

Directive from the CPC Central Committee on Launching a Rectification and Study Movement in the Literary and Art Circles

Date: November 26, 1951

The following information is forwarded to the Central Bureaus and their branches, the Party committees of all provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, the Party groups of cultural departments of governments at the same level, and the Party groups of arts and literature organizations:

(i) The Central Committee approved the report submitted by the Central Propaganda Department to the Central Committee on November 23, 1951, and considered the report to be correct.

(ii) All responsible comrades in the Central Bureaus, Sub-bureaus, Provincial Committees, Municipal Committees, and District Committees, as well as those engaged in literary and artistic work in their respective areas, are requested to carefully study this report and, following the methods employed in Beijing, launch a well-prepared and purposeful rectification and study campaign within their local literary and artistic circles. This campaign should involve serious criticism and self-criticism, overcoming erroneous ideas among literary and artistic cadres, promoting correct thinking, rectifying literary and artistic work, and guiding it towards a sound direction. To ensure the success of this rectification campaign, responsible comrades in the Central Bureaus, Sub-bureaus, Provincial Committees, Municipal Committees, and District Committees, as well as those in charge of the Propaganda Departments, must personally oversee the leadership of the rectification campaign in the literary and artistic circles and submit their plans to the Central Committee and the Central Propaganda Department for approval.

(iii) This directive from the Central Committee and the report from the Central Propaganda Department can be published in Party publications and can be read by sympathizers outside the Party.

November 26, 1951, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

[appendix]

Report from the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee on the Rectification and Study of Literature and Art Cadres

(November 23, 1951)

Chairman Mao and the Central Committee:

While literary and artistic work has achieved some success in the past two years (with notable achievements in film and mass cultural activities), it also has many shortcomings, particularly in leadership. There is a tendency to neglect ideology, become detached from politics and the masses, and appease the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, leading to chaos on the literary and artistic front. Some disorganized and undisciplined phenomena have also developed among Party literary and artistic cadres, which urgently need correction and rectification. Therefore, we have decided to conduct a rectification study among literary and artistic cadres to clarify various erroneous ideas in the literary and artistic circles and earnestly establish the Party's effective leadership over literary and artistic work. In preparation for this study, the Central Propaganda Department first convened a meeting of more than ten key Party literary and artistic cadres, reaching a consensus. Then, the Standing Committee of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles convened two meetings, deciding to mobilize hundreds of literary and artistic cadres in Beijing to participate in the

rectification study movement. The report on the meetings convened by the Central Propaganda Department and the study plan of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles is as follows:

Participants in the literary and artistic work conference convened by the Central Propaganda Department included Hu Qiaomu, Zhou Yang, Ding Ling, Zhao Shuli, Li Bozhao, Chen Yi, Ai Qing, He Qifang, Zhou Wen, Lü Jun, Jiang Qing, Yang Hansheng, Yuan Muzhi, Chen Boer, Zhang Geng, Yan Wenjing, and Lin Mohan. The main content of the conference was the examination, criticism, and self-criticism of the leadership work in literature and art. It also discussed specific plans for strengthening film work, rectifying drama work, and adjusting and strengthening literary and artistic publications. Since the first meeting on September 24th, eight meetings have been held.

According to the self-criticism at the meeting, the main mistake made by the leaders of literary and artistic work after entering the cities was that they wavered in their belief in Chairman Mao's policies on literature and art, and in some aspects even allowed bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology to usurp their leadership. The main manifestations of this are as follows:

(i) They indulged the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, abandoned ideological struggle and ideological reform, and lacked seriousness in ideological work.

In collaborations with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois artists, there was a lack of principled unity; their various erroneous ideas were not seriously criticized, nor was the task of ideological reform seriously proposed. Many petty-bourgeois artists arbitrarily misinterpreted Chairman Mao's speeches at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, refusing to reform their thinking, refusing to let literature and art serve politics, and demanding that literature and art depict more of the lives and tastes of the petty bourgeoisie. They believed that the main audience for literature and art (such as film) today was the lower middle class, and that it should cater more to their tastes.

They opposed using the advanced ideology of the working class to reform and elevate the lower middle class, instead demanding that the ideology of the working class be lowered to the level of the lower middle class. Surrounded by this bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, many of the Party's literary and artistic cadres followed the trend, demonstrating that their stance was consistent with or close to theirs. The 1950 Shanghai Congress of Literary and Art Circles unilaterally put forward the slogan of "closer unity, bolder creation," without requiring literary and artistic workers to participate in actual struggles and reform themselves.

This tendency was not limited to Shanghai; the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Ministry of Culture also failed to solemnly propose such a task to literary and artistic workers. It was precisely this political tendency to abolish class struggle that led many literary and artistic leaders to be excessively and often ineffectively preoccupied with administrative affairs, paying little attention to ideological work. This resulted in their work being extravagant and impractical, with much form but little substance. Consequently, the Party lowered its requirements for literary and artistic works, allowing erroneous tendencies and shoddy productions to flourish, instead of considering the serious review of film scripts and films, as well as literary and artistic publications and theatrical and musical programs, as a significant political responsibility. This led to the production, screening, and propaganda of the film "The Story of Wu Xun," a loss of awareness regarding the reactionary propaganda of "The Story of Wu Xun," and a slackening of efforts to criticize "The Story of Wu Xun" after Chairman Mao pointed out its reactionary nature.

(ii) Being detached from politics and the masses.

Because leadership has abandoned ideological struggle, many writers have become detached from politics and the masses, which is the root cause of the current lack of vitality in literary and artistic work, the sluggish creative output, and the lack of emotional depth in many works. Some literary and artistic workers have gradually developed a complacent attitude in the peaceful environment, and their political interests have waned. Some of them are enthusiastic about one-sided technical learning, mistakenly believing that technical learning can only be achieved through Western methods, while neglecting their own nation's folk-art traditions (for example, the Central Academy of Drama's promotion of ballet, claiming it was a "fight for the people to enjoy thigh-dancing decades later"). Their works lack a correct and enthusiastic depiction of new life and people; even when dealing with correct political themes, they often vulgarize politics and distort the images of workers, peasants, and soldiers. The leading organs of literary and artistic work have not taken effective measures to make writers participate in political struggle and connect with the lives of the masses a regular habit.

(iii) Severe liberalism, lack of criticism and self-criticism, and lack of learning.

Because of neglecting ideology, becoming detached from politics, and alienating themselves from the masses, literary and artistic work lost its fighting purpose, failed to form an organized team and a strong leadership core, and inevitably developed vulgar liberalism and a lack of organization and discipline. Within the Party, there was little consultation or reporting to the Central Committee regarding literary and artistic work, especially the increasingly important film work. Party members in literary and artistic work lacked rigorous political life; the Party groups of the Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Ministry of Culture rarely examined ideological and creative problems, rarely engaged in criticism and self-criticism, and rarely studied Marxist-Leninist theory. Outside the Party, the Federation of Literary and Art Circles and its affiliated associations were paralyzed.

The meeting pointed out that Comrade Zhou Yang should bear primary responsibility for the above-mentioned phenomena (Comrade Zhou Yang made a detailed self-criticism), while also pointing out that other comrades also bore some responsibility, and they engaged in heated criticism of each other. In order to overcome the above-mentioned tendencies in the literary and art circles, the meeting decided that the Federation of Literary and Art Circles would mobilize about 700 staff members from all sectors of the Beijing literary and art circles to conduct a rectification study. Public criticism and self-criticism would be carried out at the study meetings and in newspapers and periodicals, and specific measures for rectifying the literary and art ranks (the Federation of Literary and Art Circles system, the Ministry of Culture system, various art schools, and within the Party) would be determined during the study.

The meeting decided that the main methods for improving literary and artistic work in the future are:

I. Correct the situation where literature and art are divorced from the Party's leadership, and regularly report important situations and problems in literature and art to the Central Committee for instructions. Carefully establish the Literature and Art Department and the Film Department of the Central Propaganda Department, making them powerful working organs for the Party's leadership of literature and art. The literature and art work conference convened by the Propaganda Department this time should be held frequently in the future, forming the core of the Party's leadership in literature and art.

Second, thoroughly reorganize the work of all associations within the Federation of Literary and Art Circles, making them centers for organizing writers to participate in practical struggles, learning, creation, and critical self-criticism. To focus the main efforts on creative activities rather than administrative organizational activities, it is planned that the Federations of Literary and Art Circles at

all levels and the Ministry of Culture operate under a joint office, and associations without function will be abolished.

Third, to improve leadership over film work, a draft decision of the Central Committee on strengthening film work has been prepared and will be submitted for review within the next few days.

IV. Rectify literary and artistic publications to make them serious weapons of struggle. It has been decided to cease publication of *People's Drama*, *People's Music*, *New Opera*, and *Beijing Literature*, concentrating efforts on running *Literary Gazette* and *People's Literature* well. The former will become a leading publication for art criticism and literary study, while the latter will become a leading publication for publishing and guiding creative work. At the same time, *Shuoshuo Changchang* will be strengthened to become a guiding publication for popular literature and art nationwide, and will regularly select and print scripts and songs to meet the needs of the vast country. This plan has been agreed upon by all parties and will be formally decided soon in the name of the Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

V. A systematic struggle will be waged against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology in the literary and artistic circles. In the field of drama, the first priority will be to examine the serious petty-bourgeois tendencies of the Central Academy of Drama in its creation and teaching, which are divorced from politics and reality. The Ministry of Culture is to issue a decision on rectifying the work of the Academy and reorganizing it. At the same time, the criticism of the anti-historicist tendencies in the reform of traditional opera, represented by Comrade Yang Shaoxuan (who has been dismissed from his post), will continue, and the work of drama reform will be rectified. A general conclusion will be drawn on these two criticisms.

Based on the recommendations of the Propaganda Department's meeting on literary and artistic work, the Standing Committee of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles has decided to launch a study campaign within Beijing's literary and artistic circles. A study committee, comprised of leaders from various literary and artistic departments (both Party and non-Party members), including Mao Dun, Zhou Yang, Ding Ling, Ouyang Yuqian, Yang Hansheng, Cai Chusheng, Chen Yi, Tian Han, Sha Kefu, Ma Sicong, Li Bozhao, Jiang Feng, Yuan Muzhi, Lao She, Lin Mohan, Yan Wenjing, Zhu Dan, Ma Shaobo, Wu Xue, and Li Guangtian, has been formed to lead this study campaign. The Federation will convene a mobilization meeting for literary and artistic cadres from all departments on November 24th. Hu Qiaomu, Zhou Yang, and Ding Ling will each deliver reports explaining the significance and purpose of the rectification study campaign within the literary and artistic circles, and several Party and non-Party literary and artistic workers will also speak. The participants were organized into groups based on their work relationships and read the following documents: (1) Chairman Mao's "On Practice"; (2) Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art"; (3) Chairman Mao's "Oppose Liberalism"; (4) Stalin's letter to Bednyi (People's Daily, August 12, 1951); (5) The four decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the issue of literature and art and Zhdanov's report; (6) People's Daily editorial "The Discussion on the Film 'The Story of Wu Xun' Must Be Taken Seriously". Then, they conducted a self-examination in conjunction with their work.

Please provide feedback on the appropriateness of the above sections.