

Zhou Yang as a Cultural Authority and Humanistic Socialist: Intellectual Evolution and Political Culture*

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Liberal China watchers tend to perceive the ideological-cultural polemics in the Chinese intellectual community as a factional or power struggle between "liberal intellectuals" and "cultural bureaucrats." In this perspective, Zhou Yang may be perceived as a watchdog within the totalitarian state of orthodox Maoist policy regarding literature and art. He was known for years only as a power-wielding communist "cultural czar." Some studies go so far as to deny him the status of an intellectual, casting him instead as their enemy. Moreover, liberal China viewers tend to see that his writings and public roles in most cultural campaigns well manifest Zhou Yang's portrait as a blinded spokesman of Maoist vulgaristic mass line for political mobilization and thought reform.

This article suggests, however, that Zhou Yang's life reflects two symbolic currents in Chinese intellectual life: aspirations to the role of officialdom and a sense of cultural mission. Like idealistic intellectuals throughout Chinese history, he faithfully dedicated himself to the socialist revolution, although the methods through which his life expressed this appeared as a contradiction, unification, and finally as a culmination of these two currents. As could also be argued of many other early twentieth-century intellectuals from all parts of the political spectrum, Zhou Yang was committed to the enlightenment of Chinese society, and as an out-

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*The author's perspective on Zhou Yang is influenced by conversations with and the works of Gu Xiang (Zhou Yang's colleague), Li Hui (*People's Daily*), and Wen Lumin (Beijing University), as well as Lucian Pye's view on Chinese political culture and Timothy Cheek's and Carol Lee Hamrin's study on China's establishment intellectuals.

spoken and at times heterodox socialist intellectual-cadre, he followed in the moral path of his imperial and Confucian predecessors.

KEYWORDS: cultural mission; cultural authority; humanistic socialist; Confucian reformist ideal; Leninist principle

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In general, liberal China watchers tend to perceive the ideological-cultural polemics in the Chinese intellectual community as a factional or power struggle between "liberal intellectuals" and "cultural bureaucrats." Many studies have a tendency to emphasize that liberal or critical intellectuals in the PRC voice dissatisfaction with the communist regime and ideology.¹ Given, therefore, that Chinese intellectuals of all types complained bitterly under Mao about the dogmatism of the leadership and bureaucratization of the regime, the Western approach seems excessively imbued with academic assumptions of Cold War scholarship.

In this perspective, Zhou Yang may be perceived as a watchdog within the totalitarian state of orthodox Maoist policy regarding literature and art. He was known for years only as a power-wielding communist "cultural czar." Some liberal studies go so far as to deny him the status of an intellectual, casting him instead as their enemy.² Rather, liberal China viewers

¹Joshua Fogel's and Timothy Cheek's study also pointed out this view. See Joshua A. Fogel, "Ai Siqi: Professional Philosopher and Establishment Intellectual," in *China's Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship*, ed. Merle Goldman, Timothy Cheek, and Carol Lee Hamrin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 23. Cheek points out that some Western studies tend to erroneously view Deng Tuo, one of the main establishment intellectuals, as a liberal who had the courage to denounce the errors of the Party after the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Cheek's research based on the totality of Deng's life and intellectual activities modified this predilection: "Not only are implications that Deng rejected the CCP simply not true, but it is apparent that Deng perceived himself to be a loyal communist. His criticisms were given to improve, not denounce, the political system." See Timothy Cheek, "Deng Tuo: A Chinese Leninist Approach to Journalism," in *China's Establishment Intellectuals*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin and Timothy Cheek (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 92-123; Timothy Cheek, "From Priests to Professionals: Intellectuals and the State under the CCP," in *Popular Protests and Political Culture in Modern China: Learning from 1989*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), 136.

²Zhou Yang has been made the subject of several studies although none have exclusively focused on his role in the Chinese intellectual community. See Douwe Wessel Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine in China and Soviet Influence, 1956-1960* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965);

tend to see that his writings and public roles in most cultural campaigns well manifest Zhou Yang's portrait as a blinded spokesman of Maoist vulgaristic mass line for political mobilization and thought reform.

However, a broad range of research into Zhou's entire writings and behavior pattern assures us that his image needs to be reevaluated. Most of these studies have only partially examined the life of Zhou Yang, focusing purely on his role as an ideological spokesman from the 1940s to the 1950s.³ Such studies mainly emerged in the height of the Cold War era

David Holm, *Art and Ideology in Revolutionary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Merle Goldman, *China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Byung Joon Ahn, *Chinese Politics and the Cultural Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); Tsi-An Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness: Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968); C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1917-1957* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961); Kyna Rubin, "Writers' Discontent and Party Response in Yan'an Before 'Wild Lily': The Manchurian Writers and Zhou Yang," *Modern Chinese Literature*, no. 1 (September 1984): 79-102. There are also some studies on Zhou Yang's critical role after the Great Leap Forward. See Bill Brugger and David Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990); David A. Kelly, "The Emergence of Humanism: Wang Ruoshui and the Critique of Socialist Alienation," in Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin, *China's Intellectuals and the State*, 159-82.

³ Among studies on Zhou Yang, major works which include but are not solely devoted to discussion of Zhou Yang are those by Douwe Wessel Fokkema, David Holm, and Merle Goldman. In his study, Fokkema dealt with Zhou Yang's literary theory and polemics in the 1950s mainly in relation to Soviet literary theory. See Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*. He handled literary theory and polemics between Zhou Yang and other intellectuals, but not the public roles of Zhou Yang. David Holm's work is most controversial. In his view, Zhou Yang's pragmatic and elitist beliefs regarding culture had already sprouted in the 1930s and 1940s. According to Holm, Zhou is most often seen as the foremost advocate of "popularization of literature" and "national forms" and a blind supporter of Mao's "cultural populist ideas." However, Holm has not been able to find any evidence to support this view. Holm argues that Zhou's views on culture occupied a "middle ground" between "artistic elevation" and "popularization," suggesting that Zhou was in fact a reluctant participant in the debates over popularization and national forms. Holm advanced the argument that regardless of the "objective revolutionary function" of his writings, Zhou can only in a very obscure way be said to have been the foremost advocate of Mao's cultural ideology. See Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 99-100; on cultural populists and national form, see 66-70. Although Holm's study does not discuss Zhou's activities after 1949, this author's view is broadly consistent with Holm's. In her pioneering work on Chinese intellectuals, Goldman labeled Zhou in the 1940s-60s as a "literary bureaucrat." Somewhat at odds with the picture given in this first study, her second important study included Zhou Yang as a "liberal intellectuals' political patron" in the 1960s. Her latest study characterizes Zhou as a "Marxist humanist theorist" after the Cultural Revolution. Without critiquing this terminology in detail, it should be noted that her views are based on an analysis of a certain period of Zhou Yang's life. See Goldman's three works: *Literary Dissent*, *China's intellectuals*, and *Sowing the Seeds*.

and are seriously one-sided and flawed in that they ignore Zhou Yang's vigorous literary criticisms based on cultural elitism and his practical or critical attitudes toward Mao Zedong's orthodoxy since the failure of the Great Leap Forward as well as his passionate arguments about "socialist humanism" and "socialist alienation" in the 1980s.

This article suggests that previous assessments of Zhou Yang are excessively concerned with issues relating to power during the time in which Zhou assumed the role of a cultural authority within China's intellectual community and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As such, these previous assessments do not sufficiently consider either his moral or critical contributions to intellectual discourse. This article emphasizes his intellectual continuity as an active revolutionary intellectual-cadre from the 1930s to the 1980s and places his life in a continuum of intellectual evolution and broader context of Chinese political culture.

Socialist Literary Criticism as a Cultural Mission

From the time that Zhou Yang joined the CCP, his literary criticism portrayed the struggle of the revolutionary proletariat for socialism under the guidance of the Party leadership. Indeed, it was Zhou Yang as a socialist literary critic who initially provided the CCP with its supporting cultural ideology in these spheres by promulgating what purported to be a new literary theory—national defense literature, socialist realism, and a synthesis between revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism.⁴

Zhou found himself in sympathy with Maoist cultural theories and policies in literature and art, perceiving no contradiction between his own beliefs in these areas and his acceptance of Mao's orthodoxy as an overarching ideology. He gave prominence to Mao's dictum that intellectuals should participate in the struggle of the masses. Zhou strongly argued that

⁴Zhou Yang, "Discussion on the Combination of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism," in *Zhou Yang wenji* (Collected works of Zhou Yang) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1984), 3:60-66; Zhou Yang, "The Path of Socialist Literature and Art in China," *Peking Review*, 1960, no. 38:6-15; *ibid.*, no. 39:15-24.

literature should be written to serve the people and the needs of Party policy, suggesting that there need to be no contradiction with nondogmatic literary views.

In this, he was as much affected by the Russian populist literary theorist Chernyshevsky, whom he had translated while in Yan'an, as by Mao.⁵ Notably, Zhou Yang's life and revolutionary ideas reflected to a considerable degree a similar pattern with Chernyshevsky. Zhou Yang himself said that he was a supporter of Chernyshevsky's style of literary life.⁶ Following the ideas of this Russian literary theorist, Zhou Yang's own literary theories rejected the apolitical theory of "art for art's sake." In his works he asserted that literature should be the weapon of social revolution as propaganda and serve the interests of the people.

Literary Polemics with Lu Xun and Hu Feng

From 1931 to 1937, as a returned student from Japan and faithful communist literary critic, Zhou Yang took a leading role in propagating communist literary theory in the League of Left-Wing Writers (hereafter, the League) in Shanghai. The League was an organization of socialist revolutionaries whose purpose was to promote the production of proletarian art. However, their literary slogan brought about growing controversies among the leftist writers even before the founding of the League, and instantly inspired succeeding ideological and literary polemics in the Chinese intellectual community.⁷ With an unquestioning organizational activism, Zhou Yang as a young revolutionary served the CCP's cultural line, and quickly gained prominence over other revolutionary intellectuals.

Lu Xun's ideas regarding revolutionary literature were dissimilar to those current in socialist circles. Lu Xun did not believe that "literature has

⁵In Yan'an, Zhou Yang translated Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky's master's dissertation, *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*, which vigorously attacked the apolitical theory of "art for art's sake." For Chernyshevsky's influence on Zhou, see Zhou Yang, "On Chernyshevsky and His Aesthetics," in *Zhou Yang wenji* 1:359-79; "Rambling Talks on Literature and Life," *ibid.*, 325-37, in Rubin, "Writers' Discontent and Party Response," 79-102.

⁶See Zhou, "Rambling Talks on Literature and Life," 325.

⁷For the League and literary polemics, see Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Literary Trends: The Road to Revolution 1927-1949," in *The Cambridge History of China* 13:425-45.

the power to move heaven and earth."⁸ He argued that these revolutionary writers were still complacently enveloped in their hollow revolutionary slogans. Their pose of self-righteousness merely presented an extreme leftism, which veiled their ignorance of Chinese society. Referring to Upton Sinclair's phrase, Lu Xun argued that "although all literature is propaganda, . . . not all propaganda, and certainly not the works of these revolutionary writers, was literature."⁹ Lu Xun did not deny the class nature of literature but he strongly criticized the idea that left-wing writers could act as spokesmen for the proletariat.

In contrast to Lu Xun, Zhou Yang was a loyal adherent to the CCP line. This, together with his organizational talents, gradually led him to prominence over other intellectuals. Later, debate within the League's new leadership erupted, and two groups developed, one centering on Zhou Yang, the other on Lu Xun. As the debates progressed, the influence of Zhou Yang's group, which maintained close relations with the CCP, grew while that of Lu Xun's independent and nondoctrinaire group declined. As a result, Lu's group came into conflict with Zhou Yang and his colleagues who emerged as the new organizational leadership of the League and the CCP's cultural hierarchy.

During the bitter debate over "national defense literature" which erupted shortly after the dissolution of the League, Zhou Yang had tried to convert Lu Xun to his side, but Lu Xun continued to support Hu Feng, who had long been Zhou's main rival in the intellectual community. Subsequently, Hu Feng openly expressed his support for the arguments of Lu Xun in the conflict with Zhou and challenged Zhou's authority. This culminated in the literary polemics between Zhou Yang and Lu Xun, who both strove to secure the superiority of their respective literary circles.¹⁰

⁸Lu Xun, "Literature and Revolution," in *Lu Xun quanji* (Complete works of Lu Xun) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1991), 4:83; English translation in *Lu Xun: Selected Works* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1985), 3:25.

⁹Lu, "Literature and Revolution," 84; Lee, "Literary Trends," 425; Amitendranath Tagore, *Literary Debates in Modern China, 1918-1937* (Tokyo: Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1967), 85-86.

¹⁰Merle Goldman, "Hu Feng's Conflict with the Communist Literary Authorities," *The China Quarterly*, no. 12 (October-December 1962): 109. For the battle of the two slogans, see

The disagreement between these two groups brought to light a fundamental question which would subsequently trouble the Party leadership regarding its policy toward literature and art. Lu Xun's group insisted that writers should maintain their autonomy while supporting the struggle against the Japanese invasion. Zhou Yang and his circle, on the other hand, maintained that in such a crucial situation it was necessary to maintain a cultural as well as political united front. In the national revolutionary period, Zhou Yang's belief that literature and art should remain faithful to the socialist revolution was a recurring theme in all his literary criticism.

Significantly, even since Lu Xun's death, recurring cultural polemics in contemporary China had often revived the clashes of literary views promoted by these two groups. Zhou Yang and his followers had always been in line with the Party's cultural stand, branding the unwavering solidarity of the Party and the people as the highest value. In contrast, the so-called Lu Xun's disciples or supporters have always given the higher regard to the aesthetic taste in their writings and intellectual autonomy apart from politics.

However, Zhou Yang later recalled that it was a mistake to criticize Lu Xun. After the founding the PRC, he humbly paid homage to Lu Xun's contribution to the left-wing literature and art movement in the 1930s. Zhou confessed that he had been inexperienced and did not have a good mastery of Marxism at that time.¹¹ In addition, to express his deep respect for Lu Xun's contribution to the revolutionary literary movement, Zhou edited *Lu Xun quanji* (Complete works of Lu Xun) in 1957. Regarding the conflict between Lu Xun and Zhou Yang in the 1930s, Xu Guangping, Lu

Lee, "Literary Trends," 439-45; Chou Yu-sun, "Lu Hsun: Before and After His Death," *Issues & Studies* 22, no. 11 (November 1986): 110-37.

¹¹Zhou Yang, "Inherit the Past and Usher in the Future," in *Chinese Literature for the 1980s: The Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists*, ed. Howard Goldblatt (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 17. In an interview in July 1978, Zhou frankly stated that he and his group at that time could not appreciate Lu Xun's greatness in the Chinese revolution. See Zhao Haosheng, "Zhou Yang xiaotan lishi gongguo," *Xinwenxue shiliao* (Historical Materials of New Literature), February 1979, 234-37; English translation in Tony Kane, "Zhou Yang Takes a Look at History," *Spring-Autumn Papers* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 133-35. Also see Zhou's report given on the centenary of the birth of Lu Xun on September 25, 1981: "Persist in Lu Xun's Cultural Direction and Develop Lu Xun's Militant Tradition," *Chinese Literature*, 1982, no. 1:99-118.

Xun's wife, once remarked: "To my disgust, some treacherous people still attack Comrade Zhou Yang in the name of Lu Xun." She pointed out Zhou's high respect for Lu Xun after the establishment of the PRC, commenting: "If we are concerned not with a man's personality but with his deeds, if we are faithful to the organization and the Party, we ought to see things differently."¹² This remark indicates both that there was an ideological disagreement between Lu Xun and Zhou Yang and that some people still use this disagreement as a political means to attack Zhou Yang.

Hu Feng was purged and sent to prison after being criticized by Zhou Yang and his group in 1955. When Zhou spoke at the Second Session of the Council of the Chinese Writers Union in April-May 1956, he raised the negative example of Hu Feng and the entire literary current. In his speech, Zhou did not attack Hu Feng for any counterrevolutionary relationship with the Kuomintang (KMT), but rather for his literary opinions and his role in the dissident tradition of communist writers.¹³ Zhou Yang's main arguments and criticisms of Hu Feng were primarily ideological and elitist, a point which is not acknowledged in some scholarship. In July 1966, when Hu was asked to criticize Zhou Yang—who had also been purged—he refused and said:

Although Zhou is now in prison, I have absolutely no wish to feather my own nest at his expense. The theory of literature and art, and cultural polemics in particular, is so sensitive that what is required is a great deal more sincere work and full-scale free discussion in order to reach a conclusion. In the current situation, a criticism of Zhou Yang and his group would not be sufficient to justly persuade people.¹⁴

¹²Xu Guangping, "Let's Correct Errors and Unite Around the Party," *Wenyi bao* (Literary Gazette), 1957, no. 20:5-6. See also Maruyama Noboru, "The Appraisal of the Literature of the Thirties in the People's Republic of China: Aspects of the Ideological Background to Contemporary Chinese Literature," in *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature and Literary Criticism*, ed. Wolfgang Kubin and Rudolf G. Wagner (Bochum, Germany: Herausgeber Chinathemen, 1982), 240.

¹³Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Cog and the Scout: Functional Concepts of Literature in Socialist Political Culture: The Chinese Debate in the Mid-Fifties," in Kubin and Wagner, *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature*, 379-80; Zhou Yang, "The Task of Building a Socialist Literature," *Wenyi bao*, 1956, no. 5-6:4-16; Chou Yang [Zhou Yang], "Building a Socialist Literature," *Chinese Literature*, 1956, no. 4:198-222.

¹⁴Mei Zhi [Hu Feng's wife], "Hu Feng's Biography," *Wenhui*, 1987, no. 9, reprinted in Dai Zhixian, "The Whole Story of the Case of Hu Feng Counterrevolutionary Clique," in

In September 1980, the CCP concluded that its past decision on the "Hu Feng Anti-Revolutionary Clique Case" had been completely mistaken and should be corrected. It was Zhou Yang who visited the hospitalized Hu Feng and congratulated him, informing him of the Party's decision on Hu's rehabilitation.¹⁵ Ironically, in 1967 Yao Wenyuan harshly criticized Zhou Yang, charging that "his ideology was in essence the same as Hu Feng's."¹⁶

Apart from the views most liberal Western studies portray on his combative personality, Zhou displayed apologetic and modest approaches in the polemics with Lu Xun and Hu Feng's case. This was also the case seen clearly in the further cultural debates of the Hundred Flowers and the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

Socialist Realism

Modern Chinese literature emerged amidst the intellectual ferment which followed the May Fourth Movement. In this context, the school of literary realism was particularly attractive to many of the movement's supporters. Influenced by the May Fourth literary revolution, all left-wing writers claimed to be realists, but they could not agree on what realism really meant. Although the term "socialist realism" was not used until 1932, communist writers' understanding of realism in the preceding decade foreshadowed the later concept of socialist realism. Noncommunist writers, meanwhile, understood realism in its traditional conception, for which they were pejoratively characterized by left-wing writers as "bourgeois realists."¹⁷

These debates are of historical interest in that they were largely responsible for inflaming left-wing writers into the polemics that subsequently beset Chinese literary circles. The acrimonious arguments between

Zhongguo zhishifenzi beihuanlu (The story of Chinese intellectuals' grief and joy), ed. Shen Zanyun, Li Xingyuan, and Liang Yichi (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1993), 149-50.

¹⁵Dai, "The Whole Story of the Case of Hu Feng Counterrevolutionary Clique," 139.

¹⁶Yao Wenyuan, "On the Counterrevolutionary Double-Dealer Chou Yang," *Chinese Literature*, 1967, no. 3:35-36.

¹⁷Sylvia Chan, "Realism or Socialist Realism: The 'Proletarian' Episode in Modern Chinese Literature, 1927-1932," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 9 (January 1983): 57. The following argument on socialist realism benefits from Sylvia Chan's study.

Zhou Yang and Lu Xun's group over the nature of revolutionary literature came to the fore in the early 1930s when Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen rebelled against the League's doctrinal line, "Proletarian Literature and Socialist Realism." Both sides in the polemics were professed realists and agreed that literature must reflect reality truthfully. However, they were unable to agree as to what reality was and how it could be truthfully expressed.

In September 1931, a young literary scholar named Hu Qiuyuan published an article criticizing the so-called literature of nationalism that was vigorously promoted by the KMT and opposed by all left-wing writers. Hu was a prominent member of the League. One of his main arguments was that "literature should never be denigrated as a gramophone of politics."¹⁸ He wrote that "it is a betrayal of art to degrade it into a phonograph of politics."¹⁹ He did not agree with the League writers that bright images in literature could help to bring about a bright future of China. Therefore he believed that literature had no function other than to reflect reality. Hu Qiuyuan's challenge to the League's literary stance was defended by Su Wen who spoke of a similar concern over the exploitation of literature for political ends.²⁰

Su Wen and Hu Qiuyuan reflected Lu Xun's view when they argued that realism demanded that a writer record what he saw and believed to be real, not what an ideology claimed to be real. They also believed that there was no socioeconomic base in pre-socialist China for a proletarian literature to take root. Su and Hu refuted the belief of Zhou Yang and other writers of the League, arguing that although literature has a class basis, literary creation should not be subjected to Marxist economic and political laws. Literature should reflect life aesthetically by showing its complexities and ambiguities. Contrary to the ideas of Zhou Yang and other socialist literary theorists, Su and Hu argued that the function of literary criticism was to

¹⁸Ibid., 66; Hu Qiuyuan, "On Bitch Literature," in *Wenxue yundong shiliaoxuan* (Selected historical materials of literary movement), ed. Beijing University and Beijing Normal University (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1979), 3:78-115.

¹⁹Hu, "On Bitch Literature," 118. Also see "Don't Invade Literature," in *Wenxue yundong shiliaoxuan* 3:120-22.

²⁰Su Wen, "On *Literary Journal* and Hu Qiuyuan's Literary Debates" and "Exit of the Third Kind of Person," in *Wenxue yundong shiliaoxuan* 3:127-36, 161-77.

analyze literature objectively rather than to dictate the process of its creation.²¹

The views expressed by Hu and Su were taken as an attack on writers in the League, and counter-criticisms were published. The criticisms of Hu and Su in the League's journal, whose editor was Zhou Yang, were so severe that Lu Xun was prompted to submit a written protest to Zhou.²² In particular, Zhou Yang also expressed his own theories which were opposed to those of Su and Hu. Zhou made a distinction between phenomena and essence, and argued that the essential truth is often obscured by delusive phenomena. Literature should reveal the essential and not focus on mere superficial phenomena. To bestow value upon the latter, as Su Wen argued, would result in what Zhou termed the error of factual and psychological empiricism. In this article, Zhou Yang presented his argument that it was not possible for a writer to reflect reality in a purely objective manner. When attempting to understand and portray events and characters, Zhou argued, the writer is simultaneously a self-conscious subject viewing the "objective" world and a part of that world, and as such his subjective understanding would inevitably be conditioned by that world. He went on to argue that even realists, if they were of bourgeois origin, had been influenced by capitalist society, which had determined their consciousness despite their critical understanding of the true nature of capitalism. Zhou Yang suggested that "only Marxists could really grasp realist methods, because the ultimate truth in the world is the realization of communism, a truth only proletarian writers would want to recognize from their own class interest." He rejected Su Wen's claim that "literature is to be purely intuitive" and said that "even intuition is influenced by reason." He agreed that "writers were in danger of writing schematic literature if they did not abstract Marxist concepts." Zhou also voiced the opinion, however, that at times of national crisis it was possible for some members of the non-proletarian classes to abandon their own classes and join the ranks of the

²¹Lee, "Literary Trends," 434-35; Chan, "Realism or Socialist Realism," 66-69.

²²About Lu Xun's protest, see Lu Xun, "On the Third Kind of Person," in *Lu Xun quanji* 4:438-44.

communist revolution. He thought that such a complete modification from one class to another was difficult, but conceded that even if such a change was only partial "it was still possible for those concerned to grasp the objective truth to some degree."²³

Although he remained firm in his arguments on socialist realism, Zhou Yang's practical attitude is made clear in the following remarks:

The movement of realism and democracy in literature is consistent with the national liberation struggle. We insist that literature should not always be a servant of politics but it would be difficult for us to deny that literature is a political weapon. This principle appears clearer when the social situation is in desperation . . . Since China is now in a struggle of life and death against imperialism, no nationalistic and patriotic writer should overlook the present political situation. We have to take advantage of literature and help ourselves to regain the liberation of the Chinese people, wherein the significance of the national defense literature lies. We must further promote the freedom of literature and strengthen the basis of the literary front, which will eventually improve the interests of the Chinese people.²⁴

Through these polemics, there were of course sharp exchanges and controversies. These controversies soon came to an end, however, because both sides shared sympathy for the proletarian literary movement of the League. However, in Yan'an, those who opposed Zhou Yang and Mao Zedong's literary line invoked the argument of Lu Xun's critical realism. Because of ideological and political differences with Lu Xun, Zhou Yang refused to accept the arguments of Lu Xun's group. In summary, the history of literary polemics from this period onward was primarily a story of the struggle between these two literary groups and their approaches to a solution to cultural-ideological issues in China.

After 1949, Zhou Yang constantly called for socialist realism. In one of his essays, Zhou Yang mentioned Mao Zedong's work "On New Democracy" of 1940, which stated that "the May Fourth Movement came into being at the call of the Russian revolution and of Lenin."²⁵ He also referred

²³Chan, "Realism or Socialist Realism," 67-68; Zhou Yang, "The Truthfulness of Literature," in *Zhou Yang wenji* 1:58-73.

²⁴Zhou Yang, "Realism and Democracy," in *Zhou Yang wenji* 1:228-29.

²⁵Zhou Yang, "Socialist Realism: The Road of Advance for Chinese Literature," in Zhou Yang, *China's New Literature and Art: Essays and Addresses* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1954), 88, 91-92. See also Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," in *Selected Works*

to Lu Xun, who in 1932 spoke of Russian literary influence in his essay "I Hail the Chinese-Russian Literary Ties."²⁶ In this article Zhou pointed out that at that time Chinese literature was not yet fully socialist, but "socialist and revolutionary-democratic, guided by the creative methods of socialist realism."²⁷

In his report of September 1953, Zhou Yang argued categorically that Chinese writers "regard the method of socialist realism as their highest principle in the creation and criticism of all literature and art."²⁸ He reminded writers of a passage in the "Talks at the Yen'an [Yan'an] Forum on Literature and Art" (hereafter, "Talks") in which Mao had said that "Soviet literature in the period of socialist construction portrays mainly the bright [side]."²⁹ According to Zhou Yang, socialist realism requires "the portrayal of characters of a completely new type, characters who do not tolerate the evil influences of the old society. . . . Not only should the people of today be described, but also an outlook given to the people of the future."³⁰ However, portraying positive characters should not be separated from exposing negative ones. In line with the optimism inherent in Marxism, Zhou Yang found it necessary that in literature "all backward phenomena should be overwhelmed by the invincible new forces. Therefore, in our works, we should not put negative characters on the same footing with positive characters."³¹ The description of the "positive character" may be idealistic or even hagiographic, because "it is permissible and sometimes even necessary for a writer, who wants to bring the shining qualities of a hero into sharp relief, purposely to ignore unimportant shortcomings, so that the hero becomes an ideal personality that all can admire. Our realists must, at

of *Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 2:373. The following debate is partly summarized from Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 36-42.

²⁶Lu Xun, "The Ties Between Chinese and Russian Literatures," in *Lu Xun: Selected Works* 3:209-13.

²⁷Zhou, "Socialist Realism," 95.

²⁸Zhou Yang, "For More and Better Literary and Artistic Creations," in Zhou, *China's New Literature and Art*, 27.

²⁹Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 3:91.

³⁰Zhou, "For More and Better Literary and Artistic Creations," 31.

³¹*Ibid.*, 32.

the same time, be revolutionaries with an ideal."³² In its choice of subject matter, socialist realism was not to be restricted to the present time. The writers may describe historic figures, but he emphasized:

In our literary works on historical themes, only those who were on the side of progress, whose examples can inspire and educate the people of today, should be depicted and praised—such people, for instance, as the leaders of the successive peasant revolutions, national heroes who gave their lives struggling for the country's independence and unity, and great scientists and artists who through their work contributed to the welfare of the people.³³

In conclusion, Zhou Yang's view was more or less a comment on issues with which Mao had already dealt in his Yan'an "Talks." However, Zhou Yang went into more detail regarding socialist realism. As he himself stated, one of the main reasons for this was that since the Yan'an Forum remarkable political changes had taken place in China: "powerful state-owned enterprises of a socialist nature have assumed the leading position in the national economy."³⁴ Although in general no direct link can be made between social situations and literature, in advocating socialist realism, Zhou Yang explicitly considered China's present stage of social development to be favorable to a change in the literary sphere.

*Combination of Socialist Realism
and Socialist Romanticism*

The Great Leap Forward in literature and art produced a new situation which required a new slogan. As in Yan'an, Mao tried to establish his own ideological norms and required others to observe them. Thus the formula, allegedly conceived by Mao, that literature should express the "combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism" immediately dominated the imagination of the Chinese intellectual community. Although established as Mao's Great Leap ideology, this new theory originally came from the demands of Soviet theorists, Gorky and Zhdanov, that socialist literature combine active romanticism with realism.³⁵

³²Ibid., 33.

³³Ibid., 35.

³⁴Ibid., 26.

³⁵Douwe Wessel Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth*

Despite these origins, when the people's communes were established in 1958 and the theory of the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism was launched, it became clear that the introduction of the new literary slogan was also a manifestation of China's worsening relations with the Soviet Union. During this period of decline in Sino-Soviet relations, the CCP expressed readiness to pursue an independent path in both politics and culture.

After Mao Zedong's directive of 1958, Zhou Yang and Guo Moruo developed this theory into a Chinese version of socialist culture. Guo asserted that "the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism is more perfect than socialist realism."³⁶ Revolutionary romanticism was supposed to demonstrate hope of a great future in current Chinese realities.³⁷ Zhou Yang attributed this concept to Mao not only to enhance the influence of Mao's orthodoxy, but also to give the concept a uniquely Chinese origin.

Between 1953 and 1958, socialist realism had been accepted as an official literary theory in China. However, during the Hundred Flowers period when dissident intellectuals attempted to dismantle its ideological content by replacing it with the phrase "realism of the socialist era,"³⁸ Zhou Yang asserted that the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism should substitute for the ambiguous Soviet socialist realism. He maintained that "this new concept emphasized the revolutionary goals of literature and detracted from the claim of truthful representation."³⁹ In June 1958, Zhou Yang indicated that this new theory was:

Century (London: Hurst, 1977), 97-98. The following arguments of realism and romanticism and He Qifang's case benefit from Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 196-208; Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 243-71.

³⁶Guo Moruo, "Answer to Questions by Editors of *People's Literature* on Some Problems in Current Creative Writing," *Renmin wenxue* (People's Literature), 1959, no. 1:4.

³⁷Rudolf G. Wagner, "Lobby Literature: The Archaeology and Present Functions of Science Fiction in China," in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981*, ed. Jeffrey C. Kinkley (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1985), 26.

³⁸Wang Ruowang, "Critique of the Realism of the Socialist Era," *Wenyi bao*, 1957, no. 6:6-7.

³⁹Zhou Yang, "Xin mingde kaituole shige de xin daolu," *Hongqi* (Red Flag), 1958, no. 1: 33-39, reprinted in *Zhou Yang wenji* 3:1-12; English translation in Chou Yang [Zhou Yang], "New Folk Songs Blaze a New Trial in Poetry," *Chinese Literature*, 1958, no. 6:8-16.

... a scientific summary of the experience of the whole history of literature, and an entirely correct proposal based on the distinctive features and needs of this age. ... During the revolution and the struggle to build up the country, our people have combined realistic thinking with far-reaching ideals. Without a high sense of revolutionary romanticism we cannot express the spirit of our age, our people, and the communist style of our working class. In the past, realism and romanticism were often considered as mutually exclusive, but we regard them as opposites which complement each other. Without romanticism, realism may easily degenerate into short-sighted naturalism which is a distortion and vulgarization of realism. It may easily turn into an empty display of revolutionary fervor and the wild flights of fancy in which intellectuals love to indulge, and this is not what we want either.⁴⁰

In addition to the emphasis on romanticism, he argued, important is that the new theory be combined with Chinese literary history. As part of this new theory, Zhou emphasized the need to learn from China's cultural heritage, but stressed—as had Mao's "Talks"—that this should be done critically. Zhou Yang reemphasized this formula that it was acceptable to learn from the literature of the past as long as this kind of exercise could help develop a new socialist literature. Traditional values and the elements of feudalism were, therefore, to be absorbed in a critical way. Zhou Yang's assertion of this theory was a further effort to update Mao's "Talks" and to counter the challenge to socialist realism which had emerged during the Hundred Flowers Movement. According to Zhou, literature should not simply mirror reality or overemphasize despair and darkness. Literature was to arouse enthusiasm for the revolution and express the vigor of life in the future. In his view, the "people's poems and folk songs" were best suited for this purpose. He concluded that poets must learn from the people and from folk songs.⁴¹

Therefore, not only did the Party's cultural leaders consider the people's poems as better, but also considered them to be the main basis for Chinese poetry. The people's quantitative output was exalted rather than the professional's qualitative product. Zhou Yang and Guo Moruo played a leading role in the mass poetry movement. The major literary event in this movement was the compilation of the best of these poems in *Hongqi*

⁴⁰Chou, "New Folk Songs Blaze a New Trial in Poetry," 11-12.

⁴¹Ibid., 16.

geyao (Songs of the Red Flag) edited by Zhou Yang and Guo Moruo.⁴² Further aspects of this new approach were the revival of Chinese folk songs and the elevation of Mao's poetry as a model exemplifying the new theory.

However, He Qifang, the one who had most vociferously carried out the Party's cultural line and had been a trusted associate of Zhou Yang since the Yan'an period, stepped forward to protest the eclipse of literary standards in the Great Leap Forward. But Zhou remained relatively inactive in the debate with He Qifang.⁴³ This seems to indicate that Zhou Yang also did not welcome the radical populist thinking in literature and art which the Great Leap Forward had aroused, and thus, he did not engage in the same kind of personal offensive as some of his colleagues such as Guo Moruo.

Thus, although in the poetry movement of the Great Leap Forward Mao promoted collectivized, amateur writing inspired by native folk tales, Zhou still retained a conventional elitist view of culture. The published selection of poems from the movement, edited by Zhou Yang and Guo Moruo, reflects Zhou's elitist interpretation of Mao's populist principles. In his article, published in the first issue of *Hongqi* (Red Flag) in June 1958, stressing continuity in the development of Chinese literary history, Zhou maintained that a premonition of the combination of realism and romanticism could already be found in the works of great poets like Qu Yuan and Li Bo:

One of the greatest poets in our history, Qu Yuan, was a splendid romanticist, and so was Li Bo in the Tang dynasty. Their poetry had the closest affinity to folk literature. Over a thousand years ago Liu Xie commented on Qu Yuan's style by saying that a true poet "dips into the marvelous without losing the truth, and appreciates the fanciful without sacrificing substance." This simple statement is the earliest view expressed in China on the integration of fantasy and reality. We must learn from the rich experience of previous Chinese writers and artists in integrating realism and romanticism, and carry this tradition forward on the basis of our new communist ideas. These new folk songs are specially valuable because they possess this characteristic.⁴⁴

⁴²See Zhou Yang and Guo Moruo, comps., *Hongqi geyao* (Songs of the Red Flag) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1979). On the poetry movement in the Great Leap Forward period, see S. H. Chen, "Multiplicity in Uniformity: Poetry and the Great Leap Forward," *The China Quarterly*, no. 3 (July-September 1960): 1-15.

⁴³For He Qifang's criticism of the poetry movement in the Great Leap Forward period, see Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 206-8; Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 243-71.

⁴⁴Chou, "New Folk Songs Blaze a New Trial in Poetry," 12.

Zhou held their refined poems to be example of literature in national forms which Mao had endorsed since his "Talks" in 1942, although Zhou placed a heavier emphasis on the traditional elitist literature than Mao.⁴⁵ This is of significance in the light of the dissident role Zhou was to play in the CCP's cultural affairs in the 1960s.

Despite the grand intentions of the Great Leap Forward, 1959 and the early 1960s were years of economic chaos, when Mao's utopian dreams did not materialize. Nor were targets for literary production achieved. Mao Zedong had provided the momentum for the Great Leap Forward, and its failure eventually led Chinese politics to a turning point. In this period the cult of Mao came to a peak. Zhou Yang was surely aware of current problems, but his function was never—at least until 1960—to question Mao's authority and Party unity. Zhou's own chosen role was to follow the latest words of the Party leadership and communicate them to the Chinese literary world as a loyal cultural-ideological spokesman.

Reinterpretation of Zhou Yang's Literary Criticism

The prevailing current of literary principle in the PRC was determined by Mao's Yan'an "Talks." In the years since 1942, this Maoist literary theory held the mainstream and was the only school of thought to survive the political vicissitudes. Mao's Yan'an "Talks" were conceived in wartime, when literature was naturally supposed to support the war effort. The view that literature is a "political weapon" was maintained from the national revolutionary to the socialist modernization period, even though political conditions changed constantly. Since significant changes often occurred, the Party spirit—a principle to follow the Party leadership and remain subservient to its changing standpoints—became the cornerstone of the CCP's cultural policy. In addition, the CCP's cultural norm regarded literature less as an independent cultural activity than as a political tool to promote the Party's ideological cause.⁴⁶

Zhou Yang accepted and propagated this view, recognizing that ex-

⁴⁵Ibid., 8-16.

⁴⁶Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 257.

pediency was of great importance for those active in the cultural sphere under the CCP's tutelage. This principle affirms that "Party leadership or the principle of loyalty to the Party's shifting policies is fundamental in matters of literary theory and aesthetics."⁴⁷ For Zhou Yang, revolutionary literature, mass literature, and the building of communism constituted important subject matter. Anti-revolutionary and anti-communist views were not to be represented. His literary criticism supported the view that fullest attention should be given to the themes of socialist revolution and socialist construction, and specifically claimed that literary works should be created to support the Party's ideological cause. A state and society where the Leninist party-state has come to prevail has no serious defects.

Within the framework of Zhou Yang's ideology, the same norm could be applied to intellectual work in general, as well as socialist modernization and industrial production. All these should serve the political goals of the Party. Zhou Yang's literary theory, which was in line with the Party's oscillating cultural policies, and his attacks on critical views were both engendered by the political situation. Therefore, Zhou Yang argued that the writers should portray mainly the bright side of socialist construction. If shortcomings or negative characters were described, they should only serve as a contrast to bring out the brightness of the whole picture. In this way Zhou's literary criticism embodied the very fundamental ideas of Chinese cultural orthodoxy, continuing a critical response to critical views from dissident intellectuals such as Wang Shiwei, Hu Feng, Feng Xuefeng, Ding Ling, and the like. Zhou was then probably banking on the cultural authority of both himself and the Party to keep the criticism within acceptable bounds.

In addition, Zhou's literary criticisms would be classified, as scholarly criticism of his writings demonstrates, as cultural-ideological slogans rather than academic works, being grounded mostly in common-sense knowledge and consisting largely of propaganda concerning the Party's cultural line and Maoist ideology.⁴⁸ This distinguishes Zhou Yang from the

⁴⁷Ibid., 258.

⁴⁸For the scholarly comments on Zhou Yang's literary criticism, see Wen Lumin, *Zhongguo*

dissident group of intellectuals such as Lu Xun, Hu Feng, Ding Ling, Wang Shiwei, Xiao Jun, and others, many of whom dissented from CCP policies as early as the 1930s.

Zhou Yang's socialist literary criticism can therefore be viewed as his method of fulfilling a cultural mission which he shared with his reformist Confucian predecessors. As part of these deliberations, the writings of the intellectuals—Lu Xun, Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Hu Feng, Ding Ling, Deng Tuo, and the like—had been aimed at enlightening the people who were still deeply imbued with traditional and feudal sentiments. As for Zhou, the imminent task was to educate and awaken the masses from the shades of conventional thoughts and ideas rather than contribute to a development of academic standards in cultural works.

In the Chinese intellectual community of the early twentieth century, there were only poor preparations for academic activities. In the face of the Western threat and subsequently rampant ideas alien to indigenous Chinese ethos and thoughts, intellectuals were supposed to bear a cultural mission to carry the nation and people through unprecedented intellectual challenges.

Establishment Through Ideological-Cultural Campaigns

Since the Yan'an period, Zhou Yang had continued to speak as an authority on literary theory and played the role of ideological spokesman under Mao's leadership. He was also a key enforcer of the CCP's cultural line holding various prestigious and important Party positions during his career in the establishment.⁴⁹ He therefore wielded incomparable influence as a cultural authority, both in strengthening the CCP's ideological cause

xiandai wenxue piping shi (The history of modern Chinese literary criticism) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1993), 179-203; Li Tuo, "Resisting Writing," in *Politics, Ideology, and Literary Discourse in Modern China: Theoretical Interventions and Cultural Critique*, ed. Liu Kang and Xiaobing Tang (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 273-77.

⁴⁹Zhou Yang held many important posts in the Party. See Wolfgang Bartke, *Who's Who in the People's Republic of China* (Munich, New York, London, Oxford, and Paris: K.G. Saur, 1987), 702-3.

and in consolidating the thought and behavior of Chinese intellectuals.

Since the founding of the PRC, the CCP's primary objective was the further consolidation of power and construction of an effective apparatus of political control. In the PRC, a Leninist party-state, the state has a hegemonic role in national policy formulation, and state organizations also thoroughly penetrate society. To this end, the CCP's policy regarding intellectuals fluctuated between repression and relaxation.⁵⁰ Initially, control over intellectuals was relaxed so as to make use of their contributions to the consolidation of the new state. As the CCP extended and consolidated its control, however, the Party demanded that intellectuals reform themselves in order to make themselves acceptable and useful to the new regime and society. Then came a series of ideological and cultural reform campaigns. Indeed, many of the political errors for which intellectuals had been criticizing the Party were made targets of the campaigns. Intellectuals who freely expressed their views might find their opinion used as examples of heterodox tendencies and they themselves might be made targets of thought reform.⁵¹ Therefore, although intellectual freedom was allowed to a certain extent, such freedom was constrained by boundaries determined by the Party leadership.

Ideological-Cultural Campaigns and Zhou Yang's Activism

Zhou Yang's public role: Since the Yan'an period, Zhou Yang had assumed prominent and powerful positions in the Party's cultural hierarchy because of his ability to play leading roles in cultural campaigns in which

⁵⁰On the pattern of the CCP's policy toward intellectuals, see Merle Goldman: "The Party and the Intellectuals," in *The Cambridge History of China* 14:218-58; and "The Party and the Intellectuals: Phase Two," *ibid.*, 432-77.

⁵¹Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 474-75. For the targets of rectification, see Frederick Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 53-54. For the most informed brief introduction to this subject, see Harriet C. Mills, "Thought Reform: Ideological Remolding in China," *The Atlantic*, Special issue on China, December 1959, 71-77. Other extended first-hand accounts and academic studies include: Theodore H.E. Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960); Robert Ford, *Wind Between the Worlds* (New York: David McKay, 1957); Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China* (New York: Norton, 1961); Boyd Compton, *Mao's China: Party Reform Documents, 1942-44* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1952).

the CCP extensively applied the norms and ideology established in Mao's Yan'an "Talks" in 1942. Mao's "Talks" soon ignited the Rectification Movement (*zhengfeng yundong*) against intellectuals who had stated opinions critical of the Party's cultural policy. Zhou Yang played a significant role in denouncing heterodox intellectuals and imposing Mao's doctrine, arguing with Wang Shiwei, Hu Feng, Feng Xuefeng, Ding Ling, and so on. He stated the background of ideological campaigns:

In Yan'an, at least the literary and art workers from Shanghai were leftist, and they were few in number, but now we were dealing with people from the entire nation, including artists and a myriad of actors. They were all professionals; the troops were different, the audience was different, and the situation was different. . . . Most importantly, the nature of the revolution had changed. Many problems arose from this, . . . this is how problems arose like the "Story of Wu Xun" affair, the "Dream of Red Chamber" affair, "the Hu Feng affair," and the "Hundred Flowers problem."⁵²

In the initial period of the regime, Zhou Yang, together with his followers Chen Boda, Hu Qiaomu, Ai Siqi, and Shao Quanlin, was main organizers of the ideological campaigns, enforcing the Party's ideological orthodoxy among the intellectuals. Subsequently, the political outlook of the intellectuals underwent a change following a series of thought reform and ideological campaigns which included the Wu Xun affair, the Hu Feng affair, the Hundred Flowers policy, the Anti-Rightist Campaign, and the mass poetry movement of the Great Leap Forward. It was always Zhou Yang who greatly influenced the tone of ideological and cultural campaigns, single-mindedly supported the Leninist Party, and finally rose to the top of the Party's cultural authority. Although officially ranked below such renowned intellectuals as Guo Moruo and Mao Dun, behind the scenes Zhou Yang wielded much more real influence than his official position formally conferred. The extent of Zhou's influence as a cultural authority came to a peak in his management of the thought reform drive in the early 1950s.

After a series of combatant ideological campaigns, the Hundred Flowers Movement signified a relaxation in the cultural policy of the CCP

⁵²Zhao, "Zhou Yang xiaotan lishi gongguo," 241; Kane, "Zhou Yang Takes a Look at History," 143.

between May 1956 and February 1957. Zhou Yang gave the Hundred Flowers Movement his full endorsement. The Hundred Flowers campaign indeed broadened the scope of literature and art. Initially, the Hundred Flowers policy appeared to be successful in that it brought about greater literary activity and permitted the view that literature consisted of more than socialist realism; at the same time the policy had not yet produced dissident political arguments. As time went by, however, the discussions growing out of the Hundred Flowers policy often developed into polemics. Intellectual-cadres within the Party hierarchy adapted to the changing Party line. More individualistic writers criticized the shifts in policy, however, and accused those within the hierarchy of valuing literature and art solely for its political or propaganda functions.⁵³ They praised Lu Xun as their mentor and appealed to his argument. As Zhou Yang and the Party's cultural policy became the object of attack, the arguments of the purged Hu Feng and his dissident views became a renewed subject.⁵⁴ The blooming of critical opinions in this period proved that despite years of ideological indoctrination, there still existed heterodox intellectuals who had not abandoned their critical views and concepts. Then came the sharp reversal of Party policy. In 1957, the intense counterattack, the Anti-Rightist Campaign, against the dissident intellectuals was launched.

Although the Hundred Flowers Movement was still under way, Zhou Yang redefined its meaning. He asserted that "the slogan of 'a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools contend' is not a slogan of liberalization as certain bourgeois writers and newspaper reporters imagine, but a militant slogan for the development of socialist culture."⁵⁵ Subsequently, the

⁵³For the criticism during the Hundred Flowers Movement of the CCP's cultural orthodoxy, see Hualing Nieh, ed., *Literature of the Hundred Flowers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 165-202; Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 117-26. The following debate benefits from Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 203-42.

⁵⁴Using the phrase of Hu Feng, Chen Yong, an ardent advocate of artistic standards, called the Party's disregard for artistic qualities "vulgar sociology." See Chen Yong, "Some Problems Concerning the Characteristics of Art and Literature," *Wenyi bao*, 1956, no. 9:33. For the arguments in defense of Hu Feng, see Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 197-202.

⁵⁵Zhou Yang, "Speech at Meeting of Writers and Artists to Celebrate the Fortieth Anniversary of the October Revolution," *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), November 9, 1957, cited in Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 204.

Anti-Rightist Campaign followed the earlier pattern of the thought reform process. A few representatives of certain groups were chosen as targets and their associates were also criticized until they made a confession. They were labeled as the leaders of the "literary revisionism" which came to the fore in May 1957, namely Ding Ling, Chen Qixia, Feng Xuefeng, and Ai Qing.⁵⁶ These intellectuals all occupied important positions in the literary community.

On July 25, 1957, with Zhou Yang's full endorsement, a series of meetings were held to criticize the Ding Ling-Chen Qixia clique. By the end of July, the meetings already included over two hundred participants. After speeches by China's most renowned writers, such as Lao She, and Party cultural bureaucrats, the sessions came to a close by September 17 after twenty-five meetings. There were more than one thousand intellectuals at the last session to hear the concluding remarks by Lu Dingyi and Zhou Yang.⁵⁷ Zhou Yang's eagerness and authority largely inspired this intensification of the campaign.

Zhou Yang summarized his view of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in an article which appeared just before the inauguration of the Great Leap Forward.⁵⁸ This was a condensation of speeches and articles against critical intellectuals. In response to the criticisms of Mao's "Talks" during the Hundred Flowers Movement, this work was an attempt to update Mao's doctrine. In his article, Zhou drew a parallel between the cultural relaxation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the heyday of the Hundred Flowers Movement in China in May 1957. During the period of relaxation in both the Soviet Union and China, cultural "reactionaries" had tried to grasp the opportunity to destroy social-

⁵⁶For the attack on Ding Ling and her colleagues, see Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 207-23; Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 147-85.

⁵⁷Nieh, *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, 237-58. Zhou Yang's speech was delivered to the enlarged session of the Party Committee of the Chinese Writers Union on September 16, 1957. See Zhou Yang, "The Great Debate on the Literary Front," *Wenyi bao*, 1958, no. 5: 2-15; English translation in *Peking Review*, 1958, no. 3:8-11 and no. 4:12-15. Party officials described this report as "the first assessment of the historical struggle between the Marxist line and the bourgeois line in the proletarian literary movement of the last thirty years." See "Peking Writers and Artists Discuss Chou Yang's Report," *Chinese Literature*, 1958, no. 5:139.

⁵⁸See Zhou, "The Great Debate on the Literary Front."

ism. Both Hungarian and Chinese dissidents had tried to revive "glories of the pre-communist past." According to Zhou Yang, some Chinese rightists entertained the illusion of creating a "Hungarian style revolt," and in 1957, these reactionaries had tried to instigate an anti-socialist "New May Fourth Movement."⁵⁹

Consequently, although the concept of thought reform to reorient China's intellectuals was based on Mao Zedong's cultural ideology, the emphasis and realization of this reform bore the hallmarks of Zhou Yang's specific interpretation of Maoist thought. From this position, his criticisms of dissident opinions in the cultural realm were influential.⁶⁰ With Mao's doctrinal proclamations on literature and art, Zhou Yang became the undisputed legislator and ideological spokesman of the intellectual community both in strengthening the CCP's ideological cause and in consolidating the thought and behavior of Chinese intellectuals.

Elitist approach to cultural campaigns and polemics: In his participation in cultural campaigns and polemics, Zhou Yang's main arguments and criticisms of other intellectuals were primarily ideological and elitist, a point which is not acknowledged in some liberal Western scholarship. Zhou was not a central protagonist throughout the cultural campaigns which occurred under his leadership, preferring to issue his determinative statements only after others had already made their views known.⁶¹ As Zhou's reasonable and elitist approach in the campaigns against Wang Shiwei in Yan'an and He Qifang in the Great Leap poetry movement indicated, he was not excessively vindictive toward discussants in his cultural constituency.⁶²

⁵⁹Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 158; Nieh, *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, 249-51.

⁶⁰Merle Goldman, "Writers' Criticism of the Party in 1942," *The China Quarterly*, no. 17 (January-March 1964): 227.

⁶¹Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 98-100; David Holm, "The Literary Rectification in Yan'an," in Kubin and Wagner, *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature*, 297-99. Kyna Rubin also stated of Zhou Yang's elitist and foreign aesthetic attitudes. See Rubin, "Writers' Discontent and Party Response," 97-99.

⁶²Zhou remained relatively moderate in the debates with He Qifang and Wang Shiwei. For He Qifang's criticism of the poetry movement in the Great Leap Forward period, see Goldman, *Literary Dissent*, 243-71. For Zhou Yang's moderate criticism of Wang Shiwei, see Holm, "The Literary Rectification in Yan'an," 297-99.

In the early days of the Wu Xun affair, a letter from Zhou to his associate Yu Ling stated: "On the question of ideological struggle . . . we must use caution and care in handling specific problems. Crude methods and impatience won't do."⁶³ At a forum on October 24, 1954, Zhou Yang indicated that the criticism of Yu Pingbo's *Dream of the Red Chamber* interpretation was not aimed at Yu personally, who indeed supported the CCP's political ideology. Although he wanted to exempt Professor Yu from personal criticism, Zhou Yang wanted to have discussions which dealt with his views.⁶⁴ That Zhou Yang did not engage in personal offensives, as did some of Mao's radical followers, may be interpreted as a reflection of Zhou's dislike for radical confrontation among intellectuals.

Ding Ling was renowned as a feminist and writer in China, viewed in most Western academic literature as a "liberal intellectual." She crossed swords with Zhou Yang in the 1940s and 1950s, and as a result spent many years undergoing labor reform. After her rehabilitation, she was an active proponent of the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in 1983, criticizing her colleagues for refusing to acknowledge the spiritual pollution within themselves—a stark contrast to the Western portrayal of her as a "liberal." Ding Ling branded Zhou Yang a bourgeois intellectual. However, her stubborn adherence to the Party line, despite her earlier persecution, led other colleagues to ridicule her. At the Fourth Congress of the Chinese Writers Association on December 27, 1984, she was not invited to participate in the open letter of good wishes to the hospitalized Zhou Yang.⁶⁵

These episodes demonstrate that previous interpretation of Zhou's participation in ideological-cultural polemics in Chinese intellectual circles has been quite one-sided, while the Western approach seems excessively imbued with academic assumptions of Cold War scholarship. In particular, many Western scholars tend to perceive the ideological-cultural polemics in the intellectual community as a factional or power struggle between

⁶³Yao, "On the Counter-Revolutionary Double-Dealer Chou Yang," 29.

⁶⁴Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 48. On this campaign, see Joey Bonner, "Yu P'ing-po and the Literary Dimension of the Controversy over *Hung lou meng*," *The China Quarterly*, no. 67 (September 1976): 546-81.

⁶⁵Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds*, 131-32, 145.

"liberal intellectuals" and "cultural bureaucrats" such as Lu Xun's or Ding Ling's group and Zhou Yang's group. However, Zhou Yang's role in the Lu Xun, Hu Feng, and Ding Ling cases clearly indicates that the polemics and bitter discussions between Chinese intellectuals in cultural circles had a different tone from political power struggles.

Reappraisal of Zhou Yang's Public Role

In many ways, Zhou's role as an ideological spokesman in the establishment helps us understand how the CCP's position on intellectuals evolved and how thought reform worked for intellectuals vis-à-vis the CCP. For all the wide speculations in the West regarding cultural campaigns in the PRC, criticisms and debates among intellectuals were primarily not politically but either ideologically or culturally motivated. Although their polemics sometimes represented factional struggles for control over the cultural hierarchy, intellectuals rarely organized a coordinated attack on the CCP leadership. An underlying issue, rather, was the degree of autonomy to be granted to intellectuals. The issue of Party control made the problem of loyalty an acute one. The Party's real goals were greater solidarity under the Party leadership, the maintenance of complete Party control over cultural affairs, and the eventual mobilization of intellectuals for the establishment of socialist culture.

As David Holm demonstrates, unity of opinion has not always been maintained within the CCP. Diverse views were expressed both among intellectual-cadres and within the Party leadership. More appropriate is to suggest that, just as there has been intellectual dissent in Communist China, there has also been assent.⁶⁶ Thus, Zhou's active involvement in cultural campaigns should less be understood as representing assent from an establishment intellectual or an elitist posturing, than as a continuous critical response to the critical views of dissident intellectuals, such as Wang Shiwei, Hu Feng, Feng Xuefeng, and Ding Ling.

Recollecting his official position in cultural polemics, Zhou Yang was

⁶⁶Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 3; David Holm's "Preface" to *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China 1949-1979*, ed. Bonnie McDougall (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), vii-xiv.

committed to bringing about greater solidarity under the CCP leadership, the maintenance of complete Party control over cultural affairs, and the eventual mobilization of intellectuals for the construction of Chinese socialist culture. During his life in the establishment, Zhou Yang's works and behaviors combined the faith of a "Leninist ideologue in the rule of the Party with the cultural aspirations of a Confucian reformist."⁶⁷ Conforming himself to this syncretic political ideology, Zhou Yang stressed that cultural work must serve the socialist revolution as a whole and the tasks of socialist construction, and accept the leadership of the Party and state.⁶⁸

Finally, the nationalistic and patriotic trends of the May Fourth era, during which Zhou Yang matured, had an influence on Zhou's behavior in the establishment. From the May Fourth ideological background, Zhou inherited a sense of "cultural mission" dedicated to the re-creation of Chinese culture. This was to be a culture which inculcated an appreciation and understanding of art and the democratic tradition in Russian literature. As a leading figure in the cultural sphere, Zhou pursued these goals and fulfilled his roles in the cultural arena with vigor. In some cultural campaigns, this led him to support some intellectuals and to dampen the radicalism of cultural polemics, while in others he permitted and even led the censure of intellectuals criticized by various factional cliques, as in the case of Hu Feng. Consequently, the impressions Zhou left on others varied between that of a devotional intellectual-cadre and a cultural czar.

Dissent and Evolution toward a Humanistic Socialist

Until the late 1950s, Zhou Yang had felt no contradiction in his commitment to the CCP and Maoist cultural ideology. However, around 1960,

⁶⁷On this perspective, see the section of this article on "The Ideological Origin of Zhou Yang's Dissent."

⁶⁸Zhou Yang, "The October Revolution and the Task of Building a Socialist Culture," *Chinese Literature*, 1958, no. 1:125. On the argument of syncretic political culture in contemporary China, see Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 30-35; Sung Bin Ko, "Confucian Leninist State: The People's Republic of China," *Asian Perspective* 23, no. 2 (1999): 225-44.

particularly following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, Zhou Yang's service to the CCP and Maoist approach reached a critical point. The economic disaster and nationwide famine brought about by the Great Leap Forward led Zhou to criticize the misuse of power and to remind the CCP to respect the interests of the people. Zhou Yang eventually became a member of the reformist group that questioned Mao's dogmatism in pursuing readjustment of the Party's policy.

Readjustment of Cultural Dogmatism

The first remarkable protest against previous national policy in this period was a growing antidogmatism and specialization. In public, Zhou Yang called for a less ideological approach. At a Work Conference on Science and Technology held in 1961, Zhou stated: "The thought of Mao Zedong should be studied properly, but it must not be simplified or vulgarized."⁶⁹ In contrast to Mao's tightened policy—"ideology in command," he believed that "politics must be placed in command, but technology must be given a high place as well."⁷⁰

In the summer of 1962, Zhou drew a comparison between mass labor mobilization in projects and campaigns in the Great Leap Forward and the extravagant construction projects of the first emperor of the Sui dynasty: "The fall of the Kingdom of Emperor Suiyang was due to the excessive number of construction projects undertaken at that time . . . all requiring ruthless oppression and exploitation of the laboring people." Zhou warned, "We shall go nowhere if we rely solely on mass campaigns, crash programs, and indiscreet action."⁷¹ Mao's position was undermined by this series of denunciations.

Although Zhou in his public life repeatedly praised and quoted Mao's "Talks" as a guiding principle in literature and art, he also stated in many

⁶⁹"A Collection of Zhou Yang's Counter-Revolutionary Revisionist Speeches," *Selection from China Mainland Magazines*, no. 646 (March 10, 1969): 5.

⁷⁰"Speaking at the National Federation Film Production Conference," *ibid.*, no. 648 (March 24, 1969): 8.

⁷¹Gong Weidong, "What Poison Has Zhou Yang Spread in the Northeast?" *Renmin ribao*, August 7, 1966; English translation in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, no. 3763 (August 18, 1966): 18.

places that the situation had changed since the time of Mao's Yan'an "Talks," particularly since the failure of the mass literature in the Great Leap Forward. With this background, the CCP's new cultural norms—the "Ten Points on Literature and Art" (hereafter the "Ten Points")—were finally substantiated by Zhou Yang's leading role, which to much degree attempted to moderate the intensity of Mao's cultural orthodoxy with denouncing aesthetic quality.⁷² His arguments on the "Ten Points" were not only a call for a set of standard operating procedures of the Party leadership, but also a plea to further moderate Party rule over cultural policy.

The "Ten Points," therefore, was a programmatic document which summed up the dissent of Zhou Yang and his group in the field of literature and art in the 1960s. At the same time, the "Ten Points" was an open criticism of Mao's radical line on literature and art and a moderate plot to defuse Mao's cultural orthodoxy. The contrast between Mao's "Talks" and Zhou Yang's "Ten Points" is clear. In this relaxed context, the new atmosphere created by the "Ten Points" enabled intellectuals to express their critical views through their cultural works. Wu Han, Deng Tuo, Liao Mosha, Tian Han, and other critical intellectuals were able to promote historical plays and critical cultural works as popularly discussed in the Western works. They often used historical figures not only to criticize the Great Leap Forward but also to question Mao's dogmatism. Zhou Yang was a backstage supporter and organizer of their allegorical criticisms.

Zhou Yang and his associates desired more intellectual activity and a loosening of ideological restraints on cultural works to help resolve some of the problems brought on by the Great Leap Forward. Zhou revised a number of the criticisms to limit the discussion to literary matters and separate such debate away from political issues. Despite Zhou's efforts to control the campaign, the radical intellectuals, most prominently Yao Wenyan, engaged in harsh polemics.⁷³ However, Zhou Yang and his as-

⁷²"Ten Articles on Literature and Art," *Wenxue zhanbao* (Literature and Art Combat News), June 30, 1967; Wang Hsueh-wen, "Mao Tse-tung's Thought on Literature and Art and the Maoist Struggle Between the Two Lines in Literature and Art," *Issues & Studies* 8, no. 10 (July 1972): 61-63.

⁷³Yao, "On the Counter-Revolutionary Double-Dealer Chou Yang"; "A Collection of Chou Yang's Counter-Revolutionary Revisionist Speeches," 1-15. There is important analysis of

sociates continued to seek to confine the discussion of critical works. In the summer of 1966, however, Zhou Yang was made the chief scapegoat of the Cultural Revolution and put into disgrace.

Development of Zhou Yang's Dissent:

A Humanistic Socialist Approach

Zhou Yang was released on July 12, 1975 following imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution. At the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists in November 1979, Zhou Yang publicly apologized for some of his leftist ways in the establishment and subsequently played a major part in the arguments on "socialist humanism" and "alienation." What made Zhou Yang rather unique on the Chinese political scene in this period was his willingness to atone publicly for his arguments on "socialist humanism" and "alienation" by reference to early Marxist ideas and with the backing of the Party's bolder reformers. Zhou Yang is the most important figure directly associated with the polemics. After all, one November 1983 estimate held that more than six hundred articles and editorials on the subject had been released since 1978.⁷⁴ His public endorsement of humanism and the theory of socialist alienation in the 1980s posed more of a criticism to orthodoxy than any previous statement. On the formulation of Zhou's humanistic socialist ideas, Li Hui argued:

We are unable to know how and to what extent his sufferings in the Cultural Revolution affected his self-retrospection and reformulation of his ideas in the 1980s. However, it seems to me that the inhumane persecutions and tragic events he suffered and witnessed in the Cultural Revolution inspired him to further reclaim his early concerns regarding humanism that had stayed in his mind for a long time. . . . And then, maybe, one day he suddenly began to find his existence was distorted and alienated. If my interpretation above is not accepted, I cannot find a more pertinent answer as to why he determinedly put forward his new ideas on humanism and alienation in his later years.⁷⁵

Wielding less influence than before, he took part in a series of ideological polemics asserting a critical stance toward the CCP, which there-

his purge in Merle Goldman, "The Fall of Chou Yang," *The China Quarterly*, no. 27 (July-September 1966): 132-48.

⁷⁴Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 148.

⁷⁵Li Hui, "Shaking Swing," *Dushu* (Reading) (Beijing), October 1993, 36.

after greatly encouraged the newly emerging intellectuals in the 1980s and after. Therefore, Zhou's humanistic socialist approach and ideas as revealed in this period could be seen as a reformist critique of Chinese politics, but Zhou did not find himself in a position or with the opportunity to take such a departure.

The emergence of polemics: Earlier in 1963, Zhou Yang had delivered an important report against revisionism and humanism. Zhou's speech had made attacks on the revisionists in the socialist world, and on the Marxist humanism associated with them. In particular, he mentioned a topic rarely discussed in the PRC—the Marxist theory of "alienation."⁷⁶ Despite his ultimate rejection of the validity of the concept, his discussion was a recognition of a widespread concern among intellectuals, including his close associates, at that time. Indeed, Wang Ruoshui's essay "On the Concept of Alienation" had been drafted in 1963-64 under the direction of Zhou Yang's group. Ru Xin and Xing Fensi were also in the group. Their main purpose was to criticize the Soviet critique of humanism.⁷⁷ But Zhou's position was weakened shortly afterward and further arguments and publication were withdrawn. Wang Ruoshui finally managed to complete chapters on human nature and alienation which appeared in 1978-80.⁷⁸ While explicit links between alienation and socialism were seldom made, being a highly sensitive topic, Wang argued that alienation existed in the ideological, po-

⁷⁶Zhou Yang, "The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and Social Sciences," *Peking Review*, 1964, no. 1:10-27, esp. 19-20. For the Chinese concept of "alienation," see Donald J. Munro, "The Chinese View of 'Alienation,'" *The China Quarterly*, no. 59 (July-September 1974): 580-82.

⁷⁷Fokkema discusses Zhou Yang's criticism of the Soviet critique of humanism in detail. See Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine*, 243-55; and "Chinese Criticism of Humanism: Campaigns Against the Intellectuals 1964-65," *The China Quarterly*, no. 26 (April-June 1966): 68-81. In his report to the Third Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers on July 22, 1960, Zhou had already differentiated between proletarian humanism and bourgeois humanism, criticizing the latter. See Zhou, "The Path of Socialist Literature and Art in Our Country" (cited in note 4 above), but also available in *Chinese Literature*, 1960, no. 10:12-64.

⁷⁸Wang Ruoshui, "Guanyu yihua de gainian: Cong Heige'er dao Makesi," *Waiguo zhexue yanjiu jikan* (Collected Studies in Foreign Philosophy) (Shanghai, 1978), 1; English version in Wang Ruoshui, "On the Concept of 'Alienation': From Hegel to Marx," in "Wang Ruoshui: Writings on Humanism, Alienation, and Philosophy" (edited and translated by David Kelly), *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 39-70. Also see Wang Ruoshui, "On Human Nature," in *Zai zhexue zhanxian shang* (On the philosophical front) (N.p., n.d.), 444-67.

litical, and economic spheres in China.⁷⁹ This deeper meaning made alienation a highly sensitive topic in China. These writings form the basis of what subsequently became known as the "alienation school."⁸⁰

By 1982, when the CCP control over intellectuals had relaxed, Zhou was eager to seek official support for the ideas of Wang Ruoshui. In May 1982, when he spoke of Mao's "Talks" at the fortieth commemoration meeting of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Zhou Yang opined that "what is referred to as alienation is that, in the course of its development, a subject creates its own antithesis through its own activities and that, as an external and alien force, this antithesis in turn opposes or dominates the subject."⁸¹ While Zhou implicitly alluded to the systemic causes of alienation, he refuted any explicit connection between alienation and socialism in China.

Zhou Yang supported Wang Ruoshui's criticism of the principle of serving politics and in passing endorsed humanist Marxism and the critique of alienation. Since China had been radically transformed since 1942 when Mao gave his "Talks," Zhou argued that to interpret "serve the people" as serving only workers, peasants, and soldiers was anachronistic. Zhou reaffirmed a passage from his 1963 speech:

If we interpret alienation from the materialist viewpoint and in accordance with the dialectical law that a thing always divides itself in two and develops into its opposite, the term "alienation" which Hegel stood on its head will be turned right side up again, we will then have to admit that alienation is a general phenomenon in nature and human society, which assumes diverse forms.⁸²

⁷⁹Wang Ruoshui, "Tan yihua wenti," *Xinwen zhanxian* (Journalism Frontline), 1980, no. 8: 8-11; English translation in David Kelly, "Discussion on the Problem of Alienation," *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 25-38.

⁸⁰On the formation of the alienation school, see Chiang Hsin-li, "Alienation and the 'Emancipation-of-the-Mind' Movement in Communist China," *Issues & Studies* 17, no. 3 (March 1981): 18-33; David Kelly, "The Emergence of Humanism: Wang Ruoshui and the Critique of Socialist Alienation," in Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin, *China's Intellectuals and the State*, 164-69, 171-74; Bill Brugger, "Ideology, Legitimacy, and Marxist Theory in Contemporary China," in *China: Modernization in the 1980s*, ed. Joseph Y.S. Cheng (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989), 18-26. The following argument benefits from these articles as well as Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 139-69.

⁸¹Zhou Yang, "Firstly to Maintain, Secondly to Develop," *Renmin ribao*, June 23, 1982, 5.

⁸²Zhou, "The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and Social Sciences," 19.

Zhou Yang stated that this view was a correct principle which he continued to uphold. In this context, Zhou Yang gave a key presentation at the CCP symposium on the centenary of the death of Karl Marx in March 1983.

The development of polemics in Marx's centenary conference: By March 1983, the relaxation of Party policy had been firmly established. In this atmosphere Zhou restated his views at a commemoration on March 13, 1983 of the centenary of Marx's death. Hu Yaobang, now the Party general secretary and widely regarded as political patron of both Zhou Yang and Wang Ruoshui, played a leading role in moving reformist ideology forward.⁸³ At the commemorative symposium on March 8-11, Zhou and a number of other participants—particularly Su Shaozhi,⁸⁴ director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences—all freely elaborated on the special problems of Marxism. The focus of discussions was on the distinction between socialism as a general theory and as applied in China.

In a paper given at a subsequent symposium on Marxism, with the help of Wang Ruoshui's Marxist works,⁸⁵ Zhou Yang touched on the theme of humanism and alienation under socialism.⁸⁶ Zhou Yang repudiated his own previous criticism of humanism in the 1960s, and confessed that this view was in some respects obstinate and wrong: "It was a mistake to con-

⁸³See Hu Yaobang's commemorative address in "Centenary of Death of Karl Marx Marked," *Beijing Review*, 1983, no. 12:6. See also Hu Yaobang, "The Radiance of the Great Truth of Marxism Lights Our Way Forward" (Speech at the CCP convention to commemorate the centennial of Marx's death), *Xinhua*, March 13, 1983, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China-83-050* (March 14, 1983): K1-16. Hamrin has analyzed Hu's speech in detail. See Carol Lee Hamrin, *China and the Challenge of the Future: Changing Political Patterns* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 64-71.

⁸⁴See Su Shaozhi, "A Decade of Crisis at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, 1979-1989," *The China Quarterly*, no. 134 (June 1993): 335-51; Carol Lee Hamrin, "Conclusion: New Trends Under Deng Xiaoping and His Successors," in Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin, *China's Intellectuals and the State*, 275-304; Su Shaozhi, "Develop Marxism Under Contemporary Conditions: In Commemoration of the Centenary of the Death of Karl Marx," in *Selected Writings on Studies of Marxism*, 1983, no. 2:6, 32.

⁸⁵See Wang Ruoshui, "The Problem of Literature and Human Alienation," *Shanghai wenxue* (Shanghai Literature), September 1980, 4-8; "Literature, Politics, People," *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* (Study on Literary Theory), 1980, no. 3:7-11. Also see Kelly, "Wang Ruoshui: Writings on Humanism, Alienation, and Philosophy."

⁸⁶Zhou Yang, "A Discussion of Some Theoretical Questions in Marxism," *Renmin ribao*, March 16, 1983, 4-5; reprinted in *Zhou Yang jinzuo* (Recent works of Zhou Yang), ed. Gu Xiang (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1984), 233-54.

sider all discussions of humanism and alienation as manifestations of revisionism."⁸⁷ On humanism, Zhou called for a "compromise between bourgeois and Marxist humanism" and said: "both bourgeois humanism and Marxist humanism are compromising, and their characterization as progressive or reactionary depends on historical situations; it is only by understanding Marxist humanism that one can combat bourgeois humanism in socialist society." He asserted that "socialist humanism is the transcendence of bourgeois humanism,"⁸⁸ and said:

In my opinion, only Marxist humanism can supersede bourgeois humanism. . . . I do not approve of incorporating Marxism into the system of humanism, I do not approve of treating Marxism as though the essence of it were summed up in humanism, but we should recognize that Marxism contains humanism. Naturally, this is Marxist humanism.⁸⁹

On alienation, his key point precisely echoed Wang Ruoshui's ideas:

Socialist society is immensely superior to capitalist society, but that is not to say that there is no alienation at all in socialist society. In the past we did many stupid things in economic construction owing to lack of experience and our failure to understand socialist construction—that realm of necessity. We were bound to suffer the consequence, which was alienation in the economic field. Because democracy and the legal system were unsound, public servants sometimes made indiscriminate use of the power conferred upon them by the people and became their masters; this was alienation in the political field, it was typified in the cult of personality. This has certain similarities with the religious alienation denounced by Feuerbach.⁹⁰

But Zhou Yang felt that alienation under socialism is fundamentally different than alienation under capitalism because alienation can be handled by the socialist system itself. The causes of alienation lie not in the socialist system but in the institutional structure. As Zhou saw it, when the Third Plenary Session of the CCP's Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 called for "the emancipation of the mind," this referred to "over-

⁸⁷Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 149. In a speech on October 26, 1963, Zhou had expressed an opinion on alienation different from that in the 1980s. See Zhou Yang, "The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and Social Sciences."

⁸⁸Zhou, "A Discussion of Some Theoretical Questions in Marxism," 249. For this issue, see Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 149-50.

⁸⁹Zhou, "A Discussion of Some Theoretical Questions in Marxism," 250.

⁹⁰Ibid., 252-53; Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 150-51.

coming ideological alienation." He concluded that the Chinese people are able to overcome alienation by working through the reform of the socialist system itself, saying "now the task of legal and economic reforms [is] to overcome political and economic alienation."⁹¹

In the final analysis, Zhou discussed alienation with regard to a broad range of subjects. In the political sphere, he related alienation to antidemocratic bureaucracy, and in economics to extravagance, dereliction of duty, and corruption. All these criticisms laid the groundwork for the argument that intellectuals should criticize and protest against alienation in real life. The Party's orthodox call to serve the people had led in effect to blind servitude to alienated authority. Zhou Yang's aim in doing thus was to promote humanistic socialism through collective participation in socialist modernization. However, despite his criticism on humanism and alienation, he never denounced Chinese socialist ideology itself. Zhou Yang still accorded Marxism-Leninism-Maoism the highest priority, saying that Mao's thought on literature and art has always been the guide for Chinese intellectuals. However, he was convinced that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought should not be regarded as unchangeable dogma but as a guide to action with regard to new circumstances and problems.

Ideological Origin of Zhou Yang's Dissent

Why such a loyal proponent of the CCP's cultural policies and supporter of Mao's cultural ideology as Zhou Yang began to depart from the Maoist orthodoxy has often been asked by commentators on Chinese politics. Zhou had played a key role in the formulation and interpretation of the Party's cultural ideology, and in the 1940s and 1950s had advocated the ideological rectification of intellectuals. That he should have criticized Mao's dogmatism following the Great Leap Forward appears to present a conundrum for those who seek to understand his ideas and behavior.

⁹¹Zhou, "A Discussion of Some Theoretical Questions in Marxism," 253; Brugger and Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, 151.

Just as liberal ideology paradoxically promoted the opposition of the social influence of the church and the nobility in the West, Confucian-Leninist ideas in the PRC have promoted the development of critical attitudes toward the CCP. The Confucian reformist ideal and Leninist democratic centralism may serve powerful interests among Chinese intellectuals seeking to escape the arbitrary and irrational politics of a supreme leader. Lucian Pye has observed that cultural factors dominate public life in China more than in other countries. In the PRC, he argues, there remains a distinctive mixture of "Confucianist Leninism,"⁹² which places supreme value not just on ideology, but on highly moralistic versions of ideology. This syncretic political culture of Confucianism and Leninism, in his view, produces an eclectic political culture that accounts for the constant fluctuation of Chinese politics in the past.⁹³

As this paper suggests, Zhou's dissent strongly resembled not only Confucian reformist concerns in his desire to improve the welfare of the people, but the Leninist approach in his approval of democratic centralism and disciplined Party leadership against the orthodoxy of the supreme leader. His dissent revealed concerns derived from the Confucian reformist tradition in China which he seems to have intended as a moderation of the arbitrary rule of the supreme leader. Rather, like the nineteenth-century *qingyi* literati, he was imbued with a sense of "cultural mission" to reform government by his beliefs. Zhou sought to retool the orthodoxy, learning from the lessons of the Great Leap Forward which he had initially supported, and to articulate his practical approach to the orthodoxy.

Chinese Confucian tradition has long made use of the services of the educated elite and over the centuries many intellectuals had answered the call of civil service to the state. For centuries the tradition of Confucianism had taught intellectuals to speak out with courage against the injustice of government and to concern themselves with the national crisis. In the 1920s and 1930s, revolutionary intellectuals were rebelling against the

⁹²For the syncretic political culture, "Confucian Leninist culture," and the "Leninist approach" in the Chinese intellectual community, see Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre*; Hamrin and Cheek, *China's Establishment Intellectuals*, esp. "Introduction: Collaboration and Conflict in the Search for a New Order" and Part II: "Party Intellectuals," respectively.

⁹³Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre*, 30-32.

Confucian heritage. In believing that intellectuals have a historical mission to lead and transform society, however, these critics paradoxically perpetuated that heritage. At the same time, their belief was also inspired by the Western image of the intellectuals standing apart from, and thus enabling them to criticize and reform society. Zhou Yang once said: "People who make history are not afraid of getting their hands dirty. If we, the artists of a great age, the witnesses and recorders of unprecedented great events, will not dirty our hands, we should at least have the courage to look at the hands that are dirtied. We have to face life straight on."⁹⁴

Clearly demonstrating his sense of "historical mission," Zhou Yang's remarks are reminiscent of the following words of Fan Zhongyan, the Song dynasty reformist scholar-official: "A scholar should be the first to become concerned with the world's troubles and the last to rejoice in its happiness."⁹⁵ Mindful of this legacy, Zhou Yang was certainly aware of how his own life resonated with Confucian intellectual tradition. Thus, while May Fourth intellectuals looked for answers from Western democracy and science, Zhou Yang sought solutions from the Chinese tradition of reformists and its newly imported ideology, Marxism-Leninism.

In addition, as a Leninist intellectual-cadre forced to choose between serving Mao's personal orthodoxy and the readjustment of Party policy in the 1960s, Zhou chose the latter. This is clearly demonstrated in his preface to *Collected Literary Works of Deng Tuo* where he wrote of the vexing situation which a writer faced when Party policy appeared to be undesirable. Acknowledging that upholding the Party line was a duty of a patriotic and socialist writer, he also expressed his belief that writers and cadres alike should make their opinions regarding the Party, and even the leadership, openly known.⁹⁶ In doing so, he would be acting in the interests of the Party and the people.

This insight into Zhou Yang's attitude toward ideology in practice ex-

⁹⁴Zhou, "Rambling Talks on Literature and Life," 330-31; Rubin, "Writers' Discontent and Party Response," 86.

⁹⁵James T.C. Liu, "An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-Yen," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 111.

⁹⁶Zhou Yang, "Preface to the *Collected Literary Works of Deng Tuo*," *Renmin ribao*, December 22, 1983.

plains why he opposed Mao's dogmatism. Zhou's writings and behavior reveal a significant difference between his understanding of cultural ideology in practice and that of Mao. Although some liberal China watchers rarely recognize this point, the evidence strongly indicates that Zhou was a selective supporter of Maoist orthodoxy and, above all, a pragmatic thinker.⁹⁷ Bearing practical ideas, he made a critical comment on Mao's dogmatic ideas:

It is very regrettable that in his later years Comrade Mao Zedong denounced "the principle of the unification of contradictions" that he promoted in the early years of the national revolution. Comrade Mao was dogmatically obsessed with the principle of "one divides into two," overlooking the principle of "two unifies into one," and mistakenly absolutized the struggle between contradictions. This dogmatic idea eventually led to a radical class struggle in our country. . . . The serious problem was that Comrade Mao unnecessarily over-emphasized the voluntaristic subjectivism of humans and the reflection of the superstructure against the infrastructure of human behavior, which resulted in the misuse of subjectivism and voluntarism of the masses in the Great Leap Forward. In addition, Comrade Mao understood and interpreted "theory should serve practice" too simply as "theory should serve politics or class struggle," which affected us and brought sectarian tendencies to intellectual society.⁹⁸

This flexible and critical attitudes were already apparent in the critical sentiment toward Mao's orthodoxy in Zhou's essay in 1941. In this article, he criticized Yan'an life as being monotonous, mechanical, and narrow-minded. He said: ". . . even the sun has dark spots. The new life is not perfect. Sometimes it has many flaws. . . . We sincerely welcome criticism and rely on it to further our cause. Therefore, we shouldn't think that just because a writer makes one or two negative remarks about Yan'an, he is against us."⁹⁹ This attitude illustrates Zhou's belief in the supremacy of a

⁹⁷David Holm argues that Zhou Yang was pragmatic and moderate in articulating his literary views and carrying out cultural campaigns. See Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 1-114. For Zhou Yang's practical attitudes and roundabout criticism of Mao's orthodoxy, see "Press Campaign against Chou Yang," *Current Background*, no. 802 (1966): 1-59; "A Collection of Chou Yang's Counter-Revolutionary Revisionist Speeches," 1-24; [author unidentified], *Zhou Yang pipan wenti huipian* (A collection of the criticisms against Zhou Yang) (Shanghai: 1966), vol. 1.

⁹⁸Zhou, "A Discussion of Some Theoretical Questions in Marxism," 239.

⁹⁹Zhou, "Rambling Talks on Literature and Life," 325-37. For the English translation and polemical background to Zhou Yang's article, see Rubin, "Writers' Discontent and Party Response," 83-99.

practical understanding of ideology, a belief which led him to only selectively approve of Mao's cultural orthodoxy.

In contrast to the conventional understanding of Zhou Yang, Li Hui has argued that Zhou's dissent, which was grounded in the relationship between his intellectual autonomy and his official role, could already be found in earlier cultural polemics, although his dissent did not become apparent until after the Great Leap Forward. According to Li, Mao Zedong often criticized Zhou for his lack of political enthusiasm in promoting various cultural movements after 1949. Li further argues that in numerous campaigns—including the Wu Xun, *Honglou Meng*, and Anti-Rightist campaigns, as well as during the case of "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office"—Zhou Yang had consistently used his organizational influence to support critical intellectuals, either openly or behind the scenes. For this reason, Li Hui contended, Zhou was branded an "anti-revolutionary revisionist element," eventually leading to his persecution early in the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁰ This comment implies that the establishment period illustrates Zhou's ardent commitment to the CCP, which he perceived to be in the service of the state and the people. It also illustrates his dissent toward Maoist orthodoxy, and the failure of that dissent, providing the opportunity to further examine controversial questions concerning the continuities in intellectual life during the communist period.

Conclusion

A son of a rich peasant family, Zhou Yang, a well-educated and enlightened man, eventually became a Marxist, cultural-ideological spokesman of the CCP, and socialist literary critic. Zhou Yang was a socialist revolutionary intellectual and one of the first generation of intellectual-cadres in the PRC.¹⁰¹ He was practical but not liberal, as is clear from his

¹⁰⁰Li, "Shaking Swing," 34.

¹⁰¹In this article, "the first generation of intellectual-cadres" refers to those intellectuals who emerged in the midst of the anti-Japanese imperialism and anti-KMT struggle. This generation passionately joined the communist revolution and finally formed the main portion

writings and behavior. He was known as a man of intense moral passion and combative temperament. His mind was more forceful than subtle. He was not greatly concerned with the nuances of meaning or the complexities of social and cultural issues. Outwardly, he was aloof and authoritative, inwardly deeply pessimistic and composed, but with a genuine sentiment and moral passion which enabled him to serve the socialist revolution and a series of ideological campaigns with great expressiveness.

Zhou Yang's contradictory roles throughout his life as well as his critical behavior strongly remind us of Liu Shaoqi's renowned arguments in "How to Be a Good Communist," which stressed that Party cadres should make themselves politically committed revolutionaries of high quality by consciously strengthening and cultivating themselves. They should not become set in their old ways, but improve their thinking ability in the course of the revolutionary struggle of the broad masses through all hardships. Liu's argument of the molding of a "new socialist man" drew upon the Confucian notion of "self-cultivation,"¹⁰² to which he added the study of Marxism-Leninism as a necessary component, stressing the need to adapt strategies to changing circumstances.

Indeed, Zhou Yang's activity and cultural arguments further represented Liu's approach. Zhou drew upon traditional notions of Confucianistic self-cultivation to mold a new socialist man. As his thoughts transformed and developed after his rehabilitation, Zhou's life as an intellectual-cadre, blending Confucian reformist concerns with Marxist-Leninist ideas, presented a new perspective for his work during the rest of his life. The Chinese intellectual legacy had been inculcated into him, but he synthesized it with his socialist ideology. In this perspective, Gu Xiang, his former colleague, stated of Zhou Yang's life:

of the CCP after the founding of the PRC. See Cheek and Hamrin, "Collaboration and Conflict in the Search for a New Order," 4-6. For further studies of generations, see Li Zehou and Vera Schwarcz, "Six Generations of Modern Chinese Intellectuals," *Chinese Studies in History* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1983-84): 42-56; Michael Yahuda, "Political Generations in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 80 (December 1979): 793-805.

¹⁰²Liu Shaoqi, "How to Be a Good Communist," in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 1:107-68.

Since his rehabilitation, Comrade Zhou Yang has left an unforgettable impression with us, making objective and impartial interpretations of his past ideas and behaviors. Comrade Zhou Yang openly and frankly made a self-criticism concerning some of his mistakes in cultural-ideological affairs over the past. Additionally, he heartily expressed his apologies to some of the intellectuals who were criticized and, finally, came under unjust treatment by the Party. . . . From his sincere remarks and attitudes he demonstrated that he is a man who cherishes such scientific and "practical" attitudes as a Marxist intellectual ought to have and always remains in pursuit of "self-cultivation."¹⁰³

In conclusion, Zhou Yang's life reflects two symbolic currents in Chinese intellectual life: aspirations to the role of officialdom and a sense of cultural mission. Like idealistic intellectuals throughout Chinese history, he faithfully dedicated himself to the socialist revolution, although the methods through which his life expressed this appeared as a contradiction, unification, and finally as a culmination of these two currents. As could also be argued of many other early twentieth-century intellectuals from all parts of the political spectrum—including Lu Xun, Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, Deng Tuo, Wang Ruoshui, and the like—Zhou Yang was committed to the enlightenment of Chinese society, and as an outspoken and at times heterodox socialist intellectual-cadre, he followed in the moral path of his imperial and Confucian predecessors.

¹⁰³Gu Xiang, "Exuberant Cymbidium of Spring," in Gu, *Zhou Yang jinzuo*, 323.