

Document 13.2: Excerpt from Lu Dingyi’s speech “Let Flowers of Many Kinds Blossom, Diverse Schools of Thought Contend!” May 26, 1956

Lu Dingyi was the director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, on the Party’s Policy on art, literature, and science.

Mr. Guo Moruo, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, has asked me to speak on the policy of the Chinese Communist Party on the work of artists, writers and scientists.

To artists and writers, we say, “Let flowers of many kinds blossom.” To scientists we say, “Let diverse schools of thought contend.” This is the policy of the Chinese Communist Party. It was announced by Chairman Mao Zedong at the Supreme State Conference....

If we want our country to be prosperous and strong, we must, besides consolidating the people’s state power, developing our economy and education and strengthening our national defence, have flourishing art, literature and science. That is essential.

If we want art, literature and science to flourish, we must apply a policy of letting flowers of many kinds blossom, letting diverse schools of thought contend... .

“Letting flowers of many kinds blossom, diverse schools of thought contend” means that we stand for freedom of independent thinking, of debate, of creative work; freedom to criticize and freedom to express, maintain and reserve one’s opinions on questions of art, literature or scientific research.

The freedom we uphold is not the same as that based on the type of democracy advocated by the bourgeoisie. The freedom advocated by the bourgeoisie really means freedom for only a minority, with little or no freedom for the working people. The bourgeoisie exercises a dictatorship over the working people. Jingos in the United States bellow about the “free world” — a free world in which jingos and reactionaries have all the freedom and every freedom, while the Rosenbergs are put to death because they stand for peace.

We, on the contrary, hold that there must be democratic liberties among the people, but that no freedom should be extended to counter-revolutionaries: for them we have only dictatorship. This is a question of drawing a political demarcation line. A clear political line must be drawn between friend and foe.

“Let flowers of many kinds blossom, diverse schools of thought contend:” that means freedom among the people. And we urge that, as the people’s political power becomes progressively consolidated, such freedom should be given ever fuller scope.

Among the people there are points of agreement and points of difference. Our country has a constitution and it is a public duty to abide by it—this is an agreement among the people. That is to say, the people agree among themselves that they should love their country and support socialism. But there are other matters on which they do not agree with one another. In ideology there is the difference between materialism and idealism....

Members of the Communist Party are dialectical materialists. We Communists of course stand for materialism and against idealism—nothing can change that. But, precisely because we are dialectical materialists and understand the laws governing the development of society, we hold that a strict distinction must be made between the battle of ideas among the people and the struggle against counter-revolutionaries. Among the people themselves there is freedom not only, to spread materialism but also to propagate idealism. Provided he is not a counter-revolutionary, everyone is free to expound materialism or idealism. There is also freedom of debate between the two. This is a struggle between conflicting ideas among the people, but that is quite different from the struggle against counter-revolutionaries. We must suppress and put an end to the activities of counter-revolutionaries. We also have to wage a struggle against backward, idealist ways of thinking among the people. The latter struggle can be quite sharp, too; but we embark on it with the intention of strengthening unity, ending backwardness and creating an ever closer unity among the people. When it comes to questions of ideas, administrative measures will get us nowhere. Only through open debate can materialism gradually conquer idealism.

There will be diverse opinions, too, on matters of a purely artistic, academic or technological nature. This is, of course, quite all right. In matters of this sort, there is freedom to voice different opinions, to criticize, counter-criticize and debate.

In short, we hold that while it is necessary to draw a clear political line between friend and foe, we must have freedom among the people....

“Let flowers of many kinds blossom, diverse schools of thought contend:” that is a policy to mobilize all the positive elements. It is also, therefore, a policy that will in the end strengthen unity....

Source: Lu Ting-yi. *“Let Flowers of Many Kinds Blossom, Diverse Schools of Thought Contend!”* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1957. 3-35.