

A GREAT REVOLUTION
ON THE
CULTURAL FRONT



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING

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A GREAT REVOLUTION ON THE CULTURAL FRONT

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TALK AT THE FESTIVAL OF PEKING OPERA ON CONTEMPORARY THEMES

(July 1, 1964)

PENG CHEN

Comrades and friends:

First of all let me congratulate you on the successes achieved in the reform of Peking opera and on the successful staging of Peking operas on contemporary revolutionary themes.

There are many types of plays on contemporary themes. Hollywood is also producing "plays on contemporary themes"; the rubbish the modern revisionists are staging also goes under the name of "plays with contemporary themes". But what we are staging are plays on contemporary revolutionary themes serving the workers, peasants and soldiers and the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

Many Peking operas of the past portrayed emperors and kings, generals, ministers, scholars, beauties, lords and dowagers, young gentlemen and ladies; they prettified the exploiting classes and denigrated the working people. Very few plays were staged on contemporary revolutionary themes. Over a long period in the past Peking opera in the main served feudalism and capitalism. Many attempts were made to reform Peking

opera, and a number of plays were successfully revised, but at the current Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes we are witnessing for the first time reforms that are so comprehensive and systematic, so rich in content and well received by the broad masses of the people. This is indeed a revolution in Peking opera.

Today, we should study Peking opera from two aspects. So far as their contents are concerned, many plays in the past served feudalism or capitalism. These plays dominated the stage and they must be reformed. There are also a small number of historical plays and plays on contemporary themes whose content is fairly good; these should be further improved. So far as artistic form is concerned, Peking opera has a relatively long history and has attained a relatively high artistic level; it is a type of opera with relatively strict conventions. For these reasons it is rather difficult to reform. But once successfully reformed, it will have a bright future. Now that so many comrades and friends are determined to reform it, to revolutionize it, and great successes have been achieved in this revolution, we can say that this revolution has been successful. The reform of Peking opera — its transformation from an art that in the main served feudalism and capitalism into one serving the workers, peasants, soldiers and socialism — is a great event in literary and artistic circles; it is a great revolution. Initial success has been gained in this revolution. We congratulate you on the success of this reform; and extend our deepest thanks.

The question now is: How to carry the revolution in Peking opera through to the end; and how to reform Peking opera successfully.

There are still quite a number of differing opinions on whether Peking opera should be reformed at all and how to reform it systematically and comprehensively. The vast majority of these opinions are well-intentioned and constructive. There are also a small number of persons who are fundamentally opposed to reform. Their cry is: "What sort of Peking opera is this without the long sleeves or the long beards? This is sheer nonsense!" So there are still a lot of problems to solve. Comrades should not imagine that this festival has solved everything and that the revolution has been accomplished. That is not so. Certain questions, therefore, still have to be dealt with, and they must be brought up for discussion.

I

The first question: Is it necessary to reform Peking opera? How should we reform it?

It must be reformed and reformed successfully. I shall deal with five aspects of this question.

1. Should Peking opera serve socialism, or should it serve feudalism or capitalism? Literature and art should serve politics and the development of the productive forces. Now that we are living in a socialist society, whom should our Peking opera serve? What kind of plays should we stage? Should we serve socialism by staging plays that advance the socialist revolution and socialist construction, or should we stage plays that benefit feudalism or capitalism? This is a fundamental question. It is quite clear that if one does not want to see feudalism or capitalism restored, if one does not

hanker after these systems, then in a socialist society one cannot be always staging plays about such representatives of the exploiting classes as emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties. What is an emperor? He is the representative of the landlord class, the chieftain of the landlords. What is an empress? She is the chief of the landlords' wives. To be sure, some working people were portrayed in Peking operas in the past, but most of them were shown in a distorted and unfavourable light. How can we in our socialist society tolerate such a state of affairs with Peking opera — so important a stage art, a stage art with a relatively high artistic level and an important artistic heritage — continuing to portray emperors, kings, generals and ministers, and continuing to stage operas which are detrimental to the socialist revolution and socialist construction? That can't be! That would mean in actual fact helping the attempts of the feudal forces to restore feudalism or of the capitalist forces to restore capitalism. Therefore, Peking opera must be reformed. Either Peking opera will die out or it must mainly portray workers, peasants and soldiers and serve them and socialism; either one way or the other. There is no third way.

2. Should Peking opera serve the majority or the minority? Should it serve the workers, peasants and soldiers (including the revolutionary intellectuals), or should it serve those old and young "remnants" of the old society, and the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, undesirable elements and bourgeois Rightists? Should it serve more than 90 per cent of the population, or should it serve only a few per cent of the population? Should it serve six hundred and many

tens of millions, or should it serve a few millions or a few tens of millions who make up only a few per cent of the population? In the past, it was always those few per cent of the population who dominated the stage. Our country today is the People's Republic of China led by the proletariat and based on the worker-peasant alliance. In such a country, a socialist country, where do our workers in literature and art, our fighters on the front of the art of Peking opera, stand? Should they stand with more than 90 per cent of the population, with the workers, peasants and soldiers, that is, on the side of socialism, or on the side of our enemies, the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, undesirable elements and bourgeois Rightists? I can't say that absolutely none of you would wish to stand with the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, undesirable elements and bourgeois Rightists, but I am confident the overwhelming majority of you are not willing to stand on their side.

The mass of workers, peasants and soldiers, and especially the young people, are dissatisfied with Peking opera always staging plays about emperors, kings, generals and ministers and not staging plays on contemporary revolutionary themes. They expressed their attitude long ago. They did this very simply — by refusing to buy tickets. Old Peking operas have been less heavily booked up than several kinds of local opera precisely because these latter staged plays on contemporary revolutionary themes. Theatres in which old Peking operas about emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties are staged are always poorly attended. Is it not true that the artistic level of Peking opera is rather high? Is it not true that there are some

nationally famous actors with very high artistic attainments? But their box-office draws less people compared with some of the local operas. What does this mean? It means that the masses are telling us by their acts: "Peking opera must be reformed. If there is no reform, we'll stay away!" If things go on like this, with so many of the masses, so many of the young people, not attending, and with audiences of just a few in their fifties and sixties and a handful of ardent Peking opera fans, then Peking opera will have faded away in 20 or 40 years, and if it hasn't pretty well died out in 40 years then it certainly will have in 60. The mass of workers and peasants and young people have shown where they stand. If you still do not reform, but go on putting on operas about emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties, doesn't this mean that you will be letting Peking opera sit passively waiting for its end? Then again: our theatre is there to serve the masses of the people, but when the masses do not attend the theatre, and you do not reform it, what else then are you waiting for? As I see it, there must be reforms, inevitably, otherwise there is no future for Peking opera.

3. To present the dead or the living? There are few characters on the Peking opera stage who are living people. Besides there is a theory that "characters of living people on the Peking opera stage cannot be lifelike, or that it is very difficult to make them resemble living people, whereas in regard to the dead, the further they are from us in time the more lifelike they appear." Strange indeed! There is the opera, *King Pa Bids Farewell to Lady Yu*, but have you ever seen King Pa, or his Lady Yu? How do you know they resemble the stage types? How can you say such stage characters are like

the people of old, when neither you nor I have ever seen the originals to know? Well, that's what you say and who's to contradict you? And why insist that workers, peasants and soldiers in Peking opera can't be lifelike? At least there are models to follow when portraying contemporary people; our workers, peasants, and soldiers are all models, and where the stage characters are not lifelike, then go and see and study them for yourself and you will find that you will be able to create lifelike characters. To argue as a reason for opposing the reform of Peking opera that the characters of living people on the Peking opera stage are not lifelike and only people of the past are, just won't stand scrutiny.

Something like six hundred million and more workers and peasants (including revolutionary soldiers, i.e., workers and peasants in arms) are engaged in a great revolutionary struggle; they are engaged in a revolutionary movement of unprecedented greatness and construction of heroic proportions; isn't it well worth putting all this on the stage? Is it really only those few ancients who are worthy of being portrayed on the stage? There are so many inspiring heroic deeds; there are so many heroes, yet you do not portray them on the stage; you keep on staging feudal characters long since dead. Aren't our revolutionary heroes and heroic revolutionary masses worth depicting? Isn't it worth describing them — putting all this down on paper, on the stage, into music or on canvas? Our great socialist revolution and socialist construction arouse no interest, but those few whom no one has ever set eyes on and who are long since dead — landlord chieftains and chiefs of landlords' wives, or feudal or bourgeois "scholars and beauties" — arouse great interest. Isn't this strange? But it is not

so strange really. This concerns the question of serving the more than 90 per cent of the people, or of serving that few remaining percentage, that is, it is a question of serving socialism or serving capitalism or feudalism. At the moment there are still people who do actually want to restore capitalism or feudalism, but these are after all a small minority. To advocate serving feudalism or capitalism openly in the People's Republic of China is very difficult because they would be immediately given a telling rebuff by the masses of the people, and few dare court that. So those with ulterior motives take another line: They fill the stage exclusively with the ancients. A few working in modern drama say, "Though what I put on is bourgeois, it is of the dead bourgeoisie of the 18th and 19th centuries; and I do indeed portray feudal people but they are people who have long since passed away." A handful of persons would like to use this sort of feudalism and capitalism to corrode and poison the minds of our people and our youth. Objectively, that is what they do. Of course, the great majority of those who stage such plays do so unconsciously, because when they were in old-style opera classes, or when apprenticed to their masters, these were the plays they were taught, and though in their hearts they do not wish to put them on, there is nothing else they can put on. As for a handful of people, I doubt very much whether they do so completely unconsciously. If they are doing so unconsciously, then why do they hate the reform of Peking opera so much? We have a song that says: "Socialism is good." But they say: it isn't. They say "feudalism is good", or "capitalism is good" and they say this through the forms of art. "See how good feudalism or capitalism is on the

stage!" This is the song they want to sing. So you see, presenting people of the past and people of the present on the stage is not simply a question of the dead and the living. This is a question of a political nature, a question reflecting class character, political orientation, the path to take. Isn't it so? Some people prefer to stage foreign people and people of past times. Well, Lenin is a foreigner, and a man of times past, but how comes it then that so few plays are staged about Lenin leading the October Revolution; why are there so few good foreign dramas about the proletarian revolution on our stage?

We are historical materialists. We are not indiscriminately opposed to staging historical plays. When we oppose putting on plays about people of the past, we are opposing those plays about people of the past which laud feudalism or capitalism, which prettify the exploiting classes. As for those historical plays which fortify the will of the people and destroy the arrogance of the exploiting classes, and which benefit the cause of the people, help social development and the revolution, and further socialism — historical plays which tell of the fine traditions of the Chinese people — of course these can be staged. But the emphasis must be on staging contemporary revolutionary plays, plays about the living masses of people fighting their struggles, about the living proletariat in the midst of its struggles. A couple of years ago I took this matter up with comrades of the Peking People's Art Theatre: How about devoting just a few per cent of your time to staging plays about people of the past and about foreigners, and more than 90 per cent of your time to staging contemporary revolutionary Chinese plays? I said, and I proposed that they think

it over. I am not saying that no historical plays should be staged, but I am saying that the emphasis should be on staging plays about the living, about our workers, peasants, and soldiers, contemporary plays which further socialism and help the struggle against the enemy.

Some people in Peking opera circles said that the staging of contemporary revolutionary plays is just a gust of wind. We must tell them that this wind is mighty strong and it won't stop blowing. This wind would stop blowing only if capitalism were restored and modern revisionists got into power in China. Comrades and friends in Peking opera circles, I think that for the time being it is better for you to put aside those plays about the ancients while concentrating your energies on making a break-through in contemporary drama. You have been performing the old plays for so long and have become so accustomed to them that you feel quite at home in them, while you feel awkward and up against many difficulties when you take up contemporary plays. The question is that you haven't got enough experience, and you haven't quite got the hang of things yet; when you do, everything will be all right. Put everything else aside and give it a trial for a time; get the hang of staging contemporary revolutionary plays and then put on some plays about people of olden days at the same time. I think that unless this is done for a period of time, contemporary revolutionary drama cannot be consolidated.

4. The question of content and form. As I've just said, the ideological content of Peking opera should be revolutionary. But this revolutionary ideological content must be integrated with the special artistic characteristics of Peking opera. It is here that the difficulty

of reform lies. Set forms already exist in the special characteristic features of the art of performing Peking operas on ancient themes but there are no set forms as yet for portraying workers, peasants and soldiers in operas on contemporary themes. Some new forms were created in the course of this festival, but the experience gained is of an initial nature so it is necessary to continue to create, to sum up our experience and improve on it.

Two questions arise in integrating a revolutionary content with the special characteristics of Peking opera art. The first is: Must Peking opera conventions change? The conventions of Peking opera were originally developed to portray the ancients. Today the task is mainly to portray people of the present day—workers, peasants and soldiers—therefore, certain changes are imperative. Changes will have to be made in the music, singing, recitative, acting and acrobatic routines. Refusal to make changes will mean that the portrayal of workers, peasants and soldiers will not be convincing.

The other question is: Should the good features of other art forms be adapted to the uses of Peking opera? Peking opera was originally created and developed by assimilating the good features of other operatic forms. As it originated that way, why then should it not today learn and adapt to itself good features from other art forms? It should make such adaptations. Of course, the result after adaptation must still be wholly in the character of Peking opera. That is to say, Peking opera must still be Peking opera. It should not be turned into a hodge-podge of something that resembles nothing. It is like eating, for example. Whatever a man eats—so long as it is nutritious—will become his own blood,

flesh, bones, and so on, after he has digested it. If the result of reforming Peking opera even makes those people who love it dislike it, then it cannot possibly be said that our reforms have been successful.

5. The question of strategically despising and tactically taking into full account. By strategically despising, we mean that we are confident that Peking opera can be successfully reformed, and we will despise those people who oppose the reform of Peking opera. There are some people who oppose the reform of Peking opera, aren't there? Yes, but these sort of people who turn their backs on socialism and turn towards capitalism or feudalism are bound to come to grief. It is absolutely right that the masses look down upon them. While we are working for socialism, they are working for feudalism or capitalism. Today the more than 600 million theatre-goers want to see plays on living people but they only like to perform plays about the dead. They have cut themselves off from 95 per cent of the people. What is so grand about that?

Tactically, however, comrades must not treat this problem off-handedly but must take full account of it. Full account must be taken of the script, directing, acting and singing; every act, every scene, every character, in fact, every sentence sung or spoken and every movement must be carefully considered. Workers must be like workers, peasants must be like peasants, soldiers must be like soldiers, whomever is being portrayed must be like the "real thing". To be in the style of Peking opera and at the same time to be like what is being portrayed is difficult and if full account is not taken of everything, things won't come out right. In this great cultural revolutionary struggle to reform Peking opera, care must

differences of opinion at all about this, that indeed would be surprising.

What is to be done when there are different opinions and disputes? We should discuss and look into things in a comradely way so as to help each other and put things right. Because some operas on a contemporary revolutionary theme has some slight defects, we should not trample it to death or kill it with one blow. Every one of us should cherish this fresh, newly blossoming flower of Peking opera on contemporary themes. Don't worry if there is a dispute, so long as it really is for reform. Everyone should listen to all kinds of constructive criticisms and discuss them together. If there are criticisms they should be made face to face and not behind someone's back. This should become a habit. In the past among Peking opera circles it was a matter of "you form your group, I form mine"; bickering between this and that company, and between this and that guild was quite serious. This bad habit was a left-over from the old society. Has it all been swept away at one stroke? It is not likely. "You put on an opera and I pull away a prop from behind. I put on an opera and you pull away one of my props from behind." That was how things were. Each held together his own group but they did not want to form the big group of the People's Republic of China, not to speak of the big group of proletarian internationalism. The People's Republic of China will soon number 700 million, and under the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung we all work for a great unity, isn't that better? Some people are not content with such a great unity but want to set up their own little

unity before they are content. I urge these comrades and friends to enlarge their circle of unity.

This is the question of whether or not to reform Peking opera and how to reform it. I ask everyone to consider the few ideas I have put forward. That is the first question.

II

The second question: What must be done to ensure the successful reform of Peking opera; what are the prerequisites?

There are two prerequisites.

1. Script writers, directors and actors of Peking opera must go deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers, become one with them and establish ties of flesh-and-blood with them. That is to say, in reforming Peking opera, the line of "from the masses, to the masses" put forward by Comrade Mao Tse-tung must also be followed. Only in this way can good plays be written and Peking operas on contemporary revolutionary themes be successfully performed. How can you recreate the heroic images of workers, peasants and soldiers on the stage if you have never lived among them and are not acquainted with them? Living together with the workers, peasants and soldiers alone will not suffice, you must also distil the essential merits of the heroes among them and create typical images of them on the stage. Therefore, workers in Peking opera must go deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers, go to their factories, production teams and companies and become one with them. Some comrades and friends have found they have

gained much after spending even only a short time in the factories, production teams or army companies. Wouldn't you gain even more if you stayed there for a year or two, or several years? There are many writers and playwrights in the capital, but they have produced few plays. Why? Mainly because they are divorced from the masses and from reality. They stay in their offices and do not go out to the factories, production teams or army companies. Under such conditions how can they produce good works? How can they turn out many good works? Of course, it is impossible. Some plays have been acted rather unconvincingly and they have been rather unconvincingly directed. This is chiefly due to the fact that their directors and actors have not yet lived with the workers, peasants and soldiers or that they have lived with them only for a very short time.

The fact is that to go deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers is not so simple. It is comparatively easy to go for a few days, like a guest, but it is not so easy to be at one with the workers, peasants and soldiers, to establish flesh-and-blood relations with them. To attain this, one must, first of all, have the standpoint of the proletariat; be of one mind with the workers, peasants and soldiers, with the proletariat, with the poor and lower-middle peasants, and serve them wholeheartedly. We should all of us make ourselves willing pupils of the masses. This refers not only to you but also to us Party workers, Members of the Party's Central Committee. If we go out just to criticize and point things out right away instead of first learning from the masses like pupils, then the peasants and workers won't open their hearts to us. Although many Party workers

have established regular contacts with the mass of workers and peasants, they still need to choose some place for gaining experience at the grass-roots, where they eat, live and work together with the masses, as the willing pupils of the masses. So is it possible for Peking opera workers not to be willing pupils of the masses when they go to the countryside, the factories, or army companies? Of course they should. Naturally, we should not insist that those who are aged and physically weak eat, live and work with the masses, but it is good too to give them a chance to visit. Those artists and writers who are young and in the prime of life should, like our Party workers and the workers in other fields, live among the workers, peasants and soldiers.

This is a prerequisite for the success of the reform of Peking opera.

2. Peking opera workers must revolutionize their ideology, that is to say, they must become revolutionized and proletarianized. "Ize" means thorough change, from top to bottom and inside out. One must be revolutionized within, revolutionized not in part, but from head to foot. This is not so easy! You work on plays on contemporary revolutionary themes, but if your ideology is not revolutionized and proletarianized, how can you write, direct or act a play on these themes well? If your ideology is not revolutionized you cannot be at one with the workers, peasants and soldiers, you cannot establish flesh-and-blood relations with them. If your head is full of the ideology of the feudal landlord class or bourgeoisie, how can you identify yourselves with the proletariat and the working masses? Under such circumstances how can you establish flesh-and-blood ties with them? So, if you want to perform a

us to "re-educate people, reorganize the ranks of revolution". Why re-educate people? It is for the cause of socialist revolution and socialist construction. What kind of revolutionary ranks are to be reorganized? — The revolutionary ranks of socialism. In the past, many people were mentally prepared for the democratic revolution, but not very well prepared for the socialist revolution, and some were not in the least prepared for it. In the past, we did not undertake any systematic, all-round socialist education in every way throughout the country. Now a movement for socialist education is going ahead in the urban as well as rural areas. So long as we go on taking care of things like this, not only will we be able to carry on our socialist revolution successfully and day by day improve our socialist construction, but we will also be able to dig out thoroughly the root cause of revisionism.

Comrades! Please don't think that there can be no revisionism in China. If we don't grasp the tasks of class struggle well and of socialist education too, then, it is also possible for revisionism to appear. Speaking frankly, there are quite a few problems in literary and artistic circles, surely no less than in other fields of work. Therefore, it is necessary to launch a rectification campaign and a movement for socialist education and wage the struggle between the two roads of socialism and capitalism on the front of literature and art. We must study Comrade Mao Tse-tung's works carefully, learn Marxism-Leninism, and maintain a firm proletarian stand. I suggest that all of you examine and sift through the works you have written, the plays you have performed, the films you have acted in, the songs you have sung, the music you have performed and the pic-

play on a contemporary revolutionary theme you need, in the first place, to have a revolutionized ideology. You should be determined to remould yourself and raise your political level. Once you are determined to be revolutionary, things will go well. Change a little bit today and a little bit tomorrow, and you'll build up a revolutionary ideology bit by bit. In time you'll achieve a fundamental change. In his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art* Comrade Mao Tse-tung very clearly dealt with the fundamental questions involved here. I suggest you comrades read over those talks carefully once again.

To speak frankly, there are some people who are in an acute contradiction. Physically speaking, they have already entered socialist society, yet their heads are still in feudal or capitalist society. Surely it's not very comfortable to have one's body at one place and one's neck stretched out to one's head somewhere else? Such a person eats socialist rice and wears socialist clothes. All his amenities of life are supplied by socialism, by the workers, peasants and soldiers, yet he does not act plays to serve them, to serve socialism. His ideology is still feudalistic or capitalistic. This is an acute contradiction. If a person is like this, that's his business. But if, in accordance with his own outlook, he attempts to use Peking opera to transform the world, to oppose our staging of plays on contemporary revolutionary themes, that's very bad. Then, what is to be done? I suggest that these people had better make a big effort to remould their ideology so that they can bring their heads into socialist society too.

During the current movement for socialist education in the rural areas, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has called on

us to "re-educate people, reorganize the ranks of revolution". Why re-educate people? It is for the cause of socialist revolution and socialist construction. What kind of revolutionary ranks are to be reorganized?—The revolutionary ranks of socialism. In the past, many people were mentally prepared for the democratic revolution, but not very well prepared for the socialist revolution, and some were not in the least prepared for it. In the past, we did not undertake any systematic, all-round socialist education in every way throughout the country. Now a movement for socialist education is going ahead in the urban as well as rural areas. So long as we go on taking care of things like this, not only will we be able to carry on our socialist revolution successfully and day by day improve our socialist construction, but we will also be able to dig out thoroughly the root cause of revisionism.

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tures you have drawn in the past few years. See what is bourgeois in them or what has been influenced by the remnants of bourgeois ideas, or what is feudalistic. If you find mistakes or shortcomings, correct them and things will go well! This must be done in all spheres of literature and art, and Peking opera circles are no exception. Let everyone work for socialism and communism and thoroughly wipe out the influence of feudal and bourgeois ideology! If we act in this way, I am positive that the reform of Peking opera can certainly be done successfully, and that Peking opera certainly has a bright and great future.

ENERGETICALLY DEVELOP AND FOSTER A SOCIALIST THEATRE, THE BETTER TO SERVE THE SOCIALIST ECONOMIC BASE

This speech was delivered at the East China Modern Drama Festival which lasted from late 1963 to early 1964. Some revisions and additions were made by the speaker when it appeared in print.

KO CHING-SHIH

The development and flourishing of a socialist theatre serving the workers, peasants and soldiers of the socialist era, the politics of the proletariat, the three great revolutionary movements of the class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment, and the consolidation and development of the socialist economic base, is an extremely important and exacting task of the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction and it is also an important component part of the socialist revolution. To carry out this task, it is necessary to reform the theatre under the guidance of the Communist Party's policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and weeding through the old to let the new emerge", by rejecting what is old — capitalist and feudal, and developing what is new — socialist and communist, and vigorously promote dramatic works on contemporary revolutionary themes. The work of reforming old plays

and promoting new ones involves not only a sharp and complex struggle in theatrical circles and literary and artistic circles in general, but also a revolutionary struggle to "foster proletarian ideology and eradicate bourgeois ideology", and change old customs and habits. It is part of the socialist revolution that is deep and wide ranging.

In the light of directives issued on various occasions by the Party's Central Committee and Comrade Mao Tse-tung, a modern drama festival for the east China area was held on quite a large scale from late 1963 to early 1964 for the purpose of energetically developing a socialist theatrical art and carrying it to a flourishing maturity, and of thoroughly reforming the old plays which have long served feudalism or capitalism. Nineteen modern drama troupes from various provinces, cities and People's Liberation Army units in east China took part in the festival. They presented a total of thirteen two-or-more-act and seven one-act plays, all written by themselves in 1963. Varied in subject matter and revolutionary and healthy in theme, all these plays depicted our socialist revolution and socialist construction, and concentrated on portraying the socialist era's new people, new things and new outlook, especially those of the workers, peasants and soldiers. They have been well liked and favourably commented on by the masses. Some of these festival offerings, such as *Fighting Upstream*, *People of One Family*, *Drought Fighters*, *After a Bumper Crop*, *First and Second*, *A Mother and Son Get-Together*, *At the Sales Counter*, *The Younger Generation* and *Little Football Team*, are quite good. They have not only earned a place in the modern drama repertoire but also been adapted for other dramatic

forms. During this period, we organized festival participants—workers in the theatre and other artistic and literary fields—to study relevant writings by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, review the work done in the past few years, sum up and exchange experience, and map out plans for future work. Our political and ideological gains were also great. All this shows that by holding high the red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature, we have won a major victory.

The East China Modern Drama Festival has opened up a broad avenue for the advance of modern drama in our area; it has, in fact, given a powerful impetus to the development and flourishing of all theatrical work in our area. In the east China theatrical world we witness an unprecedented enthusiasm in staging plays on contemporary revolutionary themes. This refers not only to modern drama. In their efforts to reflect the spirit of our great socialist era, Peking opera and many other types of local opera, music and dancing, Soochow ballad singing and story-telling have all begun to move out of the circle of themes of emperors and kings, ministers and generals, scholars and beauties. In short, our dramatic work and our artistic and literary work as a whole are striving to keep pace with the times under the sympathetic eye of the Central Committee of the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung the better to answer the demands of our socialist revolution and socialist construction, and the needs of the socialist economic base. In this endeavour they have won enthusiastic praise from the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers.

Now I wish to deal with a few questions concerning the development and flourishing of a socialist theatre and socialist art and literature as a whole in the light

of the existing situation in these fields in the east China area.

I

OUR THEATRE MUST SERVE THE POLITICS OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE SOCIALIST ECONOMIC BASE

For the theatre as for art and literature as a whole, the question of whom to serve is a fundamental one, a question of principle. Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out clearly in 1942 in his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*:

. . . all our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers; they are created for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use.¹

Again he said:

Indeed there are literature and art that are for the exploiters and oppressors. Literature and art for the landlord class are feudal literature and art. Such were the literature and art of the ruling class in China's feudal era. And to this day literature and art of this kind still have considerable influence in China. Literature and art for the bourgeoisie are bourgeois literature and art. People like Liang Shih-chiu, whom Lu Hsun criticized, talk about literature and art as transcending classes, but in fact these people uphold bourgeois literature and art and oppose proletarian literature and art. Then there are literature and art

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1962, p. 23.

that serve the imperialists — for example, the works of Chou Tso-jen, Chang Tzu-ping and their like — which we call traitor literature and art. With us, literature and art are for the people, not for any of the above groups.¹

The line of literature and art serving the people, serving the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers as pointed out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung is the fundamental line of our proletarian theatre and of our art and literature as a whole. It is the watershed dividing the proletarian theatre, art and literature from that which are feudal or bourgeois. The question of the theatre, art and literature serving the people, serving the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers is also a question of serving the revolutionary people who constitute more than 90 per cent of the population. The revolutionary theatre, art and literature are to serve the revolutionary people who are the overwhelming majority. It should definitely not serve the landlord class or the bourgeoisie or the relics, young and old, of these classes. Serving the people, serving the worker, peasant and soldier masses is the only correct line for our revolutionary proletarian theatre, art and literature. We must persistently uphold this line both during the stage of the new-democratic revolution in the past, and in the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction at present.

The question of whom the theatre, art and literature should serve is a question that concerns service of the economic base by the superstructure. The theatre, art and literature are part of the superstructure. In a class society, they are all subordinate to and serve the politics

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

of a given class. The superstructure, in the final analysis, must conform to the economic base. It must answer the objective demands of and serve the economic base. In his book *On New Democracy*, Comrade Mao Tse-tung gave a penetrating exposition of this question:

Any given culture as an ideological form reflects the politics and economy of a given society, and in turn has a tremendous influence and effect upon them; economy is the base of society and politics the concentrated expression of this economy. This is our fundamental view on the relation of culture to politics and economy and on the relation between politics and economy.¹

It is inevitable that the theatre, art and literature as part of culture, as ideological forms, as part of the superstructure, must serve the politics of a given class and the economic base of a given society. Every class wants to build a superstructure that serves its own economic base, and to foster a theatre, art and literature that serves its own class interests. The feudal landlord class and the bourgeoisie have their own theatre, art and literature that serve them; we, the proletariat, must also have our own theatre, art and literature serving the politics of the proletariat and the socialist economic base. At the stage of the new-democratic revolution, our culture served the struggle against imperialism, against feudalism and against bureaucrat-capitalism. It served the new-democratic politics and the new-democratic

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *On New Democracy*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1964, p. 3.

economic base. Although our culture at that time had socialist elements — elements which played a decisive role — judging by its essential nature, it was still a new-democratic culture. Now, in the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction, our culture must be a socialist culture, with a socialist art and literature, and a socialist theatre. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: “A national culture with a socialist content must be the reflection of socialist politics and economy.”¹ It is inconceivable that our politics and economy should be socialist while our theatre, art and literature remain capitalist or feudal, or are new-democratic. In the socialist era, the theatre, art and literature have the task of fighting imperialism and feudalism. But their basic and most essential task is to wage a thoroughgoing struggle against capitalism and the bourgeoisie, to serve socialism, and protect, consolidate and develop the socialist economic base. This is a matter that we must make clear in the first place.

A socialist society is a society in which classes and class struggle exist. During the stage of socialism and throughout the entire historical period of transition from capitalism to communism, there will be a struggle between the two classes — the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and a struggle between the two roads — socialism and capitalism. On the one hand, we have new people, new things, new ideas and new moralities representing the socialist forces growing and developing vigorously; the broad masses of people are constantly enhancing their political consciousness, heroes and exemplary men and women imbued with socialist and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

communist ideas emerge one after another; the socialist cause advances fast and the economic base of socialism is daily developing and becoming more firmly consolidated. On the other hand there still exist the old things which obstruct, weaken and undermine the economic base of socialism. Although we have basically eliminated capitalist ownership economically, the struggle between the two classes and between the two roads will not come to an end before all bourgeois influences are liquidated and all sources generating capitalism are eradicated domestically, and internationally, so long as imperialism and capitalism remain, in short, before the transition to a communist society is realized. Struggles in the political and ideological spheres are more complicated and tortuous than struggles in the economic field. The bourgeoisie resort to various means including "peaceful evolution" in order to stage a comeback, and under certain conditions the possibility of capitalist restoration may become a reality. This struggle is bound to be sharply reflected in the theatre and in other spheres of art and literature. Only by waging prolonged, constant and repeated struggles can the growing socialist forces and communist elements gradually overcome and replace the doomed forces of capitalism and feudalism.

This sharp and complicated class struggle, this deep and extensive socialist revolution, is a stern test for each and every one of us revolutionary workers including those in the spheres of the theatre, art and literature; we have got to define our attitudes unequivocally. Are you going to take an active part in this struggle and defeat capitalist and feudal ideas with socialist and communist ideas, or are you going the other way? Theat-

rical, art and literary workers should be revolutionaries in the first place. As revolutionaries, you must take an active part in this struggle and not shy away from it; you must publicize socialism and communism and not capitalism and feudalism; you should be on the side of the new things and not the old ones. However, in actual fact our theatrical, art and literary workers take different attitudes towards this struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and between the two roads — socialism and capitalism. There is a positive as well as a negative attitude; there is also an attitude of opposition. Naturally, no attitude of opposition will be tolerated, but it is also wrong to take a negative attitude in this matter. A negative attitude implies neither fighting against the old things nor backing up the new ones, with the result that the former runs wild while the latter are suppressed. With such an attitude how can new things grow rapidly and the old be thoroughly defeated? If we do not solve this question by taking stock of our fundamental stand and attitude we cannot become genuine revolutionaries, and service to socialism becomes just so much empty talk.

How, then, should our art, literary and theatrical workers serve socialism? They must employ the weapon of art and literature in actual struggles, and through the power of artistic imagery to move and influence people, publicize socialist and communist ideas, combat capitalist and feudal ideas, inspire and educate the people, enhance their political consciousness and encourage their revolutionary spirit. The theatre, art and literature as weapons of the socialist revolution must not only educate the people in revolutionary traditions but also in the prospects of the revolution, inspire them to uphold

lofty revolutionary aims, resolutely carry the socialist revolution through to the end, actively support the revolutionary struggles of the world's peoples and strive for the emancipation of all mankind and the realization of communism throughout the world. "It [literature] must become Party literature." (Lenin)¹ The Party character and class character of our revolutionary theatre, art and literature determine this. However, now, after the victory of the socialist revolution there are people who regard the theatre, art and literature not as weapons for carrying on the Chinese revolution and world revolution but as things to amuse and entertain. Obviously this view is not Marxist-Leninist and runs counter to the orientation of a revolutionary theatre, art and literature. In a socialist society, if the theatre, art and literature are not made to serve the proletariat, then they cease to be the superstructure of socialism, and will instead degenerate, take the road of revisionism and become part of the superstructure rendering service to the restoration of capitalism. Have not the modern revisionist superstructure, theatre, art and literature already become out-and-out instruments of capitalist restoration? They are doing their utmost to spread the bourgeois theory of human nature, humanism, pacifism, the doctrine of personal well-being and the corrupt and decadent bourgeois way of life; they are also exerting themselves to oppose revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, smear the socialist system, serve the imperialist policy of "peaceful evolution" and become an instrument paving the way for capitalist restoration. We

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Party Organization and Party Literature", *Collected Works*, Volume 10, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, p. 45.

must conscientiously study and learn the serious lesson that this experience gives.

The theatre is an art form that has a mass character. Through the images it creates on the stage, it exerts a strong influence on audiences of millions. Good plays have a good influence and vice versa. Therefore, every theatrical worker must be fully aware of his heavy responsibility. Guided by the spirit of responsibility to the revolution and to the masses, he must write good scripts and stage plays on contemporary revolutionary themes well, firmly adhere to Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature and wage a resolute struggle against all wrong ideas which run counter to it.

Since the founding of New China, guided by Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature, our effort to develop the theatre in the east China area has been highly successful. This must not be underrated. But it must also be recognized that its results are still a long way from being able to suit the socialist economic base. There are certain people in our theatrical circles who pay lip-service to the line of art and literature serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, but who do not follow this Party line in practice. For fifteen years, they did very little to reflect actual life and struggles under socialism; to tell the truth, one scarcely knows if they have done anything at all. They are enthusiastic about plays and operas of the bourgeoisie and the feudal class, energetically propagate foreign and ancient ones and put on plays and operas about "dead people" and ghosts on a big scale; they criticize and find fault with our socialist theatre and try to hold back its swift development. Certain people, Communists at that, turn a blind eye to such things; they are neither distressed by them, nor do they

intervene, or put a stop to or oppose bad plays and operas publicizing feudalism or capitalism; in fact, they even find excuses for the latter, with such remarks as "there's no harm in ghosts", "there is a popular character to feudal ethics", and so on and so forth. On the other hand, instead of enthusiastically supporting dramatic art reflecting actual life and revolutionary struggles, they are cold and indifferent to it. All this profoundly reflects the struggle of the two roads and the struggle of the two lines in our theatrical and art and literary worlds. Such struggles are in essence a struggle to determine which class the theatre, and art and literature are to serve. This struggle on the art and literary front will go on while classes and class struggle remain; we must persevere in it and wage it to the end.

II

**THE SOCIALIST THEATRE MUST TAKE
AS ITS MAIN TASK THE REFLECTION OF ACTUAL LIFE
AND STRUGGLES UNDER SOCIALISM
AND THE PORTRAYAL OF THE MASSES OF WORKERS,
PEASANTS AND SOLDIERS OF THE SOCIALIST ERA**

Since we want the theatre to serve proletarian politics and the socialist economic base, we must energetically promote dramas on contemporary themes reflecting socialist revolution and socialist construction since the founding of New China. We must actively portray the actual life and struggles of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers in the socialist era and warmly sing of the new people and new things, new ideas and new moralities that characterize the indus-

trial, agricultural, military, educational and commercial fronts. Of course, the reflection of revolutionary struggles in the new-democratic period is also necessary, but the greatest energy should be put into creating dramas reflecting the socialist era. Only so can modern revolutionary dramatic works reflecting the socialist era and portraying the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers become the mainstream of our theatre. And only so can we throw ourselves, with vigour and inventiveness, into the task of creating more and nobler heroic images of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, describing how they mature in the three great revolutionary movements of the class struggle, the struggle for production, and scientific experiment, and holding them up as models for the great masses of the people to learn from and emulate, so that more heroic and model people may swiftly emerge.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung taught us: "Revolutionary literature and art should create a variety of characters out of actual life and help the masses to propel history onward."¹ This is not only the principle guiding the creative work of our socialist theatre; it is also its glorious responsibility. The labouring people are the masters of history. The masses of workers, peasants and soldiers of the socialist era are the creators and builders of the new life. The history of the development of a proletarian theatre and art and literature can be said to be the history of the proletariat and the labouring people, under the leadership of the Party, striving to express themselves in the theatre and in art and literature,

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, p. 20.

the history of their using the theatre and art and literature as weapons in the struggle for self-emancipation. In the socialist era our theatre can acquire inexhaustible vitality and a great future for development only by taking as its mainstream the reflection of actual life and struggles and the portrayal of the worker, peasant and soldier masses. Theatrical workers must create more images of perfect, positive, heroic characters, warmly sing of their proletarian revolutionary spirit and noble communist qualities, and effectively criticize negative characters, so as to release the full militant potentialities of the revolutionary theatrical arts. Only by taking the line of portraying the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers can theatrical workers throw themselves into actual life and struggles, familiarize themselves with the worker, peasant and soldier masses, identify themselves with them, remould their own ideologies thoroughly, and so truly become proletarian theatrical workers and make our theatre a truly socialist theatre. Does this mean, then, that dramas with other contents are forbidden? No. Plays and operas that accurately reflect the class struggle and the national-liberation struggle in the history of our country or such struggles in other countries, those that expose the ugly face of the imperialist and feudal rulers and of the bourgeoisie, all those that help the masses push history forward, all those with revolutionary significance, can be staged. All traditional dramas which, after adaptation, enable the ancient to serve the modern, all those plays and operas which benefit the people, can also be staged, provided they do not go contrary to the six political criteria set down by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in his work *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions*

Among the People. But, in our socialist theatre, the mainstream must be the reflection of socialist life and struggles and the portrayal of the worker, peasant and soldier masses of the socialist era. This is a point that must be reasserted and clearly understood.

As to the reason why dramas on contemporary revolutionary themes should be promoted, even up to now there are people who still hold different views. It has been said: they should be promoted because times have changed, society has changed; any artistic form should be able to reflect "both the life of the ancients and that of present-day people; and portray characters of various classes", only so can the inadequacy of dramatic art be "made up for", only so can it be made "complete, rich and powerful". Clearly, such a view is divorced from class analysis and is a misrepresentation of the reason why we advocate a contemporary revolutionary dramatic art. We advocate such an art not at all because there exists a need to make up for some inadequacy or other, but because it involves a fundamental reform of the theatre. It is a fundamental question of setting the theatre in the right direction, of making the workers, peasants and soldiers become the masters of the stage and making the theatre serve socialism. If modern drama has to reflect "both the life of the ancients and that of present-day people and portray characters of various classes" before it can be considered "complete, rich and powerful", then what are you going to portray as the mainstream—the worker, peasant and soldier masses of the socialist era, or the emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties of feudal times? Will you sing of the revolutionary masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, criticize characters of the

capitalist and other reactionary classes, or just the opposite? People who hold the views outlined above may outwardly agree with the revolution in the theatre and with portraying the workers, peasants and soldiers, but in actual fact they are protecting the emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties. The most they are willing to give the former is an auxiliary status. It seems as if both we and they are advocating drama on contemporary themes but there is a difference as to what kind we have in mind — revolutionary, non-revolutionary, or counter-revolutionary. What we promote is the socialist theatre, and not something else; a dramatic art with contemporary revolutionary themes, and not some other kind of drama with contemporary themes.

It is precisely for this reason that the imperialists and modern revisionists execrate our promotion of dramas on contemporary themes. The imperialists spread nonsense about our having replaced the “immensely popular old plays and operas with kings, princes, wisemen and courtesans” with “purposely drab” plays on contemporary themes. Cheek by jowl with the imperialists and echoing their slander, the modern revisionists also launched an unbridled attack on our dramatic works with contemporary themes, using such phrases about them as “puritanical” works “bound by set patterns” and “pernicious and vulgar dogmas”. These attacks and slanders show that, starting from their reactionary bourgeois class stand, the modern revisionists are utterly incapable of understanding what socialist drama is and what dramas on contemporary revolutionary themes are. In their countries, not only dramas on contemporary revolutionary themes but genuine Marxism-Leninism with great vitality and vigour is also condemned as

“puritanical” and “pernicious and vulgar dogmas”. Imperialist and modern revisionist attacks and slanders no matter what they say cannot harm us in the slightest, they only go to show that our promotion of a socialist dramatic art and of plays and operas on contemporary revolutionary themes is absolutely correct and necessary.

The life of the people, of the workers, peasants and soldiers, is the inexhaustible source of our creative work. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

What in the last analysis is the source of all literature and art? Works of literature and art, as ideological forms, are products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society. Revolutionary literature and art are the products of the reflection of the life of the people in the brains of revolutionary writers and artists.¹

The people's life in the socialist era is rich and colourful, vivid and vigorous. China has a history of several thousand years. In those thousands of years, the people, as makers of history, had their brilliant life and struggles. But under prolonged reactionary rule, they were oppressed and exploited and their life was miserable. Today the revolution has achieved nationwide victory and imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism — the three great mountains weighing down on the heads of the Chinese people — have been overthrown; political liberation has been achieved and the people have been freed from oppression; capitalist private ownership of the means of production has been eliminated and the people have been freed from exploitation. Under these

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

circumstances, the Chinese labouring people, led by the Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung, are bringing their wisdom and boundless creative energy into full play, working for the great cause of socialist revolution and socialist construction and striving to realize their great communist ideal. People are transforming the world while remoulding themselves in the three great revolutionary movements—in class struggle, production and scientific experiment—on the industrial, agricultural, military, educational and commercial fronts. In these struggles, there are contradictions between the enemy and ourselves as well as contradictions among the people, including those between the more advanced and the backward. Our cause and our people are continuously advancing by constantly resolving all kinds of contradictions and surmounting all kinds of difficulties. In actual life and struggle our workers, peasants and soldiers and their cadres are rapidly enhancing their socialist and communist consciousness and they have a completely new outlook. New people, new deeds, new ideas and new moralities are appearing in large numbers on all fronts and in every field. There is an increasing number of socialist and collectivist heroes and exemplary people.

Even fragmentary materials for the east China area show that new people are to be found everywhere and new deeds are being performed all the time: Some of them have demonstrated a firm stand in the class struggle, unmoved by the enemy's threats or bribery, uncorrupted by old ideas and influences, and always maintaining the fine innate qualities of a proletarian fighter. The Party branch secretary in *Old Ho Comes to the Home of Small Keng*, and the P.L.A. soldiers lauded in *The*

Good Eighth Company on Nanking Road are people of this type. The Yangchow opera *The Seal* and the modern play *On Guard Beneath the Neon Lights* are the reflection of the brilliant qualities of these proletarian fighters in literature. Led by Party branch secretary Chen Yi-mei, a national model peasant, members of what is now the Chenchiachuang Brigade of the Chenchuang People's Commune in Chufu County, Shantung Province, began organizing an agricultural producers' co-operative in 1952 and raised output 67 per cent within three years. In an editor's note to an article in *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside* Comrade Mao Tse-tung praised it as a "very well run co-op". But the leadership of this brigade was at one time in 1961 usurped by the class enemy and its production suffered sabotage; its per *mou* yield dropped from 450 to 300 catties. Chen Yi-mei, however, kept up the struggle by relying closely on former poor and lower-middle peasants. In the socialist education movement, they organized a committee of poor and lower-middle peasants, established their hegemony, repulsed the attacks of the capitalist and feudal forces and recovered the leadership. Today their production has made new gains—their per *mou* yield has doubled from 300 to 600 catties. Cheng Teh-wang, a Shanghai pedicab driver, provides another example. In his everyday work, he serves his passengers wholeheartedly, always offering that which is convenient to others while tackling the difficulties himself. In his work he actively helps maintain social order, defends the interests of socialism and wages a resolute struggle against evil and evil-doers. Since 1962 he has helped the government clear up eleven cases involving violations of the law.

Others have worked selflessly in industrial production. In order to increase output, improve quality, lower costs, introduce technical innovations or make inventions, they have studied hard, been persevering in research, and made great contributions. The Yunghsin Seamless Tube Mill in Shanghai used to be a small factory in a back alley. With veteran worker Pan Ah-yao and others leading the way, the Yunghsin workers turned out a batch of high-grade precision seamless tubes with their own equipment and technique. In the process, they went in energetically for research and improved the machines for making irregularly-shaped tubes, thereby solving the problem of mass producing such tubes. Staff members and workers of the Shanghai Alcohol Distillery worked hard to equip their plant themselves. Within a few years, they turned a small, ramshackle factory into a modern plant employing a technological process which is advanced even by world standards. This was accomplished by constantly introducing technical innovations. This distillery is producing more than five times as much alcohol as it did in 1957. Many workers grew so absorbed in solving key technical problems and introducing innovations that they neglected meals and sleep; they were tireless on the job.

Still others have devoted themselves wholeheartedly to running collective production well in agriculture. They have worked hard to change extremely unfavourable conditions of production, studied agricultural techniques to turn low-yielding plots into high-yielding ones and high-yielding plots into still more productive ones. There is a production team in Kiangsi Province which goes by the name of the "Rocket Team". Its leader is a young girl named Ting Chang-hua. Her farm

used to be very poor. The soil was sandy and yields were low, but she has noble aspirations and a great deal of drive; she takes the lead at work and puts heart and soul into guiding her team members to do their collective production well. For several years their per *mou* grain yield has been above the 1,100 catty or 1,200 catty mark and their per *mou* ginned cotton yield topped the 200 catty level. They are also raising many pigs, averaging nearly two pigs per *mou* of land. If one asks why she has led production so successfully, her experience may be summed up under four heads: 1. she is just and selfless; 2. she sets an example by her own conduct; 3. she adheres to the mass line; and 4. she conducts scientific experiments. There is a farm called the Szuyang Farm in Kiangsu Province; it is a state farm located by the old course of the Yellow River and its soil is sandy. Chang Hsueh-tung, director of the farm, used to be a peasant who took part in the guerrilla war. After joining the farm, he helped build it up till it succeeded in gathering 200 catties of ginned cotton from every *mou* of land. Converting the output of sweet potatoes into food grain at the ratio of four to one, the per *mou* yield in other places generally amounts to 300 or 400 catties, but when I visited the farm in 1962, I found that it harvested over 500 catties per *mou* in spite of bad weather. This was not all. He also brought neighbouring production teams forward. With him leading the way, the backward teams were able to increase production greatly within a year. There is a Tsulai People's Commune in Taian County, Shantung Province. By relying on their own efforts and with the tenacious spirit of the legendary Yukung [the "Foolish Old Man"] who tried to remove two mountains blocking the way to his house, its mem-

bers and cadres terraced the mountain slopes, detained flood water in a reservoir, changed the face of their poor mountainous region, and raised their per *mou* grain yield to 600 catties.

In the battle against natural calamities, some of them kept in view what served the overall interests and displayed a fine communist style and a heroic and determined revolutionary will. Many moving events took place in the fight against drought in 1963 in Fukien. After many months of dry weather, when one river dried up, its bed was dug deeper to get water from another river. The spirit of "subordinating the smaller interests to the large" as described in the play *Drought Fighters* about the cadres and members of the Lungchiang Brigade of the Pangshan People's Commune in Lunghai County, Fukien Province, mirrors the battle against drought waged throughout the province. Another outstanding instance of preserving the general interests at the cost of specific interests occurred in 1963 when waters were diverted from heavily flooded areas of Hopei Province into Shantung Province. In Enhsienwa alone, hundreds of thousands of *mou* of land were purposely flooded to save a larger area of crops elsewhere. To check and store these floodwaters, a temporary dyke was built in a great hurry. But when people stood on it, it was as soft as "standing on a mattress". It proved unable in places to withstand the onslaught of storms and waves, and it was breached in several spots. What then? Men of the P.L.A., cadres and ordinary folk, battling the stormy waves, formed a human wall by linking arms in the water in front of the dyke. This and other effective measures finally saved the day.

In dealing with matters concerning relations between the state, the collective and the individual, some stand on a high plane and look far ahead, putting the interests of the state first and those of the collective and the individual second. For several years past, for instance, the Party branch of the Chianghsin Brigade of the Mienchuan People's Commune in Pengtse County, Kiangsi Province, has led the commune members in growing good crops to overfulfil the quota of cotton sold to the state. Their slogan is: "Stand at the door-step, and see Tien An Men" — a slogan which has exerted a deep influence over a wide area. Moreover, in various parts of the country many people's communes and their members not only enthusiastically fulfil their task of paying the grain tax and selling grain to the state to support national construction; but when natural calamities have occurred elsewhere, they have preferred to reduce their own consumption so that they could sell their surplus grain to the state over and above the quota and thus help relieve the stricken areas. The masses' lofty spirit of placing the interests of the state above those of their collective is portrayed in the play *After the Rich Harvest*.

Within the ranks of our P.L.A. and militiamen, heroes and pace-setters have come to the fore in ever greater numbers. Kuo Hsing-fu, the leader of a company in Nanking, has created an advanced teaching method which has been adopted throughout the army. Chao Erh-chun, a sailor of a certain naval unit, and Wang Yung-tsai, a soldier of a certain army unit in Tsinan, gave their lives fighting fire and flood. Su Wang-chao, leader of a militia company in Pingyang County, Chekiang Province, led all the members of his family in

putting out of action a group of armed Chiang Kai-shek agents. Members of three generations of the family of Lu Chih-yu, a fisherman on Kungtung Island off the coast of Shantung Province, are militiamen who excel in marksmanship. With a scull in one hand and a rifle in the other, they guard the coastline of their motherland in co-ordination with the P.L.A.

There are noble spirits too among many of our scientists and medical workers. They tirelessly tackle difficult scientific problems and have painstakingly and swiftly handled almost incurable cases. For instance, doctors and nurses of the Kuangchi Hospital in Shanghai worked hard and successfully healed the severe burns of the worker Chiu Tsai-kang. Doctors and nurses of the No. 6 People's Hospital in Shanghai succeeded in rejoining Wang Tsun-po's severed hand to his arm. These achievements are precedents seldom found in the world history of medical science.

In the course of the movement for learning from Lei Feng, many people like him have appeared in various parts of the country and there have been many moving acts patterned on his example, acts which show a complete and selfless dedication to the interests of others. For example, Chang Wen-ken, a Communist and a messenger of the liaison department of an army unit in Foochow, saw two commune members fall into a large manure pit as they were taking manure from it. Knowing that their lives were in immediate danger, though he himself was ill, he jumped into the pit without caring about the danger to his own life, and helped them out with a great effort. He himself then succumbed to the fumes and lost consciousness. He recovered only after being given emergency treatment. The people

were so touched by his noble spirit in rescuing others at the risk of his own safety that with one voice they praised him as "Chairman Mao's good soldier". Late one night, when the No. 4 Normal School in Shanghai caught fire, the students, undaunted by the danger, did all they could to put it out. Leaving their own belongings, they risked their lives to salvage the school's equipment and thus reduced the loss of common property.

With the steady advance of the masses in socialist consciousness, a growing number of people have taken part in the struggle to change old customs and habits and to establish the new, socialist way of life. For instance, 120 of the households in Chihhsiu Lane, Putuo District, Shanghai, formerly worshipped images of gods. But with their class consciousness raised in the movement for socialist education, they have understood the cause of happiness and sufferings and emancipated their minds from the shackles of superstitious beliefs. More than 110 of them have now voluntarily removed and destroyed the objects of their superstition. They said: "We have been deceived by gods and ghosts for many years. We will not allow them to harm our children and grandchildren." Another example is provided by the eight families of workers and staff who live in Tangsheng Lane, Tungmiaochiao Road, Hsuhui District. These families, since they jointly built their present dwellings and became neighbours in 1952, have consistently stood together and helped each other and shown as great a concern for each other as if they were one family. Advocating simple living and the running of family affairs with industry and thrift, they have earned a reputation as "a stable rear of production".

They often call to mind their past sufferings and ponder over the source of their present happiness. They teach their children not to forget the miserable past and to appreciate the sweet present. By example, they educate their children to love labour, find pleasure in helping others and return to the owner anything they may pick up anywhere. In this way, they promote the healthy development of their children both physically and mentally.

These new type of persons, new things, new ideas and new moralities are appearing and spreading everywhere in our present socialist society. Here I have confined myself just to a few examples. Even several days and nights would not be long enough for us to give a full account of what we know. And we do not know everything: our knowledge is incomplete. In real life, the new persons and new things are far more numerous and are continuously appearing. In short, the working people of New China are carrying forward the earth-shaking and unprecedented cause of revolution and are creating great and magnificent epics. Inspired by lofty ideals and revolutionary sentiments, they are performing heroic feats which command our admiration and respect. Their images are both ordinary and great. Speaking about them, or hearing about them, one feels elated and deeply moved. How could revolutionary workers in the theatrical world and in art and literature not wholeheartedly sing the praises of such a great epoch, lovingly portray such great masses of workers, peasants and soldiers and recreate the artistic images of such great heroes. If one does not do this, how can one have a mind to eat and sleep?

Though life is so rich and there are heroes of such noble character and fine feeling in our midst, there are still some who think otherwise. They assert that plays mirroring the actual life and struggle under socialism are "limited in themes" and "too simple and dry" and the life of workers, peasants and soldiers "coarse", "lacking in interest" and not worth portraying. Such a view is obviously utterly wrong. Their error, if traced to its roots, lies in their class stand, attitude and sentiments. They are unwilling to write about life as it is or to write about workers, peasants and soldiers, because they believe such themes offer no scope for drama and cannot yield much emotion. Can it be that it is only when one writes about emperors and kings, generals and ministers, scholars and beauties of the past, about the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, indulging in the "fine, intricate and melancholy" sentimentality of "boy-meets-girl" stuff that there can be drama, human interest, a power of attraction and a flow of feeling? In our view, the so-called "coarseness" of workers, peasants and soldiers is an expression of revolutionary staunchness. Only those who see with the eyes of aristocrats and lords regard workers, peasants and soldiers as "ignorant and coarse" and lacking in "fine and complex" feelings and thoughts. To the proletariat, it is the feelings of the exploiting classes which are crude and vulgar, corrupt and savage in the extreme. Let us leave aside the emperors and kings, the generals and ministers, the scholars and beauties. As to the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, what is positive about them today that is worth portraying? In the days when the bourgeoisie was on the ascendant, it played a certain progressive role, but as history marched on, it turned into its an-

ber Lenin's words, the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

Marx and Engels were the first to provide us with excellent models of such concrete analysis.

When Marx and Engels applied the law of contradiction in things to the study of the socio-historical process, they discovered the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, they discovered the contradiction between the exploiting and exploited classes and also the resultant contradiction between the economic base and its superstructure (politics, ideology, etc.), and they discovered how these contradictions inevitably lead to different kinds of social revolution in different kinds of class society.

When Marx applied this law to the study of the economic structure of capitalist society, he discovered that the basic contradiction of this society is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership. This contradiction manifests itself in the contradiction between the organized character of production in individual enterprises and the anarchic character of production in society as a whole. In terms of class relations, it manifests itself in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Because the range of things is vast and there is no limit to their development, what is universal in one context becomes particular in another. Conversely, what is particular in one context becomes universal in another. The contradiction in the capitalist system between the social character of production and the private ownership of the means of production is common to all countries where capitalism exists and develops; as far as capitalism is concerned, this constitutes the universality of contradiction. But this

contradiction of capitalism belongs only to a certain historical stage in the general development of class society; as far as the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in class society as a whole is concerned, it constitutes the particularity of contradiction. However, in the course of dissecting the particularity of all these contradictions in capitalist society, Marx gave a still more profound, more adequate and more complete elucidation of the universality of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in class society in general.

Since the particular is united with the universal and since the universality as well as the particularity of contradiction is inherent in everything, universality residing in particularity, we should, when studying an object, try to discover both the particular and the universal and their interconnection, to discover both particularity and universality and also their interconnection within the object itself, and to discover the interconnections of this object with the many objects outside it. When Stalin explained the historical roots of Leninism in his famous work, *The Foundations of Leninism*, he analysed the international situation in which Leninism arose, analysed those contradictions of capitalism which reached their culmination under imperialism, and showed how these contradictions made proletarian revolution a matter for immediate action and created favourable conditions for a direct onslaught on capitalism. What is more, he analysed the reasons why Russia became the cradle of Leninism, why tsarist Russia became the focus of all the contradictions of imperialism, and why it was possible for the Russian proletariat to become the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. Thus, Stalin analysed the universality of contradiction in imperialism, showing why Leninism is the

of modern drama have given us useful experience. The most important thing is your approach to contradictions within the ranks of the people, the class stand and viewpoint you take in your creative work. If you write from the proletarian stand and viewpoint, you will succeed, otherwise you will fail and distort reality. Some people whose outlook has not been remoulded approach life from the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois stand and viewpoint and therefore fail to take note of the bright and the positive in our day-to-day life; they see only the backward and the negative. While they lack the revolutionary fervour to extol the new type of people, new things, new ideas, new moralities, they take a great interest in what they call "exposing" the seamy side of life. They believe they mirror life as it is, but in fact they make no distinction between right and wrong and stand truth on its head. "Exposure" in their hands is nothing but a distorted picture of reality from the bourgeois stand. Of course, we can write about flaws and mistakes in our work, and about defects and errors of the working people, but that is to educate people and has nothing to do with "exposure". Comrade Mao Tse-tung made this point very clear in his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*:

For revolutionary writers and artists the targets for exposure can never be the masses of the people, but only the aggressors, exploiters and oppressors and the evil influence they have on the people. The masses of the people too have shortcomings; these should be overcome by criticism and self-criticism within the people's own ranks, and such criticism and self-criticism is also one of the most important tasks of

literature and art. But this should not be regarded as any sort of "exposure of the people". As for the people, the question is basically one of education and of raising their level.¹

Then there are comrades, stuffed with petty-bourgeois illusions, who like to imagine the world a perfect place that leaves nothing to be desired. When they come into contact with the dust and heat of everyday life, when they realize that things are not what they believe them to be, they say there is nothing worth writing about, and they feel disappointed and dejected. These comrades should disabuse themselves of such vain illusions. They should be practical and approach problems from the dialectical materialist standpoint, using it to distinguish the main trends from the side issues in developments, the basic substance from the ephemeral phenomenon, the budding new things from the old that are dying. They should know how to take a firm grip of the main trends and the essence of things and know how to spot all that is new and growing, even though it may still be in an embryonic stage. If you observe the contradictions within the ranks of the people from our class standpoint and thus make a concrete analysis of various types of people and various types of contradictions, generalizing them, thrashing out their essence, constructing the plot of your play carefully and artistically, you will certainly be able to produce a profound and well-considered piece of work on the internal contradictions of the people, a piece of writing that will enable the public to benefit from experience and learn lessons

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art*, p. 34.

and get a good education out of it. We have had quite a number of excellent plays that mainly reflect the contradictions within the ranks of the people, plays that have done a good job in presenting conflicts, that are packed with dramatic action, well considered and conform to real life. The experience represented by these plays can very well dispel doubts that may exist on this score.

There are also people in east China who say that the movies and plays produced in the 30s before the War of Resistance Against Japan were excellent as if the present ones were far inferior to those of the past. This is a totally mistaken view. Did we have a revolutionary artistic and literary movement before 1942 when the Yen-an forum on literature and art was held? The answer is definitely yes. In those days the revolutionary artistic and literary movement both in the Soviet and White areas played a positive role in the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggle; in the upsurge of this struggle of the Chinese people, a great standard bearer of proletarian revolutionary culture — Lu Hsun — did appear on the scene. No one has denied this. Comrade Mao Tse-tung himself has highly evaluated this movement. But could it be said that everything was all right in the orientation of the work in art and literature at that time, that there were no problems in the ideology and understanding of workers in art and literature then? That cannot possibly be said. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung called the forum on literature and art in 1942 precisely because this problem had not been clarified or solved in artistic and literary circles, whether in the 20s, 30s

or in the early 40s when it was convened. It was thanks to the Yen-an forum in 1942, thanks to the talks given by Comrade Mao Tse-tung and thanks to the fact that a solution to the problem of orientation in revolutionary artistic and literary work had been found that a broad avenue was opened up for proletarian revolutionary art and literature and they have since been advancing by leaps and bounds along a correct path. Guided by the line set forth by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, revolutionary art and literature have scored one success after another in the past twenty-two years as they in actual practice served the workers, peasants and soldiers while the revolution deepened and developed. Although not all departments on the artistic and literary front in east China have at all times implemented the Party's line on art and literature — and therefore there still exist various problems which need urgent solution — we are far better off today than in the 30s whichever way you look at it. Hence, anyone who today indiscriminately lauds to the sky the art and literature of the 30s not only violates historical facts; to do so, in fact, is tantamount to negating the achievements made after 1942 under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature. It also amounts to trying to drag revolutionary art and literature back to the days before the Yen-an forum, to keep them at the stage of the democratic revolution and prevent them from ever advancing to the socialist stage. In other words, it amounts to complete negation of the need to advance and to hold aloft the red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature. This is something which our workers, peasants, soldiers and the masses as a whole can never allow.

III

OUR SOCIALIST ERA WILL SURELY PRODUCE MORE AND BETTER DRAMATIC WORKS OF HIGH IDEOLOGICAL AND ARTISTIC STANDARDS

Our socialist theatre will attain unprecedented new heights both in political content and in artistic quality. This is historically inevitable as it is the demand of our times. From the criterion of socialist theatre, what after all should be counted a good play? In his *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "In literary and art criticism, there are two criteria: the political and the artistic."¹ And he added:

Politics cannot be equated with art, nor can a general world outlook be equated with a method of artistic creation and criticism. We deny not only that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable political criterion, but also that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable artistic criterion; each class in every class society has its own political and artistic criteria. But all classes in all class societies invariably put the political criterion first and the artistic criterion second. . . . What we demand is the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form. Works of art which lack artistic quality have no force, no matter how progressive they are politically.²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

In this passage Comrade Mao Tse-tung has most clearly elucidated why the political criterion should come first and artistic criterion second and what are the dialectical relations between political and artistic criteria. We must examine and evaluate all works of art and literature according to this standard. The proletariat must put forward even more clear-cut demands regarding the political criterion. Proletarian dramatic art must strive for "the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form". In accordance with the specific conditions of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Comrade Mao Tse-tung laid down in concrete terms that in regard to the political criterion "everything is good that is helpful to unity and resistance to Japan, that encourages the masses to be of one heart and one mind, that opposes retrogression and promotes progress; on the other hand, everything is bad that is detrimental to unity and resistance to Japan, foments dissension and discord among the masses and opposes progress and drags people back".¹ In the socialist period, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has also laid down six political criteria in his work *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*. Among the six, two are most basic — to be helpful to socialist transformation and socialist construction and to be helpful to the consolidation of the leadership of the Communist Party. These six criteria constitute the political standard by which we judge today whether a play is good or bad. As regards artistic standards, Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

. . . all works of a higher artistic quality are good or comparatively good, while those of a lower artistic quality are bad or comparatively bad. Here, too, of course, social effect must be taken into account. There is hardly a writer or artist who does not consider his own work beautiful, and our criticism ought to permit the free competition of all varieties of works of art; but it is also entirely necessary to subject these works to correct criticism according to the criteria of the science of art, so that art of a lower level can be gradually raised to a higher level and art which does not meet the demands of the struggle of the broad masses can be transformed into art that does.¹

Comrade Mao Tse-tung did not consider the question of art of a high or low level, or good or bad art, as being something abstract and leave things in a void. Time and again he has emphasized that proletarian art must meet the demands of the struggle of the masses and serve proletarian politics better. He has always maintained that a struggle on two fronts must be waged on questions of art and literature, that is to say, a struggle both to oppose the tendency to produce works of art with wrong political viewpoints and the tendency towards "the poster and slogan style" which is correct in political approach but lacking in artistic power.

Fine works of art are created under certain social and historical conditions; they are not created entirely according to the subjective will of individuals. All good works of art and good artists are products of their times. In our country, which is in the midst of the socialist revolution and socialist construction, we have

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the Marxist-Leninist leadership of the Party's Central Committee and Comrade Mao Tse-tung; our revolutionary banners are held high and are clear for all to see; the people are keen and enthusiastic in the cause they fight for; the cause of socialism is forging ahead vigorously and the face of our society is changing from day to day, from month to month — such a rich, colourful and vivid life as we lead today is in every respect unknown to the people of ancient times. On this basis, there have inevitably emerged a number of good, revolutionary writers who produce very good works that are fine in political content and are of high artistic value. This is determined by the times. If a particular writer does not write such books, someone else will; if he fails to produce a fine piece of work, someone else will; and if one piece of work is not so good, then another will be. Today, in imperialist and capitalist countries, because capitalism has decayed and is in its decline, it is impossible for the men of letters who persist in their reactionary, bourgeois stand and viewpoint to create good works; they can only produce works which reflect the sick, corrupt way of life and ideology of the bourgeoisie. In countries where revisionism is in power, where the revisionists, while not making revolution themselves, do not allow others to make revolution, the revisionist writers, who are anti-Marxist-Leninist, too, can only produce works that are decadent, languishing, empty and reactionary, works that demoralize readers and pave the way for the restoration of capitalism.

Of course, the existence of a rich and colourful social life is only the objective condition under which fine works may be produced. Writers must exert subjective efforts to produce fine works; without such efforts,

without painstaking work, fine works will still not be produced. The production of a fine work of art is a process of arduous, creative work, a process in which our writers go deep into life, familiarize themselves with it, and steadily elevate their ideological and artistic levels. A play, in particular, if it is to win popularity among the broad masses, if it is to become a fine play liked by the masses, must be continuously revised, polished and improved to perfection by absorbing the opinions of the audience on a wide scale during the course of staging.

All the items presented at the East China Modern Drama Festival have been repeatedly revised and polished, and they will continue to be revised, polished and perfected to form a permanent part of our repertoire. Some people, however, in dealing with certain roughnesses in socialist plays — roughnesses which are inevitable at the start as in the case of anything new — instead of taking an attitude of giving warm support and positive help, go in for fault-finding and making difficulties, nagging and pointing an accusing finger, leaving the strong impression that they are concentrating attacks on one flaw while ignoring other good qualities. Their attitude is actually one of saying “no” to plays on revolutionary, contemporary themes. Obviously, this is an incorrect attitude. Can plays on contemporary themes be criticized? Yes, they can be criticized. Not only that, criticism is indispensable for making plays on contemporary themes a success. But what is needed is constructive, well-intentioned criticism, not ill-intentioned, destructive criticism. As long as the attitude in criticizing is right, there is no need to worry even if the criticism itself is wrong. We admit that not a few plays with contemporary themes are very rough and

need to be improved. This is something we must attend to in real earnest if we are to develop our socialist theatre and make it flourish. We are also firmly opposed to stereotyped plays written to a formula and produced in a hurry because they compromise the reputation of socialist plays and are not welcomed by the masses. Here, one point must be made quite clear: the elevation we are referring to is elevation on the basis of popularization, elevation in the direction of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, of serving socialism, not the kind of "elevation" that is divorced from the workers, peasants and soldiers, not the kind of "elevation" that runs counter to the line of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, of serving socialism.

Our theatrical workers must thoroughly remould their ideology and for a long period of time go deep into the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers if they wish to write and stage more and better socialist plays. Why are there people who fail to produce anything in spite of the rich, colourful, vivid living reality they are faced with? The main reason is that they have not solved these two fundamental problems or have not done so well. Why are there people who are keen on promoting and writing capitalist, feudal plays but are lukewarm in promoting and writing socialist plays? Why are there some actors or actresses who very much regret not having played a role in a foreign classic play, but who do not feel sorry because they have not acted in plays reflecting the real life and struggles of today? This shows that something is wrong with their stand and attitude, something is wrong with their thinking and sentiments, and that capitalist, feudal ideas must have a very strong influence on them. People with different sentiments and different ways of

thinking have different likes and dislikes. If someone does not remould his ideology but lets old ideas clog his mind, then, it is as if he has a cold, is colour-blind and deaf: he cannot properly smell, see, or hear the many new things that exist, nor will he be able to write plays depicting the new men, new things, new thoughts, new moralities of socialism, nor will he be able to stage them well. Some of our theatrical workers, like many comrades in other professions, have *not* really gone deep into life, into the struggle, and hold aloof from the masses and reality. So it is really the old things and not new things, or only new things in the abstract, and not new things in the concrete, that occupy their minds. If this is so, it is impossible for them to remould themselves successfully or produce good works of art, no matter how resolved they are to do so. Therefore, we must go deep among the masses, into the heat of the struggle, only thus can we change our stand, attitude, ideas and feelings thoroughly and completely break away from the survivals of capitalism and feudalism. By doing this, an artist becomes mentally more active, widens his field of vision and broadens his knowledge; in this way he will find many subjects for his writing and be confident that he can produce good works of art. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

China's revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and wholeheartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source, in order to observe, experience, study and analyse all the dif-

ferent kinds of people, all the classes, all the masses, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle, all the raw materials of literature and art. Only then can they proceed to creative work.¹

All of us theatrical workers must act in accordance with this instruction given us by Comrade Mao Tse-tung.

To produce more and better socialist plays our theatrical workers must also be courageous enough to break away wholly from all out-moded artistic concepts; they must be daring in shattering the artistic confines of the capitalist and feudal classes. So as to reflect fully the rich, colourful and vivid life of the era of socialism, to give profound expression to the thoughts and feelings of the workers, peasants and soldiers in this era and create lively images of the advanced people of this era, it is necessary to shatter the restrictions of the banal art, that does not cater to present-day needs. Some of our theatrical workers, long under the influence of artistic concepts of the capitalist and feudal classes, often confine themselves within certain set frames of artistic creation and failing to get out of these frames, have become a conservative force acting against the renewal of art. Marx and Engels said in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."² If we are to develop socialist plays and carry out theatrical reform, we must most resolutely make a break with the political and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

² Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1958, Vol. I, p. 53.

artistic ideas of the capitalist and feudal classes handed down from the past and truly build up the political and artistic ideas of the proletariat.

This, of course, should not be understood as a rejection of the fine artistic and literary heritage of the past, both Chinese and foreign. We should take over from that heritage all that is good, be it Chinese or foreign. The point is that a correct attitude should be adopted in so doing. We are not nihilists towards history, nor do we prostrate ourselves before the heritage of the past. Our attitude towards that heritage is to take it over in a critical way. Only so can we create completely new things that are our own. Lenin said:

Marxism has won itself its world historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because it has by no means discarded the most valuable conquests of the epoch of the bourgeoisie, but, on the contrary, mastered and worked over all that was valuable in more than two thousand years of development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this same direction, inspired by the practical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the last stage of its struggle against all exploitation, can be acknowledged as the development of a truly proletarian culture.¹

Comrade Mao Tse-tung also pointed out:

... we can benefit only if we treat these foreign materials as we do our food, which should be chewed in the mouth, submitted to the working of the stomach

¹ V. I. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture" [written in 1920], *Collected Works*, 4th Russian ed., Moscow, Vol. 31, p. 292.

and intestines, mixed with saliva, gastric juices and intestinal secretions, and then separated into nutriment to be absorbed and waste matter to be discarded; we should never swallow anything whole or absorb it uncritically.¹

He further said:

We must take over all the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage, critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as examples when we create works out of the literary and artistic raw materials in the life of the people in our own time and place. . . . But taking over legacies and using them as examples must never replace our own creative work; nothing can do that.²

That is to say, we should critically take over fine literary legacies, and do so for the purpose of using them as examples when we create works out of the actual life and struggles of the socialist era; we should not swallow anything raw or accept it indiscriminately *in toto*, still less should we use it to replace our own creative work. It should be admitted that the histories of China and other lands know many fine literary and artistic works such as those of the 18th and 19th centuries which, by exposing the evils of feudalism and capitalism, acquired significance for their historical times. But we must be aware that these are legacies from the eras of feudalism and capitalism and that in their basic ideas they propagate the ideology of the feudal classes including their

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *On New Democracy*, p. 64.

² Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, p. 19.

concepts of morality as well as the individualism, democracy and humanism of the bourgeoisie. All these are diametrically opposed to the socialist ideology of the proletariat and we must effect a most radical and thoroughgoing rupture with them. We should critically analyse the whole literary and artistic heritage, the theatre included, and the greater their influence, the more exhaustively we should criticize them. Only in this way can they be made useful to socialism and the people of today. However, some of our people have praised the literary and artistic works of the 18th and 19th centuries to the skies, and prostrated themselves before them. They don't want to analyse and criticize them. Such a blind cult of this heritage means, in practice, to propagate feudal and capitalist ideas under the pretext of taking over the heritage of the past.

Insofar as artistic forms are concerned, some fine classical works of literature and art have their unique features, and the traditional theatrical arts, too, have a set of stage conventions evolved over a long period of time. Under appropriate circumstances it is both necessary and possible — after efforts are made — to utilize and reform these old forms in order to express a new content. But form and content are closely interrelated; a new content always requires a new form of expression. Old forms utilized and reformed to carry a new content are no longer purely old forms; in a certain sense and for all practical purposes they can be described as a kind of new form. The conventions of traditional plays are suited to the portrayal of the ancients. Without proper reform they cannot satisfactorily depict the new people of today. To portray the workers, peasants and soldiers of today on the stage requires the introduction of their images,

their language, manners and actions, that is, the introduction of new forms of expression which can hardly be found in the artistic and literary works or the theatrical arts of the past. After all, when portraying heroes from among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers on the stage we cannot present their language, actions, style, etc., in such a way that they take on airs and graces and become affected and ostentatious like the feudal and capitalist classes! A change of content necessarily demands a break-through in the forms of expression. Certain artistic skills taken over from the past can, when conscientiously reformed, be used to portray our contemporaries; this is an aspect of things which we should not overlook. The main aspect, however, should be the extraction from actual life of artistic forms suited to the portrayal of our contemporaries. The images, language, manners and actions of workers, peasants and soldiers can, when drawn from actual life and artistically refined and polished, become very good and beautiful artistic forms. This means that theatrical workers will eventually find new forms suited to the representation of socialist life as a result of integrating themselves more closely with the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, through extensive artistic practice in staging plays and operas on contemporary themes depicting these masses and through a process of prolonged exploration and accumulation of experience. These new forms will inevitably have a more strongly marked national and mass character. Some of our people, however, are overawed by the present boundaries of their art and dare not go one step beyond those boundaries. They lack the courage to make a break-through and introduce innovations. What they have been engaged in is merely uncritical

transplanting and copying. Comrade Mao Tse-tung already cautioned us a long time ago: "Uncritical transplantation or copying from the ancients and the foreigners is the most sterile and harmful dogmatism in literature and art."¹ In all our theatrical arts, with regard to both their form and content, we should weed through the old to let the new emerge — weed out the old i.e., feudalism and capitalism, and let the new, i.e., socialism and communism, emerge. Failing this, these arts will not only disqualify themselves politically, but will stop growing artistically; in the end they will inevitably be swept aside by the times and discarded by the masses.

All in all, we must believe that there is no ancient whose attainments cannot be excelled and that those who come after are capable of making ever greater achievements. We should not be complacent with regard to whatever has been left us; we should not eulogize the old and disparage the present; we should not blindly believe in the past. This applies to the sciences as well as to the theatrical arts, and, indeed, to every branch of our activities. However, this by no means signifies that we shall not encounter difficulties as we advance, and that the growth of our socialist theatre will all be plain sailing. The building of our socialist theatrical arts will be a protracted and arduous task. Our socialist theatre will have to go through a process of developing and perfecting itself. Both feudal and capitalist cultures and arts came into being and grew up over a long period of time. China's feudal culture and arts had a history of vicissitudes lasting for several thousand years. The de-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

velopment of capitalist culture and arts in the Western European countries, with the "Renaissance" as its inception, also took several hundred years. In our country, socialist culture and arts have a short history of just fifteen years, and our socialist theatrical arts are after all just a budding sprout. The creation of a socialist theatre is in itself a great and profound revolution. To put our socialist theatre on a firm basis and completely edge off from the stage those plays which disseminate feudal and capitalist poison will require concerted, protracted and arduous efforts and struggles on the part of our script writers, directors, actors, actresses and other theatrical workers. When faced with difficulties, we must not lose heart or fear to forge ahead. As long as we follow a correct direction, make unceasing efforts and continuously enhance the ideological and artistic level of our socialist theatre, we shall be able to bring into being a theatre which will measure up to this great era of ours and enrich the stage with a matchless flourishing of artistic flowers.

IV

**HOLD STILL HIGHER THE RED BANNER OF
MAO TSE-TUNG'S THINKING ON ART AND LITERATURE;
STRIVE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND
FLOURISHING OF A SOCIALIST THEATRE**

The class struggle, both at home and internationally, will exist throughout the entire period of socialism and will be protracted, complicated and tortuous. Art and literature is a weapon in the class struggle, and a barometer of the times. The class struggle is inevitably re-

flected in art and literature. The question of whether or not our art and literature should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and socialism, represents a serious and protracted class as well as ideological struggle on the front of art and literature. In this struggle, if proletarian ideology does not take over the hegemony, revisionist ideas will advance unchecked and pave the way for the restoration of capitalism; if socialist drama does not occupy the stage, capitalist and feudal drama will take it over and make it an encumbrance to the socialist revolution and socialist construction. We must always bear in mind the fact that at present there still exists the struggle between two classes and two paths, and that bourgeois and feudal ideologies still exist. We should not for a single moment forget the class struggle. All our revolutionary theatrical workers and workers in the field of art and literature must hold still higher the red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature, make it still more clearly visible for all to see and strive to build a socialist theatre, art and literature. All workers in the theatrical, art and literary fields must conscientiously study Mao Tse-tung's thinking, study his views on art and literature, seriously, repeatedly and with a determination to master them, so as to raise their level of cognition and remould their ideology, so as to ensure that our socialist theatre, art and literature will advance with firmer, bolder strides along the path charted by Comrade Mao Tse-tung.

If the line of art and literature set forth by Comrade Mao Tse-tung is to be firmly adhered to, the Party's policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and weeding through the old to let the new emerge" must be correctly carried out. This is a basic policy guiding the re-

form and development of our theatrical art. Practice has shown that this policy is completely correct. It was put forward by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in accordance with the line of art and literature serving the workers, peasants and soldiers; it is also to make art and literature serve the workers, peasants and soldiers still better. This is a policy that helps to develop socialist art and literature in our country, and bring it to a flourishing state. It is definitely not a policy that protects feudal and capitalist art and literature and should never be utilized for the development of things which are feudal or capitalist. We are for the free development and contention of different themes, different styles and different schools of art along the socialist line. But we shall never tolerate works that speak for capitalism and feudalism.

To advance our socialist theatre and make it flourish, it is necessary to organize and step up the building of the ranks of our revolutionary theatrical workers; that is, bring up a body of theatrical, art and literary workers who are capable of correctly implementing Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature and who are politically sound and professionally expert. Theatrical, art and literary workers, including playwrights, directors, actors, musicians and decor artists, should first of all make up their minds to become staunch proletarian fighters and work to revolutionize themselves continuously. The question of revolutionizing the ranks of our theatrical workers is one of paramount importance. It must be urgently solved. Revolutionization means to become truly proletarianized and communist, to equip our minds with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thinking. As far as our theatrical workers are concerned, however, quite a number of people have not yet completed their socialist

ideological remoulding and have still not acquired many proletarian ideas. On the contrary, some of them are still seriously infected with bourgeois and even feudal ideas, and yet they are appearing on the stage and making propaganda every day and have a very great influence on the masses. Hence the question arises: in exactly what image should they transform the world: the proletarian image, the socialist image, or the image of the capitalist and the feudal classes? Chairman Mao Tse-tung pointed out:

Intellectuals of petty-bourgeois origin always stubbornly try in all sorts of ways, including literary and artistic ways, to project themselves and spread their views, and they want the Party and the world to be remoulded in their own image. In the circumstances it is our duty to jolt these "comrades" and tell them sharply: "That won't work! The proletariat cannot accommodate itself to you; to yield to you would actually be to yield to the big landlord class and the big bourgeoisie and to run the risk of undermining our Party and our country." Whom then must we yield to? We can mould the Party and the world only in the image of the proletarian vanguard.¹

This statement of Comrade Mao Tse-tung is of extremely deep educational significance. The educator himself must first of all be educated. If we do not earnestly remould our bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, and firmly uphold proletarian revolutionary ideology, it will be impossible for us to achieve revolutionization and we cannot possibly create a socialist dramatic art. That is why all

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

revolutionary theatrical workers must plunge themselves into the surging rush of life and the heat of the struggle and identify themselves with the workers, peasants and soldiers of the era of socialist revolution and construction, remould their standpoint, viewpoint, ideas and feelings from top to bottom, rid themselves of all vestiges of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois individualism, liberalism and ideas of seeking personal gain, completely break with all outworn concepts and build up a proletarian world outlook. Only by so doing can we transform ourselves into staunch art and literary fighters for the proletariat, both in name and fact. Whether or not our theatrical workers can really become one with the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers is an important criterion determining whether or not they can truly become artistic and literary fighters for the proletariat. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

In the final analysis, the dividing line between revolutionary and non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary intellectuals is whether or not they are willing to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants and actually do so.¹

This is also applicable to the case of our theatrical and art and literary workers. As some of these came from the old society, or from families of the exploiting classes, or received a bourgeois education, they must surely be contaminated with some residual poison from capitalism and feudalism. As to some of our younger comrades, they have not tasted the sufferings of class exploitation

¹Mao Tse-tung, "The May 4th Movement", *Selected Works*, Vol. II.

and class oppression and they lack tempering in the class struggle as well as personal experience in such struggle. On top of this, they have not been eating, living and labouring constantly and as they should together with the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. That is why there always exists a by no means negligible gap between them and the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers in ideology and sentiment. They must know themselves, face up to their own weaknesses, ceaselessly remould themselves, temper themselves, improve themselves, and turn their ideology and sentiments utterly and completely on to the side of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. Only by so doing, can they truly transform themselves into artistic and literary fighters for the proletariat. Only by so doing, can they really come to love socialism ardently, portray socialist workers, peasants and soldiers wholeheartedly, praise our socialist heroes warmly, and so create works of a high ideological and artistic level.

In strengthening the ranks of theatrical workers attention must be paid to the building of a force of script writers. Playwriting is a key question in advancing the socialist theatre and making it blossom. Without scripts the socialist theatre cannot be developed speedily. The leading organs in theatrical work should take playwriting as their foremost task. In addition to training up directors, actors and theatrical workers of all kinds, an efficient contingent of playwrights must be fostered in all parts of the country. Professional playwrights should be aware of their great responsibilities, consciously go deep into life and do their utmost to produce plays. At the same time special attention should be paid to fostering the ranks of spare-time theatrical workers, discovering

and assisting amateur script writers, so that both professional and spare-time playwriting can be developed. Spare-time playwrights are scattered on various fronts, deep in the midst of actual struggles. There are many of them and they have great potentialities. So long as we carefully help them and cultivate them, they will become a force the importance of which cannot be overlooked.

The ranks of our theatrical workers consist of all writers, artists and dramatists who are willing to serve socialism and the workers, peasants and soldiers. We must unite with them, warmly assist them to make progress, and help them to obtain adequate conditions for doing creative work. It is our conviction that in our socialist society, as a result of tempering themselves in revolutionary struggles and artistic practice the great majority of artists and writers who want to go ahead can make the contribution that is expected of them to our motherland's socialist revolution and socialist construction, to our socialist theatre, literature and art.

The building of our revolutionary theatre, art and literature and the building of the ranks of revolutionary theatrical, artistic and literary workers demand that we seriously wage ideological struggles in artistic and literary circles. One method of conducting ideological struggles is to strengthen art and literary criticism. We must improve our art and literary criticism to guide and promote creative writing and stage performances, sum up our experience and wage ideological struggles in the field of art and literature. We must develop revolutionary art and literary criticism, energetically promote, foster and encourage all healthy, progressive and revolutionary art and literature and repudiate all that is bad, backward and

reactionary. This is indispensable to the development and prosperity of our socialist theatre. The East China Modern Drama Festival through the plays it staged provides a lively way of crystallizing and swapping experience, helping to increase our knowledge and understanding, to introduce the campaign of "comparing with, learning from, catching up with the advanced and helping those lagging behind" into the sphere of the theatre and fostering mass art and literary criticism. Facts show that this is quite a good method of helping the socialist theatre develop and thrive, and it should be properly used in the future.

The strengthening of the Party's leadership in the dramatic arts is a basic condition for the development and flourishing of socialist drama. Party committees at all levels must strengthen their leadership in theatrical work, and strengthen ideological and political work among the ranks of theatrical workers. They should conscientiously carry out socialist transformation on the theatrical front and the ideological remoulding of theatrical workers, and treat these as an important task of the socialist revolution. This aspect of the socialist revolution should never be relaxed. In the past there were people who denied the importance of Party leadership under the pretext of "opposing intervention by the leadership in creative writing". This attitude is completely wrong and must be resolutely refuted. The modern revisionists were especially vicious when attacking our Party's leadership in art and literature. With ulterior motives, they alleged that our plays on modern themes "were all written under the direct leadership and with the direct participation of the Party organizations" and that "it would be better to say that these plays were

written by the Party committees than to say that they were written by certain playwrights. . . ." As a matter of fact they attacked us because they vainly hoped to make our creative writing deviate from the leadership of our Marxist-Leninist party and accept instead the leadership of their revisionist party, and to make it depart from the Marxist-Leninist path and embark on their revisionist path. If we had been fooled, our theatre, literature and art would inevitably have become a tool for the restoration of capitalism and our theatrical, art and literary workers would have slipped down into the revisionist quagmire. Therefore we must be vigilant and carry the socialist revolution on the theatrical, art and literary front through to the end. Our theatre, art and literature are a weapon for revolutionary struggles and a powerful weapon for thwarting and gradually liquidating capitalist and feudal influence and for preventing revisionist corrosion. Our theatre, art and literature must be held firmly in the hands of the Party and be put under the firm leadership of the Party. If we are to strengthen Party leadership, the Party then will have to "intervene" in creative works which are detrimental to socialism and the people, and "destroy" the creative moods for such works. Comrade Mao Tse-tung put it well when he said:

Then does Marxism not destroy the creative mood? Yes, it does. It definitely destroys creative moods that are feudal, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, liberalistic, individualist, nihilist, art-for-art's sake, aristocratic, decadent or pessimistic, and every other creative mood that is alien to the masses of the people and to the proletariat. So far as proletarian writers and artists are concerned, should not these kinds of creative moods be

destroyed? I think they should; they should be utterly destroyed. And while they are being destroyed, something new can be constructed.¹

By strengthening Party leadership we mean that the Party must provide correct guidance in creative work, and not, as the revisionists alleged, monopolize creative work itself. As a matter of fact, in this great socialist era today the ideological level and the knowledge of the individual artist and writer are after all limited. The Party leadership, on the other hand, feels the pulse of the times, and is well aware of the revolutionary trends. Far from hampering the initiative and creativeness of artists and writers when it gives them assistance politically, ideologically and in selecting subjects and themes it will help them raise their ideological level and orientate them. Actually it is only by abiding by the line charted by the Party, fully absorbing the rich mass experience of struggle and life, earnestly listening to the views and demands of the masses that theatrical workers can possibly produce plays that successfully reflect socialist life and struggle.

The present international and domestic situation is excellent. Theatrical, art and literary workers must catch up with the march of the times, step up the building and the development of the socialist new theatre, new art and new literature. Our revolutionary theatre, art and literature must not only serve the Chinese revolution, but the world's revolutionary people and take up the tasks called for by proletarian internationalism. Our theatrical, art and literary workers should without ex-

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, p. 37.

ception cultivate revolutionary aims and cherish lofty ideals, hold aloft the red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on art and literature, effectively using their weapons — the theatre, art and literature, to support and inspire the Chinese people as well as the peoples of the whole world in their struggle against imperialism, the reactionaries of all countries and modern revisionism and strive for the complete realization of communism!

SPEECH AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FESTIVAL OF PEKING OPERA ON CONTEMPORARY THEMES

(June 5, 1964)

LU TING-YI

Comrades, friends,

The 1964 Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes opens today. This is the first time so large a festival of Peking opera on contemporary themes has been held. This is an event of revolutionary significance for both Peking opera and the rest of China's traditional operas. I wish to express my warm congratulations on the opening of the festival. I greet the theatrical workers from the various parts of the country who are taking part in it and all the comrades who have helped to organize it. I hope that, by watching the performances, learning from each other and exchanging and summing up our experience, we will make the revolutionary flower of Peking opera on contemporary themes bloom still more abundantly.

Socialist art and literature must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. Our theatrical art should follow the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and weeding through the old to let the new emerge". This policy is well known to all. Since liberation, great progress has also

been made in Peking opera circles. The content of Peking opera has become healthier, and the technique and skill of its performers have greatly improved. Most Peking opera artists and workers have raised their level of political understanding, are conscientiously and industriously serving the masses and the country, and thus enjoy high prestige both at home and abroad. Under the guidance and teaching of the older generation of Peking opera artists, a new generation has emerged.

A socialist society is a society in which there is class struggle. This is reflected in Peking opera as in other cultural fields. The past fifteen years have witnessed ups and downs in Peking opera. All of us can remember that when the bourgeoisie launched a frenzied attack in 1957, there were some people who dug out and staged a number of harmful operas. This was, in fact, part of the wild attack launched by the bourgeoisie and the feudal forces against socialism. Recently, when our country suffered three consecutive years of natural calamities, when the modern revisionists headed by Khrushchov withdrew experts and tore up contracts, when the Indian reactionaries launched armed provocations on our southwest border, when the Chiang Kai-shek bandits under the wing of U.S. imperialism clamoured about "attacking the mainland", when the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and bourgeois Rightists seized the opportunity to carry on their activities in a big way, there again appeared a host of ghost operas and other harmful operas on the Peking opera stage. This happened in Peking and also in other cities. With ghost operas appearing in the cities, the villages, too, had them. Ghost operas helped feudal superstitions to raise their ugly heads. This was again an unbridled attack against socialism by the bourgeoisie and the feudal forces.

At that time there were some people in theatrical circles who could not see the situation very clearly. They were fooled by the talk of "no harm in having ghosts". Now, they should learn the lesson from this and become more politically aware.

Comrades and friends, you all know that today our country's economy has made an all-round turn for the better. How could we overcome our difficulties so quickly? It is because we realized very early that in a socialist society class struggle still exists; and by firmly relying on the working class, the poor and lower-middle peasants, and by uniting with all those forces which supported and were for socialism, we waged a resolute struggle on all fronts. The book *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, written by Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1957, provides the theoretical basis to guide us in understanding the situation in our country and in waging struggles correctly. We have overcome our difficulties by heeding the words of Chairman Mao in our work.

Chairman Mao teaches us that a socialist society is not "a state of the whole people", not a society without classes, without class struggles. In a socialist society there are still contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production, and between the superstructure and the economic base, there is still class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. These contradictions are of two different types: contradictions among the people, and contradictions between the enemy and us, but mostly they are of the former type. One must distinguish between the natures of these two types of contradictions and they must be resolved in different ways. Class struggle in a socialist society rises and falls, and sometimes becomes very sharp. The development from so-

cialism to communism takes up a very long historical period. And throughout this period there exists the danger of reverting back to capitalism.

The modern revisionists are paving the way for the restoration of capitalism, which is the "peaceful evolution" the U.S. imperialists have pinned their hopes on. The emergence of the modern revisionists has made the imperialists beside themselves with joy. They even hope that some day in China too a "peaceful evolution" will take place. The bourgeois Rightists in our country, echoing the imperialists and the modern revisionists, have said that "poverty causes change, change opens the way, the way leads to wealth, and wealth leads to revisionism". They use this incantation to try and make the people believe that the restoration of capitalism in our country will certainly take place. In view of this we should take a firm stand and work hard to guarantee that revisionism shall not appear in succeeding generations, and that capitalism shall never be reinstated in China.

Theatrical art is part of the superstructure. And the superstructure must conform to the economic base. Socialist theatrical art must serve the socialist revolution and socialist construction. The greatest and most glorious task of revolutionary theatrical artists and workers is to educate the present generation and the coming generations, too, to be revolutionaries for ever, who will never change their revolutionary outlook, and who will struggle to the end against the imperialists and their lackeys, against the bourgeoisie and the feudal forces, against modern revisionism and modern dogmatism, and for the realization of the lofty ideal of communism.

Clearly, if Peking opera themes are restricted to stories about emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and

beauties, Peking opera will not be able to conform to the socialist economic base. In that case, serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and letting a hundred flowers blossom and weeding through the old to let the new emerge would then become just empty talk.

We are never against Peking opera staging good traditional plays such as those adapted from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Heroes of the Marshes*, *Generals of the Yang Family*, and others. Nor do we oppose the staging of good mythological plays such as *Uproar in Heaven*, or *Monkey Sun Wu-kung Defeats the White-Bone Ghost*. We also advocate new historical plays which are written from a historical materialist point of view and have educational significance, particularly those with themes from modern history since the Opium War. But these alone are not enough. Peking opera needs a new revolutionary flower, that is, plays on such contemporary themes as the revolutionary struggles since the May 4th Movement, class struggle and production and construction since the liberation. And this is why the current festival is a very good beginning, and something to rejoice over. Peking opera artists and workers learning from the People's Liberation Army, the exemplary soldier Lei Feng, the spirit of the Taching oil workers and Tachai farmers, have made great efforts, have both made use of and developed the conventions of Peking opera, and broken through them, and have thus accomplished what many considered impossible — they have introduced living people of today to the Peking opera stage. Comrades and friends, I wish again to thank you for your diligent efforts.

Will anyone oppose such a good thing? Will there again be ups and downs in Peking opera after this? There will

certainly be people who will oppose this. And there will certainly be ups and downs, because in the last analysis this is a matter of class struggle.

Now the imperialists and modern revisionists have begun to put their curses on Peking operas with modern themes. They do this because of their class instinct even without having seen a single Peking opera of this type. We are glad of their curses because it shows that we are on the right track. The fact that we follow this path hurts the imperialists and modern revisionists. If not, why should they want to curse it and swear at us? The crux of the matter is that they hope our art will degenerate just like theirs. But it turns out that our art is developing along a healthy, revolutionary path. China is a country of 650 million people, and contains one-fourth of the world's population. So it can be imagined how dreadful it is to the imperialist and revisionist gentlemen to see socialist, revolutionary art and literature flourish in such a populous country. I suggest that the Ministry of Culture compile and publish a collection of those articles in which the imperialists and modern revisionists lay their curses upon modern theme Peking operas, and distribute it to everyone taking part in this festival. Let everyone have a chance to see them. Then we will know that our work is not only significant to our own country, but is also of international significance.

The imperialists and modern revisionists say that Peking operas with modern themes are "terrible". We say just the opposite: "They are fine." Such operas inspire their audiences with revolutionary spirit; that is their first good point. By presenting such plays, Peking opera artists have taken another step forward in remoulding their outlook. They are learning from and identifying

themselves with the workers, peasants, and soldiers. That is the second good point. The new plays have won great popularity and received a warm welcome among the people when staged in various parts of the country. That is the third good point. In short, they are very good.

Peking opera actors who have taken part in these modern theme operas have learnt from their own experience that it is necessary for them to go out among the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and learn from them their noble qualities, and know what they like and what they are against. This is a great revolutionary transformation in the Peking opera world. Peking opera artists and workers, whether of the older or the younger generation, ought, in full self-consciousness, to make themselves revolutionaries, and always be revolutionary. They should temper themselves in the tide of class struggle, stand firm, never surrender to the enemy, never be revisionists, and never desert the revolution. I hope that all Peking opera workers, from the playwrights and directors to the rank-and-file personnel, from those who play main roles to those who take supporting roles, will respond warmly to the call of the Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung and go out among the workers, peasants, and soldiers, plunge themselves in the class struggle and the struggle for production to remould themselves and do their work in the socialist theatre well and so make their contribution to the great cause of socialism.

There is a very bright future for Peking operas with modern themes. The repertoire at the moment may not be so large. Some of the plays are fairly mature, others may need polishing. From now on festivals like this may be held once every few years. By a process of gradual accumulation and improvement, we hope that there will,

in time, be hundreds of excellent plays on the repertoire of Peking opera with modern themes in various parts of the country. Since we understand the significance of our work and know the method of approach, we are sure to succeed, and achieve greater successes in the future.

I wish this festival success.

I wish comrades and friends good health.

A GREAT REVOLUTION ON THE CULTURAL FRONT

(*Hongqi* Editorial, No. 12, 1964)

The reform of Peking opera is a major event. It is not only a cultural revolution but also a social revolution. The reform which began with the current festival of revolutionary Peking opera on contemporary themes held in Peking and the further revolutionary measures that will follow in drama, *chuyi* balladry, film, literature, music, dancing, fine arts and other literary and art fields, are an important component of China's socialist revolution in the field of culture and ideology.

Many revolutionary plays on contemporary themes have been performed in the current festival. Their ideological content is generally good, some very good. They create many brilliant images of heroic people, and make certain innovations in the acting, thus bringing into full play the remarkable traits of Peking opera. In order to successfully stage revolutionary operas on contemporary themes, a number of actors have exerted great effort in going among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers; many of them are getting ready to do so. All this shows that under the brilliant guidance of Mao Tse-tung's ideas on literature and art, revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes have taken a first step forward in educating and influencing their audiences with social-

ist and communist ideas. We should congratulate Peking opera circles for their successes.

As early as 1942, Comrade Mao Tse-tung already pointed out: "This question of 'for whom?' is fundamental; it is a question of principle." He also said: ". . . all our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers. . . ." ¹ Serving the workers, peasants and soldiers is a direction from which we will never swerve. For socialist literature and art to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers they are required to serve the socialist revolution and socialist construction and to struggle for the elimination of the exploiting classes and their ideological influence. In the field of literature and art, theatrical art is one of the art forms which has a particular mass character. Peking operas have a vast number of devotees and audiences. Therefore, like all other literary and art forms, what kinds of ideology are to be used to educate the masses and what sentiments are to be aroused to influence them is a vital question of principle for Peking opera.

The socialist system shows an incomparable superiority over all systems of exploitation in history. It abolishes private ownership and establishes public ownership of the means of production, eliminates the system of exploitation of man by man and establishes the dictatorship of the proletariat; under the socialist system the people become masters of the state. However, a socialist society is still a society with classes and class struggle. In the entire historical period from socialism to communism,

¹ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1962, p. 15 and p. 23.

there still exists the struggle between two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as well as the struggle between two roads, the road of socialism and the road of capitalism. The general law of history is that the proletariat will eventually triumph over the bourgeoisie and socialism will finally defeat capitalism and enter communism. Nevertheless, during the historical stage of socialism, class struggle has its ups and downs and the danger of capitalist restoration exists. Capitalist restoration may take the form of violence or the form of "peaceful evolution" or a combination of the two. Besides using violence, the imperialists, the landlords and the bourgeoisie often attempt to resort to a "sugar-coated poison" policy in the hope that socialism may gradually and imperceptibly degenerate into capitalism through revisionism. To this end, they always try every possible way to wrest the ideological position from the proletariat so as to spread the influence of reactionary political ideas and the bourgeois way of life, to poison and whittle away the Communists, the proletariat and other revolutionary people and to prepare conditions and pave the way ideologically for a counter-revolutionary restoration.

This is a serious class struggle.

In this struggle literature and art are an important position to be contended for, and the theatre, which is an important branch of literature and art, is no exception. From the literature and art of modern revisionism represented by Khrushchov, its theatre included, we have already seen how the revisionists lavishly disseminate the bourgeois theory of human nature, humanitarianism, pacifism and so on and so forth, how they do their utmost to oppose revolution, attack the dictatorship of the prole-

tariat and besmirch the socialist system; they bring in the rotten and degenerated "novel" art of U.S. imperialism, give publicity to the American way of life and poison the masses in the socialist countries, particularly the younger generation, with all sorts of things that are decadent, debauched and reactionary so as to corrupt them mentally and morally and sap their will power. Modern revisionist literature and art are such that they extinguish and blunt the revolutionary will of the masses, meet the needs of imperialism, serve the imperialist policy of "peaceful evolution" and the cause of restoring capitalism.

Therefore, in a socialist society, which class has seized the ideological position of literature and art and what kind of ideology they propagate not only involves the question of whether or not literature and art are themselves revolutionary in nature, but the question of whether or not they have a future for development. Moreover, they also involve the question of whether or not socialist political institutions and their economic base can be consolidated, whether or not they can develop and whether they will degenerate. If literature and art in our socialist society, instead of propagating the proletarian ideology, instead of warmheartedly bringing out the revolutionary spirit of the workers, peasants and soldiers, and the noble quality of the heroes in the new era, disseminate capitalist and feudal ideas, then they are not socialist literature and art at all. Because the reactionary and decadent ideas they propagate seriously corrupt the masses, especially our younger generation, they cannot but become a boon to the capitalist and feudal forces. There is not the slightest doubt that we absolutely

cannot tolerate such literature and art that break from socialism and oppose socialism.

With the development of the socialist revolution and socialist construction, it is necessary to further deepen the socialist revolution in the political and ideological fields. It is also necessary for the theatre, as a component part of the superstructure, accordingly to make as its primary task fostering proletarian ideology and eliminating bourgeois ideology, propagating socialism and communism, and serving socialism directly. This makes it imperative for the art of Peking opera to carry out reforms according to the policy of "weeding through the old to let the new emerge". What is meant by "weeding through the old to let the new emerge"? It means to weed through the old, that is, capitalism and feudalism, to let the new, that is, socialism and communism, emerge. Not only should there be new contents compatible with the era of socialism, but also new forms compatible with the era of socialism. Revolutionary operas on contemporary themes depicting contemporary life of struggle with new creations both in form and content must have the main place on the Peking opera stage; they must have the main place on the stages of other theatrical arts as well. Only in this way can our theatre and stage, which is an important ideological position, really become an ideological position of the proletariat.

Since time is on the march, there must be corresponding changes in the content of literature and art. It is inconceivable that a stage dominated by emperors and kings, generals and prime ministers, talented scholars and beauties can serve the militant task of "fostering proletarian ideology and eliminating bourgeois ideology". Though there exist, in varying degrees, progressive ideas

in certain traditional plays, they fall far short of the needs of the masses of working people and are far from adequate in educating the people in socialist ideas. As to those bad plays containing feudal dregs, they are harmful and must be resolutely discarded. Some time ago, some people advocated the staging of a great many operas about ghosts; they patronized demons and spirits and advanced the so-called theory of "no harm in having ghosts" in apology for these ghost operas which spread feudal superstitions. This is extremely harmful, a reflection of the attacks on socialism in literature and art launched by the bourgeoisie and the feudal forces. It is very detrimental to raising people's political consciousness and to the consolidation and development of socialist institutions. Literature and art disseminating feudal and capitalist ideas can by no means serve proletarian politics and the economic base of socialism; they will only play an obstructive and destructive role.

Here, we raise a sharp question. In the struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie and in the struggle between the socialist and capitalist roads, on which side do our literature and art stand? Do they reflect the ideas and feelings of the working class, the poor and the lower-middle peasants, or do they reflect the ideas and feelings of capitalist and feudal forces? Do they serve the workers, peasants and soldiers who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, or do they serve the handful of exploiting class elements? Do they follow the Marxist-Leninist line on literature and art which Comrade Mao Tse-tung put forward years ago, or do they follow the revisionist line? It should be pointed out that, on the literary and art fronts in our country, some of our comrades have really solved this question while others

have either not or not quite solved it. China's socialist revolution and socialist construction now have a history of fifteen years; the working people in our country have created historic miracles on all fronts. Some literary and art workers, however, do not see this at all and have no enthusiasm for it; they are either simply unwilling to praise and depict that struggle or have not done it well. On the contrary, they are absorbed in capitalist and feudal culture, they still hide themselves in an "ivory tower", they stubbornly refuse to go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, and into the heat of the struggle. Their innermost soul is still a domain of the bourgeoisie; they ceaselessly and stubbornly try to express themselves in an attempt to remould the world according to their own world outlook. Among them a handful have begun to decay and degenerate. Some of them, indeed, have stood on the side of the exploiting classes from the very outset. Such a state of affairs cannot be tolerated and must be changed.

In the wake of the development of socialist revolution and socialist construction in our country, a revolutionary mass cultural movement has arisen. Revolutionary drama, revolutionary songs, revolutionary dances, revolutionary films, revolutionary poetry, revolutionary novels, and revolutionary fine arts are urgently needed. In these fields a start has already been made by the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. The masses of the people are using revolutionary literature and art to destroy reactionary literature and art. In these circumstances, what should be the attitude of our writers and artists? Some comrades are beginning to go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers to carry out the cultural revolution together with the masses of the peo-

ple. In this way, taking on a completely new aspect with buoyant vigour, they use the weapons of literature and art to reflect the life of struggle for socialism, to serve socialism, and so have been welcomed by the masses; and in winning ideological positions for socialism they have contributed their effort. This point was proved by those actors who were well received by the audiences at the present festival of revolutionary Peking opera on contemporary themes. It must be pointed out, however, that within the ranks of writers and artists as a whole, quite a number of people have still not done this. Towards such a revolutionary mass cultural movement, some people have taken the attitude of marking time, and some have even adopted the attitude of resistance. Consequently we must tell them sharply: It is necessary to carry out resolutely Comrade Mao Tse-tung's policy on literature and art, to go among the workers, peasants and soldiers, to go into the heat of the struggle, to use the weapons of literature and art to foster proletarian ideology, and eliminate bourgeois ideology, expand the positions of socialist ideology and demolish the positions of bourgeois ideology. This is a task of primary importance in carrying through to the end the socialist revolution in our country.

The most important and most crucial problem in revolutionizing literature and art is the revolutionizing of the writers and artists themselves. Comrade Mao Tse-tung teaches us:

China's revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and

wholeheartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle. . . .¹

This is the basic path all our writers and artists must take towards revolutionization.

Revolutionary writers and artists must first of all be revolutionary fighters. Without going among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, without going into the heat of the struggle, conscientiously steeling themselves, remoulding themselves, there can be no revolutionary spirit, or revolutionary sentiments, and enthusiasm for reflecting revolutionary life will be lacking; concerning literature and art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, serving socialism, serving the revolutionary people of the world, such people will not give it any thought and will not be able to make it their vital concern.

As Comrade Mao Tse-tung put it:

Works of literature and art, as ideological forms, are products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society. Revolutionary literature and art are the products of the reflection of the life of the people in the brains of revolutionary writers and artists. The life of the people is always a mine of raw materials for literature and art, materials in their natural form, materials that are crude, but most vital, rich and fundamental; they make all literature and art seem pallid by comparison; they provide literature and art with an inexhaustible source, their only source. They are the only source, for there can be no other.²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

It is obvious that only by steeling oneself in the struggles of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers can one make speedy and significant progress in one's creation and art. Only by so doing can one use literature and art as a weapon to educate and inspire millions to advance still more valiantly on various fronts in the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

In this cultural revolutionary movement, it is an extremely welcome phenomenon that revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes are beginning to be staged. Some people have asserted that performing such operas means the withering away and death of Peking opera as an art. Facts show exactly the opposite to be true: Because Peking opera has begun to be revolutionized and popularized, revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes have not only won praise from literary and art circles but are welcomed by people from all walks of life; not only the faithful audiences of Peking opera love these revolutionary operas, but those who formerly did not attend Peking operas very often have also become enthusiastic audiences. Thus, by staging revolutionary operas on contemporary themes, the art of Peking opera has gained new vitality and broad, new prospects have been opened. To be sure, no refined art can be created overnight, and revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes are no exception. We should not unreasonably expect them to attain perfection at one stroke, nor should we lightly discard some of the plays because they are as yet rather crude or because they suffer from certain minor blemishes. With regard to those which are correctly orientated politically and have a revolutionary ideological content, we should with an unbending will try to make them more mature and

gradually improve and perfect them through repeated performances and by listening to suggestions from all sides and revising them over and over. As for those successfully staged numbers with fine content, we should popularize them all the more and raise them to a still higher level on the basis of popularization in the spirit of stopping at nothing short of perfection.

The socialist cultural revolution is a great and arduous long-term task. Party organizations everywhere and departments in charge of literature and art must attach great importance to this work, give it earnest leadership and help it to go forward in a healthy manner so as to defeat and wipe out bourgeois and feudal forces thoroughly in the ideological sphere in a planned way and step by step, and enable socialist literature and art to play their great role still more effectively in the three great revolutionary movements — the class struggle, the struggle for production, and scientific experimentation.

A NEW STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEKING OPERA

—Greeting the Opening of the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes

(Renmin Ribao Editorial, June 6, 1964)

The Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes has opened. Over a score of opera troupes from nineteen provinces, cities and autonomous regions are taking part in it. The festival is a review of past achievements, and an occasion for the summing-up and exchange of experiences. It is a great event for Peking opera and the whole art of the theatre. It marks the beginning of a new stage in the development of this opera. It is an indication that Peking opera has reorientated itself to fit in with the theme of "letting the socialist new emerge" to meet the needs of the socialist economic base.

Peking opera is an important form of Chinese theatrical art. It has the largest number of opera troupes and artists and has a wide popular appeal. In the course of the socialist transformation of literature and art, the question of how to make Peking opera better serve the socialist revolution and socialist construction is therefore one of particular importance.

In theatrical art, the Communist Party has consistently followed a policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom

and weeding out the old to let the new emerge". It consists of two requirements: first, to sift and revise traditional plays and to write new historical plays of educational value from the historical materialist point of view and secondly, to ensure that theatrical art reflects the new era and the new life of the workers, peasants and soldiers and to introduce appropriate innovations into the form of presentation, to suit the change in content. Since liberation comparatively more has been done, with conspicuous success, to meet the first requirement but little has been done in respect to the second requirement and less has been done in Peking opera than in other forms of drama.

Why is it that Peking opera has all these years fallen behind other dramatic forms in this respect?

It must be admitted that Peking opera, which has developed a rather rigid style of presentation, is a more difficult medium than any other dramatic form, by which to depict contemporary life. The difficulties, however, can all be overcome. The main thing standing in the way of the reform of Peking opera is conservatism, which attempts to preserve the remnants and survivals of the old. People with conservative ideas are found both among the Peking opera artists and Peking opera lovers. They cherish this art as if it were an ancient relic that is inviolate and one that should never be used to present plays on contemporary themes, fearing that if it is used for this purpose, the art itself will be destroyed. These people are in fact trying to lock up Peking opera and its artists in an old castle, in a life out-moded, and completely deprive them of their right to reflect life's realities, and thereby prevent them from rendering better

service to socialism and to the workers, peasants and soldiers.

Must Peking opera be reformed? Can it be reformed? Does the presentation of plays on contemporary themes destroy or develop this traditional dramatic form? Forceful answers to these questions have now been given by the Peking opera artists with their practical demonstrations.

The reform of Peking opera is a demand of the times and the people, and the development of Peking opera itself calls for it. Any art which fails to meet the requirements of the ever-advancing times will gradually but inevitably lose its vitality and bring about its own extinction. There are many examples of this in the history of art. If Peking opera can only portray ancient and not modern people, only emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties of the ruling class or at most the common people of ancient times, and not the masters of the new age and the new society, who are workers, peasants and soldiers, and if the stage of Peking opera is to be perpetually dominated by the ancient and the dead, then this art can hardly be of great service to socialist politics and economy, can hardly educate the people in socialist and communist ideology. Furthermore, if it cannot express the thoughts and feelings of the working people in the new society, it will gradually but inevitably divorce itself from the people, fall into decay and become extinct. Therefore, it is only by continuous reform and by acquiring the capacity to reflect contemporary life that Peking opera will be able to open a broad avenue for its own advancement.

True, Peking opera has developed higher and more rigid conventions which, however, have not been con-

trived out of nothing. Through a gradual process they have been extracted from ancient life by Peking opera artists at different stages of history. Since Peking opera could find suitable artistic conventions to depict ancient life, why can it not find some new forms of presentation for depicting present-day life? Quite a few excellent works have already appeared on the Peking opera stage. They successfully reflect the new age and new life, create new heroes and heroines, express the thoughts and feelings of the revolutionary people, and have begun to work out on the foundation of traditional art, new forms of presentation to suit the new content.

Peking opera is more adapted to the presentation of historical themes. We must, however, realize that for various reasons, during the course of its development, it has divorced itself, over a considerable period, from life. Consequently even in the presentation of historical themes, it is more often not as spirited and full of life as other operas, and shows a tendency towards rigidity and stiffness. When Peking opera troupes perform plays dealing with contemporary themes, expressing present-day life, the artists have to come into closer contact with real life and this will help to enrich and enlarge the contents of Peking opera and, consequently, its capacity to portray life. Script-writing and performance on contemporary themes will, in turn, help to improve creative writing and acting on historical themes. Clearly this is not to destroy the tradition of Peking opera but to develop it.

The question is: How can an ancient dramatic form such as Peking opera become a new Peking opera which will produce better plays on contemporary themes? This work has only now begun and not much experience has

yet been accumulated. Peking opera artists must continue to devote strenuous efforts to seeking out and trying out many different ways. The experience already gained in the presentation of plays on contemporary themes indicates that if Peking opera is to perform these plays with success, it must combine bold reform with inherited tradition. This has two aspects: first, with actual life as a starting point, new forms of presentation must be introduced in accordance with the need to portray new life and create new people, instead of making life accommodate itself to old conventions and distorting life's realities; secondly, the special merits of Peking opera must be given attention and followed, the taste of the audience considered, those things in traditional art, which may be adopted, critically applied, and the special features of Peking opera preserved. It is only by doing all these things that success can be achieved in the creation of excellent plays, truly reflecting present-day life while still retaining the characteristics of Peking opera.

The presentation of plays on contemporary themes by Peking opera has become a popular undertaking throughout the country. This is a very good thing. The Peking opera artists should continue to go all-out and strive for the flourishing and progress of the opera on contemporary themes. An earnest and serious attitude must be taken to attain this aim and unceasing efforts should be made to raise the ideological and artistic level of these plays and no perfunctory way of doing things should be allowed. Only thus can Peking opera on contemporary themes truly establish its position and enjoy prestige among the people.

The keynote for Peking opera artists in the fulfilment of this arduous task is to make greater efforts to remould

themselves and make themselves revolutionaries. They must study Marxism-Leninism and the works of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and raise their own political and ideological level, earnestly correct their shortcoming of isolation from everyday practical life and from the masses and make a determined effort to go into the midst of, and learn from life and the masses, and remould their own thinking and feelings. Since the artists must portray and sing the praises of the new heroes and heroines on the stage, if they are not acquainted with them, do not understand them, are not one with them, and do not take part in their fiery struggle, they will be unable to gain a deep understanding of their thoughts and feelings, hence they will be unable to create their heroic images with full artistic impact. This also shows that the performance of plays on contemporary themes is an effective motivating force inspiring the Peking opera artists to go deep among the masses and remould their own thinking. Many artists have now, in varying degrees, lived among the masses and taken part in their struggle. This is enabling them to portray more vividly the spirit and character of their contemporaries, and to further revolutionize their own thinking and feelings and become one with the masses.

Peking opera on contemporary themes has achieved initial success. But this is only the first step towards its socialist transformation. In its advance, it will encounter various problems of artistic creation which must be gradually solved by continuous, earnest pursuit and practice; it will also encounter ideological obstacles—obstructions and objections from certain people under all kinds of pretexts, who under the guise of “cherishing” Peking opera and its artists, are actually putting a spoke

in the wheel of its revolutionization, a spoke which may finally bring about its extinction. This is a question of understanding, and at the same time it is a reflection of the class struggle in the realm of theatrical art. Recently both the imperialists and modern revisionists have launched wild attacks on us vilifying our plays on contemporary themes. This shows that they are afraid of the power of socialist plays and proves that we have done well and correctly. We must persist in the correct direction of Peking opera presenting plays on contemporary themes, and with unwavering confidence and courage create a new Peking opera of the socialist era.

The Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes will help the artists to clarify the direction of the development of Peking opera, raise the level of their understanding, deepen their confidence, and earnestly exchange and sum up their experience. This will greatly facilitate the creative work on contemporary themes, the further reform of Peking opera and the further revolutionization of Peking opera artists. We are confident that so long as the artists wholeheartedly carry out the Party's policy of literature and art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers as well as socialism and seriously implement the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom, weeding out the old to let the new emerge" on theatrical art, it is certain that Peking opera, which has a long tradition in China, will advance to a new flourishing and more brilliant stage and that it will show great splendour in reflecting contemporary as well as ancient life. The future of the art of Peking opera is very bright. We heartily offer our best wishes for the success of this Festival.

CARRY THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN LITERATURE AND ART THROUGH TO THE END

Cheering the Triumphant Conclusion of the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes

(Renmin Ribao Editorial, August 1, 1964)

The Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes is a great revolution in the art of Peking opera and has written a brilliant page in the history of Chinese drama. This great revolution has advanced Peking opera to a new stage, in which it serves the workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as socialism. The success of the festival is also a great achievement for the socialist revolution in China's literature and art. It will further stimulate the revolutionization of China's literature and art and help to carry this revolution through to the end.

A good many of the Peking operas on contemporary themes presented at the festival had revolutionary ideological content and were performed with superb technique and skill. These were enthusiastically welcomed and heartily approved by vast audiences, who agreed that the gains were beyond expectation. Those who did not believe Peking opera could be reformed have now lost their scepticism, and those who approved of and supported the reform before have gained greater confidence. The success of the revolutionary Peking operas on con-

temporary themes has smashed the shameless slanders of the imperialists and modern revisionists and given them a sharp slap on the face.

The socialist stage is an important battle position for socialist ideology. Whether it is to propagate feudal and bourgeois ideology or proletarian ideology is a question over which capitalism and socialism are struggling. China's socialist transformation of ownership is basically complete, but the struggle of "who will win" between socialism and capitalism over ideology, which is a part of the superstructure, has not been finally settled. The defeated reactionary classes will never submit willingly to extinction; they will invariably resort to any means to grapple with the proletariat for the theatre and for other ideological battle positions in vain attempts to consolidate and spread their influence and, consequently, regain their "lost paradise". For this reason, the question of whether Peking opera is to undergo a revolution and whether revolutionary plays on contemporary themes are to be performed becomes a sharp ideological class struggle, in which the successful presentation of revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes is of particular significance.

The current festival has made the following basic questions clear to Peking opera artists and all those who are engaged in literary and art work:

(1) Whom should Peking opera serve? Should Peking opera serve socialism, or should it serve feudalism and capitalism? Should it serve the labouring people, who make up more than 90 per cent of the population, or should it serve those old and young relics of the old society who are merely a small fraction of the population? Should it portray the masters of the new era — workers,

peasants and soldiers, or the masters of the old era — emperors, kings, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties? Should the operas staged advance the socialist revolution and socialist construction, or should they benefit feudalism and capitalism? This is the most fundamental question. The festival showed that Peking opera and all the literature and art of the proletariat can become effective weapons in the hands of the proletariat and truly serve socialism as well as the workers, peasants and soldiers only by strengthening proletarian ideological positions; thoroughly clearing away the ideological influence of the exploiting classes; working hard to reflect the new age and portray the workers, peasants and soldiers; incessantly educating the masses of the people in socialist and communist ideology; inspiring the labour enthusiasm of the masses of the working people; and strengthening their determination in the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

(2) The question of reforming the artistic form of Peking opera. Should Peking opera be reformed boldly to meet the needs of its new contents and thereby continuously enhance its power of expression, or should it just stick to its old conventions and stand still, letting itself wither away and die out? This is another fundamental question. Peking opera should have a revolutionary ideological content. The special artistic character of Peking opera should be integrated with the revolutionary content. Those who devote themselves to the reform of Peking opera have long been deeply convinced that a suitable national form must be found to present the new, socialist content, and that the traditional Peking opera cannot satisfactorily depict the new ideological content unless it is reformed. To remould a tradi-

tional art like Peking opera that has a long history and deep, strong roots among the masses, to adapt it to the new content and to give it a new lease of life is undoubtedly of great significance in the socialist transformation of China's literature and art. Rich experience was obtained in this respect at the festival. All the fine operas that were popular at it portrayed the new life and new thoughts of the socialist era, and introduced varying degrees of artistic innovation to suit the new life and new thoughts. The reforms did not break the traditions of Peking opera or damage its special features, but continued and developed them. Introducing reform while staying within the tradition, and developing the special merits of Peking opera while maintaining its distinctive character is the correct way of reforming it and adapting it to its new, socialist content.

(3) The remoulding of Peking opera artists. The key problem in reforming Peking opera lies in the remoulding of the Peking opera artists. The reform of Peking opera is lagging behind that of other theatrical arts throughout the country. The reform of Peking opera has met with greater resistance among leading members of the Peking opera circles as well as Peking opera artists and enthusiasts. The reasons for this are varied, but the main one is that the Peking opera artists have long been cut off from the workers, peasants and soldiers. They have a lot of old things deep-rooted in their thoughts and feelings, not only bourgeois ideas but also feudal ideas and backward habits. It will be difficult for people who are seriously encumbered by old ideology and old habits to become revolutionaries in Peking opera. Only by going into the midst of the workers, peasants and soldiers to remould their own ideology and feelings

can the Peking opera artists make proper use of their art form and reform it to portray workers, peasants and soldiers and serve socialism. All the operas that were revolutionary in their ideological content and performed with superb technique and skill at the festival are the results of the Peking opera artists going into the midst of the workers, peasants and soldiers and going deep into the struggle.

Socialist Peking opera artists should be, in the first place, revolutionary fighters for socialism. Without ideological remoulding it is impossible to have revolutionary thoughts and feelings, and therefore impossible to write or stage any revolutionary operas. Peking opera workers are not ordinary revolutionary fighters; they are educators who use their art to teach and inspire the masses. Those who teach must first be educated; and only when they have acquired revolutionary thoughts and feelings is it possible for them to educate others with revolutionary thoughts and feelings. Comrade Mao Tse-tung laid special emphasis on the importance of the ideological remoulding of the intellectuals at the National Conference of Propaganda Work of the Chinese Communist Party held eight years ago. He said:

If you think that those who teach others don't need to be educated any more and have no need to study any more; and that socialist transformation applies only to other people — to the landlords and capitalists, and to small producers — but not to the intellectuals, you are wrong. Intellectuals too should reform; everybody should study and reform, not only those who have not yet changed their basic stand.

Every Peking opera artist who is determined to become a proletarian revolutionary fighter in the field of literature and art must identify himself in his way of life and his thoughts with the masses of the workers and peasants through revolutionary practice. He must make conscientious efforts to change his class stand, views, thoughts and feelings. Otherwise he will be unable gradually to shift his standpoint over to the side of the workers, peasants and soldiers, to the side of the proletariat; and he will find it impossible to overcome the strange phenomenon of split personality as shown in the incongruity between life and thought on the stage and in real life, and he will be unable to have revolutionary spirit and feelings. Moreover, Peking opera, like other arts, is the product of the reflection of the life of the people in the minds of revolutionary artists; the labour and struggle of the workers, peasants and soldiers is the sole and inexhaustible source of all revolutionary literature and art. It is impossible to create any revolutionary literature or art that profoundly reflects reality without going into the midst of life and the masses. Peking opera workers must therefore be fully determined to go among the masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers in batches and at different periods as other literary and art workers have done, plunging themselves into the heat of struggle and thereby undergoing artistic and ideological steeling and remoulding. "Be a revolutionary before staging a revolutionary play" — this is the most profound conclusion the great majority of Peking opera artists have drawn at the festival.

The presentation of revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes has a far-reaching significance. It has given an impetus to the revolution in Chinese drama

and set a good example for carrying out a thoroughgoing socialist revolution in China's literature and art. The traditional influences of feudalism and capitalism are deep-rooted in Chinese literature and art. Most of the writers and artists, long influenced by such cultural traditions, lack a clear understanding of the importance of ideological remoulding. Even the young generation who have grown up in socialist society will lose their bearings in an "ivory tower" if they do not live among the workers, peasants and soldiers. This was why a host of ghost plays and other bad plays appeared on the socialist stage not long ago, disseminating feudal and capitalist ideas. Some publications even spread the so-called theory that there was "no harm in having ghosts". When the forces of feudalism and capitalism launched desperate attacks on socialism some writers and artists were intoxicated with what they called artistic appreciation and gave them their hearty approval, instead of feeling an urge to rise up and struggle against them. Some writers and artists who have long been cut off from the masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers and their struggles, turn a blind eye to the epoch-making achievements of the labouring people and have no enthusiasm for them. A handful have even begun to decay. They live under socialism, but they still allowing their thoughts and feelings, their methods of artistic creation and their artistic interests to linger in the time of feudalism and capitalism. How can such writers and artists serve the workers, peasants and soldiers or socialism if they do not thoroughly reform themselves and become new people? In order to eliminate feudalism, capitalism and ghosts and devils of all kinds from literature and art through revolution, every writer and artist must first of all carry out a revolution to cor-

rect the tendency to alienate himself from reality and the masses. The road cleared by the revolutionary Peking opera artists for the reform of Peking opera is the road which all revolutionary writers and artists should be glad to take and follow to the end.

The performance of revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes is only a beginning in the revolutionization of literature and art. Hard tasks still lie ahead. Ideological remoulding is a protracted, complicated and arduous process. It is necessary to step up ideological and political work among writers and artists, to struggle to promote proletarian ideology and eliminate bourgeois ideology on the literary and art front, to foster a widespread spirit of criticism and self-criticism, and to combat the intellectual's soft-heartedness, conciliatory attitude and bad habit of making excuses for himself. Soft-heartedness towards a comrade's mistakes does not help him to reform and amounts in the last resort to treating him most heartlessly. Adopting a conciliatory attitude towards bourgeois ideology is not the way of helping a comrade to arm and remould himself with proletarian ideology, for the two different ideologies will never become reconciled to each other. To be tolerant with oneself and make excuses for oneself is to be lax and content with falling behind; this will in the end become absolutely inexcusable. All this harms not only your comrades and yourself, but also the cause of the Party and the revolutionary interests of the people and the Party. All revolutionary literary and art workers must take a serious attitude towards this question.

The staging of Peking operas on contemporary themes is a great revolution. Who is most hostile towards the

revolution? The reactionaries at home and abroad. The imperialist and modern revisionist overlords have little knowledge of the art of Peking opera and have not seen any Peking opera on contemporary themes. But as soon as they learn that Peking opera was going to be revolutionized they immediately rush forward and, posing as protectors of the traditional art of Peking opera, frantically attack the revolutionary movement in Peking opera. The focus of their attack is the change in the ideological content of Peking opera, the improvement of its artistic form and the transformation of Peking opera artists. What frightens them most is that Peking opera will portray workers, peasants and soldiers and serve socialism; that the traditional opera will be reformed and become a new and powerful artistic weapon; and that the Peking opera artists will keep close ties with the workers, peasants and soldiers and become revolutionary literary and art fighters. In a word, throughout the socialist transformation, Peking opera will no longer serve a small number of people and remain a tool by which the overthrown reactionary classes can realize their dream of "peaceful evolution". This is the basic reason why the reactionaries at home and abroad bark so savagely at revolutionary Peking opera on contemporary themes.

"To be opposed by the enemy is a good thing and not a bad thing," is a famous saying of Comrade Mao Tse-tung. Twenty-five years ago, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

From our point of view, I think, a person, a Party, an army unit or a school that is not opposed by the enemy is no good and must be smeared with the same dirt as the enemy. If we are opposed by the enemy,

we are good, for it proves that we have drawn a distinction between the enemy and ourselves. If the enemy vigorously opposes us, saying that we are in a mess and nothing is right with us, then it is still better, for it proves that not only have we drawn a distinction between the enemy and ourselves, but we have been very successful in our work.

The frenzied attacks launched by the imperialists and modern revisionists on revolutionary Peking opera on contemporary themes has rightly testified to the truth that what they fear makes us happy. The more viciously they heap curses on us the stronger is the proof that our work of revolutionizing the theatre is correct and well-done.

As we congratulate the festival of revolutionary Peking opera on contemporary themes on its successful conclusion, we have great hopes for and full confidence in the revolutionization of Peking opera and Peking opera workers, of literature and art, and of literary and art workers. All revolutionary literary and art workers worth their salt should plunge themselves into this revolution with energy and enthusiasm, and carry out a thoroughgoing socialist revolution on the literary and art front, contributing all their efforts to consolidating and developing the positions of socialist and communist ideology. Some people have said that the staging of revolutionary Peking operas on contemporary themes is only a gust of wind. Right they are. It is a wind, but not just a gust. It is a strong revolutionary wind that will keep on blowing for ever. It will gather greater force, and, like the autumn wind sweeping the fallen leaves, it will blow the exploiting classes and every trace of their ideological in-

fluence into their graves. It is also like the east wind of spring that will make the new things of socialism flourish and the hundred flowers of socialist literature and art blossom in greater abundance.

Let us march forward bravely, holding aloft the great revolutionary banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on literature and art!

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Let us march forward bravely, holding aloft the great revolutionary banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on literature and art!

文化战线上的一个大革命

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