

Peter-Weiss-Stiftung für Kunst und Politik e.V.

Appeal for a Worldwide Reading on the Anniversary of the Political Lie on March 20, 2008

For the third time the Peter Weiss Foundation for Art and Politics calls upon cultural institutions, theatres and interested individuals to join in a worldwide reading on March 20th, the anniversary of the political lie. The essay "In Memory of the Forgotten" by the Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) will be read.

It is especially meaningful now, right before the Olympic Games (August 8-24, 2008 in Beijing), to draw attention to the censorship, the silence decreed on matters related to China's most recent history, Tibet, the enormously high number of death sentences, the collaboration with the regime in Sudan and, not least, the imprisonment of civil rights activists. As recently as three weeks ago the 34 year-old activist Hu Jia, known for his commitment to human rights and rights for those infected by HIV, was put in prison after a six-month house arrest.

China is a country without any memory when it comes to certain issues. The majority of those who grew up in China in the nineties have no clear notion of what happened during the massacre in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989. Research into the Cultural Revolution is forbidden. Public commemoration of the 500,000 intellectuals who were imprisoned or sent to labour camps during the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956-57 is also not allowed. The regime preaches harmony. Because he continually called upon the Chinese to remember their past, the regime slowly grew suspicious of Lu Xun, who had always been presented as a strong supporter of the Revolution.

In the summer of 2007, after Lu Xun's work vanished from the reading lists of a few American universities, China's minister of education ordered certain of his texts, those that had been read out on June 4, 1989, to be struck from schoolbooks and substituted by the feudal sagas of Jin Yong. Lu Xun was already threatened by censorship during his lifetime. Even after 1949 his work and photos were edited and reinterpreted due to political circumstances.

The aim of our events and activities is to raise awareness of the form and content of political communication. Since lies belong to the equipment of political groups at the start of the twenty-first century, it is crucial that the strength of those who protest against them is not weakened.

On occasion of the third anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq, the Peter Weiss Foundation initiated for the first time a worldwide reading on March 20, 2006. On this "anniversary of the political lie" Eliot Weinberger's text "What I Heard about Iraq" was read at events and over the radio. On March 20, 2007 over 1.2 million people listened to two reportages by Anna Politkovskaya.

On March 20, 2008 the text by Lu Xun will be submitted in all universal languages by the Peter Weiss Foundation for Art and Politics. To sign up for this reading on the third anniversary of the political lie please contact: info@peterweissstiftung.de