

TEXT 22

UNFOLD CRITICISM OF “WATER MARGIN”

In accordance with an instruction from our great leader Chairman Mao, this newspaper and other journals have begun criticism and discussion of the novel *Water Margin*.

This is another struggle of great importance on our country's political and ideological front and is a component part in the implementation of Chairman Mao's important directives on studying theory and combating and preventing revisionism; it will give a powerful impetus to deepening the study of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is hoped that the vast number of workers, peasants and soldiers who form the backbone force in theoretical study, professional theoretical workers, cadres and the masses will take an active part in the discussion.

Chairman Mao recently pointed out: **“The merit of the book *Water Margin* lies precisely in the portrayal of capitulation. It serves as teaching material by negative example to help all the people recognize capitulationists.”** He also added: **“*Water Margin* is against corrupt officials only, but not against the emperor. It excludes Chao Kai from the 108 people. Sung Chiang pushes capitulationism, practises revisionism, changes Chao's Chu Yi Hall to Chung Yi Hall, and accepts the offer of amnesty and enlistment. Sung Chiang's struggle against Kao Chiu is a struggle waged by one faction against another within the landlord class. As soon as he surrenders, Sung Chiang goes to fight Fang La.”** [See notes on last page.—*Tr.*]

This teaching by Chairman Mao penetratingly exposes the essence of *Water Margin* in preaching a capitulationist line and brings to light the true features of Sung Chiang who practises revisionism and capitulationism. In *Water Margin* Sung Chiang is a member of the landlord class. He worms his way into the ranks of the peasants who have risen in uprising, usurps the leadership of the Liangshan Mountain insurgent army, pushes a capitulationist line—“simply waiting for an offer of amnesty and enlistment from the imperial court”—and eventually becomes a vermin undermining the peasant revolution and a faithful lackey of the feudal dynasty. The authors of *Water Margin* did their best to prettify and extol Sung Chiang's capitulationist line. This book *Water Margin* is indeed rare teaching material by negative example.

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Since the book came out, there always have been different opinions about its main tendency. At one time after liberation, it was lauded by some people as “an immortal epic of peasant revolution”; they even went so far as to ascribe Sung Chiang’s capitulationist line, which represents the interests of the landlord class, to the irreproachable “limitations of the peasantry,” and they described their viewpoint as “historical materialist viewpoint.” In fact, just as Chairman Mao has pointed out, Lu Hsun [(1881-1936), a great revolutionary, thinker and writer—*Tr.*] said long ago that “*Water Margin* makes it quite clear that because they were not against the emperor, they accepted the offer of amnesty and enlistment when the government troops arrived and set out to fight other brigands for the state—brigands who did not ‘enforce justice on behalf of heaven.’ They were lackeys after all.” To call the capitulationist Sung Chiang a revolutionary, to extol his revisionism and describe such praise as “historical materialism,” and to confound his capitulationist line with the line of persevering in peasant uprisings—these are important questions; is it not necessary for us to thoroughly thrash them out?

To study and understand Chairman Mao’s instructions and unfold the criticism and discussion of *Water Margin* are of great and profound significance not only to the study of classic literature, but also to literature, philosophy, history, education and other fields and to our Party and people in upholding Marxism and combating revisionism and adhering to Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line both now and in the future and both in this century and the next. We need to draw lessons from *Water Margin*, that teaching material by negative example, sum up historical experience, learn how to distinguish in complicated struggles a correct line from an erroneous one and know what capitulationists are like. The history of our Party over the last 50 years or so proves that whoever practises revisionism practises capitulationism—class capitulationism in home affairs and national capitulationism in foreign affairs. This was the case with Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao—both capitulated to Soviet revisionist social-imperialism. At present, our country is in an important period of historical development. We must adhere to the Party’s basic line and policies, and we must uphold the principles advanced by Chairman Mao—“**Practise Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don’t split; be open and aboveboard, and don’t intrigue and conspire,**” unite with all the forces that can be united with, criticize revisionism and push the socialist revolution and construction forward.

Through the criticism and discussion of *Water Margin*, let us conscientiously study the Marxist theory, continue to criticize Lin Piao’s counter-revolutionary revisionist line, and carry through to the end the

struggle in the superstructure in which the proletariat triumphs over the bourgeoisie and Marxism over revisionism!

(September 4)

Translator's notes:

1. *Water Margin*: a Chinese novel, describing a peasant war towards the end of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.), that has been circulated for several hundred years.
2. Chao Kai: founder of the insurgent peasant army in the novel.
3. The 108 people: the 108 captains of the peasant insurgents.
4. Sung Chiang: a main character in the novel who has usurped the leadership of the insurgent peasant army.
5. Chu Yi Hall and Chung Yi Hall: the assembly hall where the peasant insurgents in the novel meet to discuss matters. What Chao Kai meant by *chu yi* was to unite and rise in revolt; what Sung Chiang meant by *chung yi* was to be loyal to the emperor.
6. Kao Chiu: a corrupt official in the novel and a faithful lackey of the emperor.
7. Fang La: leader of another insurgent peasant army.