

MAO TSE-TUNG

FIVE DOCUMENTS ON LITERATURE AND ART

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING

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First Pocket Edition 1967

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present English translation of *Five Documents on Literature and Art* has been made from the Chinese text published by the People's Publishing House, Peking, in May 1967. The notes at the end of the pamphlet have been added by the translator.

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Printed in the People's Republic of China

**LETTER TO THE YENAN PEKING
OPERA THEATRE AFTER SEEING
DRIVEN TO JOIN THE LIANGSHAN
MOUNTAIN REBELS¹**

January 9, 1944

Having seen your performance, I wish to express my thanks to you for the excellent work you have done. Please convey my thanks to the comrades of the cast! History is made by the people, yet the old opera (and all the old literature and art, which are divorced from the people) presents the people as though they were dirt, and the stage is dominated by lords and ladies and their pampered sons and daughters. Now you have reversed this reversal of history and restored historical truth, and thus a new life is opening up for the old opera. That is why this merits congratulations. The initiative you have taken marks an epoch-making beginning in the revolutionization of the old opera. I am very happy

at the thought of this. I hope you will write more plays and give more performances, and so help make this practice a common one which will prevail throughout the country.

**GIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION TO THE
DISCUSSION OF THE FILM
*THE LIFE OF WU HSUN***

May 20, 1951

The questions raised by *The Life of Wu Hsun* are fundamental in character. Living in the era of the Chinese people's great struggle against foreign aggressors and the domestic reactionary feudal rulers towards the end of the Ching Dynasty, people like Wu Hsun did not lift a finger to disturb the tiniest fragment of the feudal economic base or its superstructure. On the contrary, they worked fanatically to spread feudal culture and, moreover, sedulously fawned upon the reactionary feudal rulers in order to acquire the status they themselves lacked for spreading feudal culture. Ought we to praise such vile conduct? Can we ever tolerate such

This is an extract from an editorial written by Comrade Mao Tse-tung for *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*).

vile conduct being praised to the masses, especially when such praise flaunts the revolutionary flag of "serving the people" and is underlined by exploiting the failure of the revolutionary peasant struggle? To approve or tolerate such praise means to approve or tolerate reactionary propaganda vilifying the revolutionary struggle of the peasants, the history of China, and the Chinese nation, and to regard such propaganda as justified.

The appearance of the film *The Life of Wu Hsun*, and particularly the praise lavished on Wu Hsun and the film, show the degree of ideological confusion reached in our country's cultural circles!

In the view of many writers, history has developed not by the replacement of the old by the new, but by the exertion of every effort to preserve the old from extinction, not by class struggle to overthrow the reactionary feudal rulers who had to be overthrown, but by the negation of the class struggle of the oppressed and their submission to these rulers, in the manner of Wu Hsun. Our writers have not studied history to ascertain who were the enemies oppressing the Chinese people, and whether there is anything praise-

worthy in those who submitted to these enemies and served them. Moreover, they have not tried to find out what new forms of social economy, new class forces, new personalities and ideas have appeared in China and struggled against the old forms of social economy and their superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) in the century and more since the Opium War of 1840, and they have accordingly failed to determine what is to be commended and praised, what is not to be commended and praised, and what is to be condemned.

Certain Communists who have reputedly grasped Marxism warrant particular attention. They have learned the history of social development — historical materialism — but when they come across specific historical events, specific historical figures (like Wu Hsun) and specific ideas contrary to history (as in the film *The Life of Wu Hsun* and the writings about Wu Hsun), they lose their critical faculties, and some have even capitulated to these reactionary ideas. Is it not a fact that reactionary bourgeois ideas have found their way into the militant Communist Party? Where on earth is the Marxism which certain Communists claim to have grasped?

For the above reasons, there should be discussion on the film *The Life of Wu Hsun* and on books and essays relating to Wu Hsun so as thoroughly to straighten out the confused thinking on this question.

LETTER CONCERNING STUDIES OF THE DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER

October 16, 1954

Enclosed are two articles refuting Yu Ping-po. Please look them over. They are the first serious attack in over thirty years on the erroneous views of a so-called authoritative writer in the field of study of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. The authors are two Youth League members. First they wrote to the *Wenyi Bao (Literary Gazette)*² to ask whether it was all right to criticize Yu Ping-po, but were ignored. Having no other alternative, they wrote to their teachers at their alma mater—Shantung University—and got support. Their article refuting "A Brief Comment on *The Dream of the Red Chamber*" was published in the university journal *Wen Shi Zhe (Literature, History and Philosophy)*. Then the

This is a letter written by Comrade Mao Tse-tung to the comrades of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and other comrades concerned.

problem came up again in Peking. Some people asked to have this article reprinted in *Renmin Ribao* in order to arouse discussion and criticism. This was not done because certain persons opposed it for various reasons (the main one being that it was "an article written by nobodies" and that "the Party paper is not a platform for free debate"). As a result a compromise was reached, and the article was allowed to be reprinted in the *Wenyi Bao*. Later, the "Literary Legacy" page of *Guangming Ribao* carried another article by the two young men refuting Yu Ping-po's book; *Studies of "The Dream of the Red Chamber"*. It seems likely that the struggle is about to start against the Hu Shih school of bourgeois idealism which has been poisoning young people in the field of classical literature for more than thirty years. The whole thing has been set going by two "nobodies", while the "big shots" usually ignore or even obstruct it, and they form a united front with bourgeois writers on the basis of idealism and become willing captives of the bourgeoisie. It was almost the same when the films *Inside Story of the Ching Court* and *The Life of Wu Hsun* were shown. The film *Inside Story of the Ching Court*, which has been described by certain people as patriotic but is in fact a film of national betrayal;

has not been criticized and repudiated at any time since it was shown all over the country. Although *The Life of Wu Hsun* has been criticized, up to now no lessons have been drawn; what is more, we have the strange situation in which Yu Ping-po's idealism is tolerated and lively critical essays by "nobodies" are obstructed. This deserves our attention.

Towards such bourgeois intellectuals as Yu Ping-po, our attitude should naturally be one of uniting with them, but we should criticize and repudiate their erroneous ideas which poison the minds of young people and should not surrender to them.

TWO INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING LITERATURE AND ART

I. INSTRUCTION OF DECEMBER 12, 1963

Problems abound in all forms of art such as the drama, ballads, music, the fine arts, the dance, the cinema, poetry and literature, and the people involved are numerous; in many departments very little has been achieved so far in socialist transformation. The "dead" still dominate in many departments. What has been achieved in the cinema, new poetry, folk songs, the fine arts and the novel should not be underestimated, but there, too, quite a few problems exist. As for such departments as the drama, the problems are even more serious. The social and economic base has changed, but the arts as part of the superstructure, which serve this base, still remain a serious problem. Hence we should proceed with investigation and study and attend to this matter in earnest.

Isn't it absurd that many Communists are enthusiastic about promoting feudal and capitalist art, but not socialist art?

II. INSTRUCTION OF JUNE 27, 1964

In the last fifteen years these associations,³ most of their publications (it is said that a few are good) and *by and large* the people in them (that is not everybody) have not carried out the policies of the Party. They have acted as high and mighty bureaucrats, have not gone to the workers, peasants and soldiers and have not reflected the socialist revolution and socialist construction. *In recent years*, they have slid right down to the brink of revisionism. Unless they remould themselves in real earnest, at some future date they are bound to become groups like the Hungarian Petofi Club.

NOTES

¹The Peking opera *Driven to Join the Liangshan Mountain Rebels* is an episode from *Shui Hu Chuan* (*Heroes of the Marshes*), the 14th century classical novel. It tells how Lin Chung, spurred on by the strength shown by the people, resolved to join their rebellion against the reactionary rulers.

²A theoretical journal on literature and art published by the Union of Chinese Writers.

³These are national mass organizations in the field of literature and art.

毛 泽 东
关于文学艺术的五个文件

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外文出版社出版（北京）

1967年袖珍本第一版

编号：（英）1050—651

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1-E-841Pc