

Deng Xiaoping's Policy on Literature and the Arts

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Deng Xiaoping's literature and art policy was based on Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art. Its main point is that literature and art must first serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers; and then the people and socialism. However, in present-day mainland China, the term "people" refers to those strata of society that support the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Although Deng was a victim of the Cultural Revolution and has never wanted to repeat that decade-long catastrophe, he does not permit freedom of creation and insists that literature and art must serve the Party's ends.

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The arrest of the "gang of four" by Hua Kuo-feng in October 1976, about a month after Mao Zedong's death, was the first sign that the Cultural Revolution period was at an end. In August 1977, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) Eleventh National Congress formally declared the revolution's conclusion and the beginning of a movement to expose and criticize the gang of four. After the Third Plenum of the CCP's Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, Hua's role was gradually reduced to that of a figurehead and power was concentrated in the hands of Deng Xiaoping.

Deng has been described not only as an outstanding Marxist, a steadfast communist, and a brilliant proletarian revolutionary, politician, and military strategist, but also as a farsighted and revolutionary strategist of literature and the arts.¹ Considering how long he has

¹Pan Qi's preface to Yang Bingzhong and Liu Jiang, *Deng Xiaoping wenyi sixiang*

wielded supreme power in mainland China, a study of the formation, substance, and implementation of Deng's policy on literature and the arts and the reactions that policy has aroused is well worthwhile.

Policy Formation and Substance

Deng derives his ideas on the arts from Mao. In January 1940, Mao stated that the new culture was the ideological reflection of the new politics and the new economy which it set out to serve, and that the new-democratic culture was the proletarian-led, anti-imperialist, and antifeudal culture of the broad masses.² This theory is not, strictly speaking, Marxist; according to historical materialism, culture and politics are two elements of the superstructure. There is no principal-subordinate relationship between them and culture can only serve economics, not politics. This view, however, was accepted by Deng without reservation.

In May 1941, speaking at a competition for model propaganda teams of the Eighth Route Army's 129th Division, Deng emphasized that cultural work should serve political ends and that it was the task of the CCP to disseminate and implement the culture of new democracy. He said: "We determinedly oppose the colonial culture and the comprador-feudal culture, but we serve the political purposes of new democracy."³ By then, the war against Japan was well advanced and Mao's "new democracy" seemed to have a greater appeal to intellectuals than the Program for the War of Resistance against Aggression and National Construction put forward by the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China). According to communist propaganda of the time, new democracy was national, democratic, scientific, and popular,⁴ an attractive invocation of all the issues of the May Fourth Movement.

yanjiu (A study of Deng Xiaoping's thoughts on literature and art) (Guilin: Guangxi minzu chubanshe, November 1990), 1.

²"On New Democracy," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, 5 vols. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965, 1977), 2:372-73.

³Deng Xiaoping, "Principles, Tasks, and Orientation of the Cultural Work of the 129th Division," in *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (1938-1965)* (Selected works of Deng Xiaoping [1938-1965]) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, May 1989), 24.

⁴Zhang Wentian, "Content and Nature of the Chinese Nation's New Culture," in *Zhang Wentian xuanji* (Selected works of Zhang Wentian) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), 252-53.

At the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in May 1942, Mao said that literature and art, as component parts of the revolutionary machine of the CCP, were powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy. He pointed out five problems that must be solved in order for the arts to achieve these objectives: (1) the problem of class stand—writers and artists should adopt the stand of the proletariat and the masses, and CCP members must uphold the stand of the Party, the Party spirit, and Party policies; (2) the problem of attitude—writers and artists should expose the duplicity and cruelty of enemies and strike at them, assume an attitude of both alliance and criticism toward allies, and praise the masses; (3) the problem of audience—works of literature and art should be produced for an audience of workers, peasants, soldiers, and their cadres; (4) the problem of work—the primary task of writers and artists is to understand workers, peasants, and soldiers, and those who come from the intelligentsia must change and remold their thinking if they want their works to be well received by the masses; (5) the problem of study—writers and artists must study Marxism-Leninism and society.⁵ Thus, Mao formally bestowed various tasks on his “cultural army” and also set rules for all writers and artists under the CCP’s jurisdiction.

The CCP had always regarded the arts as an effective instrument of struggle, even as early as the 1930s. At Yan’an, they put even greater emphasis on this function as they struggled to survive and develop. Their politicization and dogmatization of the arts marked the end of literary freedom in areas under their control. Mao himself made it clear that under communist rule, satirical essays and the style of writing adopted by Lu Xun were inappropriate. Therefore, although Mao set up a Lu Xun Art Academy (later renamed the Lu Xun Academy of Literature and Art), he appointed Lu’s implacable enemy, Zhou Yang, as its president. Behind his ostensible respect for Lu Xun, Mao actually wanted to strangle the spirit of protest preserved by Lu’s followers.

One of the Chinese Communists’ favorite tactics in dealing with opponents was to put labels on them before employing the united front tactic of alliance and struggle; the basic principle is to “exploit

⁵“Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 3:70-73.

contradictions, win over the majority, oppose the minority, and destroy enemies one by one.” Mao mentioned this tactic at the Yan’an Forum. He understood that workers, peasants, soldiers, and the urban petty bourgeoisie constituted more than 90 percent of the total population of China. Therefore, he did not hesitate to ignore Marx’s criticism and rejection of the revolutionary potential of the peasants and to follow Stalin in demanding that literature and art serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers. As for the urban petty bourgeoisie—which included the writers of the 1930s, people who liked to express their own personalities and who demonstrated liberal tendencies—Mao did his best to attract them to Yan’an with united front tactics. His “Talks at the Yan’an Forum,” a mixture of threats and cajolery, was directed against dissatisfied writers who had come to Yan’an from the cities.

Mao reiterated Lenin’s remark that the arts were “cogs and screws” destined to fulfill their allotted roles in the “proletarian machine.” The arts, he asserted, must serve politics and create typical examples of contradictions and struggles. He denied the validity of art for art’s sake, art transcending classes, art parallel to politics, or art independent of politics, and launched a rectification movement to eliminate these “enemies.”

As the CCP continued to implement Mao’s instructions concerning the arts, writers were required to be loyal to the Party and abide by its rules. The result, as described by Hu Feng, was the creation of a literary world “ruled by corpses” in which a writer could not even cough without it being recorded and investigated.⁶ Hu’s friend Zhang Zhongxiao was also unequivocal in his criticism of Mao’s “Yan’an Talks.” He said: “This book was probably useful in Yan’an, but it is not useful anymore. Judging by the current situation, it can kill people. So that is why the literary hacks worship it as a totem.”⁷ This criticism enraged Mao so much that he personally arranged for Hu Feng and his associates to be purged. Hu’s tragedy originated from his liberal ideas and his longstanding feud with Zhou Yang, whose ability to dominate the arts in mainland China for so long mainly stemmed from his talent for catering to Mao’s tastes.

⁶“Hu Feng’s Letter to Lu Ling” (January 12, 1950), in “The Second Batch of Materials on the Hu Feng Counterrevolutionary Clique,” *People’s Daily*, May 24, 1955.

⁷“Zhang Zhongxiao’s Letter to Hu Feng” (August 22, 1951), in “The Third Batch of Materials on the Hu Feng Counterrevolutionary Clique,” *ibid.*, June 10, 1955.

However, Zhou was also purged during the Cultural Revolution. When Mao thought Zhou had not thoroughly executed his orders, he replaced him with Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan. Since Mao's motive in initiating the Cultural Revolution was to destroy all ideas different from his own, he considered the arts policy implemented by Chiang and her associates to be the most correct.

Some observers have argued that the Cultural Revolution was the work of the gang of four, who took advantage of Mao's feeble-mindedness in old age. But if we look again at Mao's "Yan'an Talks," we can see that Mao himself set the stage for the Cultural Revolution as early as 1942. Taking the Soviet experience as his model, Mao set strict rules for writers and artists and labeled all works of art that did not conform to these rules as "poisonous weeds."

From 1949 to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Deng Xiaoping worked his way up through the CCP hierarchy. During this period, he did not publish anything specifically on the arts,⁸ though some of his speeches did touch on this topic. In a speech at the Xi'an Meeting of Cadres on April 8, 1957, for example, Deng asserted that Marxism and dialectical materialism could be truly developed only when all kinds of ideas had been expressed in debates according to the principle of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend."⁹ But these words were only a reflection of Mao's stand at that time. In a campaign against counter-revolutionaries at the end of 1955, more than 1.4 million people were disgraced or persecuted. It was to pacify discontent after that campaign that Mao launched the "hundred flowers" movement in May 1956. On May 1 the following year, the CCP Central Committee issued a formal directive concerning this "rectification movement," and people were invited to air their views in order to help the Party fight "bureaucratism and subjectivism." Repeated assurances that the regime would "not blame the speakers but be warned by their words" encouraged many people, including members of the "democratic parties," businessmen, industrialists, intellectuals, and even CCP members, to speak out and call for democracy. But when the criticism started to get too fierce, the leadership put a halt to the movement and launched an "anti-rightist struggle" to suppress it.

⁸Yang and Liu, *Deng Xiaoping wenyi sixiang yanjiu*, 4.

⁹"The CCP Should Accept Supervision," in *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan (1938-1965)*, 261.

Deng was one of Mao's right-hand men in this struggle. On July 1, 1957, the *People's Daily* published an editorial written by Mao, which contained the following well-known remarks: "Some people say this was a covert scheme. We say it was an overt one. For we made it plain to the enemy beforehand: only when ghosts and monsters are allowed to come into the open can they be wiped out; only when poisonous weeds are allowed to sprout from the soil can they be uprooted."¹⁰ Deng's task was precisely that of "wiping out ghosts and monsters and uprooting poisonous weeds." In a report on the rectification movement published in the *People's Daily* on October 19 that year, he pointed out that the methods of "exposing, isolating, and splitting" would be adopted for the majority of intellectuals, though some of them would be punished and suppressed. He also claimed that ideological remolding was a long-term task that might take more than ten years to accomplish.¹¹ He could not foresee that after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution nine years later, he himself would be purged as part of an "ideological remolding" movement on a much bigger scale.

Deng lost all his posts during the early and middle stages of the Cultural Revolution. In early 1975, he was temporarily rehabilitated and once again put in charge of the routine work of the CCP Central Committee. At a forum on work in the rural areas held on September 27 and October 4, 1975, he spoke about the problem of "fragmenting" Mao Zedong Thought thus:

Take our policies on literature and art for example. Comrade Mao Zedong has said it is necessary to make the past serve the present, to make foreign things serve China, to let a hundred flowers bloom and to weed through the old to bring forth the new. These policies form an integral whole. However, the policy of "letting a hundred flowers bloom" is no longer mentioned and has, in fact, been abandoned. This is another example of the fragmentation of Mao Zedong Thought.¹²

While delivering this defense of the integrity of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng failed to mention that the "hundred flowers" movement had actually been brought to a halt by Mao and Deng himself. His reha-

¹⁰"*Wen Hui Bao's* Bourgeois Orientation Should Be Criticized," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 5:454.

¹¹Deng Xiaoping, "Report on the Rectification Movement" (September 23, 1957), *People's Daily*, October 19, 1957.

¹²"Things Must Be Put in Order in All Fields," in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 49.

bilitation certainly did not herald a thaw as far as the regime's policy toward the arts was concerned.

Deng became mainland China's supreme leader after the Third Plenum of the CCP's Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978. In retrospect, CCP theorists have claimed that at that time, as the core of the Party's second-generation collective leadership and the chief architect of the reform and opening-up policies, Deng "created a new era and led literature and art on the road to glory with his scientific ideas."¹³ In their minds, the main contributions of Deng's thinking on literature and art included: (1) bringing literature and the arts into tune with the times and the political situation and defining the tasks of literature and the arts in modern China; (2) elaborating and emphasizing the intimate relationship between literature and art and the people; (3) elaborating the theory of the Party's leadership over socialist literature and art; (4) propounding the idea of "socialist literature and art with Chinese characteristics"; and (5) making a contribution to theory by correctly grasping and putting into practice the laws of development of literature and art.¹⁴ In reality, of course, Deng is neither a writer nor a theorist; the only reason for these fulsome compliments was his possession of political power.

On October 30, 1979, Deng delivered a speech at the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists which provided the guiding principles for the regime's current policy on the arts. This eight-page speech occupied pride of place in a 120-page book entitled *Deng Xiaoping lun wenyi* (Deng Xiaoping on literature and art) which was published in October 1989, only a few months after the Tiananmen massacre. The rest of the book had little to do with the arts.

In the early years after the fall of the gang of four in 1976, the CCP leaders sought to set themselves apart from Jiang Qing and her associates by tolerating a certain amount of dissent and encouraging "scar literature" (*shanghen wenxue*), which dealt with the darker aspects of life during the Cultural Revolution. Deng also adopted a relatively relaxed policy toward writers and artists in this period. This was the atmosphere in which the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists took place. In his speech at the congress, Deng asserted:

¹³Jin Yu, ed., *Deng Xiaoping sixiang baoku* (The treasure house of Deng Xiaoping thought), 3 vols. (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, March 1993), 3:1681.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1683-90.

In the production of literature and art, which involves complex mental labor, it is essential that writers and artists follow their own creative spirit. What subjects they should choose for their creative work and how they should deal with those subjects are questions that writers and artists themselves must examine and gradually resolve through practice. There should be no arbitrary meddling in this process.¹⁵

Deng's support for "no meddling" in artistic creation, of course, received enthusiastic applause from writers and artists who had survived the Cultural Revolution. However, Deng did not omit to remind his audience that literature and art should serve the broadest masses—primarily workers, peasants, and soldiers. His reiteration of this principle set a trap for unwary writers and artists that would be sprung later, when the political climate changed.

In commemorating the fortieth anniversary in May 1982 of Mao's "Yan'an Talks," the CCP not only emphasized the necessity of upholding and further developing Mao's thinking on literature and art, but also instructed writers to uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, to overcome tendencies toward "liberalization," to be bold in praising new men, new things, and new ideas, and to familiarize themselves with the life of struggle experienced by the masses. In the following month, the Fourth National Committee of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC) adopted at its second session a joint pledge requiring all writers and artists to conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. Thus it was made clear that mainland China's writers and artists would not enjoy real freedom of creation, even after Mao's death. Upholding Mao's thinking on literature and art means upholding his principle that literature and art must in the first place serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and further developing Mao's thinking on literature and art implies making literature and art serve "the people" and "socialism." Zhou Yang, who had been imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution and had by that time been rehabilitated, pointed out that literature and art were not subordinate to politics. But he did not mean that literature and art had nothing to do with politics and could be divorced from politics. He explained:

Since the Third Plenum [of the CCP's Eleventh Central Committee], the mainstream of literature and art has been good and should be praised. However, there have also been some erroneous minor trends. The bour-

¹⁵"Speech Greeting the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists" (October 30, 1979), in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)*, 206.

geois liberalization tendency on the ideological front that emerged with the drastic policy change of “opening up our country to the outside world and invigorating our domestic economy” is exactly one of those hard-to-overlook minor trends. It is in order to oppose this tendency that we emphasize that literature and art must serve socialism.¹⁶

Judging from all this, Deng’s development of Mao’s thinking on literature and art was still based on making the arts serve “the people” and “socialism.” Of course, the CCP has its own special definitions of such terms as “the people” and “socialism.” “The people,” for example, has never included all sections of the population,¹⁷ and today it is taken to mean all those who support the present regime and its goals.¹⁸ In other words, all those who do not support “socialism” are excluded from “the people.” Socialism, too, is given a very precise definition as the stage of society leading to communism.¹⁹

Given these very narrow definitions, the instruction that “literature and art must serve the people and socialism” can be assumed to mean that it should serve the CCP and communism. It would be better if the CCP leadership admitted this, as it would help writers to understand why, in order not to violate the rule that they must “serve the people,” they must uphold the Four Cardinal Principles.

In a speech delivered at a reception for martial law commanders in Beijing on June 9, 1989, Deng said that the Tiananmen protests which had been suppressed a few days earlier were an inevitable product of both the international and the domestic environment at that time. He emphasized the importance of the Four Cardinal Principles, and said that if the regime had made a mistake, it was that it had not upheld the Four Cardinal Principles consistently enough or impressed them into the minds of the people, students, cadres, and Party members. He concluded that the recent protests were in the nature of a conflict between “bourgeois liberalization” and adherence to the Four Cardinal Principles.²⁰ This speech of Deng’s is the only item written

¹⁶Zhou Yang, “Upholding and Developing [Mao Zedong Thought],” *People’s Daily*, June 23, 1982.

¹⁷See *Zengding Zhonggong shuyu huijie* (Chinese Communist terminology, revised and enlarged), third edition (Taipei: Zhongguo chuban gongsi, February 1977), 22.

¹⁸See Xu Zhengfan, ed., *Makesizhuyi cidian* (Marxist terminology) (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, June 1987), 20.

¹⁹See *ibid.*, 593.

²⁰See “Address to Officers at the Rank of General and Above in Command of the Troops Enforcing Martial Law in Beijing” (June 9, 1989), *People’s Daily*, June 28, 1989; reprinted in *Deng Xiaoping lun wenyi* (Deng Xiaoping on literature and art),

after the Tiananmen massacre which is included in *Deng Xiaoping lun wenyi*. Although it seems to have nothing to do with the arts, it does indicate the direction the regime's policies in general were taking at that time.

During a joint forum in April 1990, the CFLAC and the Chinese Writers' Association (CWA) emphasized returning to the study of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought in order to consolidate their guiding position in literature and art. In particular, all writers and artists were urged to engage in a thorough study of Mao's "Yan'an Talks" and *Deng Xiaoping lun wenyi*.²¹ On May 21 that year, the Yan'an Writers and Artists' Association sponsored a symposium to commemorate the forty-eighth anniversary of the "Yan'an Talks." Participants praised the Talks as a "scientific work" that had developed the concepts of Marxist literature, art, and aesthetics. They also said:

The trend of bourgeois liberalization has become widespread in recent years. We should soberly understand that this is an acute struggle on the ideological front. It is our unshirkable duty to respond to the "rebel elite's" challenges to the "Talks." Themes that must be discussed at this symposium include paying close attention to both rectification and development in the realm of literature and art; following the correct road pointed out by the "Talks"; rectifying the orientation of literature and art and the ranks of writers and artists; and developing an educational movement and a struggle against the trend of bourgeois liberalization.²²

On October 9, the acting minister of culture, He Jingzhi, reiterated the same ideas, but he also admitted that it would be very difficult to "rectify" and "develop" the arts at one and the same time.²³ Since then, Deng's policy on literature and art has continued to focus on rectification and development. However, it will be difficult to get the arts to flourish while worrying about "bourgeois liberalization" and attempts by foreign governments at "peaceful evolution."

Many activities were organized to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Mao's "Yan'an Talks" in May 1992. A *People's Daily* editorial

ed. CCPC Propaganda Department, Bureau of Literature and Art (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, October 1989), 33, and also an English translation in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1982-1992)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), 297.

²¹"Rectify the Orientation of Literary and Art Work and Make Strenuous Efforts to Promote Literary and Artistic Creation," *People's Daily* (Overseas edition), April 28, 1990.

²²"Writers and Artists Discuss Mao Zedong's Thinking on Literature and Art in Beijing," *ibid.*, May 23, 1990.

²³"He Jingzhi on the Current Situation of Literature and Art," *ibid.*, October 10, 1990.

argued that far from being out of date, the basic principles expounded in the "Talks" had demonstrated more clearly than ever their eternal significance and usefulness as a guide.²⁴ Once again, it was emphasized that the arts were supposed to serve the people and socialism and that "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" remained the guiding principle for literature and art. On May 22, the CFLAC, the CWA, and the Institute of Chinese Arts jointly sponsored a forum on Mao's theories on literature and art. Speaking at the opening ceremony in his capacity as secretary of the CFLAC CCP committee, Lin Mohan declared that Mao's "Yan'an Talks" would shine forever. He also praised Deng's contributions to upholding and developing Mao's thinking on literature and art, adding that the study of Mao's Talks must be combined with the study of Deng's comments on literature and art and also his talks during his tour of southern China which had taken place a few months earlier. This is yet more evidence that mainland China's writers and artists are always required to serve the political purposes of the Communist leadership.

Implementation and Reactions

Shortly after his second rehabilitation at the end of 1978, Deng initiated a new wave of ideological persecution with the arrest of the dissident Wei Jingsheng on March 29, 1979. In February 1980, Hu Yaobang, who was then Deng's close associate, reiterated at a forum on script-writing that works of art must embody Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. At the same time, he denounced Sha Yexin's play *Jiaru wo shi zhende* (If I really were) for having an adverse effect on society. As a result, the play was banned. In February and March 1981, the CCP Central Committee issued in succession documents no. 7 and no. 9. The former required writers to criticize under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought "works advocating wrong trends of thought" and at the same time to accept the CCP's leadership and unreservedly support its political stand. The latter authorized high-ranking cadres to arrest pro-democracy activists and seize underground publications, and to ruthlessly

²⁴Editorial, "Go Deeply into Life and Promote Creation—Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Comrade Mao Zedong's Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," *ibid.*, May 23, 1992.

suppress all anti-CCP and antisocialist activities. In other words, writers and artists were banned from saying anything contravening the line, principles, and policy of the CCP Central Committee. "Scar literature" thus became a target of suppression.

In April 1981, the *Liberation Army Daily* openly criticized Bai Hua's play script *Ku lian* (Unrequited love). This sparked off a barrage of criticism of the play from the *People's Daily*, the *Beijing Daily*, the *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily) of Shanghai, and *Hongqi* (Red Flag). On July 17, Deng asserted:

I have seen the movie *Sun and Man*, which follows the script of *Unrequited Love*. Whatever the author's motives, the movie gives the impression that the Communist Party and the socialist system are bad. It vilifies the latter to such an extent that one wonders what has happened to the author's Party spirit.²⁵

These comments were similar to criticisms published in the *Liberation Army Daily*. Bai was forced to examine his own mistakes, but his written self-criticism failed to obtain the approval of the CCP Central Committee in September. In the following month, Deng's personal order to criticize Bai was published in *Wenyi bao* (Literary Gazette) and reprinted in the *People's Daily*. Bai had to openly acknowledge his own mistakes and apologize. Deng's action was almost a repetition of the "heart-to-heart talks" movement (*jiaoxin yundong*) that Mao initiated during the 1950s.

Deng's speech about eliminating "spiritual pollution" on the ideological and cultural front at the Third Plenum of the CCP's Twelfth Central Committee in October 1983 formally raised the curtain on a campaign to purge disobedient theorists, writers, and artists. The Chinese Communists claimed that the main causes of spiritual pollution were the leftover influence of feudalism and the corrosion of capitalist ideology, showing that they were afraid of the impact of Western ideology on writers and artists. During the movement to eliminate spiritual pollution, Bai Hua's historical play *Wuwang jin'ge Yuewang jian* (The King of Wu's golden dagger and the King of Yue's sword), Xu Jingya's *Jueqi de shiqun* (Rising poems), and Zhang Xiaotian's novel *Lili yuan shang cao* (Long grasses on the plain) became targets of fierce criticism. Bai's historical play was attacked

²⁵"Concerning Problems on the Ideological Front," in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)*, 368-69.

for going counter to the spirit of socialism and his *Unrequited Love* was again criticized for vilifying the socialist system because its description of people's alienation implied that the CCP inhibited and destroyed human nature. In fact, the Chinese Communists hated *Unrequited Love* because it encouraged writers and artists in mainland China to explore the theme of alienation and also because it hinted that Mao was the source of the disasters that had befallen them, which contradicted Deng's repeated assertions that Mao's merits outnumbered his mistakes.

At a CWA working conference on October 31, 1985, Wang Meng, Deng's faithful follower, spoke in his capacity as CWA executive vice chairman. Wang told writers to study Marxist theory, cultivate a revolutionary outlook on life, get deeply involved in struggles, and understand the fundamental interests of the Party's cause. He also commented on Hu Qili's speech at the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists, indicating that there were certain conditions attached to creative freedom.²⁶ As a result of these conditions, Liu Binyan's *Dierzhong zhongcheng* (The second kind of loyalty) and *Wo de riji* (My diaries), and the play *WM*, written by Wang Peigong and directed by Wang Gui, were banned. It was clear that under Deng's rule, writers were still not free to write as they wished, and it is no wonder that the writer Yu Luojin requested political asylum when she was in West Germany for an academic conference.

Literature and art is a realm of great sensitivity in mainland China, and the Ministry of Culture can be seen as a "political thermometer." Before Wang Meng's appointment as culture minister in April 1986, only one previous incumbent of that post, namely, Mao Dun, had been a writer. In November 1983, Wang Meng talked about problems with literature and art. He wrote:

Some [literary and art works] are reckless fabrications distorting revolutionary history and facts and deviating from basic Marxist principles. Some even go so far as to beautify the Kuomintang, big landlords, and the big bourgeoisie; negate class and class struggle; negate the justice, inevitability, and necessity of revolution and revolutionary wars; and advocate supra-class, supra-party, and nonrevolutionary "restoration of human nature"; but actually they repeat the platitudes of historical idealism or use the bourgeois theory of human nature to oppose the Marxist theory of class.²⁷

²⁶Wang Meng Says at CWA Working Conference That Writers' Social Responsibilities Should Be Emphasized While Creative Freedom Is Upheld," *People's Daily*, November 6, 1985.

²⁷Wang Meng, "Wash Away Dirt to Meet New Prosperity," *Guangming ribao* (Guangming Daily) (Beijing), November 7, 1983.

Wang's comments showed that some writers' problems with the CCP had evolved from "contradictions among the people" into "contradictions between ourselves and the enemy." These remarks and Wang's stressing of the importance of the Four Cardinal Principles show that he was a bureaucrat at heart, and indeed, that was why he was made minister of culture.

In early 1987, Liu Binyan and Wang Ruowang came under fierce attack once again. On January 23, the discipline inspection commission of the *People's Daily* expelled Liu from the Party, accusing him of attacking the Four Cardinal Principles as rigid, outmoded dogmas leading China into disaster and of saying that he had written *Ren yao zhi jian* (People or monsters) and *Qianqiu gongzui* (Merits and crimes that will go down in history) to reveal a truth—that the CCP was corrupt.²⁸ Ten days earlier, the Shanghai Municipal Discipline Inspection Commission had decided to expel Wang from the Party for attacking the socialist system, advocating the capitalist road, negating the CCP's leadership, and opposing the Party's policies. Wang was then criticized in the *People's Daily* and *Liberation Daily* for, among other things, openly rebelling against and desecrating the Party's program, constitution, and discipline.²⁹ All these charges proved that in Deng's opinion, those he accused of exhibiting "bourgeois liberal" tendencies were guilty of opposition to the Party's leadership.³⁰ Deng believed that Liu and Wang did not make these indiscreet remarks carelessly but that they opposed the Party consistently and totally. That was why he took action against them.

On January 6, 1989, the physicist Fang Lizhi, who had already been expelled from the CCP, wrote a letter to Deng asking him to grant an amnesty to Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners.³¹ His letter raised the curtain on a democracy movement of unprece-

²⁸"Discipline Inspection Commission of *People's Daily* Expels Liu Binyan from the Party," *People's Daily* (Overseas edition), January 25, 1987.

²⁹Xi Yusheng, "Party Discipline Prohibits Opposition to the Four Cardinal Principles—A Criticism of Wang Ruowang's Erroneous Advocacy of Bourgeois Liberalization," *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily) (Shanghai), January 16, 1987.

³⁰See Zhang Zhenlu, "The Essence of Bourgeois Liberalization as Seen from Wang Ruowang's Words and Actions," *People's Daily* (Overseas edition), January 20, 1987.

³¹"Fang Lizhi's Letter to Deng Xiaoping," *Jiushi niandai* (The Nineties) (Hong Kong), no. 230 (March 1989), reprinted in *Ziyou zhi xue minzhu zhi hua—Zhongguo dalu minzhu de kankelu* (The blood of freedom and flowers of democracy—Mainland China's rugged road to democracy), ed. King-yuh Chang (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, August 1989), 45.

dented scale. By March, Fang had been joined by numerous well-known intellectuals, and after the death of the ousted CCP general secretary, Hu Yaobang, on April 15, students took up the call. The student movement developed into a mass movement in which numerous intellectuals, writers, and artists participated. On May 18, mainland China's senior man of letters, Ba Jin, sent an open letter in support of the student movement from his sickbed. He said:

It was a group of patriotic students who strived for science and democracy for the motherland in the May Fourth Movement seventy years ago. After seventy years we are still a backward country. I think that the demands of the students today are completely reasonable. What they want to do is exactly what we have not accomplished. China's hope lies in them.³²

The crackdown, of course, came on June 4. In late August, He Jingzhi was appointed acting minister of culture, and in September he was also appointed deputy director of the CCP Central Committee (CCPCC) Propaganda Department. Together with Propaganda Department director, Wang Renzhi, he reinstated the old repressive policies toward writers and artists.

To reinforce the Party's control over writers and artists, dogmatists were placed in positions of power in the various literary and propaganda organizations. In early 1990, Lin Mohan replaced Wu Zuqiang as secretary of the CFLAC CCP committee; Chen Yong and Zheng Bonong took over *Wenyi bao*; Ma Feng was made vice chairman of the CWA and concurrently secretary of its Party organization; Liu Baiyu replaced Liu Xinwu as editor-in-chief of *Renmin wenxue* (People's Literature); and Liang Guangdi and Li Hui were promoted to the positions of director and deputy director of the CCPCC Propaganda Department's Bureau of Literature and Art. On June 2 that year, Xu Wenbo and Chen Changben replaced Ying Ruocheng and Wang Jifu as vice ministers of culture. The regime then reinforced the propagation of its policies on literature and art through *Wenyi lilun yu piping* (Literary Theories and Reviews) edited by Chen Yong and *Zhongliu* (Mainstay), a new periodical created by Lin Mohan and Wei Wei.

In the wake of the June 4 massacre, symposiums and conferences were held to remold writers and influence readers. On September 18,

³²“Ba Jin's Letter in Support of the Student Movement,” in *Huo yu xue de zhenxiang—Zhongguo dalu minzhu yundong jishi, 1989* (Truths of fire and blood—Records of mainland China's 1989 pro-democracy movement) (Taipei: Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishi, October 1989), 4-16.

1989, the CCPCC Propaganda Department's Bureau of Literature and Art sponsored a meeting of people in charge of literary and art publications in Beijing, during which the bureau director, Liang Guangdi, blamed some of these publications for "leading public opinion in the wrong direction and publishing erroneous propaganda content during the turmoil." Those in charge of the literature and art departments of the *People's Daily*, *Wenyi bao*, *Zhongguo wenhua bao* (Chinese Culture), and *Wenxue pinglun* (Literary Review) also conducted self-criticisms about their own publications' errors of political orientation.³³ On October 18, at a symposium for writers and artists on the subject of Jiang Zemin's speech on the fortieth anniversary of the PRC, Wang Renzhi emphasized the necessity of opposing and eliminating the serious influence of "bourgeois liberalization" among writers and artists.³⁴ On November 15, *Wenyi bao* invited a number of Beijing writers and critics to a meeting to criticize Liu Binyan's and Su Xiaokang's "treacherous words and deeds against the CCP and socialism."³⁵ The CWA's presidium also decided to deprive Liu and Su of their membership and dismiss Liu from all his CWA posts as vice chairman, presidium member, and board director.

At a national seminar on cultural and art work on January 10, 1990, Li Ruihuan, a member of the CCPCC Politburo Standing Committee, pointed out that "bourgeois liberalization" had such a serious impact on literature and art that some works of art were disseminating doubt and distrust toward the CCP and socialism in violation of the Four Cardinal Principles.³⁶ At a meeting to commemorate the 110th anniversary of Lu Xun's birth on September 24, 1991, Jiang Zemin again stressed how "international hostile forces" were constantly trying to bring about "peaceful evolution" in mainland China and that "bourgeois liberalization" within the country was working hand-in-hand with these forces.³⁷ To combat this "peaceful

³³"Literary and Artistic Publications Should Conscientiously Sum Up Experiences and Lessons, Adhere to the Correct Orientation, and Thoroughly Implement the 'Double-Hundred' Policy," *Wenyi bao* (Literary Gazette) (Beijing), September 23, 1989.

³⁴"Hold High the Banner of Socialist Literature and Art, Unite to Enhance the Development of Literature and Art," *ibid.*, October 21, 1989.

³⁵"Writers in Beijing Criticize the Reactionary Words and Actions of Liu Binyan and Others and Resolutely Defend the Honorable Name of Chinese Writers," *ibid.*, November 18, 1989.

³⁶Li Ruihuan, "On Certain Issues Concerning the Promotion of a Splendid National Culture—Speech at the National Seminar on the Situation in Cultural and Art Work" (January 10, 1990), *People's Daily* (Overseas edition), May 17, 1990.

³⁷Jiang Zemin, "Continue to Study and Carry Forward Lu Xun's Spirit—Speech at

evolution,” the regime is now pushing “patriotism” among its writers and artists, although its definition of patriotism is “dedication to the building and protection of socialist modernization as well as the cause of China’s reunification.”³⁸ Thus, from the CCP regime’s point of view, even patriotism means love of the Party.

Conclusion

Mao has been dead for almost two decades now, but his ideas on literature and art still remain dominant in mainland China. Deng has never had any intention of coming out from under Mao’s shadow in this respect. He has also adopted Mao’s tactic of simultaneously befriending and threatening writers.

As a victim of the Cultural Revolution, Deng has never wanted to see a repeat of that decade-long catastrophe, but like Mao, he does not know what true freedom is and insists that literature and art must serve the CCP. We can only wait to see whether Deng’s imminent demise will herald a change in mainland China’s literature and art policy.

the Meeting to Commemorate the 110th Anniversary of Lu Xun’s Birth,” *ibid.*, September 25, 1991.

³⁸Jiang Zemin, “Patriotism and the Mission of Chinese Intellectuals—Speech at the Report Meeting Held by Youth in the Capital to Commemorate May Fourth” (May 3, 1990), *People’s Daily* (Overseas edition), May 4, 1990.