



Chairman receiving the performers of the revolutionary opera "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy" in 1967.



Chairman Mao making a report at the Lu Hsun Arts Institute in Yanan—May 1938.

'WE DEMAND THE UNITY OF POLITICS AND ART'

Mao Tsetung's teachings on revolutionary culture

by Trisha Renaud

"Revolutionary culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution."¹

These are the words of Chairman Mao Tsetung, the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our time and the glorious leader of the Chinese revolution. Following the tradition of other revolutionary leaders such as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Mao made many contributions to developing a Marxist-Leninist line on culture and to waging the struggle for communism on the cultural front. His principles are an essential weapon in defeating bourgeois and revisionist ideology in the realm of literature and art. Under Chairman Mao's leadership, new socialist art and literature has blossomed all over China, greatly strengthening the task of socialist construction.

Mao Tsetung continually stressed the importance of revolutionary culture, of a "cultural army"—"If we had no literature and art even in the broadest and most ordinary sense, we could not carry on the revolutionary movement and win victory."² Culture, he insisted, had an important role to play in uniting the masses of people and exposing and defeating the enemy, whether it be the Japanese imperialists of the 1930s or the capitalist-roaders inside the party today.

Which class must be served by literature and art? Chairman Mao stressed that culture must serve the working class and the broad masses of the people. It must serve the needs of the masses and their revolutionary struggle. Mao took as his starting point Lenin's words that literature and art should

“serve . . . the millions and tens of millions of working people.”³

From this fundamental point, Mao went on to analyze the class character of all culture. He explained what proletarian culture must be based on and how it should serve the masses. He pointed out what problems cultural workers must solve in order to create revolutionary literature and art, and how they should wage the two-line struggle on the cultural front between the bourgeois and the proletarian roads.

The history of Mao Tsetung's role in the Chinese revolution is evidence of the importance he attached to culture and of his contributions. As early as 1919, he participated in the cultural revolution that sprang out of the May 4th Movement. The political upsurge of the May 4th Movement swept China, as masses of people rose in opposition to feudalism and Japanese domination. A cultural reform movement grew up along with it as an inseparable part of the political struggle of the time. It was this movement that Mao calls the first “cultural revolution.”

CULTURE THAT SERVES THE MASSES

“A cultural revolution is the ideological reflection of the political and economic revolution and is in their service.”⁴ This concept of “cultural revolution” Mao advanced many crucial times in China's history. The May 4th Movement stood up boldly to the old culture of feudalism and imperialism. Progressive literature and art blossomed everywhere. Mao Tsetung played a leading role in this movement, speaking, writing, organizing progressive circles, and founded a significant magazine, the Hsiang River Review, which addressed the burning political questions of the day.

An important target of the May 4th Movement was the old Confucian view of literature and art that placed culture beyond the reach of the masses. This old feudal culture was only for a few “geniuses” because it was felt the masses were too “ignorant.”

In opposition to this, young revolutionary intellectuals such as Mao Tsetung and Lu Hsun, strove to create culture that served the needs of the Chinese masses at that time for independence from Japan. Lu Hsun was a particularly outstanding figure, one whose life Mao continually pointed to as the model for Chinese revolutionary writers and artists. Lu Hsun urged “the propagation of political and social ideas which would unite the people against tyranny; literature not for the elite but for the masses.”⁵

Events clearly pointed out for many young revolutionaries the class character of all culture. Chairman Mao deepened this understanding. Literature and art, he said, are ideological reflections of a given society, mirrors of the life of a people. They belong to definite classes and serve the interests of the class they represent. This is the primary characteristic of all culture—it is stamped with the brand of a class. As Mao said, **“In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics.”⁶**

The bourgeoisie, as in the old Confucian culture, has long promoted the theory that art stands above classes—art for art's sake. The artist, they say, is a mystical creative genius who creates solely for pleasure or beauty. The bourgeoisie pushes this false view of art in order to cover over the class struggle and to spread their own decadent “classless” culture, which is in fact, bourgeois culture.

Mao Tsetung firmly attacked this theory of “classless” art and literature, taking a clear stand in advocating proletarian culture. Literature and art, he said, must serve, first of all, the working class, the leading force in the revolution, and secondly, the broad masses of people who are allies of the revolution. This meant educating and uniting the masses and exposing their enemies.

Mao saw this question as absolutely crucial to the revolution. Culture exerts a powerful influence on the masses, and under bourgeois society, the dominant culture can only be bourgeois culture, designed to prop up bourgeois rule. Literature and art play an influential role in the political struggle; they are an inseparable part of “politics.” They can either serve to unite and inspire the masses of people in the class struggle, or else they can deceive and disarm the people and peddle bourgeois ideology.

What must culture that serves the needs of the masses be based on? What must be the content of revolutionary literature and art? True proletarian culture must be based on the science of Marxism-Leninism, the science that will liberate the working class.

MARXISM-LENINISM GUIDES CULTURE

With the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, Mao wrote, a qualitative change occurred in the cultural movement in China—the force of Marxism-Leninism began to make a decisive impact and to guide the revolution in culture. Mao, writing in 1920, said this new force has **“launched heroic attacks on imperialist culture and feudal culture . . . For the last twenty years, wherever this new cultural force has directed its attack, a great revolution has taken place both in ideological content and in form (for example, in the written language). Its influence has been so great and its impact so powerful that it is invincible wherever it goes. The numbers it has rallied behind it have no parallel in Chinese history.”⁷** It was the guiding force of Marxism-Leninism deepened and creatively applied by Mao Tsetung that created a revolution in Chinese literature and art.

Culture can play an important role in spreading Marxism-Leninism throughout society and in opposing the poisonous ideology of the bourgeoisie. And in turn, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism must play the leading role in all revolutionary and progressive culture. Revolutionary writers and artists, Mao insisted, especially those who are party members, must study Marxism-Leninism in order to defeat the influence of bourgeois ideology within their own thinking and establish proletarian literature that is correct in orientation, that stands with the working class. Mao pointed to Lu Hsun as an example of a progressive revolutionary writer who through

disciplined study transformed his world outlook and became a great communist fighter on the cultural front.

Mao stressed that proletarian culture must be scientific, seeking truth from facts and opposing all feudal and superstitious ideas. In this regard, culture must use the science of the working class to observe and analyze life, to penetrate the essence of things and portray life accurately. Culture must concentrate the contradictions in society between classes and point to the direction of revolutionary struggle.

Revolutionary culture must also be based upon the life of the masses of people. According to Chairman Mao, "The life of the people is always a mine of the 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."⁸ This is the essence of proletarian culture—that it springs from and depicts the life of the masses of people, the real makers of history, and in doing so, that it serves them.

In China, it is the rich life of the masses of workers and peasants that the new socialist art takes as its starting point. For example, after the fierce struggles to kick out the emperors, kings and feudal ruling class figures of the bourgeois culture, the stage and screen today are dominated by proletarian heroes.

Literature and art must reflect the experiences and struggles of the masses, their concerns and victories. Together with a correct political line, class stand is key in producing this kind of culture. Mao waged a fierce struggle within literary and art circles to combat erroneous tendencies on this question. He criticized those cultural workers who paid lip service in theory to the primary importance of the working class, while in practice spent their time studying, analyzing and praising the works of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. As a result, they produce culture which is based on and takes the stand of the petty-bourgeoisie.

INTEGRATION WITH THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS

How does one gain a correct class stand? By studying Marxism-Leninism and by close integration with the masses of workers and peasants, by remolding one's world outlook. As Mao put it: "Our writers and artists have their literary and art work to do, but their primary task is to understand people and know them well."⁹ Cultural workers must fuse their thoughts and feelings with those of the masses. This can only be done by close integration with the struggles of the people, a process of remolding one's outlook. "If you want the masses to understand you, if you want to be one with the masses, you must make up your mind to undergo a long and even painful process of tempering . . . If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remold their thinking and their feelings. Without such a change, without such remolding, they can do nothing well and

will be misfits."¹⁰

Mao Tsetung waged struggle with many writers and artists over the basis of revolutionary literature and art. Particularly during the 1940s, this struggle came to the fore. At this time, there was a large influx of cultural workers and intellectuals into the red base area of Yen-an.

In May of 1942, a forum of writers, artists and intellectuals was convened at Yen-an in order to push forward the revolution in the ideological and cultural sphere. At that time, whatever revolutionary literature and art existed was restricted to the cities and to intellectual circles, cut off from the masses of peasants, the majority of the population.

The Yen-an forum on literature and art was highly successful in mobilizing numbers of cultural workers around the party to go among the masses and to create new socialist art. Mao Tsetung played a leading role in this forum. His speeches were recorded as the "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," a classic work setting down the principles of a Marxist-Leninist line on culture.

In the Talks, Mao urged cultural workers to go among the people and apply the mass line—from the masses, to the masses—to the tasks of revolutionary culture. He instructed them in the task of popularization, spreading cultural works among the Chinese population, and raising the cultural level and standards of the people.

POPULAR, SIMPLER AND HIGH QUALITY

While popular literature and art is simpler and more easily accepted by the masses, it is also necessary to continually raise the cultural level. Both tasks, stressed Mao, are important and both must be based on the needs of the working class. "The people demand popularization and, following that, higher standards; they demand higher standards month by month and year by year. Here popularization means popularizing for the people and raising of standards means raising the level for the people. And such raising is not from mid-air, or behind closed doors, but is actually based on popularization. It is determined by and at the same time guides popularization."¹¹ Standards are raised based on the need of the masses, in the direction in which the struggle of the people is advancing. Culture must not be raised to the "heights" of the bourgeoisie or the feudal ideology, but in accord with the aims of the working class.

Mao Tsetung also put forward at the Yen-an forum the principles for the united front in art and literature. At that time the main struggle in China was resistance to Japan, and a broad united front was formed on that basis. In working with non-party and progressive writers and artists, Mao stressed that party cultural workers must unite first of all on this issue of resistance to Japan. Secondly, they should unite on the issue of democracy, and thirdly on issues of method and style in cultural work, on the question of socialist realism. Thus the aims of the united front are to first build unity on a political basis, then on questions of artistic style.

These were some of the tasks on the cultural front in the 1940s. Mao's

disciplined study transformed his world outlook and became a great communist fighter on the cultural front.

Mao stressed that proletarian culture must be scientific, seeking truth from facts and opposing all feudal and superstitious ideas. In this regard, culture must use the science of the working class to observe and analyze life, to penetrate the essence of things and portray life accurately. Culture must concentrate the contradictions in society between classes and point to the direction of revolutionary struggle.

Revolutionary culture must also be based upon the life of the masses of people. According to Chairman Mao, "The life of the people is always a mine of the 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."⁸ This is the essence of proletarian culture—that it springs from and depicts the life of the masses of people, the real makers of history, and in doing so, that it serves them.

In China, it is the rich life of the masses of workers and peasants that the new socialist art takes as its starting point. For example, after the fierce struggles to kick out the emperors, kings and feudal ruling class figures of the bourgeois culture, the stage and screen today are dominated by proletarian heroes.

Literature and art must reflect the experiences and struggles of the masses, their concerns and victories. Together with a correct political line, class stand is key in producing this kind of culture. Mao waged a fierce struggle within literary and art circles to combat erroneous tendencies on this question. He criticized those cultural workers who paid lip service in theory to the primary importance of the working class, while in practice spent their time studying, analyzing and praising the works of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. As a result, they produce culture which is based on and takes the stand of the petty-bourgeoisie.

INTEGRATION WITH THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS

How does one gain a correct class stand? By studying Marxism-Leninism and by close integration with the masses of workers and peasants, by remolding one's world outlook. As Mao put it: "Our writers and artists have their literary and art work to do, but their primary task is to understand people and know them well."⁹ Cultural workers must fuse their thoughts and feelings with those of the masses. This can only be done by close integration with the struggles of the people, a process of remolding one's outlook. "If you want the masses to understand you, if you want to be one with the masses, you must make up your mind to undergo a long and even painful process of tempering . . . If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remold their thinking and their feelings. Without such a change, without such remolding, they can do nothing well and

will be misfits."¹⁰

Mao Tsetung waged struggle with many writers and artists over the basis of revolutionary literature and art. Particularly during the 1940s, this struggle came to the fore. At this time, there was a large influx of cultural workers and intellectuals into the red base area of Yen-an.

In May of 1942, a forum of writers, artists and intellectuals was convened at Yen-an in order to push forward the revolution in the ideological and cultural sphere. At that time, whatever revolutionary literature and art existed was restricted to the cities and to intellectual circles, cut off from the masses of peasants, the majority of the population.

The Yen-an forum on literature and art was highly successful in mobilizing numbers of cultural workers around the party to go among the masses and to create new socialist art. Mao Tsetung played a leading role in this forum. His speeches were recorded as the "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," a classic work setting down the principles of a Marxist-Leninist line on culture.

In the Talks, Mao urged cultural workers to go among the people and apply the mass line—from the masses, to the masses—to the tasks of revolutionary culture. He instructed them in the task of popularization, spreading cultural works among the Chinese population, and raising the cultural level and standards of the people.

POPULAR, SIMPLER AND HIGH QUALITY

While popular literature and art is simpler and more easily accepted by the masses, it is also necessary to continually raise the cultural level. Both tasks, stressed Mao, are important and both must be based on the needs of the working class. "The people demand popularization and, following that, higher standards; they demand higher standards month by month and year by year. Here popularization means popularizing for the people and raising of standards means raising the level for the people. And such raising is not from mid-air, or behind closed doors, but is actually based on popularization. It is determined by and at the same time guides popularization."¹¹ Standards are raised based on the need of the masses, in the direction in which the struggle of the people is advancing. Culture must not be raised to the "heights" of the bourgeoisie or the feudal ideology, but in accord with the aims of the working class.

Mao Tsetung also put forward at the Yen-an forum the principles for the united front in art and literature. At that time the main struggle in China was resistance to Japan, and a broad united front was formed on that basis. In working with non-party and progressive writers and artists, Mao stressed that party cultural workers must unite first of all on this issue of resistance to Japan. Secondly, they should unite on the issue of democracy, and thirdly on issues of method and style in cultural work, on the question of socialist realism. Thus the aims of the united front are to first build unity on a political basis, then on questions of artistic style.

These were some of the tasks on the cultural front in the 1940s. Mao's

disciplined study transformed his world outlook and became a great communist fighter on the cultural front.

Mao stressed that proletarian culture must be scientific, seeking truth from facts and opposing all feudal and superstitious ideas. In this regard, culture must use the science of the working class to observe and analyze life, to penetrate the essence of things and portray life accurately. Culture must concentrate the contradictions in society between classes and point to the direction of revolutionary struggle.

Revolutionary culture must also be based upon the life of the masses of people. According to Chairman Mao, "The life of the people is always a mine of the 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."⁸ This is the essence of proletarian culture—that it springs from and depicts the life of the masses of people, the real makers of history, and in doing so, that it serves them.

In China, it is the rich life of the masses of workers and peasants that the new socialist art takes as its starting point. For example, after the fierce struggles to kick out the emperors, kings and feudal ruling class figures of the bourgeois culture, the stage and screen today are dominated by proletarian heroes.

Literature and art must reflect the experiences and struggles of the masses, their concerns and victories. Together with a correct political line, class stand is key in producing this kind of culture. Mao waged a fierce struggle within literary and art circles to combat erroneous tendencies on this question. He criticized those cultural workers who paid lip service in theory to the primary importance of the working class, while in practice spent their time studying, analyzing and praising the works of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. As a result, they produce culture which is based on and takes the stand of the petty-bourgeoisie.

INTEGRATION WITH THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS

How does one gain a correct class stand? By studying Marxism-Leninism and by close integration with the masses of workers and peasants, by remolding one's world outlook. As Mao put it: "Our writers and artists have their literary and art work to do, but their primary task is to understand people and know them well."⁹ Cultural workers must fuse their thoughts and feelings with those of the masses. This can only be done by close integration with the struggles of the people, a process of remolding one's outlook. "If you want the masses to understand you, if you want to be one with the masses, you must make up your mind to undergo a long and even painful process of tempering . . . If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remold their thinking and their feelings. Without such a change, without such remolding, they can do nothing well and

will be misfits."¹⁰

Mao Tsetung waged struggle with many writers and artists over the basis of revolutionary literature and art. Particularly during the 1940s, this struggle came to the fore. At this time, there was a large influx of cultural workers and intellectuals into the red base area of Yen-an.

In May of 1942, a forum of writers, artists and intellectuals was convened at Yen-an in order to push forward the revolution in the ideological and cultural sphere. At that time, whatever revolutionary literature and art existed was restricted to the cities and to intellectual circles, cut off from the masses of peasants, the majority of the population.

The Yen-an forum on literature and art was highly successful in mobilizing numbers of cultural workers around the party to go among the masses and to create new socialist art. Mao Tsetung played a leading role in this forum. His speeches were recorded as the "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," a classic work setting down the principles of a Marxist-Leninist line on culture.

In the Talks, Mao urged cultural workers to go among the people and apply the mass line—from the masses, to the masses—to the tasks of revolutionary culture. He instructed them in the task of popularization, spreading cultural works among the Chinese population, and raising the cultural level and standards of the people.

POPULAR, SIMPLER AND HIGH QUALITY

While popular literature and art is simpler and more easily accepted by the masses, it is also necessary to continually raise the cultural level. Both tasks, stressed Mao, are important and both must be based on the needs of the working class. "The people demand popularization and, following that, higher standards; they demand higher standards month by month and year by year. Here popularization means popularizing for the people and raising of standards means raising the level for the people. And such raising is not from mid-air, or behind closed doors, but is actually based on popularization. It is determined by and at the same time guides popularization."¹¹ Standards are raised based on the need of the masses, in the direction in which the struggle of the people is advancing. Culture must not be raised to the "heights" of the bourgeoisie or the feudal ideology, but in accord with the aims of the working class.

Mao Tsetung also put forward at the Yen-an forum the principles for the united front in art and literature. At that time the main struggle in China was resistance to Japan, and a broad united front was formed on that basis. In working with non-party and progressive writers and artists, Mao stressed that party cultural workers must unite first of all on this issue of resistance to Japan. Secondly, they should unite on the issue of democracy, and thirdly on issues of method and style in cultural work, on the question of socialist realism. Thus the aims of the united front are to first build unity on a political basis, then on questions of artistic style.

These were some of the tasks on the cultural front in the 1940s. Mao's

revolutionary line was highly successful in mobilizing large numbers of workers and peasants behind the party and raising their educational and cultural levels. It also brought the masses themselves into the production of cultural work. Before, a few intellectuals had produced China's dominant culture while the popular culture of the masses had gone undeveloped and isolated. Now the great wealth and wisdom of the masses have begun to come to the fore in cultural work. The results of this mobilization are strikingly evident in China today where in every village, factory and school, there are writers' groups, theater troupes or musical groups.

By 1949, the revolution triumphed in China. The working class led the state and controlled the means of production and was pressing on with the tasks of socialist construction. But just as class struggle continued throughout Chinese society, it also was waged fiercely on the cultural front.

By the 1960s, the struggle in the superstructure between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had become key in socialist development. The superstructure is those political, religious and philosophical institutions and ideas which arise out of the economic base of society. In social development, the economic base generally plays the principal role, although the superstructure at times is of crucial importance. It can hold back economic progress, and it is also often a front of counter-revolution.

ROLE OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE

The role of the superstructure is most clearly evident in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. By the 1960s, socialist transformation in the economy was on a firm footing, but the deposed bourgeoisie retained great influence in many areas of the superstructure. This was a great threat to socialist construction. In the realm of culture, the bourgeoisie controlled the stages, screen and literary circles. It made them into platforms for promoting bourgeois ideology, for diverting the masses from the class struggle and promoting a return to the capitalist road.

Mao Tsetung, speaking in 1963, pointed to the bourgeois influence in literature and art: "Problems abound in all forms of art and the people involved are numerous; in many departments very little has been achieved so far in socialist transformation. The 'dead' still dominate . . . the social and economic base has changed but the arts as part of the superstructure which serve this base still remain a serious problem . . . Isn't it absurd that many Communists are enthusiastic about promoting feudal and capitalist art, but not socialist art?"¹²

Under the domination of the bourgeoisie and capitalist-roaders like Liu Shao-chi and Chou Yang, literature and art sang the praises of the bourgeoisie. Their heroes were emperors, kings, bandits and all kinds of "ghosts and monsters," while they held the workers, peasants and soldiers in subjection and cast them in degrading roles.

What is to be praised and what is to be condemned? In essence, Mao said, this means what class should be praised? What class should dominate literature and art? If literature and art must serve the proletariat, then the tasks

are clear. As Mao put it, "All the dark forces harming the masses of people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled; this is the fundamental task of revolutionary writers and artists. . . . If you are a bourgeois writer or artist, you will eulogize not the proletariat but the bourgeoisie, and if you are a proletarian writer or artist, you will eulogize not the bourgeoisie but the proletariat and working people: it must be one or the other."¹³

The aggressors and exploiters, the imperialists and capitalist-roaders, are the targets of exposure and condemnation. Their ideology must be struck with merciless blows by revolutionary culture. But the masses of people can never be the targets of exposure. Shortcomings in the ranks of the masses may be criticized, but never as an "exposure of the people."

In regard to the masses of people, the primary task of revolutionary culture is one of education and inspiration, of raising their level. It is the heroic characteristics of the masses that should dominate revolutionary literature and art. Criticisms of their shortcomings are secondary.

The application of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line can be seen in the Cultural Revolution where cultural workers followed the policy of "combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism." This means basing culture on the real life and experiences of the masses of people and typifying and idealizing their heroic struggles. Key to this was the creation of new proletarian heroes that embody all the fine characteristics of the working class.

Bitter struggle was waged against the bourgeoisie in the creation of new socialist heroes. It was in the Peking Opera that the first victories of the Cultural Revolution were won in the sphere of literature and art against the reactionary line of Liu Shao-chi.

IMPLEMENTING REVOLUTIONARY LINE

Cultural workers of the Peking Opera Troupe of Shanghai wrote of their struggle to implement Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in the creation of the hero Yang Tzu-jung in the opera, Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy. "A handful of representatives of the bourgeoisie . . . turned Yang Tzu-jung into a filthy-mouthed desperado and a reckless muddle-headed adventurer reeking with bandit odor from top to toe. Such a character can only be a living sample advertising Liu Shao-chi's reactionary military line. . . . Guided by Chairman Mao's proletarian line on literature and art, we have smashed the various schemes of the class enemies, criticized their various fallacies and created the brilliant images of Yang Tzu-jung and other proletarian heroes by the method of combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism. Not particularly individuals in real life, these heroic images are the quintessence of thousands and thousands of heroes coming to the fore in revolutionary struggles. They are 'on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life.'¹⁴

All over China, new socialist art of this kind began to spring up, the

product of hard-fought class struggle. In 1957, Mao Tsetung stated that: "Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy for promoting the progress of the arts and the sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land."¹⁵ This, he insisted, will not weaken, but will strengthen socialism by bringing the initiative of the revolutionary masses of people into play, letting struggle and criticism freely develop.

But class struggle was still key, for the bourgeoisie and capitalist-roaders continually vied for control of the realm of culture. The main form of struggle on the cultural front, Mao said, is that of literary and art criticism. Criticism can be a powerful weapon for exposing bourgeois and revisionist culture and also for strengthening revolutionary culture.

Mao put forward the Marxist-Leninist view of how to criticize literature and art. There are two criteria—the political and the artistic. The political criteria holds that art which is good promotes unity of the masses and pushes forward their revolutionary struggle. According to the artistic criteria, art of a high quality is good, while that of a lesser quality is not. As Mao states:

"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."¹⁶

HIGH POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC STANDARDS

Likewise, the proletariat must put the political criterion first and examine all literature and art from this standpoint. However, Mao also stresses, proletarian literature and art should strive to reconcile the two criteria:

"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."¹⁷

Form, then, must serve content, for work without quality can have little or no force politically. Thus, there are two areas of struggle on the cultural front—producing art with a correct political orientation and with high artistic standards.

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao further developed the policy for literary and art criticism, applying it to the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. While culture should develop and flourish freely, he said, one must distinguish between "poisonous weeds" and "fragrant flowers."

The two most important criteria for literature and art are that they should be beneficial, not harmful, to the cause of socialism and should strengthen the leadership of the Communist Party. They must also unite the masses, build the people's democratic dictatorship, help consolidate democratic-centralism, and build proletarian internationalism. Mao asked: "In a socialist country like ours, can there possibly be any useful scientific or artistic activity which runs counter to these political criteria?"¹⁸

The bourgeoisie and capitalist-roaders in China's cultural field tried in vain to put forward their standards, but Chairman Mao's revolutionary line smashed their attempts. They tried to promote old feudal standards and art forms as well as foreign imperialist and revisionist culture under the guise of the "laws of life" and the "rules of the stage." Peking Opera workers angrily denounced this line—"In a word, by the 'laws of life' they mean 'laws' for restoring capitalism and by the 'rules of the stage' they mean 'rules' for imposing the counter-revolutionary dictatorship of the bourgeoisie on the stage! Indeed, we have 'completely ignored' such 'laws' and 'rules,' and frankly speaking, we're going to smash them root and branch."¹⁹

Chairman Mao stressed that new socialist culture must learn from both past and foreign culture, but must critically use what is beneficial and can be transformed to serve the proletariat. "We should take over the rich legacy and the good traditions in literature and art that have been handed down from past ages in China and foreign countries, but the aim must still be to serve the masses of the people. Nor do we refuse to utilize the literary and artistic forms of the past, but in our hands these old forms, remolded and infused with new content, also become something revolutionary in the service of the people."²⁰

RESOUNDING VICTORIES

Guided by Chairman Mao, the Chinese people won resounding victories in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They established the dictatorship of the proletariat in literature and art and smashed the bourgeois headquarters of Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao. But class struggle still continues under socialism and literary and art workers did not relax their vigilance but directed their fire even more heavily against the capitalist-roaders inside the party and their revisionist ideology.

Breaking With Old Ideas, a recent Chinese film, is a good example of expressing this important theme—the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the party. The hero is a communist fighter who combats the capitalist-roaders unswervingly.

However the bourgeoisie reared its head in opposition to films like *Breaking With Old Ideas*. Teng Hsiao-ping slandered the new revolutionary works as "ultra-left" and "the only flower allowed to blossom." Cultural workers who filmed *Breaking With Old Ideas* wrote of this struggle: "Teng Hsiao-ping wildly attacked the Cultural Revolution and spread all sorts of revisionist ideas in an attempt to change the Party's basic line in order to restore capitalism. He slandered the revolution in literature and art exemplified by the model theatrical works, and tried to stop writers and artists from depicting current class struggles . . . We too, while filming *Breaking With Old Ideas*, met with obstruction from Teng Hsiao-ping's gang who spread all sorts of wild allegations about us. But led by the Party we learned from the hero of the film who dares to fight wrong trends, and we fought back, resolutely resisting the evil wind which aimed at restoring capitalism and reversing correct verdicts."²¹

Today, Chairman Mao's line is winning great victories in the cultural front as well as elsewhere over Teng Hsiao-ping's clique. Even with the great loss of Chairman Mao, the Chinese people continue to rally behind his revolutionary line.

More recently, the struggle in literature and art continues to unfold. The capitalist-roaders of the "gang of four"—Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao, Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan—tried to push their counter-revolutionary line in a frantic campaign against the new revolutionary film, *Pioneers*. They charged that the film had "serious errors both politically and artistically"²² and attempted to suppress its distribution.

This gang called themselves "standard-bearers" of the revolution in literature and art. The bourgeois careerist Chiang Ching was the first to slander the film. A November 5, 1976 People's Daily article described their activities: "This gang had been making full use for years of literature and art as their springboard for a capitalist restoration, in order to realize their criminal aim of usurping party and state power, subverting the dictatorship of the proletariat and restoring capitalism . . . they treated model revolutionary theatrical works as their personal capital, used them as monuments to themselves to create public opinion favorable to themselves for their counter-revolutionary plot to usurp party and state power."²³

The article goes on to describe their sectarianism towards literary and art workers and their suppression of many revolutionary cultural works that followed Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. They opposed literature and art serving the masses and cultural workers integrating with the masses.

Chairman Mao issued a directive aimed directly at the "gang of four" and expressed warm approval of the film *Pioneers*. "There is no big error in this film. Suggest that it be approved for distribution. Don't nit-pick. And to list as many as ten accusations against it is going too far. It hampers the adjustment of the party's current policy on literature and art."²⁴

The People's Daily article points clearly to the significance of struggles such as the one against the "gang of four" "If their plot had succeeded, the gains of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the revolution in literature and art would be lost and the whole of China would change color."²⁵ The importance of combatting revisionism and the capitalist-roaders in an all-around way, including the cultural front, is crucial to the tasks of socialist construction.

With the legacy of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, the Chinese people continue to wage fierce class struggle to ensure the success of socialism. Chairman Mao's revolutionary line is a powerful weapon on the cultural front in defeating revisionist and bourgeois ideology.

FOOTNOTES

1. "On New Democracy," *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol. 2, p. 382, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967.

2. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature," *S.W.*, Vol. 3, p. 86.
3. "Party Organization and Party Literature," Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 48-9, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962.
4. "On New Democracy," *S.W.*, p. 373.
5. Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge*, p. 67-8, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1972.
6. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum," *S.W.*, Vol. 3, p. 86.
7. "On New Democracy," *S.W.*, Vol. 2, p. 372.
8. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum," *S.W.*, Vol. 3, p. 81.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 72
10. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
12. Han Suyin, *Wind in the Tower: Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Revolution—1949-1975*, p. 238, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1976.
13. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum," *S.W.*, Vol. 3, p. 92.
14. "To Find Men Truly Great and Noble-Hearted We Must Look Here in the Present," p. 3-4 and 6, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1971.
15. "On Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend," *On Literature and Art*, p. 134, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967.
16. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum," *S.W.*, p. 89.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
18. "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom," p. 141.
19. "To Find Men Truly Great," p. 15.
20. "Talks at the Yen-an Forum," p. 76.
21. Li Wen-hua, "Strive to Depict Heroic Characters of the Proletariat," *Chinese Literature* No. 10, p. 113, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976.
22. Hsinhua News Agency release, Nov. 6, 1976, p. 3.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 4.