

1949

Meetings

Dates of Meeting:

02-07-1949 - 21-07-1949

Type of Meeting:

Federation of Literary and Art Circles

Place of Meeting:

Beijing

Attendance:

Hu Feng, Mao, Zhou, Zhu De and Lu Dingyi. It was attended by 753 cultural leaders from all parts of the country. literature and art workers from both liberated areas and from areas under GMD rule. Lists of potential participants were expected to include an appropriate balance of individuals from former Communist-controlled base areas and Nationalist-controlled “white” areas, in addition to both “new” and “old” cultural figures. In reality, the majority possessed some form of base area experience, while it seems that those without explicitly revolutionary pedigrees were selected primarily on the basis of their national reputations—Mei Lanfang, the famous Peking opera star, represented a notable example of the non-revolutionary minority.

Major Agenda Items:

to determine the future policy of the national task of literary and artistic work, the establishment of a new national art organization

Speeches/Reports:

Mao Zedong: "In the struggle against oppression and reactionaries, the development of revolutionary literature and art," 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

Zhou Enlai “[political report](#)” July 6, 1949 discusses the unity of literature and art, to serve the people, popularization and improvement, transforming the old art and other issues

He gave theoretical guidance in five areas. First, he said, unification of all China's literary and art workers was essential. Zhou identified several different types of art workers, including those in the PLA, those in PLA-controlled areas, and those in areas controlled by the Nationalists. He urged delegates to promote a united spirit among all cultural workers in their home regions. Second, artists were to serve the people, especially the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Third, popularization was to take precedence over raising of standards. Fourth, old literature and art were to be remoulded. Old contents were to be remoulded first, but attention should also be paid to old forms so that contents and forms might be unified. Fifth, artists and art leaders must avoid particularism but instead consider the needs of the whole country in their art. To carry out these cultural policies, he announced plans to form popular associations such as the Art Workers Association to train artists, expand artistic activity, and undertake the remoulding of art. The government planned to set up its own structures to organize arts and literature, but intended to rely on the cooperation of popular associations to implement its activities. Although Zhou claimed that the AWA and other such organizations were "masses' groups," they were in fact, as we saw in the introduction, the cultural arms of the Chinese Communist party. The art bureaucracy was thus envisioned as a two-part cooperative structure administered by the party and the government.

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. Art and Politics in China, 1949-1986 by Maria B. Galikowski

Guo Moruo speech "for the construction of the new art"

Ding Ling: speech “from the masses and to the masses” The main argument of her speech was “how to become a literary and artistic worker for the People,” wherein Ding Ling called special attention to collectivism (jiti zhuyi jingshen). “Collectivism,” as Ding Ling developed the concept on the basis of her own experience, “means that a writer should prepare an outline, stating the basic point, the problem to be solved. Following that, there will be a meeting with readers (might be including both literary critic

and ordinary peasants/workers readers) discussing whether the writer's intention concerning that point is correct or not. After the work is finished, the writer should collect the questions and suggestions from audience, and discuss and further revise those literary works which are assessed as good literature all pass through this process. ”

Zhu De: 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".

Mao Dun report "Struggle Under Reactionary Oppression and the Development of Revolutionary Literature and Art" July 4, 1949

"During the early period of the War of Resistance, cultural production (wenyi chuangzuo) was suitably vigorous, but before long, reactionaries of the Nationalist Party became increasingly reactionary, and the situation of writers increasingly dire. Consequently, cultural production soon became subject to all manner of unimaginable restrictions "

Mao Dun's point was not that "revolutionary" artists had failed to engage in "struggle" with the Nationalist Party through critical depictions of the regime, or that they had not served the war effort by attempting to mobilize China's populace on the nation's behalf. Rather, his address attempted to identify those points at which "complicated" (fuzha) circumstances—blamed primarily on restrictions placed on artistic expression by Nationalist "reactionaries"—had inhibited the creation of a cultural orthodoxy compatible with that outlined in Mao's 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and the Arts."

Not only was this the one cultural policy which Mao Dun mentioned by name, but it clearly served as the criterion according to which all cultural production—and by extension, cultural producers—situated within Nationalist-secured areas became known as evolutionarily flawed.

Zhou Yang report sketching the literature and art movement in liberated areas. He criticizes Hu Feng's thinking without mentioning him

Mao Dun report on "the development of literature and art ideological theory" specifically criticized the literary and artistic thinking of Hu Feng without mentioning his name. It said that "'subjective' problems in literature and art are actually problems having to do with the writer's standpoint, viewpoint, and attitude." See [speech](#)

Yang Hansheng July 7, 1949 report "Concerning Film Work in the Liberated Areas

He castigated Nationalist oppression for filmmakers' collective inability to gain deeper contact with the urban industrial proletariat, or access to a mass audience beyond "petit bourgeois" types already found frequenting city theatres. Unlike Mao Dun, however, Yang also argued for the ongoing existence of a cohesive "dramatic cinema movement" (xiju dianying yundong) in Shanghai dating back to the 1940s and, by extension, for Shanghai filmmakers' claim to revolutionary legitimacy. Praising the "free space" (ziyou de tiandi) of the north, and promising to further "research" Maoist ideology, Yang seemed to treat as inevitable the impending unification (tuanjie) of cultural producers from both "white" and "liberated" regions. This vision was troubled, however, by a starker human reality of mistrust and discord: "After passing through eight years of warfare during the War of Resistance and [War of] Liberation, even though [China's cultural circles] co-existed within the nationalistic, democratic camps (zhenying), there still existed many ideological and emotional knots (geda) between individuals which could not be easily unraveled."

"In the past twelve years, the development of a film industry (shiye) in the liberated areas can only be said to have begun with the 10,000 li Long March, and remains in an immature state. In the wake of victory in the people's War of Liberation and the expansion of the liberated areas, the film industry of the liberated areas has also kept pace with this victory and expanded to become national in scope; moreover [this industry] has become the state-operated enterprise (qiye) of the people's nation. Additionally, this single state-run enterprise will soon occupy the leading place within the film industry of the entire nation."

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 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. Art and Politics in China, 1949-1986 by Maria B. Galikowski

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

In addition to the speeches given by prominent political figures, also speeches were delivered by leading individuals in the various cultural fields

Other Decisions and/or Actions:

- the call for writers and artists to join in the land reform movement distinguished between different categories of writers and artists. The main object of this demand was the young writers and artists of the modern post-May Fourth literature and art, especially those who were cadres. They were expected to provide the largest numbers of writers and artists for the land reform movement, and to participate politically in the movement itself, rather than merely look on from the side-lines. Other writers and artists were invited to go to the countryside to observe and write about the land reform movement if they wished.
- The Congress' guiding principle was based on the spirit of Mao Zedong's Speeches at the Yan'an Forum of Literature and Art, that literature and art should serve politics and serve the worker, the peasant and the soldier. The Congress did not change, but rather confirmed, the relationship between literature and art on the one hand and politics on the other, and drew up guidelines for creating literary works. It reaffirmed the political control methods applied to the original "liberation area" literature.¹⁴ However, it rejected the spirit of modern literature exemplified in the New Culture Movement, which advocated a modern literature and art based on artistic freedom, a critical attitude towards society and inspiration from the world literary heritage, especially modern Western thought and creative methods
- summed up the experience of the new literary movement, defined the art of new China policy, mission, China's socialist literature and art entered a new historical period.
- At this conference, the All-China Federation of Literacy and Art Circles was founded, joining together the specific professional associations established during the same conference: the All-China Association of Literary Workers, the All-China Association of Drama Workers, the All-China Association of Music Workers, the All-China Association of Cinema Workers, the All-China Association of Dancing Art Workers, and the Chinese Opera Reform Association. An All-China Ch'ü-i Reform Association Preparatory Committee was also set up at this conference.
- similar federations and associations were established in the great administrative regions, provinces, and cities. There were over sixty such organisations established
- The fourth article of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles' 1949 Constitution listed the following areas of activity for the Federation: first, joining in the revolutionary and reconstruction work of China and reflecting that work in all branches of literature and art in order to further inspire the people; second, eliminating all traces of imperialist, feudal, and bureaucrat-capitalist literature, reforming the popular old literature and art, and critically assimilating the literary and artistic heritage of China and other countries; third, helping and directing amateur literary and artistic activities, taking the new literature and art to the factories, villages, and army units, and training new writers and artists from among the people; fourth, developing a literary and artistic movement among each of the country's minority nationalities, uniting new democratic content with the artistic form of each minority nationality, and carrying out cultural exchange between nationalities; fifth, strengthening study of revolutionary theory and of problems in literature and art in order to develop a scientific theory of literature and art and literary and artistic criticism; and, sixth, strengthening international cultural exchanges, promoting both patriotism and internationalism, and joining the world peace and democracy movement headed by the Soviet Union.
- Chairman: Guo Moruo
- Vice chairman: Mao Dun, Zhou Yang
- Standing Committee: Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Zhou Yang, Ding Ling, Cao Yu, Sha Kefu, Zhao Shuli, Yuan Muzhi, Tian Han, Xia Yan, Xiao San, Ouyang Yuqian, Yang Hansheng, Ke Zhongping, Zheng Zhenduo, Ma Sicong, Li Bojian, Hong Shen, Xu Beihong, Liu Zhiming, Zhang Zhixiang (in order of importance)
- Artists and art critic members of FLAC: A Ying, Ai Qing, Cai Ruohong, Gu Yuan, Jiang Feng, Lai Shaoqi, Li Hua, Li Qun, Liu Kaiqu, Ni Yide, Qi Baishi, Xu Beihong, Ye Qianyu, Zhang Geng (in alphabetical order)
- Supplemental members: Hua Junwu, Wang Zhaowen, Yan Han, Ye Fu, Zhu Dan

Remarks:

1. Art Workers Association (AWA, forerunner of the Chinese Artists Association) was established at the same time joining forces by literary and art workers from both liberated areas and GMD-controlled areas.
2. 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. 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.
3. 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 " Xu Beihong, who became the first Chairman of the Artists' Association in 1949 was, in reality, only a figurehead.
Art and Politics in China, 1949-1986 by Maria B. Galikowski pg 12-13
4. Following the closing session of the National Congress of Literary and Art Workers, forty local congresses were held throughout China
5. The preparations for that conference began in March of that year with the formation of a preparatory committee of forty-two prominent writers and artists, many of whom were later leading figures in the various associations established at this conference. During the following three months this committee did the preparation involved in holding such a national conference. The two most important aspects of the preparation work were: first, the drafting of reports and speeches for the conference and of constitutions for the proposed associations and, second, the invitation, of participants to the conference. Participants were selected according to three main criteria. They were those who could be considered opposed to imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism. They represented all the various fields of literature and art. Only those who held senior positions in literary and artistic offices or associations or who had long or distinguished professional careers were invited.
6. The first National Art Exhibition was held at the National Beiping Arts College in conjunction with the July 1949 Congress of Literary and Arts Workers. The works of 301 artists exemplified the artistic concerns of the day. A catalogue published in October divided the works into five categories: painting, woodblock prints, new year's pictures, cartoons, and sculpture
7. A highly staged event with little left to chance, the Beiping Cultural Congress came together under the guidance of its preparatory committee, formed on March 22 by a diverse set of forty-two cultural leaders, including Guo Moruo, Li Bozhao, and Hu Feng. In creating a list of representatives of leading cultural workers and artists who "opposed feudalism," the committee devised two categories of representatives, starting with the "natural representatives" (dangrandaibiao) found in the leading figures of pre-existing cultural organizations. This drew in Communist cultural leaders from all five existing regional governments,¹¹ as well as cultural luminaries from the All-China Literary and Art Circles Resistance Association (Zhonghuaquanguowenyijiekangdixiehui), active in former Guomindang-held areas. "Invited representatives," the second and much larger group of delegates, included high-ranking cultural workers, cultural workers, specifically emphasizing their central role in the now victorious revolution. Mao's cultural army: drama troupes in China's rural revolution. DeMare, Brian James. (2015) Cambridge university press Page 149-150