

Art and Politics in China, 1949-1986

by

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to examine the complex pattern of the relationship between politics and art in the People's Republic of China between 1949 and 1986, analysing the three most important aspects of this relationship, namely organisational structures, the ideological framework and political movements. The principal issue addressed in this research is that of how the Communist Party's policies on culture and art have affected the development of art theory and the creative work of artists in China.

The thesis consists of four chapters representing the major historical stages of the People's Republic of China. Each chapter focuses on the different manifestations of the relationship between politics and art in a particular social phase. Chapter one deals with the early formation of the organisational structures, the ideological framework and political campaigns in the arena of Chinese culture and art between 1949 and 1956. Chapter two examines the further development and the vacillating nature of the relationship between the state and artists during the years 1957 to 1966. Chapter three looks at the stormy years of the Cultural Revolution during which the political discourse and artistic work were merged. The fourth chapter discusses the new trends of Chinese art by describing the newly emerging "self" (individual subjectivity) and the search for modernity in the period of 1978 to 1986.

The general methodology employed in my thesis is composed of three dimensions - social, historical and comparative. The analysis of the social conditions and the general account of the historical process are closely combined with individual case studies. A comparative perspective is also adopted in order to reveal the extent of foreign influence.

The central argument submitted in the thesis is that art in the People's Republic of China should be seen as an image of social reality. The argument is pursued by a method which seeks to relate art to social-political settings, and to explore not only the aesthetic dimension of artistic work, but also the political discourse embodied in it.

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Introduction

This research investigates the complex relationship between art and politics in China between 1949 and 1986, emphasising the effects of Communist policies on artists and their work in the People's Republic. Its main objective is to discuss the organisational structures and ideological framework governing Chinese art over the period, rather than to present a detailed critical appraisal of the aesthetic dimension of the art produced. It aims to assess the way in which art has been used since 1949 for propaganda purposes and to elucidate in what ways and to what extent the aesthetic discourse has mirrored its political counterpart.

My analysis has explored the three most important aspects of the relationship between politics and art, namely the art institutions, the ideological scheme and the political movements, through which political dominance was asserted over artists. During some periods, organisational and ideological control was regarded by the authorities as sufficient to keep artists in line. At other times, political movements to thwart the re-emergence of 'bourgeois' or 'feudal' thinking were considered necessary. Each chapter of the thesis thus lays different emphasis on the three areas and reflects the fluid nature of the relationship between art and politics.

In my analysis I have attempted to examine the subject from social, historical and comparative perspectives in order to look at the main theoretical premises or conceptual foundations for the cultural policies of the Communist Party. I have also investigated the way in which these theoretical premises were practically applied to the creative work of artists. The thesis provides an overview of general developments in art after 1949, as well as individual case studies. It also looks at both the continuing influence of traditional Chinese art and the impact of foreign ideas and styles. The relationship between art and politics in China has not followed a set pattern and is, therefore, approached in the thesis as being characterised by constant changes. These changes have been contingent mainly on social-political considerations, but also on the response of artists to the political constraints imposed upon them.

The work is divided into chapters representing four major historical-political stages. During the first formative stage, the Party took steps to consolidate its political position on a national level and to extend its authority in the cultural sphere. Through cooperation with the majority of Chinese artists and intellectuals in general, it strove to establish a high degree of ideological uniformity by setting up institutional structures to mediate the Communists' ideological scheme and by periodically initiating political movements.

Once the Party had attained its first goal of gaining political and ideological legitimacy and winning the general cooperation of artists, during the second stage it mobilised artists en masse to participate in socialist construction through a series of large-scale social-political movements including the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the Socialist Education Movement in the early 1960s. To ensure the active participation of artists in these movements, their ranks were periodically purged, most notably during the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957 and, to a lesser extent, the Anti-Rightist Deviation movement of 1959. This period is marked by significant fluctuations in the relationship between the authorities and artists, as policies vacillated between liberalisation and radicalisation. It was also during this time that the Party's authority both politically and culturally began to come into question because of the disastrous failure of a series of political and economic policies.

The third stage, that of the Cultural Revolution, represented a major attempt by the radicals in the leadership to re-affirm their supremacy over the political and cultural spheres. Cultural policies were taken to radical extremes, with the result that a uniformity in art of a degree unprecedented since 1949 was established as the political and artistic discourses merged.

However, this degree of ideological control proved unsustainable and collapsed following the death of Mao in 1976. The period after his death, representing the fourth and final stage, was symbolised by the forging of a new relationship between art and politics, and between artists and the state that functioned in a different way from previously. It saw the emergence of the individual subjectivity of the artist and the search for a new mode of

artistic expression within a limited framework of social reform. In a considerably more tolerant political atmosphere, the Party attempted to forge a new ideological consensus, whilst artists tried to establish a new interface with the Party and society by re-defining their functions within the new system.

Before I begin a detailed analysis of the relationship between art and politics after 1949, it is necessary first to outline briefly the historical background to this relationship.

The organisational and ideological system established by the Communist Party after 1949 for art was a natural development resulting from policies formulated and applied during the Communists' struggle for power through the 1930s and 1940s.⁽¹⁾ From the 1930s some leading figures in the Communist Party like Qu Qiubai and Mao Zedong began to develop their ideas on the social function of art according to Marxist theories as interpreted by Russian and Soviet political and cultural theorists. Mao shaped these ideas further in his Yan'an Talks in the form of a synthesis which delineated the social and ideological function of writers and artists and included the use of popular art forms as political propaganda.⁽²⁾

At an organisational level also, the Communists had already set up a department of propaganda by the late 1920's which directed all cultural activities within their own sphere of influence. In the urban areas, the Party sought to extend its influence by organising leftist sympathisers into cultural associations, such as "The League of Left-Wing Writers" (zuoyizuojialianmeng) and "The League of Left-Wing Artists", (zuoyimeishujialianmeng) whose activities were directed towards propaganda work.⁽³⁾ Artists with no previous experience of producing woodcuts, for example, were now trained in woodcutting techniques to be used for the purposes of political propaganda. Woodcuts were a cheap and easy form of art to produce, they had a long tradition in China, and they had become popular in the early 1930's following Lu Xun's introduction of the work of European woodcut artists to Chinese art circles. Many members of "The League of Left-Wing Artists", such as Jiang Feng and Cai Ruohong, later travelled to the Communist base in Yan'an where they became established as leading art cadres.⁽⁴⁾

It was here in Yan'an at the Lu Xun Academy of Art set up by the Communists,

that they crystallised their ideas on the appropriate institutional structures and ideological framework for cultural activities. The Academy had departments of literature, drama and art, and their courses were designed to train the mainly urban youth in cultural propaganda work. For the artists this meant training initially in woodcuts and, after 1942, increasingly in New Year pictures (simple coloured woodblock prints changed at each Chinese New Year), which were especially popular with the peasants. After a short spell at the Academy, graduates were often sent into the local villages to collect folk songs and to paint New Year pictures with political messages. During the War of Resistance Against Japan their main task was to mobilise resistance against the Japanese and to raise morale generally both in the villages and at the war-front.⁽⁵⁾

The Academy became an important centre for experiment in the implementation of Communist cultural policy. It not only produced a core group of Party cultural cadres to help oversee propaganda work, but it also in all respects became a "model" for later cultural institutions and activities. Mao even talked about preparing writers and artists to go from the "Small Lu Yi" ("Lu Xun Yishuxueyuan") to "Big Lu Yi" or from the Academy and its environs to the country as a whole, the implication being that there would be a continuation in general cultural line once the Communists had moved from their base areas to take over the whole of China. The importance of the ideas and practice developed in the Academy can be seen in the fact that after 1949, the Communist leadership attempted constantly to remind writers and artists of the "spirit of Lu Yi" (Lu Yi jingshen) as an ideal that should be emulated. As late as the 1980s, sixteen volumes of works produced in the Academy were collected and published, ranging from woodcuts to short stories, New Year pictures to poetry.⁽⁶⁾

During the 1930s and 1940s, the pattern of organisational and ideological control of the Party over left-wing cultural activities that was to be established throughout China after 1949 was gradually evolved. This pattern of control was composed of 3 main strands:

1. The Party attempted to assert its leading role in the cultural field through maintaining control over various organisations, including The League of Left-Wing

Artists" and the Lu Xun Academy of Art, over publications, such as "The Literary and Art Supplement" ("Wenyi fukan") in the "Liberation Daily", and over a series of woodcut, cartoon and New Year picture exhibitions held in Yan'an.⁽⁷⁾

2. The Party made efforts to impose its own ideas as to the style and content of artistic work in order to establish its dominance in the ideological sphere. Whenever new conditions arose and political imperatives changed, the Party required writers and artists to adjust their work to suit the new situation. Therefore, during the War of Resistance Against Japan, art was required to engender patriotic fervour and a hatred of the Japanese invaders. When the target of attack became the Guomindang, artists were encouraged to portray the ills of Chinese Society under Guomindang rule. Similarly, when the peasants expressed a dislike of many of the woodcuts produced by artists at Yan'an, because of western-influenced features such as heavy shading, artists were compelled to adhere to more acceptable Chinese methods or switch completely to producing New Year pictures.⁽⁸⁾
3. Even at this early stage, the Party began attempts to reform the thinking of writers and artists, discouraging them from elitism and encouraging them to participate directly in the lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers. One of the main purposes of Mao's Yan'an Talks was to set out systematically ideological guidelines for writers and artists by defining the social function of the arts and delineating the role of the artist within the ideological framework. Ominously, the Party also began to carry out small-scale purges against non-conformists within its ranks, the most extreme example being the criticism and execution of the writer, Wang Shiwei, for his heterodox views and independent thinking.⁽⁹⁾

Though only at a formative stage in the 1930s and 1940s these three features were to play a crucial role in the comprehensive system of control established by the Party after the founding of the People's Republic.

Obviously, the vast majority of artists throughout China at this stage were not subject to Communist control either organisationally or ideologically. Many kept completely aloof from political affairs and maintained their own artistic independence, especially a

large number of traditional Chinese painters, who continued to produce their highly stylised landscape or bird-and-flower ink paintings. Some, however, disturbed by the level of corruption under the Guomindang, the chaos caused by conflicts between warlords vying for power and China's low reputation on the international stage, had sympathy for the left-wing cause. As part of its strategy to forge a united front with as many sections of society as possible, the Party deliberately tried, through those who openly sympathised with it, such as Guo Moruo and Mao Dun, and through its underground networks, to win the support of artists and writers working in Chongqing, the newly-established Guomindong capital in China's interior.⁽¹⁰⁾ Zhou Enlai, for example, at that time a Party Politburo member, maintained close links with the prominent painter, Xu Beihong, who was based in Chongqing. Many artists who were courted by the Party were well-known and respected in their particular fields. Several, such as Xu, had studied academic oil painting abroad in the prestigious European art academies, and, after 1949, many of them were to take up important positions in the new art institutions as a reward for their previous support, and to give added credence to the Party's expressed aim to maintain a united front of all artists.⁽¹¹⁾

Before 1949, although the Party had begun to assert its control and influence over artists and intellectuals in general, its dominance was far from comprehensive, even amongst Communists themselves. At this stage, the Party leadership still felt in a relatively vulnerable position and in order to unite as broad a range of artists as possible, it was forced to rely mainly on persuasion, rather than coercion. After 1949, however, the situation was to alter dramatically as the Party now had at its disposal the political power and organisational means to impose its will on all artists throughout society.

CHAPTER ONE

"From 'small Lu Yi' to 'big Lu Yi'" - the formative stage (1949-1956)

In the introduction, I presented a summary of the situation in art circles before 1949, with emphasis on the initial development of the relationship between artists and the Communist Party in the Communist-held base areas in Yan'an. This relationship had its first organisational manifestation in the form of the Lu Xun Academy of Art, where Party principles and guidelines regarding the function and form of all literary and artistic endeavour were first systematically set out in Mao's Yan'an Talks', thus establishing Party thinking on the purpose of and main audience for creative work.

In this chapter I propose to discuss the complex relationship that existed between politics and art during the years 1949 to 1956, a period which was to constitute a new stage in this relationship. After 1949, the Communist Party, now in control of the whole of China, became the exclusive arbiter of cultural policy throughout the country. Its aim was to ensure that the ideological and cultural principles and organisational guidelines which had formed the basis of the Lu Xun Academy of Art were effectively implemented among all "cultural workers", as all those involved in cultural activities were now called.

However, this was an infinitely more problematic task, and a much more difficult situation to control. With regard specifically to art, the Party now had to deal with a much greater diversity of artistic forms than had been the case in Yan'an. Furthermore, many artists from the newly liberated areas, , unlike those in Yan'an who had been on the whole prepared to accept and support party directives, were ambivalent towards, even suspicious of, the new regime. For this reason, although there was a basic continuity of policy after 1949, most principles and guidelines remaining essentially the same as they had been at Yan'an, the Party felt it necessary to take into consideration the more complex nature of its newly-established relationship with artists throughout China and to allow for a certain degree of flexibility in its approach.

Of primary importance to the Party in its dealings with artists was the

achievement of the following two fundamental objectives:

1. The establishment and maintenance of an ideological monopoly as a means to legitimise its power and consolidate its political supremacy.
2. The direct participation of artists in the continuing process of social revolution, socialist construction and all political movements.

The highly politicised nature of the role now assigned to artists forced them to re-evaluate their function in society, as well as the form and content of their work.

In order to understand developments in art after 1949, it is necessary to look first at the paradoxical nature of the relationship between the authorities and intellectuals as a group, of which artists comprise an integral part. The paradox has been an underlying factor in all policies affecting intellectuals⁽¹⁾ and it is based on the following two considerations:

1. The Communists were fully aware upon taking power that intellectuals, by virtue of their capacity for independent thought and their creative talents, constituted the greatest potential threat to the political supremacy of the Party, to ideological unity and to the stable political order. To minimise this threat they needed to maintain rigid ideological control and to bring intellectuals periodically to heel through fear of persecution. At the same time, they aimed to mould intellectuals ideologically into a malleable group that would help implement policy.
2. The Communists were also aware of the crucial role that intellectuals could play in helping to legitimise the regime's position of power and to promote its policies. Those involved in the arts, for example, possessed the cultural means to propagate ideas amongst vast numbers of people. For this reason, in addition to stressing the necessity for a strong political dimension in the arts, the Party also saw the wisdom in allowing some degree of debate on aesthetic standards, in order to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the arts as a medium for propaganda.

The paradoxical nature of the relationship between the authorities and artists was manifested in the main debates on art, the organisational structure of the art institutions, and artists' involvement in a series of political movements. The basic pattern of this relationship can be revealed by analysing the methods employed to exercise control over artists and the way in which the artists in turn responded. This will involve an analysis at three different levels:

1. The organisational structure through which the authorities institutionalised their control.
2. The ideological scheme imposed on artists, as manifested in debates on art and in the resulting creative work.
3. Key political and ideological movements, periodically engineered to bring artists into line through criticism and self-criticism, demotions, denunciations and purges, amounting to a form of ideological terror.

Section 1. The Creation of Organisational Structures as a Means of Institutionalising Political Control

a. Organisation

Of primary importance to the authorities once they had extended their control from the "old liberated areas" mainly in the north to all other areas of China was the setting up of organisational structures through which cultural policy could be disseminated over the entire country. It was necessary to set up associations on a national scale which would encompass all cultural endeavour, including art, literature, drama and so on, to "facilitate the carrying out of (our) work, the training of talented people, popularisation and reform".⁽²⁾ The fundamental principles which formed the basis of these associations were initially set down at the first National Congress of Literary and Art Workers (July 1949), and reiterated at the second (Sept. 1953).⁽³⁾

The Congress held in 1949 was of particular importance in that it brought together for the first time all those working in the cultural field from both the old Communist-held areas and the regions which had only recently come under Communist control. The significance the authorities attached to creating a unified cultural force out of these disparate groups was apparent from the large number of leading political figures, including Mao, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Lu Dingyi who attended the Congress and delivered speeches. Mao's address clearly aimed at bringing the different groups together by stressing the shared purpose and common ground of all Congress participants as 'progressive cultural workers of the people'. He stated: "... You are all needed by the people. You are the people's writers, the people's artists or the people's organisers of literary and art work. You are useful to the revolution and to the people".⁽⁴⁾

Zhu De, the Commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army, acknowledged that there was a high level of cultural diversity in China, but, in an attempt to minimise the very real differences that existed among Congress participants, he pointedly asserted that the main cultural current since the May 4th period had always been in line with "the people's democratic revolutionary movement".⁽⁵⁾ Later, Zhou Enlai, the new Premier, in his political report to the Congress specifically emphasised the need to achieve unity between

cultural workers from the old and the newly liberated areas, between those politically committed individuals who had a history of participation in left-wing cultural activities, and those who had previously exhibited no particular political orientation in their work but were now willing to "reform themselves".⁽⁶⁾

In addition to the speeches given by prominent political figures, the presentations of leading individuals in the various cultural fields also addressed this question of the division between the ranks of cultural workers. Jiang Feng, a wood-cut artist and long-standing Party activist who had worked in the Lu Xun Academy of Art at Yan'an, gave a report on behalf of artists from the old liberated areas. He outlined the close association between art and Communist policy in these areas, stating that, even though the situation had now developed and artists from the Communist base areas had moved from the countryside to the city, the essential characteristics of the revolutionary art practised in the base areas was to be maintained. In order to achieve this, practical measures were to be adopted, including the speedy re-education of an increasing pool of artists, particularly folk artists and traditional Chinese painters, and making full use of modern printing facilities in the cities to print large quantities of art work for dissemination amongst the populace.⁽⁷⁾

Ye Qianyu, unlike Jiang Feng, had never been directly involved in left-wing art activities, having spent most of his time before 1949 teaching at the Beiping College of Arts. At the Congress, he acted as representative of the areas recently brought under Communist control. Though opening his speech by acknowledging that some good work had been produced in these areas, he nevertheless went on to enumerate the many shortcomings of the "progressive" art⁽⁸⁾ movement to which he had himself contributed. These shortcomings, including factionalism, a lack of strong leadership, an incorrect or superficial understanding of Party policy towards the arts, divisiveness, individualism, remoteness from the masses and social life, and excessive reliance on 'Western bourgeois artistic methods and aesthetic values', were to be taken as examples by which artists could now measure their past failings. To correct these failings, Ye stated, artists needed to study earnestly Mao Zedong Thought and Mao's policies on art, and combine with the workers, peasants and soldiers to struggle for a new China.⁽⁹⁾

These two speeches reveal how the authorities intended to impose their own cultural values on artists from the newly-liberated areas in order to bring them into line with those from Yan'an, and thus effect a measure of ideological unity. It can be seen from Ye Qianyu's implicit self-criticism that this was to be achieved largely through a critical examination by each individual of his or her past mistakes, followed by a wholehearted willingness to accept the guidance of the Party.

At the same time, incentives were used to induce artists to offer their support to the Communists. These took the form of positions of importance, particularly in the newly-established Artists' Association, for better-known individuals who were thus assured of a prominent place in the new system and the chance to maintain, even enhance, their personal prestige. Ye Qianyu is a prime example of an artist rewarded in this way, acting first as Chairman and leading member of the artists that attended the Congress, and later becoming Deputy Chairman of the Artists' Association.

If we examine the composition of the executive committee of the Artists' Association, the institution through which art policy was to be disseminated nationwide, we find that of the thirteen members almost half were mainstream artists who had enjoyed a high reputation when living and working in the Guomindang-held areas. The presence of artists like Xu Beihong, Wu Zuoren and Liu Kaiqu added stature to the new Association and went some way to allay the fears of artists suspicious of the Communist regime. These mainstream artists also possessed technical skills that were generally superior to those of artists from the old liberated areas due to their rigorous artistic training both in China and abroad. Such skills could be an important asset in achieving Mao's demand at Yan'an that there should be a "raising of standards" in artistic levels, as well as the "popularisation" of art.⁽¹⁰⁾

However, it must be said that, although the authorities, for the sake of unity, created the impression of a power balance within the executive committee between mainstream artists and the artists and art cadres from Yan'an, real power lay, in fact, with members of the second group. They comprised the majority within the committee, and, more significantly, all four sub-committees in which the major decisions were taken and specific

art policy formulated, were headed by veteran Party cadres. Cai Ruohong chaired the important editing and publishing committee, Wang Zhaowen became head of the committee that dealt with political movements, Ye Fu was responsible for exhibitions and Jiang Feng was in charge of the committee for "artistic welfare".⁽¹¹⁾ Xu Beihong, who became the first Chairman of the Artists' Association in 1949 was, in reality, only a figurehead. Suffering from ill-health throughout his time as Chairman, he died only three years later.⁽¹²⁾ Qi Baishi, the traditional Chinese painter who replaced Xu as Chairman, was already in his nineties when appointed⁽¹³⁾ and to an even greater extent held only nominal authority. Ultimate power rested with Jiang Feng as head of the Party group within the executive committee of the Artists' Association,⁽¹⁴⁾ and it is clear that in 1949 the dominant force within the Artists' Association was the old "Lu Yi" group, who were the long-term active supporters of Party policy. It was this group that was to be most influential in formulating specific art policy. It should be borne in mind, however, that the Artists' Association itself was not a body which could freely make decisions. It remained subordinate to the Ministry of Culture and ultimately to the Department of Propaganda which supervised cultural affairs and mediated decisions between the Politburo and the cultural organs under its control.⁽¹⁵⁾

Following the closing session of the National Congress of Literary and Art Workers, forty local congresses were held throughout China. Each of them set up a local branch of all the different cultural associations that had been established at the national level,⁽¹⁶⁾ and organisational control by the Party of cultural activities was extended down to the grass roots level. This power structure remained virtually unchanged until the Cultural Revolution in 1966. The Second National Congress of Literary and Art Workers held in September and October 1953 saw little change in the composition of the executive committee of the Artists' Association. Qi Baishi had replaced Xu Beihong as Chairman, but the Vice-chairmen still included Jiang Feng, Liu Kaiqu, Ye Qianyu, Wu Zuoren and Cai Ruohong. Jiang Feng and Cai Ruohong were the key figures, as head and deputy-head respectively of the Association's Party group.⁽¹⁷⁾ The power wielded by individuals like Jiang and Cai derived from the Association's central role in determining the extent to which individual artists could bring their work before the public. If artists wished to exhibit their work or

have it published in the official art periodicals, they needed to receive permission from one of the Artists' Association's committees. If they wished to exhibit or publish regularly, it was a virtual necessity for them to be members of the Association, particularly at the national level.⁽¹⁸⁾

The constitution of the Association promulgated in 1954 outlined its main functions in guiding creative work,⁽¹⁹⁾ and revealed its highly politicised nature. It opens with the contradictory statement that the Association is a voluntary organisation (implying a high degree of autonomy), but one which must actively participate in the Chinese people's revolutionary struggle and socialist construction, support the Party's Marxist-Leninist art policies, accept that art should serve the people and be closely linked to them, and adopt the creative and critical method of Socialist Realism. Specific tasks were set down as follows:

1. To organise artists to participate in a variety of creative activities and to produce art with a combination of a high level of ideological content and artistic quality; to encourage a work ethic and enthusiasm among artists; and to take a lead in the study of art theory and criticism.
2. To organise the study of art theory based on Marxism-Leninism and Socialist Realism; to study the policies of the Party and government; to study life in society and, using the method of criticism and self-criticism, to reform and improve continuously the thinking of artists.
3. To organise the selection, introduction and exhibition of works of art.
4. To train young artists and help amateur artists and the masses in general in their artistic activities to promote the development of the people's cultural life.
5. To promote the study of, and research into China's cultural heritage.
6. To strengthen the international exchange of culture and art, particularly between China on the one hand and the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the "people's artists" from other countries on the other.

Funding of the Association was to come partly from members' subscription fees, but mainly from state subsidies, highlighting the Association's financial dependence on the

authorities. Finally, the constitution warned that any member who violated the interests of the state or the people (without actually defining what constituted a violation) or was guilty of "reactionary" behaviour or speech would be expelled. This was no idle threat, for an expulsion could bring permanent disgrace.

b. Two institutional channels of political control - (1) art publications (2) exhibitions

Art publications and exhibitions were two of the major channels by which artists were able to gain regular access to the public. If denied access to these channels an artist would lose the most important means of sharing his or her work with the wider public, arguably the *raison d'être* for creative expression. Aware of the crucial role played by publications and exhibitions, the authorities ensured that strict control was maintained over them through the Ministry of Culture and the Artists' Association. Without the official approval of, or sponsorship by, one of these organisations, it was virtually impossible for artists to have their work published or exhibited at the national, or even local level. By exercising strict control, the Party was guaranteed authority over the aesthetic ideas and ideological principles to which art was required to conform.

(1) Publications

During the latter half of 1949 more than forty different cultural magazines and journals were officially established. Each new publication was sponsored and edited by official organisations or cultural institutions. They included such influential publications as the "Literature and Art Gazette" ("Wenyibao"), (May 1949), and "Popular Arts" ("Qunzhong yishu") (October 1949), edited by Zhou Erfu; "People's Literature" ("Renmin wenxue"), (October 1949), edited by Mao Dun and Ai Qing; "People's Drama" ("Renmin xiju"), April 1950), edited by Tian Han, "Mass Film" ("Dazhong dianying") (June 1950) and "New Traditional Drama" ("Xin xiqu") (September 1950).⁽²⁰⁾

In February 1950 the first official national publication on art "The People's Art" ("Renmin meishu"), was published, with Wang Zhaowen and Li Hua as editors. It was

established, sponsored and controlled by the Artists' Association, as was the publication that superseded it in 1954, "Fine Art" (Meishu). In addition, in December 1955 the Artists' Association and the People's Art Publishing House ("Renminmeishuchubanshe") co-sponsored and co-edited "Artists' News" ("Meishujia tongxun"). The publication of art magazines and journals was facilitated by the establishment of art publishing houses at the national and local level, all of which came under the direct control of official art organisations and, ultimately, the State.⁽²¹⁾

By maintaining a strict monopoly on access to publications, the authorities were able to promote their own policies on art, to criticise heterodox views and artistic trends, and to encourage the kind of creative work that suited current political needs.⁽²²⁾

(b) Exhibitions

Exhibitions, as the second major channel by which Chinese artists gained access to a public audience, also came under the strict control of official art organisations at the national and local level. The first national exhibition held by the Party after taking power was organised by those artists who later went on to occupy the leading positions in the Artists' Association. It was held at the same time as the first National Congress of Literature and Art and it was dominated by works from the old liberated areas "reflecting the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants".⁽²³⁾ Only a small percentage of the work was contributed by "progressive" artists from the areas originally held by the Guomindang.

This exhibition was followed by the "First National Exhibition of Fine Art" (October 1950), also arranged by the Artists' Association. A third exhibition, (October 1951) on the art of ancient China, was organised by the Ministry of Culture to raise patriotic sentiments at a time when China was in the midst of the Korean war. Other exhibitions arranged by either the Artists' Association or the Ministry of Culture or, in some cases, jointly by the two, included a "National Exhibition of Traditional Chinese Painting" (1953), a "National Exhibition of Folk Arts and Crafts" (1953), the "Second National Exhibition of Fine Art" (1955) and the "Second National Exhibition of Traditional Chinese Painting"

(1956).

Artists were themselves effectively precluded from organising their own exhibitions partly due to the monopoly of control held by the Artists' Association and the Ministry of Culture over all suitable public display areas, and partly due to what one artist and art critic termed "the unwritten law that says you do not attempt to hold exhibitions without official permission."⁽²⁴⁾

c. The re-structuring of art educational establishments

Art educational establishments were an integral part of the authorities' aim to achieve comprehensive ideological control in the art world since they were the places where principles and guidelines concerning creative work could be systematically conveyed to art students. As has been seen, at Yan'an, the Party had established the Lu Xun Academy of Art as an experimental institution to help train artists according to Party principles.⁽²⁵⁾ Many of the veteran art cadres and teachers from the Academy had then gone on to occupy the top positions in the new official art organisations after 1949.

In 1949, when the People's Liberation Army swept into China's big cities, it was ordered by the Communist leadership to occupy all key factories, government offices and educational establishments, particularly the big universities. As a measure of the importance the Communists attached to gaining control over all art activity in China, upon entering Beijing and Hangzhou, PLA units were sent to occupy the Beijing College of Art and Hangzhou State College of Art, the two largest and most influential centres of art education and training.⁽²⁶⁾ Later, both institutions were placed under the direct control of the Ministry of Culture, whilst other minor art colleges were run directly by provincial or city education committees.⁽²⁷⁾ Beijing College of Art was subsequently merged with the art department of North China University's Academy of Literature and Art. This was a Communist-dominated arts institution, formed from the original Lu Xun Academy of Art and other base area art organisations and schools which had joined together prior to 1949. Beijing College of Art was re-named the Central Academy of Fine Art in November 1949.⁽²⁸⁾ Hangzhou State College of Art was also renamed as the East China Campus of the Central

Academy of Fine Art.⁽²⁹⁾

Upon taking control of the two establishments, the authorities began to carry out reforms in four general ways:

(1) Party groups were set up to work within them. Although Xu Beihong was appointed principal of the Central Academy, administrative authority in reality lay with an inner circle of five Party members. The five, Hu Yichuan, Wang Zhaowen, Luo Gongliu, Jiang Feng and Zhang Ding, were all old members of the original Lu Xun Academy of Art.⁽³⁰⁾ At Hangzhou, the nominal head was Liu Kaiqu but, again, decision-making was left largely to the two vice-principals, Ni Yide and Jiang Feng, both Party stalwarts. A Party group with Jiang Feng as head was also set up and this further ensured that control of the college would remain firmly in the hands of the Party.⁽³¹⁾

(2) Though most professors and teachers were retained in their posts, there were immediate attempts to alter the educational orientation of the two establishments. A statement issued by Jiang Feng indicated the new direction for art education. He made clear that the basic guidelines to which all art educational establishments should adhere had been set out in Mao's Yan'an Talks, and that accordingly art was to "serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and should be closely associated with revolutionary practice."⁽³²⁾

In a set of regulations drawn up in 1951 by Jiang for the East China Campus of the Central Academy of Fine Art we find further details of the comprehensive range of principles to be applied to art education. The colleges were expected: "(to adopt) educational methods which combine, theory and practise, to cultivate middle- and high-ranking artists of talent who have a revolutionary world outlook and a revolutionary artistic outlook, and who have grasped a definite level of artistic skill to meet the needs of the new democratic construction; to carry out political and ideological education in accordance with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, to eliminate feudal, compradore and fascist anti-revolutionary thinking, to establish a scientific outlook and methods, to develop thinking that is patriotic and directed towards serving the people, and to carry out education in art theory and practical skills using realism and China's (own) national and revolutionary art".⁽³³⁾

(3) The curriculum was re-arranged and teaching methods modified. Art practice

was taken as the cornerstone, with realism as the main creative style. Students and teachers were sent to factories, villages and army barracks to "experience life" ('tiyan shenghuo'), and to collect materials for their work. For both teaching and creative work, the guideline was to be "the political criterion first, the artistic criterion second". In addition, as art was now based on the "needs and likes of the people", so it was directed that the main types of art to be pursued by students should be New Year pictures, picture-story books, propaganda posters and portraits of leaders. During practice sessions, attention was to be paid to sketching because it had a strong illustrative quality. This method had been popular in the old liberated areas. Now, as then, it had the advantage of being mastered quickly and easily, and was well-suited to propaganda work.⁽³⁴⁾

Many aspects of the old curriculum came under attack. The teaching of traditional Chinese painting was criticised for allowing "self-expression", encouraging "ink play" and ignoring realistic themes. Modern Western painting, regarded as being influenced by "Western avant-garde artistic ideas" was also criticised for running counter to Party policy.⁽³⁵⁾

(4) Students from the ranks of workers, peasants and soldiers were actively encouraged to attend art colleges, in order to change the composition of the student body, which till then had been comprised predominantly of those from a professional background. The percentage of such students increased every year from 1949 with the introduction of this policy of positive discrimination. The authorities aim was to train art cadres from suitable social backgrounds to take charge later of the various art establishments. During 1950, fifty individuals attended the Central Academy of Fine Art for short courses specially organised for them.⁽³⁶⁾

From these reforms it is clear that the authorities were determined to exert influence on all aspects of art education. They placed their most reliable and active supporters in key positions of authority, insisted that only art designated as politically desirable should be taught whilst anything else should be criticised and rejected, and lastly, through the selection and training of art students, teachers and cadres from a politically acceptable class background, they aimed to ensure the continuation of left-wing policies in

the art academies and colleges.

Conclusion

The setting up of these organisational structures gave the state unprecedented control over all areas of artistic endeavour. It radically altered the conditions under which Chinese artists had traditionally operated by providing an all-embracing framework within which they were forced to work.

However, institutional means were only one element in the relationship between politics and art. Politicised organisational structures could not, in themselves, guarantee comprehensive control of the art world. In addition, an ideological scheme and an ideological mechanism were necessary for Party principles and policies to be re-interpreted in terms of art theory and applied to the process of artistic creation.

Section 2. The ideological scheme as the theoretical framework for artistic creation

1. The concept of new socialist literature and art. The over-politicization of art.

The ideological scheme formulated by the authorities constituted the basic theoretical framework for all aspects of cultural activity. At its centre was the concept of new socialist literature and art, which was propounded at Mao's Yan'an Talks, and which consisted of a definition of the social function of the arts. This idea did not, in fact, originate with Mao, but had its roots in Marxist theories of art as developed by the early Russian Marxists, such as Plekhanov and Lenin, and Chinese Marxists, in particular Qu Qiubai.

In China during the late 1920s and early 1930s, questions on the essence or fundamental characteristics of art, as well as its class nature, had already been explored by Qu Qiubai. He had stated the Marxist view that art, as a form of social ideology, belonged to the superstructure and reflected and was influenced by social relationships based on economic production, while at the same time having an influence on them.⁽³⁷⁾ He had also confirmed the orthodox Marxist theory of "no art for art's sake", and asserted that art was an important tool in class struggle. In his view art should serve the masses, or more specifically "craftsmen, the urban poor and peasants".⁽³⁸⁾ Later, at Yan'an, Mao was to replace these

three categories of people with his own - the workers, peasants and soldiers. Qu, like other left-wing writers, through his translations of Russian and Soviet theoretical works and his own essays, became a bridge between the Marxist theory of art as understood in the West and the Chinese version as ultimately formulated in Mao's Yan'an Talks. According to one Chinese scholar, Mao's ideas on art for the workers, peasants and soldiers was "the logical development of the Chinese proletarian art movement pioneered by Qu Qiubai and other left-wing writers and artists."⁽³⁹⁾

The practical consequence of the new policy meant that after 1949, most art tended to fall into one of three main categories, according to political content. These categories were:

(1) Work that glorified Party leaders and Party history, including, "Founding Ceremony" (oil painting by Dong Xiwen),⁽⁴⁰⁾ (Plate 1) "A Portrait of Chairman Mao" (sculpture by Liu Kaiqu), "The Memorial to the People's Heroes" (sculpture by Liu Kaiqu et al.), "Fang Zhimin in Prison" (woodblock print by Zhang Huaijiang), "Crossing the (Yangzǐ) River" (woodcut by Gu Yuan) and "Railway Guerillas" (picture-story book by Han Heping).

(2) Art promoting specific Party policies. The editorial of the first issue of the official publication "People's Art" called upon artists to do their utmost to portray the new China, and to promote and propagate the common political programme formulated at the meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, held in 1949.⁽⁴¹⁾ The first edition of "Fine Art" in 1954 reported on a meeting held by the Artists' Association specifically to support the "general Party line during the transitional period",⁽⁴²⁾ which amounted to a call to artists to represent the current political policy in their work. Almost every issue of "People's Art" and "Fine Art" between 1949 and 1956 included articles exhorting artists to study particular policies and to use all appropriate art forms to help the authorities present them. One of the numerous examples was a book entitled "Illustrations on the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries" produced in 1952 during the movements against the "three *ants*"⁽⁴³⁾ and "five *ants*".⁽⁴⁴⁾ The book, which depicted in pictorial form the regulations for the suppression of counter-revolutionaries, sold as many as ten million copies.⁽⁴⁵⁾

(3) Works of a more general political nature or those depicting socialist heroes or the workers, peasants and soldiers. Even those with no obvious association with the workers, peasants and soldiers, or any overtly political theme in their title, such as "The Adventures of San Mao"⁽⁴⁶⁾ by Zhang Leping, could still be considered of value. The "San Mao" cartoon-story book was not originally conceived as a political work, yet it was considered as highly acceptable because it condemned the old pre-1949 society and positively supported the new system.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Other examples of works in this category are Ye Qianyu's oil painting "The Uniting of All the Peoples (Of China)", Zhang Songhe's sculpture "Militiamen", Deng Shu's New Year Painting "Defending Peace" and Li Keran's New Year picture "A Labour Model Visits the Park". We can see from all these examples that the content of many works of art had been imbued with strong political overtones. However, although correct political content was the primary consideration for the authorities, they could not afford to ignore the aesthetic dimension if works were to be successful propaganda. Due to this fact a central tenet of the new socialist art became the aim to achieve a "unification of revolutionary political content and the most perfect artistic form possible".⁽⁴⁸⁾ Crucial implications of this aim were the tendency to over-politicise art, and also the fundamental contradiction facing the artist as he attempted to combine both the political and aesthetic aspects of the formula. Demanding that art should primarily meet a set of political requirements would almost inevitably result in severe limitations being placed not only on the subject matter, but also on the form and 'mood' or 'spirit' of a work of art. Such limitations tend to run counter to the dynamics of the artistic process itself which necessitates the psychological freedom of the artist to explore a multiplicity of phenomena and to depict that which most strongly appeals to his creative imagination.

This contradiction between the concept of new socialist art and its practical application meant that Party ideologues in charge of art were faced with a serious theoretical and practical issue, one that was to become the central concern of Chinese artists also. How exactly were artists to express important political content in the perfect artistic form? What was the most appropriate way of unifying content and form in a politicised cultural context?

Although this problem was encountered by artists working with virtually all art media, I shall focus on the following three areas of particular concern:

1. How to express new political ideas in popular or folk art forms.
2. How to transform traditional Chinese painting with its refined and elitist background so that it could convey political ideas.
3. How to utilise foreign art forms to express political content.

1. Popular or folk art

The issue in this instance was how to combine revolutionary or political content with highly stylised folk art forms⁽⁴⁹⁾ that were popular with, and easily understood by, the masses, including illiterate peasants. For the purpose of this study, I shall take the interesting example of the New Year picture (nianhua) to highlight the problems faced by all folk artists.

(a) The traditional function and style of the New Year picture

The New Year picture was one of the most important Chinese folk art forms. Although originally intended for the urban gentry and merchant families,⁽⁵⁰⁾ since the setting up of the first print workshops more than three hundred years ago it had become a genuine art of the people, closely associated with the events of ordinary life, particularly in the countryside. The forms of the traditional New Year pictures and the techniques used to produce them had been developed and become highly stylised over several generations. The New Year picture images were usually taken from pattern books and reproduced using woodblock printing methods.⁽⁵¹⁾ The pictures were generally characterised by large areas of unmodulated primary colours, diffuse perspective and standardised or formal compositions.

Their traditional content can be divided into five main categories:⁽⁵²⁾

(1) Good luck messages:

"All one's heart desires year after year"

"Health, wealth, happiness and a long life"

"An abundant harvest of all food crops"

(2) Popular stories concerning particular individuals:

"The foolish son-in-law visits his father-in-law"

"Yang Guifei after bathing"

(3) Popular stories based on mythical characters - deities, immortals, fictitious animals with amazing powers, and so on:

"Journey to the West"

"Eight Immortals cross the sea"

(4) Traditional Confucian values:

"Twenty four exemplars of filial piety"

"The three obediences and the four virtues"

(5) Traditional gods:

"The door gods"

"The kitchen god"

"The earth god"

From these five categories, we can see that traditionally, New Year pictures consisted of symbolic pictorial representations of the aspirations, dreams, moral principles and religious beliefs of the Chinese people. They were an expression of a popular collective consciousness and value system developed over many years. In presenting Chinese social life and aspirations in artistic terms, they had strong associations with social behaviour and social relations, becoming, in one sense, an integral part of social ritual. They thus had deep roots in Chinese social consciousness, and were the only examples of art work to be found in many peasant homes.⁽⁵³⁾

(b) The importance of New Year pictures as a propaganda tool.

The Communists had been aware of the importance of New Year pictures at an early stage, and at Yan'an they were used on a wide scale from 1942 for political purposes.⁽⁵⁴⁾ After 1949, of all the various art forms, they again attracted special attention, representing as they did one of the most popular and effective means of disseminating political messages.

In November 1949, Mao personally authorised the issue of a document referring specifically to New Year pictures called "Directive of the Cultural Ministry of the Central People's Government on Launching New Year Picture Work".⁽⁵⁵⁾ The document claimed that in pre-1949 Chinese society, New Year pictures had been used as a medium to convey "feudal ideas and concepts". Therefore, it was important to reform them and create a new type for the purpose of educating the people. The document defined the new themes that were to be used in New Year pictures for the following year as being "the re-birth of a new China", "the great victory of the people's war of liberation", and "the life and struggle of the ordinary labouring people". It advised cultural and educational organisations to encourage artists to create New Year pictures, implicitly acknowledging that there was some reluctance on the part of many urban-oriented artists with a high level of cultural sophistication to engage in work involving an art form usually considered as little more than a rural craft.

The document also encouraged art organisations to cooperate with older and well-established New Year picture painters and, in fact, all folk artists, who were to be given material assistance and help in adapting the traditional forms with which they were familiar to the new political requirements. Finally, it called for the expansion of retail outlets for New Year pictures and other folk art forms, such as small shops, bookstalls and street pedlars.⁽⁵⁶⁾ By these means the political message contained in the pictures could reach a wide audience. Certainly, the new government seems to have had a degree of success in terms of the sheer numbers of pictures and other folk art forms produced in the years immediately following the founding of the new Republic. After 1949, initially only one of the firms producing New Year pictures that had been operational before liberation,

Xiecheng, was able to resume production. It managed this with the help of the central authorities and the Tianjin branch of the Artists' Association. By 1950, it had produced 400,000 copies of 14 types of new New Year pictures.⁽⁵⁷⁾ By 1953, the total circulation nationwide of New Year pictures, picture-story books and propaganda posters produced by a network of newly-established firms had reached a staggering 180 million copies.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In 1952, the figure for New Year pictures alone had been 40 million copies.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Shortly after the issuing of Mao's document, the February 1950 edition of "People's Art" published four major articles on the question of creating modern New Year pictures by reforming their traditional content. In fact, throughout the early 1950s, discussions on New Year pictures and folk art forms in general held a prominent position in official arts magazines.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In 1950 and again in 1952 New Year picture competitions were organised and sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, and several exhibitions were held.⁽⁶¹⁾ The increased emphasis on the pictures by the authorities resulted in many artists, such as Li Keran and Lin Gang switching temporarily or permanently from their usual work to the printing of the new-style New Year pictures. A report written in 1953 even asserts that the production of woodcuts fell significantly in the early 1950s because woodcut artists were diverted from their usual occupation to produce New Year pictures instead.⁽⁶²⁾

(c) Attempts to reform the New Year picture

During the War of Resistance Against Japan, both in the Communist Base areas and in the areas under Guomindang control, efforts had been made to utilise the New Year picture for propaganda purposes. Lai Shaoqi in the Guomindang-held areas, for example, had helped produce "War of Resistance Against Japan door gods."⁽⁶³⁾ At Yan'an initial attempts to use the New Year picture as propaganda were hampered by adherence to its traditional conventions, which caused artists to become "prisoners of ready-made concepts, metaphors and social values."⁽⁶⁴⁾ Difficulties were increased by the attitude of the educated urban artists who often found the traditional New Year picture "backward and repulsive".⁽⁶⁵⁾

After 1949, the authorities continued to be aware of the need to reform the New

Year picture. As Wang Zhaowen stated in 1950: "We cannot and should not deny the advantages of old forms or old techniques, but we also should not tolerate the backwardness of the traditional New Year picture. We cannot equate people's customary sense of aesthetic appreciation with surrendering to old habits and feudal tastes ... People's needs and habits have been formulated in the old society. We cannot just follow them and not try to improve them or to create new forms. We must help people to form new aesthetic concepts. It is an important way to improve the New Year picture".⁽⁶⁶⁾

Of particular concern was the traditional content of New Year pictures which the authorities regarded as being based on fantasy, superstition and other reactionary elements. These had to be replaced by themes of more positive political significance. The political content with which the new pictures were imbued is clearly illustrated by some of the most popular New Year pictures of the early 1950s, such as "Celebrate the Birth of the People's Republic of China", "Chairman Mao Reviews the Troops", "The Founding Ceremony of New China" and "The Peoples of China Unite!"⁽⁶⁷⁾

The New Year picture's traditional form of representation, characterised by exaggerated proportions, simple patterns, vivid colour and dramatic composition, was also regarded as too outmoded for the new messages it was to convey. Its standardised mode of representation was in direct conflict with the authorities' demand that artists should "paint from real life" and depict "the hot revolutionary struggle" and "socialist construction". Therefore, after 1949, attempts were made to infuse the new New Year pictures with more realistic techniques of representation. Shi Lu, in his report, summarising the work being carried out in the Shaan Gan Ning⁽⁶⁸⁾ area in 1950, commented that the new form of New Year pictures was based on classical realism, influenced by Western artistic methods, though he did not go on to specify which aspects of realism this involved.⁽⁶⁹⁾ The majority of New Year pictures were by 1950 also being produced with stone plates and offset lithography, rather than the wood-blocks traditionally used by the peasants and by the Communists in the old liberated areas.⁽⁷⁰⁾ These methods produced a stronger and clearer definition of line and a more refined image, and may have been considered a more appropriate vehicle for a formal realistic style.

However, these reforms of the New Year picture were still not able to resolve the difficulties artists had been experiencing since Yan'an over how to utilise this traditional art form to convey a political message convincingly. Before long, the authorities themselves began to notice that there was still much room for improvement. They complained that many New Year pictures were "neither fish nor fowl", and that artists had not succeeded in fundamentally altering the old content and form of the pictures. Vivid examples of this were cited: traditional pictures of the God of Fortune and the Four Heavenly Kings were now being used to depict People's Liberation Army heroes, with the result that the soldiers were beginning to look like the old God of Fortune; a political banner with the slogan "Support Chairman Mao" was simply added to the traditional representation of the "Three Gentlemen", Happiness, Wealth and Longevity; features of the traditional image of the door god were incorporated into the depictions of workers, peasants and soldiers.⁽⁷¹⁾ Wang Zhaowen, art critic and influential member of the Artists' Association, criticised in particular a New Year picture of Mao, titled "We Are Together With Chairman Mao" (Fig. 1) which even appeared in Hong Kong in the Communist-supported newspaper "Dagongbao". Not only did it portray the workers, peasants and soldiers surrounding Mao as caricatures but it also represented Mao himself with an inordinately large head and a small body. Wang complained that it had produced a cartoon-like effect, making Mao look foolish by "distorting the people's leader".⁽⁷²⁾ Shi Lu, in his report from the Shaan Gan Ning area, also had to admit that despite efforts to incorporate a measure of realism into the New Year pictures, the images portrayed were far from being "realistic", - with the workers not looking like workers, and the same being true for peasants and soldiers.⁽⁷³⁾

The failure to reform traditional New Year pictures successfully was to some extent acknowledged by Cai Ruohong at a meeting in 1954 specifically to discuss them. In his speech, called "When Creating New Year Pictures the Good Traditions of Popular New Year Pictures Should Be Developed,"⁽⁷⁴⁾ he pointed out that, according to the opinions of peasants and workers, most of them were dissatisfied with the new-style New Year pictures. When asked what they disliked and approved of in the pictures, the replies they gave revealed a continuing appreciation of those features most closely associated with traditional pictures.

They did not want to look at anything considered unlucky, unintelligible or devoid of bright colours. (Shi Lu had acknowledged that because of printing difficulties and the need to keep costs down, only light washes of red, yellow or blue colour tended to be used in the New Year pictures. This lack of bright colour and an insufficient variety of colour was deemed by him to have affected the pictures' general quality.⁽⁷⁵⁾) Amongst the opinions heard there was no mention of any of the "feudal" or "superstitious" elements so disapproved of by the authorities.

The five themes positively welcomed by the workers and peasants comprised "the rivers and mountains of the motherland", a growing family, a happy marriage and family life, technical knowledge related to production, and scientific knowledge. Of these, only the last two can be regarded as having strong political overtones, whilst three out of the five are typically traditional subjects. After five years of Communist rule, it appeared that workers and, in particular, peasants were continuing to cling to their own cultural heritage. It seemed that the new-style New Year picture had at this stage largely failed to win them over.

2. Traditional Chinese painting

Policies towards traditional Chinese painting gave rise to the same kind of contradiction as that facing the reform of the New Year pictures, and in some ways the problem was much more acute. Traditional Chinese painting was regarded by the authorities as being at the opposite end of the social spectrum to folk art, and it was looked upon as an elite art form far removed from the lives of ordinary people. Over the centuries it had been developed and refined exclusively by the literati or scholar-official class and was thus considered by the Communist authorities to express the world view of the social elite. It was produced by the brush and ink method, and consisted primarily of landscapes, flower-and-bird painting and figurative painting, none of which accorded with the authorities' requirements that art should reflect "the struggle of the workers, peasants and soldiers"! Flower-and-bird painting was particularly inappropriate for conveying political ideas. In addition, one of the most common styles of traditional Chinese painting, the "xieyi" style or freehand brushwork characterised by vivid expression and bold outlines, lacked

many elements of classical realism, such as single-point perspective and dissection, which was being increasingly favoured by the authorities.

At Yan'an there appear to have been no major debates on the relative merits and defects of traditional Chinese painting. The Communist Party at that stage concentrated largely on utilising folk art forms which were simple and economical to produce and which held the greatest appeal for the local people. In addition, the vast majority of traditional Chinese painters had elected to remain within the Guomindang areas, rather than join the revolutionaries at Yan'an. After 1949, however, the authorities had to deal with a sizeable group of traditional Chinese painters and formulate some kind of policy towards them. Once again, it was Mao's pronouncements in 1942 that formed the basis for this policy.

At Yan'an, Mao had declared that "tradition was to serve the present" (guweijinyong) and he had called for a "pushing out of the old to bring out the new" ("tuichenchuxin").⁽⁷⁶⁾ Both of these slogans advocated a critical assimilation of those aspects of traditional Chinese art which could be usefully adapted to the new political requirements. These observations of Mao's were taken as the basic guidelines for the reform of traditional Chinese painting, but they offered no real insights as to which aspects of traditional Chinese painting should be considered as "feudal dregs" and which as "fragrant flowers". This problem, which in many respects was the continuation of the controversy that had been going on since the turn of the century over how best to reform traditional painting,⁽⁷⁷⁾ thus became a major issue of debate in the official organs of the Artists' Association, "People's Art" and "Fine Art".

Li Keran, a prominent traditional Chinese painter, presented his view that the problem with traditional Chinese painting lay in the fact that it had become too closely associated with 'subjective self-expression' and that it over-emphasised a "likeness in spirit" (shen si) at the expense of "likeness in form" (xing si). "Likeness in spirit" refers to one of the basic concepts of traditional Chinese painting, which dictated that the main purpose of the artist was to produce not a faithful representation of the objective world, as is the aim of realist and naturalist artists in the West, but to capture the essence or "spirit" of the natural world and to express this in terms of the artist's personal subjective understanding

of and reaction to this "spirit"! Li claimed that this tendency had caused traditional Chinese painting to be "driven into a dead-end" and into the "cage of formalism", due to its detachment from "objective reality" and the "lives of the ordinary people".⁽⁷⁸⁾

Li Hua, a woodcut artist from the Yan'an days and now an executive committee member of the Artists' Association, went further in his criticisms by asserting that a precondition for the reform of traditional Chinese painting was the removal of the "literati ideas and concepts" that governed it. According to Li, this could only be achieved if there was a fundamental change in artists' thinking, causing them to reject their cultural traditions and embrace a new system of values based on political criteria. He stated bluntly that landscape and flower-and-bird painting had no place in the new era of traditional Chinese painting and that traditional aesthetic principles like "breath resonance"⁽⁷⁹⁾ ("qi yun") which had formerly comprised an integral component of traditional Chinese painting, should not be pursued as ends in themselves. His vision of how traditional Chinese painting should be reformed consisted of painters adopting "Socialist Realist content".⁽⁸⁰⁾

His opinions were shared by others, particularly many Yan'an veterans who had been influenced by art practice in the Soviet Union, which was based on 19th century European realism. Of special significance were the views of one of the most powerful figures in the art world, Jiang Feng, who made it clear that he believed it was extremely difficult for traditional Chinese painting to portray socialist life without major changes in its content and methods of representation.⁽⁸¹⁾ Later, Jiang would be accused of deliberately suppressing traditional Chinese painting in the early 1950s because of his alleged prejudice against it.

On the issue of the reform of traditional painting forms or techniques, artists formed into two main groups:

(a) The "reformers"

They tended to be advocates of the reform of both the content and technique of traditional Chinese painting, arguing that a unity of technique and content was required to produce a complete and effective work of art. As the portrayal of the new socialist life in China required new themes, so would it need new forms.

In Cai Ruohong's view, if traditional Chinese painters used only traditional methods to depict socialist life, it would result in a weaker, less dramatic expression of the subject and thus reduce its impact. He advised that painters should develop new techniques to deal with themes never touched before by traditional painters. He, like most "reformers", suggested using "realistic" (that is to say, scientific) methods to force traditional painting out of its impasse, stating that painters should focus more on the training technique of "xiusheng" or "painting or sketching quickly on-the-spot"⁽⁸²⁾ (a technique often employed by Western landscapists).

An article by another "reformer", Hong Yiran, encouraged painters to do their utmost to create new forms, citing the artist Shi Lu as a good example of someone who, although a relative newcomer to traditional Chinese painting, (he had originally trained as a woodcut artist), had been experimenting with new painting techniques.⁽⁸³⁾ Shi Lu was, in fact, regarded as a leading reformist of traditional Chinese painting in the early 1950s, along with Jiang Zhaohe.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Both had been attempting to infuse their work with techniques more commonly associated with academic oil painting, such as modelling and single-point perspective.

(b) The "conservatives"

The "conservatives" included several of the most prominent traditional Chinese painters, such as Fu Baoshi, as well as many lesser artists.⁽⁸⁵⁾ They organised a counter-attack against the "reformers" by accusing them of ignoring or rejecting China's cultural tradition and of blindly worshipping the West. They in addition spared no effort in stressing the historical importance and aesthetic values of traditional Chinese painting, showing little inclination to alter its basic forms. Mo Pu, for example, argued that in depicting human figures and landscapes, traditional Chinese painting had its own unique qualities, because "with a few simple brushstrokes, one can at the same time depict the characteristics and spiritual state of the object."⁽⁸⁶⁾ The prawns of Qi Baishi and all of Shi Tao's work were cited as vivid illustrations of this point. Mo Pu then went on to refute the most serious charge laid against traditional Chinese painters by the "reformers" - that it

could not portray "real life" because it was lacking in scientific method. He stated that "in traditional Chinese landscape painting there is the use of heavy and light layers of ink to depict various kinds of scenery and to convey a sense of vast space. In figure painting, (we) use simple lines to depict different qualities of the human form, something that can be clearly seen in the figures at Dunhuang. Therefore, the people who claim that in comparison with traditional Chinese painting, Western painting is so much more rational and scientific, and say that the former has no perspective, no dissection and no genuine colour are actually basing their arguments on ignorance of the true essence of traditional Chinese painting methods".⁽⁸⁷⁾

Pan Tianshou echoed this view when he stated: "If we use Western techniques such as the method of light and shade in traditional Chinese painting it will obscure its unique beauty of line. Traditional Chinese painting methods encompass the unification of form and soul. Any compromise will weaken its unique nature and decrease its brightness".⁽⁸⁸⁾

This polarisation of views was eventually acknowledged by the art authorities, who admitted that the main contradiction in traditional Chinese painting was that of form and content. Zhang Ding, deputy head of the Central Academy of Fine Art, observed that traditional Chinese painting had a long history and had developed a highly stylised and sophisticated form, but that this had led it to become remote from reality and the demands of the people. He claimed that the problem of how to overcome the limitations of this art form to portray the new life had become so acute that most people had either maintained a conservative stance and opposed any kind of reform, or went to the other extreme and denied tradition totally. Though Zhang criticised both tendencies he was, himself, unable to provide any credible solution to help resolve the contradiction.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Similarly, Zhou Yang, the Party ideological chief in charge of cultural affairs, in a speech to the Artists' Association, also acknowledged the existence of two opposing attitudes, one conservative and one nihilist, towards China's cultural heritage. Though he too criticised both as being harmful, he revealed his own uncertainty over how traditional Chinese painting should be practically reformed in his nebulous idea that artists should "inherit a realistic spirit" and

'possess an affinity with the people'.⁽⁹⁰⁾

As pressure for its politicization continued, traditional Chinese painting began to be forced to accommodate such themes as "The Newly Constructed Office of the Red Star Collective Farm", "Striving to Sell Surplus Grain" and "Always Be On Your Guard". However, at this early stage, the contradiction that had become highlighted in the discussions on the reform of traditional Chinese painting was also manifested in some of the work produced. Arnold Chang, in his assessment of Pan Yun's traditional Chinese painting "The Liberation of the Great Southwest Leads the Troops Onward" (1951)⁽⁹¹⁾ describes it thus: "... (It) depicts a group of soldiers encircling a host of dancers and musicians dressed in local costume. In the background are a series of Chinese style homes, and beyond them a vast range of mountain peaks. A line of soldiers move horizontally in the distance, behind a rock mass, and up an incline. The landscape is painted in the conventional Chinese manner; the scene is divided into three parts, foreground, middleground and background. The brushwork and light colouring are reminiscent of Ming dynasty works; the handling of the buildings, rocks and clouds is sensitive and accomplished. But the treatment of the figures and horses and the bright red banners and flags is more like the type of outline and colour drawing employed in nien-hua (New Year pictures). These two types of representation seem totally incompatible in this work. In addition, the artist has made no effort (or if he has, he has not succeeded) to reconcile the traditional three distances of the Chinese landscape with the linear perspective required for accurate portrayal of the figure grouping. The result is a terribly unconvincing recession into depth and a confused distortion of scale. One feels that this artist is caught between two worlds, but is still a good deal more comfortable in the old one than in the new".⁽⁹²⁾ Similar problems were also apparent from a major review of the First National Exhibition of Traditional Chinese Painting held in Beijing in 1953, in which it was pointed out that the task of trying to use the old form of traditional Chinese painting to express life 'realistically' was causing difficulties. At the same time, attempts to adapt certain Western painting methods to the traditional Chinese form were also deemed unsatisfactory. The review particularly mentioned landscapes which appeared to have figures grafted on to them. The background landscape was clearly traditional in style, but it

was claimed the figures in the foreground had been produced using Western painting techniques and thus gave the impression that they were cut-out figures from elsewhere and simply affixed to the original landscape. The review commented that even the work of Jiang Zhaohe and Shi Lu needed improvement because the faces in their paintings looked dirty and unnatural due to the incorrect application of Western painting techniques. It ended on the gloomy note that after four years of debate and artistic practice with no real results, the question of how best to develop a new style of traditional Chinese painting still remained.⁽⁹³⁾ Perhaps a solution could be found by altering the basic form, but if this were done, "Would that really be traditional Chinese painting or Western water-colour painting?"⁽⁹⁴⁾

As a final point, it should be noted that not all traditional Chinese painters were forced to compromise over their work by attempting to politicise it. Several of the more prominent painters in particular, like Qi Baishi, Huang Binhong, Pan Tianshou and Yu Fei'an, were relatively unaffected by the new political climate. Even the commemorative paintings they were on occasions asked to produce usually consisted of representations of traditional subjects such as flowers or birds. They were tolerated by the authorities because they were seen as the main upholders of China's 'artistic heritage', about which the authorities were to remain ambivalent over the next few decades. On the one hand, traditional Chinese painting was regarded as an art of the Chinese social elite, but, on the other, it was also a symbol of the sophisticated brilliance of Chinese culture and, therefore, a matter of national pride. At a time when the new government was striving to establish its political legitimacy throughout the country, it could not afford to be seen adopting a nihilistic attitude towards traditional painting. For this reason, although some traditional Chinese painters were badly treated after 1949,⁽⁹⁵⁾ and most were either passively discouraged from continuing their work by being denied public spaces to exhibit⁽⁹⁶⁾ or actively encouraged to adapt it to the new political requirements, a small group were left to continue to produce, exhibit and publish paintings in their own personal idiom.

3. Foreign art

Debates had taken place amongst Chinese artists on the relative merits of foreign art since the turn of the century and particularly after the May 4th movement. The question asked had been the same as that of traditional Chinese painting - which aspects of foreign art were worth adopting to revitalise Chinese art and which should be disregarded. Many artists had travelled abroad to study art in Europe and Japan and had then returned to pass on their knowledge and expertise to students at home.⁽⁹⁷⁾

At Yan'an the situation was complex. Many of the woodcut artists had been heavily influenced by the Europeans Käthe Kollwitz and Frans Masereel and a few had interests in modern Western oil painting styles, particularly Impressionism; at the same time, the Soviet Union's adaptation of European academic realism for its own political purposes in the form of Socialist Realism was an idea beginning to gain ground. In 1942, however, most experimentation in purely foreign art forms came to an end, with Mao's push for the "sinification of Marxism" and a search for local solutions to local problems.⁽⁹⁸⁾ In art, as we have seen, this involved concentrating on folk art forms that appealed to the Chinese peasants, rather than imitating foreign styles which the peasants were said to have disliked.

Nevertheless, at Yan'an Mao had not totally rejected the possibility of utilising aspects of foreign art as long as they could be shown to be useful to the Communist cause. His concept "foreign things to serve China" (*yang wei zhong yong*) dictated that all elements of foreign culture were to be selected, analysed and divided into the "cream" or "best" (*jinghua*) and the "dross" or "dregs" (*zaopo*). The dross was to be rejected and the best retained to serve the new situation.⁽⁹⁹⁾

After 1949 the art authorities, on the basis of these rather vague guidelines, defined what was worth saving in "foreign" art and what had to be rejected, and in so doing formulated a set of basic policies. What they decided to adopt was essentially classical realism and, in particular, the form it had taken in the Soviet Union, Socialist Realism. In the first issue of "People's Art" in 1950, an article written by Jiang Feng on Italian Renaissance painting linked classical realism with the stage of capitalist ascendancy in the

West and affirmed its progressive nature.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ In fact, almost all articles on foreign art in official publications after 1949 were concerned with either classical realism or Soviet Socialist Realism. The only modern Western art published tended to be work that embodied strong elements of realism, as exemplified by a feature on a selection of French, Italian and American modern woodcuts. As Jiang Feng pointed out, "Although the cutting method and style of these works are diverse, nevertheless they all take as their starting point the requirement to express a real or true image."⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Most modern Western art was, however, criticised as decadent and reactionary and totally unsuited to portraying life in Socialist China. It was labelled as being associated with the declining stage of capitalism, and branded at the theoretical level as "formalism" (xingshizhuyi).⁽¹⁰²⁾ Using Mao's analysis of acceptable and unacceptable foreign art, the authorities criticised Chinese artists whose work betrayed signs of supposedly undesirable tendencies from abroad. Lin Fengmian and Pang Xunqin, the most prominent representatives of the so-called "new-style painting" (xin huapai), based on modern Western art styles,⁽¹⁰³⁾ at the East China Branch of the Central Academy of Fine Art in Hangzhou, were forced to make self-criticisms. Lin admitted: "The road I previously took was wrong and this has been a bad influence on my students,"⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ whilst Pang confessed: "I also advocated the new-style painting but today I must put into practice the new teaching principles. I hope I can redeem my errors."⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

Impressionism was singled out for particular criticism because, of all the modern and contemporary Western styles of art, it was, and had been since Yan'an, one of the most popular in China. Impressionism's emphasis on light and colour to the exclusion of all else meant that form was considered as taking precedence over content, something to which the authorities had always been directly opposed. It was, therefore, dismissed as being essentially a "formalistic method guided by subjectivism".⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Socialist Realism

In 1951 Zhou Yang stated that the Chinese "must learn from other countries and especially from the Soviet Union. Socialist Realist literature and art are the most beneficial

spiritual food for the Chinese people and the broad ranks of the intelligentsia and youth."⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Over the following years, there was a continuous stream of pronouncements on the importance of Socialist Realism, such as that made at a meeting called by the Ministry of Culture in July 1955, emphasising the theoretical principles of Socialist Realism as they applied to art.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

The philosophical basis of Socialist Realism

The Marxist view of art is based on the theory of reflection (*fanyinglun*), consisting of two components.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ These two components were originally part of two different philosophical approaches, both of which were major influences on Marx. They were:

(a) The material (mechanical) realist approach adopted by the 18th century French Encyclopaedia School and the empirical tradition in Western philosophy, closely associated with mechanical science and mathematics, and, in art, with various scientific techniques such as perspective and shading. The aim of such art was to produce a scientific likeness of the material or external world, or to produce a mirror-image of objective existence or reality.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

(b) Objective idealism, based on Plato's Universal Form⁽¹¹¹⁾ or Hegel's Abstract Categories or Absolute Ideas.⁽¹¹²⁾ This approach takes the ideal world as the essence or foundation of the world we live in. Abstract ideas and concepts constitute the foundation of practical existence. They have a transcendent or independent existence external to the individual subjective faculties. One example of this which is relevant to the realm of art is the concept of Beauty. In objective idealism, Beauty is not "in the eye of the beholder," but exists as a set of absolute criteria that determine an object as being beautiful, regardless of subjective perceptions. Objective idealism is in one way similar to the materialist approach in that it aims to project a mirror-image of the world, but of the ideal and not the material world.

Socialist Realism is a synthesis of these two approaches. If we look at Socialist Realist art we find aspects of it that clearly indicate a reflection of the material world in its representations of peasants, workers, factories and farms, and in the predominance of work with a strong plot or story-line. But we also find that it embodies idealised elements, dramatic composition, the liberal use of bright colours (particularly red), and so on. Marx himself indicates that it is these two factors which constitute the foundation of Socialist Realism: "... to reflect life truthfully according to real social content and ... to evaluate life from the heights of Communist ideals."⁽¹¹³⁾

The theory of reflection obviously entails an over-emphasis on the cognitive dimension of art, since one must first and foremost have an understanding of the external world (as well as knowledge of a host of relevant abstract principles) if one is to depict it competently. One important consequence of this emphasis on the cognitive element is the overriding importance in artistic work of content, using standard forms according to fixed "scientific" criteria. This approach can be seen in the work of some Russian and Soviet theorists, most noticeably Belinsky, which led them to the conclusion that the difference between art, science and philosophy is only in their outward forms, their content being fundamentally the same, sharing as they do the same basic principles.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Socialist Realist art in China

Chinese Socialist Realism had its antecedents in Soviet Socialist Realism, which was formally adopted by the Soviets in 1934 once Stalin had managed to bring cultural activities firmly under his control. Soviet Socialist Realism was based on the late nineteenth century Social Realism of Ilya Repin and his colleagues, who were collectively known as the Peredvizhniki or "Wanderers".⁽¹¹⁵⁾ They in turn had based their work on the formal realism of the European academies, infusing it with themes of human poverty and degradation, which reflected their own sense of social responsibility. Socialist Realism adopted the formal aspects of "the Wanderers" paintings but its content was based on the Communist ideals of which Marx wrote.

Similarly in China, Socialist Realist works were to be used for "combining the

reality of today with the ideals of tomorrow."⁽¹¹⁶⁾ A good definition of what work produced in the Socialist Realist style might look like is given by Ellen Johnston Laing in her book "The Winking Owl" : "For figural subjects, the principal individuals are placed at or near the center of the composition, they usually are highly colored and detailed, and they often are spotlighted with natural or artificial light, which throws into shadow the secondary surrounding figures, necessarily rendered in darker tones and less detail. Attention is focused on the main figures not only by their central location in the composition, by the color and lighting, but also by their placement at the apex of a triangular ground plane the diagonal sides of which are formed by lesser figures or by objects. The triangle also creates a wedge into depth from the foreground to the midground. In some cases the figures, in active poses and gestures, may be in a compact pyramidal grouping. In landscapes a common feature, perhaps associated not so much with academic work as with the elementary lessons of perspective, is a serpentine or curving line of figures curling into the distance with the figures diminishing in scale as they recede".⁽¹¹⁷⁾

It should be remembered, however, that by no means all the art produced after 1949 was in the Socialist Realist mode. It tended to be reserved mainly for oil painting (Plate 2)(like Socialist Realism itself a foreign import), to a lesser extent for New Year pictures and other folk art forms, and infrequently for traditional Chinese painting.

The introduction of Socialist Realism into China after 1949 was facilitated by the initial contacts Chinese artists had with Western art during the early 20th century. Several artists influential in the newly-established Artists' Association and art academies, such as Xu Beihong and Liu Kaiqu had studied the methods of academic realism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ As both academic realism and Socialist Realism are normative-based, it was relatively easy for them to switch from producing nude studies and paintings of still life to those depicting Party leaders, smiling peasants and workers. In addition, Xu Beihong, as head of the Central Academy of Fine Art, played an important role in the spreading the influence of formal realism, that comprised the foundation of Socialist Realism, throughout China's art educational establishments.

The dominance of Soviet influence

The new Chinese government looked to the Soviet Union, its ideological mentor, for guidance and material help in achieving "socialist reconstruction". This resulted in a high degree of Soviet influence in Chinese political, cultural, industrial and agricultural affairs as the Soviets sent advisors and technical equipment to assist their Communist neighbour.

As a consequence of this, prominent Soviet artists and art theorists like Gerasimov and Rukov were invited to China to deliver lectures, and their Chinese counterparts, including Jiang Feng, Luo Gongliu and Cai Ruohong, were sent on visits to the Soviet Union.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Exhibitions of Soviet and Eastern European art in the Socialist Realist style were regularly featured in official art publications, and vast numbers of translated publications on Soviet art and art theory appeared during the early 1950s. One educational establishment alone, the East China Branch of the Central Academy of Fine Art, Hangzhou, over a period of just four years (1952 to 1956) translated and published a whole range of Soviet books on art, such as "Soviet Plastic Arts Over the Last Thirty Years", and "The World Significance of the Soviet Plastic Arts", as well as others on Soviet historical paintings, landscapes, posters, political cartoons and illustrations, altogether totalling more than eighty titles.⁽¹²⁰⁾

The theoretical principles of Soviet Socialist Realism were inculcated into groups of Chinese students who attended art courses in the Soviet Union. In China, these ideas were disseminated mainly by the Soviet artist Maximov, who held a training class in Beijing from February 1955 to July 1957.⁽¹²¹⁾ At this class, students were introduced to the ideas of the 19th century Russian art theorist, Chistiakov,⁽¹²²⁾ who dictated that artists must "depict an object in such a way that it looks as it exists in the natural world and as our eyes see it."⁽¹²³⁾ This was to be achieved through laying inordinate stress on fine drawing, which was regarded as being "scientific" and "objective", and at the same time dispensing largely with colour, which was branded as "subjective".⁽¹²⁴⁾

The adoption of Socialist Realism in China and the rejection of all other Western schools of art inevitably resulted in extreme limitations being placed on the work of artists. Most oil paintings, and many New Year pictures, woodblock prints, woodcuts and propaganda

posters became expressions of political formulae, artistic manifestations of political concepts and reflectors of "socialist reality". A superficial reconciliation of the contradiction between content and form was only achieved by the application of sharp restrictions on the style of work that could be produced, which resulted in oil painting in particular becoming stultified and characterised by a great deal of repetition.

Eventually, the authorities recognised the limitations and disadvantages of their restrictive policies. At a conference on the teaching of oil painting, the Deputy Cultural Minister, Liu Zhiming, admitted that "Our oil painting still has no style. In the future we will advocate a variety of schools and styles ... the oil painting profession itself ought to have many different schools. In the arts, what has to be avoided at all costs is 'sameness'. In the future there should be a diversity of styles".⁽¹²⁵⁾

Liu's comments amounted virtually to an open acceptance of the failure of the authorities' art policies with regard to the adaption of Western art to suit Chinese requirements. His sentiments were to be echoed many times over during the liberal period of the "Hundred Flowers" (to be discussed in the next chapter). Only by severely limiting the range and scope of artistic expression to an extremely narrow domain had the authorities managed to cover up temporarily the contradictions caused by their own ideological scheme. However, narrowing the options open to artists resulted in a constant re-working of a small number of political themes in the same style and this would inevitably lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of artistic works as tools for educational or propaganda purposes. The question of how to sustain the effectiveness of a work of art or how to link content and form so that in depicting important political themes its aesthetic dimension need not be sacrificed was one that still awaited a satisfactory answer.

Section 3 The political movement as a means of control

The third important factor in the relationship between art and politics in China was the way in which the authorities used political movements (*zhengzhi sixiang yundong*) as an effective means of control, to affirm their ideological line and to assert their monopoly of power in the cultural field by imposing what amounted to an ideological terror. The

political movement was considered by them as a necessary manoeuvre to bring intellectuals periodically into line and it formed part of their policy towards intellectuals of alternating periods of relaxation with periods of repression. Relaxation allowed breathing space for some development of intellectual and cultural work within the parameters set by the authorities; repression was seen as a means of circumventing scepticism, dissent or any intellectual challenge which might threaten the ideological monopoly of the Party.

Between 1949 and 1956 there were three main political movements that particularly affected intellectuals. Though originally not aimed at the art world, they eventually developed into wider campaigns embracing all aspects of cultural endeavour, including art. The three were:

- (1) The criticism of the film "The Story of Wu Xun" (Wu Xun Zhuan), 1951
- (b) The criticism of Yu Pingbo's research into "Dream of the Red Chamber" (Hong lou meng), 1954
- (c) The campaign against Hu Feng, 1955

These political movements shared certain common features, which in fact also characterised several later campaigns:

- (1) They all began from one particular event which then caused reverberations throughout the intellectual-cultural world, becoming ultimately nationwide political movements.
- (2) The academic discussion surrounding them was always finally turned into a political discussion, that is to say, the intellectual debate was always made the prelude to a political movement.
- (3) The method of severe widespread criticism of intellectuals was utilised to eradicate any signs of dissent and to force intellectuals into making self-criticisms.
- (4) Intellectuals were kept in line by placing restraints on their intellectual and creative work.

- (a) The criticism of "The Story of Wu Xun"

In May 1951, the "People's Daily" published Mao's article, "We Should Pay

Great Attention to the Film 'The Story of Wu Xun', " which became the signal for the first political movement aimed at criticising "feudal bourgeois ideology".⁽¹²⁶⁾ In fact, "The Story of Wu Xun" was a run-of-the-mill film released in February 1951, depicting an historical figure, Wu Xun, who lived during the last years of the Qing dynasty, and who devoted his life to the cause of providing free education. The real point of the criticism was revealed in an article in the "Literary and Art Gazette" by Zhou Yang, the title of which, "Ideas Which Oppose the People and History, and Art That Opposes Realism", gives some indication of the basic theme of the movement. Zhou Yang claimed that the discussion of the film concerned not only the film itself, but also all cultural, educational and social science circles throughout China. He called it a "serious ideological debate relating to two different views of history"; "The Story of Wu Xun" supposedly representing the "anti-people's view of history". Its themes and characters were condemned by Zhou as "reactionary".⁽¹²⁷⁾ The crux of his argument focused on the characterisation of the main figure in the film, Wu Xun, and the ideas he expressed. Zhou Yang summarised them thus: "Wu Xun is depicted as a lonely idealist. He walked a long, bitter road ... but this image of the loner produced feelings of respect amongst petty bourgeois intellectuals in the audience." He continued by saying that when "petty bourgeois intellectuals" failed to associate themselves with the masses, they always ended up weak, hesitant and lonely. They were faced with two alternatives - either to give themselves up to the Party and the people, or to rely on individual philosophy and struggle. He concluded: "The film 'The Story of Wu Xun', leans towards the latter tendency."⁽¹²⁸⁾

Clearly Zhou's main purpose was not only to criticise this film, but also, through a particular interpretation of its characters and themes, to criticise independent and individualistic tendencies among Chinese intellectuals.

A few months later, a rectification movement began in cultural circles which was linked to the controversy over "The Story of Wu Xun". In this movement, Zhou Yang and Hu Qiaomu both repeatedly advised artists and other cultural figures to reform and divest themselves of their "petty-bourgeois outlook and artistic view".⁽¹²⁹⁾

During the movement to attack "The Story of Wu Xun" and the following

rectification movement, with the exception of Jiang Qing's criticism of the publication of "The Wu Xun Pictorial" ("Wu Xun Huazhuan"), there were few individual artists who were directly implicated.⁽¹³⁰⁾ However, the general effects of the two movements on art circles were by no means insignificant. Artists who had previously objected to art being used solely for political purposes, who had objected to being "loyal court painters" ("Yu yong huajia") and who were against the popularisation of art and the placing of political considerations before artistic ones, and those who strongly advocated improvements in artistic techniques, were all said to have been severely criticised, and their "misguided tendencies" suppressed.⁽¹³¹⁾ Self-criticisms were made even by prominent individuals in the art world, such as Hu Qiao and Yan Han, who admitted that their work tended towards formalism, as a result of their over-emphasis on Western art, particularly its technical aspects.⁽¹³²⁾

The main thrust of the rectification, however, was directed not so much at individuals, but at art institutions, particularly the Central Academy of Fine Art, which came under attack for the "bourgeois ideology" that was said to permeate the educational policies of its leadership.⁽¹³³⁾ Because the main criticisms were directed at institutions rather than individuals, most artists survived this movement relatively unscathed.

Nevertheless, in bringing art much closer to politics by forcing artists to participate actively in a political movement, the authorities were able to gain greater compliancy from artists over the demand that "art should serve politics". Though it is extremely difficult to find concrete evidence, some commentators have observed that following this movement, the number of art works directly reflecting political themes increased dramatically.⁽¹³⁴⁾

(b) The criticism of Yu Pingbo's research on "Dream of the Red Chamber"

In September 1954, Li Xifan and Lan Ling, two undergraduates at Shandong University, published an article in the University's academic journal "Literature, History and Philosophy" ("Wen Shi Zhe") criticising the "idealist" views of the scholar Yu Pingbo as expressed in his research on the classical Chinese novel "Dream of the Red Chamber". Mao Zedong, on the pretext that the "Literary and Art Gazette", the official organ of the

Association of Chinese Writers and Artists, had refused to publish the article, accused the magazine of using its powerful position to put up obstacles against those without privilege and he thus inflated the significance of the whole affair. It grew into another political movement comparable to the furore over the film "The Story of Wu Xun".⁽¹³⁵⁾ During this campaign Mao and other Party ideologues first defined the school represented by Yu Pingbo and Hu Shi⁽¹³⁶⁾ in the field of classical literary research as the 'idealist school', which was associated with "bourgeois" ideas.⁽¹³⁷⁾ Mao personally dictated the style and tempo of the movement, and, as in the case of the previous movement, the campaign was also not limited to one narrow area but covered the entire cultural and social science field. Cultural and academic journals published articles attacking Yu Pingbo and Hu Shi, and in the cultural field, so-called "bourgeois idealism" became the target of attack.

Again, although no individual artist or work of art was singled out for criticism it did have an impact on the art world at large. Once the "Literary and Art Gazette" editorial board had, under pressure from Mao, been forced to make a self-criticism for excluding "small figures" ("xiao renwu" - a reference to its failure to publish the original article that had initiated the campaign, written by the two students Li Xifan and Lan Ling), the editorial board of "Fine Art" also came under pressure to make its own self-criticism. Finally, it gave way and in December 1954, it admitted that it had failed to be vigilant against "bourgeois idealism" in its work, to use the correct political criteria in selecting works of art to be published in the magazine, and to go all out to support and promote the younger generation of artists and art critics. It ended by saying that it would do its best to overcome all shortcomings.⁽¹³⁸⁾ In the same issue, in an article entitled "We Must Clear Away Bourgeois Views in Art Criticism", the influential woodcut artist Li Hua, was criticised as an advocate of idealism in art criticism.⁽¹³⁹⁾ An interesting point to note is that, although these political campaigns were mainly targeted against non-Party artists or intellectuals as part of the process of integrating them into the system, the campaigns almost always affected some Party art cadres, like Li Hua, who were accused either of being too lax in executing their authority over artists or of not being completely in line themselves with a particular policy.

3. The campaign against Hu Feng⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

Of the three movements, the campaign against Hu Feng was the most severe and extensive. Hu Feng and members of his so-called "clique" were not only criticised academically and politically, but their works also became known as "poisonous weeds" and disappeared from bookstores overnight. They themselves were condemned as counter-revolutionaries and sent to prison, labour camps or exiled to remote areas. Mao called them "... a counter-revolutionary clique secretly hidden in the revolutionary camp."⁽¹⁴¹⁾

In addition to criticising Hu Feng's "bourgeois idealism", Mao also emphasised the incorrect nature of one of Hu Feng's key view points - "sameness in public opinion" ("Yulun yilü"), which Hu had on occasions used to describe not only a lack of diversity in public opinion, but also in general cultural debate. In an article countering Hu's opinions, Mao put forward his own interpretation of the term "sameness in public opinion", which, he stated, meant denying counter-revolutionaries the chance to spread their views. He claimed that in a socialist system, there was only freedom of speech "among the people" ("renmin neibu"), and anyone who wanted to use freedom of speech "for counter-revolutionary purposes" would be denied that freedom and would be punished. For such people there would only ever be "sameness in public opinion".⁽¹⁴²⁾ Mao drew a line between "the people" and "the enemy" (or "counter-revolutionaries") to support his argument. However, responsibility for deciding who would be placed in which category rested firmly with the Party.

Following the issue of Mao's guidelines, the campaign against Hu Feng was extended to encompass all cultural domains. This can be seen from the table of contents in any issue of the "Literary and Art Gazette" during 1955, which was mainly comprised of articles either criticising Hu Feng and his political and aesthetic ideas, or those who were considered to be under his negative influence. Many articles focused on the criticism of one of his key concepts - the "subjective struggling spirit" ("zhuguan zhandou jingshen"), which embodied the idea that of primary importance to the artist is individual subjective expression.⁽¹⁴³⁾ This idea, which was tantamount to advocating freedom of expression, naturally posed a serious threat to the authorities' monopoly of all aesthetic ideas and creative work.

As with the "Literary and Art Gazette", several issues of "Fine Art" during 1955

carried articles criticising Hu Feng. The most influential artists and art cadres in the Artists' Association jointly wrote an open letter condemning Hu Feng in the strongest terms and supporting the campaign against him.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ The July edition of "Fine Art" reported on the way in which artists throughout China were taking an active part in Hu Feng criticism by holding meetings, writing articles and producing cartoons. Cartoons appeared more regularly in official publications during this campaign than any other art form because they were considered to be the best vehicle for satirical attacks, particularly on "enemies of the people".⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ This was because their victims could be depicted as being wicked, to highlight their 'crimes', but also foolish so as to ensure they did not appear too powerful or threatening. Counter-revolutionaries might be cunning and evil, but they were no match for "the people".

Following the sometimes brutal denunciations of Hu Feng, artists were warned that they, "must learn from the experiences and lessons they have gained from this event, they must go further in recognising the complexity and sharpness of the class struggle during the transitional period, they must overcome the liberal tendency of paying attention only to their own art work and forgetting politics. Finally, they must re-inforce further their study of Marxism-Leninism, reform their thinking and closely unite around the Party".⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

Conclusion

Although it is true to say that during the three campaigns outlined above, artists did not become major targets for criticism, unlike individuals working in other cultural fields, nevertheless, the effects of the campaigns still caused reverberations throughout the art world. The campaigns had the effect of setting a political framework for all important artistic debates over the period.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ In addition, the term "bourgeois liberalism" became increasingly a label to fear, and artists began to be more circumspect about the views they expressed and the kind of work they produced. It may be true to say that through these three movements the authorities had achieved its goal of bringing artists and other intellectuals into line by purging any signs of dissent, but they had also turned the cultural and artistic field into a periodical political battleground.

CHAPTER TWO

The Vacillating Years (1956 to 1966)

Introduction

The period of 1956 to 1966 was one of uncertainty for Chinese artists, and intellectuals in general, particularly when one contrasts it with the first six years of the People's Republic. During those initial years, many people had been optimistic about China's future prospects and the Party enjoyed wide support from the majority of intellectuals. From 1956, however, divisions began to appear between pragmatists and radicals, and intellectuals started to waver in their support for the authorities, some even going so far as to challenge the Party's legitimacy. The major events of this period were mainly precipitated by outside influences, particularly Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956, closely followed by the Hungarian uprising, both of which shook the Communist world, and betrayed the first signs of trouble in the Communist camp. As a reaction to this, political campaigns directed against intellectuals were used as the main means of control. A power struggle amongst the top political leaders and policy divisions between them began to affect cultural circles in a much more direct way than had earlier political disputes, such as that which led to the purge of Gao Gang.⁽¹⁾ As we shall see, one consequence of the unstable situation that prevailed in China from 1956 was that the relationship between the authorities and artists became increasingly complex. This relationship can be most clearly delineated in four major socio-political stages:

1. The Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist movements.
2. The Great Leap Forward and Anti-Rightist Deviation movements.
3. Re-adjustment and relaxation following the Great Leap Forward.
4. The Socialist Education Movement and the period leading up to the Cultural Revolution.

1. The Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist Movements

(1) The Hundred Flowers

At a meeting of the Supreme State Conference held on May 6th 1956 Mao first put forward the idea of "Letting a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Letting a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend",⁽²⁾ a new direction in policy that was to be referred to by Mao and other Party leaders on several occasions over the next few months. On the 26th May, the Party Propaganda Chief, Lu Dingyi, gave a speech explaining Mao's ideas in greater depth. He emphasised the need to secure a united ideological front with all sectors of society, and advocated a diversity of themes for cultural and intellectual work. He even went so far as to say that it would be permissible in cultural work to refer to "celestial beings (or immortals) in heaven, and birds and beasts that can speak".⁽³⁾ Here, he seems, in fact, to be encouraging writers and artists to use their creative imagination, to go beyond the conventional political framework. Shortly after this, Zhou Yang, the Deputy Chief of Propaganda, echoed Lu's sentiments. Whilst chairing a meeting on the "Preparations for the Twelve Year Development Plan for Culture and Science", he stated that, "If you want artistic activities to flourish and to improve artistic levels, then the best line (to take) is liberalisation".⁽⁴⁾

From these speeches, it appeared that the Party's stance on cultural policy had very nearly made a complete turnabout. Its previous rigidity on matters of ideological orthodoxy and the rigorous control it had imposed in the cultural sphere now seemed to have been greatly modified. What had brought about this relaxation? Though there is still some debate amongst scholars as to why Mao finally initiated the Hundred Flowers policy, there are some general factors which most would agree contributed significantly to his decision. The first was the international dimension. The denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Union caused great confusion in socialist countries, and led to instability in Eastern Europe, in particular Hungary and Poland.⁽⁵⁾ Doubt was cast on the traditional policies of old Stalinists, and in China this led to a re-appraisal of the rigid ideological stance that had been imposed since 1949.

At the national level, by 1956 China's socialist reforms seemed to be going well. In the countryside collectivisation had almost been completed, as had the system of joint

state - private ownership for enterprises in the cities. The economic situation was much improved, stability had been achieved and the first Five-Year Plan was progressing successfully.⁽⁶⁾ The mood in the country was more optimistic, and the Party was confident that its authority had been fully established. Now the task was to further motivate the enthusiasm of intellectuals to participate in the next stage of socialist construction.

However, on the negative side, the initial attempts at the socialist transformation of society had led to a highly centralised political system which generated a host of bureaucratic problems. It must also be said that the reforms had affected the interests of some social groups, and mistakes that had been committed in the process had begun to damage the image of the Party amongst some sectors of society. In 1956 and 1957, under the influence of events in Hungary and Poland, various locations in China witnessed small-scale workers' and students' strikes, people went to Beijing to present petitions and air their grievances, and former rich peasants even attempted to withdraw from the collectives. As Mao said: "contradictions amongst the people are beginning to intensify".⁽⁷⁾ There was therefore a pressing need to improve the old functional mechanism of Party organisation in order to solve these social problems, and for that a more relaxed policy was required.

The need to involve intellectuals in the process of resolving these social contradictions and continuing to build on the initial achievements of socialist reform is clear from many of the speeches of the top political and cultural leaders. Liu Shaoqi on several occasions set down the main parameters of the Hundred Flowers movement and highlighted the importance of participation in it by intellectuals. "We must utilise the power of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals to build up socialism".⁽⁸⁾ Full participation in the movement was to entail: "... learning to think independently, to have one's own views and judgement. Do not blindly worship other people and do not be afraid. Everything can be doubted".⁽⁹⁾

On another occasion, Liu, referring specifically to the Hundred Flowers movement as it was to apply to cultural work, stated that a variety of forms was to be allowed to exist, that each person had their own way of doing things, and that these differences were to be tolerated. Elements of foreign and traditional literary and art works could be adopted,

though, as usual, this only applied to 'desirable' elements. One of the most noticeable departures from previous policy was Liu's assertion that the opinions of non-experts (indicating Party bureaucrats) should be discussed with experts, and that non-experts should not attempt to place themselves above professionals. Literary and art workers were also told that they should respect the opinion of the masses but not necessarily follow them.⁽¹⁰⁾

Zhou Yang, in one of his important speeches to cultural workers on the Hundred Flowers, gave a more detailed indication of why the policy was thought necessary. He acknowledged that intellectuals had some reasons for dissatisfaction towards the Party, and that the best way to deal with this, all things considered, was to adopt the principle of relaxation. "Their (intellectuals) social and economic foundation has disappeared, so that they can only follow the socialist road, but it is also not good for socialism to make intellectuals feel that the situation is unbearable". He particularly emphasised that only one opinion, i.e. that of the Party, was previously allowed because a "decisive victory had not been achieved between capitalists and socialists, counter-revolutionaries had not been cleaned up and capitalists were still exploiting the people". Now, however, the class struggle was basically over, intellectuals had progressed greatly since the socialist reforms had been initiated, and the Party could use the Hundred Flowers movement to "enlarge democracy amongst the people, in order to further the process of uniting all social groups. Without this unity, socialism will collapse, particularly as socialist construction consists of a cultural and scientific revolution. We have to unite all intellectuals, particularly senior ones to join in this construction. If we cannot achieve that, our country cannot get rid of its backward state."⁽¹¹⁾

Mao also emphasised the need for a more liberal approach to cultural activities if China was to develop and progress. The Hundred Flowers policy had been "put forward in the light of the pressing need for China to speedily develop its economy and culture ... it is a guiding principle which promotes artistic development and scientific progress."⁽¹²⁾ Diverse forms and styles in the arts were to be allowed to develop freely, any administrative pressure used to promote one style or school at the expense of all others being detrimental to the comprehensive process of development. Rather than absolute and orthodox theoretical

standards deciding the criteria governing artistic activity, questions that arose were now to be solved through "free discussion" and "artistic practice".⁽¹³⁾

Mao's theoretical justification for the Hundred Flowers policy was based on Lenin's "Theory of the Unity of Opposites",⁽¹⁴⁾ whereby truth could only be highlighted by comparison with falsity, which was to be followed by a period of struggle against this falsity, beauty is highlighted by comparison with ugliness, goodness with evil, and so on. A "fragrant flower" in the cultural realm could only be regarded as such by comparing it with a "poisonous weed". Therefore, from a philosophical point of view, opposites were necessary for the healthy development of positive and desirable conceptual categories.

However, seen in this light, the Hundred Flowers was, for intellectuals, somewhat double-edged. It allowed greater relaxation in cultural circles, but largely in order to bring dangerous tendencies in the arts out into the open so that they could act as a foil for what was considered beneficial. Once revealed in this way, these dangerous tendencies were then to be criticised. Mao at one point stated quite clearly that the Hundred Flowers was the best way to reform the intellectuals, about whom he continued to hold deep suspicions. He believed that "bourgeois" and "petty bourgeois" thinking would always be reflected in political and cultural ideology in one form or another, and that one of the best ways of dealing with it was not through suppression, but by allowing it full expression and then giving "appropriate criticism".⁽¹⁵⁾

Changes in Organisation Due to the Hundred Flowers Policy

A striking feature of the application of the Hundred Flowers policy to cultural circles was an emphasis unprecedented since 1949 on the professional status of writers and artists and on their particular creative expertise. "Artists are to guide art, musicians are to guide music. We have to have experts guiding experts",⁽¹⁶⁾ pronounced Zhou Yang, signalling that during this particular stage of socialist construction the "expert" dimension of the Party's "red and expert" formula was to be predominant. It was to be artists, rather than Party bureaucrats who would largely decide how general Party directives were to be interpreted and applied to their own field of expertise. This encouraging tone towards

artists may well have been used as an attempt to help them overcome any fears they may have had about expressing their thoughts, following their recent experience of the heavy criticism sessions mounted against Hu Feng.⁽¹⁷⁾ Zhou Yang also declared that the Artists' Association should be regarded as a virtually autonomous organisation run by artists themselves, and largely free of Party interference. He said of the Association, "it is their (the artists') organisation, and it should not be subordinate to the government. The Artists' Association should be independent."⁽¹⁸⁾

Zhou Yang's speech was later discussed by the Party group of the Artists' Association, which included Jiang Feng, Cai Ruohong, Wang Zhaowen and other influential figures. They all expressed support for the main content of the speech and, on the basis of it, they produced a working plan for 1957. It was the outline of a programme concerned with improving the standard of art work produced by artists and with making the necessary organisational adjustments in order to allow artists to carry on free debate and to provide them with the conditions for unhampered creative freedom. To achieve these aims, the Party group put forward several proposals. Firstly, they stated that in the future the main form of art exhibitions should change from that of the large-scale or national format, with many artists from all over China contributing one or two pieces, to the individual or small group exhibition. They even went so far as to work out the provisional methods for arranging and holding such exhibitions, declaring that anyone could apply for an exhibition slot. The content of exhibited pieces was to be the sole responsibility of the artist and so, rather than having to undergo the usual cumbersome process of selection, the artist was to be allowed the freedom to choose his or her own work for exhibition.⁽¹⁹⁾ In addition, on the basis of the Artists' Association Party group's recommendation that artists should set up their own art groups, "art salons" began to appear that did not function under the direct control of the Association. One such example was a group set up at the Central Academy of Fine Art to discuss the question of Impressionism, a subject formerly considered taboo.⁽²⁰⁾

The Party group advocated the setting up of different art periodicals or journals by artists working in the same styles. Within a short period, artists were indeed organising their own semi-official periodicals which, though still needing the tacit support of the

Artists' Association and relying on official printing, publishing and distribution facilities, did not come under the direct control of the Ministry of Propaganda, as was the case with "Fine Art " and "the Literary and Art Gazette". Hua Junwu, with several other colleagues, edited one such periodical "Multi-Image", whilst another group set up the art magazine "Sun Wukong". A group in Shanghai even set up a periodical, "Bees", which specifically aimed to publish work rejected by all other art magazines.⁽²¹⁾

Changes were also planned for the official organ of the Artists' Association, "Fine Art". An editorial in its 1957 new year issue detailed the wide-ranging scope of these changes. It opened with the surprising declaration that "Fine Art" should not be regarded as the official organ of the Artists' Association, even though it had hitherto given the impression that it represented the official line of the Party's cultural policy. The editorial acknowledged that many complaints had been received from readers about the poor quality of articles and illustrations, and the editorial board had now decided that its practice of setting restrictions on themes and topics for artists and art critics would now be dropped. Artists would be encouraged to use their own initiative and offer a variety of opinions. In addition, there was an implicit admission that not enough attention had been paid by the periodical to problems relating specifically to the creative process, and too much to long tracts on Marxist art theory. In future, the editorial declared, "Fine Art" would ensure that questions of creative work and theory would be closely combined, but with slightly more emphasis on the creative aspect, reflecting the general policy in cultural circles to focus on the "expertise" rather than the "redness" of all cultural workers. With regard to non-Chinese art, in an attempt to break with the blanket coverage of Soviet and Eastern European art featured in the periodical, the editorial board stated its intentions to strengthen the introduction of art and art theory from other countries. The format of "Fine Art" was also to be changed. There would be more pages and a larger page size to allow for the inclusion of more materials, and the selection and editorial procedures for art works to be published would also be modified.⁽²²⁾

Further Signs of Relaxation in the Art World

In April 1957 the Beijing branch of the Artists' Association organised a series of meetings for Beijing artists to discuss Mao's Hundred Flowers speech. For the first time since 1949 major criticisms were voiced by many of those present, including Si Tuqiao, Li Qun, and Zuo Hui.⁽²³⁾ Their main objection to the policies pursued over the previous six years was that a blind and dogmatic application of Marxist theory to art had caused serious problems. It had resulted, they said, in a lack of independent thinking amongst artists and had prevented them from properly assessing the relative merits of Western art (by, for example, the continual denigration of Impressionism) and China's own artistic tradition. The sculptor, Liu Kaiqu stated bluntly that all restrictions on the creation of sculpture and cartoons should be completely done away with, whilst Pang Xunqin's assessment was that the problem of bureaucratism in the field of arts and crafts was even worse than the situation described in Wang Meng's "The Young New Arrival At the Organisation Department".⁽²⁴⁾ The problem had evidently become so acute that in the Academy of Arts and Crafts in Beijing a "democratic programme for the management of the Academy" was put forward,⁽²⁵⁾ whereby a secret ballot would elect an Academy Council to act as the highest organ of the establishment. It was the Council that would decide the principles guiding the educational programme, personnel appointments and the financial management of the Academy, and the Council which would democratically elect the Principal and Vice-Principal. The programme represented, in fact, the first demand since 1949 from an art education institution for independent control of the decisions that affected it.

With the implementation of the Hundred Flowers policy, a marked increase in literary and art works critical of the shortcomings and problems of Chinese society and, in particular, of bureaucratic Party cadres became apparent. In the field of reportage, Liu Binyan's "Internal News From This Newspaper" and "On the Bridge-Construction Site", and in creative literature Wang Meng's "The Young New Arrival at the Organisation Department" are but a few examples.⁽²⁶⁾ In the art world, overt criticism came mainly in the form of cartoons, such as those that appeared in a National Exhibition of Cartoons in January 1957. A substantial proportion of those exhibited were devoted to satirizing Party

bureaucratism and the wastefulness of the state. "Lengthy Speeches All Day" criticised the amount of time wasted by Party cadres on delivering political sermons, and "Expert at Spending Money", implied that even the Empress Dowager would have to concede defeat to Party cadres in the area of extravagant spending.⁽²⁷⁾ Cartoons had previously been used for the purpose of criticism both at Yan'an and since the founding of the People's Republic, but their main function had been to expose and satirize a range of external enemies, or to encourage a more radical outlook amongst ideological waverers. During the Hundred Flowers, however, the cartoons were focussed much more on criticising the Party itself and the bureaucratic practices generated by its policies.

Another change that occurred during the Hundred Flowers was a renewed interest in Western Impressionism, a topic which had not seriously been debated since the early 1940s in Yan'an, when the advocates of some features of Impressionism had lost out to their more ideologically-motivated colleagues.⁽²⁸⁾ In the February 1957 edition of "Fine Art" a cluster of articles on Impressionist painting appeared, along with reproductions of representative Impressionist work by Monet, Degas, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and Pissarro.⁽²⁹⁾ The articles were mainly translations of essays by Soviet theorists,⁽³⁰⁾ and hence many of them had strongly critical overtones. However, there was some recognition of the technical usefulness of Impressionism in the history of art, and the very fact that the kind of modern Western art that, to the Chinese authorities, was most closely associated with decadent bourgeois society was able to appear in "Fine Art" is a telling sign of the prevailing atmosphere of liberalisation. By simply acknowledging its existence, the periodical opened the way for possible further examination of Impressionism by Chinese critics in the future. Following these articles, a series of discussions took place nationwide on the relative merits and defects of Impressionism. The Zhong nan⁽³¹⁾ School of Art and the Wuhan branch of the Artists' Association for example both held three meetings to debate Impressionism, at which it was accepted that something could and should be learned from Impressionism, and that it should be regarded as a "flower".⁽³²⁾

'Observing and learning from real life'

During the Hundred Flowers, many of the fundamental principles on which art policy had been based began to be questioned and debated in the public arena. The idea of 'observing and learning from real life' was one of these. It had been used as an instruction to artists to forego the cosy surroundings of their art studios in favour of a commitment to mix with real people and witness real events first hand. It was intended as a means by which artists could enrich the socialist content of their work and avoid the pitfall of 'conceptualism', which would inevitably occur if artists remained in their 'ivory towers'.

During 1956 and 1957, though no one dared to challenge it as a concept, voices were raised in protest over how it was being dogmatically interpreted by Party cadres in charge of art work. An article which appeared in "Fine Art" in January 1957 by Xiao Caizhou⁽³³⁾ is a typical example of such a protest. Xiao's main argument was that over-emphasis on "observing and learning from real life" at the expense of taking into account the "unique qualities and characteristics of art" (i.e. its technical or formal dimensions) had greatly damaged artistic development in China. He criticised those who condemned artists for their defence of these unique qualities, claiming that under the influence of such misguided people many artists had set aside their brushes, had spent some time in the factory or village, but upon returning home had been unable to produce successful work on appropriate themes because they had not "observed and learned from real life" according to the "special characteristics of art". He asserted that the whole process of "observing and learning from life" had become mechanical, because it was a theoretical concept applied to all forms of culture, and did not address the central question of how it was actually to be applied to the concrete process of artistic creation. Artists were left to rely on information on the latest political line gleaned from newspapers, political documents and so on, and then on the basis of this information produce the required image. The consequence of this was that artistic work had become a direct illustration of political concepts or ideas in a standard and abstract form. The writer ended with an appeal to avoid over-simplifying the interpretation of "observing and learning from life" and to pay more attention to the different requirements of the various cultural forms. We can say from this, then, that Xiao is not only questioning the

Party's application of one of its key principles to cultural circles, but is also using it to stress the independent and unique qualities and requirements of art, as opposed to other cultural forms. He is thus undermining a cornerstone of cultural policy - that all areas of cultural endeavour should have the same theoretical principals applied to them, and that all "cultural workers" should be able equally successfully to put them into practice; that no cultural form could carve out an independent domain for itself, separate from all other cultural activities.

The question of "observing and learning from real life" was just one of the problems aired openly in art circles in particular and in cultural circles in general. From the avalanche of criticism, it is clear that artists and writers, dancers and musicians were frustrated with the restrictions placed upon them and were fully aware of the negative consequences generated by limiting their creative capacities. At emotionally charged meetings of the Writers' Association to discuss implementation of the Hundred Flowers policy, Mao Dun, Lao She and other prominent figures strongly criticised the limited range of subject-matter and the lack of variety in the style of Chinese literature, which they put down to a dogmatic and one-sided understanding of the principle that "the arts are to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers", to a narrow interpretation of Socialist Realism, to crude and simplified literary criticism and to inappropriate administrative interference.⁽³⁴⁾

Many artists shared the views of the writers, facing as they did the same set of problems. One of the most daring and comprehensive diatribes exposing the more glaring shortcomings of the art world was written for "Fine Art" by Jin Ye, a highly outspoken lecturer from the Zhejiang Academy of Art. In his article "A Talk on the Problems Existing in Art Creativity"⁽³⁵⁾ he tried to tackle some fundamental questions of major concern to artists. His assessment of the current situation in the Chinese art world was extremely pessimistic, and he declared that work with unimaginative repetitive content expressed in tasteless forms was a virtually universal phenomenon. His view as to why this had come about (and it was a view expressed several times by other artists and art critics) was that artists were not allowed to carry on their profession according to the natural laws governing art, nor was their starting point a "real feeling for life." The artist's perception of reality, he said, had been

relegated to an insignificant position, forcing artists into producing empty themes from abstract political concepts. Jin claimed that the aesthetic dimension of art had been ignored, and stressed the need to produce a vivid visual image if art was successfully to portray real life. Speaking from his own experience as an art teacher, he believed that art colleges were not paying proper attention to cultivating the creative individuality of the students. In addition, there had been too narrow an understanding of the social function of art, so that the only way for artists to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers was by directly depicting the activities they were involved in.

Jin's answer to these problems was to focus more on the technical skills of the artists, as both the content of and the means of expression in art were equally important and complex. "Even Socialist Realism requires a variety of forms of expression". So, rather than setting political content and technical methods against each other, as had too often been the case, Jin stated that the importance of both should be recognised. Even so, he makes it clear that, in his opinion, what makes someone a good artist is not his political commitment but the level of his professional artistic skills.

The content of art exhibitions during the Hundred Flowers

Perhaps one of the most noticeable signs of liberalisation in art during the Hundred Flowers was the proliferation of exhibitions in China covering a wide spectrum of art both traditional and contemporary, and the work of both Chinese and foreign artists. Exhibitions held in Beijing in particular reveal a diversity ranging from Ai Zhongxin's oil paintings and the traditional Chinese paintings of Guan Shanyue and Chen Banding to Ming and Qing portraits.⁽³⁶⁾

The Second National Exhibition of Traditional Chinese Painting (July 11th-23rd 1956) held in the China Art Gallery was said to comprise a "variety of subject-matter and style ... far above the works displayed at the First National Exhibition of Traditional Painting and the traditional paintings shown at the Second National Exhibition of Fine Arts".⁽³⁷⁾ Notably failing to mention Socialist Realism or the requirement for art to serve a political purpose, one article simply stated that "the artists are able to give realistic and

charming portrayals of the new life and new people in our country; but they also create beautiful landscapes, they paint flowers and animals, and they give us visualisations of ancient folk tales."⁽³⁸⁾ Included in the exhibition were Qi Baishi's peonies, delicate white magnolias by Yu Fei'an, "Two Chickens" by He Fanghua and Wu Hufan's magnificent mountain scenes. Although praise was given to some traditional Chinese paintings reflecting contemporary political themes, in particular, Liu Xiongcai's "Flood Prevention at Wuhan", commemorating an incident in 1954 when the people of Wuhan successfully averted a flooding of the Yangzǐ river, the comment was made that the exhibition's weak point was "painting of the human figure, in which respect nothing at the exhibition was equal to the excellent landscapes, flowers and birds".⁽³⁹⁾

An additional development was an increase in the number of foreign exhibitions other than those from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These shows were said to have "contained something new, something entirely different from anything we have seen before".⁽⁴⁰⁾ An exhibition of British graphic art came to Beijing, the first of its kind in China.⁽⁴¹⁾ The 220 exhibits, including woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, silkscreen prints and book illustrations, covered the last 500 years of British graphic art. Particular note was taken of the political and social caricaturists William Hogarth ("the father of political satirical art"), Thomas Rowlandson, James Gillray and Richard Newton, perhaps because they echoed the political satire that permeated the work of many Chinese cartoonists during the Hundred Flowers. There was also in 1956 the first ever exhibition of Mexican art in China, featuring work from the last 20 years by 30 artists, including the woodcuts of Leopold Mendez and the lithographs of Pablo O'Higgins.⁽⁴²⁾ News of the exhibition and reproductions of exhibits appeared in the "People's Daily", the "Guangming Daily", the "Peking Daily", "Fine Art" and other publications, and the exhibition drew to it several prominent Chinese graphic artists, such as Gu Yuan, Li Hua, Li Qun and Zheng Yefu. It was followed in succession by displays of the work of six contemporary Italian artists, a Vietnamese exhibition, an exhibition of contemporary Greek art and a second Mexican exhibition comprising paintings, murals, woodcuts and engravings, and featuring the work of amongst others, Diego Rivera and D.A. Siqueiros.⁽⁴³⁾ However, perhaps the most

significant indication of the extent of liberalisation was an exhibition of works in Beijing by French artists. This small show, consisting of only 27 paintings, presented to a Chinese audience the work of outstanding Western art figures, such as Picasso, Matisse, Bonnard, Dufy, Utrillo, Marquet, Roualt, Léger and Lurçat.⁽⁴⁴⁾

2. Rectification

The period of "blooming and contending" was disappointingly short-lived. Early on in the movement, at the second plenary session of the Central Committee selected at the Eighth Party Congress, (November 1956), Mao announced a rectification drive to run concurrent with the Hundred Flowers campaign which would oppose bureaucratism, factionalism and subjectivism. He warned: "If the problems of the masses are not dealt with, the peasants are going to revolt, the workers will go to the street to demonstrate and the students are going to make trouble."⁽⁴⁵⁾

From the start, Mao seems to have intended to use both the Hundred Flowers and rectification largely as a means of releasing social tensions, reducing social contradictions and improving the overall efficiency of the Party. However, within a short time things may have gone further than he expected, and he may have underestimated the frustration and dissatisfaction (as well as the courage) of the intellectuals. The criticism of the Party became overwhelming, and was directed not only at individual Party members and specific policies, but also at some fundamental principles and even the socialist system itself. This first concerted attack against the Party since 1949 must have been highly alarming to Mao and the other leaders.

By May 1957 Mao was ready for a counter-attack against those whom he chose to label as Rightists (those who had voiced dissenting opinions). This first took the form of an article entitled "Things are in the Process of Transformation" which was circulated amongst Party members. In it, Mao outlined a change of tactics from criticising dogmatism to criticising revisionism, which he now regarded as a greater threat. "In the last few months, everyone has been trying to criticism dogmatism, but they have let revisionism escape. Obviously dogmatism should be criticised, but now we should begin to criticise revisionism

Some of the dogmatism being criticised is actually Marxism."⁽⁴⁶⁾ By June 8th the Central Committee had already issued a "directive on organising forces to prepare for a counter-attack on the attack made by the Rightists."⁽⁴⁷⁾

Mao outlined how his interpretation of the scope of the Hundred Flowers differed from many of the dissenters. "We only want people to speak out on (matters of) cultural and academic work, but the Rightists want to develop it into the political sphere."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Here, Mao clearly draws a line on what can and cannot be questioned. When intellectuals challenge fundamental principles, all freedoms previously granted are to be abolished. Mao's continuing suspicions about the reliability of intellectuals (which it seemed to him had been proven correct) is clearly an important factor behind rectification and the anti-Rightist movement. When analysing the class nature of intellectuals as a social group he stated that China's five million intellectuals were "quite cultured" and possessed technical expertise, but that many were from the old society and had close links with the old mode of production. "Now the old economic foundation has been transformed, but what is in their heads cannot be changed overnight. So, some of them waver They do not wholeheartedly come down to stand with or serve the proletariat."⁽⁴⁹⁾ Based on Mao's assumption that "in the transitional period of Socialist society, the main social contradiction is that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie",⁽⁵⁰⁾ intellectuals, largely made up of the "bourgeoisie", would of necessity become the main focus of any political movement.

In a "People's Daily" editorial on July 1st, written by Mao himself, entitled "Wenhui bao's Bourgeois Direction Should be Criticised" the official signal for a nationwide campaign against Rightists was given.⁽⁵¹⁾ Many articles criticising Rightists soon appeared in national and local newspapers and periodicals, and the authorities organised several meetings with the purpose of attacking Rightists. Inevitably, cultural circles became one of the most important areas of struggle.

At an enlarged meeting of the Party group of the Writers' Association, Lu Dingyi and Zhou Yang made two important speeches setting down some of the guidelines for the anti-Rightist movement. They described it as a "social revolution on the political and ideological front", and drew parallels between the movement in China and that against

Trotsky in the Soviet Union and the 'Petöfi Club' leaders in Hungary. Lu Dingyi declared it to be a "very serious class struggle". In analysing the reasons for the existence of "bourgeois intellectuals" in a socialist society, Lu and Zhou made the following three points: 1. Ideology always lags behind social existence. Intellectuals from the old society, not having undergone proper thought reform, had been unable to come to terms with the new reality. 2. Bourgeois ideas will exist for a long time to come. 3. In the cultural realm, the "struggle between two lines" has never ceased since the Yan'an Talks in 1942, the main difference between the two being their approach to the relationship between politics and the arts, the Party and the arts, and the status the arts and cultural workers should have in society.⁽⁵²⁾

Lu and Zhou re-iterated the importance of politics leading the arts, the arts accepting the leadership of the Party, the arts serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and the subordination of aesthetic criteria to political considerations, and they stressed that these basic principles were to comprise the main issues in the anti-Rightist movement. Lu said that cultural workers should wholeheartedly and unconditionally go to the countryside and factories, and he expressed the hope that within eleven years, 70% of writers would go to farms and factories to be re-educated and reformed. He also tried to emphasise the importance of Socialist Realism, accepting that though it was not the only method of arts creation, it was the best. In the final part of his speech, Lu declared that cultural workers should have the "three resolutions"- to thoroughly oppose Rightists, to thoroughly improve their work, and to take thorough measures to reform their own thoughts.⁽⁵³⁾

Rectification in the art world

With the emphasis during this period on attacking anti-Rightists, the most major changes in the art world involved the dismissal and removal of individuals who were unlucky enough to fall under suspicion. In literary circles, Ding Ling, Chen Qixia, Liu Shaotang, Gong Liu, Ai Qing, and others received severe criticism; in music, it was individuals such as Zhang Quan who came under attack; in drama it was Wu Zuguang, amongst others; in film, Zhong Dianfei; and in the news media, Chu Anping, Liu Binyan, and so on.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In the art world, a whole host of prominent figures lost their positions and were forced to do menial tasks or sent to the countryside for re-education. The list includes Mo Pu, head of the Hangzhou Academy of Art; Zheng Yefu, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Artists' Association; Yan Han, the Association's cadre in charge of creative work; Ye Gongchuo, first head of the recently established Chinese Painting Academy; and Wang Xuetao and Xu Yanxun, also from the Academy; Liu Haisu, Head of the East China Academy of Art; Yang Jiao and Zhang Xiaojie, President and Deputy President of the North East Art College, who were also its Party Secretary and Deputy Party Secretary (they were accused of being the 'backbone' of Jiang Feng's Rightist group); Wang Liuqiu, Head of the Department of Painting at the Zhejiang Academy of Art; Liao Bingxiong, Executive member of the Chinese Artists' Association and Deputy President of its Guangzhou branch; Wang Zimei, Sichuan cartoonist; Ren Qianqiao, the Art Section Chief of the Shandong branch of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art workers; Jing Qimin, a young Liaoning artist from a peasant background, who worked in the offices of the "North Eastern Pictorial"; Pang Xunqin, Head of the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts; Yuan Baitao, a Xi'an artist, and Wang Maihan, an artist from Tianjin. Several cartoonists such as Shen Tongheng and Li Bingsheng were also indicted, as the cartoonists had been particularly active during the Hundred Flowers.⁽⁵⁵⁾

From this selective list of people attacked by name in official publications one can begin to grasp the sheer scale and scope of the Anti-Rightist movement as it affected the art world. These were the main figures targeted in art journals, but throughout China the numbers were very much larger. It can be seen that the movement had a wide geographical spread, and affected artists working at every level of society and in every kind of field, from oils and traditional Chinese painting to arts and crafts and cartoons. Many held important positions in art education and art institutions such as the Artists' Association, and many had been associated with the revolutionary Communist movement since the 1930s and early 1940s. Loyalty to the Party was no guarantee of protection from criticism and dismissal. This can be seen most poignantly in the case of the main target of attack, the First Deputy Chairman of the Artists' Association, Head of the Party Group of the Association and acting President of the Central Academy of Fine Art, Jiang Feng.

The case of Jiang Feng

The first criticisms of Rightists in the art world appeared in "Fine Art" in July 1957, and they came from Liu Kaiqu, Wu Zuoren, Gu Yuan, Hua Junwu and Jiang Feng himself.⁽⁵⁶⁾ At this stage, the criticisms were still couched in fairly abstract language and no specific targets were named. The whole movement was still in its early period and there was clearly some confusion amongst the top leaders. This may possibly be partly because the political direction had just changed, and the leaders of the art world, instead of being asked to speak their minds, were now having to acknowledge their mistakes in doing precisely that. They may, therefore, have fallen back on rhetoric to mask their uncertainty. However, the vagueness of the initial criticisms is more likely to have been connected with the power struggles amongst these leaders, which at that stage had not yet been successfully resolved.

By September and October another spate of articles appeared, written by Cai Ruohong, Hua Junwu and a group of traditional Chinese painters, including Li Keran and Guan Shanyue. This time the attacks were well organised and directed against a specific target. Ironically, it turned out to be Jiang Feng, the most senior Party figure in the Artists' Association, who was accused of being the source of all Rightist tendencies, and called the "head of the arsonists in the art world".⁽⁵⁷⁾ On August 28th and 30th, the Ministry of Culture held two meetings at which it revealed Jiang's "anti-Party speech and actions". He was criticised of being consistently against the Hundred Flowers policy and of ignoring the historical legacy of Chinese painting by claiming that it was unscientific, its linear images were backward and had no perspective, and its expressive form was therefore highly limited and unable to reflect properly modern life or to serve political needs. With this as an excuse, it was claimed, he had tried to reject traditional Chinese painting, and failed to pay attention to the work of uniting traditional Chinese painters. Under his presidency the traditional Chinese painting department at the Central Academy of Fine Art had been changed to the Colour Ink Painting department (though it was not merely the name that had changed. Jiang had introduced the use of Western drawing techniques, shading, perspective, and so on, to serve as the basis of traditional Chinese painting, rather than training students

to copy the old Chinese painting masters. This was the main point of contention). He had, therefore, attempted "to set tradition and revolution against each other".(58)

He was accused of a whole series of additional mistakes against the Party; of forming a revolutionary group against Party policy, especially against the Hundred Flowers which he was said to disagree with in a "dogmatic" way; of complaining about problems in the Party, such as a lack of democracy; of blaming the increasing non-politicisation of artists and art students on the resolution of the Eighth Party Congress which stated that more professionalism was needed to address the main contradiction between the advanced socialist system and backward economic forces; of warning about the consequences of stressing "expertise" at the expense of "redness"; of not working out properly the relationship between himself and the Party, refusing to take part in meetings organised by the Minister of Culture, the Party Committee of Beijing city and even Premier Zhou; of claiming that the criticisms against him by the Ministry of Culture and the Party group of the Artists' Association were personal attacks, the result of factionalism and Cai Ruohong's personal ambition to oust him and to become President of the Central Academy of Fine Art; of carrying out behind-the-scenes manipulations to encourage others to criticise the Ministry of Culture; of supporting Pang Xunqin's "anti-Party programme" and of generally giving encouragement to many Rightists.(59)

Jiang Zhaohe, Li Keran, and other traditional Chinese painters joined in the attacks on Jiang, accusing him of being too Western-orientated in his outlook, of aiming to replace traditional Chinese line painting with Western drawing, and of offering little or no financial support to traditional Chinese painters who wished to go on field trips to paint the local scenery. They claimed that some traditional Chinese painters had been forced to give up their painting, others were left without work, whilst still others had had to take up extremely lowly employment like "painting nine fen book-marks".(60) Even Mao mentioned Jiang Feng and his views on traditional Chinese painting in one of his speeches in 1957. He felt Jiang lacked dialectical thinking, saying, "Even with spouses you need two".(61)

The case of Jiang Feng becoming the chief target in art circles during the Anti-Rightist movement is a good example for us in trying to understand the relationship

between artists and the authorities and the complexity of a situation which sees such a close interconnection between politics and art. It is, after all, extremely ironic that Jiang, one of the most powerful figures in the art world, became the main victim of the Anti-Rightist movement, and particular factors must have been at play. From Jiang's history, it is clear that he was not labelled a Rightist because he really was advocating bourgeois liberalism or demanding total freedom of creation which might pose a challenge to the Party. On the contrary, he can be described much more accurately as a close adherent to basic left-wing principles, a faithful follower of the Party since he joined it in 1932. If we compare his background to Cai Ruohong, who many believe was his main political rival and who finally took over from him when he was dismissed, we see that there are very few differences in their revolutionary credentials. Both showed inclinations towards revolutionary art work at an early stage, Jiang with his woodcuts (he was a student in Lu Xun's early woodcut programme) and Cai with propaganda posters. Both joined the Shanghai Alliance of Left-Wing Artists in 1931, both went to Yan'an and joined in the art activities at the Lu Xun Art Academy. Since 1949 they had both held important and responsible positions in various art institutions.⁽⁶²⁾

The difference between them probably lies much more in their personalities. Jiang seems to have been more inflexible (and, perhaps, more stubborn) in his attitude towards art policy, adhering more closely to the principles he had imbibed at Yan'an. His mistake during the Hundred Flowers appears to have been a failure to comply quickly with the new policies, which left him stranded on the side-lines. Mao hints at this when he says, referring to Jiang, "Old Cadres have to think now - before there was a set of methods, but now we have contradictions among the people".⁽⁶³⁾ Zhou Yang, in his early speech on the Anti-Rightist movement, accused Jiang Feng and others of "individualistic thinking. With their individualism they cannot be faithful to the Party."⁽⁶⁴⁾ However, it is clear that Jiang was not "individualistic" because he wanted to break from Party control or to go against the Party as such, but simply because he was not flexible enough to change direction every time the Party did. Conformity to the prevailing dominant line of the Party was of the utmost importance, and failure to understand this could lead, as in Jiang's case, to the loss of

position and good name. This is why Cai Ruohong could claim that "although Jiang Feng appears very left, he is, in fact, very right."⁽⁶⁵⁾ Cai demonstrated that he could be more flexible than Jiang, and with the exception of the period of the Cultural Revolution, Cai managed to remain Vice-Chairman of the Artists' Association right into the 1980s. He had obviously learned the skill of how to flow along with the general political line, however many times it turned. When the Hundred Flowers was announced, he applauded it enthusiastically; when the Anti-Rightist movement came along, he was at the forefront denouncing Rightists. His ability to change tactic ensured his survival; Jiang's failure to do so contributed to his downfall.

We can also say that a general power struggle amongst the top art leaders, and personality conflicts amongst them and with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Propaganda, as well as policy clashes, had an important role to play in Jiang's demise. It reveals the complexity of political movements in China. Simply dividing individuals into Leftists and Rightists as the authorities attempted to do cannot always explain the reasons for and outcome of events. For instance, when Chen Qitong (from the cultural section of the political department of the People's Liberation Army) and three others wrote a letter to Mao with their reservations about the Hundred Flowers, even though Mao at first criticised them, they were later not made into Rightists.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Jiang Feng, on the other hand, suffered that fate. Therefore, when Cai accused Jiang of being a Rightist, it seems to have been largely a pretext to bring disgrace upon him, rather than having any substantial theoretical justification. If we look at accusations of Jiang's reservations regarding the emphasis on "expert" rather than "red" in creative work during the Hundred Flowers, we see that his only crime was being temporarily out of step with Communist policy. Within a short period, policy shifted once again towards an emphasis on "redness". Jiang's "Rightist cap", however, was not removed.

Jiang may have had some views on traditional Chinese painting which differed from that of many traditional Chinese painters, but to say, as several did in speeches against him, that his attitude towards this kind of painting was completely nihilist⁽⁶⁷⁾ is somewhat unfair. In one way, Jiang's reservations about traditional Chinese painting were

only a reflection of earlier Party views of it as elitist and decadent. In addition, as we saw in Chapter One, some traditional Chinese painters shared Jiang's view that it is difficult to combine traditional painting techniques with revolutionary themes.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Jiang's transformation of the traditional Chinese painting department at the Central Academy of Art to a Colour Ink Painting Department which emphasised Western drawing could be regarded as a sensible way to tackle this apparent anomaly. It was certainly supported as an idea by Wu Zuoren and Liao Jingwen, the widow of Xu Beihong. Xu had always regarded a solid grounding in drawing as the basis of all good art.⁽⁶⁹⁾ However it must be acknowledged that Jiang's firm belief that traditional Chinese painting could not adequately serve political purposes undoubtedly angered several traditional Chinese painters. From the outset of the Hundred Flowers complaints were voiced by them that since 1949 insufficient attention had been paid to traditional Chinese painting and that "some people" still had the attitude of slighting China's national heritage.⁽⁷⁰⁾ This was surely an implicit criticism of Jiang, who was well-known for his views on traditional Chinese painting and who, as the most prominent figure in art circles, had the greatest influence over how much support should be given to it.

It is likely, however, that this attack on Jiang was not motivated purely by his attitude towards traditional Chinese painting. The disunity amongst the Artists' Association leadership is likely to have been a more important factor. Interviews with artists and art critics⁽⁷¹⁾ suggest that the origin of this problem lay in a power conflict between Jiang and Cai Ruohong. After 1949, main control of the Chinese art world rested with four individuals, Jiang, Cai, Hua Junwu and Wang Zhaowen, the first two of whom were particularly powerful. At the outset of the Anti-Rightist movement it appears that Cai won the backing of Hua against Jiang (Cai and Hua had been friends since the Yan'an days), whilst Wang remained neutral. Jiang may have suffered from the lack of a substantial power-base, because of his failure to form close associations with most of the individuals from the extremely influential group whose roots lay in Yan'an and the Lu Xun Art Academy. An unnamed member of Jiang's "Rightist clique" disclosed that during the Yan'an period Cai Ruohong was already part of one group that comprised amongst others Hua Junwu, Li Qun,

Zhou Yang, Qian Junrui (the Deputy Minister of Culture in 1957) and Liu Baiyu (Deputy Head and Deputy Party Secretary of the Writers' Association), whilst Jiang may only have had close links with people like Ding Ling and Chen Qixia, both of whom were discredited as early as 1955.⁽⁷²⁾ There is also some suggestion of enmity between Jiang and Qian Junrui. Qian was opposed to Jiang's decision to replace the Traditional Chinese Painting Department at the Central Academy of Fine Art with a Department of Coloured Ink Painting, based on the teaching of Western drawing, and had indirectly accused Jiang of suppressing China's national heritage.⁽⁷³⁾ Jiang had, in turn, angered Qian by referring to "people in the Ministry of Culture who cannot understand art".⁽⁷⁴⁾ Jiang's inability to build up a lasting power-base and his mistakes in offending influential figures such as the Deputy Minister of Culture and several traditional Chinese painters, may well have contributed to his demise. Cases similar to Jiang's were replicated many times, at different levels and in different cultural fields and geographical locations. As we might surmise from the example of Jiang, of the 3-400,000 people who were labelled as Rightists, it is highly probable that a large proportion had not genuinely attempted to challenge Party principles at all, and many may have been falsely accused for personal motives. Many were sent to labour camps for re-education and Jiang Feng himself was demoted to a lowly art worker in an art studio. His rightist label was not removed for twenty years.

Those artists who were lucky enough to escape labelling were sent to rural areas to "support socialist reconstruction in the villages", and to "further their thought reform". Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin all had a "wave of going to the countryside". In Shanghai, 90% of the Artists' Association, including prominent artists like Zhang Leping, volunteered to go to the countryside.⁽⁷⁵⁾ From Beijing, Wu Zuoren, Huang Yongyu, Ye Qianyu and Li Hua were just a few of those artists who went to live and work in rural areas.⁽⁷⁶⁾

At the Central Academy of Fine Art and the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts the teaching programme was reformed as part of the general drive against Rightists. "Class line" was once again emphasised, as were both halves of the formula "red and expert" (during the Hundred Flowers, the focus had been, of course, on the word "expert").⁽⁷⁷⁾

All the old dogmas now returned to the artistic discourse,⁽⁷⁸⁾ and the orthodox

line became firmly re-established, and even strengthened. Mao and the Party had learned that even a slight relaxation on the ideological front could cause great problems, so the constraints on artists became tighter than ever before. Their treatment during the Anti-Rightist campaign was much worse than during any previous political movement. It created an environment of fear and suspicion which ensured that artists would respond more obediently to the next stage of Socialist construction. The initial euphoria had now largely disappeared, leaving behind a gradually developing sense of disillusionment and betrayal. The dissent of individual voices had been ruthlessly suppressed and replaced by a more rigid uniformity that lay the foundation for the radical social programme of the Great Leap Forward.

2. The Great Leap Forward and the Anti-Rightist Deviation Movement

Background

The Great Leap Forward was a movement based on what was known as the general line of socialist construction (shehuizhuyi jianshi zong luxian). This general line was formulated after 1957 against a background of the successful completion of the first Five-Year Plan, which provided a substantial material basis for economic development, as well as against a background of the successfully conducted Anti-Rightist movement.

The Great Leap Forward also had its roots in the international scene. Taiwan and its ally the United States continued to exert pressure on China, and Taiwan prepared to form a North East Asian Alliance with Japan and South Korea, increasing China's discomfiture.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In addition, following its 20th Party Congress, the Soviet Union began shifting its position towards Western countries to a less confrontational stance. Towards China, it continued its long-term pursuit of domination by attempting to establish a joint submarine fleet with China and to set up a long-wave transceiver on Chinese soil (both refused by the Chinese authorities).⁽⁸⁰⁾ All of these events constituted important conditions for the formulating of the general line of socialist construction, as they made China aware of the urgency and necessity of catching up economically with the Western powers and with its strong Communist neighbour. In 1958, Mao stated that the Chinese economy was backward and China's material foundation weak. In addition, he said that "Spiritually, we feel we have been constrained. In this respect, we have not been liberated, so we have to push ourselves, gather our strength and go forward."⁽⁸¹⁾ The external challenge and the relatively successful implementation of the initial attempts at reforming China's political and economic structures constituted, then, the necessary pre-conditions for the Great Leap Forward.

Great Leap Forward Policies

In March 1958 at a Working Conference of the Central Committee in Chengdu, the principles for the general line of socialist construction were first put forward using the

formulation, "Go all out, aim high and achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism". The main object was to achieve results at high speed. Mao also emphasised at the meeting that "we should break superstition, liberate our thought and develop the style of daring to think, daring to speak and daring to act."⁽⁸²⁾

The theoretical justification for this policy was the radical leftist standpoint which was promoted and strengthened during the Anti-Rightist movement. It comprised three main elements: 1. An emphasis on the role of individual subjective activity, at the expense of objective necessity and economic laws. As long as one had enthusiasm and determination one could achieve anything. 2. A disregard for balanced development. Mao was against the idea of balanced development because he believed it led to a lack of dynamism. Only by going against a vulgar and mechanical view of "proper" balance could progress be achieved. 3. An emphasis on the theory of continuous revolution. Mao stated his view in 1958 that "Our revolutions come one by one", an idea which rejects the proposition of change through stable progression.⁽⁸³⁾ It reveals Mao's belief that a society should be continuously pushing forward, without any need for consolidation.

Above all, the most important driving force in Mao's thinking was his ambitious pursuit of a unique route to transform Chinese society from its economically backward state to a prosperous and ideal Communist utopia in a relatively short period, to equal and even out-do the achievements of his Soviet neighbour. It represented a continuation of Mao's search for socialism with Chinese characteristics that had begun with his earlier idea of socialism moving "from the countryside to the city", which had gone against the Soviet comintern's theory that revolution should move in the opposite direction.⁽⁸⁴⁾

The main characteristics of the Great Leap Forward can be seen from two of its major propositions: 1. "everyone to become a steelmaker" and 2. the People's Communes. Both were based on the same principles. Firstly, they shared the "high target" ("gao zhibiao") aspiration, regardless of whether or not the targets set could be realistically attained. In agriculture, Party cadres strove to out-do each other in the amount their crops yielded. Hubei, Fujian and other provinces submitted grossly exaggerated figures for their wheat, cotton, peanut and rice production, in order to meet the demands of the high target

plan. The same was true for steel. In 1957 total national steel output amounted to only 5,350,000 tons, and the authorities had the ambitious plan of doubling this during 1958. Some places seemed to have exceeded even their expectations, as when Henan province proudly proclaimed that in early September 1958 its steel output was 780 tons per day but by 15th September it had miraculously soared to a staggering 18,693 tons per day!⁽⁸⁵⁾

Secondly, both objectives were to be achieved by means of the mass campaign. Mao had never placed a great deal of faith in hierarchical, bureaucratic systems, using modern scientific management methods. He still believed results were most effectively obtained by using the technique of the mass movement, which had played such an important role in the events leading up to the Communist take-over in 1949. Now, social construction was to be conducted in the same way as guerilla warfare, by mobilising the enthusiasm and potential of the 600 million people who were to participate in this process.⁽⁸⁶⁾

At the outset of the Great Leap Forward the entire cultural sphere was also mobilised to play a supporting role, and the distance between politics and art narrowed. Following the brutal suppression of the first real signs of independence amongst artists during the Hundred Flowers, they were now intimidated into accepting the absolute leadership of the Party. The advent of the Great Leap Forward forced artists to abandon their private work and join the "great tide of socialist construction".

The Organisation of Professional Artists during the Great Leap Forward

Soon after Mao's call for a Great Leap Forward in all areas of society, the Artists' Association put forward five proposals to be heeded and followed by all local branches of the Association and, in fact, by all artists throughout China. They were exhorted to:

1. Produce a work plan for 1958 for a Great Leap Forward in the art field. Concrete measures were to be designed to ensure the fulfilment of the plan.
2. Pay attention to the ideological and artistic dimension of art work. In stressing this point, the Association was trying to ensure that quality would not suffer, amidst all the pressures on artists to produce large quantities of work.

3. Give utmost support to the popularisation of art works, which meant producing more New Year pictures, picture-story books, cartoons, propaganda posters and illustrations.
4. Strengthen the coaching of the masses in art, to help enrich people's artistic life, and to facilitate the production of large numbers of amateur works of art.
5. Go to the countryside or to factories at least once during the year.⁽⁸⁷⁾

To fulfil these recommendations, artists in Beijing attended a series of meetings from March onwards to discuss the best way to implement the Great Leap Forward plan. As in industry and agriculture, art production was to be governed by the necessity to achieve "the high target".⁽⁸⁸⁾ In the course of these meetings 39 cartoonists decided they were going to create 5,800 cartoons in 1958, and, to meet the needs of amateur cartoonists, they were going to send coaching teams to the countryside and to factories. A Great Leap Forward cartoon exhibition was also planned. Another 54 artists aimed to create 600 paintings reflecting Great Leap Forward themes in a "popular style" that the workers, peasants and soldiers would understand and like. Staff from the Central Academy of Fine Art stated their intention to set up twenty evening schools in Beijing, as well as several correspondence schools. 96 sculptors said they planned to hold two exhibitions and to write a theoretical work of around 120,000 words on China's sculptural heritage. In keeping with the spirit of the Great Leap Forward, they also intended to learn from folk artists and craftsmen. Not to be outdone, woodblock printers aimed to produce 2,112 woodblock prints during 1958, and to organise a workshop in Beijing on the study of woodblock printing techniques. Finally, 39 New Year picture painters set an ambitious target of 3,812 New Year pictures to be completed within the year, as well as eight books, and articles on New Year pictures totalling 160,000 words. Beijing artists then challenged other branches of the Artists' Association to surpass their goals, and Shanghai art circles seem to have risen to that challenge, boldly stating that in 1958 they were going to complete a total of 10,000 pieces of art work.⁽⁸⁹⁾

The idea of a "high target" in art production may seem slightly absurd, but it was one which permeated all cultural fields in 1958. For example, pressure was placed upon

writers to devise figures for the amount of literary work they expected to contribute to "the Great Leap Forward in the cultural arena". Tian Han promised to write ten stage plays within a year, as well as ten film scripts. Mao Dun planned to write one long novel and three novelettes, as did Ba Jin. Perhaps not so ambitious as his colleagues, Cao Yu only committed himself to composing five one-act plays.⁽⁹⁰⁾

The emphasis during the Great Leap Forward, then, was to be on quantity, rather than quality, and in a complete turn-around since the Hundred Flowers, "redness" was to take precedence over "expertise". Figures for art production were set in much the same way as those for agricultural and industrial production, without any great discussion on "quality control". The aim was to create a competitive atmosphere between regions, so that each area would attempt to out-do others in terms of the sheer numbers of pieces produced. In the event, works of art did appear in great numbers, even if the high targets were not universally reached. Figures published in early 1960 reveal that between 1953 and 1957, "professional artists" (presumably those belonging to the main national Artists' Association) produced slightly more than 3,000 pieces of work. In just one year, 1958, when Great Leap Forward enthusiasm was at its height, they managed 8,216 pieces, nearly three times as many as during the preceding five years!⁽⁹¹⁾ As long as ample materials were provided, and considerations of quality remained of secondary importance, it appears that "high targets" in art may not have been quite so unrealistic as they eventually turned out to be in agriculture and industry.

In addition to formulating targets, artists were obliged, as on other occasions during the previous nine years, to visit rural areas and factories to be re-educated and to help with the artistic training of the local populace. This time, however, it was not simply a question of a limited number of individuals going, but the majority of artists went. All students and teachers from art institutions also had to undertake to spend between three and six months in the countryside or in factories. Several prominent artists, such as Gu Yuan and Shao Yu even wrote enthusiastically about their experiences and achievements there.⁽⁹²⁾ Cheng Shifa, Jian Hanting and others went to the famous ceramics factory at Yixing,⁽⁹³⁾ whilst Lin Fengmian, Guan Liang and Shao Keping went to work in a cooperative on the

outskirts of Shanghai.⁽⁹⁴⁾

The emphasis on "national" and "popular" art and mass participation in artistic activities

The emphasis on national and popular art during the Great Leap Forward has its roots to a large extent in international factors. Faced with a continuing threat from the United States, and increasingly deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union, the Chinese authorities began to stress the need to develop a Chinese route to socialism. For this purpose, a strong sense of national identity needed to be fostered, in order to harness nationalistic fervour for China's unique socialist construction programme. In the realm of art this essentially meant focussing on the types of art, mainly traditional Chinese painting and folk art, which were of purely Chinese origin. China's art (and general cultural) resources were thus utilised as a means of legitimising prevalent political purposes.

A shift in attitude towards the relative importance of traditional Chinese painting could be clearly seen during the Anti-Rightist movement from the case of Jiang Feng. At this time the tide was already beginning to turn and one of the major criticisms against Jiang - and the only one directly concerned with his ideas on art itself - was that he had suppressed traditional Chinese painting and ignored China's historical legacy. By believing that only oil painting could express revolutionary themes, according to his critics Jiang had thus revealed a wish to deny his own national identity.⁽⁹⁵⁾ However, as we have seen previously in Chapter one, the authorities themselves had always had an ambivalent attitude towards traditional Chinese painting, acknowledging its uniquely Chinese characteristics, yet also aware of its elitist associations and often doubting its usefulness in successfully portraying political themes. It had led to such anomalous situations as Qi Baishi being honoured with the position of President of the Artists' Association, whilst other traditional Chinese painters were put to sweeping floors.⁽⁹⁶⁾

During the Great Leap Forward, however, the ambivalence was largely pushed to one side, and artists and art critics were warned not to adopt "nihilistic attitudes towards China's national heritage, or to "worship foreign things!"⁽⁹⁷⁾ Early in 1958 a spate of articles was published on the achievements and artistic legacy of Qi Baishi as the main

representative of China's traditional heritage. He was described in glowing terms as having "inherited and developed the best in the cultural and artistic legacy of ancient Chinese traditions."⁽⁹⁸⁾

The praise of Qi here may not be so much in genuine honour of his achievements as born out of political necessity. He was after all only a bird-and-flower painter, however skilled, who had never really made any attempt to reflect "the intense revolutionary struggle" or the lives of workers, peasants and soldiers in his work. The prominent position given to him in 1958 was more as a figurehead to link Chinese tradition and the Chinese national identity with the Communist authorities, and unite artists ideologically under the banner of nationalism, which was an essential move considering the prevailing national and international circumstances.

Though the importance of traditional Chinese painting was re-affirmed in 1958, it was China's popular arts which became the dominant art form of the Great Leap Forward.

Like all other areas to which Great Leap Forward principles were being applied, results were to be obtained through the methods of mass mobilisation and mass campaigns, utilising the energies of the peasants, in particular. At a "National Conference for Rural Mass Cultural Work" held in Beijing between April 20th and April 30th by the Ministry of Culture, Qian Junrui outlined two possible directions in which Chinese culture might now develop.⁽⁹⁹⁾ The first he described as serving the socialist revolution and construction and

the vast mass of the people, its characteristics being summed up in the phrase "large numbers, quick, good, economical" ("duo, kuai, hao, sheng"). The success of this line depended on the mass participation of ordinary people, and it was therefore, by definition, anti-elitist. It represents a continuation of Mao's early ideas which go back to 1927 on the need to tap the energy and enthusiasm of the population as a whole if spectacular results are to be achieved.

The second possible direction Qian described as "bourgeois and revisionist" ("bourgeois", referring to America and the West, and "revisionist", implicitly to the Soviet Union though only Yugoslavia was actually mentioned). This line was characterised by a belief in "art for art's sake" and by being "a few in number, slow, poor-quality/bad, and extravagant/wasteful". ("shao, man, cha, fei"). Qian emphasised that it was the duty of

artists to follow the first direction and thereby set the tone for the Great Leap Forward in the art world. During the Conference it was proposed that professional and amateur artists should work side-by-side amongst the people to create an "artistic high-tide"! Caught up in the general excitement, Hebei province promised to produce 100,000 paintings, Hunan promised 350,000 and Hubei two million! The intention was to ensure that "all villages were going to have murals, and slogans would be everywhere".⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

The main thrust of the Great Leap was to expand the ranks of amateur artists. Hubei, for example, planned to adopt a "Five-Combination Model", encompassing (1) experimentation combined with coaching, (2) group training combined with individual teaching, (3) travelling art units combined with teaching at fixed locations, (4) the taking of apprentices by artists and craftsmen combined with mutual learning between the people, (5) exchanging experiences combined with one or two centres where resources were concentrated. In this way, Hubei intended to train up 80,000 amateur artists in 1958 to serve as the core force for carrying out the Great Leap Forward in art in the province. Other provinces followed suit, Heilongjiang, for instance, declaring its intention to train 20,000 core amateur artists as well as guaranteeing that every agricultural collective in the province would have an art group before the following year.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

During the Conference, "popularisation" was affirmed as the top priority in cultural activities, and rural cultural clubs (planned for every collective farm) were seen as the main centres for organising participation in these activities. However, any art training or art production was not to be viewed in isolation, but had to be closely combined with political tasks and the usual demands for agricultural production. Six main principles were put forward at the end of the Conference which were to serve as the ideological and practical basis of mass participation in artistic activities.

- 1) Politics in command. Art was to serve political needs and considerations directly.
- 2) Resolute adherence to the mass line.
- 3) Carrying out the "Double Hundred flowers" principle. Here, however, the emphasis was not on more free and open artistic expression, but on solving the relationship

between tradition and the present, and between Chinese and foreign art, which is more in keeping with the general Great Leap Forward ethos.

- 4) The establishment of a proletarian cultural army that was both "red" and "expert".
- 5) Ensuring an economical pursuit of cultural activities.
- 6) Dependence on and cooperation with the local Party leadership and other departments concerned.⁽¹⁰²⁾ The movement, then, was to be directed not so much by the central party apparatus, through decisions and plans sent down from above, but more at the grass-roots level, under the local Party leadership, which would integrate artistic activities with all other facets of local social and economic life.

Shortly after the conference, a cultural mass movement was promoted throughout China. "The entire Party," in a "People's Daily" editorial, was asked to collect folk songs.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Artists, writers and actors left their places of work and went out on the streets and into the villages. Writers produced leaflets with poetry and short stories reflecting Great Leap Forward events, artists drew cartoons and painted traditional Chinese paintings that illustrated commune life and the growth of iron and steel production, singers performed on construction sites and in the fields.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Magazines and periodicals began to publish stories, paintings and poems by workers, peasants and soldiers. For example, the July issue of Shanghai's *Wenyi Yuebao*, was devoted entirely to short stories written by workers.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ "Fine Art" also gave increasing coverage in 1958 to work by amateur artists, with special issues of peasant murals in September, workers paintings over the autumn and art by servicemen in November. The January 1959 issue of "Fine Art" had a series of articles featuring the discussions of worker and peasant artists on their own experiences as amateurs. A group of paintings accompanied these articles with evocative Great Leap titles, such as "Everybody is Making Steel" (Zhang Yusen, Hebei) and "The Liquified Iron Rushes Down" (Wang Hong, Anhui).

Throughout 1958 almost every issue of "Fine Art" included paintings and articles produced by so-called "mass artists"! The percentage of their work in the magazine increased rapidly, sometimes dominating entire issues, and inevitably there was a concomitant

decrease in the work of professional artists. The People's Art Publishing House also began in 1958 and 1959 to publish a whole series of worker, peasant and soldier painting albums, which brought together the best examples of this amateur art. The stated policy was to feature work that "displays the characteristics of the times".⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Exhibitions

A national exhibition of worker, peasant and soldier art was organised for the end of 1958.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ It covered a whole range of popular forms, particular New Year Pictures and paper-cuts, and displayed typical Great Leap Forward themes such as steel-production, "getting rid of the four pests", constructing new roads in the countryside, and so on. Similar though smaller, exhibitions were then held all over China. The Artists' Association, at both national and branch levels, paid great attention to exhibitions as a vital aspect of their Great Leap Forward activities. With gallery space at a premium it had to devise makeshift means to ensure that as many as possible of the huge numbers of paintings and prints being produced were allocated an exhibition slot. In Chongqing, ten or so long picture boards, each with the capacity to exhibit fifty to sixty pieces of work, were used as a gallery for amateur art. The exhibits on the boards were changed every two weeks, facilitating a sizeable turnover of work. In Tianjin around 200 large paintings were hung along the two busiest commercial streets, and people were encouraged to put up propaganda posters and Great Leap Forward paintings in their own homes.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ In addition, the leadership of a Tianjin textile factory organised 300 worker-artists to produce paintings reflecting the history of their factory as educational material for the workers' political training.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Throughout China, similar experiments took place in industrial and commercial units and rural communes.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

The mass campaign spread through the Chinese countryside. To fulfil the ideological requirements of the Great Leap movement that required art creation to become truly "popularised", a special effort was needed in China's rural areas, which had hitherto been relatively neglected. Great attention was therefore paid to developing the skills of traditional peasant art, such as paper-cuts and New Year pictures. The most important

development in art in the countryside were the new murals, which appeared everywhere and were featured prominently in the art periodicals.

The new murals

Murals had existed in China for many centuries,⁽¹¹¹⁾ and were used originally for ceremonial or ritual purposes. Obvious examples are the "tomb-tiles" from the mortuary shrines of wealthy and influential Warring States and Han officials, which depicted fantastic quasi-human figures, routine events of social life or ceremonial activities.⁽¹¹²⁾ Following the arrival of Buddhism in China, religious murals, displaying scenes from the life of the Buddha, or illustrating the Buddhist sutras, became widespread. Some impressive examples, like those in the Dunhuang Caves, have survived to the present day.⁽¹¹³⁾ Others, such as those produced for the Buddhist temples in Luoyang by the celebrated Wu Daozi, are no longer extant.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

The propoganda potential of murals had largely been ignored by the Communists prior to the Great Leap Forward. Although some were produced in Chinese villages during the anti-Japanese war,⁽¹¹⁵⁾ following Mao's Yan'an Talks, greater attention had been paid to developing the potential of New Year pictures in the communist base areas.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

During the Great Leap, however, whilst New Year pictures continued to enjoy a prominent position, it was the new mural that played an increasingly important role. It not only shared with New Year pictures the characteristic of being a traditional Chinese art form, an important consideration in the light of the international and national situation in 1958, but it also used up less resources and required less technical skill than even the humble New Year picture. This was a crucial factor, given the scale of the mass art movement envisaged by the authorities. Murals could be painted any time, anywhere, as long as a spare wall was available, and only the simplest of materials were required. Murals were also extremely visible, obvious to anyone walking down a village street or passing a peasant's home. The mural thus constituted a highly appropriate tool for fulfilling Great Leap Forward requirements.

At the National Conference for Rural Mass Cultural Work mentioned previously,

a speech made by Gao Xueqian, head of the peasants club in a village in Hebei province, Changli county, outlined how the peasants had been inspired in the village. They had based their activities on the slogan "Great Leap forward in production, culture follows closely, murals lead at the front, singing is the vanguard" and within only three days they had painted 164 murals. Each house had "6 sides brightly coloured" and the face of the village was said to be completely transformed.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Nor was this village an exception. Every township in Changli county was decorated with brightly-coloured murals and slogans painted in elegant large characters. The murals displayed visions of the agriculture of the future, and exhortations to repair irrigation works, to improve soil quality, and to increase crop yields. Everywhere, there were pictures of peasants studying, rearing pigs, collecting pig manure and planting trees. Model peasants or workers from the locality were of course prominently featured.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ In one village, the peasants club every ten to fifteen days published a magazine of paintings by members, and showed it around the local brigades and during market days.⁽¹¹⁹⁾

In mid-August, the editorial office of "Fine Art" organised a small group to visit Pi county, Jiangsu. The group later reported on the peasant murals and other artistic activities of what became in effect a model county for amateur art work. It was discovered that the county had some 1,800 village art groups, boasting 6,000 amateur artists. In July alone, more than 23,300 murals and 15,000 propaganda posters had been completed. Every village sported more than 10 murals and every brigade, more than 5. By August, even these figures had been surpassed, with 15,000 core amateur artists completing 105,000 murals and 78,000 propaganda posters. In half of the villages, it was reported, every house had between one and five murals, and in one of the towns, Guan Hu, there were 25,000 murals, though the town itself had a population of only 20,000.⁽¹²⁰⁾ Though it is impossible to confirm these figures, they do give an indication of the vast quantities of work produced. Most surprisingly, as reports show, there was not one single professional artist living and working permanently in Pi County, and the huge number of paintings had been produced by amateurs, and generally as a sideline activity, secondary to the demanding requirements of agricultural production.

In addition to any support given by the local Party committees, there were probably two main factors that contributed to the achievements of Pi county in popularising art:

1) Professional artists from the Provincial People's Cultural Centre, Nanjing, visited the county to organise short-term training classes for the peasants. After training, these peasants then went on to train others in the village, thereby quickly building up a substantial pool of individuals with the necessary rudimentary artistic skills.

2) The methods of organising artistic activities were basically the same as those for "smelting iron", - mass participation and "getting on with the job using local methods". ("tufa shang ma"), that is to say, improvising according to the particular needs or resources of the locality. The first problem the Pi County peasants encountered when painting their murals was the provision of colouring materials. Initially they used household paint, but this meant each mural cost two yuan to produce, far too much if large numbers were to be painted. In addition, the process was too slow, with three art teachers being able to paint only three murals a day between them. As neither the cost nor the speed met Great Leap Forward requirements, other measures, drawing on local resources, had to be used. Red soil was dug from the mountains and roasted to obtain a red pigment (red being the most important colour); blues and purples came from colour left over in the peasants' dyeing pots; kitchen chimney soot provided black colouring and lime was used for white and leaves for green. Brushes to apply the colour were made from palm leaves. For only a few yuan, the peasants were thus able to paint their murals,⁽¹²¹⁾ which was reminiscent of the Yan'an days, when artists had been able to produce woodcuts and New Year pictures at an extremely low cost.

Murals did not only appear on external walls but also on walls inside houses. They tended to feature the standard themes of Great Leap Forward aspirations. Yang Wei Village in the Taihang Mountain District produced murals with titles such as "Women Carry a Load of 1,000 Jin", "Sing for Socialism", and the "Great Leap Forward Horse". Typically for peasant paintings at this time, the content of Yang Wei village murals mainly reflected topics of local interest, with which the peasants were familiar, and which illustrated the daily activities of their village. For instance, the main crops of the village were Chinese

potatoes and corn, and in one mural, stalks of corn were depicted as rockets and potatoes as satellites, both being launched at high speed towards Tiananmen Square. Its title was "Drive the rockets, fly in the satellites; every mou of land has produced 1,000 jin to go into Beijing."⁽¹²²⁾

Another important characteristic of the new mural was its close association with folk songs, as the words of folk songs were often written on or beside murals during the Great Leap. With regard to this combination, it was commented: "Whatever cannot be expressed on the surface of a painting, poetry can provide. The image visible on the surface of a painting can also strengthen the effectiveness of poetry. Peasants say there is poetry in painting and painting in poetry. When you can unite painting and poetry, then you are a real expert."⁽¹²³⁾ These two popular cultural forms were deliberately combined to maximise their educational effectiveness. In addition, one of the major aesthetic qualities said to characterise traditional Chinese painting and poetry, i.e. "In every painting there is a poem, and in every poem there is a painting" ("huazhong you shi, shizhong you hua")⁽¹²⁴⁾ is here re-interpreted in a popular, and one might say cruder, form, without the subtleties that lay behind the original saying. Aesthetic elements of Chinese high culture were thus borrowed and transformed into an effective means of mass political propaganda, and an idea that once captured the imagination of China's cultural elite was now widely used for educating her semi-illiterate peasants.

A typical example of the combination of mural and folk song was in Xiao Pu River Village, Changli County. The mural, titled "Bumper Harvest" depicted a huge single stalk of corn, under the shadow of which peasants laboured in the fields. The words of the folk song on it went thus:

"One stalk of corn 1,000 zhang high.

It breaches the blue sky and enters the clouds.

If you ask who is planting in the fields

It is not a spirit, it is not the Buddha, it is not a god

It is the members of the commune.

They have liberated their thought and are in high spirits.

They dare to speak, dare to think, dare to work.

The revolutionary peasants can plant a sprout that will shoot towards the sky".⁽¹²⁵⁾

There are obvious affinities between the mural and the folk song. The content of both is characterised by a great sense of optimism and vivid imagery that is exaggerated almost to the point of absurdity, consonant with the idealistic ethos of Great Leap Forward aspirations. They are expressed in a direct and simple way, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity in the message being conveyed, an essential consideration when addressing barely educated peasants. The vast majority of peasant murals and folk songs at that time followed a similar pattern.

Wang Zhaowen, when discussing the characteristics of murals, stressed their affinity with folk songs. He stated that each had been affected by the other and both possessed features of imagination, fantasy and speculation. Both followed the principle of Revolutionary Romanticism,* and revealed strong idealistic and romantic overtones. He provided many examples of how these features were expressed - peanut shells as big as boats, stalks of corn as tall as trees, - requiring long ladders to reach the top of them -three happy children carrying one huge ear of wheat, a balanced scale with a bean pod on one side and a child on the other, and a large Chinese cabbage with three children playing hide-and-seek inside it, accompanied by the folk song:

*"The Chinese cabbage has grown really big.
Children can hide behind it,
Xiao San Er has become really anxious
Da Niu and Xiao Gou Wa are delighted."*(126)

In an article in "Fine Art" (December), Wang Zhaowen analysed the artistic features of peasant paintings,⁽¹²⁷⁾ including murals. His object was to challenge the view that peasant painting did not require any real skill, an opinion that probably originated with professional artists unhappy at the unprecedented emphasis on amateur folk art . Wang asserted that peasant painting had its own approach, and that people should not "blindly worship" any artistic technique, even those based on science, such as perspective or

* a concept to be explained below

anatomical dissection. He stated that "any artistic principle, if it departs from practice and becomes absolute, is erroneous", and he warned artists that they "should not blindly follow foreign dogma". "In art", he stressed, "we have to emphasise subjectivity, rather than subjective laws".(128)

Wang is here clearly trying to defend the techniques of the peasant artists, and is referring largely to the new murals. He is attempting to substantiate the Great Leap Forward assumption that in art, as in all other areas of socialist construction, it is wrong to worship scientific principles as absolute dogma. At the same time, however, he unintentionally confirms that the peasant paintings were produced with little or no technical skill. He reveals that they are characterised by a lack of perspective, shading, focus and dissection and, as may be inferred from his remark on subjectivity, they ignore any notion of proper dimensions based on reality and objective laws. However, what Wang also makes clear is that this apparent lack of skill is actually unimportant in the context of China in the late 1950s. The murals were not originally intended to be technically proficient, but were the fruits of a massive social experiment to engage uneducated peasants in creative work for the first time. In terms of its sheer scale, the mural movement seems to have been, temporarily at least, largely successful.

New Year Pictures

The second most important popular art form during the Great Leap Forward was the New Year picture. Discussions about New Year pictures had been given a prominent position in art periodicals since 1949, and in virtually every year a substantial debate took place on the subject, 1958 and 1959 being no exceptions. Because of the wide circulation of New Year pictures and their deep cultural roots amongst the peasants, it was the official policy to use them as a major cultural weapon for political and social propaganda. However, due to the persistence of so-called 'feudal' characteristics in many New Year pictures, the authorities had never been completely satisfied with previous attempts to introduce revolutionary themes. The official view of them thus remained somewhat ambivalent.

We can see the importance of New Year pictures in terms of propaganda value

from the statistics on numbers printed. It was estimated that in 1958 some one hundred million pictures were printed, and that approximately half of the Chinese population (three hundred million people) regularly looked at one or more.⁽¹²⁹⁾ In one Chinese source, the hundred million prints were divided into 664 different themes, which were then listed in a number of general categories:

- 1) Chinese folklore and traditional Chinese drama and theatre (196 themes)
- 2) Children and plump babies (139 themes)
- 3) Scenes from contemporary life (172 themes).⁽¹³⁰⁾

Two thirds of these, it was claimed, featured sport, acrobatics, dancing and "beautiful women" ('meinü'), and only a few, 8.6%, actually reflected the "revolutionary struggle" or "socialist construction"! Only one theme was concerned with collectivisation. This compared with pictures on the theme of horoscopes, which comprised a fifth of the total and numbered as many as twenty million copies!⁽¹³¹⁾

The problems associated with New Year pictures were further illustrated in the following chart:

Year	Themes			
	The lives of workers, peasants, soldiers and other political themes		Traditional Chinese opera, plump babies and other non-political themes	
	No. of prints	% of total		
1955	859,000	3.8%	281,000	12.4%
1956	257,000	8.8%	1,700,000	56.6%
1957	346,000	7.3%	2,648,000	57.1%
1958	211,000	2.6%	5,829,000	72.4%

Source: (132)

From this table we can see that between 1955 and 1958 there was a drastic decrease in the number of New Year pictures on political themes and those that directly reflected the lives of workers, peasants and soldiers from 38% down to only 2.6% of the total.

At the same time there was a concomitant increase in those depicting traditional themes

from 12.4% to 72.4%.

These figures tell us that by 1958 there still seemed to be a strong resistance amongst the population, and especially amongst peasants, to politicised art forms. The varying degrees of politicisation amongst different art forms confounds the assumption that all art under the communists directly reflected political themes. Whilst murals were reasonably easily politicised, New Year pictures proved more of a problem for the authorities. Their continuing conservative nature was partly influenced by the buying power of the peasants. New Year pictures were generally bought individually by peasants for their own houses on a voluntary basis, unlike other types of paintings, which were normally purchased by work units, hotels, institutions, and so on.⁽¹³³⁾ It appears that the peasants' tastes in art were more difficult to change than the authorities might have hoped. It reveals that traditional tastes can exhibit a stable pattern and a strong resistance to change, even when there is a drastic transformation of the economic and political environment. Institutional change could be brought about fairly rapidly and easily through the establishment of powerful and comprehensive organisational structures. In comparison, deeply-rooted cultural habits, rituals, symbolic forms and their cultural associations, popular beliefs and aesthetic values proved much more resistant to change. Popular forms of art often have an inner resilience, a mechanism that defies political interference. The New Year picture for example is not just an abstract art form, but, from a social anthropological point of view, like ancestor worship, it is an integral part of the Chinese social ritual system. As a social ritual it cannot be separated from ancestor worship. Ancestor worship and the hanging up of New Year pictures are two of the most important aspects of the New Year, the latter because it is supposed to bring good luck.⁽¹³⁴⁾ The two actions are complementary and, in a chain of continuity, they link the past, present and future, symbolically ensuring prosperity for the following year. Therefore, changing the content or form of the New Year picture at a deep level involves in reality a process of changing people's social psychology, social ritual and the symbolic structure of their social life. Traditional aspects of the New Year picture thus inevitably persisted after 1949.

A "Fine Art" journalist who made an investigation in 1958 of New Year pictures,

had to acknowledge that people were still drawn more to traditional themes than to the political subjects favoured by the authorities. "Old male peasants like beautiful scenery, and flora and fauna. Old female peasants like plump babies. They all like figures taken from folklore, stories from historical dramas and mythical stories. These kinds of things are most welcomed by peasants. In some counties, peasants say they particularly like "The White Snake Legend", "Havoc in Heaven", "The Cowherd and the Girl Weaver", stories from the "Three Kingdoms", "The 108 Heroes from the Water Margin", "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai".⁽¹³⁵⁾ These are the most familiar and favourite (subjects) of the masses".⁽¹³⁶⁾

According to the Xinhua bookstore, the main retailing outlet for New Year pictures, regardless of how many were available with traditional themes, all could be sold out immediately. One of a series on "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" titled "Transformed Into Butterflies", sold out six times in succession.⁽¹³⁷⁾

This "Fine Art" journalist revealed not only that peasants still greatly favoured traditional themes in their New Year pictures, but also that they most disliked those with any strong political message such as "Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang"⁽¹³⁸⁾ "Soviet Experts Visit a Collective Farm", and so on. It seems that even though the modern New Year pictures often attempted to imitate the bright and vivid colours of their traditional counterparts (certain bright colours were important because they were thought to bring good luck) they still obviously lacked the cultural resonances and symbolic associations that endeared the traditional New Year picture to the peasants.

During the Great Leap Forward, however, the resistance of the New Year picture to Communist ideology came under renewed pressure. The authorities were fully aware of the strong influence of the New Year picture as one of China's most popular art forms, and realised that problems with it continued to exist. Articles expressing forceful criticism of traditional influences on New Year pictures began to re-appear,⁽¹³⁹⁾ and some practical measures were also taken to reform them.

A typical example of this was in Shandong province, where the cultural authorities attempted to use New Year pictures to convey political ideas by introducing new subject matter. Shandong's traditional New Year pictures depicted a wide range of themes

and, in common with those elsewhere, exhibited exaggerated, decorative and brightly-coloured images displayed in a symbolic and highly generalised form. Each of the main subjects and types had a specially allocated place within the home:

- 1) The door-god: on the front door of the courtyard.
- 2) The "Painting and Character Lamp": on the courtyard wall and on the various lamps in the house.
- 3) "Foreign strips" and "Moonlight pictures" on the internal doors.
- 4) Special paintings called "Beside the Window" and "Above the Window": round the window areas.
- 5) The "Stove Horse":* by the stove.
- 6) "Surrounding the Table": to decorate the table (This refers to pieces of cloth with simple printed or embroidered patterns hung around or placed upon the table)
- 7) The "Small Horizontal Slope" - a mixture of poetry and pictures : above the kang.
- 8) "Wooden Squares" (wooden blocks with carved or painted images): for alcove decoration.
- 9) A "Vertical Drape (Roll)", paintings of beautiful women: on the walls, on screens.
- 10) "Stable Door Paintings" : on stable doors
- 11) "Cow" paintings (of farm animals): on both sides of farm carts.

During the Great Leap Forward the Shandong art authorities attempted to imbue these various pictures with political messages. For example, the door-god was deliberately transformed into the "Bumper Harvest"; the Moonlight pictures had to reflect contemporary women and children themes: the beautiful women on the screens became women working in the People's Communes; the small horizontal scrolls of poetry and painting were to represent new revolutionary folk songs, and so on.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

* A type of Chinese peasant calendar

These innovations in Shandong were gradually accepted by the Beijing art authorities as having had some success, and on the basis of this foundation laid during the Great Leap Forward, by the mid-1960s Shandong had become something of a model for the reform of the New Year picture. In the introduction to a collection of Shandong's New Year pictures published in 1965 it was made clear that progress had been made in toning down the exaggerated and naive features of the earliest post-1949 efforts, and that the New Year picture could now more effectively reflect real life and contemporary events.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ However, in China as a whole, the authorities still needed to maintain their vigilance over the tendency to favour traditional themes and forms in New Year pictures, particularly during periods of political relaxation when official pressure to produce highly politicised work was eased. At such times, even artists in the 'model' province of Shandong often returned to the motifs commonly found in traditional New Year pictures, as can be seen from Shi Banghua's picture, "Carp Jumping Over the Dragon-gate" produced in Weifang in 1959. (Plate 3).

Propaganda Posters

The propaganda poster was an extremely important means of conveying Party ideology, particularly during mass movements such as the Great Leap Forward. This newest Chinese art form had since 1949 reflected virtually every political movement and issue. In terms of artistic technique, it drew on traditional Chinese art forms, such as the bright, unmodulated colour of New Year pictures, as well as on Soviet propaganda posters with their use of shading and perspective, simple political slogans and prominent positioning of human figures.⁽¹⁴²⁾

At the end of 1959 a conference on propaganda posters was organised to coincide with a ten-year poster retrospective held in Beijing.⁽¹⁴³⁾ From statistics cited at the conference, we can see how important this form of art was considered by the authorities for its propaganda value. Between 1950 and 1957, the People's Art Publishing House published 286 varieties of propaganda poster, and printed 16,530,000 copies. During the Great Leap Forward the yearly average increased dramatically and in just one twelve month period 241 varieties were published and 11,340,000 prints made. This constituted more than two-thirds

of the output for the previous eight years. There was a uniform increase across the country. The Tianjin Art Publishing House, for example, published only 17 varieties of propaganda poster and printed 144,000 copies in 1957. In 1958 the figures were respectively 130 varieties and 13,200,000 copies, and in 1959 120 varieties and 3,416,000 copies. In 1958, a particularly popular propaganda poster, titled "The People's Communes Are Good" attained a circulation of 8,230,000. It was explained that, if not for a shortage of paper, 15,000,000 copies would have been printed to satisfy public demand.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

An increasing number of professional artists were enlisted to work on propaganda posters during 1958 and 1959. It was noted at the conference that artists had previously been reluctant to engage in such work but that since the beginning of the Great Leap they were "voluntarily knocking on the doors (of the authorities in charge of art) to offer their services for propaganda poster work", a measure, perhaps, of the success of the Anti-Rightist movement in ensuring the compliance of artists in political endeavours.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾

In order to coordinate poster publication and printing with other Great Leap activities, posters began to be produced at a tremendous pace. New designs were shaped up in a few hours and sent directly to the printing press where the entire process was monitored by editors. Posters of particular importance could be produced in around ten hours from conception and design to final printing and the poster became an instantaneous expression of Party policy, reflecting the smallest changes or developments almost as quickly as official statements. Access to a mass audience was crucial, and with speed and quantity the two most important considerations, poster quality was inevitably sacrificed in many cases.

A major stylistic tendency was the incorporation in the posters of more features of popular art forms, particularly the New Year pictures, and a reduction in influence from Soviet posters. Speakers at the poster conference implicitly acknowledged that the poster was not being so well received by peasants, and that, in order to maximise its propaganda effects, greater use should be made of traditional methods. It was for example recommended that more use should be made of the bright and vivid colours of the New Year pictures, and that Soviet techniques, such as shading, or strong contrasts between black and white, should be discouraged.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

Art Education

From the outset of the Great Leap Forward, art education was targeted as a major area for reform. In February 1958 the Ministry of Culture held a five-day meeting specifically to discuss the issue, which centred on the need "to combine art education with practice". The Central Academy of Arts and Crafts in Beijing worked out a plan for 1958 to implement comprehensive reforms. Purely classroom-based teaching was replaced by practical work in production units or workshops, where students would acquire skills from experienced craftsmen.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Students and teachers from all other art institutions were also required to work in rural areas or factories as part of their standard curriculum. In an effort to narrow the gap between traditional Chinese painting and popular arts and crafts, several artists from the Shanghai Traditional Chinese Painting Academy, such as Cheng Shifa, Tang Yun and Wang Geyi were sent to the Shanghai Enamelware Factory to work in conjunction with craftsmen there on improving the designs of industrial products.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

An important development was the re-appearance of "the class line", which required the training of working-class artists who were both "red and expert". A five-year plan formulated at the February meeting mentioned earlier directed that the percentage of peasant and worker students in all art institutions should reach 60-70%, from which we can infer that it had been far below this level. It was also declared that the proportion of so-called "leftist" teaching staff should reach 70%,⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ revealing the fact that the Ministry of Culture still felt that a substantial proportion of the staff in art institutions were of questionable loyalty.

Soon after this meeting the Zhejiang Academy of Art (formerly the Eastern branch of the Central Academy of Fine Art) began to recruit workers to its courses, and several provinces organised special classes to train a core body of worker-peasant-soldier artists.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ In addition, new "amateur" art schools to train peasants in rudimentary artistic skills were set up in rural areas. In Ji River County, Hebei for example, one was established on July 21st 1958. The school was operated on an essentially part-time basis, students attending classes during the slack season. At other times, teachers would go out to coach

students in groups or even individually. The professional woodcut artist Gu Yuan was appointed as Deputy Head and the local Party Secretary as President. The student body consisted entirely of peasants.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ This tripartite system, bringing together professional artists, Party cadres and peasants, represented a new form of Great Leap art education. By combining professionals and amateurs it fulfilled the formal principles that had been elaborated in earlier Great Leap Forward policy documents.

Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism

An important theoretical idea lay behind these practical changes introduced during the Great Leap Forward. It was put forward by Mao himself during the 2nd plenary session of the Central Committee when the general line of socialist construction was first outlined. Mao stated that proletarian literature and art should adopt a creative method based on a combination of Revolutionary Realism (i.e. Socialist Realism) and Revolutionary Romanticism.⁽¹⁵²⁾ From the outset, the concept of socialist construction and that of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism had close associations, and a close theoretical link existed between them. Revolutionary Romanticism, which as an aesthetic concept was brought to prominence during the Great Leap, was a direct manifestation of Mao's idea of subjective idealism and his belief that people's initiative and enthusiasm could overcome and transcend all objective conditions, and realise Communist ideals. People with an idealistic and romantic revolutionary spirit, with imagination and determination, could transform romantic ideas into reality.⁽¹⁵³⁾

The concept of Revolutionary Romanticism, like that of Socialist Realism, can be traced back to Soviet theorists. Zhdanov, Politburo member and ideological chief in the Soviet Union after the Second World War, made the first major pronouncement on it in 1934 when he stated: "The whole life of the working class and its struggle consist of combining the most severe and sober practical work with grand heroics and great prospects. Romanticism, a new type of Romanticism, a revolutionary Romanticism, cannot be alien to Soviet literature."⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ In his Yan'an Talks Mao asserted that life, as reflected in works of literature and art, could and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more generalised,

more typical, more idealised and, therefore, with more universality than ordinary life and reality.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Clearly, for Mao, mirror-images or realism were not appropriate or adequate for the needs of Socialist art. His commitment to romanticism is evident in the poetry he wrote himself and in his personal taste in classical Chinese poetry. He always favoured the romantic, imaginative Li Bai more than the realistic and descriptive Du Fu.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾

Mao's own artistic inclinations were, however, obviously not the whole story. After all, it was only during the Great Leap Forward that Revolutionary Romanticism really came to the fore. Of equal importance were Great Leap sentiments which stressed heroic, idealistic ambition, romantic imagination and human subjectivity at the expense of real conditions and objective laws. The emphasis on creating anew, on going beyond natural laws to transform the ordinary processes of life by using non-conventional means, established the climate for the development of Revolutionary Romanticism as the major principle governing art during the Great Leap. Zhou Yang described it as an idea put forward by Mao which accorded with the Marxist theory of the unity between continuous revolution and progressive stages of revolution (*bu duan geminglun yu geming fazhan jieduanlun xiang jiehe*), claiming that Mao had succeeded in dialectically uniting the two methods of realism and romanticism in artistic creation.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ The combination of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism was elsewhere described as being best understood in terms of the relationship between the two philosophical categories of phenomena and essence.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ A further explanation came from Ge Lu: "If the philosophical foundation of critical realism is materialism, then that of the unity of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism is dialectical materialism."⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

These three statements are a further indication of the core ideas which formed the basis of Revolutionary Romanticism. Dialectical materialism is a synthesis of aspects of Hegelian dialectical idealism and 18th century French materialism. Dialectical materialists, of whom Mao was one, wish to describe or reflect the objective world, but at the same time, unlike the proponents of Naturalism, they are not satisfied with simply constructing a mirror-image of that world. They aim instead to project their ideas or their imagination onto reality, as its essence, so that these ideas can be fulfilled in the objective

process. They emphasise the unity between phenomena and essence and between the objective world of concrete things and subjective knowledge and ideas.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

The relationship between Revolutionary Romanticism and Socialist or Revolutionary Realism requires clarification, since in many respects the two ideas appear to be similar. Socialist Realism, in contrast with Western Naturalism or Realism, embodies elements of Romanticism. It does not attempt to reflect randomly objects or events from the concrete world, but in accordance with a Socialist world view or Socialist principles. It thus carries within itself aspects of Realism and to a lesser degree, Romanticism. This is manifested, for example, in the depiction of the typical Socialist hero who is meant to be the embodiment of Communist ideals, but whose human figure in terms of artistic representation is depicted largely in accordance with objective laws. Major events represented in Socialist Realism are highly selective and often tinged with romantic overtones, such as evocative splashes of red colour or dramatic expressions on the faces of individuals. However, although the overall effect can at times be melodramatic, nonetheless themes are normally based on historical fact or drawn from real life, and the images produced are on the whole constructed in standard proportions and perspectives. The difference between Socialist Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism is mainly one of degree - the latter involves an over-emphasis on the romantic dimension, often to the point of absurd and implausible over-exaggeration, whilst the former attempts to maintain some degree of balance between objective representation of certain features of reality and emphasis on specific aspects of that reality. Revolutionary Romanticism is more deeply rooted in the philosophical foundation of objective idealism than in materialism.

This exaggerated characteristic of Revolutionary Romanticism comes across most clearly in the folk arts, particularly the new folk songs, murals and New Year pictures of the Great Leap. The folk songs were full of vivid verbal imagery, describing the superhuman efforts of the Chinese people to change their environment and lauding their power to overcome nature: "In Heaven there is no Jade Emperor, On Earth there is no Dragon King."⁽¹⁶¹⁾ I am the Jade Emperor, I am the Dragon King. When I give a command the three mountains open a path for me - I'm coming!"⁽¹⁶²⁾ Peasant paintings, as we have already

seen, depicted an idealised world of the future, where wheat and corn and other grain crops grew several metres high and where vegetables attained such prodigious proportions that children were able to play games inside them. (Plate 4) They were usually vibrant with the frenetic activity associated with the Great Leap. (Plate 5) Often there appeared in them row upon row of peasant figures joyfully engaged in the sowing or harvesting of crops and the rearing of animals, innumerable figures set against a background of unmodulated and contrasting primary colours to achieve a more vivid and startling effect.

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that it was the works by peasant artists which most clearly manifested the principles of Revolutionary Romanticism. The concept itself, as it applied to art, would not have seemed all that alien to the peasants, their own folk art tradition being to a great extent based on highly imaginative images of larger-than-life individuals, divinities, birds and beasts represented in fantastic dimensions and brilliant colours. In terms of picture-making, the work of peasant artists during the Great Leap is more satisfying, and the overall effect is fresher, livelier and less forced and constrained than earlier attempts by professional artists to translate more prosaic subject-matter, such as, for example, the PLA man, into the traditional mode of the New Year picture. The peasants, as amateurs, were limited neither by the need for adherence to objective, scientific dimensions and scale as required by Realism (and, hence, Socialist Realism), nor by the conventions of spatial relations, an overall sense of harmony, and so on that normally apply to traditional Chinese painting. Largely unfettered by the aesthetic considerations that might constrain professional artists, they were able to give free reign to their imagination and, using brushwork that was both spontaneous and lively, they produced the idealised images of a future Socialist society that so characterised Revolutionary Romanticism.

Revolutionary Romanticism could of course be double-edged. Its emphasis on imagination and romantic expression could allow it to be used in opposition to official policy and in support of individual subjectivity. After all, during the Great Leap there was much talk by the authorities of unleashing the "subjective force" of the masses, though paradoxically within the parameters of Party policy. However, there was the possibility that artists, in the name of "subjective romanticism", might challenge the old framework

based on Socialist Realism and thereby pose a threat to the uniformity dictated by political priorities.

The authorities, aware of this possibility, were forced to define Romanticism in their own terms to limit any side-effects on their policy. In numerous articles published in "The Literary and Art Gazette", and "Fine Art" and in the speeches of Zhou Yang and other Party ideologues, we find severe criticism of "negative Romanticism", based on "bourgeois individualism", and a constant attempt to draw the line between this and Revolutionary, or even "progressive" Romanticism. One writer equated practitioners of "negative" or "reactionary" Romanticism both with those who wanted to "return to the old traditional kinship-based medieval mode of life", rejecting Enlightenment aesthetics based on materialism and Realism, and with those who indulged in "pure aestheticism" and who followed modernist tendencies in art. The so-called "Progressive" Romanticism of Europe was endorsed since it expressed the "fighting spirit of capitalism against feudalism" from the 18th century onwards, as manifested in the works of the writers Byron, Hugo and Lemontoff, the musicians Schubert, Chopin and Liszt, and the French Romantic artist Theodore Gericault (1791-1824).⁽¹⁶³⁾ In fact, during 1958 and 1959, with the exception of work from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the only Western paintings referred to positively in art periodicals were those of the French Romantics.

As part of the general attack on "individualistic" Romanticism, examples were made of artists whose work fell into this category. These included Wang Shiqiu, Yuan Yunsheng and Wu Jing, who, capped as Rightists during the Anti-Rightist movement, were again accused in 1958 of "imposing their own fantasies on empty imaginations" and "attempting to release and express their own individualistic emotions".⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

For the authorities, then, the concept of Revolutionary Romanticism when applied to art needed to be handled with care. It perfectly embodied Great Leap Forward aspirations, not only in its depictions of Great Leap activities, but also because it could be easily practised by the great mass of the Chinese people and thus fulfil one of the Great Leap objectives, namely that everyone could be an artist.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ However, it could also be manipulated, particularly by professional artists, to negate this very purpose. Though

supposedly rooted in the entire community and intended to reflect the collective consciousness or will, Revolutionary Romanticism could also be re-interpreted as a means of allowing individual subjective expression that fell outside of the authorities' political programme.

The Further Tightening of the Ideological Control of Artists During the Great Leap Forward and the Anti-Rightist Deviation Campaign.

During the Great Leap Forward there was continuous reference in official publications to the importance of criticising Rightists, individualism, and an over-emphasis on being 'expert' at the expense of being 'red'. There were also repeated reminders that "politics were in command", and numerous calls for unconditional subordination to the Party. In April 1958, the Artists' Association organised a meeting in Beijing that was attended by cadres from branches nationwide to summarise the results of the Anti-Rightist movement and to struggle against remaining Rightist tendencies.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ During this meeting, in order to prepare the political and ideological climate for the implementation of the Great Leap Forward in the field of art, the leading role of the Communist Party in art was stressed, and condemnations were voiced of the view that artistic technique should take precedence over politics. An earlier editorial in "Fine Art", titled "Teaming Up with Workers and Peasants is the Necessary Route for Revolutionary Artists" outlined a list of dangerous ideas advocated by Rightists, the most important being to place artistic technique above all else, and to advocate freedom in art creativity and "bourgeois individualism", both of which were "opposed to Socialism and the Party's policy on art."⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

Throughout the Great Leap, an ideological campaign was waged against any deviation by artists from the imposed orthodoxy, and any sign of independent expression was continuously and severely curtailed. Strict control was maintained over artists, beginning with the Anti-Rightist Movement and re-enforced through the constant criticism of 'bourgeois individualism' and of any reticence over participating in the mass campaign. There was strong and concerted pressure for artists to abandon their individual identity, both as independent thinkers and in their creative work. In the Central Academy of Fine Art and other art institutions, occasions were staged during which artists had to undergo a ritual

self-examination and self-criticism. They had to "open their heart to the Party", in order to purify their thinking and so become "a cog in the huge revolutionary machine".⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ This sustained political pressure was, in fact, an integral part of the entire mass social engineering movement of the Great Leap Forward. It forced many artists into blind devotion to what proved to be an irrational course, the validity of which was initially largely unquestioned. In this sense, the authorities had succeeded in breaking the spirit, even if temporarily, of the majority of Chinese artists.

Nevertheless, there were discordant voices to be heard. In 1959, during a debate on landscape and flower-and-bird painting, the artist He Rong published two articles claiming that this kind of painting was being discriminated against and deliberately suppressed because it was a traditional form of art that was not able to reflect important social and political themes. He argued against this discrimination, and the general practice of differentiating between main (zhu) themes (themes with heavy political overtones) and secondary themes (ci), which included landscape and bird-and-flower painting. "When building a machine, iron and steel are important, but when one constructs a park, flowers are essential."⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Clearly, He Rong was advocating a broader and more generous interpretation of what should be politically acceptable in creative work, and was voicing doubts over the heavy over-emphasis on paintings whose content was directly political.

However, even small sparks of dissent such as this were quickly snuffed out as the Great Leap pursued its course. On July 2nd 1959, an enlarged politburo meeting was held at Lushan in Jiangxi province, during which the Defence Minister, Peng Dehuai, wrote a letter to Mao criticising the Party's (and, hence, Mao's) mistakes in handling the Great Leap, attributing the excesses of the movement to ultra-leftism and the "crazy enthusiasm of the petty-bourgeoisie".⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ His opinions had some support among other members of the Party elite, particularly Zhang Wentian, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Zhou Xiaozhan, the First Secretary of the Hunan Party Committee, and Huang Kecheng, Chief-of-Staff of the People's Liberation Army and Deputy Defence Minister. These three, along with Peng, were subsequently condemned as an anti-Party Rightist opportunist clique and removed from their posts.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Shortly after, on August 7th, the Party issued a directive which stated that

Rightist Deviation (in reality, opposition to Great Leap excesses) had become the major obstacle to successfully implementing the Great Leap Forward, and that steps would have to be taken to overcome it.⁽¹⁷²⁾ At all levels and in different fields people were again targeted for criticism and labelled as Right Deviation Opportunists. In all, it is estimated that some 3,650,000 Party cadres and Party members were implicated, and a further 3,000,000 non-Party people.⁽¹⁷³⁾ Party dogma was pushed to an even greater extreme, further away from the reality of the prevailing situation or from rational consensus.

In the realm of art, we see at that time continuous criticism of "bourgeois" and "revisionist" views and a renewed emphasis on the importance of Mao Zedong Thought as a guide to art creation. During 1960, both in "The Literary and Art Gazette" and "Fine Art" there was a spate of articles concerning "the Party principle of proletarian literature and art", insisting that politics should be in command, and that everyone should seriously study Mao's thought and struggle against revisionist and bourgeois ideas on the art front. The editorial office of "Fine Art" even issued a self-criticism for losing its vigilance against such ideas, referring to two discussions that had been published on landscape and bird-and-flower painting that included "mistakes of principle!"⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ The discussions, of course, were the work of He Rong who, in 1960, became the main embodiment of Rightist ideas in the art world. He, along with Zhang Wang⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ and Chen Shuliang⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ were severely criticised in a series of articles in "Fine Art". "The Literary and Art Gazette" even compiled a set of four articles by He Rong, including his "Peonies are good. Lilacs are also good" into an "internally circulated booklet" for a limited readership to peruse and criticise.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ He was accused of attempting to attach equal importance to all types of paintings, regardless of whether or not they reflected Great Leap themes. "To discuss landscape and flower-and-bird painting and place them in an inappropriate position will serve to downgrade the most important art work which reflects the lives and struggles of the people.,,It will create confusion amongst artists, blur their correct direction, affect their enthusiasm,,and the result will be to reduce the combative role of proletarian art."⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

In another implicit attack on He Rong, the art critic Qiu Wen went further by defining the class nature of Chinese landscape painting. He asserted that it was erroneous for

some to claim that landscape painting has no class nature, that it is simply a copy of nature, and nature itself is classless. In line with Leninist and Maoist thinking, he re-iterated the point that artistic creation, like all human activity, will inevitably reflect a particular social consciousness, and, similarly, people's aesthetic tastes will also display a class bias. His view was backed up by others who affirmed that when discussing traditional Chinese painting one should not ignore the fact that there is no such thing as beauty, whether of nature or otherwise, that goes beyond the boundaries of class.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾

A point that deserves mention here is that, even as ideological control was being tightened within China, and virtually only those works of art that directly reflected Great Leap Forward themes were allowed for exhibition or for publishing in art periodicals, those paintings sent abroad for exhibition did not necessarily need to fulfil these requirements. In December 1958, the paintings sent from China to the "Socialist Art Exhibition" in Moscow did not all reflect Great Leap Forward themes or other political movements, as can be seen from some of the titles - "Peonies", "Goldfish", "The Flower Basket", "Water Lilies", "Guilin Landscape", and traditional themes such as "Chang E", topics from "The White Snake Legend", and "Dai Yu Reading", from the traditional novel "Dream of the Red Chamber". In addition, paintings sent to Paris in January 1959 for an exhibition entitled "Chinese Painting Over the Last Hundred Years", comprised mainly those works executed by traditional Chinese painters, such as Ren Bonian, Wu Changshuo, Huang Binhong and Qi Baishi, none of whose work could be said to reflect the "revolutionary struggle".⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ In these two exhibitions, the artistic dimension certainly does not seem to have been subordinated to the political one.

This would suggest that when the audience is foreign, the artistic dimension can be at least as important as political considerations. It reveals that the ideological principles of the Chinese authorities could to a certain extent be flexible. It also shows that they were not ignorant of or blind to what we might call the aesthetic value of art. Internally, the authorities pursued a deliberate policy of manipulation and indoctrination, placing severe constraints on what was politically acceptable for art. When it came to foreign audiences, however, the authorities seem to have been aware that maximum

propaganda value abroad could not be reaped from exhibiting heavily political works, and that high quality art with less marked propagandist overtones would show China in a more favourable light on the international stage.

Although it appeared superficially that the movement against Rightist Deviation was going to constitute a re-enactment of the earlier Anti-Rightist campaign, in reality, there seems to have been far less enthusiasm in art circles for yet another political upheaval. No major figure fell victim to this later movement (although it could be argued that at this stage there was a much smaller pool of people to choose from, with many prominent artists and art cadres already dismissed from their posts and sent for 're-education'). The Anti-Rightist campaign and the Great Leap had evidently drained some of the energy and enthusiasm of artists and Party ideologues alike. In addition, the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 was directed more against intellectuals and specifically against erroneous ideological thinking, so that a large number of cultural figures were discredited. It also never really spread to China's rural areas. The Anti-Rightist Deviation movement, on the other hand, targeted above all the political and economic spheres, and it affected all sections of society in both urban and rural areas. In this case, artists and writers were not the primary targets. But perhaps one of the most important underlying reasons for the lack of a strong response by artists during this latter movement was the gradual appreciation of the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap, which were becoming apparent in 1960, and which were to lead to yet another re-adjustment of Party policy.

3. The Disastrous Consequences of the Great Leap Forward.

The Rise of a More Pragmatic Approach

By 1960 it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Great Leap Forward policies had been disastrous, particularly in the economic sphere. In the countryside, time devoted by the peasants to producing useless low-grade steel should have been spent on tending crops in the fields. Agricultural output in 1960 dropped by 13.6% on the previous year and total grain production only managed to reach the 1951 level. Similar situations prevailed with cotton, rapeseed and livestock.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ In industry, too, the entire value in renminbi of industrial output was down by a third in 1961 compared with the 1960 figures, while the state's total financial income dropped by almost half between these two years. There were shortages everywhere and mass starvation in the countryside.⁽¹⁸²⁾ The economic situation was aggravated by political events as the worsening relationship between China and the Soviet Union led to the Soviet withdrawal of technical assistance, aid and expertise. A potential crisis over Party credibility loomed as the mistakes made with the economy revealed the scale of incompetence and gross mismanagement.

The Party leadership was obliged finally to move from an unsustainable ultra-left policy to a more pragmatic, more realistic position. At an enlarged Central Committee working meeting in 1962, Liu Shaoqi on behalf of the Party and Central leadership, accepted responsibility for the errors committed during the Great Leap and acknowledged the necessity of making policy adjustments.⁽¹⁸³⁾

The first obvious sign of the new pragmatic policy was Mao's "retreat from the first line of politics to the second", and his replacement by Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, all known to be less radical and more pragmatic in their approach. There followed a series of policy adjustments that were not limited to the economic front, but also covered the political, scientific and cultural fields. There was a return to more realistic economic planning, and the people's communes were re-organised so that the distribution of agricultural products and, indeed, effective control of production lay increasingly in the hands of the small-scale production brigades.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ In industry, there was a renewed emphasis on improving efficiency and cost effectiveness and in commerce and craftwork there

was more stress on the basic principle of commodity exchange, based on commodities of equal value, in order to help re-vitalise the market.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾

New Party documents issued on education ("60 Points on Higher Education"), on science ("14 Opinions On the Present Work in Natural Scientific Research Institutions") and on culture ("8 points on Culture"), established the new pragmatic direction for intellectuals. The document on culture was issued in 1962, though adjustment had already been under way since 1960. It implicitly acknowledged that during the Great Leap, the arts had been adversely affected by leftist mistakes, crude criticism, inappropriate interference and a too rigid administrative system. It called for the encouragement of artistic work which provided enjoyment and satisfied the people's aesthetic needs, as well as educating them in socialist ideology. In contrast to the highly uniform nature of art produced during the Great Leap it stated that themes should now be rich and varied, that there should be a variety of styles and schools, and that individuality in creative work was to be supported. It also mentioned that time for creative work should be guaranteed by giving appropriate attention to the need in writers and artists for both work and rest. It thus implied that the policy of sending those involved in cultural activities to the countryside should be drastically modified. Finally, the document made clear the need to ensure that cadres in charge of culture should have a certain level of understanding and expertise in their own particular cultural field.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ In line with adjustments in other areas, a certain degree of professional knowledge and technical expertise was to be required of cultural cadres. The qualification of being "red" alone was no longer sufficient.

Organisation

One of the first steps the authorities took in the early 1960s was to correct their previous mistakes over personnel during the Anti-Rightist Deviation movement and to a lesser extent the earlier Anti-Rightist campaign. In all, more than 3,650,000 Party members and cadres and an additional 3,700,000 non-Party people were re-habilitated.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Zhang Wang and Chen Shuliang were openly re-habilitated in "Fine Art"⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ and the Party leading group in the Artists' Association reversed its decision on He Rong, declaring the

harsh criticism against him to be a mistake.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Li Keran and Li Qun who had been implicitly criticised, though not actually by name, during the Anti-Rightist Deviation movement were also offered an apology.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾

Another sign of the less radical atmosphere was a change in the constitution of the Artists' Association. Anyone who had published theoretical work or exhibited work of a high artistic standard three times in exhibitions organised by the Artists' Association was to be allowed to become a member of the Association at the national level.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ There was no mention of a knowledge of political history, ideological enthusiasm or purity as being a prerequisite for membership. A shift in the publishing principles of the People's Fine Art Publishing House and in two other notable publishing houses, Rongbaozhai and Duoyunxuan ("In the South, there is Duo, in the North there is Rong") also reflected the more liberal atmosphere and a return, yet again, to the acknowledgement that aesthetic, as well as political, considerations were important. Rongbaozhai Publishing House stated its aim to publish work of a high artistic standard, rather than the more popular art forms, and Duoyunxuan too, specialising in the photocopying, printing and publishing (as well as the retailing) of traditional Chinese painting, planned to specialise mainly in paintings they considered to be of "high quality".⁽¹⁹²⁾

A statistical comparison reveals the changing focus of publications nationwide in 1962 compared with 1958. The table below gives the various percentages of all paintings published throughout China in the form of painting collections and albums, according to three main thematic categories.⁽¹⁹³⁾

Year	The lives of workers, peasants and soldiers, current policies, revolutionary history.	Traditional themes, such as characters from dramas and novels, landscapes, flower-and-bird, ordinary scenes from daily life (not directly political)	Foreign art - mainly from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Third World
1958	53%	35%	12%
1962	31%	61%	8%

From this table we can see that in 1958, at the height of the Great Leap Forward, the work published in collections and albums reflecting overtly political themes

was more than half of the total, whilst that consisting of traditional and non-political themes with a strong aesthetic dimension amounted to only just over one third of the total. By 1962, however, the situation had changed dramatically. Now political themes constituted only one third of the total and work belonging to the second category comprised almost two thirds. Obviously, these figures represent only a part of the entire sum of publications, but they are a good indication of the general trend in the content of art during the early 1960s. For example, in 1962 the number of New Year pictures with non-political themes published by the Shanghai Art Publishing House comprised an overwhelming 97.2% of the total number published, whilst those reflecting the revolutionary lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers amounted to a mere 2.8%⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ In "Fine Art" too there was a sharp decline after January 1959 in the amateur paintings of the Great Leap Forward, which disappeared completely from the magazine by the end of the year as the work of professional artists began again to take precedence.

Theoretical Changes

Although signs of liberalisation in the cultural arena were clearly visible from as early as the end of 1958, the first major meeting at which policy changes were systematically outlined was the Third National Congress of Literary and Art Workers held in Beijing between July 22 and August 13, 1960. Attended by more than 2,300 cultural delegates, it, like the two preceding congresses, served the function of summarising past problems and achievements and setting out a cultural plan for the medium-term future. Speeches were delivered by all the most prominent figures in the various branches of cultural activities, as well as in the Propaganda Department, but the speech of most pertinence to our discussion here was that given by Zhou Yang, vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Literature and Art Circles. Diverging from the basic tenor of most of his pronouncements during the 1950s, this speech is more in line with the general sentiments of the original Hundred Flowers to which Zhou and other delegates referred on several occasions. Zhou warned: "Monotonous life and monotonous art alike are frowned upon by people. Since the people's life is rich and varied, the literature and art reflecting their life should be rich and varied too. Each writer and artist can, according to his sense of political responsibility, his

personal experience of life, his interest and special talent, decide what theme to choose and what forms of expression to adopt".(195)

As a defence of the greater freedoms to be allowed in cultural activities, Zhou explained: "The people need inspiration and encouragement in their spiritual life, but they also need things that give pleasure and delight. Provided these do not run counter to ... the socialist path and the leadership of the Communist Party, works of art of all forms, themes and styles can be allowed to develop".(196) Nor did Zhou neglect to mention the art training that would be necessary to achieve this new period of "blooming". He insisted that everyone should "raise our artistic skill increasingly", describing artistic technique as "a product of highly skilled and meticulous labour Contempt for technique means contempt for human labour and wisdom, and is utterly wrong. Only by means of a highly developed technique can correct political ideas be integrated with beautiful artistic forms to the greatest perfection, can the moving power of art be produced".(197)

Zhou is here clearly enunciating a far more liberal, more technique-oriented and therefore more professionalised line than could ever have been contemplated during the Great Leap. However, Zhou was to go even further in a series of proposals drafted by himself, Cai Ruohong and Lin Mohan, as well as others from the Department of Propaganda. The proposals took the form of a set of "Opinions on Current Literary and Art Works", otherwise known as the "Ten Points on Literature and Art".(198) and they formally became policy in April 1962. The "Ten Points" were extremely lenient in tone, and although, as expediency required reference was made to some of the general principles of the Yan'an Talks, there was an obvious lack of much of the political rhetoric that had characterised the Talks.

The document stressed that there should be no undue interference in the arts by political cadres and it allowed for a much broader range of content and style. In complete contrast with Great Leap policies where artists were virtually compelled to spend long periods in the countryside or in factories, the "Ten Points" would only commit itself to saying that artists should maintain contact with workers and peasants, but that direct involvement in manual labour should only be undertaken in the light of the special circumstances of each individual artist's particular field of work, his age and his health. Clearly, Zhou Yang and the others

responsible for the "Ten Points", were, in reality, acknowledging that professional artists should be treated as a special group in society, something that the Great Leap had been specifically designed to eradicate. This was made even more apparent when the "Ten Points" advocated that artists should receive material incentives as an encouragement for their work, such as financial rewards and the guarantee of better living conditions. It is a strong indication of the extent to which the Party felt it had lost the confidence of artists, and the extent to which it was prepared to go to win back their support.

That some measures would be needed to achieve this objective is evident from a meeting of Beijing artists in 1962 ostensibly to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Mao's Yan'an Talks. During their discussions there was a great outpouring of criticism against the dogmatic policies pursued by the Party during the Great Leap and their disastrous influence on art. Wishing to highlight the unique nature of each art form, and in protest against the blanket application of certain ideological principles to all cultural activities, the Beijing artists stressed the need to maintain and develop the special characteristics of individual art forms, and warned against forcing any one type of art to follow the aesthetic rules of another, for example, trying to produce an oil painting in the same way one would a traditional Chinese painting and vice versa. They commented on the over-emphasis of political content to the detriment of formal considerations, concluding that yet again not enough attention had been paid to technique, form, colour and composition. One stated: "As artists, how can we do our work without paying sufficient attention to the form of art?"⁽¹⁹⁹⁾

As the liberalised atmosphere of the early 1960s began to permeate art circles, many articles in "Fine Art" and other periodicals began to concentrate on questions relating mainly to the technical skills of the artist and the aesthetic qualities of art, rarely mentioning any kind of political criteria and avoiding the use of Marxist slogans. Creative originality was considered as "a symbol of the development of art"⁽²⁰⁰⁾ and even Cai Ruohong contributed an article on the need to improve basic artistic technical training in art institutions.⁽²⁰¹⁾ Questions such as these had been barely touched upon, let alone discussed at any length, by art critics during the Great Leap Forward.

The new mood of relaxation was perhaps most noticeable in discussions on

traditional Chinese painting, particularly landscape and flower-and-bird painting, which enjoyed something of a revival at that time. A group of articles in the February 1962 issue of "Fine Art" re-affirmed the important role of landscape and flower-and-bird painting, constituting a complete reversal of official opinion during the Anti-Rightist Deviation movement that this type of art should be criticised for its inability to depict themes of "revolutionary struggle". Others covered specific problems concerning the aesthetics of landscape painting,⁽²⁰²⁾ its general features and the principles governing it,⁽²⁰³⁾ whilst some, such as "The Artistic Achievements of Ten Great Artists(of Ancient China)",⁽²⁰⁴⁾ chronicled the development of traditional Chinese painting prior to the 20th Century. All these articles share in common a focus on purely aesthetic problems and considerations and largely ignore the political propaganda dimension of art that had been so marked during the Great Leap Forward.

As a strong reflection of these changes, the paintings produced during the early 1960s reveal a sharp contrast with the highly politicised work that immediately preceded them. In early 1961, the organisation at Beihai of a "Welcome Spring Exhibition", comprising of mainly landscapes, flower-and-bird paintings and portraits of beautiful women in traditional China⁽²⁰⁵⁾ was symbolic of a "new spring" for Chinese art. The idea of a "new spring" was evidently prevalent in art circles at that time because it formed the title of another exhibition held in Beijing in 1963. Interestingly, the reviewer of this exhibition, Yu Feng, seemed pointedly to avoid any lengthy discussion on the content of the exhibitions, concentrating instead on matters of style. In summary, she said: "Our motto is: Our art must satisfy aesthetic tastes of all kinds among our people building socialism".⁽²⁰⁶⁾

In fact, during the first half of the 1960s the overriding consideration for artists and art critics seems to have been what has been referred to as the "poetic",⁽²⁰⁷⁾ or the formal aspects of art which appealed to the artist's and the viewer's aesthetic sensibilities. Paintings reproduced in official publications were largely devoid of the strong political overtones that characterised those of the late 1950s, and essays on art were low on political rhetoric and more concerned with exploring formal matters of technique and the success or otherwise of the overall compositional arrangement in terms of a work's aesthetic strengths

and weaknesses. Though content was discussed, form was never neglected. On the contrary, in many cases it took precedence, as reviewers of exhibitions, or painting collections eulogised the artists' creative genius or pondered at length over some delightful detail that gave them particular pleasure. Shao Yu, for example, was described as a "tireless explorer of the poetic, of rhythms in the contrast of colours and the possibilities of modern design or compositional innovations based on the national traditional style."⁽²⁰⁸⁾ In the same vein, Ni Yide said of Pan Tianshou's paintings, "He weaves them into delightful compositions like a skillful tapestry-maker with a fecund imagination, turning them into exquisite patterns of natural beauty."⁽²⁰⁹⁾ Ni described Pan's painting "Bathed in Dew" (Plate 6) in lyrical terms: "'Bathed in Dew' depicts a lotus pond in the early morning; shrouded in mist the dew-drenched lotus flowers rise fresh and serene, accenting the coolness of dawn"⁽²¹⁰⁾ and at another point "His painting "Bathed in Dew" ... is like a poem describing the lotus pond wrapped in morning mist, with its flowers, heavy with dew, swaying gently on their stems and only partly visible."⁽²¹¹⁾ The paintings of Lin Fengmian, which had been denigrated since the early 1950s, were now appraised in glowing terms by, surprisingly, an old Yan'an veteran, the cartoonist Mi Gu. Lin's paintings were said to be, "Mellow as a cup of grape wine with a fine bouquet", and " ... like a jewel in a treasure box; a rare flower in a garden."⁽²¹²⁾ Mi even went so far as to quote Lin's views on painting, which singularly fail to mention anything about the need for art to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers or socialist construction, but which concentrate on important conceptual aspects of the creative process: "Simplification in painting should be based on a study of natural phenomena ... faced with a complex combination of natural objects, the artist should seek to depict their colours and colour relations, their character and natural qualities as they manifest themselves to the eye, and absorb trivial or accidental phenomena into a complete, integrated concept."⁽²¹³⁾ Hua Junwu even wrote an article explaining how he always attempted to bring an element of poetry into his cartooning: "... there is much that it (the cartoon) can learn from poetry."⁽²¹⁴⁾ In the same way that praise was lavished in the early 1960s on work with a high artistic standard, so work that was not aesthetically pleasing, regardless of its content, was open to criticism for this failing. One of Ya Ming's unpublished paintings "Great changes

in Mountains and Streams", produced during a trip around six Chinese provinces with Fu Baoshi, Qian Songyan and others, was disparagingly said to be "neither beautiful nor new. It is a dull, direct report, and it is not poetic" (215)

Some of the main beneficiaries of the short period of political relaxation were the traditional Chinese painters, as their efforts on the whole most skillfully and powerfully embodied the "poetic". Official publications covered at great length the work of many of the outstanding names of particularly the 20th Century, including Qi Baishi, Fu Baoshi, Pan Tianshou, Guan Shanyue, Qian Songyan and Shi Lu, none of whose work over this period has really any discernible political content.

Occasionally some concessions are made to the political requirement of art, but not to the extent of intruding on the all-important aesthetic dimension. This is usually achieved by coupling a non-political work with a title that has political overtones. "Battling Against the Drought" (Plate 7) by Ya Ming and Song Wenzhi, for example, might suggest that it takes as its central theme the prominent figures of peasants engaged in a flurry of activity, as was common in paintings during the Great Leap. In fact, it is basically a traditional landscape painting which focusses on the traditional elements of mountains and trees. The human figures in the picture are so small that it is almost impossible to tell in which activity they are engaged. In any case, the whole tenor of the scene is so tranquil, one might never guess that the individuals concerned are involved in such a hectic pursuit as drought-prevention. Shi Lu's painting of horses drinking at a river was titled "Horses Drinking by the River Yan", to give the impression that it referred to the Communists' revolutionary base at Yan'an. One commentator explains this by saying "Instead of expressing outright praise of Yen'an, the cradle of the revolution, by painting a few horses resting there for a while before going back to the front he (Shi Lu) conveys the idea that Yen'an served as a haven of rest for revolutionaries as well as their starting point".(216)

The most striking thing about this comment is the way it reveals how in times of political liberalisation, even those paintings most devoid of obvious political content could be imbued with a positive political meaning.

Great efforts were made by commentators to justify the proliferation of

landscapes and flower-and-bird paintings in official publications. This was particularly true in the case of flower-and-bird painting which is extremely difficult to infuse with political content. One of the two articles selected by the periodical "Chinese Literature" to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Mao's Yan'an Talks was, ironically, a vindication of Chinese landscape painting, and appeared to have no relevance whatsoever to the radical line on art set down by Mao in 1942. The opening sentence of the article, written by Wu Zuoren, gives an indication of its entire tone. "A friend asked me: What is the way to appreciate Chinese landscape painting?" Later in the article Wu asserts: "Although landscapes and flower-and-bird paintings may not reflect politics directly, since the labouring people who are the masters of our country have a positive cheerful attitude to nature, it is easy to see what the spirit of such paintings should be today".⁽²¹⁷⁾ "Such Great Beauty Like This in All Our Landscape", a wonderful panoramic mountain scene bathed in red light from the rising sun was painted in 1959 by the traditional Chinese painters Fu Baoshi and Guan Shanyue, and now hangs in the Great Hall of the People in Peking. Devoid of even the token signs of human presence or human activity that we see in several traditional Chinese paintings of this period, it was nevertheless lauded as a great contribution to socialist art - "It invokes in the viewer a feeling of love for and pride in the motherland".⁽²¹⁸⁾ Cui Zifan, himself a prominent flower painter, defended the importance of flower-and-bird paintings in similar terms. through them the artist arouses in his audience a love of beauty, of life and of the land of their birth".⁽²¹⁹⁾ Landscape and flower-and-bird painting were thus justified on the ground that, as traditional Chinese art forms that echoed the aesthetic sensibilities of the Chinese people, they symbolised a feeling of national pride. Even Cai Ruohong felt compelled to offer a defence of flower-and-bird painting. Without any real justification for his claim, he asserted that "Our paintings of flowers and birds are no longer pretty toys for the leisured class, but express our people's love of life and their artistic sense".⁽²²⁰⁾

The truth was that in reality these paintings were fundamentally no different from those that had been produced for generations. As soon as artists were provided with a conducive political atmosphere, they returned to the kind of work with which they were

most familiar, and that which most appealed to their individual aesthetic tastes. What had changed, however, was the attitude the authorities had decided to adopt towards their work at this stage for purely pragmatic reasons. Unfortunately, although the early 1960s was something of a golden era for Chinese art when artists were once again able to express themselves through a diversity of themes unprecedented since 1949, this relaxation in policy was still directed and controlled by the political leadership and was therefore, contingent on primarily political considerations. Once the policies of the leadership changed emphasis, which they had done several times in the previous decade, artists would inevitably be forced to do likewise.

4. The Socialist Education Movement and the Prelude to the Cultural Revolution

This era of relaxation for artists did not, sadly, last long. Even during the period of pragmatic re-adjustment, the more radical line associated with Mao did not die out completely, but re-surfaced periodically as Mao attempted to regain control in the political arena. As early as July 1962 at a working meeting of the Central Committee, Mao talked again at great length about class struggle and social contradictions, and began to cast doubt on the policies of adjustment. Then, at the Tenth plenary session of the Eighth Party Congress (Sept. 1962) Mao's opening speech affirmed that class and class struggle still existed in socialist China, and that the "bourgeois capitalist class" still aimed to restore its former position.⁽²²¹⁾ Mao's assessment of the political situation in a socialist society thus laid the foundation for an ultra-leftist backlash against the realistic approach of the pragmatists. At the two meetings mentioned above, there were already signs of criticism of a 'dark wind' as represented by Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun, as well as an attack on the 'wind of reversing decisions' (fan'an feng), referring to the political rehabilitation of Rightists and Right Deviationists at the beginning of the period of relaxation.⁽²²²⁾

In the following year Mao initiated another political campaign, the Socialist Education Movement, otherwise known as the "Four Clean-ups" Movement.⁽²²³⁾ "In agriculture, he sought to halt the trend toward 'capitalism' ... In culture, he sought to reverse the trend toward 'revisionism' or ideological erosion and the reemergence of an

intellectual elite that had resulted from the party's effort to win the cooperation of the intellectuals".(224) From this time, Mao and his associates began to pay specific attention to the ideological and cultural front, and cultural circles experienced a gradual reversal of the former atmosphere of relaxation, as control was tightened once more. Mao severely criticised the Ministry of Culture as being full of "emperors, kings, generals and ministers" ("di, wang, jiang, xiang"), and of being "The Ministry of Gifted Scholars and Beautiful Ladies" and "The Ministry of Dead Foreigners" ("Caizi Jiaren bu", "Waiguo Sirenbu")(225) because of (as he saw it) its leading role in directing more liberal policies.

In December 1963 Mao issued a set of written instructions, in which he asserted that many problems continued to exist in all areas of the arts, and that socialist reforms had had in fact very little impact on them. In a further document issued in June 1964, Mao elaborated on the ways in which he felt the reforms had actually achieved little in the cultural field. In a terrible indictment of cultural activities in China, Mao stated bluntly that of all the various cultural associations and the arts journals published by them, very few were good. His assessment was that over the last fifteen years (i.e. since 1949) "they basically (though not all) fail to carry out the Party's policies ... they do not get close to the workers, peasants and soldiers, and do not reflect the socialist revolution and socialist construction. In recent years, they have even slipped to the brink of revisionism. Without earnest reform, one day they are all going to become like the Hungarian Petöfi club".(226)

Within a short period, Mao's attack on cultural policies began to take effect. In March 1963, the performing of "ghost" dramas ceased, and some, such as "Li Hu Niang" were criticised. In addition, the "Literary and Art Gazette" began to refer to the representation of "middle characters" or characters without any clear political orientation, as a "bourgeois artistic demand" that reduced the importance of depicting positive images of the workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as socialist "proletarian heroes and heroines".(227) By excluding the possibility of depicting middle characters, the scope of artists' creative work was severely reduced to a narrow range of characters and life situations, and the wide variety of themes advocated during the period of relaxation suffered a serious setback. The new era of tightening ideological control was one in which the representation of socialist

heroes and heroines was one of the most important aspects of socialist art. Revolutionary slogans and political rhetoric with increasingly radical overtones was the order of the day. Some of the more prominent figures in cultural circles began to come under attack, including the Deputy Cultural Minister Qi Yanming, the Deputy Chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Workers Yang Hansheng, Xia Yan and Tian Han.⁽²²⁸⁾ Criticism then began to be levelled against the views on Marxist aesthetics of Wang Qi, a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Art, who had written an article, "On the Exploration of Art Forms", implying that Marxist doctrine was really only relevant in appraising the content, and not the form, of a work of art. He was also attacked for his approval of Gauguin, Matisse and Cezanne whom he regarded as artistic innovators, but whom the authorities had always classed as "bourgeois formalists!"⁽²²⁹⁾

"Fine Art" began again to publish an increasing number of paintings featuring workers, peasants and soldiers as subjects. In addition, as in the days of the Great Leap Forward, articles written by these same groups began to appear, giving their (mildly critical) opinions on the art journal itself.⁽²³⁰⁾

As pressure increased on artists and Party ideologues alike to radicalise their thinking, the Party Propaganda chief Lu Dingyi and the Ministry of Culture felt compelled to issue a joint official document forbidding the use of nude models in art institutions, presumably believing that this practice would be classified eventually as "bourgeois decadence"! Ironically, however, Mao himself intervened with a written instruction issued on July 18th that totally contradicted the prohibition order. He stated, "The use of nude models - whether they are men or women, young or old, is a basic necessary technique of oil painting and sculpture, and we must have it. To forbid it is inappropriate, it is feudalistic thinking."⁽²³¹⁾ Here we can see the complexity of Mao's ideas (something which must have caused many an artist and art critic to feel perplexed over the years). On the one hand, Mao was against any aspects of what he would have termed a "bourgeois mentality", but on the other, he was also against "feudalistic thinking"! In this particular instance, unfortunately for Lu Dingyi and the Ministry of Culture, Mao decided that the issue of feudalistic ideology amongst members of the Party took precedence over any other issue. This event also gives us

an insight into the predicament in which the Party propaganda chiefs found themselves in interpreting Mao's vague directives. Unsure of what actions would be safe and appropriate in this case, they ended up, in desperation, banning anything they felt might cause some problem in the future.

The Rent Collection Courtyard

The most significant piece of art to come out of this period in its scope, aesthetic level, and also in its clear representation of the more radical and politicised direction in which art was moving, was the series of sculptures known as 'The Rent Collection Courtyard'. (Plate 8) The work re-created a vast scene based on real life in China before 1949 in which Sichuan peasants brought along their extortionate rents to the local tyrant landlord Liu Wencai. It showed their cruel treatment at his hands, their increasing anger at the situation and finally their successful fight for freedom, with the help of the Chinese Communist Party.⁽²³²⁾ The sculpture was a major undertaking, comprising 114 clay figures, and measuring 96 metres in length. It was created over five months by four teachers and four students from the sculpture department of the Sichuan Academy of Fine Art, along with a former student of the Academy working in the Sichuan museum, a clay craftsman, three artists who had never officially studied sculpture and a small number of art teachers from primary schools. To increase its authenticity, the work was built up on the actual tax-collecting courtyard in the landlord's manor, and so the original house, doors, pillows and other items became an integral part of the entire exhibition. The technique adopted was that traditionally used by craftsmen to create figures for the earth and town god temples. Instead of the plaster of paris (a foreign import) usually employed in sculpture-making in the art academies, the artists used straw and soil mixed with cotton and fine sandy earth to produce a material that was both simple and inexpensive.⁽²³³⁾ Upon completion, the series of sculptures was opened to the public on October 1st 1965, China's National Day. In order to increase its propaganda value, photographs were later taken of it, and together with several of the figures which had been reproduced by Beijing artists, it was exhibited in China's National Art Gallery.⁽²³⁴⁾ During the Cultural Revolution several revisions of the work

were undertaken, with extra figures added, some done away with and others remodelled in order to convey more convincingly the radical message of that era. This was most strikingly apparent in the figures situated at the end of the sculpture, some of whom now held aloft Mao's writings and political slogans emblazoned on wooden placards.⁽²³⁵⁾ The political tenor of the entire exhibition had, in fact, subtly changed by this later stage, with the replacement of pathetic and sorrowful-looking peasant figures that might be construed as 'negative', by others full of revolutionary fervour - "Whereas in the autumn of 1966 there were still figures who made a tragic impression or aroused one's sympathy, one year later they were all suffused with a relentless fury".⁽²³⁶⁾

"The Rent Collection Courtyard" became one of the most prominent pieces of art work prior to and during the Cultural Revolution. Not only was it exhibited in Beijing, but photos of the exhibits and discussions on them also appeared in "Fine Art" and in various English-language journals for foreign consumption, such as the "Peking Review" and "Chinese Literature". In addition, the terms in which the sculpture was described made it clear that it was considered to be something of a "model" to be emulated by artists, in the same way as a small selection of revolutionary operas became a "model" for people working in the field of drama during the Cultural Revolution.

The prominent position given to "The Rent Collection Courtyard" is due to several factors. First and foremost, it was an ideal representation of the political line expounded by Mao and re-iterated by him at intervals over the years. It revealed clearly and unambiguously the existence of class struggle and confirmed the necessity of the Chinese revolution and the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in liberating the peasants from the exploitation and oppression of the landlords. At a time when Mao believed many members of the Party were slipping into Soviet-style "revisionism" and that people in general were becoming too comfortable and ideologically lax in their daily lives, and beginning to forget the cruel hardships of the past, the sculpture was a sharp reminder of why and how the revolution had been fought. It thus served the political purpose of acting as an educational tool for the ongoing Socialist Education Movement and, later, for the Cultural Revolution.

As a series of clay sculptures which drew heavily on folk art traditions, it fulfilled the Party's aim to utilise folk art in presenting new revolutionary content. Its creation was a collective, rather than an individual, effort, and it was thus an expression of Mao's desire to expunge the elitist nature of art, partly by encouraging more collective work. This aspect of the sculpture could also be construed as evidence of the commitment of some professional artists to radical Party policies and so act as an example for other professional artists to follow. It harked back to Great Leap Forward aspirations of combining the skills of professional artists and craftsmen with the overall leadership of the Party. In addition, "The Rent Collection courtyard" was a good illustration of the Party's aim to achieve "a unity between the political theme and the artistic form", discussed at length in the first chapter. A great deal of attention was paid by the creators of the sculpture to both political content and to details of artistic design to maximise the overall impact. With such a large number of sculpted figures involved, it would have been easy to fall into the trap of repetition and uniformity. Care was taken therefore to ensure that each figure was given as far as possible its own physical characteristics. There was also a deliberate attempt to include in the sculptures men, women and children of all ages, and to position them striking a variety of poses. The entire exhibition conveyed a story, and was, thus, meant to be "read" by the viewer, much as he or she might read an historical novel. There is a stress therefore on continuity so that each of the six main sections of the exhibition runs smoothly one into the next. At the same time, however, in the event of the exhibition being divided and different figures being sent to other parts of the country for showing, each section or even each individual figure or group of figures could exist as a separate entity.⁽²³⁷⁾ The images produced were both simple and vivid, and easily appreciated by ordinary people who were left in no doubt as to the message being conveyed.

For all these reasons, "The Rent Collection Courtyard" became an exemplary piece of work, embodying all the aspects of a work of art advocated by the Party. It constituted one of the clearest manifestations of the radical aspirations of Mao and his associates as well as being a strong indication of the new direction in which political events were developing.

In Shanghai, control of the city had been in the hands of radical left-wingers since the mid-1950s. By 1962 the First Secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee, Ke Qingshi and the Shanghai Party propaganda chief, Zhang Chunqiao were emphasising that all cultural work had to represent only those events that had occurred during the previous thirteen years, and they rejected all foreign influences. In addition, Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, had become Mao's main representative in the cultural field. She began to organise a 'revolution' in Peking opera, which became the prelude to Mao's most ambitious social movement to date - the Cultural Revolution.⁽²³⁸⁾

CHAPTER THREE

The Stormy Years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)

Its Origins and Main Features

The Cultural Revolution was the continuation and culmination of the radical line associated with Mao and his like-minded colleagues. It officially began in May 1966 with the issuing of the so-called May 16th Circular, though its origins may be traced back even further to Jiang Qing's 'revolution' in Peking opera, Yao Wenyuan's critique of "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office", or even to as early as the beginning of the Socialist Education Movement.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, it is more important for us to look at the underlying social conditions that culminated in this unprecedented social campaign, in order to glean some insights into the main characteristics of art during this period.⁽¹⁾ Social economic and political factors underlie the Cultural Revolution, as well as Mao's own ideas and personality. The conflict between the radical and pragmatic lines in the Party quickly manifested itself after the Communists took power in 1949 and became particularly sharp during and after the Great Leap Forward. The ideological gulf widened between Mao and his associates on the one hand, and Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and so on, on the other.⁽²⁾ It was Mao who played the crucial role in initiating the Cultural Revolution, and an analysis of his ideas and intentions will indicate the ideological basis for the movement, and may provide insights into how art developed over these ten or so years.

Mao's fear of losing the power struggle with Liu Shaoqi and the other pragmatists was one motive for setting the Cultural Revolution in motion, but more important were Mao's political ideas on which he had had plenty of time to reflect since the failure of the Great Leap. His main ideological premise can be seen in a letter later called the "May 7th Directive" (1966) in which he outlined his vision of a new society. He first mentioned the PLA, stating that it should be like a big school. As well as being a fighting force, the army should also study politics and culture, be involved in agricultural production, set up

medium and small-scale factories, and generally participate in mass work. The reason for this was to create a strong bond of unity between the army and the people, who would then join in the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeois class. Mao then referred to the workers, stating that they should take industrial work as their major concern, but should also participate in other areas of political, agricultural, military and cultural life. He went on to apply the same formula to peasants, students, and those working in the commercial sector, in service industries, and in all branches of Government and Party organisations and institutions.⁽³⁾

In this vision of a new society, Mao aimed gradually to bridge the gap between workers and peasants, between the city and the countryside, and between manual labour and intellectual work. A "People's Daily" editorial of August 1st that was approved by Mao before publication stated that it was his intention to change 700 million Chinese into critics of the old world, and constructors and defenders of the new. According to his plan, every individual was to be able to take up the hammer and engage in industrial work, take up the hoe and the plough and cultivate the fields, take up the gun and fight the enemy, and take up the pen and write articles and stories. The entire country would thus become "a huge school of Mao Zedong Thought and of Communism!"⁽⁴⁾

Obviously, Mao's vision of a new society did not emerge for the first time in 1965 and 1966, but had been developing since his Yan'an days. It had even been put into practice once before during the Great Leap Forward, with the setting up of the agricultural communes and mass mobilisation. Though the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward temporarily frustrated his ambitions, the gradual recovery of the economy as a result of the subsequent adjustments, and Mao's belief that these adjustments had constituted a shift away from his vision of the ideal society, regenerated his eagerness to continue his social experiment. However, Mao's prestige in the Party had fallen after the Great Leap and his absolute power was no longer guaranteed. To ensure, therefore, that his programme would be put into practice, and to resist any opposition from the pragmatists in the leadership or the bureaucracy, he turned once again to the tactic of the mass campaign, relying on the Chinese people to rebel at the grass roots level. The mass movement of the Cultural Revolution was

thus, in Mao's revolutionary thinking both an important means and an end.

As the name suggests, the starting point for the Cultural Revolution was the cultural sphere. For Mao, this was the "point of breakthrough" (tupokou) because in his view, cultural activities were completely dominated by bourgeois intellectuals, and any political campaign should therefore begin with a shake-up in this field. It began with attacks on Wu Han's play "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office" and on the so-called "Three-Family Village", referring to the three writers Deng Tuo, Liao Mosha and Wu Han. It then moved on to criticise more prominent intellectuals, such as key figures in the Party Propaganda Department, including the Minister of Party Propaganda, Lu Dingyi, and Deputy Ministers, Zhou Yang and Lin Mohan, who were accused of being "Black Factionalists". The Propaganda Department itself was called a "Palace of Hell". (Yanwang dian), and was accused of protecting Rightists, suppressing Leftists, and of working against the revolution.⁽⁵⁾

In the first major official document outlining Mao's plans for the cultural and educational fields, the May 16th Circular, a sharp indictment was made of the 'bourgeois and reactionary' content not only of the media, but also of film, drama, music, dance and art. The document declared: "Now we have to hold high the great banner of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution and thoroughly expose the bourgeois reactionary position of a group of anti-Party, anti-socialist academic authorities; we must thoroughly criticise bourgeois reactionary thinking in the academic field, the media, publishing and the arts, and seize the power of leaders in the cultural arena. In order to achieve this, we must at the same time criticise the representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party, the government, the army, cultural circles, and all other areas. We have to get rid of these people. These people are a group of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once the opportunity is ripe, they will attempt to grasp power, to transform the proletarian dictatorship into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie".⁽⁶⁾

Evidently, Mao looked upon the ideological struggle in the cultural field as a political struggle between two classes and between two basic political lines. As in the Great Leap Forward, professional artists were once more to find themselves in an extremely precarious position as they became the natural targets in what was fundamentally an

anti-elitist, anti-liberal and anti-pragmatic movement. In the preceding period of relaxation, as well as during the Hundred Flowers of 1956, they had unfortunately shown that in a conducive political atmosphere they would readily reject many of the ideals that the Party had been trying to inculcate into them. Their struggle to attain a measure of independence in their work was to prove particularly costly during this last and most turbulent political movement before Mao's death.

The Movement's Impact on Art Institutions

Following the initial criticism and later purge of all the main figures of the Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Culture and the Beijing Party Committee, the new locus of organisational power became the "Cultural Revolution Small Group", which was closely identified with Mao's radical policies. Chen Boda was its nominal head, but Jiang Qing was its leader in practice. Other members included Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Li, Guan Feng, Qi Benyu and Yao Wenyuan.⁽⁷⁾ As time went on this group even replaced the Politburo and the Party Secretariat as the movement's de facto decision-making body, gaining direct control of cultural policy. Virtually the entire cultural establishment, much of which went back to the Yan'an days and the Lu Xun Academy of Art, was replaced by the group which, enjoying the support of Mao, became the main guiding force for the new cultural policy. There were similar drastic changes at all levels of cultural activity. Physical attacks were even made on some individuals. Victims included Jiang Guangnian, editor-in-chief of the "Literary and Art Gazette" and a secretary of the Writer's Association, Zhang Tianyi, editor of "People's Literature", Tian Han, Chairman of the Writers Association, and the Peking opera performer, Zhou Xinfang.⁽⁸⁾

Information on organisational changes in the Artists' Association is extremely hard to come by, due to the fact that "Fine Art" along with all other official arts journals apart from "Chinese Literature", ceased publication in 1966. What information we do have comes mainly from "Chinese Literature" and one or two of the Red Guard tabloids, most of which lasted for only a few issues. The national newspapers occasionally provide useful details. From these sources, it is possible to begin to make some sense of the chaotic situation

during the initial period of the Cultural Revolution.

The Party leading group in the Artists' Association, like those in other cultural associations, came under increasing attack, particularly because of its alleged role in supporting the pragmatic policies of the early 1960's. Cai Ruohong, Hua Junwu and Wang Zhaowen, as the most powerful figures in the Association since the political demise of Jiang Feng, were especially vulnerable. In June, the three were invited to "stop work and reflect on their mistakes" and large-scale meetings were organised to criticise Hua Junwu.⁽⁹⁾ Six months later, Hua and Cai were openly attacked in the January 11th editions of the "People's Daily", the "PLA Daily" and the "Guangming Daily", as "counter-revolutionary revisionists", and for their part in causing the Artists' Association to degenerate "into a counter-revolutionary body like the Petöfi Club in Hungary."⁽¹⁰⁾ They were said to have opposed the theory of "the decisive role of subject matter", Hua Junwu stating that artists should not "divide subjects into major and minor. There's nothing wrong with painting people or flowers."⁽¹¹⁾ One of the biggest criticisms levelled against them was that, for an exhibition arranged by them in 1962 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Mao's Yan'an Talks, they had "carefully seen to it that the exhibits chosen were all feudal dregs or bourgeois junk which should have been consigned to the rubbish heap of history and which in no sense supported the Talks. They included paintings of lemons, cherries, dead fish, girls with flowers, lohans conquering tigers and similar trash."⁽¹²⁾ The only three adopted criteria for selecting the exhibits were that they should have been produced since 1942, that they were to be taken from all over the country, (the sticking point about this during the Cultural Revolution being that many areas of China before 1949 were held by the Guomindang, so that paintings from these "white" areas should not have been included in the exhibition), and that they should possess a fairly high degree of artistic excellence.⁽¹³⁾ No mention was made of the need to reflect the revolutionary lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers. Cai and Hua were accused of touring the country and personally inviting "black artists to exhibit black works."⁽¹⁴⁾ They were said to have allowed the "cultural spy" Ye Qianyu, famous for his "reactionary and lewd cartoons", to exhibit eight items (the largest number of any artist to participate in the commemorative exhibition), including his cartoons,

illustrations and traditional Chinese paintings.⁽¹⁵⁾ More than 60% of the 1470 works in the exhibition were said to consist of "goldfish, fat babies, water melons, prawns, and so on".⁽¹⁶⁾

Cai's part in drafting the "Ten Points for Literature and Art" (see previous chapter) in 1961 was vehemently condemned, but exposures of Hua Junwu's "crimes" went back even as far as the 1930's. He was labelled "an old hand at producing black, anti-Party cartoons"⁽¹⁷⁾ referring particularly to his activities after 1938 and his decision to go to Yan'an. There, during 1942, at a time when the Communists were experiencing extreme difficulties, hemmed in by both the Japanese and the Guomindang, Hua, along with Cai Ruohong and others organised an exhibition of satirical art, which revealed the darker side of life at Yan'an. For his critical cartoons, such as "The Relation Between the Army and the People", "A Question of Line" and "I Attended the Rally", Hua was later severely reprimanded by Mao.⁽¹⁸⁾ During the Cultural Revolution, Hua's name was constantly linked with that of Ding Ling and Wang Shiwei, both of whom had dared to write about the negative aspects of Yan'an,⁽¹⁹⁾ and both of whom were criticised at the time (Wang was later executed) for attempting to undermine the morale of the Communists at a critical period. Hua was said to have continued his anti-Party stand even after 1949, with cartoons such as "The Weathercock" (which portrayed a Party cadre as half man and half weathercock - the implication being that cadres, having no firm principles of their own, simply follow whichever way the political wind blows), "Something Wrong" depicting a dragon dance with the leader leading the dragon by the tail instead of by the head, ("Criticises our Party leadership as "giving orders at random" and losing sight of the general direction") and a whole series of cartoons directed against the Great Leap Forward.⁽²⁰⁾ All of this was taken as proof of a "long, thick, maladorous black line running through all his (Hua's) so-called cartoons from the thirties to the sixties."⁽²¹⁾

Two days after the criticism of Cai and Hua in the three major national newspapers, one of the many "rebel" groups that had sprung up at the behest of Mao to carry out the Cultural Revolution officially "seized power" from the Artists' Association which in any event had not been functioning meaningfully for months.⁽²²⁾ The final blow came in July 1969 when all the members of the various cultural associations, including the Artists'

Association, which had once come under the direction of the Ministry of Culture, were sent to May 7th cadre schools⁽²³⁾ and military farms to participate in agricultural labour.⁽²⁴⁾

These upheavals in the Artists' Association were justified by the radicals' assertion that its members were 'bourgeois intellectuals, Rightists and feudal remnants'. Statistics provided at the time reveal that in 1964, of the somewhat exclusive membership of the national Artists' Association (not including local branches) totalling 1,116 individuals, only 46 (3.2%) were from worker-peasant-soldier backgrounds. Out of 112 council members, only 5 (4.1%) were from worker-peasant-soldier backgrounds. But when one looked at the Secretariat, the Praesidium, and the 23 permanent council members, not one came from these backgrounds.⁽²⁵⁾ The statistics show the extent to which intellectuals dominated the different levels of the Artists' Association, occupying all key positions, and they provided the justification for abolishing the Association and drastically altering art policies.

In addition to the suspension of the Association and the discontinuation of its publication, "Fine Art", all art education institutions stopped recruiting students for at least four years. Only after 1970 did some institutions, such as the Zhejiang Academy of Art, resume taking students, though now most were either from worker-peasant-soldier backgrounds, or young people who had been to the countryside for at least three years and were therefore considered politically sound. This recruitment disregarded any artistic skills prospective students might possess.⁽²⁶⁾ After 1972 family background and political performance became the dominating factors in deciding admission to art schools.⁽²⁷⁾

During the Cultural Revolution and particularly in its early stages, many artists were attacked and works of art destroyed. All work produced before 1966 was designated "the products of feudalism, revisionism and bourgeois thinking". Red Guards entered the homes of artists, art galleries and temples, and burned paintings and art books and smashed statues. Especially targeted were foreign language publications, treatises on traditional Chinese art, images of nudity and paintings which included classical Chinese quotations.⁽²⁸⁾

Lin Fengmian and Pang Xunqin felt compelled to destroy their own work for fear of repercussions from Red Guards.⁽²⁹⁾ Qi Baishi's grave was desecrated and even Xu Beihong's Commemorative Hall was attacked.⁽³⁰⁾

These were, perhaps, the darkest days for artists since 1949. They were faced with a wave of cultural nihilism disposed to denying the importance of China's traditional high culture, and even many of the works of art produced since 1949. The turbulent events of 1966 reveal one of the main characteristics of this initial stage of the Cultural Revolution - a break with the past and the promotion of the "new Cultural Revolutionary artistic style".

Art During the Cultural Revolution

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, despite massive dislocation of art organisations, publications and education, art continued to play an important role in the movement. In addition to the large number of propaganda paintings to promote the Cultural Revolution and the many cartoons designed to ridicule and attack "Black Factionalists" and other targets, one of the most prominent features of art at that time was its contribution to the creation of a personality cult around the figure of Mao. This deification of Mao was directed and encouraged by the Cultural Revolution Small Group as a means of bolstering Mao's (and therefore their own) position, restoring his prestige and strengthening his political power base to ensure his absolute authority in carrying out his political programme.⁽³¹⁾

The cult of Mao was one of the most important dimensions of the Cultural Revolution. It had its origins both in Chinese political traditions, in which the Emperor was revered as mediator between Heaven and Earth, and also in the cult of Leninism and, particularly, Stalinism, which share many features with the Mao cult of the late 1960's. The Chinese theoretician Wang Ruoshui stated: "The reason that the Cultural Revolution was able to come about depended mainly on the absolute, unchallengeable authority of Mao. In turn, the Cultural Revolution pushed the worship of Mao to an extreme."⁽³²⁾ Another scholar, Yu Shifang, pointed out: "The acceptance of Mao's personality cult by the masses and by a large number of Party members, which turned the Cultural Revolution into an irresistible force across the entire country, was inseparable from the methods of agitation and forms of organisation based on traditional religion that were skillfully utilised by Mao, Lin (Biao) and the Cultural Revolution Small Group".⁽³³⁾ This process of deification can be observed in various manifestations:

1. The creation of a pseudo-religious ritual in revolutionary form, consisting of several integral components having associations with traditional religion. For example, the notion and the image of a 'saviour' in the person of Mao was represented by, or depicted in, countless numbers of statues, portraits and badges. The image of the "saviour" permeated all aspects of life. Statues of Mao were erected in public places, such as city squares, university campuses,⁽³⁴⁾ and in front of important institutions; his portraits hung in every office, factory, classroom, shop and home; Mao badges were worn by individuals everywhere. There was thus achieved an integrated and effective structure in visual form of Mao's personality cult from the social or collective level down to the individual level. An all-pervasive visual presence of Mao thus registered his overwhelming dominance and authority.

2. The "little red book" or quotations of Mao, of which 740,000,000 copies were said to have been sold during the Cultural Revolution.⁽³⁵⁾ In many ways for a short time it became almost a bible for the Chinese people, with its simple homilies and moral guidance.

3. Mao's inspection of the Red Guards in Tiananmen Square (18th August 1966) generated an emotional ecstasy comparable to a religious meeting.

4. It could be said that the use of terms which traditionally referred to evil spirits, such as "monsters and demons" ("niuguisheshen") and "demons and ghosts" ("yaomoguiguai") by Mao and his supporters to criticise their opponents conveyed in part at least a sense of religious disapproval or even disgrace.

Much has been written about the Cultural Revolution period in the last decade and more details of the practice of the Mao cult have emerged. Apparently, one of the most important aspects of it was the establishment of ritual activities in which the visual image played a crucial role. When "Loyalty Halls" ("Zhongzitan"), whose function was similar in many respects to churches or temples, were set up, they were decorated with red banners and red lamps, and Mao's portrait was placed in a central position, flanked on either side by quotations from his works. The atmosphere within the halls was designed to engender a

sense of solemnity and respect. Visitors (and everyone was expected to visit often) went there to "ask for instruction" and "report on all their activities". They were expected to wish Mao a long life, to sing "The East is Red" and read out a liturgy of Mao's quotations. "Believers" had to struggle against their own selfishness, reform their soul and become absolutely loyal to Mao. In a ritual similar to those of many religions, "devils" were brought along to the "Loyalty Halls" to confess their (political) crimes and to ask forgiveness.⁽³⁶⁾ On occasions, actual churches were taken over and the painted or sculpted images of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints were replaced with that of Mao.⁽³⁷⁾

In another ritual which usually took place in public areas such as city squares, total obedience to Mao's thought was displayed by means of a "loyalty dance" to Mao, in which individuals held red banners, embraced his portrait or clutched his "little red book" in an orgy of emotional sobbing and fevered enthusiasm.⁽³⁸⁾

Due to the development of these social rituals as an important dimension of the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, and the key role played by the creation of a "saviours" image, the emphasis on these rituals and the "saviour" image meant that throughout China efforts were made to place portraits of Mao in all public and private spaces. Perhaps at no other time since 1949 was there such a fusion of art, political ideology, social consciousness and individual psychology. The ubiquitous presence of Mao's portraits and their pseudo-religious aura ensured that art became less of an external and voluntary experience for individuals, who would have to deliberately seek it out in exhibitions or purchase it in shops, and more an integral part of social life providing a powerful means of shaping the collective consciousness and of ensuring personal "salvation".

Comparisons between the portraits of Mao and European religious painting in terms of social function and the formal methods of execution employed are striking. Both were designed to be morally uplifting, to contribute to a process of self-cultivation, to engender a feeling of deep solemn respect and reverence towards the person whose image was represented, and all that he stood for. In Christian churches, the major events of Christ's life are regularly depicted to reveal the various facets of his persona. Portraits of Mao, too, covered all the stages of his revolutionary career, from his student years in Hunan, through

the 1920's and the early founding of the CCP, the Jinggang Mountains period, the Long March (particularly the Zunyi Conference, which saw Mao emerging for the first time as leader of the Communists), the Yan'an period, the civil war, liberation and after. Mao was presented in the roles best suited to increasing this personal prestige - as founder of the Communist Party, as the great Red Army commander, as the wise teacher and Party theoretician, expounding his ideas in front of a captivated audience, as the kindly leader or saviour of ordinary Chinese folk, and as the solitary thinker planning the next stage of the revolution.

An example of a Cultural Revolution painting that directly echoes European religious painting is Zhou Shuqiao's "Hunan Communist Group". (Plate 9) Mao is shown as a young man addressing a group of Communist adherents in a small, dimly-lit room. As the only person standing, he is obviously the central figure within the composition, and his importance is highlighted further by the intense and rapturous gazes of his audience who incline their heads and upper bodies towards him, hanging on to his every word. In Christian iconography Christ is often depicted standing and surrounded by seated or kneeling apostles who lift their heads and fix their eyes upon him. In Zhou's painting the compositional arrangement of the figures forms a triangle with Mao's head at the apex. The viewer's eyes are inexorably drawn towards him as the central focus. The pose Mao strikes is also reminiscent of images of Christ, his hand extended in an open gesture similar to that of Christ's denoting peace and goodwill. The overall mood is one of solemnity and spirituality, engendered by the mainly muted brown and russet tones and the light of the overhanging lamp which casts a soft ethereal glow on the faces of the figures below. Only the rather jarring portrait of Marx on the wall and the pile of political tracts and Communist newspapers scattered about tell us that this is not the depiction of a Christian Saviour, but a gathering of the embryonic Communist Party.

An interesting development of Mao portraiture during the Cultural Revolution was that, in addition to the usual representations of Mao encircled or flanked by the smiling masses, there was an increasing tendency to depict him far removed from the masses, a figure towering above the earth who instigates the mass movement of a quarter of the world's population and who dares to challenge nature itself. "Follow Closely Chairman Mao's Great

"Strategic Plan", (Plate 10) (anonymous) is a prime example of this genre, with Mao positioned in the clouds, gazing into the far distance, his hand outstretched as if reaching towards some bright future. Below him, the teeming masses, insignificant and barely visible, snake into the background as far as the eye can see. They carry banners with political slogans and hold aloft their Mao portraits, so that Mao's image is multiplied several times within the single painting. Here he resembles not so much a political leader, but a god or a Buddha, a superhuman force capable of bringing about momentous changes on earth. It is an example of the deification process taken to extremes.

Perhaps the most significant, and certainly the most ubiquitous painting of the Cultural Revolution, was, not surprisingly, also a clear expression of the personality cult. "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan" (Plate 11) by Liu Chunhua shows a youthful Mao, attired in a long Chinese robe, with a furled paper umbrella tucked under one arm, and one fist clenched as he strides across hilly terrain. His figure totally dominates the scene, seemingly filling the gap between the ground and sky, symbolic of a Chinese emperor mediating between Heaven and Earth. Liu Chunhua, the young Red Guard who painted the picture after initial planning by a group of Beijing students, explained the thinking behind it:

"We placed Chairman Mao in the forefront of the painting, tranquil, far-sighted and advancing towards us like a rising sun bringing hope to the people. We strove to give every line of his figure significance. His head held high and slightly turned conveys his revolutionary spirit, dauntless before danger and violence, courageous in struggle and daring to win. His clenched fist depicts his revolutionary will, fearless of sacrifice, determined to surmount every difficulty to free China and mankind, confident in victory."⁽³⁹⁾

The utilisation of art to re-create history

One of the most sinister aspects of art during the Cultural Revolution was its use in distorting historical reality to a degree unprecedented since 1949. This was done to discredit individuals who had once made significant contributions to the Party but who had now fallen out of favour. It was also intended to sustain the prestige of those occupying leading positions and directing Cultural Revolution policies. Many pre-1966 paintings

displayed events and individuals in revolutionary history in a way that did not conform with Cultural Revolution rhetoric. To affirm the new orthodoxy, figures were erased from paintings, while others were placed within certain contexts that did not wholly conform with the historical facts. In the revised version of the oil painting "The Joining of Forces At Jinggang Mountain", the discredited Marshal Zhu De was replaced by Lin Biao, who at the time (1928) was actually a mere platoon head, and certainly not in any position to lead the united Communist military forces. His status during the Cultural Revolution as a leader second only to Mao, however, ensured his (temporary) place in the revised version of Communist Party events. Dong Xiwen's famous painting "Founding Ceremony" was also altered by the removal of the prime target of the Cultural Revolution, Liu Shaoqi, from the line-up of Communist Party leaders.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Many pictures of Mao, to heighten his personal prestige, linked him inaccurately with important milestones in Party history. Paintings hung in the "Commemorative Hall of the First Communist Party Congress" in Shanghai that depict this famous event in Party history are good instances of this. When the meeting shown in the paintings was held in Shanghai in 1921, Mao was not, in reality, the central figure, but merely one of two representatives from Hunan. At that time he was not well-known, and several other participants attending were more influential in Communist circles. Though the paintings seem to indicate otherwise, and imply that Mao dominated the proceedings, in fact, he played a fairly minor role.

The best-known example of a work of art distorting historical fact is the oil painting "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan", for which some explanation of historical background is required. Following the founding of the Communist Party in 1921, Party members began to organise the workers and to encourage them to strike against employers in order to gain redress for various grievances such as long hours, low pay and poor working conditions. Their efforts were concentrated in the three cities of Anyuan, Hanyang and Daye in Hunan. Communist activity amongst the Anyuan miners was of particular importance, because the Anyuan miners group was the first major union led exclusively by the Communist Party. The Communists were able to organise a successful strike there in 1922, and Anyuan

became a bastion of support for the Party, providing cadres at the Whampoa Military Academy and other political schools from amongst its ranks of workers.⁽⁴¹⁾ As one of the earliest successes of the Party amongst China's industrial workers, Anyuan represented a landmark in Communist Party history, and reflected glory on those Party leaders associated with it. Unfortunately for Mao, however, although he participated in organising the strikes in Hunan, his role was minimal and at the periphery of the major action. Much more important were the parts played by Liu Shaoqi, Li Lisan and others. Liu Shaoqi had always been more involved in the organisation of workers in towns and cities, whilst Mao had tended to focus his attention on the growing Hunan peasant movement.

In 1961, an oil painting by Hou Yimin, "Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Miners", portrayed Liu as the forceful leader of the Anyuan striking miners. (Plate 12) In it, he is shown striding forward purposefully, with a determinedly-set face, flanked by miners whose expressions reflect his own look of steely will. The following year, in "The Earth Is Burning", a film covering the Anyuan strikes, Liu's leading role was again highlighted. Some of the scenes even implied that Liu, and not Mao, was the Chinese people's "Sun".⁽⁴²⁾ The prominence given to Liu at that time reflected his enhanced position following the demise of the Great Leap Forward and the triumph of his pragmatic approach over the radical policies pursued during the late 1950's.

By 1967, however, Liu's political downfall was virtually complete, and his reputation as a key player in the shaping of Party history lay in ruins. It has already been mentioned above that in "Founding Ceremony" he was eliminated from the line-up of Party leaders when Mao declared the establishment of the new People's Republic on Tiananmen Square. Now his role in earlier Party events was also discredited. In 1967, Hou Yimin's painting of Liu and the Anyuan miners was attacked as a "poisonous weed",⁽⁴³⁾ and efforts were made to insinuate that it was Mao, and not Liu, who had actually helped lead the workers' strikes. An exhibition was arranged in Beijing with the title "Mao Zedong's Thought Illuminates the Anyuan Workers' Movement". A consequence of this exhibition was Liu Chunhua's painting "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan". Its propaganda value was acknowledged when it was labelled one of the "two gems of art", the other being the music for

the Peking opera "The Red Lantern".⁽⁴⁴⁾ It was also, unusually for a painting, widely reproduced in all the major national newspapers on July 1st, the anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, along with criticisms of Liu Shaoqi's role in the Anyuan miners strike and praise for the part played by Mao.

It is interesting to consider why this particular painting merited such unprecedented media coverage. From a technical point of view, it seemed to offer nothing especially new and, in any case, we have seen that at times when radical policies hold sway, art work tends to be judged primarily in terms of its themes rather than forms. This was certainly the case with "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan". By distorting the historical reality of events in Anyuan and implying that it was, in fact, Mao who had led the miners' strikes, the painting achieved two things. It firstly served as a blatant rejection of the positive late 1950's and 1960's images of Liu Shaoqi's contribution to the strikes. Second, its virtual replacement of Liu with Mao ensured that an important gap in Mao's revolutionary pedigree was filled. Paintings from the Cultural Revolution and before had often depicted Mao in his military role, as the leader of the Autumn Harvest Uprising in 1927 and as the great military strategist in his redoubt in the Jinggang Mountains; they had represented him as the revolutionary leader of peasants, for example, giving instruction to Party cadres at the Guangzhou Institute of the Peasants' Movement; now, "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan" was the means to assert his pre-eminence in the Communist movement amongst urban workers. The impression was created that Mao had been pivotal in the revolutionary events and developments in the three most important sectors of society - the workers, peasants and soldiers. Rather than being linked mainly to the peasant movement and to a lesser extent to PLA activities, Mao could now lay claim to a pre-eminent role in all areas of the Communist revolution, and thus more forcefully and convincingly legitimise his position as supreme leader. One article summarised the comprehensive nature of Mao's revolutionary activities thus: "He (Mao) led the miners in the fight against the feudal power and capitalists, lit the flame in Anyuan and later led some of the revolutionary miners to the Chingkang mountains, China's first revolutionary base, thus combining the workers' movement with the peasant movement. From Chingkang mountains to Yen-an, and from Yen-an to Peking, the revolution

eventually advanced to victory".⁽⁴⁵⁾ Another article specifically associated the miners' strike with the Autumn Harvest Uprising, when workers and peasants joined together and accompanied Mao to the Jinggang Mountains as a division of the Red Army.⁽⁴⁶⁾ "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan" was thus an integral part of a strategy to enhance Mao's prestige, regardless of how misleading the means, and thereby to guarantee Mao's role as undisputed leader.

Worker and peasant paintings

At an early stage of the Cultural Revolution the popular art forms of amateur workers and peasants were, as during the Great Leap Forward, placed in a prominent position, and several national exhibitions were organised showing worker and peasant paintings. In fact, during the Cultural Revolution, as professional artists fell into disgrace, worker and peasant paintings came to be regarded as the artistic mainstream and the most important dimension of art activities. They were popularised throughout the basic units of society - the villages, factories, shops, workshops and on the streets. They became the vehicle for translating more abstract political propaganda and political slogans into concrete images, accessible to ordinary people through the use of popular forms to illustrate the lives of the amateur artists themselves. These paintings played an important role in the kind of large-scale movement that was the Cultural Revolution, because in a country like China where the communication structure was so poor, amateur artists were able to adopt simple means like wall posters, blackboard drawings, and street propaganda paintings to propagate Mao's message.

To see how deeply politicised art became after 1966, and how integral worker and peasant paintings were to the wider ideological stance taken by Mao and the Cultural Revolution Small Group, we can compare the content of picture albums and painting collections published during that other mass movement, the Great Leap Forward, with those that appeared during the Cultural Revolution. Referring back to figures given previously in Chapter two, in 1958, at the height of the Great Leap, approximately one eighth of published painting collections and picture albums were of foreign origin, more than a third

were on traditional themes, such as landscapes and flowers-and-birds, and just over half covered the lives of workers, peasants and soldiers, and directly reflected prevailing policies. In 1973, however, at a time when the Cultural Revolution had already passed its most radical phase, we find that no foreign paintings were included amongst picture albums and painting collections, there were no landscapes or flower-and-bird painting and only one collection was on a classical theme - a reprint of traditional woodblock prints originally published in 1958, titled "Ming Collection of Famous Woodblock Print Illustrations". The vast majority were concerned with the lives of workers, peasants and soldiers and contemporary political events. For example, of the 61 works included in the Tianjin Collection of Worker, Peasant and Soldier Paintings (1973), all but one featured contemporary political themes.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In this respect, 1973 is not an exceptional year. Between 1970 and 1975 one sees little variation in these general trends.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The most important aspect of the re-emergence of worker-peasant paintings in comparison with the Great Leap Forward, however, is that the strong emphasis on amateur painting and the role of workers and peasants in cultural activities is directly linked with Mao's grand vision of the new Chinese Society. Participation in such activities by workers and peasants was not viewed merely as a spare-time pursuit and a means of enriching cultural life as in the Great Leap, but more as an indispensable component of the new stage of socialist construction, which viewed direct involvement by the masses in the artistic process as a vital step in bridging the gap between manual and mental labour, rural and urban areas, and between workers and peasants on the one hand and intellectuals on the other. The importance attached to the participation of workers and peasants in art activities can be seen from the way in which workers (and on occasions, soldiers) took over from officials the running of art institutions in 1966, and also from the sending of professional artists to the countryside and factories, not to be advisers to workers and peasants, but to "learn from them" as their students. This reversal of roles between professional and amateur artists was a deliberate attempt by Mao to reform Chinese society. Though sharing some features in common with the Great Leap, his Cultural Revolution experiment was more comprehensive and more extreme.

Though there are countless examples of amateur worker and peasant paintings

and art exhibitions, I shall focus here on the two most famous groups of amateur artists during the Cultural Revolution, one worker and the other peasant. The first example is that of the "Shanghai, Yang Quan, Lu Da Workers Art Exhibition" held in Beijing in 1974, comprising 172 pieces. It was said to have attracted some 400,000 visitors, and a collection of the exhibits was later published.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The exhibition covered a wide range of political themes, including approving and positive images of the Cultural Revolution,⁽⁵⁰⁾ criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius ("Grasp Criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius, Promote Coal Production"),⁽⁵¹⁾ comparing the present lives of workers with those from before 1949 ("We Have Changed the World"⁽⁵²⁾) and China's constant search for industrial independence and self-sufficiency ("Advance Triumphantly"⁽⁵³⁾ (Plate 13)). Covering the entire range of artistic media from oils and traditional Chinese paintings to woodblock prints, New Year pictures, picture-story books, water colours, propaganda posters and blackboard pictures, the subject-matter mainly drew on the amateur artists' own lives and experiences as workers. The artists came from a highly diverse range of industries and occupations, including shipyards and building construction sites, the navy, machine factories, steel mills, textile factories, shops, mines, the railways and the banks, and this diversity was reflected in the themes of their work.

It is clear from the exhibition that the workers had been advised by professional artists in matters of technique - most of the amateurs having achieved a level of technical competence one would not normally associate with the completely uninitiated. It was later admitted by them that their skills had been acquired through the efforts of professional artists who went to the factories and workshops to hold classes. However, they also stressed that these professionals had limited their role to explaining the basic skills of composition, colour, knife techniques, and so on, "according to the practical needs of the workers". Their help was only solicited when specific problems were encountered.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The themes of the workers' exhibits were controlled by the workers themselves and they often tended to reflect particular problems in their own work places. For instance, more than fifty pieces criticised wastage in factory production and encouraged a more responsible attitude towards the use of factory materials.⁽⁵⁵⁾

In order to popularise good practices within the workplace, as well as to

propagate a broader range of Cultural Revolution policies, exhibitions of workers' art were regularly held in factories. In addition, their illustrations for blackboard and wall newspapers contributed to the general propaganda drive. These were replaced every week by new illustrations to ensure that the workers could keep abreast of the latest developments in the political movement.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Huxian peasant paintings

The Huxian peasant paintings were held up as a model for other peasant art groups to emulate.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The peasants from Huxian county, Shaanxi province, had been involved in art activities since 1958, as a direct result of Great Leap policies. Between that year and 1972 approximately 550 amateur artists from amateur art groups set up in 20 of the 22 communes in Huxian had produced some 40,000 pieces of art work.⁽⁵⁸⁾ However, since 1959 they had lost their prominent position in official publications and there had been little coverage of their artistic endeavours. In 1972, articles began to appear about them again and an exhibition of their work was held in Beijing in October 1973. Their paintings were even sent for exhibition to the West, where they were marketed as being typical of revolutionary peasant art in China.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Much was made of the fact that all the Huxian peasant artists were amateurs, which conformed to the ideological line that art could and should be practiced by everyone in society, regardless of their class backgrounds. Individual peasants recounted their personal experiences working in the various art groups, and their stories almost always emphasised their poor backgrounds and how, despite these circumstances, they had managed successfully to participate in the art activities of the county. Liu Zhide, who painted "Old Party Secretary"⁽⁶⁰⁾ (Plate 14) was himself Party secretary of one of the brigades. He was from a poor peasant background and originally his only contact with any form of art were the occasional paper flowers his father used to make. He recalled that from 1963 he had begun to get involved in art and that since then he had produced some 500 pieces. Despite becoming Party secretary of his brigade in 1968 he had continued to paint.⁽⁶¹⁾ Another amateur, a female peasant called Li Fenglan, told of how she was originally illiterate, and had no

experience of painting prior to the Great Leap Forward. Like many peasants, her previous contact with the process of art had been in the form of paper cuts. During the Great Leap, however, she began to make contributions to the ubiquitous blackboard newspaper illustrations and murals, moving on later to painting. Since then she claimed she had produced more than 300 paintings.⁽⁶²⁾

Thematically, the Huxian peasant paintings were similar to the Shanghai, Luda and Yangchuan worker paintings, in that they attempted to reflect the lives of the artists themselves and, in this case, the changes that had taken place in the villages during the Cultural Revolution. Obviously, the aspects of the peasants' lives represented in the Huxian paintings, like almost all of the art produced in the ten years after 1966, were highly selective, with strong political overtones. "Old Party Secretary" referred to above depicts an elderly Party secretary studying Mao's writings during a break in his work. His devotion to Mao is highlighted by the fact that even whilst he prepares to strike a match to light his pipe his eyes never stray from the pages in front of him. "A Big Meeting to Criticise Lin (Biao) and Confucius"⁽⁶³⁾ by Zhao Kunhan is, as the name suggests, an encouragement to the peasants to join in a new mini-movement against Lin Biao and Confucius. Other works promoted efforts to increase agricultural production, construct irrigation channels, dig wells, hoe the soil, and even the old Great Leap favourite of peasants making their own steel agricultural implements. Despite evident politicization, however, the Huxian peasants, adhering mainly to the traditional rural art forms of the New Year picture and the woodblock print, still managed to retain in their work a sense of liveliness and endearing simplicity that was lacking in many other examples of Cultural Revolution art. They used the time-honoured artistic traditions of bold and vivid primary colours in large blocks over the picture surface, ("Take Grain as the Key Link, Develop a Diversified Economy" by Bai Tianxue⁽⁶⁴⁾), simple compositional structures whereby almost the entire picture area is crowded with look-alike figures ("Impregnable fortress" by Song Houcheng⁽⁶⁵⁾) or a repetitious arrangement of a particular motif ("Production Brigade Ducks" by Li Zhenhua⁽⁶⁶⁾, "The Brigade's Chicken Farm" by Ma Yali (Plate 15) and "Bumper Harvest of White Lotus Seeds" by Jiao Caiyun⁽⁶⁷⁾), to maintain the highly decorative effect of these

popular art forms.

A distinction should be drawn, however, between the Huxian peasant paintings of the 1970's and the earlier peasant paintings of the Great Leap Forward. Unlike many of the latter, which were painted without the help of professional artists from the towns and cities, a great deal of professional help was afforded to the Huxian peasants.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Some of them later became semi-professional themselves, devoting an increasing amount of time to painting, rather than to agricultural production.⁽⁶⁹⁾ In contrast to the flat, single-dimensional figures of Great Leap peasant paintings, with their lack of perspective and their exaggerated dimensions of motif, many of the Huxian peasant paintings reveal a higher level of artistic sophistication. There is much greater evidence of modelling to produce figures that appear three-dimensional, as in "Old Party Secretary", where the use of shading and bold dark strokes in the clothing of the figure help create the desired effect. There is also an increased use of perspective, as in the paintings "Spring Hoeing"⁽⁷⁰⁾ (Plate 16) and "Commune Fish Pond",⁽⁷¹⁾ both of which include an arc of figures, larger in size in the foreground and receding into the background. "The Morning Sunlight Shines On the Village of Painting"⁽⁷²⁾, too, employs this technique, to create a grand vista of tilled fields, factories and houses, depicted in detail in the foreground, but merging into a mass of intermingled blocks of colour towards the top of the painting.

The Huxian peasant paintings thus exhibited three important characteristics, which probably explains their adoption as a model to be emulated. Their themes were of a highly political nature, valuable as propaganda in their depictions of an idyllic rural life, with happy and enthusiastic ruddy-faced peasants busily engaged in agricultural production, political meetings and study sessions; they had their origins in traditional popular art forms, rendering them easily accessible to a wide audience; and they had developed from the purely amateur peasant art of the Great Leap to a standard that was even considered presentable on the international stage. The contrast between professional painting, which exhibited a high level of technical achievement and amateur painting, which was normally characterised by extremely rudimentary artistic skills, could thus begin to be lessened. The Huxian peasant painters, with their blend of some degree of professional standards and popular forms, could

therefore be claimed to be a good example of Mao's idyllic vision of a society whose people were adept at a whole range of skills, whether agricultural, industrial, military or artistic.

The "Black Painters"

After 1969 and the Ninth Party Congress, the first stage of the Cultural Revolution ended. Although the radicals, headed by Mao and Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Small Group, were still dominant, the political and social situation had gradually stabilised, following three years of upheavals and factional fighting.

By late 1971, the Lin Biao events, during which Lin, Mao's appointed successor, died in a plane crash whilst apparently defecting to the Soviet Union, were a setback to radical policies and led to a temporary relaxation of the harsh treatment of artists. This relaxation can be most clearly seen in the emergence of what was later to be known as the "Hotel School". The improvement in China's international relations after 1971, gave rise to apprehension in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to the most appropriate means of decorating the hotels and restaurants that would cater to the vastly increased numbers of foreign dignitaries visiting China. The Ministry favoured traditional Chinese paintings, revealing once again the double standards of the Chinese authorities in their view that what was inappropriate for home consumption was perfectly acceptable, even highly desirable, when reserved for foreigners alone. When the matter was taken to Premier Zhou Enlai he was said to have readily agreed, stating that the subject-matter of the paintings should be flowers-and-birds and landscapes. He felt that, in addition to beautifying the hotels and restaurants for foreigners, such paintings and forms of traditional Chinese arts and crafts could be exported to bring foreign currency into the country. As long as the work was not reactionary, feudalistic, ugly, superstitious or pornographic it was acceptable. Landscape painting was no longer to be regarded as one of the four¹³olds¹³ ('old thinking, old culture, old customs, old habits'). In order to provide the Ministry of foreign Affairs with the many paintings they required, professional artists were called back from the countryside. They were mainly traditional Chinese painters and woodcut artists, and included Huang Yongyu, Li Keran, Yan Han, Gu Yuan, Tao Yiqing and Huang Runhua.⁽⁷³⁾ Artists went to work almost

immediately, producing landscapes, flower-and-bird paintings and various items of traditional Chinese crafts in large numbers.

On November 23rd 1973 a meeting reportedly took place in the Friendship Hotel, Beijing, attended by three prominent artists from the Artists' Association, Shao Yu, Gao Jingde, Gu Yuan and Wang Mantian, the person appointed by Mao and Jiang Qing to take charge of art. During this meeting to discuss the paintings being produced for foreign consumption, there was the first indication of a possible radical backlash. Shao Yu pointed out that there were political problems with the paintings, specifically mentioning Huang Yongyu's "The Winking Owl". Wang Mantian then offered her view that investigations should be carried out and a report made to Jiang Qing in order to ascertain the political implications.⁽⁷⁴⁾

When Jiang Qing heard of these paintings by the very artists she considered to be most elitist and bourgeois she began to criticise them and dubbed all the artists involved "the Hotel School". However, it was only during the movement to "criticise Lin Biao and Confucius", which was in reality an implicit attack on Zhou Enlai, that Jiang was able to take action against these artists. Linking together the work displayed in the Beijing Hotel, the International Club, the Cultural Relics Store and the Beijing Art Academy, Jiang and the other radicals collected together more than 700 pieces and held a "Black Painting Internal Exhibition" on 8th February 1974. Wang Hongwen, a member of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, attended the exhibition and criticised "the black paintings" as being worse than Antonioni's famous documentary "China".⁽⁷⁵⁾ Another observer, Yu Huiyong, an official with responsibilities in cultural affairs, declared the exhibition pieces to be a "restoration of everything criticised before 1966". Subsequently, meetings were organised to attack the paintings, one in Beijing drawing a crowd of ten thousand people. 215 pieces from the original 'Black Painting Exhibition' were selected for restricted viewing at the China Art Gallery from 13th February to April 5th.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Many articles critical of the paintings began to appear in newspapers and magazines, and it seemed as though a major political campaign against professional artists was about to begin again. Criticism was not limited to Beijing. So-called "Black Exhibitions", which purportedly provided evidence of "a restoration of the black

line" were held in other cities, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Though it is obviously difficult to ascertain to what extent the "black painters" genuinely intended to attack Cultural Revolution policies, and the Cultural Revolution Small Group leadership, nevertheless, Jiang Qing and the other radicals chose to read political dissent and dissatisfaction into virtually all of the "Hotel School" paintings, even the seemingly most innocuous. Huang Zhou's paintings of asses were interpreted as satirising the radicals.⁽⁷⁸⁾ The characters accompanying one of these paintings meaning "The Task Is Difficult and the Road Is Long" - was said to be an implicit criticism of economic stagnation and a negation of the Cultural Revolution.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Li Keran's "Our Motherland Has Such Beautiful Rivers and Mountains", and "Mountain Village after Rain" were castigated as "black mountains and black water",⁽⁸⁰⁾ the point being that an overabundance of black colour, the universal symbol of darkness and despair, had permeated Li's paintings, and had thus revealed his pessimism about China's future and his opposition to the authorities. The rooster in Chen Dayu's "Welcome Spring" was attacked for revealing too much of the whites of the rooster's eyes, to the Chinese, a symbolic gesture of scorn. His intention, it was asserted, was to show hostility to the new socialist policies.⁽⁸¹⁾

Arguably one of the most significant "Black Paintings", Huang Yongyu's "The Winking Owl" (Plate 17) was taken to be a sign of Huang's "hatred for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Socialist Revolution,"⁽⁸²⁾ and, as a result, Huang underwent several months of criticism sessions at the Central Academy of Fine Art.⁽⁸³⁾ His practice of using animal representations in his art to satirise political figures was well known in the art world. It had even got him branded as a counterrevolutionary in 1962, when his simple sketch-like paintings and accompanying "Animal Crackers" poems caused offense.⁽⁸⁴⁾ What is particularly interesting about his "Winking Owl", however, is that close study reveals layers of meaning from the superficial political level (as interpreted by Jiang Qing and the radicals) to a deeper more philosophical level. Ellen Johnston Laing, in her book "The Winking Owl" has pointed out a possible interpretation of the painting by analysing one aspect of the symbolism traditionally attached to the owl by the Chinese. She states quite correctly that the owl has often been regarded as a bird of ill-omen, and a symbol of darkness

and evil, and she implies that Huang's owl might have been intended to convey a feeling of darkness, despair and pessimism.⁽⁸⁵⁾ However, Huang's owl does not seem to convey a feeling of gloom and doom, but, on the contrary, suggests a hint of humour behind its one opened eye, (Laing strangely omits to mention that one eye of the owl is opened and one closed). This is not a threatening owl, a harbinger of dreadful things to come, but rather it appears to be wise and somewhat mischievous.

The answer lies in the fact that to the Chinese the owl, unlike the crow which is always regarded as an unlucky symbol, usually of death, is an ambiguous image. It is, on the one hand, associated with darkness, because it comes out to hunt at night, but on the other hand, as in the Western tradition, it is also regarded as signifying wisdom. Moreover, this wisdom does not imply a bookish knowledge but a higher form of wisdom and understanding, an almost mystical power that makes the bird at once mysterious and difficult to fathom, yet endlessly fascinating. I would suggest that this owl, rather than hinting at evil or doom is, in this particular context, a symbol of a knowing being, perhaps signifying the artist himself or Chinese intellectuals in general. The fact that the owl has one eye opened and one eye closed is another important clue. It reminds us of the attitude of intellectuals in times of past crises when individuals, completely aware of the drama unfolding before them, would nevertheless maintain a spiritual distance from what they saw as the unclean world (exemplified in the phrase "Only I am Clean" ("Weiwo duqing")). In this sense, the owl can be understood as conveying almost Daoist sentiments, a wish to attain a deeper, philosophical understanding of life, an inner wisdom, during times of political pressure and social change or chaos. It reflects the dilemma of the Chinese intellectual, forced into participating in events in which he does not believe or even which he knows to be based on falsehood, and yet still wishing to maintain his own integrity. In a way, the use by the artist of one open eye and one closed creates a dynamic tension that would not exist if both eyes were either completely closed, completely open or partially open. By having one eye open, clear and all-seeing, the owl (and by implication, the Chinese intellectual) maintains a Confucian link with the mundane world. Its closed eye reveals its moral and intellectual superiority. Like a Daoist monk, the owl is able to observe the world from the shadows, but yet maintain a semi-transcendent

distance from it. It sees everything and is fooled by nothing. Chinese history is scattered with stories of intellectuals who adopted such an attitude, like the poet Tao Yuanming who under the force of political pressure gave up his official career and moved from the centre of activity to view the world at a distance.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Huang Yongyu, on a 1978 version of the original "Winking Owl", wrote in a colophon, "How many people's faces this bird has gazed upon!"; again indicating the detached observation by the owl of the external world.

This attitude adopted by the owl and the Chinese intellectual is passive, but it is evidently not pessimistic, as seen from the general demeanour of the owl. At a time like the Cultural Revolution, it was a mechanism for survival, and the consolation of a sense of wisdom or superiority, even dismissive disdain, acted as some consolation for the very real impotence of Chinese intellectuals in the face of uncontrollable social and political forces.

It is clear from paintings like "The Winking Owl" that even during the Cultural Revolution, the sophisticated cultural traditions familiar to the Chinese art world were still able to find expression. Huang and other "Black Painters" did not need to limit themselves to direct and crude political attacks on the authorities (which, in any case, would have immediately brought them trouble). They were able to draw instead on a whole range of rich cultural resources to question or make subtle comments on the processes of life. Mao himself understood this. When the matter of the "Black Paintings" reached him, he wrote in an instruction the following, which was to actually end the campaign:- "How could black paintings not be black? The owl always has one eye closed and one eye open."⁽⁸⁷⁾ Unlike Jiang Qing and the other members of the original Cultural Revolution Small Group who interpreted the paintings in a narrow way, Mao reveals here a much deeper understanding of traditional Chinese cultural values and the thinking process of Chinese intellectuals. He seems to accept that pieces like "The Winking Owl" are not a particular attack against any one political faction, and therefore not a direct political threat, but signify a more general disillusionment towards life. Though at other times if political expediency demanded, Mao might still have used the "Black Paintings" to attack the intellectuals, by 1974 his main perceived opponent, Zhou Enlai, was already on his sick-bed with what proved to be terminal cancer. Rather than beginning a new purge for no particular benefit, Mao decided

instead to let the entire matter drop.

The original criticism of these paintings by Jiang Qing was, then, not simply a criticism of the paintings themselves, but, more importantly, it was linked to political motives, and specifically the struggle between the radicals who wanted to push the Cultural Revolution ever forward, and Zhou Enlai and the pragmatists, who desired a period of stability and consolidation. Following the Lin Biao events, many of the old guard who had been purged during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, such as Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang, had made a comeback. As the pragmatic wing of the Party increased its influence, the radical faction became worried about its own position.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Zhou Enlai's implicit instruction to relax some areas of artistic creation brought about a direct confrontation between the two sides, particularly as Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao looked upon the cultural field as their prime sphere of influence. Most of the people directing cultural activities at the national level by this time had been directly appointed by Jiang and her associates. Wang Mantian, the person designated to be in charge of art, was even a niece of Mao's. Therefore, when Zhou attempted to take a more pragmatic initiative in the art field, the radicals used the "Black Exhibition" as a means of re-affirming their own ideological line. Once again, art had come into play to support different factions within the Party.

The characteristics of art and basic art theory during the Cultural Revolution

The standard for all forms of cultural creation during the Cultural Revolution was established by the "model operas", originally eight in number, but later expanded to eleven. These so-called "model operas" were the results of reforms undertaken by Jiang Qing between 1961 and 1966 to purge the theatre of any remaining "bourgeois" or "feudalistic" elements. There were in fact originally only five operas, "The Red Lantern", "Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy", "On the Docks", "Shajiabang" and "The Raid on White Tiger Regiment", with three more added later - "Ode to Dragon River", "Cuckoo Mountain" and "Fighting On the Open Plains"; two ballets, "The Red Detachment of Women" and "The White-haired Girl", and finally the music for the opera "Shajiabang".⁽⁸⁹⁾ As models not only for the theatre, but

for all areas of creative work, we can make a brief examination of four major features they possessed and assess how these features were adapted to the realm of art, in order to understand some of the general points of theory underlying the art of the Cultural Revolution.

1. Each theatrical production listed above, although able to stand as an independent entity, was also meant to be linked together to all the other model theatrical productions to form a complete system (*zongtixing*), reflecting the entire process of revolutionary history as it was shaped by the Party. Thus "Cuckoo Mountain" and "The Red Detachment of Women" represents the years 1927 to 1937, the period known as 'the land revolution'; "The Red Lantern", "Fighting On the Open Plains" and "Shajiang" cover the War of Resistance Against Japan between 1937 and 1945; "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy" takes Party history from the end of the war against Japan to Liberation, whilst "On the Docks", "Ode to Dragon River" and "The Raid On White Tiger Regiment", deal with post-1949 China, the last specifically with the Korean War.⁽⁹⁰⁾

2. All eleven productions had as their main figures proletarian heroes and heroines, like Ke Xiang, the female Party representative for the peasant's guerilla brigade in "Cuckoo Mountain", the underground Party worker Li Yuhe in "The Red Lantern", and Yang Zirong, the PLA platoon leader in "Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy". The portrayal of these central figures has echoes of Mao's personality cult. It becomes clear that it is Mao who provides them with the attributes of a hero or heroine, such as strength, wisdom and so on.⁽⁹¹⁾ This is not only made explicit through open acknowledgement of Mao's inspiration by the characters in the operas, but is also implied through the use of stage lighting to represent the sun or sunshine, which, in turn, was one of the most ubiquitous symbols of Mao himself. During the production of "Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy", "rays of powerful sunlight through the forest ... symbolise Yang Tzu-jung's advance under the brilliance of Mao Tse-tung's thought".⁽⁹²⁾ In the film made of the "Red Detachment of Women", the hero, Hong Zhangjing " is brought out in red and bright lights to contrast sharply with the Tyrant of the South,⁽⁹³⁾ "the lights being an obvious allusion to Mao as "the reddest, reddest

red sun in our hearts".

In depicting main characters, the principle of the "three prominences" had to be applied: (1) all characters have to give prominence to positive figures; (2) all positive figures have to give prominence to heroes and heroines; (3) all heroes and heroines have to give prominence to the principal hero or heroine.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Although a formula originally put forward by Jiang Qing, it is evidently a development of Mao's earlier idea that any form of culture should represent characters and events in a way that is "more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal and therefore more universal than actual everyday life". The main task of these theatrical productions, and of all "proletarian art" of the Cultural Revolution, was to create "big and all-perfect" heroes and heroines based on the principle of combining Revolutionary Realism with Revolutionary Romanticism.⁽⁹⁵⁾

3. Technical innovations were introduced into the old forms of opera for these new theatrical productions. Traditional Peking opera has its own fixed standard style of singing and acting, but for the purpose of the new 'model' operas, the form was radically altered. For example, in the fifth act of "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy", the horse dance combines Peking opera's standard form of acting with ballet leaps and popular dancing.⁽⁹⁶⁾

4. The plots involved the two major features of simplicity and clarity. Each opera or ballet develops around one central event; from the outset everything is designed to be easily understood; the unfolding of each stage of the plot is achieved without complexity and in an extremely ordered manner. The result is a standard structural affinity shared by all the "model" operas and ballets.⁽⁹⁷⁾

These four points can be regarded as the most important features of not only the "model" operas and ballets, but of all cultural forms during the Cultural Revolution. Many articles were published devoted to emphasising these basic principles,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and they were the criteria by which the value of any creative work was assessed.

To analyse how these principles were applied to the art world, I shall take as a typical example of Cultural Revolution art the collection of 96 paintings commemorating the

30th anniversary of Mao's Yan'an Talks. The collection is of work by both professionals and amateurs, and comprises traditional Chinese painting, oils, wood block prints, New Year pictures, picture-story books and propaganda posters. Though a small percentage of the work was produced prior to the Cultural Revolution, it was included in this collection because it conformed in many respects to the four basic features outlined above, and thus to the general tenor of the collection as a whole. We can now look at these four features in turn to see the way in which they were applied to the collection.

1. Individual pieces could stand as an independent entity, but at the same time, each was associated with all the other pieces to form a coherent picture of Party history, from the founding of the Party to the Cultural Revolution. The collection as a whole also reflected every aspect of Chinese revolutionary life from images of the great leaders (11 works), the PLA and military life, the new lives of the peasants on the communes, the workers and industrial construction, the Red Guards and students going down to the countryside (altogether 76 works), and revolutionary historical themes, such as victory in the Anti-Japanese war (7 works). There were only two which did not appear to have a very strong or very obvious political message (both of which were traditional Chinese paintings).

2. The majority of the paintings were figurative representations, and of these, many clearly featured a hero or heroine. Apart from Mao, the most important hero, there were several paintings with individual figures of either workers, peasants or more commonly, PLA soldiers. These figures, which traditionally would on the whole have been depicted as minor and insignificant beings against the background of natural surroundings, now dominated the entire picture-area. If we look at "I am 'Seagull'"⁽⁹⁹⁾ (Plate 18) (by Pan Jiajun), the woman soldier, who having repaired a telecommunication line now uses it to declare her code-name, is clearly depicted as a heroic figure. She covers the largest area of the painting and, thus, dominates the scene; her physical appearance is sturdy and robust and her facial features are strong and determined, giving some clue as to her strength of character; her face is thrown into relief by some unknown source of light, the resultant illumination creating an

almost religious effect - the light of Mao has been bestowed upon her; her calm and confident air is sharply contrasted with the hostile natural surroundings, particularly the lashing wind and rain.

An example of a group composition where one figure is the "heroine" is "Practising Acupuncture"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ (Plate 19) by Shao Hua which shows a PLA girl teaching acupuncture to two minority women and letting herself be used as a guinea pig. The PLA girl, though not positioned centrally, is the only figure facing forward, whilst the other two are seen from the side. Because of this, the PLA girl physically takes up more space than the other women. It is also only with her that the viewer makes eye contact. In addition, the PLA girl's green uniform is the main solid block of colour in the picture and, therefore, more eye-catching. Although the girl next to her is wearing a vivid pink blouse, she does not become the main figure because she blends too readily into the mixture of other bright colours included in the composition. In Luo Gongliu's "Guerilla War",⁽¹⁰¹⁾ (Plate 20) too, though many figures have been included, all of them positive characters, there is one who stands out from the rest. This woman, centrally positioned as she wields her gun, attracts attention because she is wearing a bright (again almost illuminated) white hat and scarf which contrast starkly with the black background, and also because the top of her head forms the pinnacle of the triangular composition, in typically Socialist Realist fashion. Finally in "The Red Army Attending a Political Class"⁽¹⁰²⁾ (Plate 21) by Zheng Hongliu, it is clearly the political instructor of the PLA who is the 'hero'. He stands whilst everyone else is seated; the body postures of the soldiers lean towards the instructor, thus inexorably drawing the eye towards him. Significantly, whilst all the other soldiers are depicted in the shade of a tree, it is the political instructor alone who is bathed in brilliant sunshine.

3. There is some evidence of adaptation in artistic form, particularly with regard to traditional Chinese painting. Amongst such paintings in the collection we see the general use of much brighter colours (rather than the traditional black and grey tones) and of the use of light and shade, almost as one would with an oil painting, as well as the construction of figures and scenery in a way that is reminiscent of Western drawing. Red is, of course, the

most prominent colour, most commonly appearing in Mao's "Quotations", and the collar, cuffs and hat of the PLA soldier ("Fountain" by Han Yue⁽¹⁰³⁾) the ruddy faces of the Communist positive characters, ("In The Sea of Coal Blossoms the Flower of Daqing" by Li Yansheng, Huang Huabang, Ren Guisheng⁽¹⁰⁴⁾) and sometimes to depict landscapes or vegetation, most strikingly in Lin Fengsu's "Commune Holiday"⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ comprising a splash of vivid red colour rarely seen in the usually more sombre traditional Chinese paintings. In addition to red, many traditional Chinese paintings include other bright colours, such as the liberal use of green by the two professional traditional Chinese painters Guan Shanyue ("Oil City in the South")⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ and Qian Songyan ("Beautiful Land of Abundance to the South of the Yangtse"⁽¹⁰⁷⁾). Cun Yaru's painting "Cheerful People on Pine-Flower Lake"⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ is an unusual combination of, on the upper half, a landscape scene created in the time-honoured manner of traditional Chinese painting, and on the lower, the use of an array of bright and vivid colours reminiscent of those used in Chinese popular arts, especially the New Year picture.

Most of the traditional Chinese paintings, instead of adopting the free and spontaneous brushwork usually associated with this form of art, appeared to have adopted techniques similar to those used in Western drawing, so that a rather laboured effect resulted. Guan Shanyue has used these in his painting to depict the various stages of oil production, though he has softened the overall effect with some traditional brushwork for representing the surrounding landscape. If we look, however, at "Fire Trees, Silver Flowers, the Sky Never Darkens"⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ (Plate 22) which is the combined work of Cheng Shifa, Xie Zhiguang, Xu Zhiwen, Yan Guoji and Zhang Guiming, we see a rather confusing and frightening array of mechanical objects, laboriously constructed and modelled as if with a ruler in thick black strokes. The desire to create a new form of traditional Chinese painting has rendered this work devoid of the grace, spontaneity and subtlety normally associated with this form of art.

4. Most of the paintings exhibit a clear, simple and unambiguous theme, and where there is any possibility of doubt, the title usually ensures that any misinterpretation is

avoided. Sometimes written characters actually form part of the painting to make the message clearer, as with Yu Xuegao's "The Flame of the War of Resistance Against Japan is Tempered in My Red Heart"⁽¹¹⁰⁾ in which the main female figure (dressed, naturally in red) puts up a poster attacking Japanese imperialism. A mood or atmosphere is created in the paintings which allows no scope for personal interpretation. This is usually conveyed by the expressions on the faces of the main protagonists which range from angry determination in "The Flame of the War of Resistance Against Japan is Tempered in my Red Heart"⁽¹¹¹⁾, unalloyed optimism in "Chairman Mao Inspects Wu Shun"⁽¹¹²⁾, ecstatic enthusiasm in "We Must Carry Out the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to the End"⁽¹¹³⁾ and bravery in the face of adverse circumstances in "Chairman Mao's Red Guards"⁽¹¹⁴⁾. The absence of ambiguity, with its doubt and complexity, guarantees the increased effectiveness of the work of art as an educational and propaganda tool. Ensuring that the emotions of characters are expressed explicitly facilitates the understanding and the acceptance of the message by a wide audience.

The above, then, are the four main principles which governed most of the art produced during the Cultural Revolution. We have seen them before in work from periods prior to the Cultural Revolution, but it was between 1966 and 1976 that they were taken to their ultimate extremes. After 1976, and the return once again to more pragmatic policies, artists defined the art of this period as having three main characteristics - "Red, bright and vivid" ("hong, guang, liang"), referring to the endless bright optimism which artists were forced to portray in their work. And it was precisely against this blanket banality of emotion and optimism that artists were to react once the political tide turned.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The Discovery of 'the Self' - a New Era for Chinese Art" (1978-1986)

Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, his wife, Jiang Qing and three of her supporters, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyuan ("the Gang of Four") were arrested and put on trial, charged with being responsible for the Cultural Revolution. Hua Guofeng took over initially as Chairman but, lacking a solid power base, he was soon forced to step down to be replaced by Hu Yaobang. Real power, however, lay with the pragmatist Deng Xiaoping.

In December 1978, at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Central Committee, Deng outlined a new political programme that was to have far-reaching effects on all areas of Chinese society.⁽¹⁾ His primary aim was to initiate a series of economic reforms to make China prosperous and to guarantee her reputation on the international stage. In order to effect this programme, generally known as the "Four Modernisations", the new leadership once again needed to enlist the help of intellectuals. The leadership was aware, however, that most intellectuals, having suffered badly during the Cultural Revolution and the earlier Anti-Rightist movement, would be reluctant to participate in any further political programmes. Therefore, in an attempt to regain the confidence of this important social group, there was much expression of regret by the politicians over what had taken place during the Cultural Revolution, and an affirmation of the intellectuals' role within the new scheme of things.⁽²⁾

Nevertheless, the leadership was still faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, it was forced to acknowledge the damage inflicted on intellectuals during the "ten years of chaos" (as the Cultural Revolution was now called), and to permit an outpouring of grievances and anger against Lin Biao and "the Gang of Four" to signify its own repudiation of the policies of that era. On the other, it also had to ensure that this tide of anger did not develop a momentum of its own, which could lead to a challenge on the Party's rule itself.

Of equal importance with these considerations was the pragmatic approach of

the new leaders. Their main concern was with practical rather than ideological matters, and they had greater interest in the economic, rather than the cultural, sphere. The dissimilarity between the post-1979 leadership and that of the three decades preceding it is vividly illustrated by the comparison between Deng Xiaoping's practical approach - "it does not matter if it is a black cat or a white one as long as it catches mice", and Mao's grand vision of the new socialist society and his theories of continuous revolution.

As a consequence of this new pragmatic style of leadership, as long as intellectuals were not perceived as challenging the authority of the Party or jeopardising the economic reforms, they were to be allowed a degree of freedom in their work unprecedented since 1949. However, they needed to be aware that this freedom still remained contingent on the political situation and political considerations. For example, a statement issued by the Artists' Association following the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists (to be discussed presently) makes this clear.

"The Chinese Artists' Association will legally defend the artists' right to individual expression ... as long as the artist does not subvert the goals of the Communist Party."⁽³⁾ It was a warning that freedoms granted could be freedoms withdrawn.

Organisational Changes

One of the effects of Deng Xiaoping's modernisation programme was a gradual erosion of the authorities' monopoly over the ideological framework that had set the artistic agenda over the previous thirty years, and the institutional structures that had maintained it. This was primarily a consequence of the authorities allowing an unprecedented degree of liberalisation, manifested, for example in a series of wide-ranging debates on fundamental issues, mediated through the art organisations that were re-established after the Cultural Revolution. In addition, once the process was started it seemed to gather a momentum of its own, and artists themselves began to grasp the initiative and to push their new-found freedoms to the limit. In organisational terms, this resulted in a virtual two-tier system, with new structures and channels set up largely by artists themselves co-existing with the old ones.

(a) Art organisations

The most important event in art circles since the end of the Cultural Revolution was the convening of the Fourth National Congress of Literary and Art Workers in October 1979 in Beijing to summarise the progress of cultural work over the previous three decades and to re-establish formally the cultural associations which had been suspended in 1966.

In the Artists' Association, the most prominent positions were taken again by those who previously had had greatest influence but who had subsequently fallen from grace either during the Cultural Revolution or the earlier Anti-Rightist movement. Jiang Feng, rehabilitated after twenty years of humiliation and obscurity, was once again appointed as Chairman of the Association. Cai Ruohong, Guan Shanyue, Hua Junwu, Huang Xinbo, Li Keran, Li Shaoyan, Liu Kaiqu, Wang Zhaowen, Wu Zuoren and Ye Qianyu, all formerly influential figures in the Association, took the positions of Vice-Chairmen.⁽⁴⁾

The appointment of these key individuals from the past served several purposes. It helped to engender a sense of continuity with pre-Cultural Revolution art policy. Also, these older artists had already accumulated many years experience as art administrators, which could be put to good use in helping to implement the new reforms. Reversing previous judgements on them as "Rightists" or "counter-revolutionaries" and restoring to them their previous status could help renew the confidence of artists and intellectuals generally in the current leadership.

In addition, the rehabilitation of prominent artists, regardless of where they stood in the ideological spectrum (the permanent executive of the Association elected in 1979 included such diverse figures in terms of ideological commitment as Jiang Feng and Luo Gongliu on the one hand, and Lin Fengmian on the other.⁽⁵⁾), helped unite artists following years of criticism and counter-criticism. This uniting of artists, in order more effectively to implement and oversee art policy, was evidently as important an issue in 1979 as it had been thirty years earlier. The first item of the Artists' Association's new constitution mentions the need to "unite all artists that can be united".⁽⁶⁾ The in-fighting and false accusations over the previous twenty years were to be forgiven and forgotten for the sake of China's modernisation programme. Zhu Dan (a member of the Association's permanent executive), in

his speech at the Third Congress of the Artists' Association (November 3rd 1979), vividly pointed out:

"What is of importance is unity. Without unity how can there be any flourishing of the arts? We should keep the cardinal principles in mind and take the overall situation into account. All of us here have had a narrow escape and we do not have many years of life left, like a calendar at the end of the year with only a few remaining pages. What is the point of going in for contradictions among the people?"⁽⁷⁾

The Chairman of the Artists' Association, Jiang Feng, also considered the question of unity at great length in his speech delivered at the Congress:

"Only if we unite can art flourish in a true and comprehensive manner. Unity is of special importance today. Lin Biao and the Gang of Four brought about ten years of destruction, which caused disunity amongst people and created chaos. Factionalism has still not been eliminated ... I criticised people too, during the "Three Antis" and the "Five Antis". I wrongly criticised people. In 1957 I was criticised by others. Let's not settle old scores again. My idea is to look forward to the future ... Let everybody unite together and make a contribution to our country".⁽⁸⁾ Only if the leading artists presented a united front could a coherent policy on art be successfully implemented right down to the grass roots level.

In addition to the positions of the leading figures in the Artists' Association remaining essentially the same as they had been before the Cultural Revolution, the basic organisational structure of the Association itself also remained virtually unchanged from the time of its suspension in 1966. It continued to come under the umbrella organisation of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, which in turn was under the supervision of the Department of Propaganda. According to the new constitution of the Artists' Association drawn up in November 1979, the re-established branches of the Association at every level were to "directly receive (come under) the leadership of the Party committees at the provincial, city and autonomous region level, and receive guidance in their professional work from the (Chinese Artists') Association."⁽⁹⁾ This was a clear indication that, officially, the Association was to continue, as it had done since the founding of the People's Republic, to confine itself to organisational matters (the arranging of exhibitions, the publication of

official art magazines, and so on), or questions relating to technical aspects of artistic work. General art policy was to be formulated, as before, by the Department of Propaganda and ultimately the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

At the Third Congress of the Association, the main worry voiced by artists concerned the tendency of the political committees of the Association at national and branch level to misuse their administrative authority. As one delegate, Du Jian, commented:

"After the 1950s, the "left" influenced every aspect of our lives, resulting in great destruction. Our artistic creativity was also badly affected. These bad effects still exist today, a typical example of which is the fate of the picture-story book "The Maple Tree". The only correct thing to do when dealing with art is to let everyone discuss it. Methods of preventing publication should in the future be removed".⁽¹⁰⁾

Wang Qi, a prominent woodcut artist from the Yan'an days, was equally firm in his opposition to political interference:

"Using the method of administrative orders to prohibit art can never succeed. The method of free competition should be used, and from amongst these competing themes and styles of art, let the viewing public choose. Let it reject those things that should be rejected, and approve those things that should be approved".⁽¹¹⁾

This was a clear call for a move away from direct political control, towards a situation where the public would act as a regulating mechanism on the type of work produced for exhibition. This idea was not acceptable to the authorities who, although stressing the importance of popular opinion, adopted for themselves the position of "interpreter" of that opinion. However, some heed had to be paid to the quite legitimate requests of artists to " ... give creative workers more freedom. Do not place too many limitations (on them)".⁽¹²⁾ Deng Xiaoping in his conciliatory speech at the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists (October 30th 1979) made specific reference to this. Although he emphasised that Party committees at all levels were to continue to exercise leadership in the arts:

" ... this leadership should not be realised by issuing administrative orders or presenting demands that literature and art be subordinate to a temporary, specific, and direct political assignment. Rather, the Party committees should, based upon the characteristics of

literature and art and the laws of development, help writers and artists meet the conditions for making literary and artistic undertakings flourish, elevate literary and art levels, and create excellent literary and art works ..."(13) Later he again said, "The issuing of executive orders in the areas of literary and artistic creation and criticism must be stopped".(14)

These phrases from Deng's speech were quoted on several occasions during the Third Congress of the Artists' Association by delegates putting forward their own case for less political interference. However, his words were also open to misinterpretation due to lack of clarity of definition in some instances. How were the characteristics of literature and art and the "laws of development" to be defined by the Party committees? His statement that literature and art should not be subordinated to any specific political task seems to be in contradiction with an earlier assertion that "The sole criterion for deciding the correctness of all work should be whether that work is helpful or harmful to the accomplishment of the Four Modernisations".(15) Moreover, there is no attempt to reconcile Deng's affirmation of the leadership role of the Party committees with his view that "Writers and artists must have the freedom to choose their subject matter and method of presentation based upon artistic practice and exploration. No interference in this regard can be permitted."(16) What, then, were the functions of the Party Committees to be? If they were allowed only to "help" writers and artists and denied the use of executive orders, how much control could they actually continue to have over the kind of art produced? In fact, although the situation was considerably more relaxed during the years after 1979 than it had been for the previous decade or so, art continued to be subjected to ranging degrees of political control and "the issuing of executive orders in the areas of literary and artistic creation and criticism" certainly did not become a thing of the past.

The new art groups

These new groups, largely independent of the official Artists' Association, began forming as early as the beginning of 1978 and continued to operate throughout 1979 and 1980. Members of individual groups usually worked in similar styles and shared similar ideas and aspirations. In many ways, they could be compared to the literari-artists of traditional

China who were accustomed to gathering together to exchange views, admire each other's work and offer constructive criticism in an atmosphere of mutual support.⁽¹⁷⁾

The groups covered the entire spectrum of artistic endeavour, from traditional painting to picture story books, oil painting and sculpture. Within these genres, the artists experimented with styles ranging from academic realist to Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Expressionist and Abstract-Expressionist. They were also not restricted geographically to the capital, Beijing, though Beijing did produce the largest number of groups which, because of their proximity to the locus of political power, usually had a greater impact through the exhibitions they held on occasions. The most high-profile groups included Beijing's "Oil Painting Research Association" "The Sturdy Grass Woodcut Research Association", and "The Stars", Shandong's "Oil and Mural Painting Research Association", Kunming's "Monkey Year Society" and Chongqing's "Grass Grass Painting Association."⁽¹⁸⁾

Diverse and scattered as they were, the groups shared in common the desire for greater freedom in deciding their own styles of creative expression: "Every artist has the right to choose the form of expression for (his) artistic creations".⁽¹⁹⁾ At the same time, members were also concerned that people should not misunderstand their work or their motives in producing it: "We still hope, in an environment of abundant artistic democracy, to pursue in many ways humanistic painting that is liked by the people ... (Everyone) should believe in the sense of responsibility artists feel towards these times and the nation, their sense of conscience and their integrity."⁽²⁰⁾

When the groups first formed and began to exhibit their work, even high-ranking officials like Jiang Feng supported and encouraged them in their artistic endeavours, stating enthusiastically, "Freedom of association is a legal right of the people stipulated in the constitution, whilst painting associations are an organisational form of benefit to the development of art .. We should strongly advocate the organisational form of painting associations which bring so many advantages to the development of artistic creativity. The more that are set up, the better".⁽²¹⁾

Unfortunately for these art groups, the period of relaxation at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was politically engineered by Deng and his supporters to

secure his position as leader. Once that position was secure, Deng moved to re-assert organisational and ideological control of the Party over artists in the form of a mini-campaign against "bourgeois liberalism". As a result, a ban was imposed on private group exhibitions.⁽²²⁾ With the ban which, in effect, denied group artists access to the general public, several of the groups ceased to exist as cohesive entities. "The Stars" and "Grass Grass" were just two that disbanded during this period because of tougher government policies and, specifically, because of the curtailment of private exhibitions.⁽²³⁾

This was not, however, the end of private groups. By late 1984, once the "Spiritual Pollution Campaign"⁽²⁴⁾ had run its course, and a more relaxed atmosphere again pervaded literary and art circles, unofficial art groups, such as "The 28 Painters' Association" (formed in Zhejiang in 1985) began again to appear.

We can see, then, that to a large extent, private art groups were only allowed to exist and operate at the pleasure of the political leadership. They functioned, often uneasily, solely during those times when the leadership felt it expedient to permit them as symbols of the government's intention to allow more diversity and freedom in intellectual pursuits. As soon as political necessity required a clampdown on such activities as happened during the "Campaign Against Bourgeois Democratism" and "The Spiritual Pollution Campaign", this was done so ruthlessly that most groups, through fear or an inability to function effectively, disbanded.

What, then, was the significance of the groups? Certainly, the numbers of artists involved in them were small compared with the vast majority who continued to work within the Official Artists' Association at national and branch level. Nevertheless, this is not to say that their activities were without influence or went unnoticed. The second "Stars" exhibition, held in November 1979 in Beihai Park, for example was reported to have attracted over 33,000 visitors⁽²⁵⁾ and exhibitions organised by other groups were also said to have "created a sensation".⁽²⁶⁾

It was also significant that many of the most innovative and controversial artists of the late 1970s and early 1980s such as Wang Keping of "The Stars", and Feng Guodong, Zhong Ming and Yuan Yunsheng of the "Oil Painting Research Association", belonged to

unofficial groups. Artists like these, determined to break with the old ideological scheme that demanded that the content and form of art remain within strict limits, were able to gain from these groups the essential support that might not have been forthcoming from the art authorities. In an atmosphere of mutual help and encouragement, artists were able to experiment with more radical styles and themes, finding comfort, no doubt, in safety of numbers, particularly when exhibiting their work to the general public.

Perhaps the greatest significance of the unofficial art groups lay in the fact that they represented for the first time since 1949 an alternative to the official art organisation structure. Even during the Cultural Revolution, when the art "establishment" in the form of the Artists' Association and its branches was disbanded, the use of the political directive for shaping and influencing creative work was still overridingly the norm. After 1978 artists began to circumvent the channels of direct political control. Though the groups they set up were usually of a temporary nature, their very existence, as forums in which to discuss and exchange ideas that exceeded Party guidelines, posed an unprecedented challenge to the system of organisational control set up by the authorities. Furthermore, the groups provided a supportive base for exhibiting their work to the general public without necessarily going through official channels. This was evidently worrying for the political leadership which, despite its rhetoric about the need to create diversity in the arts, still aimed at a degree of ideological conformity.

(b) Exhibitions

Official art exhibitions after the Cultural Revolution continued to be an important means for the authorities to maintain control over the vast majority of artists and their work. Most exhibitions still tended to be either those arranged in art schools and colleges, which required the approval of the heads of those educational establishments, or those directly sponsored by the Artists' Association or the Ministry of Culture. Though the rigid controls of former years were greatly relaxed, the fact that some kind of official assent was required before a work could be exhibited tended to ensure that artists did not step too far out of line.

However, two developments occurred over this period which were to have important implications for the art world. The first was the showing of an unprecedented number of exhibitions of art from Western Europe, Japan and America and the second, the exhibition of work by unofficial art groups.

With the ending of the Cultural Revolution, there was soon a continuous stream of Western and Japanese exhibitions in Beijing and other major Chinese cities. It represented a significant consequence for artists of the Chinese leadership's "open-door" policy to the West and its intention to acquire Western scientific and technological expertise. The larger exhibitions included a "Japanese Modern Painting Exhibition" (July 1979), an "American Pictorial Posters, and Illustrations Exhibition" (March 1980), a "Finland Modern Woodblock Exhibition" (April 1981), an "Exhibition of Famous American Paintings from the Boston Museum" (September 1981), an "Exhibition of Original Picasso Paintings" (May, 1982), and a "French Contemporary Art Exhibition" (September 1983).

These foreign exhibitions (and I have only listed a small percentage) stimulated large numbers of publications on Western art.⁽²⁷⁾ They represented a crucial stage in the awakening of the Chinese artists awareness of aesthetic ideas never previously part of their artistic language. The drabness of Socialist Realism, illustrated in the numerous exhibitions from the Soviet Union and its Communist allies since the 1950s, was replaced by a much wider spectrum of styles and content, ranging from Impressionism, through Cubism to Abstract Expressionism and beyond. Never before, even during the May 4th period, had Chinese artists been given so much direct access in China to original Western paintings and sculpture.

The ideas generated by several of these exhibitions became the focus of some important discussions in art circles, which inevitably helped to undermine the blanket uniformity imposed on artists over the previous three decades.⁽²⁸⁾ In addition, the presence of Western exhibitions represented a gradual erosion of the principle that exhibited works were to fulfil an educational function. Whether it was works exhibited by Chinese artists, or those from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the purpose of exhibitions arranged by the Communists since the Yan'an days had been to educate the masses in Communist policy and general world view. Now exhibitions began to lose that strictly educational/propagandist

role, and to convey something more subtle, more intangible - the individual expression of the artist's perceptions and experiences. This significant shift in the function of the exhibition in China inevitably contributed to the weakening of Communist ideological control.

To a great extent, the holding of numerous unofficial Chinese exhibitions after 1979 had the same implications for the art world in China as the foreign exhibitions. Organised by the unofficial art groups mentioned earlier, they generated a great deal of interest amongst art circles and the general public, even though, because of the experimental nature of much of the work, there were some shortcomings in artistic standards. "The Second Oil Painting Research Association Exhibition", held in October 1979 in Beihai Park, comprising a wide range of styles, and including several nude studies ("apparently the first shown publicly in the People's Republic"⁽²⁹⁾) was the talk of Beijing".⁽³⁰⁾ "The Monkey Year Society Exhibition" of July 1980 "created a sensation".⁽³¹⁾ The first "Stars" exhibition in Beijing, November 1979 attracted 33,000 visitors, whilst the second, held in August 1980, drew an audience large enough to produce fourteen sizeable books of comments⁽³²⁾, seventy to eighty percent of which, according to official reckoning, were favourable.⁽³³⁾ The high attendance at these exhibitions is noteworthy considering that, "usually the people of Beijing are not so keen to frequent such places (art galleries and museums). One intellectual confessed ... that he never went to the museum because the exhibitions were not interesting, even though they were usually of contemporary works".⁽³⁴⁾ Evidently, the audience was extremely moved by the exhibits on display, as revealed by one of the many positive comments left after the second "Stars" exhibition addressed to the talented young sculptor, Wang Keping:

"Comrade Wang Keping: I salute your courage. Your ruthless (sculpting) knife dissects society's cruelty, vanity and deceit. Of those so-called sculptors who have been walking corpses for a long time now, their hypocritical souls will tremble before your works, so full of life! Painting and sculpture as art is not just a colour to decorate society! It must ... enlighten the people. You have done well and I hope that even more wonderful works will emerge."⁽³⁵⁾

That exhibitions of work from unofficial art groups were allowed to take place is

already quite extraordinary, considering that during the previous three decades it would have been virtually unthinkable. What is perhaps even more surprising is that, unlike the exhibits for officially organised shows which had to undergo lengthy selection procedures at various levels, many of the works of the unofficial group artists were not vetted in any formal way. This is made clear from Jiang Feng's introduction to the "New Spring Exhibition" held in 1979 by the Oil Painting Research Association: "For these exhibits from artists who have freely come together, no censorship system has been set up. It has been left to all those who have contributed works to discuss and decide the number of works (to be exhibited) and the positions in which paintings are to be hung".⁽³⁶⁾ Although there were artists from the unofficial groups who felt it was wiser to impose some form of censorship on themselves,⁽³⁷⁾ there were others who chose, on occasions, to ignore any official advice given on the suitability of a particular work. When, for the second "Stars" exhibition in August 1980, Wang Keping decided to go against the wishes of Jiang Feng himself and exhibit all the works he had originally prepared, including a piece, "Idol", that parodied Mao Zedong's personality cult, it constituted a direct snub at officialdom.⁽³⁸⁾

This element of challenge, of testing the authorities' patience to the limits that characterised the activities of some of the unofficial groups, was no doubt one of the main features that drew audiences to their exhibitions. This certainly seems to have been true of the "wild cat" open-air exhibition held by "The Stars" in 1979 which first brought them to prominence. "The fact that the secularisation, the freeing of artistic expression was marked by an unprecedented act of defiance rather than silent official sanction, meant that artistic creation belonged to the people; it had earned its birthright and was deserving of serious attention".⁽³⁹⁾

That tens of thousands of people regarded these unofficial group exhibitions as "deserving of serious attention", and that they managed to generate such interest and excitement, of however temporary a nature, was another warning to the authorities that their organisational and ideological monopoly over art was no longer as secure as it once had been.

(c) Art Publications

In 1976, the official art magazine "Fine Art" resumed publication. As before the Cultural Revolution, it continued to be the most important channel for the authorities' dissemination of information on art policy and organisational changes, and their response to developments in creative work and in the field of art criticism and theory.

Prior to the initiation of the reforms in 1978 and 1979, the art illustrations and comments in "Fine Art" were barely distinguishable from what was to be found in art publications during the most radical period of the Cultural Revolution. The scale of hagiography, for example, was hardly reduced, the depiction of the omnipotent and wise leader remaining as ubiquitous as ever. The main difference, of course, was that the image of Chairman Mao surrounded by smiling peasants had now been replaced with that of the new Chairman, Hua Guofeng. The pictorial representations of the latter, so similar to those of Mao in terms of highlighting him as the central figure,⁽⁴⁰⁾ reveal Hua's concern with legitimising and securing his new position as leader. Most portraits of Hua function purely as propaganda to achieve this aim, one of the most blatant examples being that of the oil painting "With You In Charge, I'm At Ease" (Plate 23) by Peng Bing and Jing Shangyi, which shows Mao *indicating* his approval of Hua as his successor.

The use of art to attack political opponents also continued after 1976. "Fine Art" and other art publications regularly featured picture-stories, woodblock prints and especially cartoons (the old favoured medium for attacking political opponents) to denigrate aspects of the Cultural Revolution and to discredit "the Gang of Four".

After 1979, in the general atmosphere of reform, a distinct qualitative change began to occur in "Fine Art", particularly after 1984, when the aged editors-in-chief Wang Zhaowen and Wang Qi, two Yan'an veterans, were finally replaced by the younger Shao Dazhen. Perhaps because he lacked the ideological tempering of his predecessors, Shao was reportedly determined to ensure "Fine Art" reflected "as wide a diversity of opinions and tastes as possible."⁽⁴¹⁾ There were several alterations in the format of the magazine in the early and mid-1980s and the quality of reproductions noticeably improved, with better colour definition due to the use of expensive glossy paper and more advanced printing techniques.

The content of reproductions also improved enormously as the all-pervasive Socialist Realism of the Cultural Revolution gave way to an amazing diversity of themes and styles, both foreign and local, that was unprecedented in China either before 1949 or since. The general tone of articles published began to alter too, and the magazine gradually lost virtually all signs of the political rhetoric that had been so prominent in its pages. Exhortations for artists to depict "the hot revolutionary struggle" and "to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers" were largely replaced with more subtle discussions on, amongst other things, concepts of beauty, "self-expression" and abstractism in art. The ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao were replaced by those of Sartre and Freud, and modern Western art theorists.

However, there were evidently some views that "Fine Art" as the official publication of the Chinese Artists' Association, still felt, even at this stage, reluctant to publish. Perhaps one of the most significant examples was a piece written by Li Xiaoshan in 1985 which attacked traditional Chinese painting in the strongest terms, saying that it had "reached the end of the road".⁽⁴²⁾ Li also questioned the reputation of several prominent traditional Chinese painters, including Liu Haisu, Li Keran, Shi Lu, Lin Fengmian and Pan Tianshou, some of whom were still leading figures in the Artists' Association and art academies. Li Kuchan, Huang Zhou and Cheng Shifa came in for the sharpest criticism. Li Kuchan was described as having failed to understand the spirit of traditional Chinese painting and his work as lacking individuality. The paintings of Cheng Shifa and Huang Zhou were said to have been characterised by "sameness" (*qianpianyilu*).⁽⁴³⁾

Not surprisingly, perhaps, when Li's article was submitted to "Fine Art" for publication, it was rejected as being too controversial.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Previously under such circumstances the article would simply never have reached the general public for discussion, the writer of the piece having no recourse to alternative channels of publication that did not come under the direct supervision of the Artists' Association. The mid-1980s however, saw the emergence of new publications which were more liberal in their editorial policy. Two of these, "The Jiangsu Pictorial" ("Jiangsu Huakan") and "Fine Arts in China" (*Zhongguo Meishubao*) saved Li's article from oblivion by publishing it in 1985.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In the late 1970s, there had briefly existed an additional channel of publication,

completely independent of official control, for a small number of artists to express their views and to show their work. This took the form of Samizdat publications, such as "Today" ("Jintian"), which originated in the democracy movement of the period and were produced by democracy activists using simple methods and materials. They contained short stories, poems and articles on cultural issues, as well as crude print reproductions by artists like Qu Leilei of the "Stars".⁽⁴⁶⁾ However, these publications were short-lived, most of them lasting for only a few issues, and circulation was limited due to problems with production and distribution.

The new art publications that appeared in the mid-1980s were, unlike the earlier Samizdat magazines, more professional in presentation, since they shared printing facilities with other official newspapers and periodicals. ("Fine Arts in China", for example, used the plant facilities of "The People's Liberation Army Daily").⁽⁴⁷⁾ The most well-known were "Currents of Ideas on Art", "Jiangsu Pictorial" and, in particular, "Fine Arts in China". This last publication, a four-page national weekly tabloid produced in Beijing, may not have been able to rival the glossy look of "Fine Art" or cover issues in as great detail, but, for the candid way in which it expressed its opinions and its refreshingly direct manner of reporting on events and trends in the national and international art scene, it became compulsory reading in Chinese art circles. Geremie Barmé has described it as "the most outspoken arts publication in China".⁽⁴⁸⁾

It was run by members of the Fine Art Research Section of the Chinese Arts Research Institute (Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan meishu yanjiusuo). Although Zhang Qiang, Director of the Section, was in overall charge, editorial control over the format of individual pages was left to a pool of researchers who shared responsibility for the selection and presentation of articles and illustrations. As its continued existence was dependent on the agreement and cooperation of the art authorities, the weekly was forced to accept the appointment of "advisors", who included leading figures of the Artists' Association, such as Hua Junwu, Gu Yuan, Liu Kaiqu, Wu Guanzhong, Wu Zuoren, Wang Zhaowen and Guan Shanyue.⁽⁴⁹⁾ It appears that their appointment was little more than a formality and that in reality, they contributed very little to the publication.⁽⁵⁰⁾

From the outset, the weekly boldly stated the aims of its editorial policy:

"We will do our utmost to respond promptly to those questions which are of most concern to the art world and the most sensitive questions relating to the beautifying of the lives of the masses. Our aims are range, depth and individuality".⁽⁵¹⁾ These aims were re-stated by Zhang Qiang:

"The main tasks of this paper are: to probe the trends and features of China's artistic development during this new era, to appraise the various possibilities of the pattern and channels that this development might take, and to launch a free discussion on the academic viewpoints of all individual artists and schools. At the same time we must make use of the advantageous conditions of publishing at short intervals (once a week), to report on developments in artistic creation, research, education, publishing etc. in China and abroad, and provide news of interchange between the two".⁽⁵²⁾

The criteria for the publication of articles, according to the editor-in-chief Liu Xiaochun, did not include political considerations. Instead, emphasis was placed on quality and the significance of views expressed at a time of rapid change in the Chinese art world.⁽⁵³⁾ The tabloid was also, in contrast to "Fine Art", not subject to the arbitrary wishes of the editor-in-chief, and responsibility was largely delegated to the editorial team, whose members were guaranteed a measure of independence.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Diversity of attitudes and opinions was positively welcomed, in order to create a forum for lively debate on important issues:

"We do not demand uniformity in academic viewpoint and research methods from the editors. Variety in the composition of the editorial group is our ultimate ideal."⁽⁵⁵⁾

This editorial independence was undoubtedly one of the main factors contributing to "Fine Arts in China" becoming something of a thorn in the flesh of the art establishment, to the extent that it was threatened with closure by the Ministry of Culture on several occasions.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The main problem seems to have arisen from its features on modern and contemporary Western art and the work of Western-influenced Chinese artists. It had provided information on artists like Mondrian, Kandinsky, Modigliani, Klimt and Rauschenberg, and had reproduced their most important works. It had also discussed Surrealism, Hyper-realism, Pop Art, New Expressionism, Performance Art and art in the

post-modern era.

All this caused Hua Junwu to complain that "Fine Arts in China" was placing too much emphasis on Western modernism, and implying that the work of all young Chinese artists was under the influence of Western modernism.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Hua also accused the magazine of failing to provide adequate analysis of the Western art it published.⁽⁵⁸⁾ A lack of what he called "initial analysis" was also the implicit criticism of Wu Zuoren, who stated the official position saying:

"The responsibility of art periodicals is not only to introduce or present (works of art), but also to give guidance".⁽⁵⁹⁾ The weekly had thus failed to fulfil the educative function that was meant to be the responsibility of all publications.

Zhang Qiang was forced to write a not altogether convincing apology for the past 'shortcomings' of "Fine Arts in China". "We sincerely hope to continue to receive care, attention and guidance from the leadership at all levels and from our elders in the art world."⁽⁶⁰⁾ Liu Xiaochun, in an article supposedly to express his apologies for the failings of the weekly, ended up attempting to defend it by stressing that readers should not take its views as the final word on artistic matters, or regard the works of art it published as models to be emulated. In a comment that could be seen as a rebuttal of Wu Zuoren's assertion that art publications should guide people's thinking, Liu stated: "We believe our readers will make their own aesthetic judgements, their own rational judgements".⁽⁶¹⁾

It is interesting to note that, following these apologies by Zhang and Liu, there seem to have been few radical changes in the editorial policy, and the tabloid continued to feature prominently modernist work from the West.

Unfortunately, as was the case with the unofficial art groups, "Fine Arts in China" and the other new art publications could only survive with the permission of the authorities. Their publication could be terminated at a moment's notice by simply refusing them access to the printing facilities upon which they were wholly reliant. In their tenuous existence they were torn between a desire to push back the limits of what was regarded as politically and aesthetically acceptable and the knowledge that their policy might result in forced closure. For "Fine Arts in China" this possibility became a reality when it was

ordered to cease publication in 1990.⁽⁶²⁾

2. The Search for Modernity - New developments in Art Practice and Theory

The Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists, called together by the Third plenary session of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (May-June 1978), drew delegates from all nine affiliated organisations to review the state of cultural work since 1949 and to discuss new cultural policy directives.⁽⁶³⁾ Deng Xiaoping attended the Congress, as Mao Zedong had before him, as the prime authority on political policy. His speech, the second of the congress, was marked by its banality, its imprecision and its lack of clear direction. Its tone, however, was moderate, in keeping with the political necessity to win back the support of intellectuals to help implement the reform programme.

Following the, by now, virtually mandatory criticisms of Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four", Deng stressed that, "Our policy on literature and art was on the right course and our achievements in this area were remarkable during the seventeen years prior to the Cultural Revolution."⁽⁶⁴⁾ His comment confirms that the aim of the new leadership was to discredit those associated with the radical policies of the late 1960s and early 1970s without unduly damaging the reputation of the Party as a whole.

Deng declared that the energies of all writers and artists should be channelled into ensuring the success of the Four Modernisations. In fact, as he stated: "The sole criterion for deciding the correctness of all work should be whether that work is helpful or harmful to the accomplishment of the Four Modernisations."⁽⁶⁵⁾ The political restraints on cultural activities clearly remained, but he emphasised that there was a great deal of scope for what would be regarded as "helpful" to the reforms. "Geared to reach the common goal of realising the Four Modernisations, writers and artists should broaden the horizons of their work; their creative thinking, themes, and techniques should change and adapt to the changing times, and should be able to plough new ground".⁽⁶⁶⁾

Mao's original formula of "literature and art to serve the people," and in particular "the workers, peasants and soldiers", was mentioned by Deng, but it was balanced by his call to "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" once again. His entire speech was in many

ways a re-working of the original "Hundred Flowers" policy, emphasising as it did a rejection of undue political interference in cultural activities and encouraging writers and artists to widen the scope of their creative work.

Zhou Yang, Vice-Chairman of the Federation of Literary and Art Workers, in his four-hour address to the Congress re-iterated Deng's remarks by calling for greater diversity in the cultural realm. However, he also made it clear that creative endeavour should still remain within political limits. The arts were to reflect the lives and interests of the people, but since "the Party has always formulated its political line and policies in the people's interests, both long-term and immediate, therefore, literature and art, when portraying the life of the people, cannot be dissociated from politics, but should be closely linked with politics."⁽⁶⁷⁾ However, in the light of the experiences of most of his audience during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou added a note of moderation, admitting that no-one was infallible and that even a "proletarian politician" could not avoid making mistakes on occasions. Therefore, the relationship between the arts and politics was not to be interpreted too narrowly with the arts simply reflecting current policies. In a similar vein, he called for flexibility in the understanding and utilisation of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, advising that it should not be regarded as an unchanging dogma, but more as a guide to action. It was to become a starting point for action (not the decisive consideration or ultimate justification as had been the case during the Cultural Revolution) and interpreted only in the light of "current reality".

The ideological basis of the speeches of both Deng and Zhou is in many ways similar to periods of political relaxation prior to 1966. But it was also characterised by the contradictions that marked much of the political rhetoric during those times of liberalisation. The dominance of political considerations was re-affirmed in the speeches, yet they also emphasised that undue official interference was not to be tolerated; writers and artists were encouraged to be more adventurous in their work, though it was stressed that their efforts were to continue to be directed towards the workers, peasants and soldiers. Clearly, the authorities had failed to address the continuing ambiguous nature of the relationship between themselves and writers and artists, and between politics and the arts.

At the Congress a good deal of anger was expressed at the brutal treatment artists had received during the Cultural Revolution. Very few had come through the experience unscathed, many suffering terribly, and some even losing their lives. In the most poignant speech at the Congress, the playwright Yang Hansheng read out the names of over one hundred writers and artists hounded to their deaths between 1966 and 1976, including Pan Tianshou, Wang Shilang, Dong Xiwen, Feng Zikai, Ma Da, Chen Banding, Qin Zhongwen and Wo Zha.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Of the speeches given by artists, by far the most striking was that by Zhang Fagen, a member of the Anhui branch of the Artists' Association. He focused entirely on the relationship between the arts and politics, and it was the first time that any artist had, at a major political forum, spoken so bluntly about such a sensitive issue. Flatly contradicting Deng Xiaoping's and Zhou Yang's rosy assessment of cultural achievements before 1966, he implied, in a cutting indictment of Communist cultural policies over the last thirty years, that the Party had failed to take the right course from the outset:

"After the country had been liberated and political power had come into the hands of the people, as a country and as a government there was the obligation to establish the arts as an independent domain in order to allow them to develop and flourish But we blindly demanded that the arts serve politics, and especially that they serve the current political struggle. But politics then were so unstable that the arts also became turbulent and vacillating."⁽⁶⁹⁾

Zhang went on to outline the disastrous consequences of the policy in Anhui, even during the "Hundred Flowers" era. His tale of a young artist who won first prize for his painting of sparrow-hunting, but who was the following year labelled as a "Rightist" once sparrows had been rehabilitated,⁽⁷⁰⁾ might cause a wry smile, but is nevertheless a vivid illustration of the hopeless situation artists could find themselves in given the vagaries of the policy-makers. He likened the state of China's art with that of her finances - "on the verge of bankruptcy."⁽⁷¹⁾ and argued for the need to free art from all political restraints, even though, with the negative experiences artists had undergone over the previous three decades, it would be extremely difficult for them "to gain release from their (psychological) shackles".⁽⁷²⁾

Initial new trends in art

Between 1979 and 1986, several new and distinct artistic trends can be discerned. Each of these trends had its own minority following, and not all the work produced in a particular style was necessarily of a high quality. However, despite the fact that they do not represent the mainstream in Chinese art, it is important to discuss them here because of their political and artistic significance. Sometimes this is manifested in an overt way in works which attempt directly to criticise or satirise the policies of the authorities. Often, what is most interesting is that a particular trend constitutes the individual expression of the artist. The very act of the artist striving to break with artistic conventions as formulated by the authorities has political as well as artistic implications because in doing so, he re-interprets the world and man's role within it in terms of his own vision.

Many of the artists dealt with in this section are young, between twenty and thirty-five, though there are notable exceptions such as Wu Guanzhong and Zhan Jianjun who, in spite of (or perhaps because of) their more advanced years, continued to produce a steady stream of increasingly experimental work throughout the 1980s. Young artists tend to have little or no connection with the art "establishment" and therefore feel they have less to lose in challenging accepted artistic conventions. They can also be impatient with the traditional Chinese concept of "waiting for your turn" (lunzi paibei), according to which respect for an artist and his work increased proportionally with his age. As Zhang Shaoxia and Li Xiaoshan observed, this system condemned young artists to be "placed on the lowest level of the art stage".⁽⁷³⁾ In addition, according to Luo Zhongli, during the Cultural Revolution the younger generation had been encouraged to rebel against authority and their elders, which made them less inclined to accept this role.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Another factor which possibly contributed to the prominence of young artists' work in the 1980s was that many older artists, having experienced a series of brutal political movements since the 1950s, may have lacked the enthusiasm and even strength to develop their work to any great extent.

"Scar Art" and the controversy over the picture-story book "The Maple Tree".

The period at the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978 was in many ways a

watershed for the arts in that it saw a shift in the approach to representing the individual away from the heroic and optimistic worker-peasant-soldier types that had existed previously. The first stage was "Scar Literature" and later "Scar Art" and the strong emotional response of writers and artists to the events of the Cultural Revolution: "The Cultural Revolution provided writers and artists with vividly and richly tragic material. This material caused all other literature and art to pale by comparison".⁽⁷⁵⁾


With the short stories "The Teacher" by Liu Xinwu and "Scar" by Lu Xinhua,⁽⁷⁶⁾ a literary genre developed, that dealt with events from the Cultural Revolution in a new way. A wide range of social problems, particularly as they related to young people, such as love and marriage, separation, injustice and even juvenile delinquency, were discussed. An important theme was that tragedy could occur in a socialist system, an idea that had not been touched upon in literature since 1949. The official justification for this idea was subsequently recognised:

"Acknowledgement of the violence and suffering and lawlessness of the Cultural Revolution, previously taboo, (was) now permissible - providing that blame (was) pinned on Lin Biao and the Gang of Four".⁽⁷⁷⁾

A close connection existed between "Scar Literature" and "Scar Art". Picture-story books, for instance, were produced on the basis of the original "Scar Literature" stories, including one on Lu Xinhua's story "Scar". "Scar Art", like "Scar Literature", dealt with the traumatic experiences mainly of young people during the Cultural Revolution.

A typical example is an oil painting by the young artist, Cheng Conglin, called "1968 x month x day Snow" (Plate 24) usually referred to as simply "Snow". Cheng was one of a new generation of talented and committed young artists who had received their official art training after the Cultural Revolution in the Sichuan Academy of Fine Art. The painting depicts an event set in the Cultural Revolution - a battle between two Red Guard factions. It is crowded with figures, one of Cheng's favourite methods of composition at that time, repeated in his later "1978 A Summer's Night - Around Me I Feel That Our People Are Yearning (For Something)". From the blood issuing from several of the figures and from the torn clothes of the girl who is centrally positioned, it is clear that something tragic has

occurred. A man can be seen stooping under the weight of a heavy placard, others appear unconscious, perhaps dead. One youth is seen about to strike a fatal blow with the butt of his rifle to the head of another, who is blindfolded with his hands bound. The victors of the battle are easily discernible from the smiles on their faces.

What is remarkable about this painting is that it presents an horrific and tragic scene without resorting to any exaggeration. The artist has used more subtle means to convey his message. The Snow of the title for example is no longer an undisturbed blanket of pure white but has been turned into grey sludge by the fighting (a metaphor for lost innocence?). The representation of the peripheral characters differs greatly from the depictions of crowd scenes during the Cultural Revolution, where each individual expresses the same emotion. Here, there is a diversity of emotion, implying disarray. One man is shown completely absorbed in his camera. Several of the bystanders, apparently simple country folk, stare in a blank, vaguely uncomprehending way at the carnage wreaked in front of them. There are echoes here of Lu Xun's account  regarding the execution of a Chinese man by a Japanese, whilst a crowd of Chinese people stood by watching the entire procedure with expressions of incomprehension.⁽⁷⁸⁾ The sense of tension is heightened by the sharp contrast drawn between the mild curiosity of the simple peasants and the terrifying scene being played out by the young Red Guards.

Perhaps the artist's main dramatic touch is his depiction of the young girl placed centrally in the painting. She is obviously the key figure, as all lines formed in the snow run to her, and her torn white blouse also catches the eye. Her expression is one of indignation and accusation. But, unlike the propagandist art of the Cultural Revolution, no target is set up to be accused. The role of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four in the disastrous consequences of the Cultural Revolution is nowhere suggested. It is simply the tragic portrayal of young people in confrontation with each other for apparently no purpose.

Gao Xiaohua, like Cheng Conglin a young graduate from the Sichuan Academy of Fine Art, produced work in the same style. His oil painting "Why" depicts a small group of young people who, from their wounds, have evidently been involved in recent factional fighting. They are sitting, deeply engrossed in their own thoughts. The painting is

interesting because it reveals, perhaps for the first time since 1949, a sense of alienation. Though the youths all belong to the same Red Guard faction, there is no feeling of comradeship between them and, in fact, hardly any acknowledgement of each other's presence, with all of them looking in separate directions. We gain a sense that for them, faith in absolute certainties has been replaced by bewilderment and doubt, re-inforced by Gao's choice of the title "Why". In "Goodbye Little Road" by Wang Chuan, the focal point is the girl's face, the expression on which displays a mixture of sadness and anxiety over the things she has witnessed in the past and over what the future might hold. The theme of disillusionment and uncertainty among the urban youth, of which this is but one example, was to recur often during the next few years.

These paintings are competently executed but there is little sign of innovation in terms of their form, though the dark and sombre colours generally employed to heighten the sense of despair did represent a sharp break with the bright colours of the Cultural Revolution.

"Scar Art" on the whole elicited little negative response from officialdom. It is true that during a series of meetings held by the Artists' Association the advice was given that, although such art was basically positive, artists should also think about looking forward to a bright future⁽⁷⁹⁾ but no major debates were reported on the validity of the genre.

The significance of "Scar Art" from a political perspective, is that, to a greater degree than "Scar Literature", it attempted to divest itself of the overtly propagandist trappings that had characterised so much of the art of the People's Republic and to replace it with a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty unprecedented since 1949. In "Scar Literature" there is still the notion of the 'villains', on whom all the responsibility for the Cultural Revolution can be heaped. In "Scar", Lin Biao is accused of "being responsible for persecuting a lot of old cadres".⁽⁸⁰⁾ Yin Dalei in "The Teacher" reflects on the fact that now 'the Gang of Four' has been removed, it will not take long before their bad influence on education is removed and "an ideal environment created".⁽⁸¹⁾ The narrator later comments that, "Until the Gang of Four were removed, dark and ominous clouds hung over our country".⁽⁸²⁾ In the "Scar" paintings there was generally no attempt to lay the blame for the events of the

Cultural Revolution on any individual or group of individuals. Instead, the question of why or how they happened is left to personal interpretation.

The literature also usually includes statements which indicate confidence in the new leadership. Xiaohua in "Scar" comments, "I shall never forget Chairman Hua's kindness and will closely follow the Party's Central Committee headed by him and dedicate my life to the cause of the Party."⁽⁸³⁾ In the paintings, on the other hand, the authorities are offered no such gestures of support. It could be argued that to express these ideas in painting would be more difficult than in a piece of writing, but it should be remembered that artists had been required to do equally impossible things for several years and could have done so now if they had felt the inclination.

It was "Scar Art", with its focus on tragic themes with no explanations, embellishments or exaggerations, that was a significant departure from the art of the Cultural Revolution. In one instance, this development inspired a discussion on the correct depiction of historical figures, which involved the picture-story book "The Maple Tree".

The pictures for this story, which were by Chen Yiming, Liu Yulian and Li Bing, are based on a short piece of fictional writing by Zheng Yi, a young student at Fudan University. The story is a simple one and can be placed firmly within "Scar Literature". It concerns two classmates, Lu Danfeng and Li Honggang who fell in love but then joined opposing Red Guard factions during the Cultural Revolution. The story ends in tragic circumstances when they both die in separate incidents.

Following the publication of the story, the newly-appointed editor of the magazine "The Picture-Story Book" ("Lianhuanhuabao") invited the three artists Chen, Liu and Li to produce a series of pictures based on it (they were also responsible for the pictures in the picture-story book "Scar"). The finished work appeared in the August 1979 issue of "The Picture-Story Book" and distribution began in Beijing on August 3rd.⁽⁸⁴⁾ During its first few days of sale, "The Maple Tree" apparently provoked a strong reaction amongst readers, prompting the editorial board of the magazine to remark that there had been "an enthusiastic response rarely seen before".⁽⁸⁵⁾ However, an order was suddenly received by the board from the Bureau of Publications (chuban guanliju) to "cease sales". The reason

given was that in "The Maple Tree", "Lin Biao and Jiang Qing appear as positive characters. If distributed, it would create a bad political impression".⁽⁸⁶⁾ This order was only later rescinded following an outcry from the publishers of "The Picture-Story Book" and some of its readers".⁽⁸⁷⁾

The offending items included a picture (number one in the sequence) showing Jiang Qing meeting a group of young Red Guards, (Fig. 2) and another of Lin Biao (number eleven) (Fig. 3). Evidently, the three artists, along with "The Picture-Story Book" team, had already anticipated the possible reaction their planned presentation of these controversial figures would provoke. A meeting of the editorial board had been called prior to publication and a discussion held on alternative methods of portraying them, such as, in the case of picture number one, replacing it with a photograph which had one corner burned. In the end, it was decided to proceed as originally planned without any alterations.⁽⁸⁸⁾

The objection raised by the Bureau of Publications touched on the important question of how to deal with personalities and events from recent history. The falsification of historical fact in official records had been a common practice, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. For example, only half the names of the twelve most prominent leaders who had attended the First National People's Congress were included in political documents issued once they had been branded as "negative characters" after 1966.⁽⁸⁹⁾ "Negative characters" in the art world, too, like Yan Han and Mo Pu, disappeared from written materials on art once they had been labelled as "Rightists". This was the case even when the materials referred to art activities in the newly liberated areas where people like Yan and Mo were amongst the most prominent.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Artists had often been obliged to distort historical reality in their work in order to conform to current policies, as we saw in the previous chapter with Liu Chunhua's "Chairman Mao Goes To Anyuan" and Dong Xiwen's commemoration of the ceremony for the founding of the People's Republic.

The methods used for such distortions were not only confined to the removal or insertion of particular figures. It was sometimes more expedient to exaggerate certain qualities or characteristics in individuals, in order to present them as "positive" or "negative" examples. These methods tended to follow set patterns or conventions, so that there was no

doubt as to the artist's intention to praise or denigrate. Twenty and more years separate the political disgrace of Hu Feng and the downfall of "the Gang of Four" but there is remarkably little change in their presentation in works of art as "enemies of the people". The favoured vehicle for such representations remained the cartoon, with its powerful, biting satire and its ability to distort and exaggerate. The ugly and evil-looking cartoons of Lin Biao and "the Gang of Four" were thus to become the standard public images of them.

Problems arose for the artists illustrating "The Maple Tree" when they attempted to challenge this established approach by presenting Lin Biao and Jiang Qing without the standard distortions. This was in keeping with the general tenor of "Scar Art" and the artists' depiction of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing was consistent with their treatment of other characters. As the artists themselves commented, the young people were portrayed neither as brave clever heroes, nor as wild hooligans, but simply as ordinary students of the 1960s.⁽⁹¹⁾ In the same way, with regard to the depiction of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing:

"We portrayed them directly, without any kind of embellishment, in order to expose their trickery at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. This was the premise of the entire tragedy."⁽⁹²⁾

This untendentious characterisation of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing had significant implications. It undermined the Party leadership's attempt to place the sole blame for the Cultural Revolution on Lin and Jiang by presenting them as evil and heterodox figures. Once the simplistic explanation of events provided by the Party was replaced by a portrayal of them that adhered more closely to reality, the public was offered the chance to make its own judgements, instead of accepting official versions of events.

"The Maple Tree" and "Scar Art" in general helped to open up a new relationship between art and its audience. Previously, art was for "educating" the people, making them passive receptors of current political wisdom. "The Maple Tree", and works like it, invited them to respond in a more active way. By dropping the formulaic symbols and not "telling" the reader whether the figures depicted were "positive" or "negative", the pictures for the story left people to draw their own conclusions.

However, this departure from established practice was not universally

welcomed. Some readers complained that if 'bad' characters were not given an ugly outward appearance then their creators were, in effect, praising them.⁽⁹³⁾ Another objected that, "Jiang Qing and Lin Biao were represented in such a solemn (dignified) manner. Lin Biao appeared in colour and Jiang Qing looked like a photograph. (We) felt that this was 'positive characterisation' and, upon seeing it, (we) felt we could not emotionally accept it".⁽⁹⁴⁾

The three artists of "The Maple Tree" received a letter from a mother whose child, after reading their picture-story book, asked her teacher, "How could Lin Biao and the Gang of Four be so good-looking when they were wicked. ('bad eggs')." ⁽⁹⁵⁾ The mother's view was that the editors of "The Picture-Story Book" should not publish such pictures, "to avoid having children no longer know the difference between right and wrong".⁽⁹⁶⁾ It was precisely these attitudes that the three artists and their supporters wanted to change. They deplored the fact that, "Many people still hope that the masses can remain like children, ignorant of everything".⁽⁹⁷⁾ One stated bluntly that, "Covering up contradictions, embellishing life, creating false images and cheating the masses is not in the interests of the proletariat"⁽⁹⁸⁾ and, with reference to Jiang Qing, "by not deliberately making her look ugly, people will be prompted to think more deeply".⁽⁹⁹⁾

The controversy over "The Maple Tree" was short-lived. Several prominent artists from the Artists' Association supported the magazine and condemned the order issued by the Bureau of Publications to stop sales. Ye Qianyu was reported to have written a letter of support from his sick-bed.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ He Rong stated that the withdrawal of the picture-book contradicted the Central Committee's policies to "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" and to end the unwarranted issuing of administrative orders. "The masses should decide whether a work (of art) is good or bad. Even if it is a big poisonous weed, the masses should still be allowed to see it. It is the order stopping its distribution that is the problem".

Final confirmation of official approval of "The Maple Tree" came when the picture-story was awarded second prize in the "Exhibition to Celebrate the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic."⁽¹⁰¹⁾

"Stream of Life" painting.

"Scar Art" raised important questions about the faithful portrayal of individuals and events. Nevertheless, like the art that had preceded it, it still had associations with overtly political themes. From 1980, however, a new trend emerged, sometimes called "Stream of Life" ("shenghuoliu"), that introduced sharp changes in theme. It was a reaction against so-called "grand themes" ("da tical") and the Communist theory that "theme is the decisive factor" (tical jue ding lun). "Stream of Life" paintings tended to portray "low-key" subjects of a more personal and intimate nature.

"Stream of Life" was part of a wider reaction against the standard depiction of the "model" individual, which had reached its extreme during the Cultural Revolution, but had its origins in the Great Leap Forward and before. As we have seen, depictions of individuals during the Cultural Revolution were basically restricted to a single type - the heroic "model" worker, peasant and soldier or Communist leader, in particular Mao Zedong. From 1979, aesthetic discourse, as part of a general negation of Cultural Revolution practices, disavowed these stereotypical images.

The "model" image had been defined as someone in whom all the qualities most desirable in the "new socialist man" were condensed and concentrated to an extreme degree. By the late 1970s, this assumption that it was artistically acceptable, and even essential, to take the representation of individuals out of reality and place them in a world of socio-political fiction began to be increasingly undermined. Artists now saw it as an attempt by the authorities to create a mythical world, inhabited by superhuman figures that were reminiscent of the gods and deities of traditional China. The "Gang of Four" far from taking an anti-traditionalist, anti-superstitious and anti-feudalistic stance, as implied in their rhetoric, had, in fact, perpetuated the concepts that lay behind these traditional images by simply replacing one set of "gods" with another. "The artistic position of the Gang of Four regarding the portrayal of the progressive 'model' in the Chinese masses is, in effect, a re-hashed version of feudal cultural consciousness. As it is the progressive and model element in the masses (that is highlighted), this becomes a new (social) stratum, that of the minority". (102)

Ironically, although the purpose of the Communist Revolution had been to benefit the ordinary peasants, workers and soldiers, during the Cultural Revolution, they were never permitted to see truthful reflections of themselves in art: "According to leftist creed, only that which is completely perfect and idealised can be called a model. (But) this is not a model, it is Utopia, and Utopia can only be found in Heaven, not in this world".⁽¹⁰³⁾

The depiction of the Communist leadership, particularly in relation to the ordinary Chinese people, also came in for criticism. A complaint was voiced that leaders were represented as virtual gods, whilst the masses appeared to be of only secondary importance:

"The leader stands in the middle, head held high
The masses are on both sides,
Men and women, old and young circle round smiling,
Red and light the whole area is bright".⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

In many instances, of course, as with the much-reproduced picture of "Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan", there was no attempt at all to include the ordinary people or other party leaders. Some artists commented that many portraits from the Cultural Revolution gave the impression that Mao was some kind of "saviour" who had single-handedly achieved the revolution.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ "The success of the revolution rests mainly with the masses. The leader plays an important role but not the only one."⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

From these various comments, two points can be seen to form the basis of "Stream of Life" art: (a) a rejection of the mythologised heroes and god-like figures that were seen as contributing to the lie of the Cultural Revolution and, as a corollary of this, a rejection of the cult of personality. (b) An embracing of the concept of the ordinary individual and an affirmation of his importance in the scheme of things.

In ideological and political terms, this development was highly significant. Since 1949, art had functioned as a tool for legitimising and perpetuating political power. It was used to define a particular world-view solely according to political and ideological criteria. During the Cultural Revolution, it had gone to the extreme of creating a vision of society with no basis in reality. The elements of realism, even naturalism, that began to

appear in art during the early 1980s reveal a rejection of a world view determined by political leaders and an attempt by artists to formulate their own vision of life, based on personal response and interpretation. The art work of this period is therefore associated with an emphasis on universally human, rather than narrowly political, values.

"Stream of Life" paintings set their figures in contexts that were not overtly political. This did not mean that they were devoid of political connotations, but simply that the political significance of them was more implicitly and subtly expressed. The most striking feature was the sensitive handling of rural scenes and people from the lowest levels of society, that is to say, poor peasants and minorities, who were portrayed without the usual exaggerated conventions. The predilection of "Stream of Life" artists for rural settings is an interesting aspect of their work. Traditionally, rural scenes had a special significance for Chinese artists, embodying as they did an intellectual yearning to achieve universal harmony with nature. Landscape painting expressed an escape for the Chinese gentleman from the corruption and distractions of the bureaucratic world, and generated a sense of spiritual purity and peace.

The "Stream of Life" artists with their humanistic concerns perhaps concentrated more on the figures in their 'landscapes', seeing in the peasants and minority peoples they painted an innocent and pure experience of life which had been impossible in the recent upheavals and distortions of urban China. Strikingly, the peasants are shown to retain a sense of dignity which contrasts vividly with the anxiety, isolation and alienation to be seen on the faces of those in the paintings of urban Chinese. As one observer commented on the individuals depicted in "Stream of Life" art: "(They reveal) a pure and clean humanity which has received no interference from class struggle".⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Many of the "Stream of Life" artists, such as He Duoling and Ai Xuan, had also been involved in producing "Scar Art". Now the focus of their painting switched from a preoccupation with their own social group and its experiences to individuals and groups of individuals functioning outside of that narrow urban framework. They had moved from emphasising the "I and "We" to "He/she" and "They".⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ This opened up endless possibilities for exploring new ideas relating to the human condition in general.

One of the most prominent figures in the movement was Luo Zhongli, student and later teacher at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Art. His oil painting "Father" (Plate 25) when exhibited at the Second Chinese Exhibition for Young Artists in Beijing 1980, caused a great stir.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ This was partly due to the sheer size of his portrait of a Sichuan peasant (it measured 160 x 240 cm), which was on a scale, as he himself acknowledged, usually reserved for the portraits of Communist leaders.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ It was also partly due to the novelty of the hyper-realistic technique he had adopted. (Luo had been influenced by the American hyper-realist Charles Close⁽¹¹¹⁾). In the painting, an aged Sichuan peasant, evidently from an extremely poor background, stares out in a mild-mannered, resigned way, his two gnarled and grimy hands clutching a broken rice bowl half-full of water. This stark image of humanity caused one critic to observe that, "art had returned from Heaven to the present world".⁽¹¹²⁾

Luo's deliberate attempt to represent the impoverished state of the peasants was one of the earliest examples of an artist highlighting the reality of China's economic backwardness. This, in itself, was no longer a particularly taboo subject as the authorities had already acknowledged the bad economic conditions prevailing in some rural areas of China.⁽¹¹³⁾ However, it was the first time that art had presented such a stark and convincing picture of these facts. "Father" raised the question of the efficacy of Communist economic policy since 1949 which was, after all, intended to improve the lot of the peasants. "After thirty years, how much better really is his (the peasant's) life compared with Old Fellow Liang⁽¹¹⁴⁾ who lived in a grass hut near the Toad Riverbank at the beginning of the 1950s?"⁽¹¹⁵⁾

A letter to "Fine Art" from a peasant who had seen "Father" echoed this sentiment. "After thirty years of change in society, the re-emergence of old dregs has caused this generation of peasants to long for happy times, but it has also made them full of worry. They have discovered that to become real masters of their own fate is extremely difficult."⁽¹¹⁶⁾

Luo himself stated that it was exactly this failure to improve the economic position of the peasants which had provided the main inspiration for his painting. Sent to

work in a small factory in the Da Ba mountain region, Da County, Sichuan during the Cultural Revolution, he had been in continuous contact with the peasants and became closely familiar with them and their lives.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ He recalled that a particular event in 1975 formed the basis for "Father". He witnessed a peasant guarding a pile of dung (dung being a valuable commodity in rural areas which needs to be guarded), and the sight of this old man sitting all day in the hot summer sun with a resigned expression on his face made a great impact on him. He remarked that he was reminded of Yang Bailao, Xiang Linsao, Run Tu and Ah Q, all fictional characters who were at the lower end of the scale in traditional Chinese society.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Clearly his impression was that no fundamental improvements had taken place in the lives of the underprivileged since pre-Guomindang times.

Luo used a hyper-realist technique in the painting and this, along with its large scale, made it visually startling. In addition, he claimed to make use of the traditional Chinese belief in physiognomy, by endowing the peasant with a "mole of bitter fate" ("kumingzhi") and "rolled ears", which he said normally indicate a fear of one's wife, but here are used to symbolise the gentle nature of the peasants and their tendency to yield to others.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ The artist's explicit sympathy for the peasant creates a vision which has much closer associations with nineteenth century Russian Social Realism than Stalin's Socialist Realism.

"Father" provoked strong reactions that were not always positive. Luo was criticised for failing to draw a distinction between the work undertaken by peasants in the old society, and that performed by them now.⁽¹²⁰⁾ He also received advice from a cadre "comrade" who had misgivings about the portrayal of the peasant and told him to include a ball-point pen behind the peasant's ear in order to imbue him with "the characteristics of the new peasant under the socialist system" (The pen would be evidence of the higher literacy and cultural levels under Socialism).⁽¹²¹⁾

"Father" also raised aesthetic questions in its rejection of the Cultural Revolution "model" figure, as the only valid representation of the individual. The requirements for a "model" figure, such as a sturdy, healthy body and a ruddy complexion, were the components of a complete system of aesthetics which dictated that peasants or workers, even when

involved in laborious activities, were to be portrayed in neat and clean attire, with no trace of grime or perspiration. In addition, the 'model' was typically allowed to reveal no signs of aging and had ideally to appear in the "spring of life" ("qingchunshidai").

Clearly Luo broke with most of these conventions. His peasant is old. On his craggy face there are beads of perspiration as a result of sitting in the hot sun. Wisps of white hair straggle from his chin and upper lip, only one tooth is in evidence and his finger-nails are filled with dirt. The picture is in stark contrast with the idealised images demanded in works of art only a few years previously. Yet, far from being universally condemned for being ugly, it on the whole received an enthusiastic response from artists and public alike when exhibited. It was finally selected as first prize winner from amongst the work included in the Second Chinese Exhibition for Young Artists, 1980.⁽¹²²⁾

How had "Father" come to be accepted? Certainly, Luo's sympathy for his subject comes across strongly, adding substantially to the painting's emotional appeal. There is also an inherent dignity in the peasant himself which leaves a strong impression, despite his "ugly" characteristics. As Shao Dazhen observed, "The 'ugly' details do not imply 'ugliness' of image".⁽¹²³⁾

All the details of the painting fuse to create a universal image of the Chinese peasant with his passive suffering. The very title "Father" was felt to affirm this almost spiritual quality. "He ("Father") forcefully expresses the virtues in the Chinese people of honesty and simplicity, strength and the ability to withstand hardship".⁽¹²⁴⁾

Luo, then, has used details normally regarded as ugly in China not to convey ugliness, but to illustrate human qualities. A parallel may be drawn between the replacement of Cultural Revolution "heroic models" with Luo's apparently "ugly" peasant, and developments in Western Europe when the decline of religious painting during the Enlightenment heralded a new aesthetic sensibility, particularly marked in Romanticism, in which: "... beauty no longer implies beauty of appearance",⁽¹²⁵⁾ when the innate qualities of individuals take precedence over their outward form. "Whether their appearances are ugly or beautiful, does not matter. What matters is their spirituality, their subjectivity or essence seeking to express itself In this way, the Hunchback of Notre Dame ... can be as

beautiful as David, prostitutes as pure as saints".⁽¹²⁶⁾

These analogies are useful because "Father" and the figures in other "Stream of Life" paintings had come to replace the "Davids" (Party leaders) and "saints" ("model heroes") of the Communist pantheon and were signal of new aesthetic standards based on the beauty of inherent human qualities, rather than the unattainable perfection of Cultural Revolution "gods".

In other "Stream of Life" paintings there is this same affirmation of the human qualities seen in "Father". Cheng Conglin in his oil painting "A Girl and Her Younger Brother" (Plate 26) offers an appealing image of the innocence of youth, made more touching by simple details such as the apple clutched firmly in the little boy's hand and the uncertain expression on his face as he takes partial refuge behind his sister. The work of artists like He Duoling and Ai Xuan is in a slightly different vein, as they had come under the influence of the American Realist Andrew Wyeth.⁽¹²⁷⁾ Their paintings, like most "Stream of Life" art, concentrate on country settings and people, but they are also marked by a misty quality and a sense of anxiety that is typical of some of Wyeth's work. However, Wyeth is often concerned with exploring the very depths of the human psyche or the human condition as, for example, in his "Christina's World" (1948, tempera), where an atmosphere of isolation and alienation is emphasised by the vast space between "Christina" and the distant houses. The work of He and Ai on the other hand, tends to convey a feeling of expectation, of looking to a future that, while uncertain, might bring better things. He Duoling's oil painting "Revival of Spring" (Plate 27) is a typical example.

Undoubtedly one of the most talented of the "Stream of Life" artists is Chen Danqing who studied at the Central Academy of Fine Art between 1978 and 1982. His best-known works, seven paintings on the Tibetan people ("Xizangzuhua"), were exhibited at the Academy as part of the 1981 Exhibition for Research Students. These paintings are powerful and evocative, revealing in brush technique and colour a strong influence from the Northern European and, in particular, the Belgian School of painting (his mentor, Wu Zuoren, had studied in Belgium in the 1920s and 1930s).⁽¹²⁸⁾ His work at no point slides into sentimentality and the figures he paints always have a pride and dignity whatever

activities they are engaged in. He portrays all aspects of the Tibetans' lives, whether it is washing in a river in a state of semi-undress ("Women Washing Their Hair"), breastfeeding ("Going to Town" (Plate 28)) or even praying during a pilgrimage ("Pilgrimage"). Chen himself said his paintings were in the naturalist, rather than the realist, tradition, citing Millet as one of his greatest influences.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Yet, at the same time, he claimed to feel dissatisfied with what he perceived as the over-subjective nature of his paintings.⁽¹³⁰⁾ A conflict had evidently arisen in Chen's mind between his admiration for Naturalism and classical Realism with their emotional distancing from their subject, and his strong desire deliberately to include an element of "subjective" humanism in his art. Both aspects seem of equal importance to him. "I hope that the audience will unexpectedly be moved by the realistic portrayal and humanistic sentiments in (my) work".⁽¹³¹⁾

This comment of Chen's sums up the approach of "Stream of Life" artists. They all strove to break with the established conventions that had dominated painting for the previous three decades by offering a vision of the individual free of political propagandist trappings. Simultaneously, they used emotionally evocative images, executed with superb technical skill, that were based on an aesthetic language accessible to everyone. The easily comprehensible form and subjects of their work facilitated a clear understanding of the humanistic message that constituted an integral part of their artistic stance.

The Search for "the self" and individual expression

In this final section I shall discuss further some of the new conceptual pre-occupations of artists in the 1980s, particularly those characterised by two features which formed the basis of much of the discussion on art and of the work produced during this period. These features are:

- (1) The influence of modern Western art theory and philosophical concepts.
- (2) The importance of issues that in Communist terms had always been regarded as "individualistic" traits, such as questions relating to the proper role and function of art, the notion of abstract elements in artistic compositions, and the degree to which art should be

viewed as the personal "self-expression" of the artist, rather than as some socially or politically determined and directed construct.

Though the Chinese authorities and some of their representatives in the Artists' Association occasionally looked disapprovingly upon and cautioned against such trends, it can quite legitimately be argued that it was the very policies pursued by the authorities that laid the foundations for these tendencies. An integral part of China's modernisation programme to promote industrial and agricultural growth, and to increase its technical and scientific proficiency, has been its "open door" policy to the West. This has led not only to the influx of Western materials and information on science and technology, but also to a whole range of, to the authorities, less welcome ideas relating to Western culture in general, including those on modern philosophy, psychology, and art theory and practice. During this time, with the exception of the Spiritual Pollution campaign in 1983, which in itself was short-lived and far less severe and widespread than previous political campaigns, the much more marked *laissez-faire* attitude of the authorities meant that there was little systematic attempt to prevent these ideas from entering China. In addition, as a consequence of the ideological crisis arising from the Cultural Revolution that was experienced by many Chinese, modern Western cultural concepts offered a viable alternative, as in the early years of the Chinese Republic, to the debased political orthodoxy. Continuing poor relations with the Soviet Union, and the memory amongst intellectuals of Soviet cultural "overkill", particularly in the 1950s, effectively circumvented the possibility of any major new artistic impetus being derived from this quarter.

One can also argue that the social and moral ethos in China during the 1980s had witnessed a shift of emphasis from the collective to the individual, a process sanctioned by government and brought about partly by deliberate government policies. These included gradually dismantling remaining communes and replacing them with leased land and private plots, a proportion of the produce from which could be sold at greater profit on the open market; encouraging the setting up of individual enterprises specifically to enable some to "get rich fast", a system which, in addition to increasing the wealth of the trader, helped to foster a consumerist or acquisitive mentality generally; and the introduction of incentives in

the workplace.⁽¹³²⁾ Paradoxically then, the government could be said to have been largely responsible for bringing about the situation of "selfish individualism", which was a reflection of, and a further impetus for, the waning of its ideological authority in the cultural field.

These two strands characterising the main preoccupations of artists - the influence of modern Western cultural theory and practice and a re-appraisal of the role and function of art and the artist in society - contained important political and aesthetic implications.

On the political level the increasing attraction to Chinese artists of modern Western philosophical and aesthetic theories and artistic styles inevitably signalled a concomitant decline of Party influence. There was clearly a difficulty in reconciling the mutually antagonistic stances of freedom of individual expression that characterises the ideal in modern Western art, and ideological conformity and responsibility to the wider society that marked Chinese Communist art policy. It produced a conflict that, in different ways, permeated many aspects of Chinese cultural and economic life as the leadership grappled with the dilemma of trying to liberalise in some areas, whilst still maintaining overall control. It is, in fact, the old dilemma of liberalisation versus control that had been a marked feature of communist cultural policy, but now the contradiction was brought into much sharper focus by the challenge to the rigid and inflexible Communist system from outside influences.

On the artistic level, the influx of modern Western aesthetic and philosophical concepts and the search for a satisfactory re-interpretation of aesthetic values opened up all kinds of questions and possibilities on the future direction of Chinese art. It can be said that, just as China was attempting to modernise scientifically and technologically, the real problem facing Chinese artists in the 1980s (one that had faced them since the turn of the century) was how to "modernise" Chinese art. The difficulty in achieving this lay not only in the fact that the artist was facing the demands of Communist ideological conformity, but, in addition, he had to overcome the antagonism towards notions of individualism embodied in Chinese culture itself.

Traditionally, Chinese society had been dominated by Confucian values which

strove to draw all aspects of social, political and cultural life into an integrated, holistic entity. This resulted in art, along with all other cultural activities, being considered as an intrinsic part of the entire social system, inalienable in particular from prevalent philosophical-moral thinking, an attitude clearly revealed in the ancient saying - "the arts are an embodiment of social-political ethics" (Wenyi zaidao). We can see evidence of this as early as the time of the Confucian classics, where Confucius extols the virtues of certain types of music and poetry for contributing to the universal harmony and for putting men in the right frame of mind to carry out their social duties. D.C. Lau comments that: "Confucius required of music, and, by implication, of literature, not only perfect beauty but perfect goodness as well", and notes that, " (to Confucius) whether a piece of music is acceptable or not depends on its moral quality."⁽¹³³⁾ Waley concurs in his assessment that "to him (Confucius), ... it (music) was important above all as an instrument of education. It promotes virtue ..."⁽¹³⁴⁾ and he also comments on the Odes saying: " ... Confucius ... and his followers used them as texts for moral instruction".⁽¹³⁵⁾ Products of culture like the Odes were regarded as being able to fulfil a whole range of social functions. "The Shih (Odes) will enable you to arouse people's emotions, observe their feelings, establish social relationships, and express any sense of injustice. At home it enables you to serve your father, and abroad to serve your prince."⁽¹³⁶⁾

In the same way, cultural activities which contravened this sense of harmony and ethics could have a detrimental effect on the social order. Confucius warned: "The tunes of Cheng are wanton ...",⁽¹³⁷⁾ whilst many centuries later, Liang Qichao's assessment of Chinese novels was that they were: "the main source of corruption in the ethical lives of the Chinese people."⁽¹³⁸⁾

It is clear then that from a very early stage a great deal of emphasis was placed on the social effects of the arts. For this reason, any work considered part of Chinese high culture generally had to remain within a framework of what was notionally considered to be socially and ethically acceptable and beneficial. As a result, in the realm of traditional Chinese painting, there developed a highly refined and broadly uniform style of art with a limited range of subject matter, technical application and materials. If one aspired to

membership of the elite in imperial China there was little scope for major deviations in one's artistic work according to one's own personal predilections. In fact, major innovation on one's own initiative would simply not have been part of one's general framework of reference at all. The Confucian system as a whole militated against tendencies deemed too 'independent'. "The rational principles of the moral ethics it (Confucian culture) emphasised restrained personal desire and the instinctive aspirations of men. In this cultural system, the ethical values of society and of the whole are paramount."⁽¹³⁹⁾ The Chinese art critic Deng Pingxiang echoed these sentiments when he stated that:

"China's traditional cultural consciousness did not easily allow individualistic art to develop naturally. The traditional cultural consciousness of the Chinese people was identical in both its outward form and inner expression. It could only understand the world and itself in the general sense of race, nationality, community and family, and could not (provide) the outward form and inner expression from 'the person as subject',"⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Li Zehou, in his book on aesthetics, even went so far as to assert that the dominance of Chinese high culture by Confucian values had resulted in "The casting aside of the aesthetic and formal laws of art itself."⁽¹⁴¹⁾

It is certainly the case that anything which fell outside the strictly defined realms of either traditional Chinese painting or Western academic realism has tended to receive a cool reception in China during most of the twentieth century. The short-lived nature of the earliest avant-garde group of artists in China in the 1930s, the "Jue Lan Association," is one example.⁽¹⁴²⁾ Another is the case of Pang Xunqin, a founding member of the association and an artist of considerable talent and sensitivity, who felt compelled to burn all the more modernist paintings he had produced, because the Chinese did not respond well to them.⁽¹⁴³⁾ As Michael Sullivan observes: "... in a society that willingly sacrifices individual freedom for the good of the whole, an artist who speaks out against orthodoxy and the suppression of individuality risks being condemned for promoting the cult of *ziwo* - 'I myself'."⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

Neither is this a problem confined to mainland China. In Chinese communities outside of China where Confucian values still dominate (either at a conscious or subliminal

level), such as Hong Kong or Taiwan, innovative art has until recently also not managed to gain a strong foothold.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ John Clark in "Problems of Modernity in Chinese Painting", poses the question of why so many twentieth century Chinese artists, such as Zhao Wuji and Zhu Dequn, have decided to leave China and live abroad, but have elected not to live in other countries with dominant Chinese cultures. His tentative conclusion is that: "it is only recently that for some younger artists all the Chinese pasts can become a legacy and not a dead weight."⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

The Chinese experience of art after 1949 comprised almost solely traditional Chinese painting or Socialist Realism, based on academic realism. As both are inherently conservative, the former depending almost exclusively on the example of early role models, and the latter, being norm-governed and constrained to achieving a certain degree of similitude vis-à-vis the object of scene being depicted, this did not bode well for the likely reception a more modernist approach would receive. As one artist despairingly commented: "Mainland Chinese society is the most difficult for a modernist to exist in".⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

There was also the danger for those Chinese artists stifled by aspects of the old conventions that the long and virtually unbroken pattern of conservatism in art would influence their comprehension of modernism and the way in which they later adopted various elements of it. Their previous experience had largely been to produce work based on sets of strictly defined criteria, whether associated with traditional Chinese painting, Western academic realism, as adopted in the 1920s and 1930s or Socialist Realism in the first three decades of the People's Republic. This could obviously result in significant consequences. As Michael Sullivan commented: "(China's) culture still has a moral basis, and that is its strength. Its weakness is the overwhelming impulse to conform".⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

Some of the major characteristics of modern art are a refusal to be governed or limited by previously formulated rules, a freedom from any obligation to present close likenesses of subjects based on such rules, strong associations with technical innovation and stylistic experimentation, and the communication of an individual's emotions, personal world-view and values. The Chinese artist had to attempt to avoid the pitfall of simply adopting modernist styles wholesale, as though they were norm-governed. To achieve this

and to move towards forms of art that incorporate some of the essential features implied in the term "modernism" would require a major paradigm shift in the Chinese artistic framework of reference.

To attain this goal required a new evaluation of the processes involved in creative activity, of the role of the artist and the function of his work in society, and of what constituted the essence of art itself. Strictly speaking, "Stream of Life" artists had already begun this process. These ideas were then taken up by others throughout the first half of the 1980s and developed further. The attempts by many artists to evolve styles free from the hitherto accepted conventions often resulted in work bordering on the amateurish (as several artists were, indeed, amateurs), but their efforts were nonetheless noteworthy for the precedent they set in providing some kind of basis, however tentative, for an avant-garde art that, given suitable social and political conditions, could ultimately become firmly established. Discussions on the development of Chinese art were often lacking in theoretical depth, inconclusive and open to further debate, but they also had an important role to play in airing ideas that would formerly have been considered heresy. Both the artistic work and the discussions were significant in that they highlighted the increasing ideological weakness of the authorities in the realm of art, and the tensions arising as a result of the conflict between the old system of imposed values, and the search for a new approach giving more prominence to the values and emotions of the individual.

"The Stars"

Any discussion of modernist art in China needs to include the group of artists who collectively called themselves "The Stars". They were young people, all under 30 and mainly amateurs, whose disparate personalities and artistic styles achieved a level of cohesion through links with the democracy movement of 1978 to 1979, and through their shared aims of bringing new vitality to the Chinese art scene. The democracy movement was a coming together of people, particularly the young, in China's main cities to demand greater political and cultural freedom following the discrediting of "the Gang of Four" and the Cultural Revolution. Centred around "Democracy Wall" at Xidan, Beijing, the movement

originally received benign approval from Deng Xiaoping and his supporters, who hoped that it would help expose the remnants of the Maoist old guard and secure Deng's position as leader of the Party to oversee China's ambitious modernisation programme.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ It created an atmosphere in which the intellectual ideas and cultural activities of dissidents flourished. A strong connection existed between political activists and writers, poets and painters. "The Stars" group were closely associated with those involved in producing the unofficial publications which sprang up at Democracy Wall, including such prominent dissidents as Liu Qing and Hu Ping from "April 5th Forum". Huang Rui, one of the principal organisers of and participators in "the Stars" exhibitions, was also a co-founder of "Today", along with the poets Bei Dao and Mang Ke.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ The literary review published the work of "Star" artists, such as the lithographs by Qu Leilei, under his pseudonym Shi Lu, in June 1979⁽¹⁵¹⁾ and Bei Dao's poems accompanied the work of Ma Desheng and Yan Li in the catalogue of the second "Stars" exhibition. In addition, it was Qu Leilei who took the courageous step of recording Wei Jingsheng's "secret" trial, and allowing transcripts of it to be distributed to the general public.⁽¹⁵²⁾

Because of their close ties with the Beijing dissidents and the political content of much of their work, "the Stars'" initial attempts at arranging exhibition space through official channels proved fruitless. This must have been a disappointment to them as only in April another unofficial group, the Oil Painting Research Association (OPRA), had come together to hold an exhibition in Zhongshan Park, for which Jiang Feng, the Chairman of the Artists' Association, wrote an opening speech praising the artists' efforts. However, these artists and their work were dissimilar in many respects from "the Stars" and the kind of art they produced. Most of OPRA's 27 members were elderly or middle-aged art teachers and professional artists, and their work was mainly Impressionistic landscapes or still-lives.⁽¹⁵³⁾ In comparison, "the Stars" must have appeared a motley assortment of young amateurs whose highly unorthodox work could prove decidedly problematic for the authorities.

Finding all official avenues closed to them "the Stars" took the bold step of arranging by themselves an open-air exhibition outside the China Art Gallery. News of the exhibition to be held between September 27th and October 3rd was transmitted via a close

network of all those involved in the dissident movement. In order to increase the impact, the exhibition was arranged to coincide with a preview of the officially organised National Exhibition for the 30th anniversary of the setting up of the People's Republic, whose officially sanctioned work consisting mainly of conventional themes contrasted sharply with many of those intended for exhibition by the Stars.

In all, more than 150 pieces were included in the dissident exhibition, contributed by twenty three artists and ranging from oils and Chinese painting to woodcuts and sculptures. The work that drew the most attention was that of the talented sculptor Wang Keping. An actor and script-writer since 1976 for the drama troupe of the Beijing Central Broadcasting Station, Wang had had no formal training as an artist and had only begun to experiment with sculpture by himself some two years previously. In the late 1970s he began to read the absurdist plays of Beckett and Ionesco, and claimed that his work has been strongly influenced by them.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ He offered twenty nine pieces for the exhibition, almost half of which could be defined as having political content, the rest consisting mainly of playful, sometimes erotic renderings of the human form. His sculpture "Fake" is an attack on the hypocrisy in society and comprises a hand covering a face but with the first two fingers parted just enough to let a bulging eye peer cautiously out. Another "Blind and Silent" is a statement on the oppressed nature of the Chinese people, especially intellectuals. It portrays a head with one eye open and the other closed and unseeing, and a large stopper in the mouth seemingly to stifle any comments or objections to the things observed with the one eye. Wang's reflections on the Cultural Revolution include a satirical piece parodying Jiang Qing, titled "Gun", and another, "A Long, Long Life", unmistakably shows Lin Biao who, whilst loudly shouting out Maoist slogans, holds aloft a copy of Mao's quotations in one hand and in the other, a knife, presumably to stab Mao in the back. There was, in addition, an extra item that "the Stars," after consideration, decided would be best temporarily left out of the exhibition. It would be another year before "Idol" (Plate 29) was presented to the public, a bronze sculpture of a face with the familiar features of the Great Helmsman himself, the cheeks puffy as they had been late in his life. He has an expression reminiscent of the impenetrable gaze of the Buddha, and sports a red star in the middle of the eastern-style headgear leaving no doubt

that the artist is parodying Mao's cult of personality. "The Stars" initial decision not to exhibit the piece reveals that less than favourable allusions to Mao, even in the relatively open and daring atmosphere of Democracy Wall, were still considered as too much of a political risk.

The dissident exhibition began to attract ever-increasing crowds, so that officials were finally unable to ignore the event. However, official response to it appeared to be somewhat confused. On one occasion, Jiang Feng came to view the exhibits and immediately gave his approval of open-air exhibitions and amateur artists who had not undergone formal institutionalised art training.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ On another, Yu Feng, the Vice-Chairperson of the China Art Gallery praised the exhibition in glowing terms following a visit. "There are some exhibits that, if they were included in international exhibitions, would not be inferior."⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ However, only one day later the exhibition was closed down by the Public Security Bureau, engendering wide suspicions that the order could only have come from the Artists' Association or the Ministry of Culture.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾

Subsequently, although the order was rescinded and a promise given that "the Stars" would be provided with proper gallery space for an exhibition at some later unspecified date, the group, with much encouragement from the leading figures of the underground journals, decided to protest against the enforced closure of their exhibition on the grounds that it contravened the new constitution. The protest eventually took the form of a demonstration, deliberately organised to coincide with the National Day celebrations on October 1st.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

The demonstration, provocative in its timing and for its prominent slogans demanding artistic freedom and political democracy, attracted a good deal of interest from foreign journalists, students and diplomats, as well as from locals, whose curiosity was aroused by the novel spectacle of the first unauthorised demonstration in the People's Republic. It also, naturally, became a matter of prime concern for the authorities, and was considered of sufficient importance to warrant the convening of an emergency meeting of the Politburo on the morning of October 1st. As a measure of the relatively tolerant attitude of a majority of the Politburo leaders at that time, largely no doubt due to political

considerations, it was decided that demonstrators would only be arrested if they persisted in their protest.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Later, at the Fourth Congress of Literature and Art convened in mid-October, a divided reaction to an event whose impact had still not died down was apparent. Xia Yan's opening speech at the Congress criticised "the Stars" for diverting people's attention, and particularly that of foreign journalists, away from the main National Day celebrations and speeches, but later Zhou Yang made a more positive assessment of "the Stars," stating that there were "people of talent (involved) in the Stars exhibition, and they must be protected".⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

Whatever the disagreements amongst the cultural authorities it was finally decided to allow "the Stars" to exhibit in Beijing's Beihai Park from November 23rd to December 2nd and again later from 24th August to 7th September 1980, this time in the prestigious China Art Gallery, Beijing. Both exhibitions attracted a huge audience, the figures for the second exhibition reportedly reaching 200,000⁽¹⁶¹⁾, by far the largest number ever to attend an exhibition in China's most important art gallery. In the first article on "the Stars" to appear in an official Chinese periodical, a favourable review of the November exhibition was provided by the young "Fine Art" editor Li Xianting, who commented that it had "virtually become an important topic of conversation amongst the public and the art world, and especially amongst young people. There were those in agreement and those that opposed it. Opinion was not unanimous, but the reaction to it was very strong."⁽¹⁶²⁾

This reaction was in response to both the political content of much of the work and also to the sheer range of styles, many of them Western-inspired, with which "the Stars" had been experimenting. As one Western observer enthusiastically commented, "Cut off from their ancestral roots by the Cultural Revolution, they looked to the West and in a few months reinvented everything: fauvism, cubism, impressionism, surrealism, Dada, expressionism, pop-art and hyper-realism."⁽¹⁶³⁾ Despite their experimentation in modernist art styles, "the Stars" were still keen to emphasise the strong social significance of their work, denying that it would be irrelevant to most Chinese people. A statement by Wang Keping, the first part of which was included in the preface for "the Stars" first official exhibition, clearly reveals this: "Käthe Kollwitz is our banner and Picasso our pioneer. But

we place more emphasis on Kollwitz. We must not be like the scholar-artists of Ming and Qing times who, when complex social struggles took place, hid themselves away and pursued pure art".(164)

Certainly, a lot of the Stars' work reveals a preoccupation with political and social questions, even though it is usually couched in a modern stylistic idiom. Wang Keping's sculptures, with their overtly political content, were easily able to strike a chord with a Chinese audience, which could share in Wang's satirical allusions to the main protagonists in the drama of the Cultural Revolution, as well as to the incompetent and insensitive bureaucrats he attacked in his work. Ma Desheng's woodcut "Six Square Metres", a criticism of the crowded conditions in which Chinese people have to live, shows the artist himself attempting to paint in his tiny room, which is crowded with furniture, and has a ceiling so low that the head on Ma's exaggeratedly elongated body seems to touch it. Yin Guanzhong takes a more complex problem for the subject of his oil painting "The Great Wall", in which he implies that Chinese tradition, which is the product of immeasurable suffering on the part of the Chinese people, continues to hinder the younger generation today. In a rather ghoulish scene executed in an expressionist mode, skulls lie scattered around the foot of the Great Wall. A young girl and boy can be seen shackled together on the wall, back to back, rendered immobile and helpless. The Wall itself is an ambiguous symbol, at once representing a major feat of construction, but, having been built originally to keep out the Northern 'barbarians', it also represents the isolationist nature of Chinese society and culture and the Chinese suspicion of anything foreign. Here, Yin is using it to represent China's psychological impediment to throwing off tradition and embracing new ideas from outside. It is also the case that the Wall, despite years of laborious effort and the loss of innumerable lives, did not ultimately succeed in keeping out the unwelcome intruders. Perhaps Yin is suggesting that, in the same way, the obstacle of tradition and the various controls placed by the authorities over the years to keep out unwelcome outside influences will also ultimately prove flimsy defences against the modern Western barbarians.

Another concern of the Stars, represented by their interest in the work of Picasso, was that their own work should undergo a constant process of experimentation and

re-generation to avoid the repetitious and stultified practices of the past. The conscious aim of the group as a whole was to bring new artistic forms to their audience, and they did this with varying degrees of success. Ai Weiwei's water-colour landscapes, highly reminiscent of Cezanne, were a means of bringing the revolutionary modelling techniques of the "father of modern art" to the attention of the Chinese public, as well as being a celebration of the new atmosphere of artistic freedom. Yan Li's "Conversation", elaborately constructed, like many of his paintings, owes an obvious debt to both the Cubists in its rendering of the bottle and table in the foreground and to Mondrian for the horizontal and vertical lines and flat areas of unblended colours that comprise the simple background. Xiao Dayuan's "Fish and Net" would have previously been considered a prime example of a formalist painting. It has some affinity with the brushwork of traditional Chinese painting, but the overall effect of the apparently random and incoherent swirling patterns created by the mass of lines and small blocks of colour can be more closely associated with Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionist "sand" paintings. The merest hint of piscine forms prevents it from becoming purely abstract.

"The Stars" had, then, created a platform on which they wished their work to be judged, but they had failed to address fully a dilemma that faced not only them, but many artists in the People's Republic - that of how to combine successfully their aspirations to produce art that had social worth or significance, with the need to ensure their work maintained a high level of freshness and vitality through constant change and innovation. If art was to have social meaning in China in the 1980s could it do so and yet develop along the lines envisaged by "the Stars"? Were artists to direct their creative efforts at workers, peasants and soldiers or at the intellectuals, now re-habilitated and an acknowledged presence in society? And even amongst those individuals in each separate group there could not possibly exist a consensus as to the best way for Chinese art to develop in the 1980s. The reduction in authoritarian control that had partly been responsible for the high level of cultural homogeneity during the previous three decades had given rise to a greater diversity of aesthetic tastes and opinions.

With artists no longer impelled to direct their efforts at any particular social group through a process of political control, their "art with social meaning" in reality was

bound to become a reflection of their own social conscience, a personal interpretation of what was socially important. When their ideas were then given expression in artistic forms that were constantly changing and developing, the difficulties of ensuring that art was accessible to everyone were compounded. One of the charges levelled against modern Western artists has been that their insatiable impulse to find self-expression through innovative forms has led to art becoming incomprehensible and, therefore, irrelevant to all but a minority. Whether one agrees with this accusation or not, it is the case that many Chinese artists, in attempting to develop modern modes of art for China in the 1980s, have had to come to terms with the dilemma that, although innovation is seen as necessary if Chinese art is seriously and meaningfully to reflect a developing modern society, experimentation beyond certain boundaries can and does lead to complaints of 'ivory-tower' elitism.

For "the Stars", this conflict had not yet been brought into such sharp focus. Many of those who attended "the Stars" exhibitions appreciated the artists' courageous stand against the authorities and their daring and clever exposés of the political manipulation by the old Cultural Revolution leadership, as well as of bureaucratic corruption and other social ills. But there was some unease with the more abstract exhibits. According to Yan Li, the more abstract or experimental an exhibit, the more criticism it tended to receive.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Chen Yansheng's collage-like sculpture of miscellaneous objects, "From Out of the Sky", drew the comment that it was "broken and fragmented, like the unclear and ambiguous shattered pieces of a nightmare".⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Even Wang Keping's generally popular sculptures provoked some adverse comments. Their knotty scars of wood were described as looking like "a skin tumour, so ugly! After seeing them one wants to vomit as though one had eaten a fly".⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

Another observer, though basically sympathetic to the aspirations of "the Stars", had reservations about the proportion of the exhibits he and several others had failed to understand. "If other people are unable to understand (your work) and thereby appreciate your emotions, then you have lost the aim of creativity. What use does your work have then? ... Fine art is a category of ideology. It should be taken as a means of educating the people, so that when someone looks at a work of art, it exerts an imperceptible influence

and thereby provides Communist morality and cultivation of character. Therefore, it needs to have a definite content".⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ The Chairman of the Artists' Association, Jiang Feng, when explaining why he had given official permission for "the Stars" to hold their second exhibition in the China Art Gallery, echoed this feeling. "When these people ("the Stars") realise that the mass of the people don't understand their work, they will learn and change their ways".⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

Although "the Stars" exhibitions attracted an unprecedented level of interest, their influence was short-lived. By the end of 1981, the official criticism of Bai Hua's screenplay "Bitter Love"⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ altered the political atmosphere once again, and "the Stars" were refused permission to hold further exhibitions. In addition, following their second exhibition, they lost the support of their most important and influential ally, Jiang Feng. They had ignored his advice and included in the exhibition various works that he considered too abstract, as well as, Wang Keping's bronze sculpture, "Idol", the parody of Mao as an aspiring Buddha-figure. This sculpture, which was the first publicly exhibited work of art to mock China's hallowed leader, caused a great deal of excitement amongst the audience and consternation amongst the gallery authorities. When the matter came to Jiang Feng's attention, he was extremely displeased, claiming that, as it was he who had granted official approval for the exhibition, he was ultimately responsible for everything shown there. He had apparently come under attack from his more conservative-minded colleagues in the Artists' Association, particularly Hua Junwu, for allowing dubious works to be exhibited.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Huang Rui, one of the Stars, cited no names but claimed that "some bureaucrats" used "the Stars" affair to attack Jiang and thus accelerated the decline in his health.⁽¹⁷²⁾ This accusation is unlikely to be strictly true, since Jiang was already advanced in years and had suffered long-term health problems following his years of ill-treatment as a "Rightist". Whatever the case, the withdrawal of his support for the Stars and his death soon after ensured the decline of the group, and by 1982, they had apparently "dropped out of sight".⁽¹⁷³⁾

In 1983 Ma Desheng, Huang Rui and Wang Keping attempted to hold a joint exhibition in Beijing, but it was soon officially closed down.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Yan Li succeeded in

arranging a one-man exhibition, self-financed, in Shanghai, in 1984, the first solo modern oil painting exhibition to be held in the People's Republic. Attendance was reasonable but nowhere near on the scale of the group exhibitions in Beijing.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ "The Stars" could no longer generate the kind of excitement they had in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were very much a product of their time, able to respond to a need in the public, which, weary of political upheavals, allowed itself to be briefly inspired by the courage, humour and naive enthusiasm of these young men and women. Only a few years later, the group's political attitudes were considered passé and their experiments in modernism had to vie for attention with all the other avant-garde trends that were becoming increasingly fashionable. Frustrated with the difficulties of showing their work in public and faced with the continuing uncertainty of cultural policy, the core members of "the Stars" began in succession to leave China and settle abroad. The high profile they had attained amongst the foreign community in Beijing, the romantic interest of foreigners in art and artists considered dissident, and the undoubted ability of several members of the group, ensured their relatively easy passage out of China. By 1988, nine of the main members had left for Japan, Europe and America in search of a more conducive cultural atmosphere. Only four, Bo Yun, Mao Lizi, Yin Guanzhong and Yang Yiping remained in China to carry on their work.

By the time "the Stars" had finally disappeared from the Chinese art scene, many others had already begun to take over where they left off. The 1980s was a time of great artistic ferment and experimentation, and a coherent picture of all the various trends and debates has yet to emerge. Here I shall concentrate on two important issues that are crucial to the relationship between art and politics. They represent the most serious undermining of artistic orthodoxy in China imposed since the founding of the People's Republic. These issues are the role of the artist and the concept of art itself.

The role of the artist

The view held by the Chinese Communist authorities on the role of the artist was, as we have seen, based on the talks Mao had given at Yan'an in 1942. Mao had clearly stated that artists, like all other individuals in China, are an integral part of society, and

must serve the needs of society as dictated by the Party. His approach had as its basic premise the social theory of human nature which derived primarily from the writings of Marx and was developed by Russian and Soviet theorists. This laid down that the nature of a human being is the sum of all social relationships. The individual was viewed in terms of his social role and social relationships, and his work judged in the light of its social usefulness and desirability. This approach was manifested in China in numerous cultural directives since 1949 and "art workers" (as they were usually known) were constantly reminded of the educative role of their work, the social reality it should reflect and the social groups at which it should be directed.

The new view emerged in the 1980s. Discussion of it often drew parallels between changes that have occurred in the West during the twentieth century and those affecting China in the 1980s, and emphasised the need for a re-assessment of art and the artist in the light of these changes. It was observed that there was an awareness in the West, following two world wars and other momentous events, that many old values and beliefs of the Western world had been shattered, and that this had led to a re-thinking of man's place in the world. In China, too, it was said that as a result of the enormous upheavals that had taken place in society, a spiritual crisis had arisen regarding values and the very meaning of life and that this had created a need for the individual to assert his autonomy and to question the nature of his existence. For the artist too, the world was changing and art would inevitably develop as a reflection of this change. After all, it was argued, even Marx had said that developments in the material dimension of a society would affect other areas of social life.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Du Jian, the art critic and theorist, went so far as to state that some parts (unspecified) of Mao's Yan'an Talks now needed to be reviewed, and even Marxism itself needed to meet the challenge of the new era. Otherwise, "it cannot maintain its scientific system under the new historical conditions", the main reason being that, "over these past few years, young people who have come into contact with all kinds of foreign modern art and foreign philosophical thinking have often begun to have suspicions about a whole series of questions, such as (the slogans) art is to serve politics, art is to reflect life, and so on."⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

The mood in cultural circles in general was changing rapidly. In the field of

literature, for example, many debates were held on whether and how the Chinese novel, in particular, should develop during the 1980s. This quotation from the periodical "Du Shu" in support of the Post-Modernist novel is typical of the more radical views being expressed: "We cannot run back to the arms of nineteenth century bourgeois realism. During the first half of the twentieth century there have occurred great changes - Freud, Einstein, two world wars, the Russian revolution, the sexual and technological revolutions. ... Tolstoy's realism has now become passé. Writers and readers with modernist thinking do not miss it".⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

The reaction of artists to the rapidly changing social environment was varied. In a climate of ideological uncertainty, the existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, became very influential, to the extent that one conservative critic complained that "some people were using Sartre's existentialism to replace Marxism-Leninism".⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Sartre's works, it seems, had begun to interest a number of Chinese artists when they were translated into Chinese in the late 1970s and early 1980s⁽¹⁸⁰⁾. Existentialism provided a theoretical model for artists who now found themselves lacking any philosophical basis for their life and work. One individual who declared himself to have been influenced by existentialist ideas was the young artist Zhong Ming, whose most well-known painting "Sartre - He Is Himself" (Plate 30) was produced for the Oil Painting Research Association's third exhibition, held in November 1980, in the National Art Gallery. Zhong Ming was an editor in the People's Literary Publishing House in Beijing and he did his painting in his spare time.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ The composition of this particular painting was unusual in that it featured a life-like portrait of Sartre in the lower right-hand corner and a half-full glass of water in the diagonally opposite corner. Both Sartre and the glass were set against a bright red background bordered by a thin white line. For those unfamiliar with Sartre's ideas, the painting must have appeared incomprehensible. The problem was compounded by the fact that many who visited the OPRA exhibition had never even heard of Sartre.⁽¹⁸²⁾

Zhong Ming's defence of existentialism in an article in "Fine Art" revealed the extent to which the ideas of some artists were beginning to come into conflict with official policies on culture, since Sartre's views on human existence conflict in many ways with Marxist theory. For example, Sartre's idea that no individual has a pre-determined place or

function within a rational system and no-one can deduce his supposed duty through reasoning,⁽¹⁸³⁾ seems to strike at the heart of Marxist theory that society can be organised and determined according to certain laws and social structures. Further, Sartre's view that each self-aware individual understands his own existence in terms of his experience of himself and of his situation⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ contradicts the Marxist view that man's existence can only be understood of in terms of his social relationships and social role. Sartre emphasises the isolated nature of the human condition, and the anxiety that man faces over choices he must make using his own free-will, and this sense of isolationism and anxiety permeated the work of several young artists in China. Zhong Ming himself, when explaining his painting on Sartre, declared it to be "the isolation of the individual in a modern urban context".⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Li Ziren's, "A Young Girl, Space" which was exhibited in a slide exhibition in 1985, manifests a strong affinity with certain existentialist ideas. It depicts a young girl, semi-naked with her back to the viewer, seated at a plain table. The only other item of furniture is a curious triangular lightshade made of newspaper which echoes the shape of the girl's hairstyle. The sense of isolation is engendered in several ways - the girl is alone in the room and has no human contact with any other individual. Only her back can be seen and it is impossible to establish any relationship with her; the room is devoid of all but the simplest items of furniture; and her apparent vulnerability is highlighted by the contrast between her semi-clad body and the ice-blue colour of the bare walls.

Zhang Min's "Interrelated World" (an ironic title in view of the content of his painting), shown in an exhibition for young artists in Shanghai in 1985, also displays an association with Sartre's ideas on human existence, depicting as it does two young males who stand at opposite ends of the painting, staring out away from each other, maintaining no human contact even though they are obviously barely a few metres apart. A lone tree, half-cut off in the background, emphasises the isolation of the two men not only from each other, but also from the natural world. This sense of human isolation, a theme in several of the works published in art journals in the 1980s, not only represents a radical break with Communist-inspired cultural policy, but also indicates a fundamental shift, however fleeting in the consciousness of the Chinese artist. In traditional China, the literati had on many

occasions become disillusioned with the system of government, sometimes even with their fellow-men (perhaps with the exception of a few close friends), but they were always able to find solace, joy and inspiration in nature, which became the source of affirmation of their human dignity. "Interrelated World", however, reveals not only a disillusionment with or separation from other individuals, but also a sense of alienation from the world of nature which had once offered such comfort to the disaffected scholar.

The implications for the authorities of the social alienation expressed in such works were disturbing. After all, the Party's cultural policy (and, indeed all areas of its policies) had as its foundation the idea that man's existence only made sense in terms of his social relationships, yet here were artists expressing the idea that meaningful social communication had broken down, leaving only isolated, disaffected individuals.

The second area in which Sartre's theories posed a challenge to the Chinese leadership was his idea of the centrality of the artist himself. Zhong Ming quotes Sartre's words: "I feel that in the relationship between myself and a work of art, I am the essence"⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ and his assertion that "each artist, in his creations and his actions, expresses himself."⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Sartre's emphasis on the role of the artist, rather than what he produces, i.e. the work of art, conflicts with the Marxist view that, although the artist is an important element in the process of artistic creation, it is the work he produces that fulfills a social function, because it is his work itself that is educational. The artist's identity as a social being is inextricably linked to the tasks he performs and the works he produces. It also links him to others who perform the same tasks. The artist's thoughts and emotions are primarily fashioned by social reality and art itself is regarded as a social phenomenon requiring both an artist to produce it and an audience to appreciate it. However, as Zhong Ming points out in his defence of Sartre, existentialism declares that the nature of an individual is not fixed or dictated by outside influences, but by the individual himself, through the choices and decisions he freely makes. In the relationship between the artist and his work, it is the artist himself who is of primary significance.

The concept of art

With the role of the artist as a social being coming under challenge, a natural consequence was the questioning of the accepted concept of art itself.

As we have seen, the Chinese Communist view of art is based on Mao's assertion at Yan'an that art must serve politics and society. It was a tool in the revolutionary process before 1949 and continued to be a tool of the Party as society moved towards the goal of Communism. Art needed, therefore, to have social relevance, acting as a reflector and interpreter of society according to Communist principles, and this was achieved through a process of conscious, directed effort on the part of the artist. This view, as we have seen, was based on the "reflection theory" (*fangying lun*), which merged the material (mechanical) realist approach with objective idealism. Socialist Realism was a result of a synthesis of these two components, the blanket application of which to all forms of cultural endeavour had led to criticisms from artists in the 1980s that "Artists do not know how to differentiate between the use of Socialist Realism in art, literature, music and so on, and so they have to rely on grasping the general principles of Socialist Realism" even though "its mechanical expression of ideas and its conceptual level is superficial".⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

All three of the above theories, materialism, objective idealism and the synthesis of the two in the form of Socialist Realism share the same fundamental ground - they relegate individual subjectivity to a relatively insignificant position. One of the major concerns in Chinese art circles in the 1980s was an attempt to re-dress this balance and give added prominence to individual subjectivity, thereby undermining one of the fundamental tenets of Marxist ideology as applied in the cultural field. Art began to be discussed increasingly in terms of the individual expression of the artist, rather than as a manifestation of the cognitive understanding of reality. These developments signalled a rejection of Cherneshevsky's dictum that "art is life", being more akin to Croce's ideas on the pre-eminence of individual perception in artistic creation. "It (art) can have a cognitive value, and it can also not have". That is to say, art need not necessarily have a "purely cognitive function".⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Wu Guanzhong, a respected member of the Artists' Association, put forward forcefully the case against the theory of reflection and the cognitive approach to art

- "Emotion and rationality are ... often antagonistic Rationality demands objectivity, pure objectivity; emotion leans towards the self or subjective experience. It carries within itself misconceptions ... If you strictly demand training in the depiction of the objective world, this is not moving along the (natural) road of art. Sometimes, it is, on the contrary, the wrong road and can even run counter to art!"⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Another critic of Socialist Realism praised the achievements of primitive art because of its aura of human spirituality and its being devoid, as he saw it, of human rationality. He stated that a work of art must be "permeated by the artist's individual mood, aspirations, individuality and disposition, and even his sub-conscious. In sum, the artist's soul must be allowed complete (comprehensive) manifestation".⁽¹⁹¹⁾

One consequence of this new interest in the concept of "individual expression" ("ziwo biao xian") was the evident influence in the work of some artists of Freudian ideas which first began to circulate in China at the end of the 1970s for the first time since the founding of the People's Republic. There were serious political implications in this for the cultural authorities because emphasis on the sub-conscious implied a concomitant downgrading of the role of the conscious, which is associated with the social aspects of human activities, social norms and moral conventions. According to Freud, it is the social collective which suppresses individual instinct, and such ideas provided the rationale for Chinese artists in their argument that art should be a reflection of the artist's inner consciousness and that the sub-conscious itself can be a reservoir for creative activity. *Art* is a way to express complex and contradictory spiritual feelings.⁽¹⁹²⁾ Even the official publication "Fine Art" allowed the critic Li Zhengtian to voice positive opinions on Freudian psychology, an editorial comment prefacing the article stating that previously art questions had been researched from a 'social' perspective, and too little from the perspective of the natural sciences and psychology. Li emphasised the importance of Freud's ideas on the sub-conscious in modern art, claiming that 'the theory of reflection' was an inadequate vehicle for conveying the concepts that lay behind modern art. "Art should give reign to artists' ... inner impulses These inner impulses or the sub-conscious are feelings that are sincere, with no trace of falsity".⁽¹⁹³⁾

Freud's theories on symbolism and on the sub-conscious with their major impetus on art, as manifested in the work of Western Surrealists, have influenced several Chinese artists during the 1980s. The paintings of Feng Guodong, like Zhong Ming another young member of the Oil Painting Research Society, exhibited some of the earliest attempts to express the sub-conscious. His "Self-Portrait", (Plate 31) shown in the OPRA exhibition in Beihai Park, Beijing, reveals a frightening world of red broomsticks swirling around the head of the artist, who is depicted as a strange, red-bearded figure with a despairing look on his face. In 1966 Feng had been sent to work as a cleaner in a canvas factory and the painting is a powerful evocation of that unhappy experience. A second painting of his, "People At Ease" (1980, oil), which was shown at the third OPRA exhibition in Beijing's National Art Gallery, is a surrealist setting of curious creatures apparently hovering in space. Feng claimed the picture was based on a strange dream, and he had evidently used techniques from early Western Surrealists, such as Dali after seeing samples of their work.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Xie Jun's oil painting "Symphony of a Gloomy Soul and Crazy Thoughts" is highly reminiscent of Dali's disembodied figures set in a strange landscape. Xie himself did not feel the painting was a success artistically, but thought that it was at least "truthful".⁽¹⁹⁵⁾

Symbolism, particularly of a sexual nature, began to appear following the introduction into China of Freudian theories. It has been suggested by J. Lebold Cohen in her book on the Yunnan School of modern art that the depiction by many Yunnan School artists of flying females based on the demi-gods or apsarases in Dunhuang may have been used as a sexual metaphor taken straight from Freudian psychology.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Xing Shenghua's sculpture "Conversation" (Plate 32), of two water pipes facing each other, which appeared in an exhibition in Beijing in 1985, leaves the viewer in no doubt that they are symbols of the male and female anatomy. This may show the influence of Freud because in Freudian psychology, water pipes are suggestive of the urinary apparatus.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Perhaps one of the most striking examples of a work of art that also may have been influenced by the Surrealists and Freud is Meng Luding's and Zhang Qun's oil painting "In the New Era - The Enlightenment of Adam and Eve". (Plate 33) Although the artists do not refer to Freudian influence in their comments on the painting⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ there is considerable evidence leading to that conclusion. Its

portrayal of a young naked couple, a Chinese "Adam and Eve" who have tasted the fruit of enlightenment has all the suggestiveness of a personal sexual awakening and psychological liberation. The mode of representing the landscape is highly reminiscent of much of Dali's work, and there are obvious Surrealist touches, such as the time piece which seems suspended above the ground. In addition, the image of boxes receding into the distance around a central figure hovering in mid-air is similar to Dali's oil painting "The Station of Perpignan", where parallel lines run to the centrally-positioned figure, which appears also to be suspended in mid-air.

The question of form

The ascendancy of the concept of "self-expression" as the main creative driving force and the subjective inner impulses of the individual were matched by a concomitant decline in the emphasis on content. This decline in the importance of content was paralleled in an increasing pre-occupation with questions of form. It was only through a diversity of artistic forms that the artist could convey a greater range of individual thoughts, emotions and values. One of the first people to raise the issue of the importance of form was the artist Wu Guanzhong who, in three articles during 1979 and 1980, gave his views on what he termed the 'beauty of form'. According to Wu, a feeling of beauty is engendered primarily by the artistic results of structure of form or organisation of colour, and therefore, "beauty of form is the crucial element in artistic creativity".⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ In his second article, Wu asserts that artists need not use basic elements in art, such as colour, line or rhythm to "express a concrete objective phenomenon, but to use them ... to create an artistic image, which is 'absolutely' independent."⁽²⁰⁰⁾ He also reassures artists that this will not lead to formalistic work incomprehensible to ordinary people as "abstract beauty is the core of beauty of form. The love of people for beauty of form and abstract beauty is instinctive".⁽²⁰¹⁾ Wu even refers to abstract elements in Chinese folk arts, such as line and colour, to prove his point that they could be admired "by workers, as well as intellectuals".⁽²⁰²⁾ Although Wu's views may be open to question, his main contribution was to start a wider debate. "The significance of Wu Guanzhong bringing up these opinions is not in whether they themselves are right or wrong.

More important is that (he) stirred the pool of stagnant water of theoretical enquiry."⁽²⁰³⁾

Others took up his interest in problems relating to the abstract elements of art that comprise form. The artist and art theorist Du Jian, for example, wrote on the significance of the "rhythm of form", concurring with Wu in his assessment that "beauty of form' and 'abstract beauty' were essentially the same thing."⁽²⁰⁴⁾ At the same time, he pointed out the inadequacy of using Marxist theory to tackle questions of "beauty of form", saying that because of "various factors" (new developments in human psychology, social progress, and so on) Marxism had never really been able to provide a proper solution.⁽²⁰⁵⁾

Others highlighted the abstract elements in traditional Chinese painting, stating that although traditional Chinese painting had never fully abandoned the "concrete image" (juxiang), "its 'brush and ink' images composed of lines and dots not only were not subordinated to those imitations of concrete things, but were 'absolutely' independent things."⁽²⁰⁶⁾ It was even asserted that traditional Chinese painting in its history had been moving in the direction from concrete to increasingly abstract images.⁽²⁰⁷⁾ Some discussed the evidence in primitive art of a gradual progression towards abstractism and the implications this had for regarding abstractism now as a positive direction for art to be moving in.⁽²⁰⁸⁾ At the other end of the chronological scale, the "cold" and "hot" abstractism of Piet Mondrian and Jackson Pollock were also discussed to see how they might fit into the notions of abstract form being discussed.⁽²⁰⁹⁾

The pre-eminence of questions relating to the relative importance of the formal aspects of art in China during the 1980s was of particular significance, because it was only through a total liberation of the means of expression that the new artistic conceptual scheme gradually being formulated and developed could be accommodated. Evidently, it would have been impossible for the established formal realism to act as a vehicle for the wide range of concepts that were becoming popular in Chinese art circles, such as existentialism, the notion of the unconscious, ideas on post-modernity, and so on. Furthermore, this did not apply only to modern Western concepts. During the mid-1980s, there was a renewed interest in Chinese primitive art and Daoist philosophy, which found expression in the modern Chinese context not in the figures of Daoist Immortals or sages, but in a highly symbolic form,

utilising traditional Daoist symbols such as Yin and Yang.

In political terms, the ascendancy of form as an independent entity, worthy of discussion and experimentation in its own right, represented an undermining at the most fundamental level of the official view that all cultural endeavour should be a concrete reflection of society and that form should be subordinated to content.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis we have seen how the four different stages in the relationship between art and politics and between artists and the authorities have, in fact, reflected the historical development of contemporary China. From the general discussion it can clearly be seen that Chinese art since 1949 has constituted a social image of reality which has re-created the social and political discourse in artistic form. Even the artistic diversity that occurred during the last ten years is part of the overall social transformation which resulted from the economic reforms and the authorities' "open-door" policy.

It has been shown that the first three decades after 1949 were characterised generally by the suppression of individual subjectivity and the imposition of ideological uniformity, which diminished the crucial distance between politics and art. The last ten years, however, has witnessed the growing demand from artists for greater freedom of expression and to be allowed greater diversity in their creative work. The search for modernity, as discussed in the final chapter, in association with the process of constructing a new relationship with the state, was in continual development right up to June 1989. The efforts of many Chinese artists during this period have been focussed on re-creating more clearly defined boundaries between politics and art by emphasising the importance of 'the self' or the individual subjectivity in their work.

This process has led to an explosion of new ideas and strong criticism of the established orthodoxy. Artists have begun openly and seriously to re-examine, question and challenge the theoretical framework imposed upon them and their predecessors. New trends in art have developed concurrently with the blossoming of the ideological and cultural debates. Artists have begun, for example, to stress that art should take the individual as the main focus of creation, but the particular individual with his or her own emotions, sense experience and physical and spiritual characteristics, rather than a manifestation of the collective identity of a social group or the abstraction of an ideological concept in the form of the "typical character" (*dianxing renwu*). This idea formed part of the general discussions in intellectual circles on humanism and alienation in the early 1980s.⁽¹⁾

These new trends in art emphasise the aesthetic rather than the cognitive

function of art and many Chinese artists no longer regard art as an ideological tool of politics.

They have attempted to highlight the specific aesthetic features of art in reaction to its excessive use as political propaganda.⁽²⁾ This phenomenon constitutes an important attempt by Chinese artists to gain a measure of independence in their creative work. They have begun to regard art more as a reflection of the inner world of individual artists, rather than as a simple mirror-image of socialist reality as defined by the political authorities.

Furthermore, some artists have even tried to construct a metaphysical framework as the foundation of the "new wave" in art (Meishu xinchao). There were three main aspects to this metaphysical framework based on the individual self as the core of the new artistic values.

1. Rational art, which advocates that art should pursue some ultimate spirit beyond the immediate social life and political reality, and provides an expression of the ultimate meaning of human existence. Art which comes under this category tends to have a pronounced spiritual quality, often emphasised by strong contrasts between darkness and light to produce an almost ethereal glow, such as in Zhang Jianjun's "Humanity and their Clock"⁽³⁾ or Ding Fang's oil paintings of city walls and hills.⁽⁴⁾
2. "Stream of Life" ("shengming liu") art, which proceeds from the life of the artist and portrays the emotive, intuitive, instinctive or sub-conscious dimension of the artists self. This trend emphasises desire, stimulation and direct sense experience, and is influenced primarily by the ideas of Freud and Bergson.⁽⁵⁾
3. Objective humanism, embodied in "behavioural art" (xingwei yishu) and "material art" (shiwuyishu). This trend stresses the interconnection between the individual and the objective world, reality and the self, and emphasises the uncontrolled incidental nature of artistic creation.⁽⁶⁾ Experiments in this type of art include the piece created in 1986 by four artists, Chen Jinrong, Chen Qiang, Xu Bing and Zhang Jun, which comprised the pattern created by rolling a two-metre high tyre covered in a variety of coloured paint along a strip of paper.⁽⁷⁾

These three dimensions of the new trends in art helped break the previous

ideological uniformity and established orthodoxy, resulting in a diversity of themes and styles unprecedented since 1949.

These developments in art ran parallel with similar trends in other cultural fields, such as a new wave in film as represented by "Yellow Earth" directed by Chen Kaige, the experimental creative writing of Bei Dao, Xu Xin and Liu Suola, and Gao Xinjian's dramas "Bus Stop" and "Wild Man". Developments in art constituted an integral part of this new cultural renaissance.⁽⁸⁾

However, the irony is that even though Chinese artists attempted to distance themselves from politics and create an autonomous realm for artistic expression, their efforts at experimentation in themselves carried political significance, because they helped to challenge and undermine the monopoly of the state over not only artistic endeavour but also over the entire cultural and social arena. The close relationship between art and politics, therefore, still existed, though in a much more subtle and complex form. As the authorities realised they could not maintain the old form of organisational and ideological control, so the conflict or tension between art and politics had to be mediated more through persuasion, rather than coercion.

The events of June 1989 and their aftermath have shown that the entire process of change will not be smooth. However, although the present crackdown may continue for some time,⁽⁹⁾ it seems that the underlying trend is unstoppable and there can be no going back on the achievements of the last ten years. Chinese artists may feel pessimistic at the moment about their situation, but it would be extremely difficult for the old relationship between art and politics as manifested during the first three decades after 1949 to be re-imposed effectively. Even in the present political climate, the artists will not so easily yield up their newly discovered "self".

Notes for Introduction

- (1) Cai Danye, Zhonggong wenyi wenti lunji; Wang Jicong, Zhonggong wenyi xilun.
- (2) Chen Tiejian et al. (edit.), Ou Oiubai yanjiu wenji; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenxue he yishu.
- (3) Wang Jicong, Zhonggong wenyi xilun. pp.71-96.
- (4) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji; Cai Ruohong, Cai Ruohong meishu lunji.
- (5) Ai Ke'en (edit.), Yan'an wenyi yundong jisheng. 1937-1948; Gu Yuan (edit.), Yan'an wenyi congshu (meishujuan). (introduction).
- (6) For details on the gathering of the material used for these sixteen volumes see Zhong Jinzhi, Jin Ziguang (edit.), Yan'an wenyi congshu (wenyi shiliaojuan) pp.1092-1095.
- (7) Ai ke'en (edit.), Yan'an wenyi yundong jisheng 1937-1948; Zhong Jinzhi, Jin Ziguang (edit.), Yan'an wenyi congshu (wenyi shiliaojuan).
- (8) Zhong Jingzhi, Yan'an Lu Yi - wo dang chuanguangde visuo vishu xueyuan. p.42.
- (9) Dai Qing, Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei and Chu Anping. pp.41-110 This book provides a good account not only of what happened to Wang Shiwei, but also of the treatment received by two others, Liang Shuming and Chu Anping after 1949. It offers an illuminating analysis of case studies relating to the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and intellectuals both before and after 1949.
- (10) Wen Tianxing (edit.), Guotongqu kangzhan wenyi yundong dashiji. pp.22-28.
- (11) Liao Jingwen, Xu Beihong - Life of a Master Painter. pp.306-325.

Notes for Chapter One

- (1) Goldman, M., China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent; p.9 Hamrin, C.L., Cheek, T. (edit.), China's Establishment Intellectuals. (introduction)
- (2) Xinhua Press (edit.), Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui jinian wenji. p.32.
- (3) Zhong Chengxiang (edit.), Xin Zhongguo wenxue jishi he zhongyao zhuzuo nianbiao (1949-1966).
- (4) Xinhua Press (edit.), Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui jinian wenji. p.3.
- (5) Ibid. p.5.
- (6) Ibid. p.33.
- (7) Ibid. pp.227-234.
- (8) "Progressive" art refers to the art produced before 1949 in the Guomindang - held areas by artists who were not closely associated with the Guomindang and who had some sympathy with left-wing politics without becoming directly involved in Communist activities. Xu Beihong is, perhaps, the most obvious example of a "progressive" artist.
- (9) Xinhua Press (edit.), Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui jinian wenji. p.234.
- (10) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji. pp.969-995.
- (11) Xinhua Press (edit.), Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui jinian wenji. p.588.
- (12) Liao Jingwen, Xu Beihong - Life of a Master Painter. pp.348-349.
- (13) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxian shang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji. p.9.
- (14) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji. p.322.
- (15) Liu, B., Cultural Policy in the People's Republic of China: Letting a Hundred Flowers Bloom. pp.26-30.
- (16) Zhong Chengxiang (edit.), Xin Zhongguo wenxue jishi he zhongyao zhuzuo nianbiao (1949-1966), p.5.
- (17) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji. p.323.
- (18) Interview with Li Xianting, Beijing, 1989.
- (19) Zong Ze, "Zhongguo meishujia xiehui zhangcheng", Fine Art. 1954, No. 2, p.10.
- (20) Zhong Chengxiang (edit.), Xin Zhongguo wenxue jishi he zhongyao zhuzuo nianbiao.
- (21) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liang tiao luxian douzheng dashiji, pp.4 and 5; Jiang Feng, "Simian lai meishu gongzuode zhuangkuang he quanguo meixie jinhoude renwu". Fine Art 1954, No. 1, pp.5 and 6.

- (22) The strong political content to which I allude can be found in any issue of "People's Art" or its successor "Fine Art". Virtually all articles contain either direct or indirect references to the current political line or to the fundamental principles of Party cultural policy.
- (23) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.2.
- (24) Interview with Li Xianting, Beijing, 1989.
- (25) Zhong Jingzhi, Yan'an Lu Yi - wo dang chuangbande visuo yishu xueyuan.
- (26) Central Academy of Fine Art (comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi. pp.98-99; Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan. pp.25 and 26.
- (27) Clark, J., "Soviet Painting" (unpublished article) 1987.
- (28) Central Academy of Fine Art (comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi. p.99.
- (29) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan. p.28. Although this formal link existed between the two establishments, in practice, there was little administrative connection between them.
- (30) Central Academy of Fine Art (Comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi. p.99. Power in the Central Academy of Fine Art lay with five members - Hu Yichuan, Wang Zhaowen, Luo Gongliu, Jiang Feng and Zhang Ding.
- (31) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan. p.25.
- (32) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji, p.53; Jiang Feng, "Weile manzu shiji yaoqiu, meishu jiaoyu bixu tigao yibu", Literary and Art Gazette (Wenyibao), 1952, No. 10, p.16.
- (33) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan, p.26.
- (34) Ibid. p.27.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Central Academy of Fine Art, (comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi. p.99.
- (37) Ding Shouhe, Qu Qiubai sixiang yanjiu. p.449.
- (38) Ibid. p.454.
- (39) Chen Tiejian et al. (edit.), Qu Qiubai yanjiu wenji". p.202. For further relevant information on Qu Qiubai see Chen Tiejian, Qu Qiubai zhuan. pp.403-436; Ding Jingtang et al. (edit), Qu Qiubai yanjiu wenxuan. pp.196-212.
- (40) When this painting was completed in 1953 it was sent to Zhongnanhai to be examined by the top Party leaders, Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De, indicating the significance attached to works of art by the authorities.
- (41) People's Art editorial, "Wei biao xian xin Zhongguo er nuli", People's Art, 1950, No. 1, p.15.
- (42) Jiang Feng, "Sinian lai meishu gongzuode zhuangkuang he quanguo meixie jinhoude

renwu". Fine Art. 1954. No. 1, pp.5-12.

- (43) Against corruption, waste and bureaucracy.
- (44) Against bribery, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts and stealing state economic information.
- (45) Literary and Art Gazette editorial, "Shanghai wenyijie ying jiuzheng sixiang hunlun xianxiang", Literary and Art Gazette. 1952, No. 3, p.18.
- (46) Zhang Leping, The Adventures of San Mao the Orphan. (English Edition), (trans. by W.J.F. Jenner and C.M. Chan.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu. p.84; Zhou Yang, Jianjue guanche Mao Zedong wenyi luxian. pp.24-30 for further details of combining political content with aesthetically pleasing art forms.
- (49) Including New Year pictures, paper-cuts, clay statues and so on.
- (50) Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an. p.144.
- (51) Ma Keh, "The Weifang New-Year Pictures", Chinese Literature. 1960. No. 8, pp.153-158; Luo Qirong, Ou Renxuan, Zhongguo nianjie. pp.7 and 8.
- (52) Ye Qianyu "Cong jiu nianhua kan xin nianhua". People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.46.
- (53) Artists Magazine (comp.), Zhongguo xiangtu yishu.
- (54) Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an (Introduction).
- (55) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, pp. 2 and 3.
- (56) Ibid.
- (57) Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an. p.143.
- (58) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji. p.62.
- (59) "'New Year Pictures', An Old Custom Serves the New China", China Reconstructs. 1953, No. 2, p.26.
- (60) For examples, see relevant articles in Literary and Art Gazette. 1953 No. 23.
- (61) Yu Feng, "New Year Pictures", China Reconstructs. 1st March 1953, p.14.
- (62) Wang Chi, "Modern Chinese Woodcuts", China Reconstructs. 1st May 1953, p.27.
- (63) Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an. p.143.
- (64) Ibid. p.35.
- (65) Ibid.
- (66) Wang Zhaowen, "Guanyu xuexi junianhua xingshi", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, pp.25 and 26.

- (67) Shi Lu "Nianhua chuanguzuo jiantao" People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.30.
- (68) Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia.
- (69) Shi Lu, "Nianhua chuanguzuo jiantao", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.31.
- (70) Ye Qianyu "Cong jiu nianhua kan xin nianhua", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.46.
- (71) Wang Zhaowen, "Guanyu xuexi jiu nianhua xingshi", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, pp.23 and 24.
- (72) Ibid. p.24.
- (73) Shi Lu, "Nianhua chuanguzuo jiantao", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.30.
- (74) Cai Ruohong, "Nianhua chuanguzuo ying fayang minjian nianhuade youliang chuantong", Fine Art. 1954, no. 3, p.5.
- (75) Shi Lu, "Nianhua chuanguzuo jiantao", People's Art. 1950, No. 2, p.30.
- (76) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenyi, pp.1-38.
- (77) Sullivan, M., Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century. (Chapter on traditional Chinese painting).
- (78) Li keran, "Tan Zhongguohuade gaizao", People's Art. 1950, No. 1, p.35.
- (79) "Breath resonance" - "implies a cosmic harmony, energy or rhythm whose reverberations produce the movement of life", (Sullivan, M., Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century, p.33).
- (80) Li Hua, "Gaizao Zhongguohuade jiben wenti", People's Art. 1950. No. 1, pp.39 and 40.
- (81) Jiang Feng, liang Feng meishu lunji, pp.66-67, p.92.
- (82) Cai Ruohong, "Guanyu 'guohua' chuanguzuo de fazhan wenti," Fine Art. 1955, No. 6, p.14.
- (83) Hong Yiran, "Guanyu guohua chuanguzuo zhong de liangge wenti" Fine Art. 1955, No. 3, p.13.
- (84) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p. 231.
- (85) Fuo Baoshi, Zhongguode renwuhua he shanshuihua.
- (86) Mo Pu, "Tan xuexi Zhongguo huihua chuantongde wenti", Fine Art. 1954, No. 7, p.13.
- (87) Ibid.
- (88) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, pp.213 and 214.
- (89) Zhang Ding, "Guanyu guohua chuanguzuo jicheng youliang chuantong wenti". Fine Art. 1955, No. 6, pp.17-19.
- (90) Zhou Yang, "Guanyu meishu gongzuode yixie yijian", Fine Art. 1955, No. 7, pp.15-18.

- (91) The painting appears in "Huadong meishu zuopin xuanji" 1951 - catalogue of an exhibition held in Shanghai in April 1951 by the Shanghai Society for the Study of New National Painting.
- (92) Chang, A., Painting in the People's Republic of China: The Politics of Style, pp.34 and 35.
- (93) Fine Art Journalist, "Wei Zhengqu meishu chuanguode geng da chengjiu er nuli - lai jing canguan di'er jie quanguo meizhanye meishu gongzuozhe dui zhanchu zuopin de yijian". Fine Art. 1955, No. 5, p.11.
- (94) Ibid.
- (95) Interview with Li Xianting 1989 Beijing.
- (96) Chang, A., Painting in the People's Republic of China : The Politics of Style. pp.33 and 34.
- (97) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, Chapters two and three.
- (98) Zhao Yongmao, Mao Zedong zhexue sixiang fazhan shigao.
- (99) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu, p.33.
- (100) Jiang Feng, "Yi dali wenyi fuxingde meishu" People's Art. 1950, No. 1, pp.69-74.
- (101) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji, p.76.
- (102) "Formalism" - an overriding preoccupation with form, rather than content.
- (103) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan, pp.7-15.
- (104) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan. Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.201.
- (105) Ibid.
- (106) Ibid. p.201 and 202.
- (107) Chou Yang, "Mao Tse-tung's Teachings and Contemporary Art", People's China. 16th Sept. 1951, p.7.
- (108) Red Guard publication. Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.17.
- (109) Chen Liao. Makesizhuyi wenyi sixiang shigao.
- (110) Brumfitt, J.H., The French Enlightenment pp.87-132.
- (111) Ritter, C., The Essence of Plato's Philosophy.
- (112) Taylor, C., Hegel. pp.225-350.
- (113) Marx, K., Maliezhuyi meixue lilun, Vol. II, p.699.
- (114) Walicki, A., A History of Russian Thought, pp.136-142.
- (115) Valkenier, E., Russian Realist Art. The State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and

Their Tradition.

- (116) Link, P. (edit.), Roses and Thorns: The Second Blooming of the Hundred Flowers in Chinese Fiction. 1979-1980. p.6.
- (117) Laing, E.J., The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China. p.21.
- (118) Liao Jingwen, Xu Beihong - Life of a Master Painter; p.50 China Cultural History Publishing House editorial department (comp.), Yishude zhaohuan - wenxue yishujiade zishu. pp.13-20.
- (119) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, pp. 237 and 238.
- (120) Ibid. p. 238; Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan, p.31.
- (121) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.238.
- (122) Rice, T.T., A Consise History of Russian Art, p.238.
- (123) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.239.
- (124) Ibid.
- (125) Fine Art journalist, "Guanyu youhua jiaoxue, jifa he fengge deng wenti - Quanguo youhua jiaoxue huiyide ruogan wenti taolun jiyao", p.7.
- (126) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.5.
- (127) Zhou Yang, "Fan renmin, fan lishide sixiang he fan xianshizhuyide yishu". Literary and Art Gazette. 1951 Sept. Vol. IV, No. 45, p.9.
- (128) Ibid. p.14.
- (129) Hu Qiaomu, "Wenyi gongzuozhe weishenme yao gaizao sixiang?" Literary and Art Gazette. 1951, Dec. Vol. V, No. 52, pp.7-9; Zhou Yang, "Zhengdun wenyi sixiang, gaijin lingdao gongzuo". Literary and Art Gazette. 1951 Dec. Vol. V, No. 52, pp.10-13.
- (130) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.5.
- (131) Hua Junwu, "Qingchu meishu gongzuozhongde fei wuchanjieji sixiang", Literary and Art Gazette. 1951, Dec. Vol. V, No. 52, pp.24 and 25.
- (132) Hu Qiao, "Xiaomie wo sixiangshangde diren". Literary and Art Gazette. 1952 Jan. No. 54, pp.15 and 16; Yan Han, "Zai meishu chuanguozhong genchu xingshizhuyide yingxiang". Literary and Art Gazette. 1952 Jan. No. 55, pp.18 and 19.
- (133) Jiang Feng, "Jianjue jinxing sixiang gaizao, chedi suqing meishu jiaoyuzhongde zichanjieji yingxiang". Literary and Art Gazette. 1952 Jan. No. 55, pp.5-7.
- (134) Central Academy of Fine Art (comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi; p.100.
- (135) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu. pp.112 and 113.
- (136) Hu Shi - one of the most well-known Chinese scholars of the twentieth century, who established his name in several areas of Chinese culture. A substantial part of his

scholarly work was devoted to research on Chinese literature. He left China for America before 1949. He was regarded by the Communists (with some justification) as having close links with the Guomindang. See Liu Xianbiao (edit.), Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shouce. pp.279-282.

- (137) Relevant articles can be found in Literary and Art Gazette. 1954 Nos. 20, 21 and 22.
- (138) Fine Art editorial, "Yinian lai 'Meishu' bianji gongzuode zhuyao quedian he cuowu". Fine Art. 1954, No. 12 pp.5 and 6.
- (139) Wang Rong, "Bixu suqing meishu pipingzhong de zichanjieji guandian". Fine Art. 1954, No. 12, p.7.
- (140) Hu Feng - Chinese literary critic and essayist. For further information on Hu Feng see Liu Xianbiao (edit.), Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shouce pp.277-279; Wang Zhangling, Zhonggongde wenyi zhengfeng. pp.99-117.
- (141) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji. pp.14-15; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu, pp.114-127.
- (142) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu, pp.114 and 115.
- (143) For examples see Qin Zhaoyang, "Lun Hu Feng de 'yige jiben wenti'". Literary and Art Gazette. 1955, No. 4, p.5; Lu Yuan, "Wo dui Hu Feng de cuowu sixiangde jidian renshi". Literary and Art Gazette. 1955, No. 4, p.14.
- (144) Artists' Association, "Jianyi ba Hu Feng cong wenyi jie duiwuzhong qingxi chuqu". Fine Art, 1955, No. 6, p.6.
- (145) Fine Art, 1955, No. 6, p.13; Fine Art. 1955, No. 7, pp.8, 11, 41-45.
- (146) Fine Art journalist, "Quanguo gedi meishu gongzuozhe jixu canjia suqing Hu Feng fangeming jituande douzheng". Fine Art 1955, No. 7, p.13.
- (147) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi. p.226.

Notes for Chapter Two

- (1) Zhu Zongyu, Yang Yuanhua (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhuyao shijian renwu, p.40.
- (2) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji, Vol. V. pp.363-402 for the text of the speech outlining the ideas behind the Hundred Flowers.
- (3) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.20.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Zheng Derong, et al. (edit.), Xin Zhongguo jishi 1949-1984. p.166.
- (6) Zheng Derong et al. (edit.), Zhongguo shehuizhuyi jianshi, pp.32-38.
- (7) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, p.148; Mao Tse-Tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-Tung. p.40.
- (8) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.22.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Liu Shaoqi, Liu Shaoqi xuanji (xia), p.192.
- (11) Zhou Yang, Zhou Yang wenji. pp.493-514.
- (12) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu, p.143.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid. p.137.
- (15) Ibid. p.146.
- (16) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.20.
- (17) Goldman, M., Literary Dissent in Communist China. pp.158-161.
- (18) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, pp.22 and 23.
- (19) Ibid. p.24.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Ibid. p.26.
- (22) Fine Art editorial, "Yinian zhi shi" Fine Art 1957, No. 1, pp. 4 and 5.
- (23) Fine Art Journalist, "Shoudu meishujia jihui zuotan, jielu 'ming' he 'fang' de zhang'ai". Fine Art 1957, No. 5, p.4.

- (24) Barmé G., Lee B., (trans.), Jenner, W.J.F. (edit.), Fragrant Weeds - Chinese Stories Once Labelled as "Poisonous Weeds".
- (25) Liu Jian'an "Ji Zhongyang gong yi meishu xueyuan fan youpai douzhengzhongde da bianlun". Fine Art 1957, No. 12, p.12.
- (26) Barmé G., Lee, B. (trans.), Jenner, W.J.F. (edit.), Fragrant Weeds - Chinese Stories Once Labelled as "Poisonous Weeds".
- (27) Mi Gu, "Zhangwo manhua yishu texing, chuanguo chu duozhong fenggede manhua lai - Conguan quanguo manhuazhan yougan". Fine Art. 1957, No. 2, pp.4-6.
- (28) Zhong Jingzhi, Yan'an Lu Yi - wo dang chuanguobande yisuo yishu xueyuan.
- (29) For relevant articles on Impressionism by Soviet writers see Fine Art 1957, No. 2, pp.37-46.
The reproductions of Impressionist paintings can be found in the same issue of Fine Art pp.24-29.
- (30) The fact that Chinese artists and art critics were at this stage unwilling to come forward and present their own views or that "Fine Art" was not prepared to publish them, may be an indication of a residual feeling of caution about "freely blooming and contending". Offering the views of Soviet theorists first was a safer way of gauging initial response to the whole question of Impressionism.
- (31) Including the provinces Hunan, Hubei, Henan, Guangdong and Guangxi.
- (32) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.26.
- (33) Xiao Caizhou, "Meishu gongzuozhe ruhe tiyan shenghuo". Fine Art 1957, No. 1, pp.43 and 44.
- (34) "Zhongguo zuojia xiehui yanjiu zhexing 'baihua qifang, baijia zhengming' de fangzhen". Literary and Art Gazette, 1956, No. 14, pp.20 and 21.
- (35) Jin Ye, "Tan muqian meishu chuanguozhong cunzaide wenti". Fine Art 1956, No. 11, pp.17-20.
- (36) "Beijing meishu zhanlan jianshu". Fine Art. 1956, No. 11, p.12.
- (37) "Exhibition of Traditional Painting". Chinese Literature 1957, No. 1, p.192.
- (38) Ibid. p.191 and 192.
- (39) Ibid. p.192.
- (40) "Foreign Art Exhibitions in Peking". Chinese Literature 1957, No. 1, p.195.
- (41) "Exhibition of British Graphic Art". Chinese Literature. 1956, No. 3, pp.206 and 207.
- (42) "Exhibition of Mexican Graphic Art". Chinese Literature. 1965, No. 3, pp.209 and 210.
- (43) "Foreign Art Exhibitions in Peking". Chinese Literature. 1957, No. 1, pp.195-198.

- (44) Chen, J., "Picasso in Peking", *People's China*. 1st Jan. 1957, p.41.
- (45) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.153-154.
- (46) Mao Tse-Tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, p.211.
- (47) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, p.156.
- (48) Mao Tse-Tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, p.340.
- (49) *Ibid.* pp.251 and 252, pp.359-364.
- (50) *Ibid.* p.341.
- (51) *People's Daily*. July 1st 1957 (editorial).
- (52) "Lu Dingyi, Zhou Yang zai zuoxie dangzu kuoda huiyishang zuo zhongyao jianghua". *Literary and Art Gazette*. 1957, No. 25, pp.1-3.
- (53) *Ibid.*, p.2.
- (54) Primary Sources Editorial Team, Zhonggong zenyang duidai zhishifenzi (zhong) pp.12-147.
- (55) For relevant articles on Rightists in the art world see *Fine Art* 1957, Nos 7-12.
- (56) *Fine Art* 1957, No. 7, pp.4-6.
- (57) *Fine Art* 1957, No. 9, pp.4-20, 34-49; *Fine Art* 1957, No. 10, pp.4-20; 34-44.
- (58) Cai Ruohong, "Cong geren yu dangde guanxi lai kan Jiang Feng shifo fandang". *Fine Art* 1957, No. 9, pp.4-7; Li Keran, "Jiang Feng weifan dang dui minzu chuantongde zhengce." *Fine Art* 1957, No. 9, pp.19 and 20; Jiang Zhaohe, "Jiang Feng dui Zhongguohua xuwuzhuyide guandian". *Fine Art*. 1957, No. 9, pp.36 and 37.
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- (60) *Fine Art* journalist, "Beijing Zhongguohua huajiade yijian". *Fine Art*. 1957, No. 6, pp.4-6.
- (61) Mao Tse-tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-tung, p.153.
- (62) For Jiang Feng's biography see Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji (preface by Lin Mohan). For Cai Ruohong's biography see Cai Ruohong, Cai Ruohong meishu lunji (intro.).
- (63) Mao Tse-tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-tung, p.155.
- (64) "Lu Dingyi, Zhou Yang zai zuoxie dangzu kuoda huiyishang zuo zhongyao jianghua". *Literary and Art Gazette*. 1957, No. 25, p.3.
- (65) Cai Ruohong, "Lun 'zuo' you tongyuande Jiang Feng fandang wenyi sixiang". *Fine Art* 1957, No. 10, pp.8-10.
- (66) Mao Tse-tung, Unselected Works of Mao Tse-tung, p.153.
- (67) Jiang Zhaohe, "Jiang Feng dui Zhongguohua xuwuzhuyide guandian". *Fine Art*.

1957, No. 9, p.36.

- (68) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji, p.9.
- (69) Fine Art journalist, "Beijing Zhongguohua huajiade yijian". Fine Art, 1957, No. 6, p.4.
- (70) Fine Art journalist, "Changsuoyuyan hua 'zheng ming'". Fine Art 1956, No. 8, p.11.
- (71) Interviews with Shui Tianzhong (1989 Beijing) and Chen Dehong (1988 London).
- (72) Hua Junwu, "Jiang Feng fan dangde fabao zhi yi 'zong pai daji'". Fine Art 1957, No. 9, pp.8 and 9.
- (73) Fine Art journalist, "Jiang Feng shi meishujiede zonghuo toumu" Fine Art 1957, No. 8, p.11.
- (74) Ibid.
- (75) "Shanghai meishujie che qi shangshan xiexiang rechao", Fine Art 1957, No. 12, p.10.
- (76) "Looking at Flowers" Peking Review June 17th 1958, p.5; "Xiexiang xiaoxi". Fine Art 1958, No. 3, p.35.
- (77) Central Academy of Fine Art (comp.), Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jianshi, p.102; Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan, p.32.
- (78) "Weile shehuizhuyi wenyi jianshide bainian daji". Literary and Art Gazette. 1957, No. 26, p.1.
- (79) Mao Jiaqi (edit.), Taiwan sanshinian 1949-1979. pp.54 and 55; Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, p.165.
- (80) Zheng Derong, et al. (edit.), Xin Zhongguo jishi 1949-1984, p.239.
- (81) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.165 and 166.
- (82) Ibid. pp.169 and 170.
- (83) Chinese Research Publishing Company (comp.), Zhishifenzi ping wannian Mao Zedong. p.64.
- (84) Sun Wuxia, Gongchan guoji he Zhongguo geming guanxi shigang.
- (85) Chinese Research Publishing Company (comp.), Zhishi fenzi ping wannian Mao Zedong, pp.63 and 64.
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- (87) "Meixie xiang fenhui he meishujia tichu changyi", Fine Art 1958, No. 4, p.5.
- (88) "Meishujie dayuejin". Fine Art 1958, No. 3, pp.4 and 5.
- (89) Ibid, p.5.
- (90) "Yang fan gu lang, lizheng shang you" Literary and Art Gazette. 1958, No. 6, p.20.

- (91) Shi Lu, "Gao ju Mao Zedong wenyi sixiangde qizhi pandeng wuchanjieji yishude gaofeng." Fine Art 1960, No. 4, p.8.
- (92) Gu Yuan, "Hui dao nongcun qu" Fine Art 1958, No. 1, p.6; Shao Yu, "Cong xiaxiang shangshan xiangqi de". Fine Art. 1958, No. 1, p.7.
- (93) "Gedi meishujia xiafang canjia laodong duanlian". Fine Art 1958, No. 2, p.46.
- (94) "Meishujie dayuejin". Fine Art 1958, No. 3, p.5.
- (95) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.262.
- (96) Interview with Li Xianting. 1989, Beijing.
- (97) He Chengying "Tan Zhongguohua, sumiao" Fine Art, 1958, No. 4, pp.32 and 33.
- (98) Fine Art 1958, No. 2, pp.32-35.
- (99) Fine Art journalist, "Shengchan dayuejin, wenhua yishu jinjin gen. - ji quanguo nongcun qunzhong wenhua yishu gongzuo huiyi". Fine Art 1958, No. 5, pp.20 and 21.
- (100) Ibid.
- (101) Ibid.
- (102) Ibid.
- (103) Liaoning University (edit.), Wenya sixiang zhanxian sanshinian, p.244.
- (104) Literary and Art Gazette 1958, No. 6, pp.20-26.
- (105) Wenya yuebao. 1958, No. 7.
- (106) "Meishu chubande zhuliu wenti". Fine Art 1958, No. 5, p.18.
- (107) Fine Art, 1958, No. 12, pp.44 and 45.
- (108) Guo Sheng "Chongqing de 'hualan'". Fine Art. 1958, No. 7, p.12; Fine Art journalist "Tianjin meishujia ganjin da, liang tiao da jie jin shi hua". Fine Art. 1958, No. 7, p.13.
- (109) "Tianjin guo mian chang hua changshi". Fine Art 1958, No. 6, p.35.
- (110) For examples see "Nanjingde gongren meizhan", Fine Art 1958, No. 6, p.20; "Gongnongye dayuejin huazhuan" 1958, No. 7, p.13.
- (111) For the origins of murals in Chinese tradition and for mural techniques see Qin Lingyun, Minjian huagong shiliao, pp.41-46.
- (112) Siren, O., Chinese Painting : Leading Masters and Principles, vol. I, pp.17 and 18.
- (113) Cahill, J., Treasures of Asia: Chinese Painting, pp.21, 23.
- (114) Sullivan, M., The Arts of China, p. 123.
- (115) Li Qun, "Xin bihuade chuxian shi yijian dashi", Fine Art. 1958, No. 8, p.20.

- (116) Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an. p.87.
- (117) Fine Art journalist, "Shengchan dayuejin, wenhua yishu jinjin gen - ji quanguo nongcun qunzhong wenhua yishu gongzuo huiyi". Fine Art 1958, No. 5, p.20.
- (118) Fine Art journalist "Wenhua yuejin da touchende nongcun yeyu meishu dajun". Fine Art, 1958, No. 6, pp.17 and 18.
- (119) Ibid.
- (120) "Pixiande qunzhong meishu huodong", Fine Art 1958, No. 9, p.3.
- (121) Ibid. p.9. For further relevant information see Artists' Association Nanjing Branch (comp.), Meishu zhanxianshangde yike weixing - Jiangsu Pixian nongminhua wenji: Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House (comp.), Zhuanlun Pixian nongminhua, (Vol. I.).
- (122) "Nongmin re'ai xin bihua". Fine Art 1958, No. 8, p.21.
- (123) Bo Songnian, "Shihua he bi". Fine Art 1959, No. 2, p.38.
- (124) Bush, S., The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636). pp.24 and 25.
- (125) Bo Songnian, "Shihua he bi". Fine Art 1959, No. 2, p.38.
- (126) Wang Zhaowen, "Gen mingde bi mei". Fine Art 1958, No. 8, p.29.
- (127) Wang Zhaowen, "Gongnongbing meishu, hao!" Fine Art 1958, No. 12, pp.11-17.
- (128) Ibid.
- (129) Xu Ling, "Nianhua gongzuozhong cunzaide zhuyao wenti". Fine Art 1958, No. 4, p.6.
- (130) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.32.
- (131) Ibid., Zhang Wang, "Cong 1958 nianhua shuoqi" Fine Art. 1958, No. 2, p.14.
- (132) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.32.
- (133) From the huge numbers of New Year pictures on traditional themes supplying the demands of the peasants we see that to some extent, market forces played an important role in determining certain aspects of art creation in China in the 1950s.
- (134) Li Qianyan, Chinese Propitious Patterns.
- (135) For examples of traditional Chinese stories reflected in New Year pictures see Lin Qun, Zhongguo minjian zhushen; Ji Xing (edit.), Zhongguo minsu chuanshuo gushi.
- (136) Fine Art journalist, "Qunzhong xihuan shenmeyangde nianhua". Fine Art 1958, No. 4, p.10.
- (137) Huang Xuanzhi, "1957 nian quanguo xin nianhua zhanlan qingkuang he qunzhong yijian" Fine Art 1958, No. 6, p.34.

- (138) Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang - two characters created by the revolutionary poet Li Ji at Yan'an. He used the northern Shaanxi folk song form combined with some new elements to compose poetry with revolutionary themes. In this particular long poem he relates the story of how peasants in northern Shaanxi were exploited by landlords and how they rebelled under the leadership of the Communist Party. Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang played a leading role in these events.
- (139) Zhang Wang, "Cong 1958 nianhua shuoqi" Fine Art. 1958, No. 2, p.14.
- (140) Xie Changyi, "Xiang minjian nianhua xuexi - Shandong sheng xiang jianguo shizhounian xianlide muban nianhua chuanguo jingguo he tihui". Fine Art 1960, No. 2, pp.30 and 31.
- (141) Shanghai People's Fine Art Publishing House (comp.), Shandong nianhua xuanji (introduction); Shanghai People's Fine Art Publishing House, Shandong nianhua chuanguo jingyantan, (introduction).
- (142) For Soviet influence in propaganda posters see Kamenev, B., Tigao zhengzhi xuanchuanhuade sixiang yishu shuiping. Si He et al (trans.); Invanov, W., Tan zhengzhi xuanchuanhua. Wu Lanhan (trans.); Ioffe M., Tan nongye ticaide xuanchuanhua. Li Jiabi (trans.).
- (143) Fine Art journalist, "Cujin xuanchuanhua chuanguode geng da fazhan - shinian xuanchuanhua zhanlanhui zuotanhui". Fine Art 1960, No. 2, pp.5-12.
- (144) Ibid, p.8
- (145) Ibid, p.6.
- (146) Ibid, pp.6, 12.
- (147) Fine Art journalist, "Meishu jiaoyu lai yige dayuejin", Fine Art 1958, No. 3, pp. 6 and 7.
- (148) "Shanghai Zhongguo huayuan guohuajia xiachang xiexiang". Fine Art 1958, No. 4, p.30; "Traditional Painting is Linked with Industrial Art", Chinese Literature 1958, No. 5, pp.140 and 141.
- (149) Fine Art journalist, "Meishu jiaoyu lai yige dayuejin", Fine Art 1958, No. 3, p.7.
- (150) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan p.31.
- (151) "Nongcun zibande meishu xuexiao". Fine Art 1958, No. 8, p.26.
- (152) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong lun wenhua yishu. p.176; Liaoning University (edit.), Wenyi sixiang zhanxian sanshinian. pp.243 and 244.
- (153) Chinese Research Publishing Company (comp.), Zhishifenzi ping wannian Mao Zedong, pp. 61 and 62.
- (154) Bowlt, J.E., "The Virtues of Soviet Realism". Art in America. 60, Nov-Dec. 1972, p.104.
- (155) McDougall, B., Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary. p.70.
- (156) For a comparison of the two ancient poets see Guo Moruo, Li Bai yu Du Fu.

- (157) Zhou Yang, "Wo guo shehuizhuyi wenxue yishude daolu - 1960 nian 7 yue 22 ri zai Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disanci daibiao dahuishangde baogao". Fine Art. 1960, No. 7, pp.17-21.
- (158) Jin Weinuo, "Xianxiang yu benzhe, xianshi yu xiangxiang". Fine Art 1959, No. 2, p.12.
- (159) Ge Lu, "Wo dui geming xianshizhuyi he geming langmanzhuyi jiehede lijie". Fine Art 1959, No. 2, p.9.
- (160) Ai Siqi, Bianzheng weiwuzhuyi he lishi weiwuzhuyi.
- (161) The Jade Emperor - The supreme deity of Taoism
The Dragon King - The god of rain in Chinese mythology.
- (162) He Jinzhi, "Mantan shide geming langmanzhuyi", Literary and Art Gazette. 1958, No. 9, p.3.
- (163) Wu Dazhi, "Shijiu shiji Faguode langmanzhuyi yishu". Fine Art 1958, No. 10, pp.37-40.
- (164) Ji Lan, "Shenme teng jie shenme gua", Fine Art 1958, No. 10, p.6.
- (165) Meisner, M., Mao's China : A History of the People's Republic, p.234.
- (166) Fine Art editorial, "Gonggu fan you chengguo, zai shehuizhuyi sixiang, yishu shang dayuejin - zai jing meishujia zuotan wenyi zhanxianshangde yichang da bianlun". Fine Art 1958, No. 5, p.3.
- (167) Fine Art editorial, "Yu gongnong jiehe - geming meishujiade biyou zhi lu" Fine Art 1958, No. 1, pp.3-5.
- (168) Fine Art journalist, "Xiang dang jiaoxin, shao jin zichanjieji sixiang - ji Zhongyang meishu xueyuan jiaoxin yundong", Fine Art. 1958, No. 5, pp.7-10.
- (169) He Rong, "Shanshui huaniao yu baihua qifang" Fine Art 1959, No. 2, p.7; He Rong, "Mudan hao, dingxiang ye hao" Fine Art 1959, No. 7, p.8.
- (170) Li Rui, Lushan huiyi shilu, pp.121-134.
- (171) Ibid. p.278.
- (172) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.196-207.
- (173) Ibid, p.207.
- (174) Fine Art editorial, "Jiaqiang Mao Zedong wenyi sixiangde wuzhuang, jiji zhandou, fenyong qianjin" Fine Art 1960, No. 3, pp.3 and 4.
- (175) Wang Zhaowen, "Bixu jianchi zhengzhi biao zhun diyi - bo Zhang Wang tongzhi". Fine Art 1960, No. 3, pp.46-50.
- (176) Zhang Ding, "Gongyi meishu shiye burong zichanjieji sixiang fushi - ping Chen Shuliang tongzhide liang pian wenzhang." Fine Art 1960, No. 3, pp.51-55.
- (177) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji,

p.42.

- (178) Hua Xia, "Guanyu 'zhuyao' yu 'ciyao' - ping 'Mudan hao, dingxiang ye hao'" Fine Art 1960, No. 1, p.12.
- (179) Qiu Wen, "Ye tan shanshui huaniaohua" Fine Art 1960, No. 5, pp.51-54; Cheng Zhide, "Huaniaohua he meide jiejixing" Fine Art 1960, No. 6, pp.46-50.
- (180) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, pp.35 and 36.
- (181) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.214-215.
- (182) Ibid, pp.215, 217, 236.
- (183) Liu Shaoqi, Liu Shaoqi xuanji (xia) pp.349-431.
- (184) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.218-228.
- (185) Ibid, pp.228-231.
- (186) For "Eight Points on Culture" see Liaoning University, Wenyi sixiang zhanxian sanshinian, pp.301-306.
- (187) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian pp.253-255.
- (188) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.49.
- (189) Ibid.
- (190) Ibid.
- (191) Ibid, p.44.
- (192) Ibid, p.46.
- (193) Ministry of Culture, Quanguo zongshumu (1958 and 1962).
- (194) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, pp.57, 72.
- (195) Zhou Yang, "The Path of Socialist Literature and Art in Our Country: Report Delivered to the Third Congress of Chinese Literature and Art Workers on July 22, 1960". Chinese Literature 1960, No. 10, pp.34 and 35.
- (196) Ibid.
- (197) Ibid.
- (198) "Before and After the Publication of 'Ten Points on Literature and Art'". Issues and Studies 9, No. 1, Oct. 1972, p.71.
- (199) Fine Art journalist, "Beijing meishujia zuotan jiyao". Fine Art 1962, No. 4, p.3.
- (200) Lei Meng, "Duchuang, yishu fazhande zhenghou" Fine Art 1961, No. 1, p.13.

- (201) Cai Ruohong, "Guanyu meishu jiaoxuezhong jiben shunlian guochengde gaijin wenti". *Fine Art* 1961, No. 5, pp.61-67.
- (202) He Tianjian, "Zhongguo shanshuihuade meixue wenti". *Fine Art* 1962, No. 1, pp.21-24.
- (203) Yu Jianhua, "Yi xing xie shen" *Fine Art* 1962, No. 2, pp.64-66.
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- (205) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.46.
- (206) Yu Feng, "New Things in an Old Art", *Peking Review*, 22nd March 1963, p.27.
- (207) Laing, E.J., The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China, p.41.
- (208) "Sketches by Four Artists" *Peking Review*, 8th Sept. 1961, pp.18 and 19.
- (209) Ni Yi-teh, "Pan Tien-shou's Paintings" *Chinese Literature*, 1961, No. 10, p.100.
- (210) *Ibid*, p.102.
- (211) *Ibid*, p.103.
- (212) Mi Ku, "Lin Feng-mien's Paintings", *Chinese Literature* 1963, No. 1, pp.101-108.
- (213) *Ibid*, p.108.
- (214) Hua Chun-wu, "Some Thoughts on Cartooning", *Chinese Literature* 1963, No. 10, p.86.
- (215) Yu Feng, "Kan 'Shanhe xin mao' huazhan suiiji", *Fine Art* 1961, No. 4, p.63.
- (216) Hua Hsia, "The Paintings of Shih Lu" *Chinese Literature* 1962, No. 1, p.95.
- (217) Wu Tso-jen, "A Reflection on Landscape Painting", *Chinese Literature* 1962, No. 7, pp.102-105.
- (218) Chang Wen-tsun, "Fu Pao-shih's Paintings" *Chinese Literature*, 1962, No. 7, p.99.
- (219) Tsui Tzu-fan, "Two Flower-and-Bird Painting Exhibitions", *Peking Review*, Aug. 11th 1961, p.20.
- (220) SCMP No. 2750, p.22.
- (221) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong ziliao xuanbian, pp.273-276.
- (222) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.267-271. For further information on the dispute between Mao and the pragmatists see Pang Xianzhi, "Mao Zhuxi he tade mishu Tian Jiaying" *Xinhua wenzhai*. 1990 No. 3, pp.137-147.
- (223) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, pp.272-278.
- (224) Goldman, M., China's Intellectuals : Advice and Dissent, p.88.

- (225) Zhu Yang et al. (edit.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian, p.299.
- (226) Ibid.; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong ziliao xuanbian, pp.302-303.
- (227) For relevant articles see Literary and Art Gazette. 1964, No. 9, pp.3-20.
- (228) Liaoning University, Wenyi sixiang zhanxian sanshinian, pp.315-324; Zhu Yang et al. (edit), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sishinian. p.399.
- (229) Liu Gangji, "Makesi zhuyi meixue yu zichanjieji xingshizhuyi meixuede genben duili - ping Wang Qi dui Makesizhuyi meixuede kanfa". Fine Art 1964, No. 5, pp.37-42.
- (230) For examples see Fine Art 1964, No. 5.
- (231) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.70.
- (232) Foreign Languages Press, Rent Collection Courtyard : Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt.
- (233) "'Shouzuyuan' nisu chuangzuode gousi sheji" Fine Art 1965, No. 6, pp.4-8.
- (234) "New Year Holiday Attractions", Peking Review, Jan. 1st 1966, p.31;"Exhibition of the Newly Reproduced Clay Sculptures 'Compound Where Rent Was Collected'", Chinese Literature 1967, No. 4, p.138.
- (235) "'Exhibition of the Newly Reproduced Clay Sculptures 'Compound Where Rent was Collected'" Chinese Literature, 1967, No. 4, p.139.
- (236) Fokkema, D.W., Report from Peking: Observations of a Western Diplomat on the Cultural Revolution, p.82.
- (237) "'Shouzuyuan' nisu chuangzuode gousi sheji" Fine Art, pp.4-8.
- (238) Liaoning University, Wenyi sixiang zhanxian sanshinian. pp.325-337.

Notes for Chapter Three

- (1) For detailed accounts of the Cultural Revolution see Wang Nianyi, 1949-1989 nian de Zhongguo - dadongluande niandai, pp.5-14; Yan Jiaqi, Gao Gao, Wenhua Dageming shinianshi; Tan Zongji et al, Shinianhoude pingshuo - Wenhua Dageming' shi lunji.
- (2) Ding Wang, Zhonggong "Wenge" yundongzhongde zuzhi yu renshi wenti, pp.1-20.
- (3) Wang Nianyi, 1949-1989 nian de Zhongguo - dadongluande niandai, p.35; Jin Chunming, Wenge shiqide guaishi guaiyu, pp.105 and 106; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong ziliao xuanbian, pp.321 and 322.
- (4) Wang Nianyi, 1949-1989 nian de Zhongguo - dadongluande niandai, p.35; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong sixiang wansui, p.642.
- (5) Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong sixiang wansui, p.640. Jiang Qing, liang Qing guanyu Wenhua Dagemingde yanjiangji. pp.13,25.
- (6) Wang Nianyi, 1949-1989 nian de Zhongguo - dadongluande niandai, pp.13 and 14.
- (7) Zheng Derong, Zhu Yang (edit.), Xin Zhongguo jishi 1949-1984, p.399.
- (8) Ding Wang, Wenhua Dageming pinglunji, pp.111-134.
- (9) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.76; Cai Danye, Zhonggong wenyi pidou lunji, pp.80-86.
- (10) Chinese Literature editorial note, "Repudiation of the Black Line", Chinese Literature 1967, No. 4, p.122.
- (11) Chao Hui, "An Art Programme Serving the Restoration of Capitalism". Chinese Literature. 1967, No. 4, p.123.
- (12) Ibid, p.124.
- (13) Red Guard publication, Revolution in the Arts. May 31st 1967, p.4.
- (14) Red Guard publication, Revolution in the Arts, July 9th 1967, p.3.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Red Guard publication, Revolution in the Arts. May 31st 1967, p.4.
- (17) Hung Yu, "Hua Chun-wu Is An Old Hand at Drawing Black Anti-Party Cartoons". Chinese Literature 1967, No. 4, p.133.
The satirical cartoon exhibition was held under the auspices of the Artists' Association and was covered extensively by the "Liberation Daily". The main themes of the cartoons were apparently attacks on bureaucratism and pedantry. The exhibition attracted 4,000 visitors in the first three days and reportedly received the approval of Li Qun, Jiang Feng and Mao himself when they attended. See Holm, D., Art and Ideology in Yan'an. pp.60 and 61. For more on the satirical cartoon exhibition see Ai Ke'en (edit.), Yan'an wenyi yundong jisheng 1937-1948, pp.316 -319.
- (18) Red Guard publication. The Proletarian. 1967, No. 3, p.4.
- (19) Ibid.; Hung Yu, "Hua Chun-wu Is an Old Hand at Drawing Black Anti-Party

- Cartoons". Chinese Literature. 1967, No. 4, p.134.
- (20) Ibid, p.135.
- (21) Ibid, p.133.
- (22) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.77.
- (23) Named after Mao's May 7th Directive of 1966. Schools were set up in accordance with this directive which were mainly based in rural areas and were for the purpose of re-educating students and intellectuals.
- (24) Wang Nianyi, 1949-1989 nian de Zhongguo - dadongluande niandai, p.353.
- (25) Red Guard publication, Meishu zhanxianshang liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, p.77.
- (26) Song Zongyuan et al. (edit.), Yishu yaolan, p.36.
- (27) Zhong Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.289.
- (28) Ibid, p.288.
- (29) Tao Yongbai, "Zhongguo youhua erbaibashinian", p.10. (article awaiting publication).
- (30) Interview with Shui Tianzhong. 1989, Beijing.
- (31) Xiao Yanzhong (edit.), Wannian Mao Zedong, pp.177-181.
- (32) Yu Shifang, "Wenhua Dageming - yichang xiandai zaoshen yundong". The Chinese Intellectual (Zhishifenzi) Spring 1986, p.38.
- (33) Ibid.
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- (64) Ibid. p.37.
- (65) Ibid, p.60.
- (66) Ibid, p.50.
- (67) Ibid, p.52.

- (68) SCMP No. 5181, p.56.
- (69) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi. pp.303 and 304.
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- (71) Ibid, p.55.
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- (73) Wenyijie baluan fanzhengde yici chenghui - Zhongguo wenxue yishujie lianhehui disanjie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci kuoda huiyi wenjian, fayangji. pp.529 and 530. (Renmin wenxue chubanshe 1979 Beijing).
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- (83) Huang Yongyu, "Shao Yu he 'maotouying shijian' - xiaodan Shao Yu, Fan Zeng". The Nineties 1990, No. 8, pp.101 and 102.
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- (91) Ibid. pp.147 and 148.
- (92) Chiang Ch'ing, On the Revolution of Peking Opera, pp.21-23.
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- (98) For examples, see "Suzao wuchan jieji yingxiang dianxing shi shehuizhuyi wenyide genben renwu" in The People's Daily. 1974 July 12th, p.5; Chu Lan, Tan wen yi zuopin de shendu wenti (neibu ziliao), 1974, Nov; "Fazhan shehuizhuyide wen yi chuanguo" The People's Daily. 1971, Dec. 16th, p.1.
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Notes for Chapter Four

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- (4) Lamb, M., Directory of Officials and Organisations in China 1968-1983.
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- (7) Xia Jun, "Zhongguo meishujia xiehui disanci huiyuan daibiao dahui zai jing zhaokai". Fine Art 1979, No. 11, p.10.
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- (16) Ibid, pp.13 and 14.
- (17) Li C.T., Watt, J.C.Y. (edit), The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period.
- (18) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, pp.322 and 323. Good information on the unofficial groups is also provided by Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting: 1949-1986.
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- (21) Jiang Feng, liang Feng meishu lunji, pp.126 and 127.
- (22) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting: 1949-1986. pp.81 and 82.
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- (24) Li Shengping, Zhang Mingshu (edit.), 1970-1986 Shinian zhengzhi dashiji, pp.397-414.
- (25) "'Star' Amateur Art Exhibition" China Reconstructs. 1980 June, p.54.
- (26) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting: 1949-1986. p.70.
- (27) China Edition Library (comp.), Quanguo zongshumu 1986 pp.670-673 cites 93 titles of painting albums and collections of printed Western art reproductions, as well as general books on Western art and art theory; Beijing Library (edit.), Zhongguo guojia shumu for years between 1979 and 1986.
- (28) As an example, a series of articles in Fine Arts in China 1985 No. 22, pp.1, 4 discuss the work of the contemporary American artist Rauschenberg.
- (29) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting: 1949-1986. p.53.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid, p.70.
- (32) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan. Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi. p.324.
- (33) Sullivan, M., "Bliss Was It That Dawn to Be Alive", Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.6.
- (34) Blaine, J., Gipouloux, A., "'The Stars' : A New Art Movement in China", Benton G. (edit.), Wild Lilies and Poisonous Weeds. p.208.
- (35) "Visitors Comments on the Second 'Stars' Exhibition", Hui Ching - shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.70.
- (36) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji. p.126.
- (37) One instance of this is the Oil Painting Research Association's rejection of a nude by Zhao Yixiong titled "Awakening of Tarim" "because of the green streak on the woman's buttocks - an Expressionist gesture that was apparently thought to be offensive". (Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting : 1949-1986. p.56).
- (38) Ah Cheng, "Stars and Sparks and Flickers and Flutters", Hui Ching - shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.18.
- (39) Hui Ching - shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.5.
- (40) As an example compare "We Must Carry Out the Revolution to the End", Fine Art 1976 No. 1, pp.24 and 25 with "Chairman Hua and Ourselves Are Joined Heart to Heart". Fine Art 1977, No. 1 (front cover).
- (41) Interview with Shui Tianzhong 1989 Beijing.
- (42) Li Xiaoshan, "Zhongguohua yi daole qiongtu moride shihou". Fine Arts in China. 1985, No. 14, p.1.
- (43) Ibid.
- (44) Interview with Li Xianting 1989, Beijing.

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- (47) Interview with Li Xianting 1989 Beijing.
- (48) Barmé, G., "Critics now chip away at China's concrete eyesores". Far Eastern Economic Review. Nov. 17th 1988, p.54.
- (49) "Zhongguo meishubao she chengli dahui zai jing juxing". Fine Arts in China 1985, No. 1, p.1.
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- (51) "Fa kan ci" Fine Arts in China 1985, No. 1, p.1.
- (52) Zhang Qiang, "Hu nian xuyu" Fine Arts in China 1986, No. 6, p.1.
- (53) Liu Xiaochun "Qun jian banbao" fine Arts in China, 1986, No. 6, p.1.
- (54) Ibid.
- (55) Ibid.
- (56) Barmé, G., "Critics now chip away at China's concrete eyesores". Far Eastern Economic Review. Nov. 17th 1988, p.56.
- (57) Hua Junwu, "Yidian ganxiang" Fine Arts in China 1986, No. 8, p.2.
- (58) Ibid.
- (59) Wu Zuoren, "Wu Zuoren da ben bao jizhe wen". Fine Arts in China 1985, No. 11, p.1.
- (60) Zhang Qiang, "Hu nian xuyu" Fine Arts in China 1986, No. 6, p.1.
- (61) Ibid.
- (62) The final issue came out the last week of December, 1989.
- (63) China Literary and Art Federation (edit.), Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disici daibiao dahui wenji.
- (64) Ibid, p.1.
- (65) Ibid, p.3.
- (66) Ibid, p.5.
- (67) Ibid, p.36.
- (68) Ibid, p.140.
- (69) China Literary and Art Federation (edit.), Kaipi shehuizhuyi wenyi fanrongde xin shiqi, p.495.
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- (72) Ibid.
- (73) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.316.
- (74) Interview with Luo Zhongli 1989, Chongqing.
- (75) Shao Zenghu, "Lishide zeren - chuanguo 'nongji zhuanjia zhi si' de ganxiang". Fine Art 1980, No. 6, p.11.
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- (77) Ibid, p.3.
- (78) Lin Zhihao, Lu Xun zhuan, p.40.
- (79) "Meishu chuanguo wenti zuotanhui zhaibian". Fine Art 1980, No. 8, p.4.
- (80) Lu Xinhua, Liu Xinwu et al., The Wounded: New Stories of the Cultural Revolution 1977-78. Trans. by Barmé G., Lee, B. p.14.
- (81) Ibid, p.150.
- (82) Ibid, p.152.
- (83) Ibid, p.24.
- (84) He Rong, "Jiang rensheng you jiazhide dongxi huimie gei ren kan - du lianhuanhua 'Feng' he xiang daode yixie wenti". Fine Art 1979, No. 8, p.13.
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- (101) "Qing zhu jianguo sanshizhounian meizhan huojiang zuopin tulu". Fine Art 1980, No. 5, p.3.
- (102) Deng Pingxiang, "Chuyu liangzhong wenhua tiaodangzhongde qingnian huajia". Contemporary Currents of Thought on the Arts (Dangdai Wenyi Sichao) March 1986, p.104.
- (103) Ibid.
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- (107) Gao Minglu, "Zhongguo dangdai meishu sichao", Xiong Shi 1989, No. 2, p.97.
- (108) Ibid.
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- (111) Interview with Luo Zhongli, 1989, Chongqing.
- (112) Xi Lai, "Qingchunde xuanlü". Fine Art 1981, No. 1, p.5.
- (113) Xu Dixin, "Wei shixian weidade zhanlüe mubiao er nuli". Red Flag. 1982, No. 19, pp.33 and 34.
- (114) A character from Liu Qing's "History of Creating Enterprises" ("Chuanyeshi") on the collectivisation of peasants after 1949.
- (115) Xi Lai, "Qingchunde xuanlü" Fine Art 1981, No. 1, p.5.
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- (134) Waley, A. (trans.), Analects of Confucius. p.69.
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- (141) Li Zehou, Meide Licheng. p.190.
- (142) Sullivan, M., Art in the Twentieth Century. pp.52 and 53.
- (143) Ibid, pp. 51 and 52.
- (144) Sullivan, M., "Bliss Was It That Dawn To Be Alive", Hui Ching-shuen (edit.),

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- (146) *Ibid.*
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- (148) Sullivan, M., "Art and the Social Framework". *The Times Literary Supplement*. June 24th 1983, p.654.
- (149) For more on the democracy movement see Benton G. (edit.), Wild Lilies: Poisonous Weeds.
- (150) Interview with Qu Leilei, 1986, London.
- (151) *Today* No. 4 (i),(ii). 20th June 1979.
- (152) Interview with Qu Leilei 1986, London.
- (153) Jiang Feng, Jiang Feng meishu lunji, pp.126 and 127.
- (154) Interview with Wang Keping 1989, Beijing.
- (155) Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.23.
- (156) *Ibid.*
- (157) Interview with Wang Keping 1989, Beijing.
- (158) According to Yan Li (Interview 1985 Shanghai), not all the "Stars" were happy with this decision, particularly Huang Rui who feared the authorities might rescind their promise to allow the "Stars" exhibition space. Wang Keping's view that they should proceed with the demonstration apparently won the day, and Huang finally agreed to participate in it.
- (159) Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.31.
- (160) *Ibid.*
- (161) Sullivan, M., "Bliss Was It That Dawn To Be Alive", Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian. p.6.
- (162) Li Xianting, "Guanyu 'Xingxing' meizhan". *Fine Art* 1980, No. 3, p.8.
- (163) Benton, G. (edit.), Wild Lilies: Poisonous Weeds. p.208.
- (164) Li Xianting, "Guanyu 'Xingxing' meizhan". *Fine Art* 1980, No. 3, p.9.
- (165) Interview with Yan Li 1984, Beijing.
- (166) Gao Yan, "Bu shi duihua, shi tanxin - zhi Xingxing meizhan". *Fine Art* 1980, No. 12, p.35.
- (167) *Ibid.*
- (168) "Zhi Xingxing meizhan zuozhemende yi feng xin". *Fine Art* 1981, No. 1, p.41.

- (169) Quoted in Sullivan M., "Bliss Was It That Dawn To Be Alive" Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian, p.6.
- (170) Wang Zhangling, Bai Huade lu pp.56-70.
- (171) Interviews with Yan Li 1985 Shanghai; Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian, p.34.
- (172) Hui Ching-shuen (edit.), Xingxing shinian, p.10.
- (173) Quoted from Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986. p.62.
- (174) Interview with Yan Li 1984, Beijing.
- (175) Personal attendance at the exhibition. This exhibition was financed and organised by Yan Li himself.
By 1984 it was becoming increasingly common for artists to fund their own exhibitions, even those held at the prestigious China Art Gallery, Beijing.
- (176) Mao Shi'an, "Xianshizhuyi he xiandaizhuyi - guanyu chuanguo fangfa 'baihua qifang' de tantao". Fine Art 1982, No. 1, p.24.
- (177) Du Jian, "Jianchi 'Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhuishangde jianghua' de genben jingshen, cujin meishude fanrong fazhan". Fine Art 1982, No. 5, p.4.
- (178) Dushu, 1980, No. 12, p.138.
- (179) Wang Hongjian, "Qian tan yishude benzhi" Fine Art 1981, No. 5, p.10.
- (180) Interview with Li Xianting 1989 Beijing. Examples of Sartre's work translated in the 1980s include Sartre yanjiu (Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 1981 Beijing), Wang Keqian, Xia Jun, Lun Sartre (Fujian renmin chubanshe 1985), Huang Songjie Sartre qiren ji qi "renxue" (Fudan University, 1986, Shanghai).
- (181) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986. p.58.
- (182) Zhong Ming, "Cong Sartre shuoqi - tan huihuazhongde ziwo biaoqian". Fine Art 1981, No. 2, p.7.
- (183) Kingston, F.T., French Existentialism, pp.168-192; Chiari, J., Twentieth Century French Thought, pp.94-116.
- (184) Ibid.
- (185) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986, p.58.
- (186) Zhong Ming, "Cong Sartre shuoqi - tan huihuazhongde ziwo biaoqian". Fine Art 1981, No. 2, p.8.
- (187) Ibid, p.9.
- (188) Qi Ji, "Tan 'shehuizhuyi xianshizhuyi' zai meishu chuanguozhongde yixie wenti". Fine Art 1980, No. 7, p.38.
- (189) Zhu Xuchu, "Meishude fei chun renshixing he zhiguanxing". Fine Art 1982, No. 8, p.15.

- (190) Wu Guanzhong, "Huihuade xingshi mei". Fine Art 1979, No. 5, p.34.
- (191) Zhu Xuchu, "Meishude fei chun renshixing he zhiguanxing". Fine Art 1982, No. 8, p.17.
- (192) Li Zhengtian "Yishu xinlixue lungang", 1983, No. 1, p.48.
- (193) Ibid. p.47.
- (194) Cohen, J.L., The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986, p.57; Li Xianting, "Xianshizhuyi bu shi weiyi zhengquede tujing". Fine Art 1981, No. 2, p.47.
- (195) Xia Hang, "Sichuan qingnian huajia tan chuanguo". Fine Art 1981, No. 1, p.45.
- (196) Cohen, J.L., Yunnan School - A Renaissance in Chinese Painting, p.21.
- (197) Spector, J.T., The Aesthetics of Freud: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Art, p.95.
- (198) Zhang Qun, Meng Luding, "Xin shidaide qishi - 'Zai xin shidai' chuanguo tan". Fine Art 1985, No. 7, pp.47 and 48.
- (199) Wu Guanzhong, "Huihuade xingshi mei", Fine Art 1979, No. 5, p.34.
- (200) Wu Guanzhong, "Guanyu chouxiang mei". Fine Art 1980, No. 10, p.37.
- (201) Ibid.
- (202) Ibid.
- (203) Zhang Shaoxia, Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi, p.37.
- (204) Du Jian, "Xingxiangde jielü yu jielüde xingxiang - guanyu chouxiang mei wentide yixie yijian". Fine Art 1983, No. 10, p.16.
- (205) Ibid.
- (206) Zeng Jingchu, "'Ye tan chouxiang mei' zhe yi", Fine Art 1983, No. 10, p.21.
- (207) Ibid.
- (208) Ni Zhiyun, "Guanyu yuanshi shehui yishu xingshi fazhan jixiangde yijian". Fine Art 1982, No. 3, p.50.
- (209) Du Jian, "Xingxiangde jielü yu jielüde xingxiang (xu) - guanyu chouxiang mei wentide yixie yijian". Fine Art 1983, No. 11, p.10.

Notes for Conclusion

- (1) Deng Pingxiang, "Yishu sikao jinru 'ren' de cengci". Fine Art 1986, No. 12, pp.41-43; Goldman, M., Cheek, T., Hamrin, C.L. (edit.), China's Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship, pp.162 and 163; 166-71.
- (2) Zhu Xuchu, "Meishude fei chun renshixing he zhiguanxing". Fine Art 1982, No. 8, pp.15-17.
- (3) Fine Arts in China 1986, No. 26, p.1.
- (4) Fine Arts in China 1985, No. 23, p.1. or picture No. 31 in Zhongguo xiandai yishuzhan. (exhibition catalogue) (Guangxi renmin chubanshe 1989).
- (5) Liu Xilin, "Yipi shidaide nizi - qingnian meishu sichao yu shehui zhi jian". Fine Art 1986, No. 6, pp.10-13.
- (6) Wang Zhong, "Ping 'meishu xin chao'", People's Daily 1990, Dec. 13th. p.5.
- (7) Fine Arts in China 1986, No. 37, p.1.
- (8) Song Yaoliang (edit.), Zhongguo yishiliu xiaoshuoxuan (1980-1987); Chen Jin, Dangdai Zhongguode xiandaizhuyi.
- (9) At present, there is strong criticism in the official media of the new wave in art as being in opposition to the Marxist theory of art. For details see Wang Zhong, "Ping 'meishu xin chao'". People's Daily 1990, Dec. 13th p.5.

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