

1949

Speeches/Documents

Title: Letter to Feng Youlan

Author: Mao Zedong

Date: October 13, 1949

Source: *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976: September 1945 - December 1955* Michael Y. M. Kau, John K. Leung pg.17

Description:

Mr. Youlan: [1](#)

I have received your letter of October 5. We welcome people's making progress. It is very good for someone like yourself, who has committed errors in the past, to be prepared to correct them now, if this can indeed be carried out in practice. You do not need to be overly anxious about seeing results in haste; you can come around gradually. In any case, it is appropriate to adopt an attitude of honesty.

This, in reply, and with respectful regards and best wishes for your work in teaching,

Mao Zedong October 13

Note

1. For an explanation of this usage, see text Nov. 17, 1949, note 2.

Feng Youlan (b. 1905) is one of modern and contemporary China's most noted philosophers. He is the author of many historical and philosophical works on Chinese civilization, among them the renowned *Zhongguo zhixue shi* (*A History of Chinese Philosophy*), which has been published in translation by Derk Bodde (Princeton University Press, 1953, reprinted 1969). Feng studied in the United States at Columbia University from 1919 to 1923, and received his doctorate in 1923. Throughout the 1920s Feng was in the midst and the forefront of basic philosophical debates in China over the meaning and validity of Chinese traditional culture and worldviews. Out of that debate he distilled a distinctive philosophy that was characterized by the mixture of rationalist elements of neo-Confucianist *lixue* (school of reason or principle), a daoistic transcendentalism, and Western realism. He also asserted that the economic foundations of a society determined its social values. This appeared to pave the way for his "conversion" to Marxism-Leninism later. After 1950, he announced his dedication to "remoulding his ideas" and interpreting Chinese philosophy along Marxist-Leninist lines. However, in the anti-Rightist furor of 1957, he was made a target of quite strenuous criticism, and it was not until the 1960s that he was reinstated. He was never a member of the Communist Party, however. For more biographical information on Feng, see H. Boorman et al., eds. (1968), 11, pp. 32-37.

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