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Zhang Zhiziang, 'Lessons Learned from Ten Years of Foreign Cultural Work, Future Tasks and Guidelines'

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Summary:

Zhang Zhixiang of China's Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations outlines the achievements and failures of the PRC's cultural diplomacy since 1949, and gives some suggestion for future approaches.

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Lessons Learned from Ten Years of Foreign Cultural Work, Future Tasks and Guidelines

Zhang Zhixiang, Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations

I.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought and the Party Central Committee's foreign policy guidelines, China's foreign cultural work has made great progress thanks to the cooperation of the relevant departments, the local people and local agencies throughout the country, and our dramatic progress both at home and abroad.

Over the past decade, the countries and regions with cultural and friendly people-to-people exchanges with our country increased from three in 1949 to 91 in 1960. Our troupes visited thousands of towns and cities on five continents. They put on colorful dramas, songs, dances and acrobatics audiences of thousands throughout the world. Sports events have won considerable glory for China. We have also hosted artists and other cultural workers from all five continents and friendly people from all walks of life. By the end of 1959, the number of Chinese sent abroad and foreigners visiting China in our cultural exchanges had reached 3,072 and 27,204. We have had exchanges of movies, books, exhibitions and cultural materials with over 160 countries and regions. We have signed governmental and non-governmental cultural agreements, agreements and contracts in 56 countries and regions. We publish foreign language publications, books that are sold in 19 languages in 158 countries and regions. Our films have been shown in 94 countries and films from 37 countries have been screened in China. We have sent cultural, artistic and photo exhibitions to 68 countries while in China we have put on exhibitions from 33 countries. We founded the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and twenty friendship associations between China and specific foreign countries have been formed. In foreign countries, 463 associations aimed at promoting friendship with China have been established.

Over the past decade, China's foreign cultural work have developed our foreign relations across a broad front, disseminating information about Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, China's achievements in national construction, its peaceful foreign policy and harmonious spirit. Through the propagation of red culture in foreign countries, we struck back against the anti-China conspiracy of the international reactionaries led by US imperialism, broke through the blockades and obstacles they erected, made friends far and wide, and encouraged and supported the people of nations throughout the world who oppose imperialism and imperialism and who are seeking peace, democracy and progress. Thus we have had some achievements in our work which blends harmoniously with the development of all our diplomatic work and international activities, in expanding the international battlefield for peace and against imperialism in order to win a peaceful international environment and serve the needs of China's socialist construction.

Over the past decade, the political leadership of foreign cultural work has gradually strengthened, the system of organization has gradually improved, and we have trained up a cadre of cultural workers. Both the political and professional competence of our cadres have improved. These achievements are most important but they are not the whole story. We also have many shortcomings and mistakes. The main problem is that we have failed to do enough work to study the situation and to

understand policy guidelines. Being sensitive to politics is not enough. Our political understanding with the speed of changes in the political situation and so frequently there are right and "left" deviations. The main problem has been rightist tendencies. Being sensitive to politics is not enough to keep up with the development of the situation. From time to time, the deviation between the right and the "left" occurs, and the leaning right occurs more often. Sometimes in our work with foreigners we let down our guard, lack a serious sense of responsibility, our organizational discipline is inadequate, and we don't ask our superiors for guidance frequently enough. Moreover, our internal organization is not good enough nor has supervision been adequate. Our ranks are not pure and honest enough. We often make mistakes both large and small. We should be able to overcome all these problems through more training and by becoming more conscientious.

II.

Foreign cultural work is one of the important tasks of the Party in carrying out the international class struggle. Foreign cultural work should be strongly political, ideological and militant while at the same time be cultural and friendly. "The basic policy in foreign cultural work is: guided by the Party's foreign policy guidelines, based on the principle of combining politics and culture, being both people-to-people and official, and operating according to a plan that integrates international activities and domestic construction. The purpose of all this is to serve the general line on China's socialist construction as well as the Party's current tasks and ultimate strategic goals in the international class struggle."

For the past several years, we have generally done our work according to those principles. Here are some of the most important things that we have learned through our work.

1. Politics and Culture: Foreign work is one of the important tools for the international class struggle. The principles that politics is in command, the absolute leadership of the Party, strengthening the role of politics, ideology and militancy in our work.

First of all, foreign cultural work must thoroughly implement the strategic line of the Party and country specific as well as regionally specific policies in foreign affairs work, clarify our strategic direction and political purpose, and strengthen political sensitivity. We must be good at finding and seizing opportunities to do cultural work. We oppose cultural exchanges for their own sake. We need to avoid making mistakes such as the tendency to carry on exchanges with no defined purpose and blind enthusiasm for dealing with Western capitalist countries and so neglecting the vast middle ground between East and West. Over the past few years, we have adjusted our work according to changes in the international situation, focusing on the Asian, Africa, and Latin America. Our policy of working especially hard in Japan, Cuba, Iraq, and Guinea, is completely correct and has been useful in isolating U.S. imperialism and its most valued servants.

Foreign cultural work serves politics. Part of this work involves understanding the nature of cultural and programs of friendly activities, distinguishing between different kinds of opportunities, places and contacts, distinguish between different kinds of specialization, stay aware of the both the bottom line in cultural struggles and our actual achievements, bring into full play the potential of our work both as a tool of struggle and as a tool for bringing people together. We should oppose the tendency to make culture to become fuzzy and to vulgarize politics. In our struggle against US imperialism and Japan's Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi pro-US monopoly group, we not only did not break off people-to-people exchanges with Japan but instead greatly increased friendly cultural exchanges with Japanese anti-imperialist and anti-Kishi forces. We have achieved tremendous results.

When we receive a progressive Japanese literary delegation, we took advantage of the situation and made a big fuss about how we stand together with the Japanese people in opposing US imperialism. On the other hand, when we receive a semi-official Japanese Go chess players delegation, we don't stress it. That is politics. A Muslim pilgrimage group strictly enforces religious practices and strengthens friendly contacts. That is politics. We present the revolutionary opera "The White-haired Girl" can export to Cuba but send a soft and graceful dance troupe to Cambodia.

Cultural work falls under the category of ideological work. All those involved in going abroad and reeving foreigners, imports and exports, and international activities cannot, over the long run, fail to get involved in issues such as how to properly present themselves, how to actively supporting the national progressive culture of all peoples, and how to correctly combat the decadent culture of the imperialists and the modern revisionist literary and cultural thinking. In order to continuously improve the ideological level of foreign cultural work, we need to study the works of Marxist-Leninism and Mao Zedong, the Party's general line on socialist construction, the Party's policy guidelines on education and other topics, and strengthen our research and study on trend of international cultural and literary thinking. Only in this way can we come to know ourselves and know others, fight to gain the initiative, develop specific goals, and to win all our battles.

The political and ideological struggle in foreign cultural work is sharp and clear. The imperialists and the international reactionaries have tried every means to destroy and obstruct the cultural exchanges between ourselves and the peoples of the world. The imperialists often fabricated "Two Chinas" plots in international activities. The decadent, reactionary culture of the imperialists and the cultural and literary thinking of international revisionism are fighting with our socialist culture for position on the battlefield. They are attacking and infiltrating us. The task of our foreign cultural work is to unite all international forces that can be united as well as to expose and attack all kinds of plots and tricks of the imperialists, the international reactionaries and the modern revisionists.

At the same time, we need to consolidate and strengthen international cultural exchanges with our own country's proletarian ideological camp. Therefore, foreign cultural activities must be more militant, take clear positions, be firm in our principles and oppose the tendency to make losing and unprincipled compromises. Even as we become more militant, we need to recognize that the international class struggle is much more complicated than the domestic class struggle. We need to distinguish between US imperialism and other kinds of imperialisms, between international reactionaries and semi-reactionaries, between revisionists and semi-revisionists, and to distinguish between the characteristics of different problems and determine how our approach should different according to time, place and other specific conditions. We need to make clear our direction or attack and the strategic aspect of our struggle. We must avoid committing the deviation errors of failing to distinguish between what is primary and what is secondary, of attacking in all directions at once, in an emotional approach, and in being arrogant and irritable.

2. We are both non-governmental and official. Foreign cultural work should be carried out as both non-governmental and governmental work. The people should be primary. First of all, starting from Chairman Mao's strategic thinking on the international class struggle, our foreign cultural and friendship activities, whether done through government or through civil society, are chiefly aimed at uniting and fighting for the broad masses of people in all countries and all forces that can be united to oppose the imperialists led by the United States. Secondly, although China has diplomatic relations with just 35 countries, we have cultural exchanges and friendly exchanges with over 160 countries and regions. Many of these, such as the Latin American countries, do not have diplomatic relations with China. All have established friendly cultural relations through people-to-people exchanges. One of

these, bingren [Note: transliteration of uncertain country name, likely misprint], with 11 groups dedicated to friendship with China. Moreover, people-to-people exchanges often create favorable conditions for establishing relations between governments. Cultural and friendship work has mass characteristics. We should develop people-to-people friendly exchanges even in countries with which we have established diplomatic relations.

Slighting the role of people-to-people exchanges in international activities, betrays a weakness in one's understanding of the perspective of the masses, and is an error.

Naturally, establishing government-to-government cultural relations and consolidating them with agreements on cultural cooperation are also very positive. Cultural cooperation between socialist countries is a new type of relationship done on the basis of equality and mutual benefit and mutual assistance. This kind of government-to-government cooperation facilitates building socialist culture and the unity of the socialist camp. The implementation of cultural cooperation agreements makes cultural cooperation more planned, purposeful, and effective. We also need to establish official cultural relations with nationalist or ordinary capitalist countries with which we have established diplomatic relations. If possible and appropriate, we should also enter into cultural cooperation agreements with them on the principle of equality and mutual benefit. The purpose of this is to develop friendly relations between our two countries, to find direct and indirect allies in the struggle against the US-led group of imperialist countries, and to use this relationship to engage with the people of those countries. We have stressed the importance of work with the royal families of Cambodia, Afghanistan, Yemen and other countries.

"This is beneficial to our neighborly good friendship with them, supports their anti-imperialist and neutral position, and helps us through them influence the people" (line drawing).

We should also actively promoting people-to-people contact with national governments of independent countries that have not established diplomatic relations with us in order to develop official contacts, in order to facilitate winning them over and influence with them, to fight against the "Two Chinas" plot of US imperialism. And as for capitalist countries that have not established diplomatic relations with us, we should, where it is to our advantage, we should not miss opportunities to organize special cultural and friendship activities and contacts with non-governmental organization in order to carry on a certain degree of official contact. This will help divide the imperialist group and isolate US imperialism as much as possible. Of course, we should not cherish any illusions while engaging in official contacts and exchanges with imperialist countries and countries where the capitalist class and reactionaries hold power. When they impose restrictions on us, we should use our contacts among the people to carry on the necessary struggle. In carrying on those struggles, we our work should be guided by a policy by what is advantageous, reasonable and not excessive.

Failing to pay attention to divisions in the imperialist camp and trying to make use of all the positive factors, even temporary ones, in the fight against imperialism is a "leftist" deviation that is also wrong.

3. International activities and domestic construction: international activities and domestic construction must be balanced and integrated. Foreign cultural work is part of international activities. Foreign cultural work plays a part in our effort to create a long-term peaceful international environment as to create favorable conditions for the rapid construction of Chinese socialism. At the same time, foreign cultural activities and investigation and research help us to understand international cultural trends and scientific achievements. These achievements serve as reference points for China's socialist construction. Moreover, as internationalists we are obliged to help

one other and support each other in the construction of socialist countries, to support the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of all countries, and to support the struggles of the colonial and dependent peoples against imperialism and colonialism. Therefore, we should actively mobilize the forces needed to carry on foreign cultural work. In particular, due to the current situation, it is even more important to stress foreign cultural work, to strengthen this battlefield, and establish and strengthen strong teams in the relevant departments and localities to do foreign cultural work in line with the current international situation and the Party's task to carry out the international class struggle. We must oppose the separation of the socialist construction of our country from international activities and avoid the tendency of think of foreign cultural activities as non-essential work.

On the other hand, we must also understand the most fundamental problem. We must strive to build China into a powerful and modern socialist industrialized country, with modern agriculture, modern scientific culture and modern national defense. The achievements of China's socialist construction are not only the foundation for our international activities, but also the major milestones on the way to the elimination of the capitalist system from the world and the development of Marxist-Leninism. China's socialist construction is based on self-reliance. It does not pin its hopes on foreign aid. The progress of science and culture also depends principally on the mass line. Pushing hard for cultural revolutions and technological revolutions, blind faith in foreigners, reliance on foreign aid, and being keen to engage in activities with foreign countries only with some vague purpose are also errors.

Foreign cultural activities and domestic cultural and educational construction should be mutually re-enforcing. When planning foreign cultural activities, in addition to political and professional considerations, we should harmonize them with the achievements of and plans for domestic cultural and educational construction. In this way, we will be able to make an overall plan for introducing foreign countries to achievements in the building education and culture in China. At the same time, we need to be able to systematically and critically absorb the progressive scientific culture of the countries of the world in order to serve the needs of our national construction. The tendency to sometimes merely passively cope than to plan our current foreign cultural work must be swiftly overcome.

China's foreign cultural work differs in its very essence from the foreign cultural activities of the imperialists. What they do are things like cultural aggression, spiritual enslavement, and even cultural activities that open the way to foreign expansionism and military aggression. We also have differences in political line with the foreign cultural work of certain socialist countries that is merely enthusiastic about opening up contact with Western countries and casually sacrifices principles for the sake of compromise and cooperation. It turns a blind eye to the infiltration of bourgeois ideology and decadent culture. Our experiences over the past decade have shown us that the overall line and specific guidelines of the Party's foreign cultural work are correct. We must continue to work along those lines.

III.

At present, the world is seeing a storm surge against US imperialism and colonialism and a struggle against modern revisionism. The world is also moving in the direction of the international communist movement. We are on the eve of great changes in the international situation. We do foreign cultural in harmony with this excellent situation. We work fully and actively, playing our proper role in supporting the anti-imperialist struggle of the people of all countries in the world, and in isolating and combating US imperialism and modern revisionism.

Towards the socialist countries, we should continue to develop cultural and friendly exchanges and implement the policy of warmth, friendliness. We should do more

work to maintain and strengthen the unity of the socialist camp. When we have differences with the Soviet Union and a few other socialist countries on the principles of Marxist-Leninism, we should take a clear stand, treat them circumspectly, and act completely in accordance with the guiding principles of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to achieve victory by counter-attacking, persisting in the struggle, allowing for unforeseen circumstances, insisting on unity and avoiding splitism. At present, in our interactions with the Soviet Union, we should suitably reduce the scope of our engagement and mostly engage with them in some literary and sports activities. We should be cautious about the import of films and books from the Soviet Union. We should be discreet according to the nature of the cultural product: we should support political, ideological and artistic works that are healthy and restrict those that conflict with the Marxist-Leninism viewpoint. We should treat other socialist countries differently from the Soviet Union. Where appropriate we should strengthen our work with them but not be too obvious about it.

We should continue to concentrate on Asia, Africa and Latin America in our foreign cultural work. We must implement a policy of not missing opportunities, making steady progress and husbanding our resources according to the specific situations in different countries. We should encourage and support the peoples of those countries now actively fighting US imperialism and colonialism, strive to achieve the unity of all forces that can be united, and isolate the few pro-American and anti-China reactionaries and strive to open up new battlefronts.

In Asia, we should continue to strengthen our work in Japan and develop cultural and friendly exchanges with countries in Asia with which we have established diplomatic relations. We should also seek opportunities in Indonesia and India to conduct appropriate cultural and cultural activities. In Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Iran, Turkey, we should look for clues and open the door to cultural exchanges.

In Africa, we should consolidate our positions in countries where we have already established diplomatic relations and keep up with the surge in the numbers of countries achieving independence and in anti-colonial movements. We should greatly develop our work in Africa, and especially in Black Africa, and build open cultural and friendly activity points in the Congo and places. In the newly independent African countries, we should expose and attack the "two Chinas" plot of US imperialism, and through people-to-people activities win officials over to our side, and fight hard to drive out the Chiang Kai-shek clique.

In Latin America, we should continue to strengthen our work in Cuba, consolidate our South American positions in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela, and seek out all types of relationships there. We should also develop our work in Mexico and other Central American countries.

In the Western capitalist countries, we should continue to maintain appropriate exchanges with the Nordic countries, strengthen our cultural work base in Switzerland, and appropriately increase the number of non-governmental exchanges with Britain, France and Italy, and try to find a way to carry out work in Greece, Austria, Spain and Portugal.

Towards the United States, we should continue to carry out the policy of isolating it. We should, however, distinguish the government from the people. At an appropriate time, we may be able to selectively invite some progressives and moderates to come to China. We should also strengthen our propaganda work in the United States.

With respect to international organizations, international conferences and international events on culture, insist on the principle "with us and without Chiang Kai-shek" and oppose the "two Chinas" plot. As long as that principle is respected, we can normally, where it is useful to us or there is a political necessity, actively

participate and do work. All personnel and delegations going abroad need to be trained for doing this work.

On the professional side, planning should be strengthened. Use various specialties according to their strengths, cooperate flexibly, and strengthen especially activities and work in such areas as arts and athletics and with journalists and writers.

Vigorously strengthen propaganda work. Make full use of effective propaganda tools such as film, television, radio, books and exhibitions, to publicize the party's general line, Mao Zedong Thought, China's socialist construction, the Three Red Banners, and China's peaceful foreign policy. We should expose US imperialist policies of aggression and war and criticize modern revisionism. Our most important task is to use the actions and behavior of US imperialism, that most backward of teachers by negative example, to defeat the ugly lackeys of US imperialism lurking within the peoples of the world. Special attention should be paid to improving the quality of propaganda aimed at foreign countries.

IV.

In order to consolidate the achievements of the past decade of foreign cultural work, and to take the initiative to carry out this work, we must strengthen political and ideological leadership, better grasp the strategic thinking and strategic principles of Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee on the international class struggle, and draw on lessons learned in our past work, overcome bureaucracy, overcome rightist thinking and prevent "leftist" deviations.

We need to further strengthen our investigations and research work on international cultural thinking, so that we can make timely reports foreign cultural and literary trends. On the other hand, we should also do comprehensive analysis and reports at regular intervals. We should so actively develop our intelligence work on scientific work being done in foreign countries.

The institutions and organization of foreign cultural work should be further improved and strengthened. The timely establishment of local organizations for cultural and friendship work with foreign countries should be given priority. Training up new talents for the ranks of foreign cultural workers should be take priority. Institutions dedicated foreign cultural and friendship work should be established and strengthened in a timely and focused manner. Stress honesty in the ranks of foreign cultural workers train young people for this work.

The necessary working conditions of the Foreign Language Commission itself must be resolved in order to meet the requirements of increasing work.

Within the ranks of foreign cultural workers the study of Mao Zedong Thought, the general line of socialist construction, the party's foreign policy, and of the international situation should be strengthened. Encourage seeking truth from facts, be serious and responsible, ask for guidance and report on major issues, report on the rules, strictly observe discipline and maintain a good working style in foreign affairs work, guard against arrogance and rashness, be modest and prudent, ensure that the future foreign cultural work will be carried out in a smooth and healthy manner, and work hard to implement the Party's general line on socialist construction and on the strategic tasks in the international struggle.

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