. We advocate proletarian

realism and, here again, some will disagree. Unity on this question, therefore, probably will be even more limited than on the issue of democracy.

Unity may be achieved on one issue while struggle and criticism may be required on another. Although each of these issues may seem to stand alone, actually they are related. Thus, even if unity is achieved on a certain issue such as the question of resisting Japan, struggle and criticism must be continued. If there is only unity and no struggle in a united front or only struggle and no unity, we should be repeating the mistakes committed by some of our comrades in the past, namely, right "surrenderism" and "tailism" or left isolationism and sectarianism. They constitute what Lenin called a sloppy policy. This is true of politics as well as of literature and art.

Petty-bourgeois writers and artists constitute an important force in the united front of literature and art. They exhibit many weaknesses in their thinking and work but they are more sympathetic toward revolution than other groups and are somewhat closer to the workers, peasants, and soldiers. We must help them overcome their weaknesses; we must win them over to work for the workers, peasants, and soldiers. These are tasks of particular importance.

4

Literary and art criticism constitutes a major weapon which must be developed to carry on a struggle in literary and art circles. As many comrades have rightly pointed out, our past work has been inadequate in this respect.

Criticism of literature and art presents a complicated problem requiring special study. Here I shall discuss only the problem of basic standards of criticism. I shall also

comment on various problems raised by comrades and the incorrect views expressed by some.

There are two standards for literary and art criticism. One is the political standard and the other, the artistic standard.

By the political standard, artistic production is good, or comparatively good, if it serves the interests of our war of resistance and unity, if it encourages solidarity among the masses, and if it opposes retrogression and promotes progress. Conversely, artistic production is bad, or comparatively bad, if it encourages dissension and division among the masses, if it impedes progress and holds the people back.

Shall we distinguish between the good and bad on the basis of the motives (subjective intention) or the effects (actual practice in society)? Idealists stress the motives and deny the effects; mechanical materialists stress the effects and deny the motives. We are opposed to both approaches.

We are dialectical materialists; we insist upon a synthesis of motive and effect. The motive of working for the masses cannot be separated from the effect which is welcomed by the masses. The motive and the effect must dovetail. A motive engendered by individual self-interest or narrow group-interest is not good. On the other hand, a good intention of working for the masses is of no value if it does not produce an effect which is welcomed by the masses and benefits them.

In examining the subjective intent of a writer, that is to say, in determining whether his motive is correct or good, we cannot depend upon his own declaration of intent; we must analyze the effect which his behavior (his creative product) has on society and the masses. The standard for examining a subjective intent is social practice; and the standard for examining a motive is the effect it produces.

Our criticism of literature and art must not be sectarian. Bearing in mind the general principles of the war of resistance and national unity, we must tolerate all works of literature and art expressing every kind and shade of political attitude. At the same time, we must be firm in principle and in our position when we criticize. This means that we must criticize severely all literary and artistic works which present viewpoints that are opposed to national, scientific, mass, and Communist interests because both the motives and the effects of this so-called literature and art jeopardize our war of resistance and wreck our national unity.

From the point of view of artistic standards, all works of higher artistic quality are good, or comparatively good while those of inferior artistic quality are bad, or comparatively bad. But this criterion also depends upon the effect a given work of art has on society. There are few writers and artists who do not consider their own works excellent.

Also, we must allow free competition of various types and shadings of artistic work. At the same time, we must criticize the work correctly, by scientific and artistic standards, in order gradually to raise art of a lower level to a higher level, and to change art which does not meet the requirements of the people's struggle (even when it is on a very high level) to art which does.

We know now that there is a political standard and an artistic standard. What then is the proper relation between them? Politics is not at the same time art. The world outlook in general is not at the same time the methods of artistic creation. Not only do we reject abstract and rigid political standards but we also reject abstract and rigid artistic standards. Different class societies have different political and artistic standards as do the various classes within a given class society. But in any class society or in any class within

that society, political standards come first and artistic standards come second.

The bourgeois class rejects the literature and art of the proletariat, no matter how high their artistic quality. The proletariat must likewise reject the reactionary political essence of bourgeois literature and art, and extract their artistic quality very judiciously. It is possible for outright reactionary literature and art, the creative work of fascists, to have a certain measure of artistic quality. Since reactionary productions of high artistic quality, however, may do very great harm to the people, they must definitely be rejected. All literature and art of the exploiting classes in their decadent period have one characteristic in common—a contradiction between their reactionary political content and their artistic form.

We demand unity between politics and art; we demand harmony between content and form—the perfect blending of revolutionary political content with the highest possible level of artistic form. Works of art and literature without artistic quality are ineffectual no matter how progressive they are politically.

Thus we condemn not only works of art with a harmful reactionary content but also works done in the “poster-and-slogan style,” which stresses content to the exclusion of form. It is on these two fronts that we must fight in the sphere of literature and art.

Many of our comrades suffer from both defects. Some tend to neglect artistic quality when they ought to be devoting much more attention to advancing artistic quality. But even more important at present is their lack of political quality. Many comrades lack fundamental political common sense, with the result that they entertain all sorts of confused notions. Let me give you a few examples of the notions entertained in Yenan.

1. “The theory of human nature”—is there such a

thing as human nature? Yes, certainly, but only concrete human nature. In a class society human nature takes on class characteristics; there is no abstract human nature which stands above class distinctions.

We stand for the human nature of the proletariat, while the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie advocate the human nature of their respective classes. And while they may not express it in so many words, they consider that theirs is the only kind of human nature. In their eyes, therefore, the human nature of the proletariat is contrary to human nature. There are in Yenan some who think along similar lines; they advocate the so-called theory of human nature as the basis for their theory of literature and art. This is absolutely wrong.

2. "The origin of all literature and art is love, love of mankind." Love may be a starting point, but there is still another even more basic starting point. Love is a concept which is the product of objective experience. Fundamentally we cannot start from an idea; we must start from objective experience.

The love that we writers and artists with our intellectual background bear for the proletariat stems from the fact that society has forced upon us the same destiny as it has forced upon the proletariat and that our lives have been integrated with the life of the proletariat. Our hatred of Japanese imperialism, on the other hand, is the result of our oppression by Japanese imperialists. Nowhere in the world does love exist without reason nor does hatred exist without reason.

As for love of mankind, there has been no such all-embracing love since the human race was divided into classes. The ruling classes have preached universal love. Confucius advocated it, as did Tolstoy. But no one has ever been able to practice it because it cannot be attained in a class society.

A true love of mankind is attainable, but only in the future when class distinctions will have been eliminated throughout the world. Classes serve to divide society; when classes are eliminated, society will be united again. At that time, the love of mankind will flourish but it cannot flourish now. Today we cannot love the fascists nor can we love our enemies. We cannot love all that is evil and ugly in society. It is our objective to eliminate all these evils. The people know that. Cannot our writers and artists understand it?

3. "Literature and art have always presented impartially and with equal emphasis the bright and dark sides, always as much of one as of the other."

This remark reflects a series of muddled ideas. Literature and art do not always present the bright and dark impartially. Many petty-bourgeois writers have never discovered the bright side; they depict only the dark side and call their work "exposé literature." They even produce works which are devoted entirely to spreading pessimism and defeatism.

During the period of socialist reconstruction the literature of the Soviet Union primarily described the bright side. Although shortcomings were admitted, they were presented as shadings against a background of over-all brightness. There was no equal emphasis of the bright and the dark.

During periods of reaction bourgeois writers and artists have characterized the revolutionary masses as bandits and gangsters but referred to themselves as god-like. Thus have they distorted the bright and the dark sides.

Only truly revolutionary writers and artists can correctly solve the problem of balance between praise and exposé. Every dark force which endangers the masses must be exposed while every revolutionary struggle of the masses must be praised. This is the fundamental task of revolutionary writers and artists.

4. "The function of literature and art has always been to expose." This kind of talk, just like the previous remark, shows a lack of understanding of the science of history and historical materialism.

As I have pointed out, to expose what is bad is not the only function of literature and art. Revolutionary writers and artists should limit the subject matter of their exposure to the aggressors, exploiters, and oppressors. The people, naturally enough, also have shortcomings, but their defects are produced in large measure by the rule of the aggressors, exploiters, and oppressors. Our revolutionary writers and artists must lay the blame for these shortcomings upon the crimes committed by the aggressors, exploiters, and oppressors, not expose the people themselves. As for the people, our only problem is how to educate them and raise their level. Only counter-revolutionary writers and artists consider the masses "born fools" and describe the revolutionary masses as "despotic mobs."

5. "This is still the period for essays. The style used by Lu Hsün still constitutes the right approach."

Essays in Lu Hsün's satirical style may be considered the correct means of attack only when dealing with the enemies of the people. Lu Hsün lived under the rule of the dark forces; he was not free to speak. He, therefore, fought back with very satirical essays and in this he was absolutely correct.

Of course, fascists and reactionary cliques in China must be attacked with bitter satire, but in the Shan-Kan-Ning Border Region and in the anti-Japanese bases in the enemy's rear, where all except counter-revolutionary elements and spies enjoy complete freedom and democracy, essayists do not need to adopt Lu Hsün's style. Here you can shout out loud, in plain language that holds nothing back, so that the masses may understand easily. When Lu Hsün was not dealing with the enemies of the people but

with the people themselves, he never, even in his "essay period," directed his satire against the revolutionary people and the revolutionary parties. The style of his essays dealing with the people was entirely different from the style he used in attacking their enemies. As I have already pointed out, we should criticize the shortcomings of the people only from the standpoint of the people and with heartfelt sincerity, with a view to protecting and educating the people. If you treat your comrades in the same merciless manner that you use for the enemy, you are taking the very same position as the enemy.

Should we, then, discard satire entirely? There are several kinds of satire: one for dealing with the enemy, another for dealing with friends, and still another for dealing with the people in your own camp. Each of these three kinds of satire is entirely different from the others. We do not wish to discard satire as a whole but we must discard the abuse of it.

6. "I am not here to sing the praises of virtue and merit! To eulogize the good side does not necessarily make for great art and to expose the bad side does not necessarily make for inferior art."

If you are a writer or artist of the bourgeoisie it is quite natural that you will not extol the working class but you will eulogize the bourgeoisie. Similarly, if you are a writer or artist of the proletariat, it is quite natural that you will extol only the proletariat and the working people. But you must be either on one side or the other.

The writings which extol the bright side of bourgeois society are not necessarily superior nor are the writings which describe the dark side of that society necessarily inferior. The writings which praise the bright side of the proletariat are not necessarily inferior, but it is certainly reprehensible, to describe the so-called "darkness" of the proletariat. Has this fact not been established in the history

of literature and art? Why should we not extol the people, the creators of history and civilization? Why should we not extol the proletariat, the Communist Party, the New Democracy, and socialism?

There are certain people who have no enthusiasm for the great cause of the masses. They act like aloof bystanders of the struggle and victories of the people as well as of the vanguard of the people. They are primarily concerned with and never tired of praising themselves or their admirers or perhaps a few others within their small coterie. These petty-bourgeois individualists are, of course, unwilling to praise the accomplishments and virtues of the people or to strengthen the courage of the revolutionary people for the struggle and increase their confidence in victory. These persons are maggots in the revolutionary camp and the revolutionary people have no use for their "eulogists."

7. "This is not a problem of our position, for our position is correct, our intentions good; we have grasped the idea; only our means of expression is not good and, therefore, the effect is bad."

I have already interpreted the problem of motive and effect in the light of dialectical materialism. Let us then see whether the problem of effect is not also a problem of position. When one approaches a task only with a motive, without ascertaining what the effect will be, he is like a doctor who prescribes without ascertaining whether the remedy will cure or kill his patient. Similarly, is it correct for a political party to issue a manifesto without ascertaining whether it can be carried out? Is that what you would call a good intention? We may err in estimating effects but can it be said that your intentions are good if you persist in using a method after it has been proved that that method produces undesirable results?

We judge a political party or a doctor by the practical

results or the effects they achieve. We must judge a writer or artist in the same way.

Those who really have good intentions must consider the effect, take into account all past experience, and carefully examine their method or their so-called form of expression. If they really have good intentions, they must recognize the shortcomings and errors in their work, practice earnest self-criticism, and be determined to correct these mistakes. It is in this spirit that Communist Party members practice self-criticism. Then and then only can your position be called correct. At the same time, it is only by maintaining a serious and responsible attitude toward actual practice that you may get to understand what position is correct and get to grasp the correct viewpoint. If you do not move in this direction in actual practice but insist that you are always right, you actually understand nothing, despite anything you may say.

8. "Learning Marxism-Leninism is a mechanical repetition of dialectical materialism, which will stifle the creative spirit."

Learning Marxism-Leninism means only observing and studying the world, society, literature, and art from the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism. It does not mean that one must include an outline of philosophy in a work of literature or art.

Marxism-Leninism embraces but does not replace realism in creative literature and art, just as Marxism-Leninism can only embrace but not replace the theories of atoms and electrons in physics. Empty, dry dogmas truly stifle the creative spirit; furthermore, they destroy Marxism-Leninism. Dogmatic Marxism-Leninism is not Marxism-Leninism; it is contrary to Marxism-Leninism.

Will not Marxism-Leninism then destroy the creative spirit? Oh yes, it will. It will destroy the feudal, bourgeois, and petty-bourgeois creative spirit; the creative spirit

that is rooted in liberalism, individualism, abstractionism; the creative spirit that stands for art-for-art's sake and is aristocratic, defeatist, and pessimistic. It will destroy any brand of creative spirit which is not of the masses and of the proletariat. And is it not right that these brands of creative spirit should be destroyed as far as proletarian writers and artists are concerned? I think so. They should be extirpated to make room for the new.

5

All the foregoing problems have been raised in the literary and artistic circles of Yenan. What do they indicate? They indicate that the literary and artistic circles seriously suffer from incorrect habits and tendencies in learning, party affairs, and literature. They indicate that our comrades still suffer from idealism, foreign dogmatism, illusions, empty talk, a belittlement of actual practices, aloofness from the masses, and other shortcomings. It is of vital importance that we mend our ways.

Many of our comrades still are not able to distinguish clearly between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. Many of our members have joined the party organizationally but have only partially or have not at all joined the party ideologically. They still retain much of the drivel fostered by the exploiting classes; do not understand the ideology of the proletariat; do not know what communism is or what the party is. They think that proletarian ideology is just "usual stuff." They do not understand that it is not an easy task to master this "usual stuff." Many of them do not bear the faintest resemblance to real Communists; they eventually end up by leaving the party. There are others who are even worse. They were once members of Japanese-sponsored organizations or Wang Ching-wei's party or the secret services of the big bour-

geoisie and the landlord class. Now they have infiltrated into the Communist Party and into party-led organizations and have pinned a revolutionary badge on their lapels.

Although the majority of our comrades are clean and honest, our party and our ranks need a thorough, far-reaching overhauling organizationally and ideologically in order that the revolutionary movement be guided towards greater development and quicker accomplishment.

Organizational overhauling requires an ideological overhauling which, in turn, requires a showdown between proletarian and non-proletarian ideologies. An ideological struggle of the kind which was recently begun in the literary and art circles of Yenan is absolutely essential.

Persons with petty-bourgeois backgrounds constantly resort to a number of ways of self-expression, including literature and art. They propagandize their own views and urge that the Communist Party and the whole world be reformed in accordance with the views of petty-bourgeois intellectuals. To them we shall say emphatically: comrades, your ideas are unacceptable. The proletariat and the masses cannot succumb to your ideas, for that would mean succumbing to the big bourgeoisie and the landlord class. It would lead to the loss of our party, to the loss of our country, and perhaps even to the loss of your own heads. To whom, then, must we turn? To the proletariat and its vanguard. It is only from their standpoint that the party and the world can be remodeled.

We hope that our comrades in literary and art circles will realize the seriousness of this discussion and participate actively, together with their friends and their comrades in this struggle against the enemy. In this way will every party member be strengthened and our ranks united and consolidated both organizationally and ideologically.

Because they are confused ideologically, many of our comrades still do not understand the difference between

our anti-Japanese bases and the other parts of China. Their confusion leads to many errors. Many of you comrades have come here from the garrets of Shanghai. When you moved from those garrets to our bases, you moved not only from one area to another but from one historical era to another. You moved from a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society ruled by the big landlord class and the big bourgeoisie to a revolutionary, new, democratic society under the leadership of the proletariat. In moving to our bases, you moved into an era of the rule of the workers, peasants, soldiers, and of the broad masses of the people, an era without precedent in the history of China. The people about us have changed; our audience has changed. Past eras are gone forever and will not return. We must unhesitatingly join the new masses.

If some of our comrades now living among the new people are still unable to understand, like heroes without a battlefield, they will be confronted with many difficulties, whether they go to the villages or stay in Yen-an.

Some of our comrades may think, "I shall continue to write for the readers in the general rear. I am familiar with them, and my writings will assume national significance." This kind of thinking is completely wrong. Conditions in the general rear are changing too. Readers there do not want the same old stories repeated by writers who are now living in the anti-Japanese bases. They expect these writers to tell them something about the new people and the new world. Only works dealing with people in the anti-Japanese bases would, therefore, prove to be of real national significance. A. Fadeyev's tale, *The Nineteen*, for example, was only the story of a small guerrilla detachment. It was not written to pander to the tastes of old-world readers, yet its influence spread throughout the world.

China is going forward, not backward! Our revolutionary bases, not the backward and retrogressive regions of

China, are leading China forward! Comrades, in trying to mend our ways, we must first recognize this basic fact.

Since we must fit into the era of the new masses, we must once and for all clarify the relationship between the individual and the masses. Let me quote two lines from a poem by Lu Hsün: "Raise your brow defiantly and coldly at the pointed fingers of thousands of people; but bow your head willingly and work like an ox for the youth." That should be our maxim.

The "thousands of people" are our enemies, and we shall never yield to them, no matter how fierce they are. The "youth" is the proletariat and the masses of the people. All Communist Party members, all revolutionaries, and all revolutionary writers and artists must follow Lu Hsün's maxim. Be as patient and untiring as the ox in working for the proletariat and the people; bend all your efforts to achieve this goal; give every ounce of your energy to this work; never stop as long as you live. You who are intellectuals may find it a painful and laborious experience to identify yourselves with the masses and to work for the masses. You may encounter many obstacles but you can attain this objective once you are determined to pursue it.

In my remarks I have dealt only with a few of the fundamental problems of the direction to be taken in our cultural movement. Many concrete problems remain, which from now on should be studied constantly.

I trust that all of you comrades are determined to advance along these lines. In the process of correcting our habits and in long-range work and study, I believe all of you will be able to reform both yourselves and your work, that you will create excellent works of art which will be enthusiastically welcomed by workers, peasants, soldiers, and the masses of the people, and that you will advance to a bright new stage the literature and art movement in the democratic as well as other areas of our country.

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