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The Chinese press in an age of reform

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THE CHINESE PRESS IN AN AGE OF REFORM

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese press in the post-Mao period has experienced many significant changes which have profoundly influenced the nation's political, economic and social life. These changes were not only limited to the fast increase of the number of newspapers, greater diversity, and improvement of news quality, but also represented by journalists' advocating political and economic reforms while struggling for their own professional independence and freedom of expression. Though the press has experienced various political oscillations and still has a long way to go in achieving real political freedom, the historical changes in the press and its significant contributions to the nation's modernization and democratization process should not be neglected. This study discusses and evaluates the changing status of the Chinese press and its role in reform movements in post-Mao China. It concludes that the press has been transforming from a uniform, rigidly controlled, and centrally directed propaganda instrument into a pluralistic, informational, and livelier press. The essence of this transformation is that the vertical, downward communication links that the Party preferred are being supplemented, if not completely supplanted, by horizontal links that have enabled various social groups to learn about each other's concerns and demands. The new press is thus able to serve not only the political authorities but to discharge effectively its duties to inform, enlighten, and entertain the common people and enable them to gain access to information previously denied them.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPCC</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>The Nationalist Party (Kuomintang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>SMPO</td>
<td>State Media and Publications Office</td>
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PREFACE

Speaking at a national conference of propaganda chiefs held in Beijing in July 1989, after the crackdown of the prodemocracy movement, Chinese premier Li Peng blamed the Chinese press as "one of the major sources that led to the turmoil and rebellion" and referred to it as "a disaster area hit hardest" by the ideological flooding of bourgeois liberalization (People's Daily, 7/21/1989). In a long article published in the same newspaper on August 9, Song Muwen, the new director of the State Media and Publication Office, summarized what appeared to be the official explanation of what happened in Chinese journalism in the past decade:

For many years, the ideological trends of 'bourgeois liberalization' and decadent ideas of every description have occupied a great deal of space in the press, such a phenomenon is unprecedented in our history. It is almost beyond our imagination. It is a bitter fruit that we have to swallow. The press...extolling capitalism, smearing China's socialism, negating China's cultural tradition, distorting the entire history, propagating abstract democracy, freedom, and humanism, and directly vilifying and attacking Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought.... All these created a rather perilous situation and aimed at toppling the government.

For decades, the Chinese press remained a uniform, rigidly controlled, and centrally directed instrument of propaganda and did little more than act as the mouthpiece of the Party. The Chinese leaders were fully aware that communist power is based, above all, on thought control. Thus they placed enormous emphasis on political propaganda to justify the legitimacy of its rule. Suddenly the Party control over the media collapsed and the press changed into something fearful to the conservative leaders.
It became a forum for diverse ideas and sometimes a prominent channel of dissent, which not only opposed the status quo and advocated changes, but paved the way for the nationwide democratic movement in 1989. During that movement, journalists not only showed their sympathy for the students in covering their demonstrations, but became active participants in the demonstrations themselves.

These unprecedented events raised a lot of questions: How had Chinese journalists come to the point of marching in the streets? What changes took place in the press with regard to journalists’ practices, attitudes, and beliefs in these years? What were the factors behind these changes? What were the significant implications of these changes? What role did the press play in the political, economic, and social reforms? Who were reformers and who were the opponents of the press reform? What were the major differences of opinion that surfaced between the two? How did reform leaders use the press to advocate reform programs? What were the influences of Chinese tradition and Western ideas on the contemporary Chinese press? How did the Chinese population react to the press reform? What is the future of the Chinese press?

Much has been written about the political, economic, and social reforms in the post-Mao era, but few of the studies have focused on the press. Press activity is part of the environment in which we live. The study of the development of any society presupposes the study of the press in that society, because the press is an institution woven into the fabric of society. If we don’t understand the way the press works, we don’t understand the society. This is especially true in the case of China. The Chinese press was charged with a difficult balancing role of serving two masters: the nation’s
political authorities and the public. In implementing this dual mission, the press played a significant role in promoting economic reform, political liberalization, and accelerating social changes. In a time of crisis, it can serve as a catalyst for revolutionary transformation. The best scholarship so far has been done on the use of the press in achieving national independence and in political indoctrination. Certainly, the part played by the press in these areas should not be underestimated, but there are other important dimensions of the recent history of the press. In addition, because of recent, rapid changes in China, anything written on these subjects tends to become outdated quickly. This study is thus undertaken with the conviction that improved knowledge of the Chinese press will add to our understanding of changes in China during a fascinating and confusing period.

In finding answers to the questions raised above, I have three basic objectives in mind: to provide a concrete description of the changes in the Chinese press in the post-Mao era; to show how these changes are the logical offshoot of broad economic, political, and cultural trends; and to illustrate the important role played by the press in the political and economic reforms. Emphasis will be on the analysis of journalists' involvement in the promotion of economic and political reforms while struggling for their own professional independence and freedom of expression. It is hoped that achievement of the three tasks will result in a reasonably clear and comprehensive picture.

Since journalistic activism is the major concern of this study, the discussion will focus on the printed media, especially newspapers and periodicals, but also includes news agencies, journalism education and research, and news broadcasting of television and
radio stations. Other mass media such as literature and art, film and stage, music, or other entertainment-oriented activities will not be included except for brief mentioning when necessary. Television broadcasting developed rapidly in China recently but its role was primarily educational and entertaining. The news programs of television and radio broadcasting depended mainly on the nation’s printed media, usually consisting of reading news stories or articles provided by Xinhua and major official newspapers. The study will thus focus discussion on printed media.

This study is basically a historical survey rather than a quantitative content analysis. It is therefore based mainly on the published materials that were available in the Chinese press and the professional periodicals. This includes what Chinese journalists have written during these years as well as official documents, important speeches of CCP leaders on journalism work, policy directives and regulations from the CCP Propaganda Department, daily information briefing and research reports from major official news media. The study also draws from Western writings related to Chinese media during this period. When applicable, observations are drawn from interviews I conducted with Chinese journalists and from my personal experience.

The study uses Pinyin, China’s official phonetic system, to romanized Chinese terms and names, instead of the Wade-Giles system. All Chinese family names precede their given names, except those who chose to follow the American tradition. The title of Chinese publications is romanized, either italicized or underlined, with English translation provided in parentheses at first mentioning. The English title, if better known in this country, will then be used consistently in the text.
In conducting research for and writing this dissertation, I have been fortunate in obtaining much valuable assistance from many people. I am especially indebted to the professors in my dissertation committee who provided me with continuing guidance and encouragement during the process. For financial support I am grateful to the East West Center for a field trip grant. I owe much gratitude to my colleagues in Beijing who never failed to assist me in collecting and mailing the materials I needed desperately in this research. I am also indebted to a dozen Chinese journalists who were either in exile in the United States or came to this country for advanced studies. Their frank and insightful responses enabled me to piece together a vivid picture of the Chinese events and the press activities in ways that would not have been conceivable at all with only written documentation. To protect my sources from further exposure than they already are, I have identified them only by the initials of their names. To all of the above, I would like to extend my sincere thanks, though I alone am responsible for any errors that remain.

I was prompted to do this research by the rebellion of the usually tame Chinese press in the spring of 1989 and its subsequent crackdown. As an eye-witness and participant of the earlier part of the unfolding drama, I tried to record the story as exciting living history. China, I know, will not always be like this. Someday it will be a freer place. Chinese journalists will think and write what they want freely. In that hope and for that reason, I write this dissertation.
CHAPTER I
THE SETTING

Journalism as a field of human endeavor must be situated in its historical, cultural and political context. China's modern press has grown up and operates today in the shadow of the nation's long cultural tradition and the influence of that tradition is plainly visible on the press. Thus, to appreciate fully the changes in the Chinese press in the 1980s and their impact on the changing Chinese society, which is the purpose of this research, requires a brief description of the historical development of the press.

Because of its complexity, the history of the press is not easily summarized. Therefore, in addition to a brief description of the historical development of the press, three major influences upon that history will be emphasized here: the Confucian tradition, Marxist-Leninist ideology, and Western ideas of democracy and freedom. The Chinese press today, in a very real sense, is a product of the interaction of these influences, and some knowledge of them is necessary for understanding the press operation today.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHINESE PRESS

The Chinese were among the first people to print newspapers. During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.), the imperial government set up a special office under one of its nine chief ministers (jiuqing) and made it responsible for regularly distributing official information to the offices of regional governments in the capital. This
systematized form of distributing information gradually developed into the Di Bao (Court Gazette) of the Tang dynasty (618-906). The development of the circuits system (fan zhen Zhidu) in the late 8th century, in particular, increased the demand for communication between central government and local circuit controllers (jie-du shi), which led to the establishment of an official news bulletin that summarized court activities and published imperial decrees and situation reports from local governments. Di Bao were also known as Chao Bao (Court Press), Yi Bao (Courier Press), and Zhuang Bao (Bulletin) in later dynasties. All of these rudimentary newspapers were more or less official news bulletins of the imperial government.

During the Song Dynasty (960-1268) appeared some unofficial publications such as Xiao Bao (Small Newspaper), which were run either by lower-ranking officials or private publishers. They reported court activities, official appointments, replacement and punishment, documents to and from the throne, and other information that were not published in the official Di Bao. The imperial government accused these unofficial publications of "spreading rumors," "distorting current political affairs," and "misleading the readers" and made repeated efforts to suppress these publications and outlawed them by issuing imperial proclamations. The government employed specialists to check any official information before release for publication (ding ben) and act as watchdogs to investigate any violations. The development of official gazettes and the press censorship that began in the Song dynasty continued without interruption into the early 20th century.
Although private publishers were allowed to run newspapers during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), they had to print only the official version of events or reprinted what was published in the official Di Bao. By then the publication and distribution of these newspapers known as Jing Bao (Beijing Gazette) became an occupational activity. They were either hand-written or printed from a clay plate that was coated with a mixture of coal dust and water. It was only after 1638 that wooden movable type was broadly used in printing. The Ming rulers set strict rules to prohibit any information that the government believed improper for general readership from being printed in these semi-official newspapers. Censorship became an established policy of the government which set up a special department to enforce it.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the imperial government run the official bulletin known as Di Chao (Court Bulletin) distributed mainly to high government officials. Meanwhile, Jing Bao continued to be published. The daily pamphlet (3.5" X 9", ranging from 10 to 40 pages) had a dozen of versions published by different publishing houses in the capital. They provided the primary sources of information for lower-ranking officials and scholars who constituted the reading public of China, commonly estimated at less than five percent of the population. Qing emperors introduced specific provisions forbidding "devilish publications and wicked talks" (zao yaoshu yaoyan). Anyone who were involved in "making and circulating these devilish ideas or publications" that endangered the imperial rule would be punished by death, imprisonment, exile from home, beating with heavy bamboo rods, or other penalties. In 1726, for example, two private newspaper publishers named Shao Nanshan and He
Yu’en were executed in Beijing for reporting Emperor Yongzheng’s extravagant holiday celebrations without official approval.⁹

The Chinese press remained in its rudimentary form until the mid-19th century, when modern press was brought to China by Western missionaries and businessmen. Under the pressure from the imperialist powers, the Qing rulers allowed foreigners to run newspapers in the foreign communities on the coast. Between 1840 and 1900, foreigners may have established more than 300 newspapers, most of them printed in Chinese and published in major coastal cities. Western missionaries alone published over 70 titles, the most influential of which were Wanguo Gongbao (International Review), Shanghai Xinbao (New Shanghai News), Shen Bao (Shanghai Daily), and Xinwen Bao (News Gazette).¹⁰ Shen Bao (1872-1949) was the longest-running of the foreign newspapers and Xinwen Bao (1893-1949) the most important one in the business world. Both were founded by foreigners and later taken over by the Chinese.¹¹

Repeated military and naval defeats by Western powers, especially the defeat of the Chinese imperial navy in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, prompted the Chinese nationalists and intellectuals to clamor for more reforms to save the nation. Inspired by high ideals of patriotism and influenced by Western ideas of democratic constitutionalism, Chinese intellectuals such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927), Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Tan Sitong (1865-98), and Yan Fu (1853-1921) established newspapers promoting reform and advocating a constitutional monarchy. In 1895-96, Kang Youwei started Zhongwai Jiwen (China and Overseas Review) and Qiangxue Bao (Self-Strengthening News), both of which were soon suppressed by the government. Shortly
thereafter, Liang Qichao began *Shiwu Bao* (Chinese Progress) in Shanghai in 1896, Yan Fu launched *Guowen Bao* (National News) in Tianjin in 1897, and Tan Sitong founded *Xiang Bao* (Hunan Daily) the next year. These newspapers propagated their new ideas with the aim to impress the public with the seriousness of the national crisis and the need for reform. They played key roles in the Wuxu Reform of 1898.\textsuperscript{12}

The failure of the Wuxu Reform inspired a new wave of Chinese democratic revolution launched by Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) in 1911. Realizing the importance of the press as a medium of public education, the bourgeois revolutionaries established their own newspapers, including *Zhongguo Ribao* (China Daily) in Hong Kong in January 1900, *Min Bao* in Japan in 1905 as official organ of the China Revolutionary League, *Minhu Ribao* (People's Voice) in Shanghai, and *Dajiang Bao* (Great River) in Wuhan. Other progressive newspapers and magazines emerged throughout the country in the early 20th century. By 1912 over 500 titles were being published with a combined circulation of 42 million.\textsuperscript{13} In the New Cultural Movement of 1915, the press served as the main organ to advocate new literature, vernacular Chinese, and new ethics, while opposing the Confucian tradition, old literature, and superstition. The press played a significant role in emancipating the mind of the people during the May Fourth Movement of 1919, a political and cultural movement calling for democracy and modernization in China.

Compared to the long tradition of inherited censorship, the press in the early 20th century was increasingly free to provide non-official information in the Western manner. It therefore undoubtedly took a leading role in national politics. Yet this trend toward a
freer press lacked two elements considered essential in the West: legal guarantees of freedom of speech and of freedom of the press from government control. Neither of the major political parties--the Nationalists (Guomindang) and the Communists--showed any real interest in a free press. There were flurries of talk about freedom of the press, mainly among intellectuals, but they were crushed from both left and right. Upon consolidating its power after 1927, the Guomindang government, "which wished to appear democratic but actually upheld authoritarianism," tightened press restrictions. Any criticism of the Guomindang had to be "Communist-inspired" or any sympathetic reporting of the Communist activities was labeled as "reactionary" and were banned. Over the ensuing decades offending journalists were arrested or assassinated and newspaper offices burned. Between 1929 and 1934 alone, the Guomindang banned the publication of 887 newspapers, magazines and books. "The power of the press has dwindled to almost nothing," wrote one critic. "There is less freedom of speech or publication than in any period from 1900."

In their political struggle against the Nationalists, the Chinese Communists paid enormous attention to ideological persuasion. That persuasion was accomplished primarily through newspapers and magazines. The Communists began their journalistic activities during and after the May Fourth Movement in 1919. In addition to Xin Qingnian (New Youth) and Meizhou Pinglun (Weekly Review) ran and edited by Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) and Li Dazhao (1889-1927), two of the influential figures in Chinese intellectual life during this period, Mao Zedong edited Xiangjiang Pinglun (Xiang River Review) in Hunan and Zhou Enlai put out Tianjin Xuesheng Lianhehui Bao (Bulletin of
the Tianjin Students' Federation) in Tianjin. These and other progressive publications helped integrate Marxism-Leninism into the labor movement in China and furthered the Communist revolution.

After its founding in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) set up newspapers in major urban centers. The most influential of these were Xiangdao (Guide Weekly), the first CCP central organ, and Zhongguo Qingnian (Chinese Youth), the organ of the Chinese Socialist Youth League. During the period of Guomindang-Communist cooperation in the mid-1920s, Mao worked as acting director of the Guomindang Propaganda Department and chief editor of its central organ, Zhengzhi Zhoukan (Political Weekly). In 1927 the Communists were driven out of the urban centers and forced to seek survival in remote rural areas in Jiangxi. There they established revolutionary bases known as the Jiangxi Soviet. On November 7, 1931, they began the Red China News Agency (the predecessor of today's Xinhua) and on December 11, the Hongse Zhonghua (Red China News), the central organ, which had a circulation of 40,000 in 1934. But, due to extremely difficult conditions during their epic Long March, news reporting was reduced to a minimum.

After reaching Shanxi Province in northwest China in October 1935, the Chinese Communists worked immediately to establish a propaganda network. In January 1936, Hongse Zhonghua resumed publication and one year later changed its name to Xin Zhonghua Bao (New China Daily), which merged with Jinri Xinwen (Today's News) in May 1941 to become Jiefang Ribao (Liberation Daily). The latter, together with Xinhua Ribao published by the CCP in several Guomindang-controlled cities, became the major
organ of the Communist Party. By 1940 communist-run newspapers and magazines in both areas of China reached about 700 titles. In the early days, the primary mission of the communist press was criticism of the Guomindang government in particular and capitalism in general. Yet the necessity of maintaining a Party line restricted the diversity of viewpoints. When the Communists consolidated their rule in Yan’an in the early 1940s, however, the major function of the press shifted to circulating official propaganda in order to whip up popular enthusiasm. The reform instituted in 1942 made the press a more effective mouthpiece of the Party. It was at this time that Mao defined the basic purpose of the press as propagating Party policy and educating, organizing, and mobilizing the masses.20

After the Communists established the People’s Republic in 1949, the Party gradually took control of all media outlets previously owned by the Guomindang as well as those owned by foreigners and private businesses and put them under absolute supervision of the Party. In the early 1950s, there emerged a closed and strictly controlled press system modeled after that of the Soviet Union, which dominated the media for over 30 years. In 1956 the Party encouraged reform of this system but backed off when journalistic criticism of the Party became serious.21 The press underwent another major shake-up during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, which reduced the number of newspapers to 58 compared to 648 before the shake-up began.22 The press and all other media fell into the hands of a group of radical leftists and did nothing but deifying Mao, lauding communist ideas, repudiating revisionist clique and capitalist roaders, and humiliating intellectuals. Under the guideline that news must serve politics,
the press coverage was characterized by falsification, exaggeration, and empty rhetoric that were neither readable nor believable.23

After the death of Mao and the return of Deng Xiaoping to power in the late 1970s, the government undertook major innovations in the course of national development. Among the resulting changes was the beginning of a new era in the news media. In contrast to Mao and his chief advisors in the old days when Party influence and radical revolutionary ideology pervaded every domain of social life, the new Chinese leaders were realistic and pragmatic. They put more emphasis on economic development than ideological purity. Deng's leadership was a much more flexible authoritarianism, permitting the emergence of differentiated, pluralistic media outlets and more diverse contents -- within certain limits. This de-emphasis of ideology made possible livelier media activities and the flourishing of less ideologically loaded information. A major goal of the new leadership was to encourage the media to promote economic modernization instead of class struggle. In other words, the leaders needed the press to mobilize the country if they were to realize the "four modernizations."24 This provided a suitable environment for journalism to flourish in China in the 1980s.

THREE SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

The history of the press in China shows clearly that though the Chinese invented paper, printing, and moveable type, and were among the first people to publish a newspaper, they never enjoyed a free press. Modern concepts of democracy and freedom have been known in China for nearly a century now, but they have never flourished
there. The Western ideology of Marxism-Leninism, on the other hand, was fitted neatly into traditional Chinese cultural patterns. As one scholar has pointed out, the role of the Chinese press as the Party’s mouthpiece manifests the "Confucian ethos in Leninist garb."25

CONFUCIAN TRADITION Confucianism, in various forms and interpretations, has constituted the mainstream of Chinese thought for more than two thousand years. It became the officially recognized imperial ideology and the object of a state cult during the Han Dynasty because of the advocation of Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C.). The subsequent Confucianization of Han politics made the Confucian tradition an integral part of the emerging national political culture. In time, Confucian ethics became virtually inseparable from the moral fabric of Chinese society.26 A comprehensive or thorough discussion of the Confucian tradition is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is necessary to note those features of that tradition that shed light on the press reform in the last decade or so.

First, China’s political tradition, embodied in the notion of tianming (mandate of heaven), has been authoritarian. It held that certain men were entitled by virtue acquired through education to wield political authority, while everyone else was obliged to honor their authority and act as their obedient subjects. This distinction between a small governing elite and the mass of the population was supplemented by a hierarchical structure of authority throughout the society embodying an intricate network of superior-inferior relationships. Within the political elite, the emperor, chosen by Heaven, stood alone at the top of the hierarchy, holding absolute power over all his officials and
subjects. The emperor's symbolic status as 帝子 (the Son of Heaven) ensured that the ultimate locus of political authority was in his person. 27

In such an elaborated tradition, there is no room for democracy and freedom. No Chinese ruler ever assumed that all men are created equal. The concept of individual freedom as legal right or civil liberty never formed in Chinese society. Statesmanship was the art of selecting, training, and indoctrinating a small elite whose members could then be trusted to run every aspect of public life in a vast empire. On the question of political and social systems, legalist Han Feizhi, the leading philosopher of government by law, believed that an "intelligent ruler" rules by law. When the rule of law is established, he suggested, the "great good government" obtains. 28 This philosophy was contradicted by Confucius, who said that if the ruler is good, laws will be unnecessary, and if the ruler is bad, laws will not be obeyed. Confucius believed that the best form of government is government by virtue. 29 The legalist school thus exercised little influence on Chinese political life. Virtue superseded law in the development of Chinese political and social institutions.

Centralized bureaucracy, strict hierarchy, and rigid thought control became the characteristic features of the Chinese empire. The exercise of absolute power by the emperor, the complete subjugation of peripheral states to the imperial control, and the total uniformity of thought achieved by ruthless enforcement of censorship, made it impossible for free public discussion to emerge. The imperial power was continuously strengthened at the expense of public freedom. As a result, the official press remained...
the mouthpiece of the imperial court and all unofficial publications were either suppressed or tightly censored.

Second, the Confucian tradition sustained a mutually reinforcing relationship between authority and education. The Confucian ethic held that political authority was the guardian of moral doctrine, the purpose of which was to cultivate the virtue of loyal subjects. Since personal virtue was a product of learning rather than something imposed by rules and regulations, the system placed greater emphasis on education, including moral teaching, than on force. Instilling virtue in the minds of men was the guarantee of good society and the best way to sustain trust in the government. Thus, a newspaper, like all other publications, was seen and used as a "textbook" for the society to learn from. Through publications, lectures, and schools extolling the tenets of Confucianism, imperial rulers tried to indoctrinate the population in what they regarded as the virtues of worthy subjects—filial piety, respect for elders and superiors, peaceful and industrious conduct and so on. They hoped thereby to bring or keep the masses within their ideological orbit by instilling loyalty and obedience to imperial rule. As a result of persistent indoctrination in these purposes, political apathy seeped into the minds of the people. Few people in traditional China dared or wanted to question the legitimacy of their rulers. Even when they disliked the performance of a given emperor, they accepted his rule as the will of Heaven.

The Communists have been as relentless in the use of ideological indoctrination as any imperial ruler ever was, though the substance of their ideology is unique in Chinese history. They continued to teach loyalty, obedience, and self-restraint, however,
thus continuing to negate or subdue the voice of individual freedom and liberty. Even today, most Chinese, especially the vast majority of peasantry, care very little about politics. They are neither loyal to existing authority nor opposed to it; they are instead concerned mainly with their daily lives. According to figures cited in the controversial television series River Elegy (He Shang), 74 percent of Chinese citizens want to avoid politics altogether, and 62 percent feel very cautious in discussing politics. This indifference to politics continues today. Political authority still comes from above, a condition to which the masses of China have always been accustomed. The pace of social and political change will likely quicken in the near future. But the traditional concept of an all-powerful ruler with a special mandate will also continue to resonate in the hearts and minds of the Chinese people for a long time to come.

Third, the Confucian tradition also provided a people-oriented strand of thought that moderated and humanized the ruler's exercise of absolute power. Given the absence of legal checks on government power (Chinese law was always merely an instrument of government rather than an inviolable constitution), what was to prevent the abuse of that power or guarantee that the government would serve the interests of society? The Confucian thought that "The people are the basis of the state" (minwei bangben) provided an answer. Mencius (372-289 B.C.) expounded Confucius's views about benevolent government by arguing that it was to the interest of the ruler who could win the hearts of the people. "The ruler is like a boat and the common people are like water," he argued. "It is the water who supports the boat, and it is also water that overturns the boat." In this minben thinking, the people are considered more important than the state
and the state is more important than the emperor. The ruler who does not act in accordance with the dao (way of heaven) is unfit and needs zhengming (rectification of names), and if that fails he must be criticized and rehabilitated, or deposed.32

What Confucius and his disciples stressed in this was the natural harmony between ruler and ruled. The hierarchical relationship, they believed, demanded not unconditional subordination but reciprocal obligation and expectation. In other words, subordination was subject to moral norms and subordinates were obliged to help the ruler maintain the proper order of human affairs. Over the centuries, it was from this profound sense of responsibility that the Chinese tradition of protest, dissent, and critique flowed.33 Within the authoritarian, hierarchical system, there was also room for critique and criticism. In the late nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals acted in this tradition when they introduced Western ideas; and this tradition of loyal dissent influences Chinese intellectuals today. Instead of challenging the tradition itself, Chinese intellectuals have protested in the name of the ruler's interests and sought reform within the established system. They directed their criticisms at particular bureaucrats rather than the emperor or the ruling party itself. This minben tradition, with its emphasis on harmonious relationships between people and rulers, helps explain the traditional preoccupation with supervising and correcting the bureaucracy and providing means for appealing its actions, while foreclosing channels for appeal against the emperors themselves.34

It seems anomalous that Confucianism was both an official ideology serving an authoritative government and a source of appeal against that government. In reality, the minben ideas functioned as a means for the ruling class to tap popular support. Exercise
of the rights it ostensibly guaranteed was effectively limited to actions that were constructive to the ruling class. Any action that threatened the authority was suppressed immediately. That is why, despite the fact that many Chinese emperors spoke out in favor of criticism, such criticism was always dangerous. In addition, the sanction for criticism was never safeguarded by institutional or legal protection. Over the ages, there were indeed many Confucian scholars who spoke out for right and justice at the risk of great personal danger, but public criticism in general played a weak and limited role.

Finally, the social tradition sustained by a huge bureaucracy choked almost every initiative for social change. As is the case with every institution in China, a newspaper there is never simply a business enterprise in the western sense. It is instead a social institution, a sort of enlarged family. According to Confucian tradition, every individual is a center from which relationships radiate in four directions—upward to his father, employer, and other overlords all the way to the emperor; downward to his sons, descendants and subordinates; and to the right and left with his brothers, friends, colleagues, and other equals. Sustaining this social structure is a ranking system that pervades all aspects of Chinese life. The "standard of official rank" today is so elaborately developed that the press, like similar institutions, is divided hierarchically into different ranks, thus, there are "central level," "provincial level," "prefectural level" and "county level" newspapers. Even journalists are differentiated according to whether they are "bureau-level," "department level," "section level," or the like. These rankings are important because they are closely related to power, wealth, status, wage, housing, and family. The measure of one’s success is the rank one reaches in sortings such as these.
To climb the ladder of rank order, one must not only be a good and knowledgeable journalist, but also have approved social and moral standards. That means disciplining and cultivating oneself so as to help maintain the social order. It also means obedience and loyalty to superiors, no criticism at all of those in higher authority, and good relationships with his colleagues. These traditional values are embodied into the criteria for a Party cadre or journalist today—good biaoxian, which literally means to manifest, display or show a good performance.\textsuperscript{35} For a journalist, good political biaoxian means standing firmly on the side of the Party and writing the news according to Party guidance. The centrality of biaoxian in allocating bonuses, pay raises, and promotions forces almost everyone (whether journalist, professor, or soldier) to honor the criteria of official virtue. In such a situation, one cannot expect the exercise of Western style individualism or journalistic freedom. Completely apart from political risk and simply for economic reasons, ordinary individuals strive to show good biaoxian. There are of course a few extremists who challenge the theory of natural harmony between rulers and ruled; but extremists are rarer in China than elsewhere, because Chinese believe in the "doctrine of mean" (zhongyong), another traditional value concept. The philosophical meaning of this concept is something like harmony or compromise. But for common people it simply means a middle-of-the-roadism. The process of Confucianization hobbled the individual Chinese to such a degree that he could not stand alone but must kowtow to superiors and cultivate the social connections he thought necessary to help him through life.
It is obvious that modern China has been and is changing. But the Confucian tradition remains a vital and conservative force in this changing society. Despite the erosion of faith in Confucian ideals among Chinese intellectuals, continuities based on those ideals remain realities in Chinese life. The recent history of the Chinese press, like everything else, is comprehensible only within the realm of those continuities.

WESTERN IDEAS OF DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM The invasion of China by Western powers in the 19th century forced the Chinese people into direct conflict with a civilization they did not comprehend and were in any case ill-prepared to appreciate. In this conflict, the Chinese empire fell apart because of corruption, conservativism, and backwardness. The impact of the West so fundamentally undermined the Confucian roots of the Chinese social order that scholars and others began to look to the West for solutions to the problems this caused. The effort to borrow from the West began with military modernization, but it then shifted to political and institutional change. Reformers who advocated these changes used the press to spread Western ideas of democracy and freedom as well as science and technology.

Initially, Western influence on the development of the Chinese press was more technical than political. The traditional Chinese press consisted of few outlets and served narrow functions. New printing and communication technology, however, made possible mass production and quicker distribution of printed material. New writing styles, improved layouts, and greater diversity of contents, as well as increased coverage of international news, sports events, human interest stories, and literary works attracted more and more readers. Business-oriented newspapers demonstrated the commercial
possibilities of the press by carrying large amounts of business news as well as commercial advertising. This was significant because it introduced the idea that the press was and could be an economic and service institution committed to making profits as well as providing news and other information services to society. These developments encouraged the idea that "objective and balanced reporting" was the only proper goal of journalism. But the European tradition of partisan press that journalists served as the representatives of various political factions and spokesmen for them also exerted strong influence on the Chinese press.

What really began the transition of the Chinese press from traditional indoctrination to modern propaganda were Western missionaries. Their idea of proselytizing through publications sowed seeds in the minds of many educated Chinese who began to run modern newspapers. But in the face of government restrictions, most of the early periodicals avoided political advocacy and controversy. Some reform papers, under the patronage of leading officials, sought reform only within the traditional Confucian framework. As Western ideas spread, however, new schools and newspapers began to advocate quite heretical doctrines. The humiliating defeat by Japan in 1895 gave fresh impetus to the discussion of such reforms and the result was a new Chinese press, one openly agitating for political reform.  

It was during this period that Chinese intellectuals, through the translations and writings of liberal reformers like Liang Qichao, Yan Fu, and Tan Citong, became acquainted with the ideas of such Western thinkers as Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Darwin, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Yan Fu, a leading advocate of Western ideas,
rejected Zhang Zhidong's slogan "Chinese things as essence, foreign things for utility" (Zhongxue weiti, Xixue weiyong) as "false learning." He attributed Western superiority to such basic non-Chinese features as political democracy and individual liberty and argued that only if its "authoritarian polity was replaced by constitutional democracy could China become strong and prosper." Such a change, Yan believed, could be achieved only by an "enlightenment of people's mind." Similarly, Tan Citong denounced the imperial practice of suppressing unofficial newspapers, and proudly presented his Xiang Bao (Hunan Daily) as the "mouthpiece of the people, an organ where they can publish their opinions freely."38

The most influential views on the role of the press were those of Liang Qichao, who described newspapers as the "eyes and ears" of rulers as well as "mouthpieces" of the people. The role of the press, Liang wrote, was to "remove clogs and promote communication" (qusai qiutong) by letting rulers hear the outside world and letting citizens speak their feelings freely.39 In another article, Liang redefined the role of the press as one of "supervising the government and guiding the masses." Liang wrote,

Government is entrusted by the people and is the servant of the people. Newspapers represent the people in expressing public feelings and speaking for the public. Thus a newspaper regards the government in such a way that a father or elder brother regards a son or younger brother--teaching him when he does not understand and reprimanding him when he gets something wrong.40

Liang's advocacy of freedom of the press, as Andrew Nathan noted, was not due to a concern for uncovering objective truth but to the political uses to which such freedom could be put. "One must intend to use one's words to change the world," Liang argued. "Otherwise, why utter them?" Liang's arguments set the tone for Chinese
newspapers in the 20th century, most of which were published for the purpose of political propaganda.⁴¹

During the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chen Duxiu, a prolific essayist active in the early Communist movement, advocated absolute freedom of the press. Searching for the cultural roots of China's trouble, Chen decided that the age-old political institutions were poorly suited to the realities of the modern world. To save this nation, he would "discard all traditional ideas..., create new political, economic and moral ideals, and build up a new spirit suitable to the new society."⁴² In an article entitled, "The Law and the Freedom of Speech," Chen argued that there must be absolute freedom of speech, unrestrained by any law, in order to discover the weakness of the present system and the shortcomings of the current law. If there is no freedom of speech, nothing better will be created. This was perhaps the boldest and most radical plea for freedom of the press ever made in China. The revolutionaries, however, wanted freedom for their own Party only. They believed that freedom of the press should work for the revolutionaries rather than for the warlords and imperialists.⁴³

The Nationalists took the same stand in rejecting the concept of universal free speech. "China can have only one revolutionary Party, the Guomindang (KMT), and no other political parties," one KMT publication read. "Under the rule of this Party, only those opinions which support the national revolution and stand by the KMT are worthy of our support and protection. All other public opinion, whether of opposition parties or of the counter-revolutionaries, are not only unworthy of toleration, but must be suppressed."⁴⁴ While claiming to be a popular, democratic government devoted to the
principle of free expression, the KMT tolerated no challenge to, or criticism of, its dominance; instead, it sought to suppress all undesirable reading materials. These experiences were painful for Chinese intellectuals, who heard promises of freedom but found themselves punished for even the mildest expression of dissent. The 1930 KMT Publication Law specifically stated that publications were forbidden to contain items designed to "undermine the KMT or violate the Three People's Principles" and violators were punishable by the prohibition of circulation, detention, or seizure of the publications.45

Moderate liberal thinkers, who espoused Western ideas of freedom and democracy, questioned the Guomindang policy of banning all publications "incompatible with the Three People's Principles." Hu Shi (1891-1962), Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) and Luo Longji (1898-1965) published several articles in Xinyue (New Moon), the organ of those liberals known as the "Xinyue school," criticizing the Guomindang policy that prohibited people from freely discussing national affairs. They argued that the press should be allowed to provide people the information they needed to follow public events intelligently; that the press should help mold public opinion by offering political alternatives in commentaries and editorials; and that it should encourage democracy by criticizing those in power, thereby helping to control their activities. They drew examples from history to show the futility of suppressing freedom, and argued that good public policies could stand the tests of criticism and discussion.46

All critics, however, conceded that the situation in China would not allow as much freedom as existed in the Western democracies. Few of them suggested immediate
adoption of freedom of the press as one of the natural rights of man. But they did suggest that the press should be free from censorship and suppression and the people generally free to speak and to print what they pleased. They agreed that the press must be punishable by law for abuses of its freedom. In other words, they believed some restraints were necessary and the government had a legitimate right to define those restraints. Yet they themselves could not agree on what the restraints should be, how the government should implement them, or what the penalties should be for their violation.

China was shut off from the West after 1949, but Western influences lingered. In 1953, Liang Shuming (1893-1988) first tested the CCP’s tolerance for dissent by criticizing the Party’s agriculture policies at a central-level meeting. A year later, another scholar Hu Feng criticized the Party’s absolute control of the press and advocated greater freedom of speech. Liang was rebuked as a "hypocrite" by Mao himself, and denied the right to speak publicly in the future.\footnote{47} In noting Hu’s criticism of the Party’s "uniformity of opinion," Mao said, "Indeed, this is true. Our system does deprive all counter-revolutionaries of freedom of speech and allows this freedom only among the people."\footnote{48} In the "Hundred Flowers" campaign of 1957, the Guangming Daily of Beijing and the Wenhui Daily of Shanghai led the press in questioning the Soviet model of journalism. One veteran journalist suggested that non-party media should be allowed to serve as watchdogs of the Party and government.\footnote{49} An influential journalism professor rejected the idea that the press is properly a tool of class struggle.\footnote{50} Chu Anping, editor-in-chief of the Guangming Daily went so far as to make public suggestions to Mao denouncing the Party’s monopoly on political power.\footnote{51} In the
ensuing Anti-Rightists Movement, these papers and many editors were singled out for special criticism.

This sudden reversal dealt a heavy blow to the press and ended all discussion of press freedom. For two decades, anything relating to Western ideas of democracy and freedom was denounced as capitalist "poison." Young journalists there had little chance to be exposed to concepts such as freedom of the press or the role of the "fourth estate." When China opened its doors again in the late 1970s, young journalists were ecstatic at learning of these Western concepts. Suddenly, more and more Western professors were teaching journalism and communication courses in Chinese universities and colleges, Western journalists were "polishing" news stories in Chinese newspapers, and Chinese students were earning advanced degrees from Western journalism schools. Western influences on the Chinese press thus increased rapidly. This, of course, posed new challenges to the existing press system, as we will see in the upcoming chapters.

**MARXIST-LENINIST IDEOLOGY**  The press system in China today was established after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. To the tradition of an official press, the CCP added its own experiences as a revolutionary Party and its own version of Marxist-Leninist doctrines. From the very beginning, the Party ran its newspapers to spread Marxist ideas and further its own revolutionary purpose. Over the years, the CCP gradually developed its own theories of Party journalism built on Leninist doctrine.

Marx never systematically addressed the question of press-state relations. As a journalist in his early years, he fought against censorship and for the right of the press
to cover what it chose. His comments and actions regarding the press give no reason to believe that he would have suppressed anti-communist newspapers. His writings on class struggle, historical conflicts, and political economics, however, suggest an intolerant attitude. He believed that when the working class had gained control of a society and defeated its oppressors, social unity and peace would reign. This, of course, has implications for press freedom. If the supremacy of the working class satisfied every human need and condition of happiness for everyone, there would be no need for media criticism of communism. Criticism could, at most, aim to refine an already harmonious system.\textsuperscript{52}

It was Lenin who shaped the form of press-state relations in communist countries. Lenin believed that freedom of the press in bourgeois societies was nothing but "freedom to deceive the oppressed and exploited masses of the people by the rich capitalists." The socialist press would be really "free," however, because it would provide all citizens equal access to it.\textsuperscript{53} He asked,

Why should freedom of speech and freedom of the press be allowed? Why should a government which is doing what it believes to be right allow itself to be criticized? It would not allow the opposition to buy lethal weapons. Ideas are much more fatal things than guns. Why should any man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinions calculated to embarrass the government?\textsuperscript{54}

To ensure that only socialist views received exposure in the Soviet Union, Lenin ordered the suppression of all counterrevolutionary newspapers and established a government monopoly on the entire press. Lenin acknowledged the special role of the press when he wrote, "A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer."\textsuperscript{55} This statement has been accepted by all
theoricians and activists in the socialist world as axiomatic. As one seasoned Chinese journalist noted,

Lenin’s teachings on the principles, stance, and methods of the party press have long served as the guidelines for the Chinese Communists in running their own newspapers and had direct and significant influence on the development of the Chinese communist press.56

The CCP theories of journalism emerged in Yan’an in 1942-43, when the Party carried out a rectification campaign. On March 6, 1942, the CCP Propaganda Department issued a circular on the reform of Party newspapers. It described newspapers as "the most powerful instrument of propaganda and agitation" and urged Party organizations at various levels to see the efficient management of newspapers as the "central task of the Party."57 As part of the campaign, Jiefang Ribao initiated press reform on April 1, 1942, and all other newspapers in the liberated areas followed suit. This reform was "a mile stone in the journalism history of the Communist Party."58

The most important contributor to the Party’s journalism theory was Mao Zedong himself. In his early years, Mao was deeply influenced by Liang Qichao’s idea of political propaganda and by his writing style as well. His early career as a radical journalist helped him understand the important role of the press.59 By the early 1930s, Mao realized that, to defeat their enemies, the Communists must "take gun in the right hand and leaflet in the left."60 Besides writing, editing, and even mimeographing newspapers himself, Mao encouraged all leading Party members to pay special attention to newspaper work. In March 1931, he praised a Red Army news bulletin as "playing a great role in agitating and organizing the masses in the revolutionary struggle."61 Later he stressed on several occasions the idea that the Party’s newspapers must serve
the central task of the Party. On the one hand, he emphasized the importance of
strengthening the Party spirit in newspapers and called upon high-level Party
organizations to exert leadership over newspapers. On the other, he stressed the mass line
by arguing that newspapers should serve as a bridge between the Party and the people. 62

Mao completed his theory of the Party press in 1948 in a speech to the editorial
staff of the Shanxi-Suiyuan Daily. There, Mao summed up the role of journalism in the
Party's work:

The role and power of the newspapers consists in their ability to bring the
Party program, the Party line, the Party's general and specific policies,
its tasks and methods of work before the masses in the quickest and most
extensive way.... The Party press should carry out the Party's line and
policies through its editorials, news stories, and other contents... to
educate, organize, and mobilize the masses. 63

Another important Party leader, Liu Shaoqi, further emphasized the "tremendous
significance" of the press in a talk to the north China press corps in October 1948.
Describing the press as "one of the very important channels and bridges linking the Party
with the masses," Liu urged the press to serve as the "eyes, ears, and voices of the Party
and the people." This formulation implied that, in addition to serving as a mouthpiece
for the Party, the press should also reflect public opinion and feelings. He therefore told
the editors and journalists,

Your pens are wielded for the people.... You should write and report what
they dare not to say, what they can not say, and what they desire to say
but find no way of expression. 64

These statements of Mao and Liu clearly constituted the principles of the Party
press and defined the relationship between the press and the Party, and Chinese
journalists accepted them as the basis of their work. Both Mao and Liu stressed the
principle of Party spirit and the propaganda role of the press. But Liu put more emphasis on the reciprocal nature of the communication process between the Party and the people and the role of public criticism. Unfortunately, Liu's ideas had never been accepted as the mainstream theory of the Party journalism. His views were denounced as revisionist during the Cultural Revolution, during which the press was referred to as one of the two "barrels"—gun barrel and pen barrel.⁶⁵

In sum, the press in China played a role entirely different from the role it plays in a democratic society. The press was not an adversary of the government, but an advocate. Its role was to serve as an instrument of the authorities and transmit the messages of the leaders to the people. Propaganda was an integral part of the activities of the Party and the government. The major characteristics of the press under this system can be summarized as follows: 1) The press served as the single official channel of information to the people. The Party decided what the public should know without regard to the needs or interests of the public. 2) News reporting was political propaganda, with no regard for objectivity or reliability of the information reported. 3) The press maintained an absolute "uniformity of opinion," and no news story or commentary inconsistent with the Party line was printed. Politically sensitive issues were off-limits. 4) There was no law and no official regulations defining or guaranteeing normal operations of the press. 5) All newspapers were cast in the same mold, and the quality of the news reported was so bad that it could hardly be regarded as news. The newspapers were filled with so many lies and empty talk that they were neither readable nor reliable. As the director of the Journalism Bureau of the CCP Propaganda
Department later confessed, "The press was run by Party officials, subscribed by officials, and read by officials only."^66

After 1949, the ideological commitment to Marxism-Leninism and to the Soviet example led to all-out efforts to copy from its revolutionary elder brother and to root out every influence from the bourgeois West. The government gradually nationalized all the media and put them under the supervision of the Party. In the early 1950s, a closed and strictly controlled system emerged based on the Soviet model, which dominated the Chinese press for over 30 years. (see Fig. 1) The state-run and highly centralized features of the system, however, showed the strong continuities with traditional forms despite the radical discontinuities in content. For the first time in Chinese history, the government had the institutional means to control the entire realm of public culture.^67

Fig. (1) Structure of the CCP Propaganda System

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Communist Party Central</th>
<th>CCP Central Propaganda Dept.</th>
<th>Central-Level Newspapers and Other Media</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provincial CCP Party</td>
<td>Provincial Propaganda Dept.</td>
<td>Provincial-Level Newspapers and Other Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>District (city) CCP Party</td>
<td>District (city) Propaganda Dept.</td>
<td>District (city)-Level Newspapers and Other Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>County CCP Party</td>
<td>County Propaganda Dept.</td>
<td>County-level Newspapers and Other Media</td>
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The propaganda system was one of the six systems that controlled every aspect of Chinese life (the other systems were the military, legal and public security apparatus, public administration, united front, and mass organizational affairs). The propaganda system consisted of all institutions related to mind control, including the CCP Propaganda Department, the ministries of Culture, and of Radio and Television, the Bureau of the Press and Publication, the Xinhua News Agency, the People's Daily, and all other media and cultural institutions at various levels. Typically, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest decision-making body in the country, was in charge of the entire propaganda system (Hu Qili until 1989, Li Ruihuan since then). At the present time, the Propaganda Department of the Party Central Committee, through counterparts at lower levels, supervises and coordinates all of the system's areas of responsibility, which range from mass media, literature, art, film, and music to political education and others. The most important sector of the department is the domestic journalism bureau (xinwen ju), which issues instructions downwards and checks the printed or broadcast output of the media. It holds regular "instructional meetings" for editors of major newspapers and other media, at which past performances are criticized and guidelines are laid down for present and future priorities on major policy initiatives and changes.

The press, as the most important part of this propaganda system, is directly controlled and managed by the Party and directly responsible for serving its interests. At all levels, it is used to promote Party objectives. The People's Daily, for example, is in many respects a Party and government bulletin board, the ultimate voice of political authority in the nation. It is "must" reading for party and government officials.
Whenever the party or government undertakes a policy initiative or alternation, it is first to announce and defend the act. Local newspapers are under close supervision of local Party and government officials, and cover only those things they permit. They depend for major news on the centrally controlled Xinhua News Agency, which does most of the national and international reporting for the entire press. Both Xinhua and People's Daily maintain nationwide networks of correspondents, who write local news as well as investigative reports for internal circulation.

Organizationally, the press has two parallel systems of control, administrative structures and party cells within those structures. The party ensures its political control by means of the party cells. Each newspaper operates as a work unit with definitive authority over the lives of its employees. An employee who wants to transfer to another job, return to school, get married, or have a baby, must get formal approval from the work unit. Reporters and editors are government employees, and as such their performances on and off the job are subject to Party review at all times. As government employees entrusted with important responsibilities, they are required without reservation to support the Party's right to exercise supreme authority and to implement all Party principles and policies. Directives issued by Party propaganda departments are placed on their desks for their guidance, and they contain many more prohibitions than freedom. The directives prescribe the treatment of specified themes and subjects with regard to space, tone, size of headlines and even placement in the newspaper. The editors are thus simply rubber stamps for official directives, placing their marks on daily copy to indicate
that they have worked the material and nothing more. All initiative has been killed and no ideas are permitted outside the narrow groove of official directives.

In the following chapters, we will see how these factors continually influenced the development of the Chinese press in the 1980s. With China marching swiftly down the road to economic modernization, the processes of urbanization, mass education, economic growth, and rising political awareness will accelerate. The press promotes this process of modernization, which in turn encourages the growth of the press. China is fated to be freer and there seems to be little chance of revoking that process. To modernize means to allow initiatives to come from all levels of the society and not from the apex alone.
NOTES


2. Ge Gongzhen believed that Di Bao first appeared during the Han dynasty. See his Zhongguo Baoxue Shi (History of Chinese Journalism, Beijing, Sanlian Publishing House, 1955), pp.22-26. No authentic record has been found so far to prove his argument.

3. Cases of the suppression of Xiao Bao were recorded in Song Huiyao Jigao (History of Institutions in the Song Dynasty; Peking Library reprinted edition, 1936). For reference, see the Penal Code, II-33, II-49, II-53, and II-125.


7. Ibid., p.19.


25. Ibid., p.9.


28. Han Feizi, quotes from Zhongguo Sixiang Baoku (Treasury of Chinese Thoughts; Beijing, 1990), p.685.

29. Ibid., p.681.

30. Yuan Zhimin and Xie Xuanjun, "River Elegy" (script of Part VI) in Xinhua Wenzhai, No.9, 1988, p.119.

32. Tu Weiming, op. cit., p.119.


37. In his article, *Quan Xue Pian* (Exhortation to Learning), Zhang Zhidong advocated learning Western technology, but adherence to the Confucian tradition. Zhang Wenxiangong Quanji (Shanghai: Wenhai Press), pp.3704-3705. As editor-in-chief, Yen Fu published many articles in *Guowenbao* (National News), advocating all-out Westernization. See *Yen Fu Shiwen Xuan* (Selected Poems and Essays of Yen Fu; Beijing, 1983), pp.29 & 108.


40. Liang Qichao, "Jinggao wo tongye Zhujun" (Advice to my Colleagues), in ibid., Vol. II, pp. 799-802.


42. Chen Duxiu, "Benzhi Xuanyen" (A Declaration by the Magazine) in *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth; Beijing), Dec. 1, 1919, pp.1-4.


44. Quoted from *ibid.*, p.120.

45. Quoted in ibid., pp.15-16.

46. For examples, see their articles published on *Xinyue* magazine in the April, May, September issues of 1929 and January issue of 1930. Also see Liang Jialu, op.cit., pp.301-303.
47. Dai Qing & Zheng Zhishu, "Facts about the Criticism of Liang Shuming" in Xinhua Wenzhai (Beijing), No.3, 1988, pp.142-143.


49. Wen Hui Bao (Shanghai), May 16, 1957, p.3.


53. Ibid., 231-235


56. Dou Qiwen, op.cit., p.69.


59. Mao wrote hundreds of news stories and commentaries for the party press in his life, some of which appeared as unsigned editorials in the Party's organ. In Selected Works of Mao Zedong alone were over 120 speeches, instructions, and articles on journalism work of the Party.

60. Mao was quoted from Dou Qiwen, op. cit., 61.


62. For reference, see "Mao's telegraph to Chen Yi" (December 15, 1942) and "Directive to Regional CCP Committees" (October 18, 1942) in Wenxian yu Yanjiu, op. cit., No.9. "Mao's


68. Unlike other socialist countries, there is no official newspaper for the Chinese government. The People Daily thus serves as the organ of both the Party and the State. Other central-level newspapers belong to different central institutions. It is the same for all lower-level official media.
October 1976 marked an epochal turning point in modern Chinese history -- the end of the Mao era. But the beginning of the Deng era did not come until the end of 1978. After the purge of the Gang of Four, Hua Guofeng emerged as the new Party chairman and state premier. Since Hua was hand-picked by Mao and was the primary beneficiary of the Cultural Revolution, he tried his best to maintain a Maoist empire and continued to criticize Deng. But, under pressure, he had to restore Deng to his previous positions. For a short while, Hua and Deng maintained a working relationship in advancing the modernization programs. This coalition was soon to break because of differences between them over the legacy of Mao and the Cultural Revolution.

During this transitional period, the press played a significant role in questioning and re-examining China's recent past in order to determine the future. The political changes of 1976 did not bring immediate openness to the Chinese press. Leafing through the pages of Chinese newspapers, one can find hardly anything more than propaganda cliches except for some articles criticizing the Gang. It was only after May 1978 when an important article was published did the press begin to actively participate in the nationwide "debate of the criterion of truth," which was to all intents and purposes a de-Maoization effort initiated by Deng and his supporters. This liberal trend not only gave birth to the Democratic Wall Movement, which added to the official efforts in eliminating
the persistent ideological influence of Mao and emancipating the people's mind, but also led to the search for a new role for the press. The Third Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978 confirmed Deng's political ascendancy and began his "Second Revolution."

**THE GREAT DEBATE ON THE CRITERION OF TRUTH**

On May 11, 1978, Guangming Ribao published a long article, entitled "Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth." This was not an ordinary newspaper article. On the surface it was only a theoretical discussion of a Marxist principle. But in fact it represented a daring step toward the destruction of the cult of Mao and the beginning of the process of de-ideologization. The nationwide debate triggered by this article was deliberately planned by Deng Xiaoping and his supporters with dual purposes: to discredit the "whatever factions" (fanshipai) led by Hua Guofeng and to break away from the radical ideology and policies endorsed by Mao during the Cultural Revolution.

After the crackdown of the Gang of Four, Hua Guofeng emerged as the new Party leader. Hua certainly did not want to see Deng Xiaoping back in power, because he feared Deng would constitute a threat to his leadership. Therefore, he continued the movement to criticize Deng. In February 1977, Hua instructed the CCP Central Propaganda Department that "the major task today is to criticize not only the Gang but also Deng." He stressed that the Party should "firmly uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao had made and unswervingly adhere to whatever instructions Chairman Mao had given."² Wang Dongxing, a key supporter of Hua who was in charge of the
Party's ideological and propaganda work, instructed the three major Party organs, the People's Daily, the Liberation Army's Daily and the Red Flag, to publicize in a joint editorial, the declarations that "whatever Mao had said and whatever Mao had done must not be questioned or rejected" and that China would "honor Mao's policies and his instructions to the full extent."

The move of the "whateverist faction" was apparently against the tide. Deng Xiaoping is a powerful and talented Chinese leader, who was charged as the No.2 capitalist roader and ousted at the outset of the Cultural Revolution. During his tenure as vice premier in the mid 1970s, he made great efforts to correct the leftist mistakes and to reshape the Party, the army, and the government. His actions were seen by Mao as "an attempt to deny the achievements of the Cultural Revolution" and as "bourgeois tendencies." Deng was again deprived of all his posts after the Tiananmen Incident in April 1976. But his pragmatic style and emphasis on economic development won him great support from the public. In addition, senior cadres in the Party and army, especially those victimized during the Cultural Revolution, supported Deng, since they believed Deng's return to power would guarantee their political interests. Therefore, Deng's many supporters mounted an extensive campaign demanding his rehabilitation. Under this pressure, Hua had to compromise by rehabilitating Deng of the positions as Vice Premier and Vice Party Chairman, after he admitted his past mistakes and pledged his support of Hua.

Once back in power, Deng lost no time in consolidating his position and expanding his base of support. He appointed his close associate Hu Yaobang director of
the CCP Organization Department in December 1977 to investigate cases of injustice
during the Cultural Revolution and to "decap" (zhaimao) or rehabilitate all those who had
been labeled rightists in 1957 and since labored in farms and camps. Thus he was able
to rally around him the veteran cadres and intellectuals for promoting his modernization
programs. To further mobilize the intellectuals for the modernization drive, Deng
stressed at a national conference of science that the "advancement of science and
technology was the key to modernization" and that "mental workers who serve socialism
are part of the working people." In the field of education, he refuted the "two
appraisals" that, prior to the Cultural Revolution, education in China was dominated by
the bourgeoisie, and that intellectuals were basically bourgeois. He proposed that the
university entrance examination system be restored, that graduate schools be opened, and
that students be sent abroad to study, and foreign professors be invited to teach in
China. In preparation for the reforms, Deng summoned a series of meetings on
agriculture, industry, transportation, railways, and economic planning.

These efforts, though impressive, were not enough to cure the wounds China had
suffered during the Cultural Revolution and to realize his ambitious goal of putting China
through a period of rapid modernization. For Deng and his followers, the most pressing
problem was not a chaotic economy on the verge of bankruptcy, but the radical
ideological legacy of Mao and the resistance from the "whateverists." During the last
decade of life, Mao attempted to reach the peak of revolution through the gigantic social
and political upheaval of Cultural Revolution. He regarded ideological purity as the
highest priority. Any practice or policy, if regarded to be in conflict with the
revolutionary ideology, should be given up. This fanaticism was exemplified by such fashionable slogans as "socialist poverty is better than capitalist wealth" and "take count of gains and losses in politico-ideological terms instead of economic terms." Under these principles, there was obviously very little room for economic rationality or functional efficiency. Though in appearance an endeavor of noble idealism, the Cultural Revolution caused incalculable loss, destruction, and disorder.

Mao's image quickly became tarnished after his death and his responsibility for the rise of the Gang was common knowledge, yet few dared to debunk him publicly. Any attempt to criticize Mao was accused of "cutting down the banner of Mao Zedong Thought." In seeking to justify their legitimacy as Mao's successors, the "whateverists" faction headed by Hua made much of Mao's last words and vowed to insist on Mao's policy of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat." They desired that everything in China would remain the same. The political and economic system could not be changed; those who were moved from office should not be rehabilitated; and the principle of class struggle should remain the "key link" in the Party's work. All these showed that Mao's legacy remained a yoke weighing heavily on the Chinese people.

Deng seemed to understand that it was Mao's over-emphasis on ideology that had weakened the Party's rule. The old policies and approaches introduced by Mao no longer fit the realities of China today, where stability, unity, discipline, and economic progress were the new order. The revolutionary rhetoric and cultural intolerance that had rendered China an intellectual desert must give way to some degree of relaxation and freedom of
expression so as to pump up popular enthusiasm for his ambitious goal of modernization. Therefore, Deng decided to eliminate the persistent ideological influence of Mao by selecting Hua’s "two-whatever" theory as the main target.

The bomb was supplied in time by Hu Fuming, a lecturer at Nanjing University, who happened to write an article for the monthly magazine Philosophy (Special edition No.77), proposing "practice is the criterion of truth" as a proposition in philosophy. While reading the proof, Yang Xiguang, then editor in chief of Guangming Ribao, noticed the value of this article. He decided immediately to postpone its publication and asked two of his editors to help the author make some revisions. The article was sent to Hu Yaobang, who asked several trusted theorists at the Central Party School to make further revisions. He added the key word "sole" himself to make the slogan into "Practice is the sole criterion of truth." Deng made the final decision to publish the article.

The article, signed by a special commentator, quoted Marx, Lenin, and Mao Zedong to prove that the communist fathers did not believe their theories were "absolute truth not subject to test by practice." Marxist theories were not "ossified dogma," it pointed out. "They must absorb new viewpoints and new conclusions in the revolutionary practice, while rejecting those old theories that no longer fit a new situation." It criticized some people who "parrot the words of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao but they do not look into the real problems and study how to solve them." It stressed,

Truth is developing. The development of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought undoubtedly need revisions, additions, and corrections.... Anything that was proved wrong or no longer fit the reality must be rejected and should not be insisted on.
This article came as a shock to the Whateverists, who immediately launched a counter-attack. Hua Guofeng instructed the CCP Propaganda Department "not to be involved or take any stand in the debate." Wang Dongxing openly accused the article of "targeting Mao Zedong Thought." He blamed the leaders of Guangming Ribao and People's Daily of "losing Party spirit" and scolded them: "Which Party Central Committee do you listen to?" Meanwhile, speaking at the political work conference of the army on May 29, 1978, Hua defended Mao Zedong Thought as "irrefutable truth." He urged all comrades of the Party to "hold high the great banner of Mao" and "put Mao's ideology in command of the socialist modernization."

Addressing the same conference on June 2, Deng gave a tit-for-tat rebuttal. He pointed out that "there is only one true theory in the world, the theory that derives from objective reality and is verified by objective reality." Those arguments that saw Marxist theories as "panache" or accused "seeking truth from facts" as "monstrous crimes" were nothing but "pernicious influence of the Gang" and must be liquidated. Deng's stand was fully endorsed by the army, which was usually a conservative force in Chinese politics. On June 24, Liberation Army Daily published a long article, entitled "The Most Fundamental Principle of Marxism." The article was checked, revised, and approved by General Lo Ruiqing (1906-1978), a key supporter of Deng who was in charge of the army during this period. After quoting from Deng's speech at length and exclaiming "How right! How profound! How well said," the article warned,

Today, there are still some people, some leading cadres in particular, who, under the influence of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, were against the principle of seeking truth from facts... They dare not touch or study new problems, dare not answer questions raised by the masses, and try to
circle around the problems... On the surface, they seem to worry about possible damage to the revolutionary cause. But, in fact, they are afraid of the loss of their personal interests.\(^{16}\)

One hundred percent behind Deng was not only the army, but also many liberal intellectuals who suffered so much during the Cultural Revolution and other previous political campaigns. Active participants of this debate included Yu Haocheng, Yu Guangyuan, Li Honglin, Sun Changjiang, Guo Luoji, Su Shaozhi, Yan Jiaqi, Hu Jiwei, Wang Ruoshui and many others. They formed the backbone of the chorus for reform but were brushed aside one after another by Chinese politics in later years. Also active in supporting Deng's "seeking truth from facts" were senior Party officials like Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun, who later would reveal their conservative nature in attacking the above-mentioned liberal thinkers. The struggle between these two groups will be discussed later.

On June 20 and 21, a large-scale discussion meeting was held in Beijing, with over 60 organizations represented, including the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Guangming Ribao, Peking University, the People's University, and some government agencies. One month later, July 17-24, 160 persons gathered from all the 26 provinces and three major cities for another discussion. The two meetings, both of which were organized in the name of the monthly Philosophical Research but actually by Deng's faction because the Central Propaganda Department was still in the hands of the whateverists, were designed to implant Deng's thesis in the heads of those who directed the thinking of the nation. In
his concluding speech to the July meeting, Zhou Yang (1908-1987), former Cultural Minister, declared,

Practice is the sole criterion of truth... It is not merely a theoretical principle. It is an ideological line. It is a political principle that determines the future destiny of the Party and State. 17

This statement showed that what was being aimed at was not precision in Marxist thinking but a political stand against all who disagreed. Zhou Yang encouraged scholars to open their minds for free discussion. He assured those who "still have lingering fear" that the Party "will not repress any free scientific discussions." 18 It was a substantial change by any standards. Political life had not been opened up to public view, but its tempo has been increased.

On July 1, 1978, the Party's 57th birthday, the People's Daily reprinted a speech Mao had delivered to a Party meeting in January 1962. In his speech, Mao acknowledged that he had made wrong decisions on the Great Leap Forward Movement and was mainly responsible for China's economic disaster during the early 1960s. He confessed that he "did not understand many problems in the work of economic construction...and knew very little about industry and commerce." 19 The purpose of publishing this old document was to prove that Mao was not infallible.

The second anniversary of Mao's death, September 9, 1978, passed without publishing any memorial articles in the press. Mao's quotations on newspaper mastheads disappeared. In October, Li Honglin, a senior CCP Propaganda Department official and one of the earliest outspoken theorists, published an article in the People's Daily, attacking the personal cult of Mao:
"The proletarian leaders are great but their greatness has a commonplace origin and it does not descend from heaven. To describe them as kinds of deities is to render to them the greatest insult... For many years such superstition circumscribed the minds of some people, and they still need to have their minds emancipated."20

Changes in the Beijing press had inevitable repercussions on the provincial press, which began to echo Beijing, taking up the same theme with apparent enthusiasm. The Party Central Committee issued a series of documents, urging all units and departments in all areas to actively participate in the "great debate on the criterion of truth." From June to October, leaders of the provincial party and military hierarchy began to publish articles in the local papers to endorse Deng's slogan, "practice is the sole criterion of truth." By the fall, most of them had expressed their approval of the ideological change from Mao's radicalism to Deng's revisionism.21

Throughout the second half of 1978 the press continued to criticize Mao's mistakes by publishing numerous articles, implying a concerted effort to demystify him and to erode his image as a god. Increasingly in the press, Mao was referred to as comrade rather than chairman. Criticism of his role in the Cultural Revolution, which was now termed as "ten years of great catastrophe", became more pronounced. Mao was accused of launching the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, which hurt hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, of prematurely creating communes in the 1958 Great Leap Forward Movement, thereby causing the starvation of millions, and of supporting the Gang during the Cultural Revolution.

Practice being the sole criterion for truth was nothing new to Marxism. The principle of "seeking truth from facts" had been stressed by Mao in his famous article
"On Practice" in the 1940s. The present emphasis on it was to "emancipate people’s mind" from the blind worship of all the sayings of the Marxist Fathers and to break the shackle of "two whatevers". Dengist leaders, if not the liberal intellectuals, did not intend to destroy Marxism. As the Guangming Ribao article stressed, "we should hold onto the basic principles of Marxism, continuously and firmly. We reject only those obsolete theories and viewpoints."22

Deng won the battle with Hua but put himself in a new dilemma: if the teachings of Marx and Mao could be challenged or refuted by new political realities, what would remain of the edifice? How could he convince those high or local Party cadres, who believed the worship of Mao was indispensable in keeping the country together, that Marxism would be able to stand on its feet? How to prevent this doctrine of "seeking truth from facts" or this belittling of Mao and Marx from inducing the young people to reject Marxism and Mao Thought altogether? The emergence of the Democracy Wall Movement in the wake of the debate would show what a dangerous path Deng had chosen.

THE DEMOCRACY WALL MOVEMENT AND UNOFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

The debate on the criterion of truth helped restore people’s willingness to speak up. In the winter of 1978, a new event erupted in Beijing streets, centered on a 200-yard brick wall in Xidan, west of the Tiananmen Square. The flood of Big-character posters (dazibao) put on the wall, known as "Democracy Wall," attracted thousands of people daily and had sweeping impact throughout the nation. The highlight of this movement
was the flourishing of an unofficial press, over 50 titles at the peak. This sudden emission of public protest was the result of a combination of various factors. But the spark that ignited the movement was the reversal of the official condemnation of the Tiananmen Incident of April 5, 1976.

On that day, a traditional day to honor the dead, thousands of Beijing citizens poured into the Tiananmen Square, carrying wreaths and memorial posters to mourn the recently deceased Premier Zhou Enlai. In speeches and poems, the demonstrators allegorically denounced the feudalistic rule of the ultraleftist leaders and endorsed Deng Xiaoping. The demonstration was suppressed in blood and hundreds of demonstrators were arrested. Deng was accused of being the "black hand behind the scene" and was ousted again. After Mao's death, the incident, as a symbol both of resistance to the Gang of Four and of potential national regeneration under a new leadership, became known unofficially as the April 4th Movement (siwu yundong). Many linked it to the May 4th Movement (wusi yundong) of 1919, which was conventionally recognized as marking rejection of the feudal tradition and greater acceptance of Western ideas. By October 1978, few of the radical decisions during the Cultural Revolution had not been reversed. But the official reversal of the verdict on the Tiananmen Incident was slow to arrive. Any change of official attitude towards the incident was difficult because it was the last ditch for the whatever faction, the loss of which would mean the end of their dominance within the Party.

The newly resurrected monthly magazine *Chinese Youth* was the first to test the water. In November, instead of carrying the autograph of Hua Guofeng and verses by
Mao, it carried poems from the April 5th Tiananmen demonstrations and articles demanding that the Party leaders rescind their criticism of the demonstrators as "counter-revolutionary." This was echoed by a People's Daily article which raised the same demand. Understandably, these efforts met strong opposition from the whateverists. Wang Dongxing, who was still in charge of ideological and propaganda work at this time, prohibited the distribution of the popular magazine. He insisted that, since Mao himself determined the incident to be counter-revolutionary, it should not be reverted. Wang was criticized by the Dengist senior cadres attending the CCP Central Committee Work Conference and was deprived of power over ideology and media in December.

On November 14, the city government of Beijing made the decision to reverse the verdict on the Tiananmen Incident, declaring it "a completely revolutionary event." Not only had the previous verdict been reversed, but all the 338 persons involved and imprisoned because of the incident were rehabilitated. This was confirmed by the official announcement of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Congress. The article "The Truth About the Tiananmen Incident" was published in almost every national newspaper. It commented that the unprecedented movement "declared to the whole world that China did not belong to the Gang of Four. The people and the people alone decide the destiny of China and determine the advance of history." The reversal of the verdict on the Tiananmen Incident served as a curtain-raiser to the Democracy Wall Movement. The intensive coverage in the press gave the impression that a mass movement of that kind was now acceptable. It led to an outpouring of demands from many people who had suffered or been persecuted and who
wanted to have their grievances heard. In the wake of the announcement by the municipal government, many Beijing residents turned out into streets to celebrate the reversal. Thousands of factory workers, students, junior officials, and out-of-town visitors gathered in downtown Beijing, particularly at the Xidan wall, to post, read, copy, and discuss political posters. People had so much to complain about: the lower living standard, a nearly bankrupted economy, the unemployment of millions of youth, the endless class struggle and political campaigns, the Party bureaucracy and privileges, and the lack of individual freedom and human rights. Those labeled as "rightists" and the "educated youth" who had been sent to the countryside and border areas came from all over the country to Beijing and camped out in the streets. The movement for democracy and human rights and the petitioners' movement for redress of wrongs fueled each other. The ouster of the Gang had promised some relief, but it was too little. In such a suffocating atmosphere, once the lid was off, discontent was bound to explode. The situation implied a gradual "withering away" of the Party’s control in grass-level organizations.29

The posters appeared on the wall reflected a wide range of topics, ranging from criticizing Mao, the Gang, the Whateverists, and their radical policies, to voicing personal grievances, whether for themselves or on behalf of others. For instance, there were repeated calls for the "rehabilitation" of those who had been publicly criticized, humiliated and removed from office during the Cultural Revolution, including Liu Shaoqi, former head of state, Peng Zhen, former Mayor of Beijing, and many others. Other issues such as the freedom of speech, economic and social differentials, privilege,
and international relations were also given coverage. The posters raised such political questions as: How could Lin Biao and the Gang of Four be so active on the political stage without Mao’s support? Was Hua completely innocent in his relationship with the Gang? What part did Hua play in the bloody Tiananmen Incident? Why should Wu De, former Mayor of Beijing who delivered the speech defining the Tiananmen as a counter-revolutionary political incident, still retain his post as a politburo member?30

These messages apparently delighted Deng, who was at the moment fighting bitterly with the whatever faction. It was certainly useful to have his rivals denounced in wall posters outside the Great Hall of the People where the central work conference took place and helpful to be able to show that the masses wanted political reform and economic growth.31 Deng chose to give tacit support to the movement and use the popular pressure to remove members of the whatever faction. On November 26 Deng told a Japanese delegation that the masses’ putting up big-character posters "is a normal thing and shows the stable situation in our country." The next day Deng told Robert Novak, an American syndicated columnist, that "Democracy Wall is good." A People’s Daily editorial on the same day encouraged the people to say what they wish. "When people are free to speak, it means the Party and government have strength and confidence."32 Deng’s comments on the Democracy Wall reached the crowd gathered at the wall that night. They were so excited that they decided to march to the Tiananmen square, thus marking the beginning of the Democracy movement.

The final days of November 1978 were important, not only because the newly-arisen Democracy Wall seemed to have gained Deng’s seal of approval, but also it
witnessed the appearance of the first unofficial periodicals. During the second half of 1978, the official press spoke in support of the people and criticized the Gang and the radical policies. Yet there seemed no doubt that most of the editors, probably favoring some liberalization in private, were unwilling to free their hands completely at a time when the political situation remained fluid. They had to look over their shoulders because they were still not immune from punishment. Furthermore, they feared, and with good reason, that a complete relaxation of control would only give free rein to the rapidly mounting political forces and encourage anarchism. Therefore, they conceded the need for a modification of control, but not its total abolition.

Public opinion, however, was already beginning to outflank their reluctance. Unsatisfied with the transitory nature of the posters, the young activists began to organize into groups and to publish journals so as to broaden readership and influence. They wrote, edited, and mimeographed from hand-written stencils under very difficult conditions. Though they appeared irregularly in very primitive form and had a relatively limited circulation, the unofficial publications did carry the latest news and activities going on in the Democracy Movement and played a significant role in influencing public opinion and excite oppositional feelings.

The unofficial publications during this period can be divided into two major categories: one more political and the other more cultural. The better known publications belonging to the first category were Enlightenment (Qimeng), the earliest unofficial publication appeared first in Guiyang and later reprinted in Beijing; Exploration (Tansuo), the most radical and influential publication edited by Wei Jingsheng and two
others; China Human Rights (Zhongguo Renquan), published by the China Human Rights League headed by Ren Wanding; April Fifth Forum (Siwu Luntan), edited by Xu Wenli and Liu Qin and advocating freedom of the press; Beijing Spring (Beijing zhichun), edited by a group of recently rehabilitated Tiananmen Incident participants and known for its moderate contents and good quality; and Voice of Democracy (Minzhu Zhisheng) of Shanghai; and People’s Voice (Renmin Zisheng) of Guangzhou. The publications concentrated on problems of political democracy and the reportage of current affairs. They shared viewpoints on certain matters and supported each other in defence of their constitutional rights. But conflicts among the groups and splits within groups occurred frequently for both political and personal reasons.

The other category, with an emphasis on what might be called "cultural democracy," represented an attempt to free art and literature from the restrictions in style and content imposed by the Party so as to provide alternative media of expression. Two thirds of the 50 unofficial publications belonged to this category, including Today (Jintian), Fertile Land (Wotu), Harvest (Qiushi) of Beijing, Life (Shenghuo), Sinking Bell (Chenzhong), and many others published outside Beijing. Though there was little doubt about the political nature of its contents, their claim as non-political literature publications helped them to survive longer than others, as the legitimacy of the Democratic Movement was increasingly questioned by the Party after January of 1979. Historically, Chinese intellectuals developed a tendency to avoid political issues and find escape in literature. The necessity of following official lines compelled them to adhere to a set pattern and made their outcries sound pro-government. But they used literature
works to lash party officials or to denounce social ills that readers could find around themselves. On many occasions, however, these two categories had not been mutually exclusive.  

The appearance of these unofficial publications represented in itself a campaign for the freedom of speech and publications. The young editors of unofficial publications belonged to the "lost generation" that grew up during the Cultural Revolution. They included young intellectuals who had been sent to the countryside, activists from the Tiananmen Incident, and children of high cadres who had lost the opportunities for good position. The expressions and demands of the publications may sound old-fashioned, but were heartily embraced by many young Chinese, who were shut off from the rest of the world for decades. Though they were inferior to the official press in printing materials and methods, their variety of content, bold approaches to sensitive subjects, and prompt response to current events and to readers' demands attracted more and more readers. Common to all these publications were the voicing of demands for democracy, rule by law, and freedom, the exposing of social injustices, and the casting away of radical taboos.

It should be noted that most of the unofficial journals such as the influential April Fifth Forum, Beijing Spring pledged themselves to Marxism and the party and backed the "Practical Group" headed by Deng. Where there was opposition, it was mainly to the past or to the Whateverist leaders. When they challenged the legitimacy of Party dictatorship, they did so on Marxist grounds. The only unofficial newspaper during the movement took the name of Qiushi Bao (Seeking Truth Daily) after the slogan of
"seeking truth from facts." If fact, many of the issues raised and discussed in the unofficial publications were just one step ahead of what the Central Committee did. It was not long before Liu Shaoqi, Peng Dehuai and others were rehabilitated, Wu De and Wang Dongxing fell from power, and a series of reforms in the political and economic system was introduced.\(^{35}\)

But not all publications stayed in line with the Party. In December 1978, the China Human Rights League published an open letter to President Carter urging him to observe the human rights situation in China.\(^{36}\) Three weeks later, it issued a "Nineteen-Point Declaration" which drew up an all-embracing long list of "basic rights." Another radical journal Thaw (Jiedong) proposed to replace the one-party rule with a multi-party system with all parties competing through elections and working within a unified national framework.\(^{37}\) The most offensive to the Party leaders was Wei Jingsheng's "The Fifth Modernization--Democracy," which was originally a wall-poster on Xidan wall and later published in the first issue of Exploration. In this article, Wei criticized Mao and the totalitarian system as "Fascism under a Marxist-Leninist signboard," and "toyed with hundreds of millions of human lives according to the vagaries of a small number of persons."\(^{38}\) He argued that without democracy, the government's Four Modernizations were unobtainable. Wei did not spare even Deng, the hero of most of the poster writers, after the arrest of the 'Gang of Four,' people hoped eagerly for the reestablishment of the great banner of Vice-Premier Deng who might 'restore capitalism' (as he was accused during the Cultural Revolution of wanting to do).... But regrettably, the old political system so hated by the people was not changed, the democracy and freedom they hoped for could not even be mentioned, there was no improvement in people's living conditions, and the wage hike was far from matching the soaring inflation.\(^{39}\)
This apparently was not what Deng expected to hear. On January 5, 1979, Deng told an American reporter that the human rights issue did not exist in China. Wei immediately raised ten questions in rebuking Deng’s claim. The demonstrations of thousands of petitioners of January 8, 1979 in Beijing put more pressure on the government. The Beijing police arrested Fu Yuehua who led the petitioner’s march and the Municipal government issued an internal circular characterizing the democracy movement as an "underground" movement that had close ties with foreigners, created disturbances, and was "impairing the state system." The response to the official action was fast and strong and protests and defense of Fu’s case in journals and posters further complicated the situation. But since Deng was visiting the United States and, after his return on February 8, the leadership was now concerned mainly with the war against Vietnam, the protest was only subjected to more intensive surveillance by plain-clothed police. Harsh attacks did not come until late March.

During this period, many activists still held the naive hope that the degree of liberation would increase. What they did not understand was that, although Deng encouraged criticism of Mao, he never intended to dump Maoism once for all. Mao was still needed by the Chinese Communist Party whose history is so intertwined with Mao that any total condemnation of the former "helmsman" would disqualify the Party from continuing its rule. Deng needed the popular criticism to help take power from the "whateverists." Now, with the end of the Third Plenum, Deng had achieved his goal and he no longer saw the liberal movement as indispensable. On the contrary, it was seen as
a threat to his regime. Fearing that the unleashed forces would go beyond control, Deng quickly felt the need to rein them back in.

On March 16, 1979, the Central Committee issued a circular, saying that an all-out de-Maoization had gone too far, was "improper," and should be stopped immediately. In his speech to the Political Bureau meeting on March 21, Deng was reportedly attacking the poster writers for whipping up resentment over leftover problems from the past, forming secret groups, and making connections with Taiwan agents and foreigners. The official press immediately echoed Deng’s criticism. The Worker’s Daily declared that human rights were already respected in China and no campaign was necessary to secure them. The People’s Daily warned the activists not to "take the worn-out weapon of human rights, which has long been the window dressing for bourgeois dictators, as a remedy for the problems of a socialist country."

Facing the threat of suppression, Wei published a special issue of Exploration on March 25 with the editorial "Do We Want Democracy or New Dictatorship?" in which Deng was charged with manipulating the people by abusing their trust in him. Wei urged the Chinese not to trust Deng blindly but to judge him according to his policies,

Is Deng Xiaoping worthy of the people’s trust?.... Does Deng Xiaoping want Democracy? No! He does not...want the people to regain the rights denied by ultraleftist leaders. He blames the spontaneous democracy movement as causing social disorder and decides to suppress it. His intention to suppress those who criticized the wrong policies and asked for social development shows that he is afraid of the people’s movement. We can’t help but ask Deng: What kind of democracy do you want? If you deny the people’s freedom of speech, their right to voice their views freely, what is the difference between this democracy and Mao’s democracy under the proletariat dictatorship?
Wei's article invited immediate response from the government. Beijing police arrested Wei on March 29 and his journal was termed "reactionary" and banned. On the same day, the Municipal Party Committee called for public order in the capital and declared a ban on all anti-Marxist, anti-Party, and anti-government publications, including posters, slogans, journals, pamphlets, and books.\(^45\) The next day, an enraged Deng, speaking to the Conference on Theoretical Work held by the CCP Propaganda Department, vowed to fight against those who rejected the basic principles of Marxism and tried to challenge the Party's leadership. For the first time, he declared that the Party would adhere to Four Cardinal Principles, namely the socialist road, the proletarian dictatorship, the Party's leadership, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.\(^46\) In the following weeks, more prominent activists were either arrested, detained or harassed, posters were removed from city walls, and unofficial publications that contradicted the four cardinal principles were prohibited. The official press defended these actions as "being taken in the interests of the people," while stressing the need for "not only democracy but also centralism, not only freedom but also discipline."\(^47\) An October trial sentenced Wei to 15 years in prison. Posters, which remained a thorn to the party, were first restricted to the Xidan wall and then could be hung only in Yuetan Park, a few miles away from the city center. Eventually, the freedom of writing big-character posters, together with three other freedoms (of speaking out freely, airing views fully, and holding great debates), were erased from the Constitution at the 1980 National People's Congress Meeting.
The Democratic Movement, which started with so much hope and optimism as a spontaneous movement of expression and debate, died in agony. Deng took the first steps in attempting to draw a line between what was and what was not politically permissible in his "Second Revolution." In so doing, he transformed a mild protest and largely pro-Deng movement into a genuinely dissident one. It was clear that Deng wanted to encourage a degree of liberalism, but only within certain limits. The contradiction was that the leadership wished to change the value system but had to rely on the old value system as the medium for change.

LURCHING TO START THE REFORM

Whether the Democracy Movement was a spontaneous protest movement or simply a psychological phenomenon, its impact on the Chinese press was profound. The great debate on the "criteria of truth" had already prompted some soul searching in the press. The existence of the unofficial publications and development of alternative sources of information stimulated further deviation in the behavior of the official press. Starting in early 1979, a series of changes came to be introduced in the press, as part of the overall reform movement.

The unofficial periodicals were an important indication of what was really in the people's mind. For many years, the official press had served as a tool of class struggle and was filled with lies and empty talk. It boasted about the achievements of the Party and painted a rosy picture of socialist China: one of fast economic development, improved living standards, and a country without unemployment. How could people
believe all of this while they stood in long lines for rationed basic goods? People were fed up with the repetitive propaganda and monotonous style of official propaganda. What they wanted was a press that would tell the truth, a press that would provide objective news reporting, a variety of information and entertainment, and a press that would not only provide service but be a check on the government as well. They simply wanted to make their observations known but could not make themselves heard on the official pages. The unofficial publications reflected the long suppressed views of the ordinary people. Their daring to expose the dark side of the system, to explore the possibilities of changes, and to demand immediate reforms, set a good example for the official press.

Deng also acknowledged the severe situation of "crises of confidence," despite the fact that he suppressed the Democracy Movement. As an old Party bureaucrat, Deng held an authoritarian view of political discipline and was determined to keep the press under the absolute control of the Party. But, as a pragmatic reformer, he understood that the myth created by excessive ideological propaganda in the past, instead of persuading and mobilizing the public, had created a frustrated, disoriented, and restive population, which increasingly suspended belief. The carefully planned downward flow of communication also prevented the leaders from realizing that their policies were in trouble. Deng and his supporters realized that a limited liberalism in journalism was necessary to win back the public. As we will see later again and again, when liberalism got out of control, Deng would join the conservatives in trying to squeeze all independent criticism out of the press and compress it back into its desiccated Mao-age shape. But in the early days after the Third Plenum, his main messages were to "liberate people's
mind" from the ultraleftist ideology and focus on economic progress. The media, it was believed, should not only persuade but also inform the people, not only report good news but also provide accurate intelligence to the leaders, not only promulgate policy but also help uncover bureaucrats who failed to implement it. The aim of the press reform was to restore the ability of China’s propaganda network to perform the functions for which it was designed.

After the Third Plenary session of December 1978, the first thing Deng did was to appoint Hu Yaobang as the director of the CCP Propaganda Department, replacing Zhang Pinghua, a trusted follower of Hua Guofeng. After taking office, Hu immediately held a series of meetings to study and plan new policies and approaches in the Party's propaganda work under the new situation. In early January 1979, over 100 directors of propaganda departments of provincial party committees and various ministries of the state met in Beijing. Hu told the meeting that the Party had decided to restore the good name of the CCP Propaganda Department, labeled as the "Palace of Hell" by the Gang. He asked the propaganda leaders to "firmly adhere to the theme of shifting the stress of the Party's work and properly convey, study, and propagate the guidelines of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party congress." To break through the old frameworks, the CCP Propaganda Department held a theoretical meeting in Beijing from January 18 to April 3, which investigated into traditional Marxist theory. Meanwhile, a national Journalism Work Conference was held in March.

The pressure from both above and below for press reform, though vastly different from each other, reinforced the desire for changes within the press. Most journalists and
editors felt "shame" for their past behavior and were strongly motivated to improve their work. For decades Chinese journalists performed the role of propagandists that had been assigned to them despite the dictates of their own conscience. They lived under constant stress and had adjusted mentally to the control imposed from above, either by not writing what they really thought or by repeating cliches. Over the years they experienced an identity crisis. Now they wanted to respect themselves as professional journalists. They wanted to work under conditions appropriate for journalists. They wanted to write what they really believed. Facing criticism leveled against the media, Chinese journalists began a process of self examination and reassessing the role of the press.

The first step was to declare a clean break with the past. The Liberation Army Daily, was one of the earliest to organize a systematic denunciation of the "Gang cliches" (bang bagu). It charged that the press under the Gang of Four had committed the crime of "forgery" and "told lies, faked events, pedalled false experiences, fabricated history, and even forged the sayings of the revolutionary fathers."50 The People's Daily also apologized for its past performance, claiming that Gang member Yao Wenyuan had ruled it, had demanded publication of articles produced by his hand-picked writing groups, and had ordered the paper to trump up paeans to pseudo-models such as Zhang Tiesheng and Xiao Jin Zhuang (a model village).51 Local newspapers followed suit, by publishing numerous articles and letters to editors, criticizing themselves for having allowed themselves to be subjected to the Gang during the Cultural Revolution and for having done harm to the Party and people. They labeled the Gang as "anti-Marxist political swindlers" using "falsehood to replace truth." One signed article charged that "news,
articles, and comments" in the Gang press "piped the same tune." It said that the "small papers copied big papers and big papers copied Liang Xiao, the pseudonym of a writing group for the Gang."\(^52\)

The press vowed to change the "lengthy, dull and trite" style of the Gang and to provide news service according to the "objective laws of journalism."\(^53\) For example, the People's Daily complained that there was too much coverage of the leaders' activities in the press. Pictures and articles of leaders receiving foreign visitors or attending meetings occupied too much space. News of banquets and meetings was usually dominated by long lists of participants or party-goers and details of their positions and titles. It urged all media to improve their reporting and to use "vivid and realistic examples of daily life to educate and mobilize the masses" for the sake of the Four Modernizations.\(^54\)

The local press also came under fire. They were charged with printing too much national news and too many articles from central-level newspapers. As a result, local news was sacrificed and usually occupied less than one page. Hu Yaobang criticized this practice,

> Our newspapers were too stereotyped. We should make it clear that all our newspapers and magazines must have their own characteristics. Nobody wants to read those newspapers which repeated each other and contained nothing new.\(^55\)

This over-emphasis on the leaders and tendency to copy central-level newspapers were attributed to the bad practice set forth by the Gang. The editors were criticized for still doing things according to the "old framework" and for considering it safe to dutifully reprint whatever appeared in Xinhua, the Red Flag, or the People's Daily. They had only
the leaders on their mind and believed that whatever the leaders did and said must be important. The masses have been completely forgotten. One writer sarcastically referred it to the "syndrome of fearing the right." Just as an old Chinese saying described "once bitten by a snake, one is afraid of a rope for 3 years," some people were "morbidly afraid of committing right mistakes."\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{People's Daily} called for a halt to all these practices.

To win back the public's interest, the press began to put more emphasis on "reviving the good journalism style ruined during the Cultural Revolution." Efforts were made to improve professional skills. Reporters were asked to write shorter and more informative news stories and improve their writing style by using livelier language instead of cliches. Newspaper layout was more appealing, humor and cartoons returned, and news reporting became quicker. Some columns which were used to offer explanations for ideological terms or to promote political campaigns were dropped. The sections devoted to literature and arts changed their name from "battlefield" into "gardens," which published poems, short stories, drawings, book reviews, and comments on music, dance and films, without any emphasis on revolutionary ideologies. More news about economic issues, international affairs, and human interest stories appeared in the press. One research showed that in 1975-76, 83.2\% of the news in \textit{People's Daily} was political in nature, while only 6.2\% of the stories concerned "pure" economic issues. But in 1979-80, only 36.4\% of the stories emphasized politics, while economic reporting increased to 42\%.\textsuperscript{57} With the open door policy, Western countries were increasingly presented in a positive light. The positive image of the United States, for instance,
jumped from a low of 8% in 1975-76 to a high of 83% in 1979-80. All these helped the return of the press's popularity. The broadening of the boundaries of journalism, however, did not weaken the purpose of the Party's propaganda, but rather improved the reliability of the political messages. As News Front put it, the strategy of "placing (communist) education in the midst of material full of knowledge and interest will help to influence people without their noticing it."58

The Chinese press also made serious efforts to restore its credibility by overcoming the lack of truthfulness. In the past, accuracy had often subordinated to other goals in Chinese journalism. Now the press was determined to expose falsehoods in news reporting. An army medical assistant reportedly cured many deaf-mutes by acupuncture. Many patients came from afar for treatment but left disappointed, because the acupuncture skills were not that good.59 A local party secretary praised as a model turned out to be a power abuser who tried to shield his rapist son. When readers complained in their letters, the People's Daily carried an investigatory report to reveal the truth. In an accompanying commentary, it stressed the importance of "adhering to the principle of truthfulness in news coverage" and warned those who supplied wrong information to the press that they could not cheat public opinion, but only "throw stones on their own feet."60 A more sensational story about an official in Guilin who reportedly asked two female tourist guides and then his own daughter to prostitute with Hong Kong tourists, was found to be a pure fabrication. The fabricator of the story was removed from his post.61
Why did false stories continue to appear in the press? Zhong Peizhang, Director of the Journalism Bureau of the CCP Propaganda Department gave the following reasons: some editors published lies to meet the "needs of propaganda"; some reporters too often relied on unchecked materials fed to them by party officials; some used exaggeration in their commentary reports to please people; some fabricated stories for career gains, and some believed that a certain amount of "reasonable imagination" did not violate the principle of "truthfulness in essence." A commentary in Wen Hui Bao described untruthful news stories as a "rat dropping in a bowl of delicious soup"--they ruin the effect. To fight against falsehoods, a national forum on truthfulness in news reporting was held in Taiyuan in June 1984. It pointed out that news reporting was full of falsehood, exaggeration, and empty rhetoric and this practice greatly discredits the Party's journalism work. The participants of the meeting agreed that,

Every journalist should always keep in mind that truthfulness is the life of journalism. News reporting is secondary to facts. Without facts, there is no news. We should propagate the Party's policies and serve the people on the basis of facts. Any attempt to fabricate, distort facts, or use 'reasonable imagination' so as to meet 'political needs' should never be allowed.... Strict regulations must be set up to maintain truthfulness and eliminate inaccuracy in news reporting.

The most impressive was the press's effort to revive its role of critic that could supervise the bureaucracy and voice concerns of the masses directly to the leaders. In an editorial entitled "Bring into Full Play the Fine Work Style of Conducting Criticism and Self-Criticism," the People's Daily criticized the Gang who "unscrupulously trampled on the principle and turned it into "tools for making merciless attacks on other comrades." It said that only by restoring the practice of criticism and self-criticism can we "bring
into full play the masses' enthusiasm and creativeness and pool their wisdom and experiences for the socialist construction.65 Another writer suggested,

Any criticism, no matter how sharp, must be welcome... Even through a criticism may be excessive or even inappropriate, it must be handled in accordance with the principle of 'blame not the speaker, but be warned by the words'.66

To implement this role, readers were encouraged to offer their criticism in letters to the editor and all major newspapers reestablished their "mass work" departments which had been closed during the Cultural Revolution. Each handled hundreds of letters a day. For instance, Gongren Ribao received 101,558 letters from the readers in 1983 and, after investigation and fact-checking, published 788 of them, including 117 prominently on the first two pages. These letters concerned abuse of power, waste, corruption, privilege seeking, nepotism, discrimination against women and children, and encroachment on mass interests.67 Criticism and investigatory reports written by journalists themselves, seldom seen since 1957, began to reappear in large quantity in the press. The best example was the press coverage of the "Bohai No.2" Incident.

On November 25, 1979, an off-shore oil rig in Bohai Bay was dashed while it was being towed during a storm. The incident resulted in the death of 72 people and direct economic loss of $40 million. It was a case of abuse of power by bureaucratic leaders who ignored safety measures and issued arbitrary orders that brought about the tragedy. But, after the incident, those who were responsible tried to evade responsibility by claiming it a "natural disaster" and even celebrated the "heroic deeds" of those involved. Reporters had been dispatched to the scene but the story was prohibited from publication. The press persisted in its investigation and revealed the truth eight months
later. On July 22, 1980, Gongren Ribao gave a detailed account of the accident, blaming the bureaucratic leaders responsible for the incident. In the following weeks, many other newspapers reported on the same subject. A Guangming Ribao article criticized some leading cadres of trying to "shirk responsibility" and described these people as "conceited, stupid, proud, incompetent, and arrogant." On August 24, a People's Daily commentary criticized the petroleum minister. Two days later, the State Council relieved the petroleum minister of his post, added a "serious mistake" to a vice premier's record, and the premier himself publicly admitted his responsibility for the incident. The press released the news immediately.

The coverage of the "Bohai No.2" incident was seen as a breakthrough in CCP journalism history. The press for the first time played a major role in public supervision of the government. No doubt the press would hardly have reported the incident without approval from the highest leadership. As one journalist pointed out, the newsworthiness of an event "oftentimes does not depend on the event itself or the ability of the reporters. Rather, it depends on the leadership's approval." But still the Chinese journalists felt encouraged and they aggressively pursued another news story in 1980 about the Minister of Commerce eating free meals in a public restaurant. He, too, soon left office. A People's Daily editorial encouraged journalists, "there is plenty of scope for newspapers to engage in critical reporting." This kind of reporting was "indispensable" because it could "redeem those who had made mistakes and educate those who had not".

The criticism reporting met strong resistance from the conservative leaders of both central and local levels. Many party and government officials disliked exposure
reporting, saying that it was "vilifying senior revolutionary cadres." Others complained that the party's work would be impaired, if the leaders were criticized publicly. Therefore, the exposures of the dark side "should not be highly colored," Ren Zhongyi, the Party secretary of Guangdong told the staff of the provincial organ Southern Daily in late 1980. "Otherwise, we might give people the wrong impression, tarnish the Party's prestige among the masses, and affect stability and unity in ways that are not beneficial to socialist construction."73

Hu Jiwei, chief editor of the People's Daily who was most active in pushing press criticism, rebutted the conservative arguments. Speaking to a journalism meeting in Beijing in December 1980, Hu stressed that criticism reporting would "add to the prestige of the Party rather than tarnish it." The Party must "accept people's supervision of the people. Without it, the Party would die." Referring to criticism of high-ranking officials, Hu pointed out that it would be "a neglect of our duty," if we only hit "flies" and not "tigers."74 He consoled his staff not to "feel bad" for being cursed by those who were criticized by the press. "It was a good thing to hear the abusive language every day," he said. "It shows that we have done a great job for society."75 He instructed People's Daily and News Front to publish a series of articles in defense of criticism reporting.

But the tide began to change in early 1981. It was not the criticism reporting that worried the conservative leaders most. What they were afraid of was a press increasingly deviating from the official line. In addition to publishing many articles by leading scholars or even by liberal party officials which discussed such sensitive issues as
democracy, rule by law, and freedom of speech, the press in the past two years gave much publicity to the "exposure literature," an extension of "the wounded literature" that expressed outrage at the injustice and pain suffered during the Cultural Revolution. For instance, Bai Hua's "Bitter Love" attacked the personality cult of Mao and the persecution of intellectuals. Ye Wenfu's poem "General, You Shouldn't Do That" criticized the privileges of high-ranking officials. Liu Binyan's "Between Men and Demons" exposed the prevailing corruption and abuse of power within and without the Party. Sha Yexin's play "If I Were Real" described how an ordinary youth impersonated the son of a high party leader and found doors suddenly flung wide. Western concepts such as impressionism, neorealism, and abstract expressionism flooded in. Sexual description appeared and nude paintings exhibited.

Added to this was a dispute over the fundamental question of praising or exposing, which was triggered by an article published in Hebei Literature in June 1979. The article "Praise Virtue or Lack Virtue" (Gede yu Quede) was signed by the unknown name, Li Jian, who was widely recognized as speaking on behalf of certain conservative leaders. He claimed that some "villainous" people in literature circles did not "praise the virtue" of Chairman Mao, the Party and the people themselves but criticized others who did so. They produced the so-called "exposure literature" with the hidden motive to oppose the Party and socialism. He cursed these people as "beasts which hide in dark corners and are fond of smelling the stink of blood." Those who refuse to "praise virtue" actually "lack virtue." Liberal writers immediately launched a counter-attack in the press. Wang Ruowang, a prominent literary critic of Shanghai, published a refuting
article in *Guangming Ribao*, pointing out that this article was like "a gust of cold wind in the spring" and "should arouse our attention." Others claimed the article was nothing but "a product of ultra-leftist thinking" and the charges were "totally unfounded." Later, the dispute almost developed into a "crusade" against the "praise faction" and the author became an outcast.

In the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists in November 1979, the participants challenged the principle of "literature in service of politics" laid down by Mao in the 1942 Yan'an Forum and demanded more freedom in their writing and artistic work. The old dramatist Xia Yan confessed that he had written only one play since 1949, which was the worst he had ever created because "I worried over each sentence, wondering whether or not it would conflict with Party policy." This was echoed by Zhao Dan, a very popular veteran film star of Shanghai. Knowing he was about to die of cancer, Zhao delivered his famous plea for artistic freedom: "If the Party controls literature and art too tightly, literature and art have no hope, they are finished."

This might be one of the final straws that led to the major crackdown on "bourgeois liberalism." The democratic election movements in the fall of 1980 also added pressure on the Party to tighten its control. In early 1981, the Party Central Committee issued its Document No.7, entitled "Decision on the Present Propaganda Policy for Magazines, Newspapers, and Broadcasting." It laid down the governing principles for the role of the press and by extension writers and other cultural workers. It ruled that, among other things, the media must unconditionally propagate the party's line and policy, and criticism reporting must pay attention to social effects and
should receive prior approval. Deng told the participants of a meeting held by the CCP Propaganda Department in July 1981 that "we must pay attention to solving the existing lax, weak, soft, scattered situation." To reinforce the message, Bai Hua’s Bitter Love became the first target of criticism. Many others were also subjected to criticism, including such items as "obscure poetry," and "unhealthy love story." For a while, exposure literature disappeared and outspoken press experiments were muted.

The movement against "bourgeois liberalism," however, died soon after it started. The reasons were clear. First, it was against the people’s will. Second, the reformist leaders were afraid that the more important economic reform might be spoiled by a new ideological movement. The quick suppression of this conservative effort left room for a new surge of demands for freedom to accompany political reform. At the time, however, the press shifted its emphasis in order to report the on-going economic reforms.
NOTES

1. The term refers to the radical group of leftist leaders within the CCP led by Mao's widow, Jiang Qing. This group was arrested in October 1976 and prosecuted in 1980. Jiang died in 1991.


11. Fang Gongwen, "Judging the Journalism Reform from the Discussion of the Norm of Truth" in Zhongguo Jizhe (Chinese Journalists, Beijing) No.6, 1988, pp.6-7. Also see Ma Qibin & Chen Wenbin, eds., Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhizheng Sishinian: 1949-1989 (Forty Years of the CCP in Power; Beijing: The CCP Historical Materials Press, 1989), p.428. It was such a sensitive topic that, for the sake of caution, the article was first published in the Party School's Lilun Dongtai (Theoretical Trends), No.60, on May 10, 1978 and then reprinted in Guangming Ribao the next day.


16. Jiefangjun Bao, June 24, 1978, pp.1-2. This article was also published on the same day in People's Daily, signed by a special commentator of the Jiefangjun Bao. It also appeared in English in the Peking Review, Nos. 28 & 29, 1978.


18. Ibid., People's Daily, p.2.


30. These questions were derived from the posters, which were quoted in Chen Ruoxi, Democracy Wall and the Unofficial Journals (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies of the University of California at Berkeley, 1982), p.11, and David S.G. Goodman, Beijing Street Voices, (Marion Boyars, 1981), pp.6, 61, and 66.


32. Quotes from Nathan, ibid., p.31, and Goodman, Beijing Street Voices, op.cit., p.63.
33. The activists usually formed around the publication of various unofficial journals or as self-styled "mass societies," with the title of the publications related to the names of the organizations, for instance, Qimeng is the organ of Qimeng She (Enlightenment Society), and China Human Rights the organ of the China Human Rights Alliance.

34. For reference on the two aspects of unofficial publications, see Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices*, op.cit., p.8.


39. Ibid., p.7.


41. Ma Qibin, op.cit., p.438.


45. Ma Qibin, op.cit., p.436.


48. Hu's appointment was decided on the CCP Politburo meeting on December 25, 1978. Song Renqong succeeded Hu as the new director of the Organization Department. Wang Dongxing was removed from several of his posts.


53. The term, used frequently by Chinese journalists, means such universal conventions as judging news value by its proximity, timeliness, prominence, and consequence, and striving for accuracy and assuming responsibility.


63. Wen Hui Bao (Shanghai) November 19, 1979, p.2.

64. Shanxi Ribao (Taiyuan), July 2, 1984, p.1. Also see Zhongquo Xinwen Nianjian, op.cit., p.205.


66. People's Daily, May 12, 1979, p.3.


77. Li Jian's article, originally published in *Hebei Wenxue*, No.6, 1979, was reprinted in *People's Daily*, July 31, 1979, p.3.

78. *Guangming Ribao*, July 20, 1979, p.3.

79. For reference, see *Hebei Ribao*, July 22, 1979, p.4; *People's Daily*, July 31, 1979, p.3.


82. Deng first used the term in criticizing young people for infatuation with "bourgeois liberalism" on January 16, 1980, see *Collected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, op.cit., p.203.

83. An unofficial version was translated in *FBIS*, March 19, 1981, U1-U3.


85. Since Bai Hua was an army officer, the army organ was the first to attacked him. See *Jiefangjun Bao*, April 21, 1981, p.1. the left-leaning *Shidai de Baogao* followed.
CHAPTER III
THE PRESS AS A MAJOR INSTRUMENT OF ECONOMIC REFORM

The Third Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978 made the decision to shift the focus of the Party's work to economic development. This shift produced significant changes in all aspects of Chinese life. In rural areas, households replaced the collectives as basic units of production, distribution and accumulation. In urban-industrial sectors, the bureaucratic, centrally planned economy began a process of gradual transformation into a market-oriented economy. However, from the beginning, reform lacked a coherent operational blueprint. The whole process can be characterized as "crossing a river cautiously by feeling for underwater stepping-stones." Without a clear model, reformers have had to feel their way along. This fact made leaders in the 1980s cautious and consultative. Every major economic decision was subjected to discussion and modifications.

Reform leaders found the press a particularly useful tool for this purpose. They believed the press could help in several ways. First, by focusing coverage on economic activities, the press could build public confidence and mobilize public support for economic reforms. Secondly, it provided a forum in which reformers could air their views, either in articles or in interviews, thereby maintaining public awareness of the problems and inviting suggestions for improvement. Thirdly, it provided a useful tool to
use against opponents of reform, thus neutralizing obstacles to modernization. As Hu Qili, the CCP Politburo member in charge of propaganda work, admitted, "Without the propaganda and press coverage, the economic reform could not develop so rapidly and with such impressive results."1

Chinese journalists have fully supported economic reforms. They welcomed the shift of their duty from political indoctrination to economic education and the chance to play a constructive role in the reforms. In reporting and promoting the reform and opening up policies, the press demonstrated its educational as well as its exemplary powers. On many occasions, it went beyond what national leaders intended or even desired, but it did a great job in mobilizing the thoughts and activities of the Chinese people behind the modernization drive.2

THE PRESS AND RURAL ECONOMIC REFORM

Economic reform began in the rural areas. On January 11, 1979, the Party Central Committee issued a document, "Decision on Some Problems in Accelerating the Agricultural Development," which stressed the importance of agricultural reform in the effort to achieve the Four Modernizations and urged that it become a top priority task. The press responded quickly, praising the Party’s decision as "reflecting the historical demands of our country’s economic development and manifesting the aspirations of millions upon millions of rural people."3 The press cited numerous examples of popular support for the new policy. Peasants were quoted to show that old agricultural policies had caused nightmares of hunger and disease. Similarly, the practice of egalitarianism
had dampened the enthusiasm of peasants because everyone was rewarded for his or her labors equally, no matter how hard he or she had worked individually.

The press also reported stories designed to rehabilitate peasants who had been labeled as "capitalist upstarts" in the heyday of the Gang of Four. To show the impact of this, a Sichuan peasant and his family were exonerated and their confiscated property - a six-room tiled house, a private plot of land, a bicycle, and 50 yuan in cash -- was returned to them. With such cases in mind, the Xinhua News Agency commented that the government "should pay attention to the material interests of the peasants as well as to ensure their democratic rights." At the same time, corrupt, lazy, or incompetent local cadres were accused of promoting their own interests to the detriment of those of ordinary peasants.

As economic reporting became one of the most important parts of daily press coverage, the People's Daily in January 1980 expanded from four to eight pages. During that month, 21 of the 29 news stories given prominent display on the front page of the Daily were economic in content. A year earlier, in contrast, only 3 of 27 front-page stories were economic in nature. To further expand its economic reporting, the People's Daily launched a market-oriented newspaper, Shichang Bao (Market News), the first of its kind in Communist China. On September 20, 1979, a trial edition of the paper was sent to Hu Yaobang, who approved its publication immediately. The specimen with Hu's comments was returned to the editor's desk in less than three hours. In its first issue on October 1, 1979, the paper told its readers, "Our main aim is to serve the needs of both producers and consumers and to help open channels to promote market trading."

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Because of the success of this effort, there soon appeared Jingji Ribao (Economic Daily), Shijie Jingji Daobao (World Economic Herald) and so many others that the number of newspapers specializing in economic reporting increased to 73 in 1884.\(^8\)

The agricultural reform, characterized by the evolution of the production responsibility system, has profoundly transformed the organization of Chinese agriculture. From 1956 to 1979, a three-level structure of communes, brigades and production teams had constituted the primary organizational as well as economic system in the countryside. Politically, that system had been effective in establishing collective relations and sustaining a stable social order. Economically, however, central planning of production, compulsory pricing and purchasing of agricultural products, and egalitarian distribution of the fruits of the system undermined individual initiative and resulted in the stagnation of productivity. To improve rural productivity, the People’s Daily now suggested two fundamental policy changes:

In advancing our agricultural production, we must implement the principle ‘to each according to his work’ and overcome egalitarianism.... Peasants’ private plots, household sidelines, village fairs are necessary supplementary components of socialist economy that should not be wantonly interfered with by anyone nor regarded as ‘capitalist things’ and prohibited.\(^9\)

Gradually, new agricultural policies emerged. They included deregulating of rural markets, ending central planning of agricultural practices; increasing prices of rural products, and linking output and remuneration. The new policies, however, still functioned within the existing commune structure. Even the production responsibility system was first introduced as a method of labor management, under which a production team contracted output and cost targets with a group of peasants working a particular plot
of land in return for quotas of work points and bonuses for surplus production. But the system was rapidly transformed into one dominated by the contracting of both output and land to individual households.\textsuperscript{10}

In January 1979, eighteen peasant families in a small village in Fengyang County, Anhui province, dismantled the production team and "secretly" divided up collective lands and other means of production among themselves. They took an oath that "if one was imprisoned because of this action, the whole village will support his family for life." Neighboring villages, hearing of this action, followed suit. This was a bold innovation because current policy did not permit the division of collective lands, encouraging instead incentives based on collective farming. In June, Wan Li, Party secretary of the province, came to the county for inspection. When he heard of the change, Wan praised the practice instead of criticizing it.\textsuperscript{11} He told an Anhui rural work conference two months later, "We must do things in accordance with the laws of economics and stress the practical results."\textsuperscript{12} Press coverage of the Fengyang example caused it to spread quickly around the province. Within a year, the agricultural production in Anhui province increased more than 20 percent.\textsuperscript{13}

Meanwhile, Sichuan, under the leadership of Zhao Ziyang, began a pilot project separating administration from production in selected communes. Zhao encouraged peasants to run their private plots more efficiently, increase household sideline production, and otherwise develop rural enterprises. The Sichuan agricultural development plan of 1980 allowed some collective land to be allotted to households for cultivation on a contract basis and related peasant income directly to output.\textsuperscript{14}
Sichuan Daily for the first time proposed,

Some peasants should stand out from the rest and become richer before others.... This policy is not aimed at expanding disparities but to create the economic condition for gradually eliminating them. The final goal was to achieve prosperity for all.15

Renunciation of the principle of sweeping egalitarianism not only allowed some individuals and groups to become richer than others, it also boosted rural production. The practice of "contracting everything to household," first introduced in Anhui and Sichuan Provinces, immediately outperformed other forms of production responsibility system, such as contracting output to work groups (lianchuan daozu), or to laborers (liangchuan daoqun), or to specialists (zhuanye chengbao), or short-term work contract (xiaoduan baogong). It dispensed with all but the barest notion of collective ownership of land and left the production team as little more than a shell. More importantly the household contracting system achieved impressive results in terms of worker productivity. It was therefore officially sanctioned in late 1980, but to be used only in the poorest areas. But once introduced, it spread widely throughout the country, as peasant enthusiasm outstripped official caution. By July 1983, the number of villages using the household contracting system was 93% of the total.16

From 1983 to 1986, the Party Central Committee further strengthened the household contracting system by allowing the free flow of labor, capital, and technology, and encouraging development of private business activity and rural markets.17 Within a few years, the system of agricultural management in China was transformed. People's communes, with their production brigades and teams disappeared. By the end of 1986, China had 3.7 million contracting households, 6.4 million of private business households,
478,000 rural enterprises, and 670,000 rural markets. Over 75 million peasants had shifted from agriculture to the manufacturing and service sectors. The average annual income of peasants grew from 134 yuan in 1978 to 426 yuan in 1986 and the gross agricultural product increased at an annual rate of 13 percent, reaching 755 billion yuan. One result of these changes was a rapid growth of urbanization. The number of cities increased from 192 in 1978 to 365 in 1986.18

Such rapid change could not have been achieved without the encouragement of the press. As mentioned earlier, the Party launched agricultural reform to stimulate rural productivity by linking material incentives to economic performance. It stressed repeatedly that the purpose was to "continue stably the system of three levels of ownership with the production team as the basic accounting unit." It also warned that collective ownership and decision-making "must be protected and no individual is permitted to encroach on their interests."19

Rural practice, however, soon made these policies obsolete. Once the process of decentralization began, peasant demand for the household contracting system could not be resisted. The radical changes as a result of the new system met strong opposition from both conservative leaders and local cadres accustomed to the communes. They criticized the new system as "rightist," "deviationist," and "overdone." They argued that the practice might "easily obstruct the development of the collective economy and produce a slide towards individual farming."20

As rural changes outpaced official definitions of what was acceptable behavior in specific situations, the new types of economic activity created widespread uncertainty and
confusion. Successful peasants were envied by others, who characterized them as "immoral for profiting from others' efforts" and "engaging in crooked ways and dishonest practices." Local cadres warned villagers not to "stick their necks out lest they get their heads blown off" (qiangda chutou niao). This made newly-rich peasants feel that they were victims of "discrimination, sarcasm, and even attack."21

Reflecting this feeling, one peasant confided, "People in the village talk a lot about me, and I have a heavy mental burden. Some people have even said that specialized households will be repudiated. I am a little afraid."22 Others worried that they might be attacked by jealous neighbors in future political campaigns or that the reform might be reversed and the communes restored.23 As one peasant said, "My family has made considerable investments on contracted land and we harvested nearly 20,000 jin (10 tons) of grain last year. But we always fear that some day the policy will be changed, and the land will be taken way from us, and our efforts will be wasted."24 Such uncertainty eroded peasant confidence necessary for long-term investment and encouraged instead the pursuit of short-term profits.

To counter the criticism, the press mounted a major campaign to encourage peasants to go ahead with the reform. In 1983, the People's Daily alone published 360 commentaries and editorials on economic reform.25 National, provincial, and local newspapers were filled with upbeat images of "10,000 yuan households" (wan yuan hu) and the successes of peasants were described in glowing terms. Articles after articles argued that the household contracting system "remains a component part of the socialist rural structure," and that it "encourages diversification according to local conditions and
gives peasants much greater freedom to plan their activities to maximize income." The fact that most surplus production above the contracted quotas remained within the family "provides incentive" for peasants to improve the quality of their field work and to use surplus labor and spare time to increase productivity. Similarly, rural markets encouraged them to increase their income through sideline production.26 The slogan, "Learn from Dazhai," a model village used by Mao during the Cultural Revolution, was now interpreted to mean "cutting many thousands of feet to fit a single pair of shoes."27

Furthermore, the press persuaded peasants to stop "envying their rich neighbors," which practice was called "red-eye disease" (hongyan bing), and encouraged them instead to find ways to get rich themselves. The press argued that the household contract system would reduce the number of cadres the peasants had to support, and prevent them from diverting collective resources to their own benefit.28 A Xinhua commentary criticized those local cadres who opposed rural reform as "experienced horses who only knew the old way" of doing things and were "trying to protect their own interests." It urged peasants not to be deceived by those who "peddled sham Marxism" but to "firmly take their own road."29 Without support of this kind, it might have been much more difficult for the rural reform to go ahead with the speed that it had.

The newspapers often served as policy advisors for the peasants by organizing policy discussions, in which they tried to dispel not only the doubts of farmers about the new system but also the fears of local cadres about the growing wealth of the peasants. The discussions were well-received among the rural people, many of whom wrote letters to editors describing how they had benefited from them. To encourage the expression of
such views, the People's Daily, since February 1979, began running a special half-page column in dealing with problems in agricultural work. On September 2, 1979, the column published the letter of a peasant, who commented that the "policy of taking food grain as the key link was detrimental to China's agricultural production." China should not produce more grain at the expense of fish, meat, eggs, and milk production, the peasant explained, because the latter provided more protein than did grains. Another peasant complained that the practice of expanding farmland in some areas had "resulted in barren mountains, serious soil erosion, adverse climatic conditions, and diminished soil fertility." Still another suggested that different localities should specialize in different crops. Mountain areas, for example, should focus on forestry and fruit-bearing trees and grassland areas on animal husbandry.  

Economic improvement led to the growth of the rural press and expanded circulation of newspapers in rural areas. At the end of 1984, 354 newspapers and journals were serving the peasants. Among these were 37 national and provincial newspapers, usually of four-pages, and 264 prefectural and county papers, mostly octavos, with a total circulation of 17.5 million copies per issue. The remainder were journals published by agricultural agencies, research institutes, rural science and technology associations, colleges, and other organizations, which together had an annual circulation of over 20 million.  

Never had the possibility of prosperity been so visible to Chinese peasants, or the desire to broaden their vision by reading so strong. To be successful, peasants needed information about markets and knowledge of science and technology as well as
government policies. The boom in the rural press was a direct result of the expanding rural market. New concepts and ideas circulated by the media helped broaden the horizons of village life. Reporters and editors established close contacts with peasants. Zhongguo Nongmin Bao (Chinese Peasant Daily), which began publication in early 1980 and became the largest of the agricultural newspapers, required each of its reporters and editors to spend at least two months in the countryside each year. It also engaged thousands of peasants as regular stringers and received over 36,000 letters annually from its readers. ³²

What newspaper editors tried to do was provide rural readers with useful information and knowledge rather than dry propaganda. Many rural newspapers and journals, such as the Chinese Peasants Daily and Rural Youth of Beijing, Happy Rural Family of Hebei, Liaoning Peasants, and Sichuan Peasants, opened special columns to explain how peasants might get rich quickly. Columns such as "specialized household gardens," "rural markets," and "peasant voices" answered inquires on rural policies and provided know-how about sideline production. Zhifu Bao (Road to Prosperity) in Jiangsu Province, which began in 1983 and had a circulation of 330,000, ran a "zhifu zhidao" (tricks of the trade) column, instructing readers on such things as how to fish, raise chickens, knit, make ice cream, repair machine tools, start a barber shop, and hundreds of other similar things. These columns were posted on village bulletin boards, read on local radio stations, and used as teaching material in rural training classes. ³³

Taking advantage of its role as an independent investigative force, the press helped check local bureaucrats and voice the concerns of peasants. For instance, a
peasant in Heilongjiang who bought 26 sheep was charged with engaging in speculation and profiteering and fined 150 yuan. When he wrote a letter complaining of this to Heilongjiang Peasants, the paper published a report of its investigation of the matter, and the case was soon resolved to the peasant’s satisfaction. In May 1983, the Chinese Peasant Daily reported that a local official in Shanxi had refused to issue plates for 258 tractors because he had not received the full amount of "bribes" he demanded. The official was fired shortly after this public criticism.

Each major newspaper in China had a special section for handling the hundreds of letters received from readers every day. The letters were read and sorted according to whether they required follow-up or should be printed in the newspaper itself. Since local authorities who might have handled the kinds of problems, complaints, and inquiries the letters contained were either slow or refused to act altogether, more and more peasants turned to the press to air their grievances and seek redress. Therefore, letters to the editor came to play an even more important role than usual in the period of reform. The peasants saw letters to the editor as the best means they had to make their voices heard.

In carrying out the kind of investigative reporting some of the letters required, reporters were sometimes harassed, slandered, or even beaten. But they took pride in their investigative duties. Still those who wrote to the newspapers to complain about the wrong-doings of their superiors took certain risks, because their letters often wound up in the hands of their superiors. Such cases were occasionally reported in the press, with the blame placed on those who suppressed criticism.
Peasants also sought help from the press in solving their economic problems. For instance, a Jiangxi peasant wrote the editor of Economic Reference News (Jingji Cankao) that, thanks to Party policy, he had had a bumper harvest, but now had difficulty selling the 16,000 jin of dried bamboo shoots he had on hand. The paper published his letter on September 5, 1983, and two weeks later had a thank-you note from the peasant saying he had received many orders after his letter was published. Not only had his own supply of bamboo shoots been sold quickly but so had those of his neighbors. Many other problems also received attention in the press in these years, among them drops in primary and secondary school enrollments, increases in rural birth rates, maltreatment of female babies, and inadequate welfare, cultural, and health services.

The lives, concerns, and achievements of peasants had never been so well covered in the press as they were in the 1980s. Individual peasants became experts, managers, technicians, scientists, even board chairmen. They constituted a generation of able, successful people. As a result of improved services offered them by the press, they began to read more and to trust more in what the press said. The old view of the press as an instrument of political indoctrination diminished. A political slogan like "Once the problem of ideology is solved, the problem of food is solved," which had been widely repeated in the 1950s or 1960s, was now dismissed as an "insult to the intelligence of a sophisticated and diverse population."

Despite all of these changes, the press remained a centrally coordinated instrument of persuasion. Propaganda praising model individuals and groups still filled the press. Thus, a village in Shanxi was a "spiritual civilization village" full of "cooperation and
unity, respect for the elderly and love for children, love for the collective, obedience to discipline and law, pleasure in helping others, and household diligence and thrift.49 The new model county of Fengyang became a showcase of peasant consumerism made possible by the new system in agriculture.40 Those who had become rich first, it was reported, did not forget those who lagged behind but helped them follow their example. Such stories no doubt contained elements of truth, but no one expected them to be, or to be read, as the whole truth. Their message was to encourage peasants to follow the direction mandated by the Party. But this kind of persuasiveness was preferable to the old form of political indoctrination. Furthermore, the increased amounts of strictly informational, educational, and entertainment materials in the press did contribute much to economic development.

Finally, the peasants who read newspapers remained a distinct minority of the rural population. A 1984 survey in Jiangsu Province found that only 39% of the rural population there read newspapers and only 15% read them regularly, which were much lower than the readership rates of 98% for intellectual and cadres and 76% for urban workers. Most peasants received their news and information from radio broadcasts amplified through the wired speaker system, or, increasingly, from television.41 The low readership was due primarily to the high rate of illiteracy among peasants, usually estimated at 40 percent of the population.42 But distribution was also a problem. While county tabloids could be distributed by local service networks, other papers and journals reached rural subscribers through the postal service, which distributed about one-third of the subscriptions. Rural postmen usually rode on bicycles, but in mountainous areas
they often had to walk from village to village. So delivery was slow, requiring days or even weeks. Thus, subscribers to daily papers were generally urban or suburban dwellers, whereas peasants preferred weeklies or monthly journals. The rural press was also much more developed in coastal areas, where peasants were more market-oriented than were those in interior regions, where doing business was still a new concept.

THE PRESS AND URBAN REFORM

The rural reform, which decollectivized agriculture and restored household farming, was such a dramatic success that Chinese leaders tried to use it as a model for industrial reform. Beginning in early 1979, the urban economy commenced its own process of transformation. Scientific research and technological improvements began to receive the highest priority, reversing the traditional emphasis on increased inputs of capital and labor. New approaches were adopted to correct deep-seated structural, managerial, and organizational problems, which were now seen as responsible for the indifferent economic performance of the past. In 1982, urban reform experiments were launched in three cities in Hunan, Jiangsu and Sichuan provinces respectively, where profits, competition, and markets were allowed to play a major role in economic activities.

Nationwide urban reforms, however, were not officially inaugurated until October 1984, when the Third Plenary Session of the 12th Party Congress passed a resolution on the subject. The purpose of the movement, the resolution said, was "to invigorate the urban economy" by establishing various forms of economic responsibility systems,
decentralizing control, giving more power to individual enterprises, reforming the price system, and paying attention to market mechanisms. By September 1987, the number of pilot cities had increased to 72, roughly one fifth of the total of 353 cities in the nation, including such large industrial cities as Wuhan, Shenyang, Guangzhou and Chongqing. Together, the pilot cities then accounted for 45% of the urban population, 45% of the fixed assets, 47% of national industrial production, and 48% of retail sales of social products. The reform was thus very extensive, covering as it did fields as industrial and commerce management, labor relations, banking and finance, housing, scientific and technological research, and leasehold and rent experiments.

Compared to the smooth process of rural reform, reform of the urban-industrial sectors was plagued by difficulties and reversals. The transition from bureaucratic centralized planning to market coordination in urban sectors proceeded very slowly, because it was politically more sensitive and technically more complex. Although the economy achieved marked output improvements, with an average annual growth rate of over 9% between 1978 and 1988, the reform itself revealed the stark nature of the economic problems that had made it necessary: structural imbalances, over-investment, wage explosions, inflationary pressures, budget deficits, and inefficient use of resources. When the Party decided to launch the reform in 1984, few realized the enormous impact it would have. As Hua Sheng and others wrote,

Such a resolution could be passed at that time for the following reasons. First, the achievements of the rural reform were notable. The results encouraged the reformers and won over the skeptics. Second, and more important, the majority probably did not realize how big an impact such market-oriented reforms would have on the foundation of China's socialist ownership system and political and cultural structures; how much
depression, confusion, and how many painful choices it might create for those who were not fully prepared.\textsuperscript{45}

Indeed, every step in the reform movement was attended by challenges from theoreticians, cadre functionaries, and wage-earners. Legitimizing new concepts ideologically required liberal reinterpretation of the meaning and function of Marxist economic theories. The process of doing that was fully reflected in the press. In such a complicated situation, it was difficult for reporters and editors to raise issues systematically, although they tried to do so. In the effort, they were sometimes responding to popular interests, but more often than not they simply reflected their own understanding of economic reform. As Fan Jingyi, editor-in-chief of the nation’s most important economic newspaper \textit{Jingji Ribao}, said, "Our basic principle in economic reporting is to press close to the Party’s policies, to the realities of economic work, and to the need of the masses."\textsuperscript{46}

In reporting on economic reform, journalists focused persistently on a number of basic subjects that had only recently been taboo: the market economy, private enterprise, hired labor, price reform, leasehold in business management, and stock exchange. The discussion of these and related topics contributed to the emergence of a mixed economy that may ultimately lead to the restoration of at least a modified form of capitalism. More importantly, the press helped undermind the ideological conservatism that had compromised earlier efforts at political as well as economic changes.

From the very beginning of economic reform, a debate took place in the press over the relation between planning and marketing. Orthodox economists argued that a planned economy is basic to socialism, and that although limited private production and
exchange may be necessary or desirable under socialism, that does not mean socialism
could be equated with a market economy. The most representative formulation of this
view was that of the "cage economy" (niaolung jingji) developed by Chen Yun, a key
conservative among Chinese leaders. But this orthodox conceptualization was quickly
eroded by the tide of reform. Against it, one item in the People's Daily argued that "the
reduction of the sphere of centralized directive planning would liberate local authorities
from excessive guidance from the central government, thus enabling them to create a
more flexible management system over industrial enterprises and utilize local resources
more effectively." The article also argued that "new priority should be given to market
mechanisms so as to improve economic efficiency." 47

In the early 1980s the debate focused largely on increasing the autonomy of
individual enterprise rather than changing the overall economic system, within which
enterprise autonomy would operate. In other words, economic reform was defined as
improving management rather than changing the existing public ownership. The first to
challenge this position was Dong Furen, a prominent economist at the Economic Institute
under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), who called as early as 1979 for
a reexamination of the concept of public ownership. 48 Dong's views were condemned
by conservatives. When private enterprises (geti jinji) spread from the countryside to
cities, conservatives were ready to argue that such enterprises were capitalist in nature
because their owners hired wage labor and ran them for profit. They urged the
suppression of all such "exploitative" practices.

The press, in contrast, defended these enterprises, saying they should not be
called capitalist because they operated legally in a socialist state. Every working Chinese, a Guangming Daily article argued, "is a co-owner of national and public means of production." For that reason, "a worker employed by a private enterprise differs from a worker in a bourgeois state." The private sector, the article said, "plays an auxiliary role and the public sector the main role and for this reason it would be wrong theoretically to classify private enterprises as purely capitalist."49 The Shanghai-based World Economic Herald published a series of articles that carried this argument further. "Private economy," the Herald said, "is the main driving force of social production" and "privatization of state-owned property is the trend of China's economic reform."50

By the late 1980s, it was apparent that reform could not succeed without concomitant changes in the system of ownership. Dong Furen noted that fact, and urged policymakers to "turn certain state-owned enterprises into private-owned enterprises" with independent management accountable for their profits and losses.51 Some argued that the leading role of the public-owned economy must be guaranteed, but 20 to 30 percent of all economic activities, especially in the commercial and service sectors, might be advantageously privatized.52

Since ownership reform was not only complicated but politically sensitive, economists such as Tong Dalin of Beijing University, an economic advisor of Zhao Ziyang, suggested separating enterprise ownership from management through such devices as leaseholding, contracting, and stockholding. Tong's stockholding proposal, as the press reported, would turn state-owned enterprises into stock-holding enterprises with shares divided between the state and workers as private investors. Shareholders would
thus not be capitalists receiving unearned income but partners. The possession of shares of their own enterprise by the workers would intensify in them a sense of ownership and responsibility for the increase and quality of production. Thus enterprises could really shake off their status as subordinates of the state’s administrative organs. In addition, shares would help mobilize funds for expanding production while discouraging unproductive spending by bureaucratic cadres.53

As to the possibility of exploitation of hired labor by private enterprises, many believed the problem should be recognized but not feared. Those who did so argued that the emergence of marketable labor, private capital, and entrepreneurial expertise made certain the development of a private economy employing hired labor, whether the result was capitalist or not. It was not easy to admit this, psychologically or ideologically, because "capitalist exploitation" had been abolished only in the 1950s -- and here it was raising its ugly head again. But the change promised rapid development of the nation's productive forces, and, for that reason, could be accepted without fear of the restoration of capitalism. An article in Jingji Ribao suggested reforming the labor system by "introducing the optimal labor grouping method," "allowing reasonable unemployment," "encouraging the free flow of the labor force," and "establishing and improving a social security system." Only in this way could China build a rational labor market and smash "the iron rice bowl."54

Journalists were not always experts in theoretical discussions of these matters but they were willing to provide space for liberal economists to voice their arguments. Typical of the press support to reformist economists was a Jingji Ribao front-page
commentary, "Do Away with the Criterion for Right and Wrong Which is Divorced from Realities." In exploring new concepts, the commentator urged economists not to take "books" as criteria for judgment, nor judge new things according to "old experience," and not to evaluate an economic proposal on the basis of "whether capitalism has used it or not." "What can be used by capitalism," the commentator pointed out, "can also be used by socialism so long as it is beneficial to the development of productive forces."55

As the principle of the autonomy of enterprises was introduced in 1984, the press gave it full support. The Fujian Daily and other papers, for example, printed an open letter from 55 factory directors and managers, entitled "Please Untie Our Hands!"56 When opponents of reform argued that autonomy in individual enterprises would undermine Party authority and insisted that directors and managers of all enterprises must remain under the control of party representatives, the People’s Daily countered that such arguments have no foundation:

An enterprise is a cell of the state economy, the main task of which consists of carrying out the production, the economic activity, and the one who is administering that cell must command an appropriate authority and power, at the same time bearing responsibility before the state. The role of a party organization at an enterprise consists not of exercising control over a manager or director, but of ensuring that the correctness of the party policy is pursued. Party committees do not have the right to interfere in production-related matters.57

Due to persistent press advocacy of reform, the authority of managers of business enterprises was enlarged, and directors of enterprises took responsibility for all aspects of business and productive activity. Previously these things had been decided by the State, to which all profits had also been handed over. Now enterprises, except paying taxes to the State, became largely autonomous. By the same token, enterprise directors
were no longer state officials who, if not doing their jobs well, were likely to be transferred elsewhere. In the new climate they had to perform more effectively or risk losing their positions.

As the contract and leaseholding systems were introduced in 1986 and thereafter, the press unambiguously endorsed them. Bu Xinsheng, for example, director of a local shirt factory in Zhejian, was praised for his boldness in carrying out reform. Similarly, an entrepreneur in Anhui was eulogized for his success in running chain stores selling sunflower seeds. News stories such as stockholding companies appearing in major cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chongqin, and state-run enterprises in Shenyang recruiting directors from hundreds of applicants from across the nation, were given prominent coverage in the press. The most astonishing story was a front page report in the People's Daily on September 11, 1988:

At 3 P.M. on September 8, many people huddled in the compound of the State Council in Zhongnanhai trying to buy something entirely new to them--stocks.... Mr. Qi, representing the Shenyang Gold Cup Automobile Company, was surrounded by people yelling, 'I want to buy 500 yuan of stocks,' 'I want 200 yuan of stocks'.... By 5 P.M., 30,000 yuan of stocks were sold. For the first time 25 staff members of the State Council became stockholders.

Despite the efforts of the press, the nature and direction of reform policies remained unclear and thus disputed. Instances of conflict between enterprises managers and party secretaries were especially numerous. Cadre functionaries were increasingly worried, because most of them considered reform an infringement on privileges they did not want to lose. They therefore viewed with alarm the transformation implicit in the reform, and mourned the "good old days" when the people were ideologically pure,
despite sweeping poverty. Would the emerging systems of lease-holding and shareholding, they asked, open the way for the return of capitalism and the capitalist practice of the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor? Discussion of this and related issues intensified in 1987.

Perhaps the best illustration of this discussion was the debate of the "Guan Guangmei phenomenon" begun in the pages of Jingji Ribao in the summer of 1987. Guan, who is not otherwise identified, was a 37-year-old shop assistant in a state-run grocery store in Benxi City in Liaoning province. In 1985 Guan began leasing unsuccessful state-owned grocery shops and formed a larger commercial entity, the Dongming Commercial Company. Guan's new company soon accounted for a third of total food sales in the city, and in 1987 its profits were almost 600% of what they had been in 1985. As general manager of the corporation, Guan paid herself a salary 20 times higher than that of her average employee.60 As a result, she found herself accused of being "a capitalist without capital" and in the aftermath deprived of her delegate membership to the Party's 13th Congress.

A letter to the paper in April 1987 caught the attention of the editors of the Jingji Ribao. Fan Jingyi, chief editor, wanted to carry a discussion in the paper on the issue. "There are many people, within and out of the Party," Fan argued, "who see leaseholding as bourgeois liberalization. The discussion will help make things clear." Other editors agreed and they sent reporters to Benxi to investigate Guan and the charges against her. Beginning in June, they published a series of articles discussing whether to classify Guan and her enterprise as "socialist" (she) or "capitalist" (zi). Within a few
weeks, newspaper editors received more than a thousand commentaries and inquiries concerning their stories, over 70 of which were published. The debate in Jingji Ribao, which editorially supported Guan, had nationwide repercussions.

Most of the newspapers correspondents believed that leasing to private operators "does not necessarily constitute a retreat to capitalism" and urged instead that leasing be encouraged because it was an efficient form of management. Others argued that leaseholding "invigorates the economy, helps satisfy the needs of the people, constitutes an effective instrument of struggle against bureaucracy, ensures transition from administrative to economic management, and encourages the development of self-dependence and initiative among workers." The system, according to the supporters, also nurtured a sense of responsibility, in both managers and workers. The high incomes of leaseholders could be interpreted as payment for their managerial expertise or compensation for the risks, not a profit derived through exploitation of hired labor. It was wrong to consider leaseholders as a new type of exploiter.

Meanwhile, the People’s Daily published several major articles giving impetus to reform. "The Shock from Lubuge," (Lubuge de chongji) a report on conflict between the Japanese-style management and the Chinese-style "iron rice bowl" system at the construction site of a major hydroelectric power station in south-west China, revealed the weakness of the old Chinese economic system: it supported the old and inefficient workers, but lacked efficiency. As one young worker at the construction site said, "I would like to work for the Japanese when I am young, and for the Chinese when I am old." Another article, "Awareness in the Throes of Reform,"
zhentong) offered solutions to many problems revealed by the reform effort by analyzing various social, political, economic and psychological factors. Its column "Dialogue on Economic Life" tried to answer such questions as "Why a doctor earns less than a barber?" "Why corruption is spreading unchecked among cadres?" "Why is it so difficult to check bureaucratism?" "Why leftist ideas remain a stubborn obstacle to social development?" The resulting discussions sparked strong repercussions all over the country.

The press became increasingly open in economic reporting during the 1980s. Its handling of the price reform provided a good example. For many years the Chinese had been accustomed to stable, fixed prices, and, therefore, regarded any price increase as a threat to the very foundation of life. Everybody knew the price system was irrational and should be changed. The only problems were when and how. In 1985, the government decided to increase the price of certain food stuffs. The press was told the details of the planned increases but was instructed to publish nothing on the subject for fear of causing social disorder. The day before the price hikes were to take effect, lines formed throughout the cities as people stocked up on groceries, because they already knew of the price increases through various channels, including foreign broadcasts. Chinese journalists, as they were instructed, sat on the story.

But in 1988, when another round of price increases occurred, the press made an effort to prepare the population psychologically for the reform. The public was told that the implementation of economic reforms made the increases necessary. The causes of the increases, according to the press, were excessive circulation of paper money, over-
expansion of capital construction, and the growth of purchasing power among certain segments of the population. It was suggested that all of these causes were subsumed under one larger causes -- market regulation in accordance with the law of supply and demand. Editorials in the press, in general, urged the public not to worry too much about the increases in prices for meat, vegetables, and other basic goods because increases in income would "compensate for the increased prices." Not everyone agreed, however. One newspaper article worried that the price increases would not only diminish the actual gains workers and peasants had recently made, but would entail a worsening of material conditions for those whose incomes were fixed. As a result, the article suggested, the increase might undermine the belief in reform itself, by breeding doubt concerning the need for reform and the desirability of the reforms being implementated. Zhongguo Jizhe (Chinese Journalist), a monthly magazine run by Xinhua, summed up the situation this way:

Before the price readjustments were put into effect, the media conducted propaganda work to explain the measures adopted to the masses of the people, thus increasing the transparency of the work. It also openly explained and reported the entire price reform measures, their cause and effect, to the masses with the aim of making the work more transparent. Practice has proved that this way of doing things has produced better results than the past practice of 'keeping the lid on' did.65

Correct or not, according to the Xinhua commentary, the preparatory work by the press helped the masses understand the principles and policies of the Party as well as the difficulties of the price reforms the Party was implementing.

The press did more than advocate economic reforms. It discussed every aspect of economic life. For instance, Beijing residents' after-dinner chatting, including their
complaints about the rising price of consumer goods and poor quality of consumer
services, became common topics of discussion in Jingji Ribao. Investigative reporting
revealed appalling abuses of child labor, widespread usage of brand names to sell fake
products, and the equally widespread usage by speculators of guanxi (ties) to secure
favored access to limited supplies of vehicles or imported goods, which they quickly
resold for high profits. In defending the reform programs from sabotage by
conservatives, the Chinese press repeatedly warned that without reform China would
never overcome its economic backwardness. "Without reforms China will lose the right
to exist on the globe."  

THE PRESS AND THE OPEN DOOR POLICY

When China opened its door to the West, the press perceived its role as a dual
one: on the one hand, creating a positive image of China internationally and on the other
providing a true image of the outside world for domestic readers. To implement the first
role, Chinese leaders had several obedient voices at their disposal. Beijing Review, for
example, devoted most of its pages to reprints of major articles, Party documents, and
government reports, reflecting the Party’s position on matters of current concern. Despite
its vowed desire "to report on both China’s achievements and problems, truthfully and
candidly," its primary function remained the same as it had been when it was created
in 1958. China Reconstructs (which became China Today in 1987) was less political, and
focused mainly on the social and cultural life of ordinary people. The increasing need to
present China to the outside world resulted in the appearance of new publications. China
Daily, the first English-language newspaper in the People’s Republic, was launched on June 1, 1981, with a total circulation of 70,000 copies. It provided English readers, particularly foreign residents in China, with major domestic and international news as well as news of Chinese economic and financial conditions. In 1985, the People’s Daily began an overseas edition tailored especially for overseas Chinese.

Besides these outlets, another important source was the Xinhua News Agency, the official organ of the state. It had been primarily a domestic news agency but in 1983, its director Mu Qing proposed to made it into a "world-class" international news agency. Since then, Xinhua has expanded notably. By 1987, it had a staff of nearly 6,000 and maintained not only an extensive domestic network of reporters but had 99 branches around the world, with a total of 450 reporters. In addition to providing hard news and official materials to domestic media, the agency transmitted about 60,000 words daily in six languages to other countries, including exclusive news services for overseas Chinese newspapers. Feature articles about Chinese political, economic, and social life were sent regularly to over 100 countries. Its Department of Domestic News for Overseas Service broadcast over 6,000 news stories in 1982, 30 percent of which were re-transmitted by the four major international news agencies, AP, UPI, Reuters, and AFP. A new Economic Information Center was created in July 1988, providing exclusive economic information about China to thousands of overseas subscribers. A few national newspapers such as People’s Daily and Guangming Daily also maintain a news network overseas.

Before the reform, the task of all Chinese media aimed at foreign countries
(duiwei xuanchuan) had been to "promote world revolution," with emphasis on Third World revolutions against the two superpowers. Beginning in 1979, that emphasis shifted to "promote foreign readers' understanding of and friendship to China, provide better service to our foreign policies, and create a suitable international environment for the Four Modernizations." As Li Pu, a former Xinhua deputy director, pointed out, "Our propaganda must be linked with the foreign realities. We must try to answer such questions as: Is China's political situation stable? Are there any factional struggles within the Party leadership? Is China going to abandon socialism in carrying out the economic reform? Is it profitable or safe to do business with China?" If China can not show a stable political situation, Li asked, "Who is going to invest in China?" He cited the following example to show that journalists should take their own initiative in reflecting China's stable political situation.

In April 1981, Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army Daily) published an article criticizing Bai Hua's film "Bitter Love." The foreign press immediately reported this event, predicting that China was beginning a new movement to purge intellectuals which might reverse the policy of economic reform. A month later, a Xinhua article, "Criticism Is Not A Stick," reported that Bai Hua was an award winner at a recent national poetry competition. "In the past, an author would be destroyed once his literary work was criticized," the article said. "But now this wrong practice has been abandoned. A writer can be criticized and rewarded simultaneously. This reflected the new political situation in China." The article revealed that Bai Hua was completing a new historical drama, that he did not suffer from any political pressure, and that the critical article appeared in the
army daily because he was an army writer. This Xinhua story had the desired effect abroad. A UPI reporter said of it that "Chinese authorities stopped the controversial criticism of Bai Hua today."73

According to Li Pu, Xinhua did not receive any instructions from above to write this article. "We did so because we want to use this case to clarify the misunderstanding of China’s situation among foreign readers," he said of the publication of the article. The deputy director encouraged all Xinhua staff reporters to take similar initiatives in their future work. The Xinhua article, however, was not transmitted to domestic media.

It became a common practice for the Chinese press to report positively the activities of a friendly government, and negatively the activities of a hostile government. Xinhua and other official organs were very careful in overseas reporting, because everything they reported could be interpreted as official intention. Thus, a young Xinhua reporter was criticized for his biography of the prime minister of a friendly country which occasioned a complaint from a representative of that country to China’s Foreign Ministry. Related to this was the fact that, if need be, Chinese editors could expatiate to their hearts’ content about unemployment, poverty, and crime in the West, or about American military build-up, or Israeli aggression; but when it came to setting out Chinese policy they could do little more than repeat phrases from official statements or the speeches of Chinese leaders. Xinhua’s reporting about Kampuchea, for example, was based primarily on reports from communist guerrilla forces there. Editors knew these reports were full of factual mistakes, but they were obliged to publish them. In recent years, Chinese journalists have tried to overcome such problems but thus far little
progress has been made.

In addition to the strict Party control that implies, the cultural sensitivity of Chinese journalists to the nation's international image is another important consideration. The journalists, no less than other Chinese, don't want China to "look bad" before the world and dislike foreign "smearing" on China's image. This reflects the traditional value that "ugly domestic affairs should not be known to outsiders" (jiachou buke waiyang). Journalists are thus particularly sensitive to condemnatory or negative Western reporting of China. In response to reports in the Western press of increasing "early age love," "gambling" and "prostitution" in China, Chinese journalists turned out many articles documenting a new generation of youths devoted to academic studies, scientific research, and correct social attitudes. If there were bad things in China, these reports implied, they were due to the remnants of an outmoded feudal tradition and to the decadent influences of the West. The Chinese press also regularly reprinted positive coverage of China in foreign newspapers in order to lend credibility to the Chinese leadership and way of life. This led to a predominance of good news in overseas reporting. In many instances, the resulting political propaganda was not imposed by the Chinese leaders, but was willingly offered by journalists themselves. Chinese journalists might harshly criticize China at home, but they wanted to present a good picture of the nation to the outside world.

The press coverage of the outside world for domestic readers has always been influenced by the fluctuation of China's internal politics. Thus, when conservatives or ultra-leftists were dominant, any attempt to learn from the West was criticized as "the philosophy of slaves of foreigners" (yangnong zhexue). When liberal reformers got the
upper hand, that way of thinking became "blind xenophobia" (mangmu paiwait). This phenomenon reflected a long-term dilemma for the Chinese people, for whom the West has long been alternatively a threat and a model. Would an infusion of Western ways and values cure China's ills or destroy its culture? Both possibilities, logically incompatible with each other, were foreseen by Chinese leaders as well as ordinary people. What attitude should China take in opening its door to the outside world in the 1980s? Deng Xiaoping's answer was this:

It is right for us to carry out the economic policy of opening to the outside world, and we must adhere to it for a long time to come. We must also continue to expand our cultural exchanges with other countries. With regard to economic exchanges, however, we are following a dual policy: we keep our doors open, but we are selective, we don't introduce anything without a purpose and a plan and we firmly combat all corrupting bourgeois influences.74

Why? Deng explains,

It is foolish to keep our doors closed and persist in the same old ways, if we want to learn from developed capitalist countries and take advantage of such advances in science, technology, management and other areas as may be useful to us. But in learning things in the cultural realm, we must adopt a Marxist approach, analyzing them, distinguishing the good from the bad and making a critical judgement about their ideological content.75

In line with Deng's principle of "seeking truth from facts," the distinction between socialism and capitalism was blurred in the Chinese press. Sometimes, admiration of capitalist countries knew no limits. Press articles described the wonders of capitalism: marvels of audio-visual methods in education, high-living standards, advanced administrative and management methods, computerized production lines, huge sums of money spent on scientific and technological research. As China increased its economic exchanges with foreign countries, newspapers devoted larger portions of their space to
world economic news. Issues frequently discussed in the press included effects of world politics on economic development, the role of government in economies in other countries, export-oriented economies of the NICs, world crisis of over-production, economic structures and imbalances of development in different countries, international monetary and energy crises, and the newly emerging world economic order.

China’s economic situation was analyzed in relation to economic circumstances outside the country. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, China moved many heavy industrial complexes to western and central mountain areas, known as "third line projects." One reason was the necessity of preparation for possible war with the Soviet Union. Another political consideration was redistribution of economic resources in favor of the backward interior in order to balance regional economic growth. Now, the availability of foreign investment encouraged market-oriented, and therefore regionally unbalanced, growth in coastal areas. As the *World Economic Herald* suggested,

> The coastal areas have better industrial bases, skilled technical forces, and transportation and communication facilities. They are experienced in and have the conditions for doing business with foreign merchants. These superior features should be brought into full play in order to produce greater quantities of export goods.  

Newspapers in coastal cities and those newly-established special economic zones (SEZ) served as voices of local interests as well as source of information and advice. In other words, these newspapers not only helped general readers gain knowledge of the outside world but also provided useful information to local authorities and business entities. *Shenzhen Tequ Bao*, for example, made use of foreign information to compile reports for local government agencies' reference and doing economic research of
potential use to business institutions. Newspapers also frequently sponsored joint symposia with economic research institutions on such subjects as effective use of foreign capital, regional economic cooperation, and economic contacts with foreign companies. These symposia generated valuable suggestions for local policy-makers. The World Economic Herald even ran a special training center, where more than 800 businessmen learned the intricacies of foreign trade and the use of foreign capital.77

Foreign trade was cast in the press as a catalyst for economic reform as well as the best way to generate foreign exchange. The press in the late 1980s devoted much attention to discussions of how China could become a profitable exporter and how Chinese enterprise could generate more foreign currency. The tone of these discussions was more mercantilist than political. A Jingji Ribao editorial in 1987, for instance, asserted:

The expansion of foreign trade can facilitate the reorganization of domestic industries. In the process of reorganization, those industries that are good at exporting will get help to develop, while those that are not will be weeded out. Those commodities that generate good economic results will gain support, and those with poor results will be suppressed. The commodity structure of our country will thus be improved and upgraded as a result.78

As foreign exchange was now all-important for economic reform, trade -- the source of foreign exchange -- thus provided a "safe cover" for liberal reformers. In the midst of a conservative backlash in the spring of 1987, for instance, a group of young economists held a much published conference in Zhengzhou, to discuss major issues concerning the reform of China's foreign trade system and the establishment of free economic zones. The press organized follow-up discussions on these and related issues. Against the political background at that time, their assertions of the need to "soften" the
rigidities of the central control was an act of defiance in itself. Such reportings and discussions in the press met little opposition. 79

By this time the Chinese press no longer insisted that life in China was better than in the outside world. Instead it admitted that China was still a poor, developing country. The extensive, detailed, and more objective coverage of the world outside in the press was well received by Chinese readers. In fact, several polls showed that news of the outside world was among the most popular aspects of the press with the readership. Nevertheless, there remained a bias in the coverage of Western countries that varied according to China’s domestic political environment and the warmth of relations with specific countries.

In general, the press coverage of economic reform during the 1980s had some specific characteristics. First, the press did not evade sensitive issues of either socioeconomic or political life, but discussed such issues openly and tried to find correct ways and methods to solve them. These discussions provided the public opportunities to air different viewpoints and made readers feel they were equal participants in the discussions. If, in the past, slogans and declarations of a utopian character predominated in the discussions of difficulties and shortcomings, the press now tried to give realistic, sober-minded treatment to the difficulties and shortcomings.

Secondly, the vertical, downward communication from the Party to the people was increasingly supplemented, if not altogether replaced, by a horizontal, freer flow of information. In other words, the press no longer served only a channel to transmit the views of leaders to the masses but to inform the masses as well. The net effect was to
enable people to form independent judgments, become active critics of government policies, and push for political change.

Finally, there was much more information in the press. In modern societies information is power. When a small group maintains a monopoly on information and its sources, and decides when, to whom, and what information is dispensed, that group is in a position to maintain absolute political control. Once the monopoly is broken and people have alternative sources of information, however, people are in a position to make independent judgments about the political and economic policies and to participate in decision-making processes. The inevitable result is a redistribution of power, which in the long run results in a different form of government. China in the 1980s was a long way from changing its form of government. But, it was certainly in a period of experiment in redistributing the kind of power that comes from information sharing.

The press coverage of economic reform was thus instrumental in promoting popular demands for more political freedom. In fact, after the mid 1980s, more and more people came to believe that the continuation of economic reform would largely depend on the advent of political reform.
NOTES


2. The role of Chinese media in political indoctrination was diminishing sharply in recent years. This was observed by many Western scholars such as Andrew Nathan's Chinese Democracy (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985) and Stanley Rosen's "Political Education and Student Response" in Issues and Studies (No. 25, 1989). But its role in promoting economic developments has been extremely powerful.


5. For example, see People's Daily, February 25, 1979, p.2.


"Ten Policies on Further Livening Rural Economy (1985)," and "1986 Plan of Rural Work." They were all issued on the first day of the year and provided important guiding principles for Chinese rural reforms. For details, see Shinian Gaige Dashiji, 1978-1987 (Major Events of Ten Year's Reform; Beijing: Xinhua Press, 1988), pp.226-240.

18. Ibid., pp. 244-245. See Also People's Daily, September 28, 1987, p.1. Due to the rapid increasing of urban population, the government has changed some large counties (xian) into cities (shi), representing an upgrading of administrative level.

19. This policy was released by Xinhua News Agency on October 4, 1979. See FBIS, October 5, 1979, L12-L13.


22. FBIS, February 6, 1984, p.3.


28. Numerous accounts were reported in the press, describing how rural cadres took advantage of their social power for personal gains, ranging from taking from peasants a portion of their profits to free meals at peasant homes. For reference, see People's Daily, Oct. 16, 1983, p.2; May 14, 1983, p.2; July 17, 1984, p.5; FBIS, Mar.1, 1984, p.T3; Aug. 8, 1985, p.K13.


30. People's Daily, September 2, 1979, p.3.


37. This is the headline of a story about food production in Henan published in People's Daily on August 10, 1958. Similar headlines such as "Ideological work is the lifeline of economic work" and "Politics takes command, Production of grain goes up" had appeared frequently in the Chinese press before 1976.


42. This figure was based on Bai Hua's "Investigation on Mass Communication in Rural Jiangsu" in Research in Sociology (Beijing), 1986, No.4:69-75.


50. World Economic Herald (Shanghai), August 29, 1988; and October 10, 1988.


56. Fujian Daily, April 24, 1984, p.2.


59. People's Daily, Sept. 11, 1988, p.1, in FBIS, Sept. 15, p.28. But, on Sept. 15, the paper carried an "Important Correction," saying that "An investigation proves that no enterprise has ever been allowed to sell stocks in Zhongnanhai, nor has any official of the State Council purchased any stocks there." When an American reporter tried to contact Mr. Duan Xinqiang, a People's Daily staff reporter who wrote the story, another reporter answered the phone, saying that "anything on the front page is true," and then hung up.


61. Xinwen Zhanxian, Sept. 1987, pp.3-5.


67. World Economic Herald, September 12, 1988, p.3.

69. Staff Reporter, "An Interview with Director Mu Qing" in Zhongguo Jizhe, January 1987, pp.6-8.


71. "Some General Principles in Overseas Reporting," in Duiwai Xuanchuan Cankao (Reference For Overseas Propaganda), May, 1986, pp.5-6. This is an internal monthly publication by the Department of Domestic News for Overseas Reporting of Xinhua.


73. Ibid., pp. 25-30.


75. Ibid., p.34-35.


77. "The Experiment of the World Economic Herald" in Jiefang Ribao (Shanghai), May 20, 1985, p.3.


CHAPTER IV

THE EXPANSION OF THE CHINESE PRESS

In the face of major economic reforms, the Chinese press, according to the Marxist doctrine of economic determinism, could not remain what it had been. A change in material social relations dictated corresponding changes in the superstructural press. Only by changing could the press function effectively in the new economic environment. For those familiar with the history of the Chinese press, what happened in the 1980s is breathtaking. New publications appeared and grew like mushrooms after a spring rain, and they did so in every corner of the country. New technology also began to transform news production. Computerized printing and tele-communications technology accelerated the speed and effectiveness of information gathering, processing, and distribution. Steady economic growth opened the way to large-scale advertising and commercial exploitation of the press’s potential. Newly established journalism programs trained thousands of young people to meet the needs of the newspaper industry. Increased interest in popular participation in economic and political change extended the potential readership of newspapers to almost the entire population.

EXPANSION AND INCREASING DIVERSITY

The most notable change in the Chinese press was the increase in the diversity as well as the number of newspapers. By the end of 1986, the number of newspapers had
increased from 180 in 1975 to 2,342, with a combined annual circulation of nearly 26 billion copies, an average of one newspaper for every five people. By late 1988, the number of newspapers was estimated at 3,500, including 1,540 intended for general distribution, 1,200 for trade and specialized readership, and 800 school newspapers.\footnote{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Magazines</th>
<th>Radio Stations</th>
<th>TV Stations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>49 (1949)</td>
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<td>1955</td>
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<td>61 (1957)</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>2,191</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1,160</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>3,457</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>104</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2,342</td>
<td>5,248</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>2,578</td>
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</tbody>
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According to an analysis in People’s Daily, among the 1,777 newspapers at the end of 1985, only 368 were party organs, which thus consisted of only 20.7% of all newspapers. There were 160 science newspapers (9%), 112 economic papers (6.3%), 174 educational papers (9.8%), and 61 papers devoted to political and legal affairs (3.4%). The remainder (50.8%), most of which were newly established papers, were small papers catering to the special interests of farmers, factory workers, intellectuals, students, women, children or the elderly. There were only 212 daily newspapers -- 12% of the total number -- while the others appeared between once and five times a week.\footnote{2}
It must be noted that the 1985 statistics shown in Table 2 counts only officially registered newspapers, which totalled 1,777, and does not include 414 known unregistered papers. The actual number of newspapers in 1985 was thus at least 2,191.\(^3\) If we take the latter figure as the basic for calculation, the percentage of party newspapers was only 17\%, a sharp decrease from the record high of 84.4\% in 1975. In contrast, non-political, specialized newspapers increased from less than 10\% of the total in 1978 to 66\% in 1985.\(^4\) This clearly shows the pluralistic trend and the end of the dominance of Party organs. The new press effectively discharged its duties to inform, enlighten, and entertain its readers. This is in sharp contrast to the previous situation, in which almost the entire press, from the *People's Daily* down to factory newsletters, served as organs of the Communist Party.

Categorically, China has over 30 kinds of newspapers, but, administratively, these divide into three layers: central (national), provincial, and local. Each of these layers can be further divided into multipurpose (zonghexin) and specialized (zhuanyehua) newspapers. At the central level, the *People's Daily*, with a circulation between 4 and 6 millions, is the most important newspaper because it is the organ of the CCP Central Committee. If the Chinese media can be described as an "orchestra," in which each instrument plays its own part, the *People's Daily* plays first violin. It is regarded abroad as the authoritative voice of China and at home as the vehicle by which Party instructions and policies are circulated to the whole population. Together with the Xinhua News Agency, it sets the political and ideological tone for all other media.
As an official organ of the State, Xinhua is the source of a large proportion of the information carried by the media. In addition to its regular wired service to both domestic and foreign media, Xinhua runs a dozen newspapers and magazines, including Cankao Xiaoxi (Reference News), Jingji Cankao (Economic Reference), Liao Wang (Outlook), Banyue Tan (Fortnight Discussion), Shijie Tiyu Cankao (World Sports Reference), and Zhongguo Jizhe (Chinese Journalists). These are among the most influential central level publications. Cankao Xiaoxi, for instance, is the most popular newspaper in China, in part because it reprints so many foreign news stories and articles on world events. This unique paper, originally an internal publication for Party cadres before 1978, expanded its coverage and readership to all citizens in 1985, when it achieved a circulation of 9 million. Through this "window," ordinary Chinese became better informed about the outside world than they had been only a few years earlier when they read and believed only what appeared in the open press. It is interesting to note that while 90% of the subscribers of this newspaper are individuals, the same proportion of subscribers to the People’s Daily are paid for with public funds.5

Other major national newspapers include Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army Daily), the organ of the CCP Military Committee and one of the nation's most conservative newspapers; Guangming Ribao (Enlightenment Daily), a multipurpose newspaper intended mainly for intellectuals; Jingji Ribao (Economic Daily), a newly found newspaper that concentrated on economic reporting and was responsible directly to the State Council; Gongren Ribao (Worker's Daily), published by the Central Trade Union Council and aimed at industrial workers; Zhongguo Nongminbao (China’s Peasant
Daily), published by the Ministry of Agriculture and intended for a rural readership; *Zhongguo Qingnianbao* (China’s Youth Daily), published by the Youth League Central Committee and one of the liveliest of all the central papers; *Keji Ribao* (Science and Technology Daily), published by the State Science and Technology Commission; *Zhongguo Jiaoyubao* (Chinese Education), run by the State Education Commission; *Zhongguo Fazhibao*, (Chinese Legal Daily); and *Renmin Zhengxiebao* (People’s Political Consultation Daily). Less important national papers include such titles as *Wenyi Bao* (Literature Gazette), *Tiyu Bao* (Sports Daily), *Jiankang Bao* (Health News), *Luyou Bao* (Tourist), and *Zhongguo Shaonianbao* (Chinese Young Pioneers Daily).

Each provincial Party committee publishes its own daily newspaper, which usually uses the name of the province or its capital city as the title of the newspaper. For instance, the official organ of the Beijing Party committee is *Beijing Ribao* and the organ of the Fujian Party committee is *Fujian Ribao*. These provincial party organs, while conveying the views of the central authorities, focus mainly on local affairs. One interesting phenomenon is that these provincial papers, always speaking on behalf of provincial leaders, served as an important battle ground and played an important role in the reforms. *Sichuan Ribao*, for example, often spoke for Zhao Ziyang, while *Jiefang Ribao* (Liberation Daily) of Shanghai often carried the views of national leaders of Shanghai origin. In addition to the 29 provincial Party organs, there were 219 newspapers serving as organs of prefecture or city level Party committees, and only 74 county-level organs. 
Some non-party local newspapers are also very influential. For instance, *Wen Hui Bao* and *Shijie Jingji Daobao*, both based in Shanghai, were local newspapers, but they reached a large national readership and were very popular among intellectuals and educated youth. The latter, created in the early 1980s, was one of the boldest newspapers in China, often carrying remarkably frank features on the problems of Chinese society. Some evening papers, such as *Yangcheng Wanbao* in Guangzhou, *Xinmin Wanbao* in Shanghai, and *Beijing Wanbao*, were also very popular for their "soft" contents.

Most of the new newspapers, however, were and remain small, specialized, and local, and are published once to five times a week. Many of them are not newspapers in the full sense, because they carry no general news, but are instead "solely entertainment or service oriented." In most cases they focus on specific topics such as computers, domestic decoration, flowers, birds, stamp collecting, travel, or sports. They cater to the special interests of various social groups such as farmers, factory managers, scientists, students, the elderly, women, and children. Even children run their own papers. *Xiao Zhuren* (Little Master), which first operated in July 1983 in Shanghai and soon had a circulation of 200,000 copies, was put out by youths, who wrote, drew, edited, and took pictures themselves. Its editor-in-chief was a 12-year-old girl.

The so-called enterprise newspaper, 361 of which were being published in 1985 and run by large industrial complexes, is worth special attention. Unlike private businesses in the West, many large enterprises in China are both production units and social communities. Employees live within a company community which often has its own elementary and middle schools, health care facilities, hospitals, restaurants, and
shops. Most enterprises in China, in fact, resemble mini-societies. Traditionally enterprise publications, including mimeographed leaflets and blackboard papers, focused on particular production activities or enterprise specialties. But enterprise newspapers, which have flourished in recent years, are now assuming the characteristics of general newspapers, becoming more comprehensive, informative, and readable. In line with the economic reform, one writer suggested that enterprise newspapers should be encouraged to adopt more open stances and become more independent. The enterprise director--rather than the Party leadership--should assume publication responsibility, the papers should place less emphasis on political propaganda and more emphasis on information transmission.

Also competing for the readers' attention -- though in China competing is perhaps not the word in the Western sense, are over 5,000 various kinds of periodicals with a total circulation of 2.4 billion copies. The most popular of these magazines include Zhongguo Qingnian (Chinese Youth), Minzhu yu Fazhi (Democracy and the Legal System), Renmin Wenxue (People's Literature), Xin Tiyu (New Sports), and Dazhong Dianying (Popular Films). The latter carries news of Chinese and foreign movies, biographies of film stars and directors, and other features. Breaking with tradition, attractive starlets began to be featured on printed media. According to one report, 218 covers of 792 issues among 102 magazines in 1981 featured pretty women. For China's youngest readers, there were 83 magazines, which variously featured science, fine arts, music, sports, fiction, or recreation. These popular magazines are particularly valued for relaxation and entertainment.
Beyond the open media lies an internal reporting system. This system functions within party organs at central and provincial levels. The most important services are those published by Xinhua and the People’s Daily. For international affairs, Xinhua produces, in addition to the earlier-mentioned Reference News, a more detailed digest of foreign news and articles entitled Cankao Ziliao (Reference Materials), which is also known as the "Big Reference". Printed twice a day, it averages 60 pages in the morning and 30 pages in the afternoon, and is available to city/bureau chiefs and above. Xinhua also produces Cankao Yaowen (Essential Reference News), a more condensed version of news summary and analysis of major world events and foreign reflections on important Chinese domestic affairs. Published twice a day in large characters for easy reading by elderly officials, it is available exclusively to top-level leaders and certain central agencies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For over four decades, Cankao Yaowen (previously Meiri Yaowen) has remained a primary source of world news for Chinese leaders. In addition, the International News Department of Xinhua publishes the Guoji Neican (International News for Internal Reference), which prints observations from abroad, analyses of foreign news, area situation reports, and foreign policy suggestions by Xinhua reporters stationed worldwide.12

For domestic affairs, both Xinhua and People’s Daily publish highly restricted publications, Neibu Cankao (also known as Neican, which means "internal reference"). Printed two to three times a week and available only to bureau-level units and above, it reports and discusses such sensitive issues as high-level corruption and mismanagement, worker strikes, public attitudes and behavior, and other policy related matters considered
"not suitable for open publication," but necessary for the leaders. Although it contains little that would not appear in ordinary Western newspapers, these reports provide the real side of Chinese society because they are true and detailed, and free of cover-ups. Major problems in domestic affairs are similarly covered in Guonei Dongtai Qingyang (Proof of Domestic Trend), published several times a day by Xinhua, each issue dealing with a single issue or problem. It is available only to members of the Politburo and certain related ministry officials.13

Some other central organizations and provincial party organs also produce their own internal publications, graded according to the confidentiality of the information they contain and the rank of their recipients. But they are not as widely read as those published by Xinhua and People's Daily. Through participating in this "intelligence mission," Chinese journalists, as a Western journalist who worked as a news polisher in Xinhua pointed out, "turned into a kind of secret police for the state."14 Despite changes in the open media, this intelligence mission of the press, party organs in particular, continues today.15

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PRESS

The economic reform that bred widespread social change was felt acutely in the newspaper industry. In the past, the press had operated within the framework of a centralized system, under which the means of production, distribution, and exchange were owned and directed by the government. All newspapers were subsidized by the government and none earned a profit. All reporters and editors were de facto government
cadres. During the 1980s, the patterns of production and marketing, as well as editing, reporting, and managing began to change. As China gave increasing play to market mechanisms and cut back on subsidies, newspapers were forced to confront the fragility of their financial bases. They had to streamline their operations and come up with new sources of income to meet the rising cost of operations, the changing demands of consumers, and the emergence of media competition.

The return of advertising was one of the earliest results of the change. Before the Cultural Revolution, some metropolitan papers carried commercial advertising, but the amount was very limited. No advertising was allowed on radio and television. Between 1966 and 1977, advertising, seen as a capitalist activity, was banned completely from all media. In its place were revolutionary slogans, pictures of Party leaders, and wall posters. Advertising returned, however, in 1978, and the rapid development of the economy led to impressive increases in advertising spending. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, telephone directories, and billboards are now filled with advertisements for everything from consumer and industrial goods and services to wedding announcements and queries about lost family members. Foreign goods such as Swiss watches, Sony television sets, and Coca Colas are prominently featured on Chinese Central Television (CCTV) programs. A song from a Hitachi advertisement became for a while the most popular song among Beijing children. Actual advertising revenues were increased from 150 million yuan in 1982 to a billion yuan in 1987, and then surged to 5 billion yuan in 1992. Advertisement became one of the major sources of the press's income.
The rapid increase in advertising reflected the increasing demands for commercial information by consumers and producers as well as the pursuit of profits by the media. Compared to the situation in the Western media, advertising in China is still in its infancy, in part because many Chinese are still not fully aware of its important role in a modern economy. But more and more Chinese journalists now understand that a media enterprise, if well managed, can be profitable, a fact that adds a financial dimension to media growth in the years to come.

As economic reform intensified, newspapers sponsored by the government received less state funds and had to assume more responsibility for their own economic condition. Rising costs resulted in considerable losses to them. The price of newsprint, for instance, increased from 730 yuan per metric ton in 1980 to 2,800 yuan in 1988. Annual production of newsprint in these years was only about 350,000 metric tons (due to a lack of wood), far below the demand of over 500,000 tons. Each year the state should import about 150,000 tons to fill the gap. Government expenditure for the import of newsprint was fixed, however, and as result of price increases on the international market, the money that bought 150,000 tons of newsprint in 1984 bought only half that amount in 1988. The resulting limited supply combined with the increasing demand to produce a severe shortage of newsprint, thus further driving up the price.17

In addition to the soaring price of paper, the cost of labor, equipment, ink, maintenance, and other necessities also increased, while the price of newspapers was fixed by the state. A copy of Legal System Daily, to illustrate the problems this caused, cost 0.087 yuan to produce, but could only be sold for 0.05 yuan. The result was that
newspapers suffered considerable operation losses. The Heilongjian Daily, a provincial newspaper which received an annual government subsidy of 10 million yuan, had a deficit of 3.5 million yuan in 1987 and 4.8 million in the first ten months of 1988. Large newspapers such as People's Daily and Yangcheng Evening News lost over 20 million yuan a year. Raising newspaper prices could solve only part of this problem, because it would cause a drop in the demand curve. Therefore, all news organizations had to employ clever strategies and try every possible means to open up new business revenues.

One thing they did was to open side-line businesses. For example, Jilin Ribao, the party organ of Jilin province in northeast China, not only published six specialized small papers but opened a hotel, restaurant, bar, photo studio, and printing shop, and ran a correspondent journalism training center. In three years, from 1984 to 1987, the paper made a net profit of over 10 million yuan from these side-line businesses. It used the money to buy new printing equipment, build dorms for its employees, and equip its staff reporters with cassette recorders and cameras. Similarly, Guangxi Kejibao, a small science paper with only 30 staff members, made over a million yuan by selling a new kind of pig feed powder. Nanfang Ribao and Guangzhou Ribao, two major newspapers in Guangdong province, ran more complicated businesses and even opened joint ventures with Hong Kong companies. Each made a handsome profit of over 10 million yuan in 1987. Some small newspapers became so market-oriented that they printed anything that would achieve greater saleability. Not only were local newspapers engaged in sideline business, all major national newspapers and other media, including the People's Daily, Xinhua news agency, and CCTV, ran side-line businesses on a much greater
scale. It is estimated that by 1988 one fourth of the Chinese media were able to operate without government subsidiary or other public funding.\textsuperscript{20}

The increasing income enabled the press to make technological innovations to meet the new demands of the news industry. Among the innovations were advanced offset machines that permit more creative layouts as well as computer-controlled facsimile printing. The use of photographs, black-and-white or colored, became more frequent and more professional as a result of imported fast-lens miniature cameras. Newspaper plants were also expanded and modernized. Some major urban newspapers such as \textit{People's Daily} imported computerized news writing and editing systems. Up-to-date photosetting equipment using lasers were also introduced, replacing the old letterpress and offset system.

The distribution of newspapers also changed. In the past, all newspapers in China had been subscribed to and distributed through the post office. Readers could make subscriptions only during certain periods, usually at the beginning of the year, and could not cancel their subscriptions for refunds. The postal service retained 25\% of the subscription money it collected as a distribution fee, which it raised to 35\%-40\% in 1987 as part of a postage rate increase. To keep their prices low, many newspapers thus established their own distribution networks. In this way, the \textit{Tianjin Ribao}, for instance, saved 2 million yuan in distribution fees in 1987.\textsuperscript{21} A national conference on urban newspaper self-distribution, held in Taiyuan in June 1987, reported that the 26 newspapers represented at the meeting had distribution expenses less than 20\% of their subscription revenue, which was far below the 35\% to 40\% charged by the postal
The new distribution system became increasingly popular, and was particularly well received by readers because it enabled them to subscribe directly to newspaper at any time and to receive better delivery service.

These improvements reflected parallel improvement in newspaper management. If there was little change in the nature of ownership, there were nevertheless major changes in managerial structures. For the first time in the Party press there was a serious discussion of the management of newspapers as modern businesses rather than government propaganda units. Some disagreed with that idea, saying that the press is a factory of spiritual products and thus needs necessary financial support from the Party. If the press were allowed to run as an independent business, they said, it would be reduced to a money-earning machine and would no longer be the faithful voice of the Party. Most people, however, sneered at these "leftist ideas" and argued that newspaper production is a commodity production and there is nothing wrong with earning money. In the age of economic reform, a newspaper would go nowhere if it did not pay attention to its own economic wellbeing.

The National Newspaper Management Society, established in March 1988, organized discussions and research in such topics as separating the Party/government from the newspaper industry and separating ownership from management. One practical problem was that China had few trained newspaper managers. To solve the problem, a program was established at the Central China Polytech Institute in Wuhan to provide special training for newspaper managers. By 1988, thirty-eight people had graduated from the program.
Closely related to the rapidly changing economic environment was the emergence of some private or semi-independent newspapers. Although these small publications were subject to frequent government scrutiny and sometimes forced to close down, they struggled to exist and a few of them even achieved noted success. Nan Feng Chuang (South Wind Window), for example, a popular journal established in 1985 in Guangzhou, enjoyed not only full financial, managerial, and personnel independence, but also a high level of editorial freedom. This was a new development in the history of the Chinese Communist press.

On the other side of the coin, the "money-making" necessities due to increasing media competition caused one major problem: corruption -- the desire for undue "private gain" in news activities. Some newspapers crammed their business sections with promotional materials for favored firms. Some others went so far as to sell press cards, to carry false or misleading advertisement, or carry "advertising articles" as news stories. For example, on June 11, 1987, two versions of Zhongguo Rencai Bao (Chinese Personnel News) appeared on the market. One was the regular version that was distributed nationwide. The other included a whole page of "advertising articles," praising the efforts of local authorities in two suburban counties near Beijing in "recruiting talented people on their merits to develop the rural enterprises." The latter was printed for only 20,000 copies for distribution in the two counties, whose officials paid 25,000 yuan to the newspaper for publishing the articles. The event was described as "an auction of conscience" in Chinese press circles. Many small newspapers that
were unable to increase advertising revenues had to cash in on vulgar and crime stories, which often included "sensational, lurid, and salacious" details.

The most blatant form of corruption was the use of media for private gain. For example, a journalist from Shanxi Gongren Bao (Shanxi Worker's Daily) wrote a false story about what he called a "model peasant entrepreneur," from whom he received a bribe of over 10,000 yuan. In 1987, the northwest office of the Zhongguo Guanggao Xinxi Bao (China Advertising Information News) invited dozens of reporters from various media in Beijing to Xian for a week-long junket that would "propagate the excellent products" of 18 local enterprises which provided airfares, hotels, meals, sightseeing tours, and handsome allowances for personal expenses. Some journalists arranged secretly to stay on the payroll of companies that paid them generous "consulting" fees. Others sought opportunities for free travels, meals, plush hotels paid for by businessmen. Business reporters and editors sometimes received fabulous gifts from corporations.

These problems were due partly to the low wages of newsmen and partly to a deteriorating value system. Despite the fact that Chinese journalists enjoyed guaranteed salaries and bonuses of 30% or more as well as government food and housing subsidies, retirement annuities of 70%-100% of their salaries, and unlimited sick leave with full pay, their income was comparatively low. The starting pay of a reporter in the mid 1980s was roughly 80 yuan, which was less than that of a hotel janitor. Low wages and soaring consumer prices combined with other factors to drive newspapermen to seek greener pastures in or out of journalism. The dire economic straits in which they sometimes
found themselves made them easy prey to corruption or, alternatively, forced them to take as second jobs in such things as teaching, translating, ghost-writing, influence-peddling, or soliciting hush money.

The sources of corruption were many—advertising executives, businessmen, enterprise managers, and even government officials, all of whom bought favors from journalists. Business editors and reporters were envied by their colleagues because they received more gifts and other "incentives" from their moneyed clientele. Brazen corruption in the press seems to have grown in the post-Mao period. The "power of the pen" surrendered to "the might of the money." One example was that increasing numbers of well-trained young journalists transferred from prestigious national newspaper jobs to much smaller ones in the special economic zones in southern coastal China, where they could double their pay. Others left journalism permanently for better paying jobs in business, particularly foreigner-run business. This exodus was in fact one of the problems plaguing the Chinese press.

The growth of "business journalism" reflected the changing economic environment. This growth, many worried, improved the economic status of the press to its social detriment. Thus journalists were exhorted to "strengthen self-cultivation, foster a revolutionary career ethics, and dare to expose and fight against any corruption in the journalism circles." But the economic demands of the newspaper industry more often than not prevailed over the professional demands. This was underscored by news reports that delegates to the Seventh National People's Congress in 1988 openly accused some journalists of canvassing advertising orders everywhere and asking for rake-offs.
The rapid growth of the mass media resulted in the increasing demand for well-trained journalists. In the 1960s there were about 10 journalism departments nationwide, all of which were destroyed or closed down during the Cultural Revolution. When they reopened in the early 1970s, entrance exams were abolished in favor of recommendations from communes or factories. The resulting shortage of qualified journalism professionals was soon apparent to everyone, and the expansion of journalism education began anew in the 1980s. Table 3 shows that the number of journalism teachers and students increased almost five-fold and six-fold respectively. Between 1984 and 1988, 48 Chinese universities turned out 5220 journalism graduates, equal to the total number produced in the previous three decades.\textsuperscript{31}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Total Student</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1,548</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>2,075</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>3,010</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>4,506</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>6,160</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Does this growth of supply satisfy the demand? The answer seems to be "No." The first national conference on journalism education held in May 1983 revealed that among the estimated 250,000 Chinese working in journalism only 8% had college degrees, and less than 1% (about 1200) had degrees in journalism.\textsuperscript{32} The education
planners attending the meeting predicted that 74,000 trained journalism graduates would be needed by the end of the century, about 5,000 a year. Table 3 clearly shows that such demand has not been met.

As a supplement to formal journalism education, short, intensive training programs at media institutions as well as correspondence courses leading to diplomas have been organized. In September 1984, Anhui Daily started the first correspondent university in journalism. In less than a year, 12 similar programs were established throughout the country, with a total registration of 130,000 students. Most of these students were young people who desired a journalism career but were unable to enter a journalism program. Others were working journalists who wanted to improve themselves so as to stay ahead professionally and to be better rewarded financially. The advantages of this new form of journalism education were quickly recognized by the newly founded National Journalism Education Association, which established a special committee responsible for examining and regulating these programs. Qualified graduates are granted certificates.

Undergraduate training in journalism varied in different schools. Some leading universities have their own journalism departments. Most others have programs attached to another department, usually the Chinese language department. Each program offers a four-year curriculum leading to a B.A. degree. The curriculum at Fudan University, for example, requires a journalism student to complete 144 credits to graduate, including 112 credits in compulsory subjects and 32 in electives. Starting in 1983, a special six-year, dual-degree program was introduced in several major universities, among them
Fudan, Xiamen, and Shanghai International Studies Universities. These new programs, integrating foreign language training and journalism, aimed to train a corps of students with both journalism and foreign language skills for major Chinese media. The effort to train students in international communication highlighted the nation's increasing emphasis on opening itself to the world and enhancing the quantity and quality of news information coming into and going out of China.34

Graduate programs in journalism, which existed only at Fudan University in the early 1960s, have been established since 1978 in several major universities. Among the 377 graduate students enrolled in journalism from 1978 to 1983, 80% were at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The significance of this program was two-fold: it recognizes journalism as a social science discipline and it makes advanced training available for journalism students. By 1986 doctoral programs were created at People's University and Fudan University, with a total enrollment of 9 students. Admission to the graduate programs was very competitive. As a 1985 graduate of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences recalled, he had had to "beat out nearly 3,000 applicants in a three-day, six-part, 18-hour marathon entrance examination" to enter this prestigious graduate program, because it is considered "the journalistic equivalent of the Whampoa Military Academy."35

The curriculum of journalism programs has been traditionally divided into three major categories. The first part included political theory, political economy, the history of the CCP, and the theory of Party journalism. The second part included professional skills in news gathering, writing, editing, newsroom procedures, journalism theory,
the history of journalism. The third, which aimed at strengthening general knowledge, included grammar, rhetoric, classical and modern literature, history and geography, international affairs, foreign language, and physical education. Most recently, new courses such as contemporary communication theory, social sciences research methods, public relations, advertising, computerized news reporting and editing, and media management have been incorporated into re-constituted programs. The curriculum expansion not only signals an expanded set of interests, but also a recognition of journalism as an inter-disciplinary field.36

The change in China’s journalism programs reflected increasing Western influence. In October 1978 when a Japanese journalism professor wrote "mass communication and mass media" on the blackboard before a group of Chinese journalists and researchers in Beijing, nobody in the room knew what these words meant.37 They were amazed to find that there existed a totally different journalism theory and practice outside China. Since then, exchanges between Chinese journalism educators and their foreign counterparts have increased rapidly. More and more Chinese universities and colleges began to offer contemporary communication courses, and Western communication and journalism textbooks were translated into Chinese and widely used in Chinese schools. Nearly 100 foreign professors and journalists have been invited to teach in China’s journalism schools. American scholars such as Wilbur Schramm, Edwin Emery, Donald Shanor and many others have taught at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. They not only taught students how to write a lead,
hard news, and feature articles, but introduced them to such concepts as objective reporting and the socio-historical and philosophical framework of the Western media.

Meanwhile, Hundreds of Chinese journalism teachers and students went abroad to learn journalism skills and Western concepts of communication. They earned their master's or doctor's degrees and transferred the knowledge they obtained from abroad to their colleagues and students at home. Since they have been exposed directly to Western journalism instruction, many of their colleagues have benefited from the ripple effect. American institutions that have been involved in the exchange programs include the universities of Missouri, Iowa, and Hawaii as well as Columbia and Stanford universities. The Parvin Fellows program, run jointly by the University of Hawaii and the East West Center, has alone trained 131 young journalists from major Chinese news institutes, including Xinhua, the People's Daily, and China Daily. Funding from international foundations has provided advanced training for journalists in China. The Reuters News Agency of Great Britain operated the Thompson Journalism Training Center at Beijing's Xinhua News Agency, providing on-the-job advanced training for hundreds of Xinhua reporters and editors who specialized in international reporting. The Department of Communication at Xiamen University was established in 1983 with the assistance of two American scholars, Wilbur Schramm and Timothy Yu, who brought in money from international foundations.

The adaptation of Western social science theory to China's communication problems is exemplified by the increasing utilization of social science research methodologies, notably that of survey research. In the past, opinion research in China
employed a panel discussion approach, in which the researchers talked with a variety of people at organized meetings. With the introduction of contemporary western social science methods, a series of new concepts, such as random sampling, close-ended questionnaire, cross-sectional analysis, etc. were introduced into China. In recent years hundreds of opinion polls have been conducted on regional and national levels, covering a wide range of topics. Understanding the public, assessing its interests, examining the social effectiveness of political propaganda, and assessing the credibility of news and program content have become important considerations in China.

The first major public opinion poll using the new methods was the Beijing Audience Survey conducted in 1983 by the Beijing Journalism Society. Similar polls were later carried out in various provinces and cities about media performance. By the late 1980s, polls were conducted to test public perception of the economic as well as political reforms. A national poll on economic reform held in the spring of 1986 surveyed 460,000 interviewees selected from over a 100 million industrial employees across the country. Polls were also held among university students immediately after the 1986 student turmoil and even after the 1989 Tiananmen Incident. In March 1988, a survey of Beijing elites (both government and intellectual) was undertaken to help identify significant issues to be dealt with in the Year of the Dragon. Survey results became a major information input for national policy planners. The survey was conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute at the People’s University, the first of its kind in the nation that was established in 1985. At this and other institutions, communication and
journalism students were facing curricula that include statistics, research methods, computer training, audience research, and data processing.\textsuperscript{39}

Journalism, traditionally seen as part of political science, had never been recognized as an independent inter-disciplinary field in China. Literature about journalism had been sparse and most of the existing work was nothing but political propaganda. This situation changed rapidly in the 1980s. During the decade dozens of journalism research institutions were established across the country. Most of them were attached to particular newspapers or as part of the journalism departments in various universities. Over one hundred professional periodicals are published by these research institutions. According to figures for 1988, over 500 journalism works and thousands of research articles had been published in the previous ten years.\textsuperscript{40}

The rapid expansion of journalism education and research during the 1980s has largely been within existing structures. What changed was the whole scale of the operation and the raw material that it handled. The proliferation of journalism education has provided a new generation of journalists who are more liberal minded. The increasing interests in journalism research laid the theoretical foundation for press reform, and journalism has emerged as a respectable and sizable profession.

**PAY MORE ATTENTION TO NEWsworthINESS**

With the changing environment in which the press operated, more and more Chinese journalists and journalism educators began pushing for still further reforms. The
resulting debate on the concept of news value, one of the most controversial issues in the mid-1980s, represented a major effort to redefine the role of the press in China.

For a long time Chinese journalism had been almost entirely propaganda and lacking in news value. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, newspaper contents bore little relation to reality. At that time, the prevailing belief was that, first, news should serve political ends and, second, the essence of events rather than events themselves was important in news reporting. That way of thinking, which remained influential well into the 1980s, thereafter came under increasing criticism.

Lei Jin of the Journalism Institute at the CASS argued that "news is something that the audience does not know but wants to know." In other words, reader interest was the "test stone of news value." While rejecting some Western concepts of journalism, Lei accepted proximity, timeliness, prominence, and consequence as criteria for the importance of news. Hu Jiwei, former editor-in-chief of the People's Daily, accepted similar criteria, but stressed that news value also included the relation between facts and social needs. Thus, in judging news, the press must consider the interests of the society and the Party as well the readers, and must strike a balance in playing its educational, informational, and entertainment roles.

The new consensus emerging from the debate was that news and propaganda are not identical and must be separated. "Journalism is not political science," one writer wrote. "This is common sense. But some people still have difficulty in understanding this. The theory of 'facts serving politics' only provides excuses for distortion,
exaggeration, and fabrication." A textbook from the journalism department of Fudan University put it more clearly:

The purpose of propaganda is to persuade people, to make them accept the view of the propagandist and thereby to make the object of propaganda consciously act in accord with the intention of the propagandist.

But, news only provides people with various kinds of objective information, and what people decide to do after receiving such information is up to the individual.

This frank definition is strikingly similar to that of Western communications theorists. Frankly speaking, Chinese journalists have not totally rejected propaganda; rather they have debated how to redefine propaganda and to separate news from it. By the mid-1980s, most of them agreed that the press should follow the "objective laws of journalism" (a term frequently used to refer to universal conventions of news value) and try to provide more objective information to readers. This meant in practice that the press should not only carry more international news, human interest stories, and public criticism of corrupt officials, but also should cover some formerly taboo subjects.

Take the reporting of disaster news as an example. Western readers are used to seeing accounts of accidents in the press. In China, however, such reports had been specifically forbidden. The press reporting of the disastrous Tangshan earthquake of 1976, which caused the death of a quarter million people and leveled the whole city, did not give any details except extensive coverage of government relief efforts. The Chinese media had a lengthy catalog of "don't tells," which included epidemics, accidents in mines and factories, transport crashes, consequences of catastrophies such as earthquakes and floods, and any thing else that might embarrass the government or cause low political
morale among the masses. In the 1980s, news of such disasters as airplane crashes, train wrecks, floods, storms, and fires began to appear regularly in the press. Xinhua news agency reported more than 30 instances of major disasters in 1985 alone. The best example of such coverage was that of the giant forest fire at Mountain Daxingan in northeast China in May 1987. The day after the fire started, Xinhua released its first story, and over the next 25 days, more than 85 Xinhua releases were printed in dozens of domestic newspapers. All the major media, including the Central Chinese TV, the People’s Daily, and China Youth Daily, sent reporters to the fire area and provided timely and detailed reports of its causes and consequences, casualties and property damages, government relief efforts, and precautions taken by the population. Among hundreds of stories were reports that when thousands of houses in Mohe county were burning, the mayor’s residence was the only one saved by the few available fire engines. The coverage showed the extraordinary desire of journalists to tell the public truthfully and completely what had happened.45

Reporting disaster was not an easy job, and was in fact sometimes even dangerous. China Youth Daily reporter Li Weizhong, who went to Heilongjiang to cover the forest fire, was whipped and locked in a detention room for three days by local authorities. "I tried to explain that I was doing my job and showed them my press card," Li later recalled. But the district leaders did not listen to me, and they "grabbed me around throat and beat me." The local leaders insisted that reporters get their (the leaders) signatures before releasing stories, and they ordered local communication centers and post offices not to send the reporters’ stories without such signatures.46 In a train
accident that claimed 28 lives in Shanghai in March 1988, local transportation authorities tried to cover up the cause of the accident, but Jiefang Ribao reporters revealed that the driver ran a red light and then tried to flee the scene.47

Truthful reporting of accidents should become a normal part of Chinese journalism and, by revealing the causes of accidents, help reduce future accidents. This was the general consensus of a group of senior editors who met in Beijing in April 1988 and called for greater freedom in reporting accidents and disasters. Fan Rongkang, deputy editor-in-chief of the People’s Daily, recalled how local authorities denied his reporters access to the scene of an airplane crash in early 1988 and refused to provide the names of victims and how in a similar crash of a passenger train from Kunming to Shanghai they did the same thing. Fan criticized officials who opposed reporting disasters because they believed such reports would have adverse social effects. This belief "sounds serious but does not hold water," said Fan. "Presenting true pictures of disasters will in the long run add to the people's confidence in the future."48

The lack of truthful reporting in the press inevitably led to the proliferation of rumors (xiaodao xiaoxi). To cover up bad domestic news "was a sign of lack of trust in the public," said one senior journalist. "Natural disasters and accidents happened everywhere, not only in China. Even if we do not report them, people will hear about these unexpected or negative events through small route channels or foreign media." In stressing the importance of revealing the causes of accidents, the journalist continued, "the absence of truthful reporting about accidents would lead to more accidents than
would have occurred if people had been more aware of the genuine dangers inherent in modern society. Secrecy can only cost more Chinese lives."

Despite increasing coverage of disaster and accident news, journalists heeded warnings not to give an overly negative tone to their coverage. Much of the reporting seemed to be intended mainly to impress the West rather than to help the Chinese people understand things. Some of the details of disaster reporting were half-hidden in stories about the speed and courage of rescue workers, the thoroughness of relief efforts organized by the government, and the heroic efforts of disaster victims to cope with the difficult situation, all of which constituted sufficient "good news" to allow public revelation of the event. Whatever the motivations behind the new policies, the Chinese public is having its consciousness raised by new revelations of human disasters throughout the country. Additionally, for the first time in their careers many Chinese journalists have "tasted blood" in genuine investigative reporting.

Crime reporting is another example of changes affecting journalism. Crimes had seldom been reported in China because information on crime and other things related to public security had been seen as a State secret. As a result, rape, robbery, and murder, to judge from the official press, simply did not occur in China. During the reform age, however, the reporting of criminal activities became routine. Dozens of newspapers and magazines specializing in legal and public security affairs were established across the nation. Minzhu yu Fazhi, which published in detail many crime stories, became one of the most popular magazines in China. Although most of the crimes dealt with at length were economic -- embezzlement, bribery, falsification of production figures,
mismanagement and waste of public resources -- other kinds of crimes were also covered. But the stress was always on the educational purpose of the reporting, which included warnings to would-be criminals, and not on keeping the public informed of criminal activities. Any attempt to cash in on crime and pornography met with harsh punishment.

Other popular issues that appeared frequently in the press included environmental problems, health care services, and housing problems, because they affected so many people. The newspapers cited data illustrating the tragic conditions of the air and water in China, of rivers and beaches poisoned and lakes and forests dying, and urged the passage of environmental laws. Some of the stories included interviews with peasants adversely affected by the lack of medical services.

Although there were still severe limits on news reporting -- "blank spots," things that cannot be mentioned at all -- reporters generally took advantage of the more liberal atmosphere to raise their own favorite subjects which had been suppressed in the past. They were afraid neither to draw conclusions nor to offer suggestions for improvements that did not square with official policies. Overall, then, journalists tried to present a truthful chronicle of their times.
NOTES


4. Ibid.


23. Xinwen Yanjiu (Shanxi), March/April, 1988, p.21; Xinwen Xuekan (Beijing), April 1988, pp.6-9.


25. Xinwen Xuekan (Beijing), June 1988, p.62.


37. Uchikawa Yoshimi, professor of journalism at Tokyo University and then President of Japanese Journalism Association, gave the lecture at the Institute of Journalism under CASS. This can be seen as the first exposure of Chinese journalists to contemporary Western concepts of communication since its "open-door" policy. The term "mass media" had not been officially accepted until Zhao Ziyang used it in his report to the 13th Party Congress in 1987.


46. Wei Yanan, Li Weizhong & Sui Minmei, "Reflection on Reporting the Forest Fire at Maintain Daxinan," News Front, November 1987, pp.6-8. Also see AFP news from Beijing, April 7, 1988, FBIS-CHI-88-067, p.23.
47. Kyodo news from Shanghai, April 7, 1988, ibid.

48. Xinhua (Beijing), April 2, 1988, in FBIS, April 4, 1988, p.41.

CHAPTER V

TWISTS AND TURNS IN THE PRESS REFORM

Driven by economic reform, political and social changes occurred rapidly and widely in China in the 1980s. The trend toward liberalization produced more independence for the press. But the reality was not that simple. The Chinese leadership was in a dilemma. To revitalize the economy and modernize the society, the leadership must discard many of Mao's radical and outdated visions. Yet, to legitimize its monopoly on political power, the regime must adhere to orthodox ideology. Thus, in carrying out the reform, the leadership maintained a "dual direction policy," that was anti-Right in politics and anti-Left in economics. In other words, the Party maintained absolutism in politics and market-driven rationalism in economics. This policy created a contradictory, even confusing situation. As a result, continual fluctuations between tightness and looseness became a feature of contemporary Chinese life. Linked tightly to politics and heavily controlled by the Party, the press reform experienced seesaw swings in the political fluctuations.

THE ABORTIVE ANTI-SPIRITUAL POLLUTION MOVEMENT

The year of 1983 witnessed another period of liberalization. As economic reform spread quickly throughout the country, China opened its door to the outside world. This led to increasing foreign influence. At the same time, the proliferation of the press
produced an "explosion of information." New policies giving preferential treatment to intellectuals seemed to encourage them to speak more freely. The cumulative effect of all this was an unaccustomed liveliness in every area of human activities in Chinese society. The press published hundreds of articles discussing such sensitive questions as modernism, humanism, and alienation.

Su Shaozhi, director of the Institute of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) criticized China's official ideology, which he said incorporated a Stalinist interpretation of Marxism and was "becoming more narrow, shallow, ossified and impoverished." The ideology thus failed to answer the challenges of real life or to dissipate the doubts of the masses. Su observed that Marxism must be committed to greater openness and compatibility with other strains of thought. Wang Ruoshui, deputy editor-in-chief of the People's Daily, similarly advocated "reorienting socialism toward humanism." The most fundamental mistake in the 30 years of socialist experiment in China, Wang believed, was the "neglect of human values." To realize the full and free development of individuals, China needs socialist humanism, which means to Wang "the rejection of total dictatorship," "abandonment of personal cults which deify one man and degrade the people," "upholding the equality of everyone before the truth and law," "recognition that man is the goal of all social activities," and "the sanctity of personal freedom and dignity." Wang also argued that alienation (yihua), one of the key concepts in Marxism, is "universal," which means that it exists not only in capitalist society but under socialism as well. The political implication of this argument was significant because it could be
interpreted to mean that the party dictatorship, though created by the people, no longer served the people. It could also be interpreted to mean that the Chinese communism had degenerated into something unintended by its creators. In an important article published in March 1983 on the 100th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, Zhou Yang, chairman of the Chinese Federation of Literature and Art Circles, further elaborated on alienation under socialism. He said,

Because our democracy and the legal system are unsound, the servants of the people (party officials) sometimes tend to abuse the power bestowed upon them by the people, and become master of the people. This is alienation in the political domain.... As for ideological alienation, the best example is the cult of one individual, which is similar to religious alienation....

These liberal views soon came under attack. In July 1983, Deng Liqun, director of the Central Propaganda Department, made a speech at the Central Party School attacking those who advocated Marxist humanism and pointed to alienation under socialism. "A small number of people," Deng said, "are carrying the flag of 'liberating thought' to oppose Mao Zedong Thought, the socialist system, and the leadership of the Party." With Party School head Wang Zhen, Deng Liqun wrote a report to Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun describing the "serious situation of spiritual pollution." In the Second Plenary Session of the 12th Party Central Committee in October 1983, both Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun spoke about the importance of fighting against the "right."

In his speech, Deng Xiaoping first stressed the "excellent results" that had been achieved in economic reform and the necessity of the upcoming party rectification campaign, which aimed at "correcting leftist mistakes" and clearing away "the three types of people" left over from the Cultural Revolution. Then, he criticized some people in the
ideological field who were spreading spiritual pollution. Without citing their names, Deng criticized Wang Ruoshui, Su Shaozhi, Zhou Yang, Hu Jiwei and others, who he said had engaged in discussion of the "abstract value of the human being, abstract humanism and alienation," and "preached abstract democracy, even advocating free expression of counter-revolutionary views." They had taken the 'hundred flowers' policy as "absolute freedom to air any view," thus turning it into "a bourgeois policy of laissez-faire." This kind of spiritual pollution "is no longer tolerable." He warned those who are indifferent to spiritual pollution,

Don't think that a little spiritual pollution doesn't matter much.... Spiritual pollution can be so damaging as to bring disaster upon the country and the people. It blurs the distinction between right and wrong, leads to passivity, laxity, and disunity, corrupts the mind and erodes the will. It encourages the spread of all kinds of individualism and causes people to doubt or even to reject socialism and the Party's leadership. 

Deng also criticized the press for "publishing these wrong ideas," and denounced those editors who "have been only interested in writing the dark side of life," "spreading pessimism," and "criticizing socialism." He reminded journalists and theoretical workers not to forget their roles:

All our workers fighting on the ideological front should serve as 'engineers of the soul'.... They should use their articles, literary works, lectures, speeches and performances to educate people, teaching them to assess the past correctly, to understand the present, and to have unshakable faith in socialism and in leadership by the Party. They should inspire the people to work hard, set high goals for themselves, have lofty ideals and moral integrity, raise their educational level, cultivate their sense of discipline and strive courageously for the magnificent cause of socialist modernization. 

Seizing on Deng’s criticism of the "right," conservatives launched a campaign to eliminate spiritual pollution. On October 21, 1983, Deng Liqun published an article in
the People's Daily urging all those who worked in the propaganda front to "analyze all kinds of wrong thought and industriously wipe out spiritual pollution." At the same time, the Party's senior ideologue, Hu Qiaomu, accused proponents of the idea of socialist alienation of intending to destroy the party's authority. Because of such accusations, Zhou Yang, the guardian of literary orthodoxy in the 1960s who had become a reformer in the 1980s, was forced to make a public self-criticism "acknowledging" his mistakes and taking personal responsibility for the spiritual pollution now infecting in theoretical and literary fields. Many publications, films, and plays were confiscated or banned for allegedly "spreading unhealthy tendencies." Citizens were urged to turn in their records and tapes of Hong Kong or Taiwan pop singers such as Deng Lijun, which were denounced as "meeting the low tastes" of the audience. Female singers were similarly criticized for "wiggling their hips as they sing" while wearing "performance costumes (that) are more and more revealing, transparent, and strange." Such performers, one author suggested, "should be given an education in Marxist aesthetics, and be taught what kind of beauty is needed in contemporary China." The Beijing Municipal government even issued a circular prohibiting its employees from wearing long hair, high-heel shoes, and narrow pants while on duty.

The biggest victory for the conservatives was the removal of Hu Jiwei and Wang Ruoshui from their posts in the People's Daily. As the Party organ that set the political and ideological tone for all the other media, the People's Daily was the of an intense struggle between reformers and conservatives. Hu Jiwei, under the aegis of reformist leaders such as Hu Yaobang, made bold changes in the paper, turning it into one of the
most "liberal" newspapers in China. Hu Jiwei insisted on publishing criticism, arguing that it was more important for the press to serve the people than the Party. Hu thus became a thorn in the flesh of such conservative leaders as Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun, who kept a particular sharp eye for any expression of dissidence in this prominent newspaper. Deng and Hu proposed in early 1983 to shift the People's Daily from the Party Secretariat to the Propaganda Department, thus putting the daily under their direct control. Director Hu Jiwei and Qin Chuan, editor-in-chief of the paper, objected to the change, arguing that the People's Daily was the official organ of the Party Central Committee not the Propaganda Department. A meeting of the Secretariat chaired by Hu Yaobang rejected the proposed change.

Hu and Deng, however, continued their effort to sabotage the leadership of the People's Daily. They secretly compiled materials from the speeches and other expressions of Hu Jiwei and Wang Ruoshui, and lodged repeated complaints against them with Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping. During the anti-'Spiritual pollution' campaign, this effort paid off: Hu and Wang were removed from the People's Daily after Deng himself signaled his approval of the change. To show their power and prestige, Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun went to the heavily guarded People's Daily compound in the eastern suburb of Beijing on October 30, 1983, and personally announced the decision of the Party. Sitting on the rostrum of the auditorium, Hu Qiaomu listed one by one the "mistakes" of Hu Jiwei and Wang Ruoshui in the presence of over a thousand members of the paper's staff. Hu and Wang said nothing in their own defense.
The years of Hu Jiwei’s editorship of the People’s Daily stood out not only because of his clear, if subtly expressed, confrontation with conservatives, but also because the Daily had not always been a literal mouthpiece of the Party leadership, especially when the paper was led by a man of such pronounced abilities and views as Hu evidently had. Hu Jiwei left his post, but the new leaders of the Daily continued his line. In December 1983, hundreds of Chinese journalists, most of them heads of official media and senior party members, showed their support to Hu Jiwei by electing him president of the newly-founded Beijing Journalism Association. A month later, with the support of Hu Yaobang, Hu Jiwei assumed a new office, Vice Chairman of the NPC’s Education, Science, Cultural, and Public Health Committee, which made him responsible for drafting a press law. In these new positions, Hu was more outspoken and played a more important role in the press reform than he had while at the People’s Daily.

The press in general took a passive attitude toward the movement against anti-spiritual pollution. The People’s Daily, for instance, not only refused to actively participate in the movement, but, on the contrary, collected information against it which was reported through private channels to Hu Yaobang and Xi Zhongxun. In mid-November 1983, the Party Secretariat issued an internal "Report on the Expansion of the Movement to Eliminate Spiritual Pollution." The report gave many examples of the excesses and undesirable effects of the movement: In some rural areas, the economy had come to a halt because contracts were torn up, peasants selling their products in free markets were detained by police, and the bank deposits of peasants were frozen. Some peasants committed suicide thinking their new wealth would be the cause of unbearable
criticism. Peasant confidence in economic reform was "badly shaken," thus creating the potential for chaos among 80% of the population. In urban areas, the report said, permanent waves, long hair, high heel shoes, colorful and fashionable clothes, and makeup and jewelry had been criticized as examples of spiritual pollution. Fears among intellectuals that there would be another Cultural Revolution created a psychological climate adverse to modernization. Some businesses became afraid to sign contracts with foreign companies lest they be accused of spiritual pollution.15

After receiving this report, the Politburo met to discuss the subject, and as a result issued several internal documents, including assessments by Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. These documents made it clear that it was necessary to eliminate 'spiritual pollution', but the effort to do so must be confined within theoretical and literature circles and not expanded beyond them. The main task now was economic construction. As a result, the campaign came to a sudden halt.17 On November 17, China Youth Daily published an article, criticizing the notion that curling hair, wearing fashionable clothing, or dancing was spiritual pollution.18 The article marked a turning point, because the Party Secretariat ordered the Propaganda Department to see that all major newspapers reprinted the article. Two days later, Deng Liqun, the author of the campaign, spoke self-critically in the press:

To efficiently realize the Four Modernizations, we have carried out the policy of enlivening the economy. We should not say that the unsuccessful things that have arisen in practicing the economic reform are spiritual pollution. We should not call the works, which have deficiencies and faults but basically follow the right direction, spiritual pollution. We should not, because of eliminating spiritual pollution, make the lives of the people dull.19
This moderating note, sounded by one of the nation’s leading conservatives, signaled the victory of the reformers. In December, the People’s Daily carried another major cautionary article:

It is worth noting that some people have expanded the elimination of spiritual pollution into daily life. They regarded wearing high heels, curling hair, wearing new-style clothing, growing flowers, etc. as spiritual pollution. This is wrong. People should not mix up spiritual pollution with changes in material and cultural life, and even more, they should not interfere excessively with different ways of life. Some people also regarded theoretical discussions of economic reform as spiritual pollution. These viewpoints will create very serious consequences in our reform. So the Party Secretariat has noted these problems and asked to correctly and realistically carry out propaganda.20

By this time, the anti-'spiritual pollution’ campaign had been excluded in so many areas that there was really nothing left of it. By the end of December, it disappeared from the press altogether. The campaign, as the conservatives complained a few years later, "lasted for only 28 days" and thus "came to a premature end." Not only had the campaign, they said, been criticized as "another Cultural Revolution," but those who actively participated in it were publicly "humiliated."21

The anti-'Spiritual Pollution’ movement had been essentially a leftist effort to slow or reverse reform. It showed the power of conservatives horrified by the rapid social and intellectual changes since 1978, but it also showed their weakness. The effort encountered considerable resistance at every level, which rendered it ineffective. Deng’s moves against the right showed his agreement with the leftists on ideological matters, but he would not allow them to disturb his economic reform. In fact, attacks on the left became steadily harsher, culminating in a campaign in late 1984 to "totally reject leftist
policies of the Cultural Revolution." The abortive outcome of the anti-spiritual pollution campaign did not end policy conflicts within the Party but rather intensified them.

DEMANDS FOR "A MORE OPEN AND LIVELIER ENVIRONMENT"

The period between 1984 and 1986 can be seen as the high point of Deng’s career. The Third Plenary Session of the 12th Party Congress in October 1984 decided to extend his economic reforms to the entire economy. The opening of 14 coastal cities gave new impetus to increased contact with the outside world. The record-high grain production of that year gave further creditability to Deng’s rural reforms. The reform of irrational economic structures and the streamlining of government organizations proceeded smoothly. Over a million elderly officials at different levels were forced to retire in 1985, leaving room for a new generation of younger and better educated cadres. While everyone was reaping the benefits of economic liberalization and increasing foreign contacts, intellectuals were trying to eradicate the leftist dominance of cultural life.

The Fourth Congress of the Chinese Writers’ Association met in Beijing on December 29, 1984. What was expected to be a dull affair turned into a jubilant celebration when Hu Qili, a liberal Politburo member who was put in charge of Party propaganda recently, used his keynote speech to give a ringing endorsement to freedom of expression. "It is necessary to give free rein to individual creativity, power of observation, and imagination," Hu declared. "The writer must think for himself and have full freedom to choose subjects, themes, and methods of artistic expression.... But, for
"This was a "historic day that the Chinese writers will never forget," Liu Binyan wrote in his diary. "Many old writers were moved into tears, a combination of sad memories and yearning for bright future." In fact the Party Secretariat had set the tone for the meeting on December 20, when it met and decided to endorse freedom of literary creation and democratic election of leaders in writers' associations. Conservatives such as Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun had refused to attend the December 29 meeting. Commenting on the Writer's Congress, a People's Daily reporter wrote,

The speech made by Hu Qili on behalf of the Party Central Committee at the opening session, confirming writer's freedom of literary writing, is well received with thunderous applause. When a congratulation message from hospitalized Zhou Yang is read, the applause from the delegates lasts for three minutes. Everyone understands the meaning of this applause. A telegraph of Hu Qiaomu from Hangzhou, however, is received silently. General Secretary Hu Yaobang sat at the center of the rostrum, smiling gently and looking attentively at the smoke rising slowly from the cigarette between his figures.

Leading conservatives were now publicly gibed in the press. It was at the same meeting that Liu Binyan, a famous muckraking reporter and writer, was elected Vice President of the Writers' Association by an overwhelming majority. On the closing day of the Congress on January 4, 1985, jubilant writers celebrated their success at a grand dancing party at the Western Beijing (Jingxi) Hotel.

Buoyed by the reform leadership's support for creative freedom for writers, many journalists began discussing how they, too, could "free" themselves from the Party's yoke. To their dismay, the response from Party leaders was "a bowl of cold water." In a major speech on February 8, 1985, entitled "On the Party's Journalism Work," Party
Secretary-General Hu Yaobang stressed that the press must remain the "mouthpiece" of the Party. "No matter what kind of reforms we are carrying out," Hu said flatly, "we absolutely cannot change in the slightest the nature of the Party’s journalism." He made it clear that literature and arts could enjoy a certain degree of creative freedom, but the press could not. His added note that news reporting must be "timely, interesting, and based on facts" seemed much less impressive.26

The main message of the Secretary-General’s speech -- "freedom" does not exist in news reporting -- had a chilling effect on the press. But within a few months, editors and reporters were generally ignoring the message. In their eyes, the speech was little more than a reiteration of policies they had been working under in the past, but not the future. Furthermore, they believed that Hu had described what he and other leaders thought should be rather than what actually was.

Although Hu Yaobang insisted that the press should remain loyal to the Party, he personally sympathized with liberalization trends in the press. He decided earlier to put Hu Qili in charge of propaganda work of the party. In the summer of 1985, Hu replaced Deng Liqun as director of the Central Propaganda Department with a loyal follower, Zhu Houze. Intellectuals and journalists were encouraged by these changes and wanted to push further. When well-informed reporters at the People’s Daily learned that Hu Qiaomu’s son, Hu Shiying, had embezzled over a million yuan in running a nationwide law correspondence school and his wife was also involved, they pursued the story vigorously and turned their findings over to Hu Yaobang and other leading reform leaders. Hu ordered Qiao Shi and Wang Zhaoguo to investigate the matter. In the
aftermath, Hu Qiaomu could do nothing but see his son and new daughter-in-law being arrested.\textsuperscript{27}

Two other cases also exemplified Hu Yaobang's efforts in protecting those who advocated liberal ideas. On November 2, 1985, \textit{Gongren Ribao} published an article under the pen name of Ma Ding, a young instructor of philosophy at Nanjing University. In this article, Ma argued that Marxism was only a theoretical guide, not a practical solution, to economic problems. He suggested introducing Western economic theories into China as a supplement to Marxist theory. The article caught the eye of Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun, who detected in it evidence of a reformist effort to establish the theoretical basis for introducing capitalist ways into the Chinese economy, thereby violating Marxist principles and deviating from the socialist road. Liberal intellectuals and journalists, on the other hand, responded positively to Ma's viewpoints. The resulting debate went on for several months and ended only when Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and Zhu Houze defended Ma's freedom to air his views in theoretical discussion.\textsuperscript{28}

In another controversy in early 1986, Liu Zaifu, director of the Institute of Literature of the CASS, published an article charging that recent theorists of literature and art had neglected the nature and value of human beings. They tended to substitute politics for art, he said, and to interpret character in political terms, thus transforming what should be aesthetic appraisal into political statements. Liu's call for restoring humanism repudiated Mao's basic theories of literature and art. His article therefore enraged conservatives, who commenced a vicious attack on him. Chen Yong, a veteran
literary critic from the Yan’an days, published a long article in the Red Flag, a stronghold of the conservative views, asserting that Liu’s viewpoints not only negated fundamental Marxist theories but constituted a direct assault on Party literature and Party art. But the attack also backfired. On May 1, 1986, Hu Qili with the support of Hu Yaobang publicly defended Liu Zaifu and urged everyone to courageously correct some of the out-dated theories in literature and art. Many articles echoing Hu’s advise soon appeared. Chen Yong, who started the attack on Liu, suffered personal humiliation.²⁹

In the aftermath of these two incidents, conservative voices were almost totally subdued. In April 1986, Zu Houze, head of the CCP Propaganda Department, urged editors and theorists of major newspapers and research institutes to create "a more flexible, amiable climate...to allow different points of views and opinions to be raised and freely debated."³⁰ As the overall situation changed rapidly, more and more liberal editors began challenging the very notion of a "mouthpiece of the Party." In mid-1986, Su Shaozhi, a former editor at the theoretical department of the People’s Daily, wrote that,

The economic reform started by breaking theoretical taboos and political reform should also, first of all, break the dogmatic limits. The first step to do so is to ensure the freedom of speech, publication, organization, and press.³¹

Encouraged by reformist politicians and intellectuals who formed an unofficial coalition to protect the press and to use it to reveal fundamental flaws in the society, Chinese journalists advocated of the "untying of the press." A series of forums were held by newspapers and magazines as well as journalism research and educational institutions to discuss separating the Party from the media, expanding the supervisory role of the
press, and restricting Party interference in the press. In a forum in Beijing, Gan Xifen, a noted journalism professor at the People's University, proposed establishment of "a few non-party newspapers" in major cities to "provide a forum for free public discussion on policy issues." His proposal was well received by other participants.

In the same vein, an article in the Gongren Ribao suggested that a "freer and more harmonious atmosphere" was needed for press reform and insisted that all newspaper articles on a given topic "are not necessarily to play the same tune." The People's Daily endorsed this argument, rejecting the ideas that "every single word or sentence in the press" must be seen as Party policy and that "only one voice is allowed" in the press. The press, the paper said, should "become an open forum which allows the masses to speak out their real feelings."

In an open letter to its readers entitled "Our Heart-felt Wishes," the People's Daily vowed to reform itself and the press as a whole. "The waves of the reform are sweeping across the entire country and bringing profound changes in economic, political and cultural fields," the paper said. "The press, as part of the ongoing reform movement, should make appropriate reforms in its work, while propagating the reform." A commentator of News Front pointed out,

The life of the press lies in the continuing forward movement in the steps of the age. In one sense, the press should go ahead of the age and guide the steps of the society. If the press sticks to old ways, refuses to study new problems, and stays aloof from the reform, it would not be able to reflect the reform situation and would eventually become obsolete.

In August 1986, editors of central and provincial-level newspapers gathered in Ha'erbin, the capital of Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, to discuss how to
further reform the press and propaganda work. They proposed a number of changes in the press: 1) to change the one-way, downward flow of information into a two-way communication; 2) to change the single function of propaganda into multiple function of providing not only propaganda but also news, education, entertainment, and advertising services and reflecting public opinion as well as Party orthodoxy; 3) to shift from rigid Party indoctrination to service-oriented persuasion; and 4) to let the people play a leading role in deciding what the press covers and how it covers it.\(^3\)\(^7\)

Speaking to the conference, Teng Teng, deputy director of the CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department, affirmed the necessity for major changes in the press. While stressing that the principles laid down by Hu Yaobang in February 1985 "are still appropriate as the guiding principles of the present press reform," Teng nevertheless called for editorial autonomy:

Some chief editors have proposed that the editorial board or the chief editor should decide what, and what not, to publish. I agree with this view. If in editing and running a newspaper, the chief editor has no power to accept or reject news, or to decide what or what not to publish, how can he run the paper? I think that in principle this should always be decided by the newspaper itself.\(^3\)\(^8\)

In July 1986, Vice-Premier Wan Li made his landmark speech, entitled "Democratization and Scientification of Decision Making is a Key Issue in Political Reform." In the speech, Wan pointed out,

To develop scientific and theoretical research, it is necessary first to create a political environment in which democracy, equality, and the free exchange of views and information are the norms of life. Leaders must respect other people's democratic right to air their opinions without fear, including, of course, those that contradict their own... To create this kind of political environment, we must insist on the principles of 'let one hundred flowers blossom and let one hundred schools contend.' This
principle applies not only to scientific research and literature and arts, but also to social science and policy research.39

Major newspapers, confident that reformers now held a commanding position, were further buoyed by the revived "double hundred" campaign aimed at achieving free debate and discussion. As this campaign blossomed in 1986, influential publications, including the People’s Daily, Guangming Daily, Economic Daily, and the Shanghai-based Wenhu Daily and World Economic Herald, published many articles criticizing the nation’s authoritarian system and its "excessive centralization of power," and advocating the "people’s right to air their views freely" and the necessity for "democratizing the process of decision." A People’s Daily commentary, to illustrate, proposed that "political issues should also be open to public discussion."40

Speaking of political reform, Yan Jiaqi, director of the Institute of Political Science of CASS, told the Guangming Daily: "The first thing is to change the excessive centralization of political power." Yu Haocheng, editor-in-chief of the popular magazine Democracy and Legal System, argued that political democracy--"the ultimate goal of China’s political reform"--could not be achieved without laws guaranteeing freedom of the press. These reports and commentaries may not have been taken seriously by workers and peasants, but they were read not only by conservative Party officials but also by millions of intellectuals and university students. Students in particular believed that fresh winds were sweeping through China’s ossified politics.

In November 1986, Wan Li held a meeting with leaders of 12 universities in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province, at which he encouraged experiments in "running universities in a democratic way." The Chinese University of Science and Technology,
the country's foremost institution for the study of science, was presented in the People's Daily and other major newspapers as a model for such a democracy. Noting this trend, Fang Lizhi, vice-president of the University of Science and Technology, gave rousing speeches to students in several universities in Hefei and Shanghai, not about science but about democracy. He extolled the virtues of free choice and human dignity and of independent judgment and personal liberty.

Despite considerable press discussion of political reform and decentralization of power, the conservative opposition to these things remained strong. Political reform was not even on the agenda of the Twelfth Central Committee's Sixth Plenum in September 1986 despite the expectation of reformers. The contradiction between the slow, limited changes granted from above and the much greater and more rapid changes demanded from below finally exploded in December 1986, as increasingly restive university students took to the streets to support substantive political reform.

THE PRESS IN THE ANTI-BOURGEOIS LIBERALIZATION MOVEMENT

The protests began in Hefei, where students of the Chinese University of Science and Technology demonstrated against unfair election procedures. They quickly spread to some 150 campuses in more than 20 cities, though the most important events occurred in Shanghai and Beijing. The student unrest lasted several weeks, despite official condemnation. The students' demands included better living and study conditions, increased government funding for education, and punishment of corrupt Party and government officials. Underlying these diversified concerns were clear calls for more
freedom and democracy in a larger society and for quickening the pace of political reform. Dazibao (big-character posters) proliferated once again on university campuses. One dazibao at Beijing University read: "In the U.S., there is the false freedom to support or not to support the communist party. In our country, we have the genuine freedom to support the Communist Party. In the U.S., there is a false freedom of the press. But in our country, we have the genuine freedom of no freedom of the press." When Beijing Daily warned that such posters were "harmful to political stability and unity," students at Beijing University burned copies of the newspaper.

The student protests, primarily aimed at conservative forces in the Party, went far beyond the limits set by the authoritarian leader Deng Xiaoping. Speaking of the student demonstrations to some elder Party leaders, Deng blamed such leading liberal intellectuals as Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan and Wang Ruowang for "spreading liberal bourgeois ideas." Some "central and local authorities" he said, "have been weak and have lost ground" in curbing bourgeois liberalization, which meant "rejecting the Party's leadership." To achieve modernization, Deng said,

> We must confidently keep to the socialist road and uphold the Four Cardinal Principles. We cannot do without dictatorship. We must not only be firm and need for it but exercise it when necessary.... Unless we are prepared to do that, it will be impossible to put an end to disturbances. If we take no action and back down, we shall only have more troubles down the road.  

The student demonstrations remained non-violent, and ended before the government resorted to suppression by force. But they already provided conservatives with a convenient pretext to attack reformist leaders. A group of conservative veteran
Party leaders held a party life conference in mid-January, presided over by Bo Yibo, in which they forced Hu Yaobang to undergo self-criticism and resign as general secretary. The arrangement of high positions in the aftermath of the downfall of Hu Yaobang illustrates the nature of the continuing struggles within the Party since 1978.

Basically there were two major camps within the Party in the 1980s, one centered around Deng Xiaoping and the other around Chen Yun. Deng’s camp remained the mainstream of the Party and government leadership but was frequently checked by Chen’s group. Within Deng’s camp, some, like Deng himself, were conservative politically but supportive of radical economical reforms. Yang Shangkun, Wang Zhen and Bo Yibo belonged to this group. Other supporters of Deng tended to be across-the-board reformers, among them Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Wan Li, Xi Zhongxun, and Hu Qili. The camp headed by Chen Yun, which was dominant in some areas of the leadership, was conservative in both ideological and economic spheres. Associated with Chen’s camp were such major figures as Yao Yilin, Song Ping, Song Renqiong, and Li Peng. Outside of these two major camps were some veteran party leaders with no special ties to either Deng or Chen, but with influence and loyalists of their own. Among these were Peng Zhen, Li Xiannian, and Deng Yingchao. They were conservatives and thus skeptical of Deng’s economic reforms. Occasionally they came onto the stage and played a role, but basically, as individuals or as a group, they had very limited influence in China’s politics. Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun belonged at first to Deng’s camp, and since they were senior Party leaders experienced in ideological work, they were very active in implementing Deng’s anti-right policy. But, since their ideological orthodoxy often
threatened Deng’s economic reform, they found themselves criticized by Deng himself on several occasions. Eventually they became Chen Yun’s men.\textsuperscript{43}

In January 1987, Deng agreed to sack Hu Yaobang, not only because of pressure from Chen Yun’s camp but also because of Hu’s failure to implement his "dual-track" policy. On January 17, a Central Committee document appeared, listing six major mistakes Hu Yaobang had made. Although never actually accused of complicity in the student unrest, Hu was charged with "not taking a clear-cut stand against bourgeois liberalization, having erroneously advocated the slogan of "high consumption," having said something "which should not have been said" regarding the effort to crackdown on economic crimes; and having violated Party discipline by making speeches everywhere, often without authorization."\textsuperscript{44} Bearing in mind Hu’s contribution to his economic reform, Deng managed to retain Hu as a member of the Politburo Standing Committee.

At the same time, Deng resisted conservative pressure to replace Hu with Yao Yilin, a loyal follower of Chen Yun. Instead, he asked Premier Zhao Ziyang to be Hu’s successor. Knowing full well the danger and difficulties of being General Secretary of the Party, Zhao asked to remain as premier or to retire. Deng persuaded him to "take the interests of the overall reform into account," and as a result Zhao agreed to accept the new position after receiving Deng’s promise of full support for his work. To make up for the loss of Hu Yaobang, Deng also made Yang Shangkun First Deputy Chairman of the Party’s Military Commission, playing the important role of "prince regent."

The conservatives did not achieve nothing. The press and the propaganda machine were once again their domain. On February 4, Wang Renzhi, deputy editor-in-chief of
Hong Oi, became the new director of the Central Propaganda Department, replacing Zhu Houze, an ally of Hu Yaobang and an exponent of liberal cultural and press policies. Also fired was Zhong Peizhang, head of the Journalism Bureau under the Propaganda Department. Five days after Hu Yaobang lost his job on January 16, a new State Media and Publications Office (SMPO) was established at the ministerial level under the State Council. Among its duties was to "draw up principles and policies on management of the press and publications and to supervise press activities."

The conservatives, who had watched apprehensively the erosion of Party power before the flood of reform, now launched their own campaign against 'bourgeois Liberalization', code words for internal opposition to party rule. This time the conservatives determined to play it big. They decided to start the house cleaning with the press. Through the party journal Red Flag, they issued the marching orders:

Newspapers, state radio and television, and other publications are mouthpieces of the party.... Party committees at all levels should strengthen and improve leadership over newspapers and magazines and broadcasting and television to help them raise their Marxist and professional standards.... It is necessary to close down newspapers and magazines with the wrong political orientation and of poor quality and, in line with the law, to ban all illegal publications.

Meanwhile, reformist leaders made every effort to assure the public that the campaign against 'bourgeois liberalization' would not get out of hand. Speaking at a Spring Festival party in Beijing on January 29, acting General Secretary and Premier Zhao indicated that the work of opposing 'bourgeois liberalization' was "strictly an inner-Party issue, to be handled mainly in the political and ideological fields." Since 1978, Zhao explained, the basic policy has remained unchanged in its two main constituents:
the Four Basic Principles on the one hand, reform and opening up on the other. These two elements are equally necessary, but, the Premier tellingly remarked,

Let us not forget that without a successful economy there will be no socialist achievements to talk about. In this view, the Four Cardinal Principles mean essentially the leadership of the Party, a leadership which guarantees the stability necessary for the smooth development of the economy. In other words, while keeping to its communist ideals, the Party should consider that its ability to promote reforms, including democratic reforms, is its best political card with the public.48

Zhao Ziyang's address summarized Party "Document No.4," a Central Committee’s Directive regarding the fight against ‘bourgeois liberalization’. This directive stipulated that the fight must be "strictly limited to within the Party itself." It would also be restricted to areas of political thought, not interfering with economic reforms, rural politics, scientific research, artistic and literary creation, and the daily life of people. In its approach, propaganda against ‘bourgeois liberalization’ was to rely mainly on "positive education" and it was not allowed to develop into a political campaign. The directive forbade publication of articles denouncing individuals by name, except with prior permission from central authorities. Moreover, criticisms of rightist mistakes must not be based on "leftist" criteria, but must take into account the new climate which had developed in China during the last decade. More specifically, the directive stipulated that there would be no scrutiny of works or articles published in the recent past. As to the work of the media, the directive nowhere stated or even hinted that the press should produce a great number of articles attacking ‘bourgeois liberalization’.49

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From February to April, conservatives, led by leftist commissar Deng Liqun, simply ignored Zhao’s injunctions as they mobilized to reverse the recent changes in the media and the ideological and cultural spheres. As a result, three prominent intellectuals, Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan, and Wang Ruowang, lost their positions and were expelled from the Party. Liu Binyan, China’s leading "exposure" reporter, was typical of many Chinese journalists. As a young man he had been filled with revolutionary fervor, but lost his job in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957. After his rehabilitation in 1979, he turned again to "investigatory reporting," exposing corruption in the party and government. As a result, he was now accused of "mixing the spurious with the genuine," "deceiving the masses," and "vilifying the Party." Fang Lizhi, a professor of astrophysics whose championing of political democracy made him a hero among students, was described as "a buffoon performing antics on the political stage." The editor of People’s Literature Liu Xinwu was likewise disgraced for allowing publication of a short novel in early 1986 that described incest and rape in a Tibetan family.

The conservatives also succeeded in closing down a number of newspapers, including the Shenzhen Youth Herald, which had published an article calling for the retirement of Deng Xiaoping. Hundreds of street papers or profit-seeking tabloids were also closed for "publishing filthy stories describing violence, swindles, and obscenities, as well as unofficial histories and inside stories." This was done during a nationwide re-registration of newspapers and magazines organized by the State Media and Publication Office (SMPO), the newly-created watchdog of the press.
Clearly the conservative campaign aimed to return to the old ways of dictating every aspect of social life, and if it were not checked timely, would ruin the whole economic reform. The reformist leaders therefore had to dissipate the conservative attacks. Addressing a national meeting of directors of propaganda departments on March 13, Zhao Ziyang told the participants to toe the line of Document No.4. The acting Secretary General stated once again that the struggle "should not be linked to economic reform. As reforms are unprecedented undertakings, we should permit theoretical exploration and practical experiments in them." On two occasions in the following days, Zhao stressed again that no mass movement should be launched and China's policy of reform and opening up was to remain unchanged. He added, "We must absolutely not oppose 'bourgeois liberalization' at the expense of modernization and democratization."53

It is remarkable that the People's Daily barely mentioned that propaganda chief Wang Renzhi was present at the meeting of propaganda directors and that he had spoken on the first day. The Daily's report of the meeting was, in fact, almost exclusively devoted to Zhao's address. The local propaganda chiefs left the meeting with the impression that the tide of bourgeois liberalization had already "turned back" and that future work would continue to focus on economic reform and opening up.

But conservatives, now firmly entrenched in the press and literary circles, refused to give in. One of their major exercises was a conference held in Zhuozhou, a remote county in Hebei Province, from April 6 to 12, sponsored by three publications controlled by the conservatives—Red Flag, Theory and Critics of Literature, and Guangming Daily.
The purpose of the meeting attended by 120 people was to "improve the understanding of the importance of the anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign, and to solicit articles nationwide for the campaign." In his keynote speech, He Jingzhi, Deputy Director of the Central Propaganda Department, called on participants to "take up their pens and unite as one to meet the challenge from bourgeois liberalization." Xiong Fu, editor in chief of Red Flag, said he was "excited about the new political situation" and called for "continuous strikes against liberal forces." Ma Zhongyang, an old literary critic from the Yan'an period, accused Western countries, particularly the United States, of having tried for decades to "cultivate a liberal force" in China so as to realize a "peaceful capitalist evolution" in the country. Lin Muohan, another heavyweight in the conservative camp, added that bourgeois liberalization had become intensive in recent years because it received support from both "high ranking leaders within the Party" and overseas reactionary forces in Hong Kong and Taiwan.54

The Zhuozhou meeting was reported at length in the Guangming Daily but ignored by the People's Daily. The tone of the coverage was one of frustration and impatience. Participants reportedly complained that writings sympathetic to Marxism had recently become difficult to find a place to publish, whereas works filled with "erroneous viewpoints" made the headlines. One participant said, "It is time to speak up even at the risk of being tagged as extreme leftists." No names were mentioned, but speakers hissed at some liberal intellectuals who gained fame and money for superficial works replete with Western "catch-phrases and new ideas." Before adjourning, the participants pledged to cooperate in cleaning up the mess. Propaganda chief Wang Renzhi said that he was
satisfied with what he had heard at the meeting; presumably including the more virulent statements that had been carefully omitted from the Guangming Daily report. 55

Among the speakers at the meeting such leading conservative writers as Yao Xueyin, Liu Baiyu, Chen Yong, Zheng Bonong, Meng Weicai and Cheng Daixi. This showed clearly that the Zhuozhou meeting was the largest gathering of old conservatives since 1978. They believed that the press had published so many wrong ideas in recent years that it was now their duty "to right all wrongs in the areas of economy, philosophy, literature and arts, history, and value systems." For such sentiments, conservatives hailed the Zhuozhou meeting as "very important" and "very successful." One article published after the massacre of June 1989 summarized conservative views this way:

The major confrontations in the theoretical and cultural front is not a confrontation between the so-called ossified conservative group and the reformist group. It is the confrontation between those who adhere to the Four Cardinal Principles and those who insist on bourgeois liberalization. History proved that liberalization is an ideological trend damaging the reform programs. Therefore, we must justly and forcefully fight against bourgeois liberalization, adhere to the Four Cardinal Principles...and keep the literature and media front in the hands of those who adhere to Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, act in unison with the Party, and implement firmly the Party's principles and policies. 56

To further their effort, Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun planned another large-scale meeting with the aim to "launch a new round of attack on bourgeois liberalization in the economic fields." In a two-day preparatory meeting, attended by 35 participants, Xu Weicheng, head of the Beijing Propaganda Department and editor-in-chief of the Beijing Daily, reported on the "successful experience" of the city of Beijing checking bourgeois liberalization. Both Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun also spoke at the meeting to set the tone for the upcoming conference. They informed acting Secretary General Zhao of the
planned conference only two days before its opening, and instead of inviting Zhao as the keynote speaker, they invited Peng Zhen and Bo Yibo.\textsuperscript{57}

ZHAO ZIYANG’S MAY 13, 1987 SPEECH: A TURNING POINT

That night, Zhao Ziyang sent for a copy of the meeting agenda and for summaries of speeches to be made by Hu Qiaomu, Deng Liqun, and Xu Weicheng. Before that, Bao Tong, Zhao’s secretary and head of the Political Reform Research Office of the Central Committee, had gotten tapes and briefs of the Zhuozhou meeting. The next morning, Bao Tong informed Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun that Zhao Ziyang would address the conference. To accommodate Zhao, the conference had to be postponed for two days. On the same day, Zhao met with Deng Xiaoping, who encouraged his stand.\textsuperscript{58} Deng had publicly thrown his weight behind Zhao two weeks earlier when he told a Spanish delegation that China’s "main struggle (was) against leftist inertia." "Since 1957," Deng added. "Leftist trends have been responsible for many errors committed during the Chinese Revolution."\textsuperscript{59}

At 15:00 on May 13, Zhao Ziyang appeared on the rostrum at Huaiiren Hall in Zhongnanhai, the CCP headquarters, and delivered one of the most audacious speeches of his career. Addressing more than a thousand propaganda, theoretical, media, and Party school cadres, Zhao stressed once again that the struggle against bourgeois liberalization "should not be a political campaign, should be strictly restricted to inside the Party and carried out mainly in the political and ideological sphere, and should not be linked to economic reform." He said that the principles set forth by Document No.4 have proved
to be "correct and realistic." and warned that those who "proposed to smash the ‘restrictions’ in Document No.4" and expand the campaign into the economic sphere were "wrong politically."60

During this lengthy speech, Zhao repeatedly quoted Deng, thus giving the impression that he was speaking on Deng’s behalf. He quoted Deng as saying that the anti-bourgeois liberalization struggle "is a long one" and "can’t be solved overnight or by launching mass campaigns." It was Deng’s idea, Zhao said, that "last year’s commotion should not affect reform and the open policy. Reform should be upheld and accelerated." Without reform, opening to the outside world, and invigorating the economy," Zhao added, "there is no future."

Zhao criticized those who had "the misconception that our reform and open policy are incompatible with upholding the Four Cardinal Principles. It seems to them that advocating reform and opening to the outside world means ignoring the Four Cardinal Principles; it also seems to them that reform and opening to the outside world should be ‘controlled’ when there is a call for combating liberalization." Zhao continued, "We must undoubtedly continue to deepen reform and open to the outside world, and the question of ‘control’ simply does not exist." He went on to cite certain erroneous views reflecting skepticism and reservation regarding reform:

--On the Economic situation, certain people actually think that the current economic situation is very poor and chaotic because of the restructure of the reform.

--Certain people regard the enterprise contract and leasing system, which is part of economic reform, as ‘promoting private ownership’; some regard the system of the factory director’s responsibility as ‘abolishing party leadership’; some regard contracts linking household output with
remuneration as 'undermining the collective economic foundation'; still others pit economic planning against commodity economy, maintaining that planned economy is socialist and commodity economy is capitalist, and that promoting commodity economy is tantamount to promoting capitalism and the root cause of capitalism.

--On political reform, some people maintain that combating bourgeois liberalization means that there is no need to carry out political reform. Even though this issue has now been clarified in Comrade Xiaoping’s talks on several occasions, there are still people who think that political reform is the same as detracting party leadership. Some are skeptical of separating party leadership and government administration, and some, in the name of intensifying ideological-political work, demand political organs be expanded with more political cadres. Some people are afraid to talk about fostering socialist democracy and emancipating the mind whenever the need to combat bourgeois liberalization is discussed. Still other people regard legitimate democratic demands as liberal thinking and suppress the masses’ legitimate criticism of our defects, mistakes, and irregularities for that reason.

--Some people also criticize the open policy, saying that this policy is the cause of widespread liberalization. Some people distort the open policy, saying ‘Yesterday we leaned toward the East (dong dao), today we lean toward the West (xi wai).”

Even recently, Zhao pointed out bluntly, some people have said that ‘to oppose political liberalization, it is imperative to oppose economic liberalization’, that ‘opposition to liberalization today is only opposition to those who talked about liberalization, and not to those who practice liberalization’, and that ‘the deepest cause of bourgeois liberalization can be found in the economic sphere’. Zhao stressed that these are "irresponsible arguments which are wrong politically and devoid of party discipline organizationally." He then added that "although such arguments are supported only by a few people, they have had a relatively great influence, which should not be ignored in propaganda work."
Zhao further pointed out that "some comrades interpret whatever is proved by practice as being conducive to liberating production forces and expanding China’s socialist modernization as capitalist, and whatever restricts productive force as socialist." The yardstick in judging whether something is socialist, he continued, "is to see whether it can liberate society’s productive forces." In the whole process of reform, Zhao concluded, "we must make constant efforts to eradicate the influence of these outmoded, stagnant, and ossified viewpoints."

Zhao’s speech applied a sudden brake to the anti-liberalization campaign. With one stroke, Zhao turned the anti-right movement into a anti-left movement. At the Secretariat meeting late that evening, Zhao criticized Xu Weicheng’s suggestion that the work of Beijing should be a half-step ahead of the Central Committee. "The work of Beijing must be identical with the Central Committee, half-step ahead or slow is not allowed." He ordered Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun to organize research on new questions arising from the new situation and not to organize a mass criticism campaign. Zhao stressed again, "Reform and opening up are the fundamental principles of our country and should never be reversed." Wan Li and Xi Zhongxun voiced their support of Zhao at the meeting.61

The May 13 speech was well received. The editors of Jinji Daily, for example, were so excited that, after returning from the meeting at 4:40 p.m., they summoned immediately all the department heads to convey to them the main points of Zhao’s speech. Yang Shangde, deputy editor-in-chief of the paper, wrote a commentary that night, which appeared on the front page the next day.62 Many participants urged the
publication of Zhao's speech as soon as possible. But Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun, very unhappy about the speech, spread information that Zhao's speech was an impromptu one that presented his own views and not those of the Party committee. Whether to publish it depended on the decision of the Politburo. Meanwhile, Deng Liqun wrote an article entitled "On the Historical Necessity of the Struggle Against Bourgeois Liberalization," which he sent to People's Daily for publication. On hearing the news, Zhao immediately got a copy of the article and, after reading it, gave instructions not to publish it. Deng Liqun then asked Beijing Daily to publish it, but the editor dared not do so.

On May 24, Propaganda chief Wang Renzhi delivered a speech to a conference on theoretical propaganda. He said little about 'bourgeois liberation,' and spoke instead of reform and opening up policy. Propaganda work should aim at giving "convincing answers" to the political and intellectual questions of the public, Wang said. To achieve this goal, he urged propaganda departments to overcome old abstract and stultified approaches. Meanwhile, through May and June, the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping made it clear that China's main problem was leftism. To the first vice-premier of Singapore, Deng spoke of "twenty years of leftist errors," and on June 4, he explained to a visiting Japanese politician that the present attack against rightist tendencies should not obliterate the fact that leftism has all along been the main enemy of the four modernizations.

The conservatives' efforts to delay the publication of Zhao's speech failed when Deng Xiaoping confirmed his support to the speech. The enlarged Politburo meeting on
July 5 and 6 made the final decision to publish it. When Zhao’s speech appeared on July 10, the People’s Daily published a prominently placed editorial, saying that:

Comrade Zhao Ziyang, in his May 13 speech, criticized harshly the wrong viewpoints of those who adopted a skeptical attitude and had reservations toward the reform, and stressed that not only should we publicize economic reform, we should also gradually publicize political reform. As comrade Deng Xiaoping stressed, we should not only insist on the policy of reform and opening up, but quicken our steps and promote reform and opening up in a bolder way.66

By mid summer the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign was over. Xiong Fu was removed from his post as the editor-in-chief of Red Flag in September, and eventually the magazine was downgraded to a publication run by the party school. He Jingzhi was also forced to retire from his post as vice-director of the Propaganda Department.

The Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign, like the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign three years earlier, ended quickly and became an embarrassment for conservatives. For the third time, a conservative comeback had been stopped by the combined forces of the reformist leadership and the public. The spreading effects of the improvement of material life -- social diversification, increased knowledge, improved education, and increasing self-confidence -- had made the nation’s new situation irreversible. Zhao Ziyang’s speech on May 13 insured that reform and opening up remained the principle policy. More importantly, it led to a new round of conflict between control and freedom of the mind: reform in the political sphere.
NOTES


2. Su Shaozhi, "Developing Marxism under Contemporary Circumstances" in *Studies of Marxism* (Makesizhuyi Yanjiu), No.1, 1983, pp.7-34.


4. Wang wrote many articles discussing alienation in socialist society. For example, see *Xinwen Zhanxian* (News Front), No.8, 1980, pp.8-13. Also his later article "Is There No Alienation in a Socialist Society?" in *Xin Qi Meng* (New Enlightenment), April 1989, pp.56-58.


8. Ibid., pp.35-36.


13. Fu Shengke (a pseudonym of a former *People's Daily* reporter who is now in exile in the United States; the word literally means "wonderer"), "Renmin Ribao Fengyun Lu" in *Xinwen Ziyou Daobao* (Press Freedom Herald), No.52, November 8, 1990, p.2.

14. The author attended the meeting.


16. *Zhengming* (Hong Kong), February 1984, p.4


25. People's Daily article quoted from Fu Shengke, op. cit., p.2.


27. Fu Shengke, op. cit., p.2; also see Issues and Studies (Taipei), April 1986, Vol.22, No.4, p.8.


29. Ibid.


31. She Hui Bao (Social News, Shanghai), August 14, 1986.

32. Da Gong Bao (Hongkong), August 7, 1986.


38. "Teng: What and what not to publish should be decided by the newspaper itself," in People's Daily, 20 Aug. 1986, p.3; Teng's speech was also summarized in News Front, No.10, 1986, pp.2-3.


43. This is based on the author's personal observations and interviews with insiders who fled China after the June 4 Incident. It also draws from Yan Huai's talk about "China's Political Structure and Reform" at a seminar at the East West Center in Honolulu during the summer of 1991.


47. Red Flag, Feb 1, 1987, p.4-6.


51. At a meeting of the Party's Political Reform Leading Group in early 1987, Peng Chong mentioned the report in Shenzhen Qingnian Bao. Bo Yibo responded angrily, "This question should absolutely not be discussed in the press." He ordered an investigation of the case and taking harsh disciplinary action against the paper. Then he turned to Hu Qili and said, "Nowadays, people like you hope that our old generations die or retire early so they could replace us." "That is not the case," a frightened Hu Qili responded humbly. "Senior revolutionary leaders are the treasure of the Party and we respect them very much. How could we dare to replace them." The episode is based on an interview with Source W (a Chinese scholar who participated the meeting and is currently in exile in the U.S.), Boston, March 1990.


58. Ibid. Also see an article in Zheng Ming (Hong Kong) August 1, 1987, pp.6-10, translated in FBIS, August 7, 1987, pp.k1-k3.


63. Shi Nan, op.cit., pp.15-16.


CHAPTER VI
A NEW ROLE FOR THE PRESS: STRIVING FOR POLITICAL FREEDOM

By late 1987, China was buzzing with talk of political reform. In undertaking a major effort to mobilize the population for direct participation in political discussion, the press was battling for its own freedom. Throughout 1988, the press helped create the climate that encouraged open expression of liberal ideas and was taking an increasingly aggressive tone, particularly in advocating political openness and freedom of the press. But, the reality of China ran contrary to the rising expectations. The slow-down of the economy, the acceleration of inflation, the widespread corruption, and deterioration of public order caused more frustrations, sending China to the edge of a new crisis.

THE 13TH PARTY CONGRESS: MORE OPENNESS IN POLITICS

The Thirteenth Party Congress, which met in late October and early November 1987, was a marked success for reformers. Zhao Ziyang was officially named as Party General-Secretary; a number of elderly hardliners were removed from the Central Committee and replaced by a group of younger technocrats. In his work report entitled "Advance Along the Road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," Zhao Ziyang reiterated the party's policy of intensifying economic reform and proposed that China was still in the initial stage of socialism, a new concept which aimed at providing a theoretical
basis for reform. But the most prominent issue for many people was that the long-awaited political structural reform was finally put on the agenda of the 13th Party Congress.

Political reform was not a completely new topic. Chinese leaders began to talk about political reform in the late 1970s and encouraged responsible criticism and constructive discussion of democratic reform. Despite the Party’s tough handling of political dissidents and periodical warning of the crumbling faith in the communist ideology, Party leaders agreed to some limited steps toward political reform. In his speech in August 1980, "On Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership," Deng Xiaoping bluntly exposed the problems of China’s political system such as bureaucracy, over-concentration of power, patriarchal methods, life tenure in leading posts, abusing power and corruption, and privileges of various kinds. "Such things have reached intolerable dimensions," Deng admitted. "They must be solved in the reform of the Party leadership and cadre system."

Deng’s speech, which symbolized a major institutional decision, was not published until 1983. For a few years, the narrower implication of the report about the cadre system was discussed and various steps were taken in this regard. It was not until 1986 that considerable discussions about political reform appeared in the official press. At the same time, a working group was set up under the Party Secretariat to study the issue of political reform. By the summer, top reform leaders spoke publicly in favor of political reform. The press was filled with detailed discussions of the shortcomings in the existing system and outlined ideas for democratic reform. Many people thought reform might
come as early as the fall of 1986. The Sixth Plenary Session of the 12th Party Congress in late September of that year did not even mention it.

The delayed political reform, which triggered the unexpected student unrest in late 1986, loomed large again in the summer of 1987. Why did the Party leadership decide to put the political reform, a highly sensitive subject, back on track only months after the conservative backlash? The reason was simple: to complement economic reform and strengthen the existing political system. By the mid 1980s, it had become widely recognized that bureaucracy and the old system were causing enormous problems for the market-oriented economic reform. Deng himself was very explicit about this in comments to a visiting Japanese politician in September 1986:

The major problem is that the political structure does not meet the requirements of the economic structure reform. Therefore, without reforming the political structure, it will be impossible to safeguard the fruits of the economic reform or to guarantee its continuing advance.²

But Deng did not want the Party to be capsized by the waves of change. China must stay on the socialist road and the Party must lead. On this point he was consistent with the conservative Party leaders. What Deng desired was a more efficient and more flexible political system -- a democratic dictatorship. Although it seemed self-contradictory, this formula, Deng believed, was the only one that would work to reconcile the difference within the Party while promoting economic progress. For more liberal leaders, such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, they seemed to be interested in allowing greater freedom and more tolerance of criticism.

In discussing the political reform at the 13th Party Congress, the new Party general secretary promised to "build a socialist political system with a high degree of
democracy" in the long run. But he warned against haste and insisted on a cautious approach to forms and methods of implementation. China’s traditions and distinctions, Zhao said, made it impossible to use Western patterns such as a multi-party system or parliamentarianism in the process of democratization, but China should try to find new methods of government. These new methods include separating the functions of the Party from that of the government, expanding the rights of local authorities in administrative and economic activities, reducing administrative apparatus, and reforming the personnel system for cadres. All these measures reflected the increasing pluralistic reality of Chinese society. To show its sincerity, the 13th Party Congress made a few steps in the direction of more democratic procedures and openness.

The Party Congress, for example, adopted a multi-candidacy system: 175 people out of 185 candidates were selected by vote as full member for the Party Central Committee. Not surprisingly, Hu Yaobang garnered very strong support in the final vote. In what seemed to have been an unplanned revolt by the lower ranks, the main instigator of the anti-bourgeois liberation campaign, Deng Liqun, who had been expected to enter the Politburo, was dropped out of the Central Committee. This was great news in intellectual circles and people lost no time in telling each other the news. "I am sure all Chinese intellectuals share the same feeling," disgraced writer Liu Binyan told the Hong Kong Media. The multi-candidates electoral system, a People’s Daily commentary said, has not only provided the constituents with an effective weapon of supervision and a greater choice, but also "shattered the mentality" of some leading cadres who often did
things against people's will and still believed they had a one hundred percent certainty of being reelected.\(^5\)

What made Chinese journalists most excited, however, was the new policy of "openness" in press reporting and the proposed establishment of a system of social consultation and conversation. Zhao pointed out,

> The leading organs at all levels can realistically carry out work and avoid mistakes only by tentatively listening to the views of the masses. There must be a channel for the demands and voices of the masses to constantly reach the higher levels.... Social consultation and conversation should become a regular activity which can promptly and correctly make the situation at the lower levels known to the higher authorities and the directives of the authorities known to the lower levels and attain mutual understanding.

To achieve this goal, Zhao proposed,

> The basic principle for establishing the system of social consultation and conversation is to increase the openness of the activities of the leading organs and let the people know about important events and discuss important issues.... We must make use of modern media to increase reports on government and Party affairs. We must give full play to the supervisory role of public opinion, encourage the masses to criticize the mistakes in our work, oppose bureaucracy, and fight against unhealthy tendencies of every description.\(^6\)

Commenting on Zhao's statement to "let the people know important events and let the people discuss important issues," Li Ji, editor-in-chief of the Worker's Daily, said, "the first part means political openness, and the second part means political democracy." He believed that this statement should be seen as "a new principle of our news work," which means more openness in the press so as to better serve the people.\(^7\)

The Chinese press called this practice an act to "increase transparency (zengqiang toumingdu)," a Chinese version of "glasnost." According to this principle, the press
should make public the activities of the leading bodies, get people involved in discussions of problems, and promote dialogue between the authorities and the broad masses. In order to enable the people to participate in governmental and political affairs, Hu Jiwei, Chairman of the Beijing Journalism Association, suggested that "efforts should be made to make state affairs public and allow press dialogues according to the four principles of democracy, openness, consultation, and supervision." 8

The Party's work "could only be more successful if it were conducted more openly," a People's Daily commentary stressed. The system of social consultation and dialogue, characterized as a direct, two-way communication on an equal footing, would help "clear away misunderstanding and create a harmonious, lively, and democratic atmosphere, strengthen democratic supervision, and eliminate bureaucracy." 9 Increasing the transparency of press coverage does not mean "not having a limit." Where does the "limit" lie? A Xinhua commentator replied,

It lies in whether the increased transparency of press coverage is or is not conducive to the reform, the opening-up, the four modernizations, the fundamental interests of the people, and the understanding and trust between the party and government on the one hand and the people on the other. 10

As testimony to this openness, the 13th Party Congress, for the first time in Chinese history, was televised live to the whole country and the world. Reporters from home and abroad were allowed to enter the meeting place to cover the events and interview delegates. At press conferences, Chinese reporters raised sharp questions that even surprised their foreign counterparts. During the course of the congress, the Chinese press was filled with frank discussions of the problems in the Chinese political and
economic systems. The official Xinhua News Agency provided detailed profiles of members of the new Politburo. The highlight was a rare reception on November 2, 1987, when the newly elected Chinese leaders met hundreds of foreign and Chinese reporters at the Great Hall of the People. The new Party general secretary, glass in hand, moved around the tables to answer reporters' questions. Zhao candidly admitted that there were some different viewpoints within the leading body, that some freedom of dissent in China was needed, that he still believed he was more suitable to assume the position of a premier, and that on important questions the new leadership would still consult Deng. Never before had a Chinese leader talked to foreign reporters in such a candid way.

The 13th Party Congress gave impetus to press reform. Shortly after the congress, a national journalism meeting was held in Beijing to pass a new "proposal on press reform." Fan Jingyi, editor-in-chief of the Economic Daily, expressed the feeling of the 800 participants from all over the country when he suggested that press reform should aim: 1) to be more truthful in news reporting; 2) to increase openness in the press; 3) to change from one-sidedness in news reporting to being more all-encompassing; and 4) to conduct dialogues between the authorities and ordinary readers on an equal footing.

The Seventh NPC and CPPCC Conferences, held in March 1988, became "a laboratory of press reform" for Chinese journalists. One big breakthrough was that many newspapers were allowed to send their own reporters to the two meetings, instead of relying on a few central organs. The press coverage was unprecedentedly open and reflected different opinions. Leafing through the newspapers during this period, one finds that almost all of the abstracts of delegates' speeches printed in the press were criticism,
discussion of problems, and suggestions. None of them was of the nature of parroting the official policies. The press was filled with headlines such as "Party and Government Officials Are Mainly Responsible for Deteriorating Social Values," "The State Council Should Be Supervised by the NPC," "Government Report Full of Empty Talk," and "Why Is Public Supervision So Difficult?" The Chinese Youth Daily, in an article titled "How to Calculate the deficit?" challenged the official figure of 8 billion yuan by quoting a delegate as saying that the correct figure of deficits should be nearly 30 billion. The Economic Daily ran a telephone "hot line" to solicit comments and views from ordinary people and published them in a special column. An observant People's Daily reporter identified 495 out of 556 automobiles used by the delegates as expensive, foreign cars, such as Mercedes and Cadillac, a fact which stands in sharp contrast to the subsistence-level of most of the population. Some newspapers raised questions regarding the qualifications of the delegates and the role of the NPC.13

OPINION POLLS: A TEST OF ATTITUDE

Numerous surveys of ordinary readers had been conducted in the past few years and the complaints reflected in these surveys about poor press practices stimulated the press reform. But few surveys had been done to test the attitude of the decision-makers or social elite. Therefore, during the two meetings, a poll was conducted jointly by the Journalism Research Institute under the CASS and the Beijing Journalists Society of 1542 NPC delegates and 472 CPPCC members. The survey showed that nearly 91% of the respondents thought that "the press should become the forum for ordinary people to
discuss state affairs" instead of merely being the voice of the Party. Did the press reflect
the views and desires of the public? The answer from 61.8 and 75 percent respectively
of the respondents was "No." Asked about the controversial role of press criticism, only
50.9% of NPC delegates and 23.3% of CPPCC members were satisfied. The others
complained that press criticism was mostly directed at the small fry and "rarely at high-
ranking cadres."14 A similar survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute
(PORI) of the People's University among the elite circles in Beijing in 1988 revealed that
91.5% responded that the news did not reflect the "voice of the masses." Clearly enough,
a massive "vote of non-confidence" had been returned against the Party press. "Short of
reform," one writer commented, "there is no way out."15

How did Chinese journalists appraise their own work? In February and March of
1988, PORI under the People's University conducted the first nationwide survey to
investigate journalists' response to the journalism reform. Among the 1884 (60.9%)
completed returns from 3094 sample contacts at different levels (central, provincial,
prefectural, and county), directors and chief editors account for 13.5%; department heads
32%; and desk editors and reporters 54.5%. The result of the poll was very revealing:
99.4% of the Chinese journalists believed that the press should "respect people's right
of information, speech, and supervision;" 91.2% of them believed that "the press has the
right to criticize the Party and government and their leaders;" and 80% disagreed with
the argument that "the press should be under strict control of the Party."16 (see table
4).
TABLE 4. BASIC ATTITUDES OF CHINESE JOURNALISTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The press should be under strict control of the Party, which should not be subject to public supervision.</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The press should respect people's right of information, speech, and supervision.</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The press should play the role of public supervision and reflect different public opinions.</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The press should not cover the events that would harm the Party and State politically or cause social disorder.</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The press should publish different opinions on major events, including politically sensitive issues.</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. All objective news should be reported so long as it is not against the law.</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The press has the right to criticize any specific policy and work of the government as well as the wrong-doings of any public officials.</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If the press allows free discussion on policy issues, it would cause great confusions and serious problems.</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See Note 16.
A=Agree; SA=Somewhat Agree; SD=Somewhat Disagree; D=Disagree

Table 5 shows that 94% of the journalists felt that the press reform was "too slow" and making "no real progress;" nearly 88% showed their "dissatisfaction" about the Party's control over the press; and the majority believed that the propaganda of the
official press was "ineffective." Behind these figures one can feel the dissatisfaction, frustration, and desire for change among the Chinese journalists.

**TABLE 5. BASIC ATTITUDES OF CHINESE JOURNALISTS TOWARDS NEWS WORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you appraise the effect of our propaganda work?</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do you appraise the credibility of our news reporting among public?</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you appraise the form of leadership over news work?</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you appraise the process of the press reform?</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A = Excellent; B = Good; C = Average; D = Poor; E = Very Poor.
2. A = Very high; B = High; C = Average; D = Low; E = Very Low.
3. A = Very Satisfactory; B = Satisfactory; D = Unsatisfactory; E = Very Unsatisfactory.
4. A = Too Fast; B = OK; D = Too Slow; E = No Progress.

When asked about the most urgent issues that needed to be addressed, the respondents listed the following four: 1) too many restrictions and limits in criticism reporting; 2) inability to tell the truth about some sensitive issues; 3) lack of openness in reporting political and administrative affairs and major policy decisions; and 4) too little voice of the people in the press. The foremost important goals that they wanted to achieve in the press reform were: 1) to expand the self-autonomy of the press; 2) to enact a press law so as to achieve the transition from rule of men to rule of law; 3) to separate the Party from administration in media management; 4) to establish a pluralistic press system and allow private citizens to run their own newspapers; 5) to get rid of out-dated
contents and renew journalism theories; and 6) to allow the press to function according to the objective laws of journalism. The surveys showed that the strict Party control of the press in the past decades was no longer suitable for the changing Chinese reality. The Chinese press had grown up to such an extent that, like a teenager who can not be forced into a baby suit, it was demanding a freer working environment.

**STRIVING FOR A PRESS LAW**

The yearning for greater autonomy and freedom became the most prominent desire of Chinese journalists in the late 1980s, which was reflected in a nationwide debate on the drafting of a press law. The survey mentioned above shows that 97.3% of Chinese journalists demanded the press legislation, an amazingly high percentage that tells the intensity of the demand. Traditionally China has been a nation governed primarily by men instead of laws. If there were some laws, they were punitive rather than protective. This applies to journalism. Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the Party has controlled the press through issuing policies and directives. With the changing reality of the 1980s, Chinese journalists felt more and more uncomfortable with this practice. Whenever the press intended to publish something counter to the authorities' interests, administrative interference and censorship occurred, which often resulted in their news stories being killed. In addition, there have been an increasing number of libel suits against journalists who are involved in critical reporting in recent years. More importantly, the previous political purges made journalists all too aware of the penalties paid for independent thinking. Without an effective press law, many
believed, the rights of journalists cannot be protected, they cannot fulfill their obligations, administrative interference cannot be prevented, and supervision by public opinion through the press cannot be achieved.

Drafting the law, however, has proven more difficult than was anticipated. First raised in 1980, the National People's Congress (NPC) did not set things in motion until 1984 when a special sub-committee, headed by Hu Jiwei, former editor-in-chief of the People's Daily, was established under the NPC Committee for Education, Science, Culture and Health to undertake drafting of the ice-breaking law. In June 1984, the NPC sub-committee and the Research Institute of Journalism under CASS jointly set up a new Press Law Research Office, which began to publish Xinwenfa Tongxun (Press Law Bulletin), an internal monthly publication specializing in research on the draft of the press law. The bulletin has been carrying research articles on key issues related to the drafting of the press law, introductory articles on the press laws of both Western countries and East European countries, as well as comments and suggestions and brief news. It became one of the most important forums for liberal journalists and researchers in advocating the press law. In 1985, Hu Jiwei held a series of forums and interviews to collect ideas from media circles both in China and in Hong Kong. Despite various difficulties, the sub-committee completed the first draft that included a stipulation that would allow people with similar views to run non-official newspapers (tongren banbao). When it was sent to high-ranking leaders for review, it was accepted in principle. Even Deng Xiaoping gave his approval by signing the document. But it was killed by Chen Yun, who said
flatly, "Non-official newspapers shall never be allowed, whether run privately or run by a group of people with similar views."18

Since then, the drafting work of the group led by Hu Jiwei met repeated interference from Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun. Hu’s nomination of Yu Haocheng, a legal expert and editor-in-chief of the Journal of Legal Studies, as a member of the drafting committee was disapproved. The group was forced to suspend its work in late 1986. During the anti-‘bourgeois liberalization’ campaign, the responsibility for drafting the press law was taken away from Hu Jiwei and the NPC group and given to the newly created State Media and Publications Office (SMPO), which operates directly under the State Council. Instead of working on the press law, the SMPO produced a draft of "provisional news work guidelines," which was mainly a code stipulating the reporters’ duties and obligations rather than protecting press freedom.19

By the end of 1987, the drafting work seemed back on track, but proceeding at a snail’s pace. In the original draft of the government report to be delivered at the NPC Meeting in March 1988, some passages called for "speeding up the drafting of a press law." But these passages were cut out of the final speech by Li Peng. This move, along with the long delays and inactions, drew intensive criticism from the delegates from the media attending the NPC meeting and they exerted more pressure on this issue. By the summer, three drafts were completed for solicitation of opinions. One was prepared by the NPC sub-committee headed by Hu Jiwei, another one by the SMPO, and the third one by a group in Shanghai. In July the Party’s Secretariat discussed the drafts in a brief
meeting. A new draft was prepared by the SMPO on the basis of the three previous drafts. But severe disagreements existed centering on three key issues.20

**FREEDOM OF THE PRESS** Does China need freedom of the press? The answer was affirmative in all the three drafts. The Chinese Constitution claims to guarantee freedom of the press. But it does so only with the stipulation that the "four cardinal principles," namely adherence to socialism, Party leadership, the democratic dictatorship, and Marxism, must not be disputed or infringed.21 The conservatives were playing on the "four cardinal principles," stressing that freedom of the press must not be separated from the socialist system and the fundamental character of the socialist press. It must conform to the fundamental interests of the Party and to the disciplines of propaganda.22 But the vast majority of journalists are fed up with the practice that any criticism of the government and the Party or any different voices in the press tend to be interpreted as anti-Party or illegal. Although few journalists challenged the four cardinal principles publicly, they stressed their constitutional rights and tried to define press freedom more liberally.

"Freedom of the press means that each citizen should have the right to make public his or her opinion freely without previous government approval," said Chen Lidan, an outspoken researcher at the Institute of Journalism under the CASS. He supported his argument by quoting a famous European Marxist Rosa Luxembourg, "If freedom is allowed only to government supporters or Party members, it is not freedom. Freedom is always the freedom of those who hold different opinions. If freedom becomes a privilege, it is useless."23 Sun Xupei, the newly-appointed interim director of the same
institute, proposed that Western "forms" of free expression should be incorporated into the "substance" of socialist press freedom so as to facilitate the role of public supervision over the authorities. Zhang Youyu, a famous Chinese legal expert, supported their arguments by saying that "as long as news reporting is based on facts and within the boundary of the Constitution, no one should restrict what journalists want to write." 

As to the purpose of the press law, the debate focused on whether it is to protect or restrict the freedom of the press. The State Media and Publication Office stressed control rather than freedom. According to SMPO director Du Daozheng, the press law should be seen as "a double-edged sword," which should protect journalist rights in news activities on the one hand, and "restrict the indiscriminate use of press freedom" on the other. He would rather describe the law's function in terms of "formulating regulations on the qualifications, rights, and obligations of journalists" than guaranteeing them freedom. Du's viewpoints represent a moderate stance within the Party leadership, neither too liberal nor too strict. But many liberal journalists, apparently unsatisfied with this limited freedom, believe that the press law should, first and foremost, protect the freedom of the press.

"The press law must protect freedom of the press," said Hu Jiwei. Any attempt to restrict press freedom is "a violation of the basic principles of our constitution." Hu stressed that a press law must not only protect the freedom of journalists to gather, report, and comment on the news, but also guarantee the freedom of all people to be informed, to air their views and opinions, and to participate freely in political affairs.
To rebuff conservative charges that he advocated "abstract or absolute freedom," Hu said,

> We are advocating freedom of the press within the framework of the constitution and laws. We never believed there has been such a thing as absolute freedom beyond law. The more efficient is the legal system in a democratic country, the less possible is absolute freedom. Freedom always conforms to the constitution and laws.\(^\text{28}\)

He stressed that he was advocating freedom of the press because he believed,

> Freedom of the press is the key in social stability. It helps build up the legitimacy and authority of the Party and government. Only this kind of authority can win respect and support of the people. The authority, formed under a condition without freedom of the press, can only be an autocratic authority, which will only be able to make the people silent but will never be able to quench the people's resentment and indignation.\(^\text{29}\)

Zhao Chaogou, director of the popular Shanghai-based *Xinmin Wanbao* (New People's Evening News), echoed Hu's view: Press freedom is an inseparable part of the constitutional rights of the people. To let people participate in and comment on political affairs is to let newspapers publish more different opinions and views. We should not allow any organization or individual to casually or arbitrarily impose regulations on newspapers regarding what to publish and what not to publish.\(^\text{30}\) Since there were always some people who tended to link press freedom with 'bourgeois liberalization,' Xu Zhucheng, a veteran journalist from Shanghai and former editor-in-chief of *Wenhui Daily*, warned, "We should never give those conservatives a chance by adding a clause to restrict freedom of the press."\(^\text{31}\)

Many journalists saw freedom of the press as "a matter of principle" and would rather not have a new press law if its purpose was to restrict rather than protect press freedom. Some were in favor of a press law but believed "conditions were not ripe" for
its enactment. As Liu Zunqi, former editor-in-chief of the China Daily put it, "If we are still fundamentally in disagreement on the issue of freedom of the press, it is best not to enact it soon. Otherwise, when we have the press law, we may not have more freedom, but probably more restrictions."32

PRIVATE NEWSPAPERS Should private newspapers be allowed in China? If so, must they be obligated to propagate the policies of the Communist Party? Should a non-official press have the right to criticize the authorities? Just a few years ago, the mere raising of such questions would have been dismissed as a lapse into "bourgeois liberalization." But in 1988, these questions became major issues in the press. The change reflected the growing sentiment to end the Party's monopoly over the press. Even cynical Chinese observers have been surprised and encouraged by the openness of the resulting debates.

"We are in the initial stage of socialism, which requires coexistence and competition of various forms of ownership, social diversity, and different interest groups," Xu Peiding, a well-known journalism professor, wrote in 1988. "Therefore, private newspapers should not be prohibited from existence so long they abide by the law." For the benefit of socialist democracy, social dialogue, and public supervision, Xu continued, "many voices are better than a single voice."33 Similarly, Qian Xinbao, editor-in-chief of Xinwen Xuekan (Journalism Studies), believed that the experience of the preceding three decades when private newspapers were virtually nonexistent had been harmful to China's development. He therefore recommended an "overhaul of the existing
press system" by establishing a "multi-tier, multi-type press structure with the Party organs as the core."34

In fact, many privately-run newspapers had emerged in the 1980s. Most of them, however, had been closed down as illegal publications, even though they were small, entertainment-or service-oriented, and non-political papers. Still, some semi-independent publications endured, among them Xiandairen Bao (Modern Man) and Nanfeng Chuang in Guangzhou, Shekou Dispatch in Shenzhen, and World Economic Herald in Shanghai. Their only linkage to the government was the requirement that they be attached to a unit (such as a research institute), otherwise they were independent. On this matter, liberals insisted that private citizens be allowed to run their own papers, whether individually or collectively. Conservatives strongly disagreed, because they insisted, if ordinary citizens were allowed to run their own newspapers, the Party would lose control of the press. In the face of this debate, the SMPO drafting committee considered three East European press models. The press laws of Yugoslavia and Poland permitted private publications, while that of Czechoslovakia forbade them. As a way out of this dilemma, SMPO director Du Daozheng turned to the press laws of Rumania and Hungary, which did not mention private publications. Most of the Chinese press was already non-official, Du explained, because it was run not by the Party but by such social groups as mass organizations, learned societies, and professional associations. "We support these kinds of non-official publications," he said. While this stance seemed plausible enough, in fact, these publications were non-official only in name, because they were still controlled by the Party through the groups that ostensibly sponsored them. The only difference between
these and other publications was that they were not Party organs. A moderate reformer, 
Du tentatively endorsed a proposal to allow private publications in Hainan, a special 
economic zone with uniquely liberal policies, but he believed it would be improper to 
extend that precedent nationwide.35

What most journalists wanted by the end of the 1980s was a real people's press 
of independent voices co-existing with the Party press, but immune from Party control 
and government intervention. Many believed that establishment of a genuine, non-official 
press would represent a "major step forward." The above-mentioned survey of CPPCC 
members showed that 56% of the respondents favored the idea of a private (minban) 
press, because they believed that forbidding citizens from running their own newspapers 
was inconsistent with the constitution. Among the 30.7% who opposed a private press, 
many were not against the idea itself, but thought its implementation just then would be 
premature.36 The percentage in favor of minban newspapers was much higher among 
journalists (70.5%). As one Chinese journalist complained,

Now more than 20 million private enterprises have sprung up in China, 
but not a single really privately run newspaper has ever emerged. If this 
situation characterized by economic relaxation and political tightening is 
not changed, it will be difficult to solve the mass media's problems and 
to put an end to the confusion.37

THE ROLE OF THE PRESS What role should the press play in China? This 
was a fundamental theoretical question that had to be confronted in drafting a new press 
law. Chinese journalists had been debating the question for years. The more they 
discussed the chronic problems facing Chinese journalism, the more they were 
convinced that the role of journalism in contemporary China must be definitively
resolved. By 1988, the debate had become one-sided: only reformist voices were heard. But new concepts concerning the role of the press emerged.

First, the idea that all newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations must serve as "ears and mouthpieces" of the Party was challenged and rejected by the majority of journalists. In numerous articles, they argued that the idea was "out-dated," "harmful" and did "not work anymore." The role of the press, they insisted, should be to "inform, educate, and entertain" the public as well as provide public supervision over the government, rather than to serve solely as the mouthpiece of the Party. They therefore suggested that the neutral term "mass media" replace that "propaganda tool" to refer to the media. "The transition from ‘propaganda tool’ to ‘mass media’ is a worldwide trend," said Li Qi, a senior Xinhua editor, in 1988. "So long as Party leader Zhao Ziyang has recognized in his speech that our news institutions are ‘mass media’, it is better not to return to the old concepts." This did not mean a total rejection of the idea of a Party press and Party propaganda. It meant instead support for a multi-tier press system with Party organs as its core. The new system they advocated would be sufficiently diversified to include non-Party and non-political media in order to achieve a necessary degree of pluralism. But under this proposal, even the Party press would function primarily to inform, communicate, and provide public supervision of the government, and only then would it propagate Party orthodoxy. To play this altered role, the Party press would have to "drop all those Party cliches, avoid simplification, dogmatism, bias, endless stereotyped indoctrination, and so on."
Secondly, both the Party and the private press would have to operate with basic acknowledgement that "the people are the masters of the country." As early as 1982, Hu Jiwei, the foremost reformer within the press, suggested that the primary loyalty of the press must be to the people. With proper vigilance from the press, Hu suggested, the Party would not repeat the mistakes it had made during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. In taking this stand, Hu rejected the conservative argument that since the Party and the people were one there could be no question of the Party acting against the people's interests. That was the same argument used to justify one-party rule and suppression of all political oppositions. Hu's theory of the people's vs. Party's press was the basis of his arguments for such ideas as freedom of the press, the supervisory role of public opinion, and independent press. It was a key point over which he collided repeatedly with conservatives in the decade. His arguments that the press must first serve the interests of the people won increasing support from Chinese journalists.

Thirdly, the supervisory role of public opinion was, after years of controversy, officially endorsed at the 13th Party congress. Though some people were still uncomfortable with that idea, it was generally believed that openly criticizing failed policies, bureaucratic ineptness, and corrupt practices would benefit modernization and reform. "The press must serve as an independent force to check government power," said Feng Yinzi, a veteran journalist from Shanghai. "Any country in the world needs such an independent force. Absolute power would only result in dictatorship and corruption."
But the controversy lay in whether critical reporting should be subject to prior approval by the authorities. Downward criticism seemed easy enough to justify, but upward criticism presented intrinsic problems. Yet most thoughtful Chinese, including most of the participants in a seminar in August 1988 believed the exemption of higher authorities from criticism should be abolished. As Zhang Huanzhang of the Chinese Youth Daily said, "Everyone is equal before public supervision. The fact that high-ranking officials are immune from press criticism simply does not reflect this equality."

Zhang Enrong of the Health Daily added that this practice was a legacy of the traditional ranking system and must be abolished. To underscore that point, Ming Anxiang of the Institute of Journalism at the CASS made a comparison. In the United States, Ming noted, the press usually leveled severe criticism at government officials rather than ordinary people, but in China the reverse was the case. An episode that occurred in March 1988 at Wuwei in Gansu province illustrated the nature of the problem this presented. There, a local newspaper published without approval an article criticizing the work of local authorities. Infuriated by the criticism, the authorities ordered the confiscation of all copies of the paper and even forced members of the paper's staff to go to homes of subscribers and retrieve copies that had already been distributed to them. They also forced the paper to publish an announcement that readers were to burn all copies of the offending issue. If such practices could not be changed, many believed, the supervisory role of public opinion would never be a reality.

Finally, the press should enjoy a relatively independent status. Freedom of the press meant that editors should have the right to decide what to publish and what not to
publish. Although there was no direct censorship in China, there were well-understood guidelines making it clear that certain subjects were not to be treated in the press. Reports on major events or sensitive issues had to be submitted to the authorities for approval before publication. In addition, self-censorship remained a common practice because journalists worried not only about the political consequences of controversial writing but about their pay-checks as well. Editors especially were penalized or rewarded for the content of their papers, and thus even more sensitive than reporters.

The fact that China had no tradition of the rule of law as well as the difficulty of undoing entrenched practice in a tradition-oriented society made the task of drafting a press law formidable. Drafts prepared by the NPC group and the Shanghai group were considered more liberal. They reflected the general desire of journalists that the press law protect freedom of the press to ensure the airing of all legal views; that the law establish a multi-tier press system that allowed private citizens to publish their own newspapers free of censorship; that it guarantee supervision by public opinion and allow full public participation in political affairs; that censorship prior to publication be eliminated and administrative interference curtailed; and that the punishment of journalists as journalists be limited to clear instances of libel, slander, bribery, leaking state secrets, and treason.

The draft prepared by the SMPO, in contrast, was openly criticized by journalists, for it mentioned "freedom of the press" only once, in the first paragraph, and included no details on how that freedom was to be protected. Instead, it detailed the restrictions to be placed on journalists, thus reflecting the effort of conservatives to reinstate the old disciplines through legislation. The SMOP draft did specify that the minban (as opposed
to the 'guanban') press would be allowed, but it did not make clear whether private citizens would or would not be allowed to run newspapers. It did however contain this sentence: "All news media must propagate the Party's line, principles, and policies."

These provisions were self-contradictory, because both state and party constitutions stipulated that the Party must act within the bounds of the State Constitution. Should a policy or act of the Party violate the constitution, the media had no obligation to propagate for the Party. If the press law defined the role of the press in such a way, Sun Xupei believed, it would eventuate in violations of the constitution. By early 1989, a revised draft of the press law, one that incorporated mutual concessions, was distributed nationwide for discussion and amendment. If "everything went smoothly," the SMPO director hoped to present it to the NPC Standing Committee in October 1989. But events in the spring again interrupted the process.

CHANGING TOPIC: CULTURAL RE-EXAMINATION

Despite liberal rhetoric in the press, the realities of Chinese life in 1988 were quite different. The strength of entrenched conservatives had stalled reform programs. Political reform, instead of curbing the bureaucracy, had intensified conflict between old and young cadres, factory managers and party secretaries, and among other social groups. Decentralization had diminished Party control, but official profiteering and corruption ran rampant. Even the economy was in deep trouble. Recent increase in economic activities intensified competition for scarce raw materials; inflation soared to heights never before seen in the People's Republic; shrinking revenues increased the state...
deficit; price reforms in the summer led to panic buying on a massive scale and to runs on the banks. These problems intensified the power struggle at the top of the Party. Zhao's position was weakened and conservatives regained control of the economy by freezing bank payments, thus sending large parts of the economy into wholesale recession.

These developments increased the frustration among intellectuals. Their previously high hopes were evaporating rapidly. They realized something was wrong with the existing political structure, but were powerless to do anything about it. For years, they had supported economic reform and opening up policy, decentralization, political democratization, the rule of law, and freedom of the press. In fact, they had done everything except directly attack the Party leadership and the system itself. It was against this background that 'cultural re-examination' (wenhua fansi) took place.

For over a century Chinese intellectuals had been debating whether China could take its place in the modern world without transforming the value system handed down by tradition. In the late 19th century and again in the May Fourth period in the early 20th century, China faced questions of whether to Westernize totally or partially, whether Chinese civilization was culturally superior or inferior to Western civilization, and whether Western science and technology could be used to modernize China economically and institutionally without destroying the essence of traditional "Chinese-ness" itself. The exploration of these issues in the late 1980s was much deeper and more soul-searching that it had ever been in the past.
Originally appearing as a literary phenomenon in the mid-1980s, the resulting critical reflection focused on cultural values and the Chinese national character. As the spreading of reform programs became increasingly difficult with the passage of time, reflections on the history of Chinese culture began to carry an increasingly overt political message. In May 1988, Yan Jiaqi published an article attacking what he called the "dragon culture." The dragon was nothing but "a symbol of imperial authority," Yan wrote. "To make China rich and powerful, there is no need to count on protection or stimulation from a god in the shape of a dragon." Instead, he urged China to open itself to ideas from the Western world. The event that crystallized this questioning of tradition was the six-part TV series, River Elegy (He Shang), and the subsequent intense debate over the series in the press.

Premiering in the summer of 1988, River Elegy immediately captured national attention because of its profound concern for the destiny of China. In an impressionist but moving fashion, the series portrayed China as a nation shackled by its own past—a conservative, closed, agrarian society tied down to the yellow earth. The great rules of Confucianism stifled every effort to create a spirit conductive to modernization and progress. A new China could be created only on a new and different basis. The Chinese people must therefore divest themselves of their emotional attachment to the traditional values and social order, destroy every obstacle to reform that had been built into the social-cultural system long ago, and accept the challenges of modernization.

Although the series made no explicit frontal attack on the Party leadership, the underlying political message was loud and clear: conservative forces within the Party
were unable to break with the traditional policy of empire or to nurture a social, political, and economic system able to confront the West on equal terms. Only by reform and further opening up, establishing "a market economy and a democracy based on the middle class," and guaranteeing intellectual freedom, could China be saved. The series became a rallying call against the most obvious obstacle in China’s rejuvenation -- self-serving conservatives within the Party. With perfect timing, it captured and articulated a swelling national sentiment.\textsuperscript{48} The series was so well-received by the TV audience that Zhang Gang, one of its five authors, was moved to express his excitement at the popular support:

After reading dozens of letters from the general public.... I was deeply moved. Every one of them, from retired cadres all the way down to primary school students, from leaders of the party, government, military to ordinary workers, showed a strong reaction, and none was negative. From reading these letters, I felt that the hearts of our people are full of hope.\textsuperscript{49}

The TV series, however, generated fierce opposition from conservatives. Wang Zhen, vice president of the State, denounced the series as unpatriotic, ordered a ban on further showings, and threatened to punish those responsible for it.\textsuperscript{50} After the first episode appeared in prime time on June 11, 1988, the CCTV was ordered to broadcast the ensuing five episodes after 11 o’clock on the following nights. Even then, large numbers of people watched with fascination.\textsuperscript{51} The CCTV received more than a thousand letters from viewers requesting that the series be shown again. On August 3, 1988, the \textit{People’s Daily}, in its special column ‘Today’s Talk’, repeated the public demand for another showing. Because of the popular demand, the series appeared again on CCTV and on many local TV stations. Apparently Zhao Ziyang, at the moment in
political disfavor, supported the program. Zhao even sent a copy of the series to Singapore's prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, when Lee visited China in September. In the following months, all major Chinese newspapers and magazines printed discussions on the series, and despite a reluctant warning from Hu Qili, the press discussion did not stop. Editors generally liked the series, recognized the public interest in it, and understood its significance for reformist leaders.

Young people especially liked River Elegy, a fact that reflected the sharp generation gap in political and intellectual values. The series, itself the work of a group of intellectuals in their twenties and thirties, used the TV screen to "editorialize" the views of its creators. For the generation that emerged into maturity in the 1980s, Marxism, even in the 'revisionist' or 'critical' forms advocated by such men as Wang Ruoshui and Su Shaozhi, was no longer a satisfactory tool for exploring China's reality. Western ideas and their own experience made many young intellectuals reject the old system and old concepts. In what amounted to a fundamental cultural re-examination, they became increasingly radical and outspoken in criticizing Chinese culture and tradition. They seemed to believe it was China's "feudal" political structure and "backward" economic system that held back real modernization.

For those who had strong sentimental attachments to Chinese tradition, on the other hand, the content of the series was troubling. Indeed, the most serious critique of the series was not of its political but of its cultural implications. Most commentators agreed that River Elegy was deeply nationalistic. One critic published in Wenhui Daily, for example, praised the series for "arousing the patriotic spirit" and "effectively
transmitting to the citizens a new Chinese consciousness.\textsuperscript{52} In a different view, a Guangming Daily article disagreed with the authors' analysis of China’s historical development, which depicted China as a "land-based" civilization as opposed to Western "sea-based" civilizations. That, the writer suggested, amounted to "geographical determinism" or even "neo-Eurocentrism." Still, this writer acknowledged that the TV series "originated unmistakably from a fervent patriotism.\textsuperscript{53} Other commentators suggested that River Elegy voiced a cultural nationalism that was urgent, idealistic, and refreshingly un-ethnocentric, as well as keenly sensitive to the younger generation’s desire to create and explore as well as renew.\textsuperscript{54} It was a form of "enlightenment," these commentators believed, a strong stimulus to Chinese modernization.

For the conservatives, in contrast, River Elegy was a "vicious and deliberate attack" on the Party leadership camouflaged as cultural reflection. To them, the series' anti-tradition stance was actually an anti-reality stance.\textsuperscript{55} Qi Fang, a senior official in the CCP Propaganda Department, called the series "cultural and historical nihilism" because it undermined the patriot feelings of the Chinese people, who looked upon the Yellow River, the dragon, and the Great Wall as symbols of their cultural identity.\textsuperscript{56} A ten-point critique, penned in October 1988 but denied publication until July 1989, attacked River Elegy for, among other things, "ridiculing and distorting Chinese history, denying any credit to the heroic effort of the Party, endless praising of Western culture, and destroying the Chinese people's self-confidence and sense of dignity."\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, cultural nationalism remained, as it had for thousands of years, one of the two operational ideas of the Chinese ruling class, the other being that "to get rich is
glorious." The Chinese leadership would not stand idly by and allow the series to destroy it without a fight.

Clearly, the struggle to control the discourse over Chinese history in 1988 became an integral part of the political clash between reformist intellectuals and unyielding conservatives. The Party required that every description and analysis of Chinese history illustrate and justify the current political leadership rather than question its legitimacy. For that purpose, it had recently rebuilt segments of the Great Wall, resumed ceremonies honoring Confucius, and otherwise worked to revive past glories. But for many intellectuals, Chinese history and culture were not things to be encased in the glass panes of museums nor encrusted in an ideology for self-glorification. Rather, they were living things with lessons from the past and answers for fundamental questions facing China today. Why is China "backward" in confronting the challenge of the West? Why is China reluctant to accept new ideas Western or otherwise? Why is China paralyzed by its own current reform efforts? What are the obstacles to reform? What is China's future in a world increasingly dominated by Western notions of modernism?

Concern with these questions, while omitted from official history works, frequently surfaced in newspapers and specialized magazines in the late 1980s. Not only was remote history revisited with telling purpose in this endeavor, but a surprising number of feature stories about rejected figures and neglected events in recent Chinese history appeared as well. For instance, Dai Qin, a senior reporter of Guangming Daily, exposed the wrongful persecution of Wang Shiwei in the 1940s and the tragedy of Hu Feng in the early 1950s. Xu Zhucheng, former editor-in-chief of Wenhui Daily,
published an account of his personal experience during the anti-rightist movement of 1957, in which he had accused Mao of playing "overt tricks" to suppress intellectuals. Some newspapers printed vividly written memoirs of the victims who had been detained, beaten, and/or imprisoned during previous political campaigns. Reporters also interviewed former party officials who had personal knowledge of such major issues as the origin of the Cultural Revolution or the truth of Lin Biao affairs. These articles were particularly embarrassing and troublesome to the Party. They did not confine themselves to recitations of facts or to correcting the historical records; on the contrary, they used history explicitly to teach lessons or raise questions about the present.

CRISIS AWARENESS AND GROWING TENSION

Facing a grave situation in 1988, reformers contended that unless reform was pursued more vigorously, the results of the reform in the last ten years would have been ruined. When Zhao Ziyang proposed in spring 1988 to open more coastal areas to foreign investment and turn them into export-processing zones, the People's Daily ran a series of articles between May 19 and June 25 defending his proposal. But as inflation accelerated in the summer, Zhao's argument that some inflation was inevitable after decades of artificial pricing policy was eclipsed by the hard-liners' relentless focus on the political effects of the economic policies. During a heated confrontation in August at the leaders' summer resort at Beidaihe, the conservatives succeeded in shelving Zhao's program to further expand the role of market mechanisms in the economy. In September Zhao admitted to visiting American economist Milton Friedman that he had lost his
authority over economic issues. The hard-liners had convinced others that Zhao’s radical programs were causing economic chaos and undermining social morality. At the Third Plenary Session of the 13th Party Central Committee, they got the upper hand and decided to reimpose central control over the economy and the society as a whole.

It seemed that all Zhao could do was await his dismissal from office. But that apparently was not Deng Xiaoping’s intention. Since Zhao was one of the few remaining high-ranking leaders willing to carry on his reform and open-up policies, Deng, on several occasions in late 1988, made it known that Zhao still had his confidence. For Deng, the ideal social and political environment included both centralism and democracy, discipline and freedom, social unity and individualism. The need at the moment was to reinforce authority and maintain stability. Deng’s actions at this point conformed to a theory of leadership called ‘new authoritarianism,’ which was then being discussed in the press. The thrust of the theory was that the process of modernization in underdeveloped countries such as the "four small dragons" of East Asia had been achieved through a strong central government rather than Western-type democracy. Authoritarian governments, made up of political elites and technocratic specialists, had enabled the countries to maintain social stability while achieving rapid economic development. Deng agreed with this idea in principle, though he told Zhao that "some specific terms could be discussed further." Deng suggested that while rebuilding its political authority, the Party should consider inviting some non-Party members to join the government, thus building a system of "multi-party cooperation under the leadership of the Party."
This clearly non-Marxist idea, which had emerged from within the Party, was well received by Zhao's intellectual supporters. In the winter of 1988-89, the idea was discussed at conferences and in the press. For instance, Dai Qing, an outspoken reporter for the Guangming Daily, wrote an article, "From Lin Zexu to Chiang Ching-kuo," encouraging the idea of benevolent "strongman government." She cited a series of correct decisions made by the authorities over the last decade to show the usefulness of benevolent dictators in today's China. Some liberal intellectuals, however, believed that the idea of strongman government threatened the trend toward democracy by shutting off outlets for political expression. Wu Jiaxiang, a young scholar in Zhao's think-tank, published an article in the World Economic Herald arguing that the new authoritarianism was different from the old centralized autocracy, which had rested on the deprivation of individual freedoms, in that it stressed individual freedom, particularly economic freedom. Considering China's political tradition, Wu suggested, the new authoritarianism was a necessary transitional step toward democracy. Another article in the same paper made the same point, arguing that China "needs a strong man to push forward reforms against all resistance." Once the political situation stabilized and economy improved, this argument went on, the market economy would expand and political democracy could be established on the basis of newly emerged social forces. One fundamental objective of those who supported this argument was to ensure the establishment of a market economy based on private ownership in a stable political environment.

For conservative ideologues, however, this was another heresy designed simply to shore up Zhao's weakening political position. If accepted, it would add to the erosion
of public belief in official indoctrination and to the already apparent decay of the Party’s own moral position, over which they professed to be deeply distressed. The ideologues understood fully that communist ideology was too important to be further neglected in China. Without general belief or acquiescence in it, the Party could not lead. In previous fights against ‘spiritual pollution’ and ‘bourgeois liberalization’, they had been defending that ideology. They themselves may no longer have really believed in it but they knew its importance to sustain the legitimacy of the Party’s rule. They therefore made repeated efforts to restore public faith in official indoctrination, only to see those efforts sabotaged by Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang and their followers. The so-called "openness" and "transparency" slogans of the latter were to conservatives nothing but green lights for ‘bourgeois liberalization’. What enraged ideologues the most was the "Sheko Incident" (shéko jīngbō).

In the summer of 1988, conservatives organized a number of "public lecturing groups" (xuānjīng tuán) and sent them to every province to propagate communist orthodoxy. One of the groups included Li Yanjie, Qu Xiao, and Peng Qingyi, all of them expert propagandists. This group went to Shekou, a special industrial district in Shenzhen, near Hong Kong. There, at one of their lectures, they were challenged by a group of local youths. While urging the audience to uphold communist ideas, they denounced un-named "gold-seekers" who came to Shenzhen for personal gain. At that point, one young man asked them what was wrong with "gold seeking" if the seeking involved one’s own labor. Another shouted, "We don’t care about lofty ideas, we only want to earn more money." Others demanded that they stop their high-pitched but empty
talk. "There is no market in Shenzhen for your out-dated cliches," one of them said. The lecture rapidly degenerated into a fierce dispute in which the three lecturers were publicly humiliated. The People's Daily published a detailed account of the event, implying that the old methods of ideological indoctrination would no longer work. Other newspapers also published many articles on the event, one of them describing the lecturers as "obedient tools" of the ideologues.

The press coverage of the "Shekou incident" enraged conservatives. In its aftermath in late 1988, Bo Yibo sent a memorandum to the Politburo, criticizing the Party leadership (read Zhao) for its lax supervision of ideology. In the memo, Bo charged that a number of intellectuals were whipping up public opinion against the Party, thus undermining the Four Cardinal Principles and encouraging Western liberal values. The trend must be stopped. Bo Yibo warned Zhao Ziyang that the press had fallen before a rising tide of bourgeois liberalization. "Tell me," he asked Zhao, "which media units are still under the Party's direction?"

Chen Yun also expressed similar concerns to Zhao. Not only was the economy degenerating, Chen warned, but public confidence in Party ideology was already lost. The Party's press was full of "bourgeois ideas of every description," Chen said angrily, and the situation "had reached the point where a counter-attack was absolutely necessary." Under pressure from conservatives, Hu Qili, who was in charge of the Party's ideological work, immediately summoned the provincial propaganda heads to Beijing and told them to pay special attention to "ideological education" and "correctly lead public opinion." The CCP Propaganda Department organized an ideological
educational workshop, which met from November 15 to December 28. There, Hu Qili once again told the participants that the most urgent task of the press "is to correctly lead public opinion and rebuild public trust of the Party." 67

As a result of these initiatives, reformist intellectuals feared the return of repressive policies, and some of them began to speak out. In so doing, they gave signs that Chinese intellectuals, as Chu-yuan Cheng observed, were ending their long period of passive subordination to the Party "priesthood" and began to openly challenge the authorities. 68 On November 16, 1988, Jinjixue Zhoubao (Economics Weekly), one of the most aggressive newspapers in the late 1980s, published a dialogue between Yan Jiaqi and Wen Yuankai on the current situation. In the dialogue, Yan Jiaqi pointed out that the present policy of rationalizing the economy would cause "stagnation of the economy, which was even worse than mistakes of the reform." Sensing that Zhao would soon be out of power, Yan urged adoption of immediate measures to prevent a "non-procedural succession" in the leadership. The succession, he argued, must follow an established procedure, and the past practice of sudden changes of leaders without popular basis must not be repeated.

In December, the Central Propaganda Department held a theoretical discussion meeting to mark the 10th anniversary of the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee. A number of the intellectuals who had actively participated in the 'truth criterion' discussion ten years earlier, among them Sun Changjiang, Zhang Xianyang, Li Honglin, and Yu Haocheng, were excluded from the meeting. Fifty others, including Li Yining, Yu Guangyuan, Tong Dalin, and Wang Ruoshui, who were designated as
"being criticized and dealt with for past mistakes," were invited but only as observers. All of the latter group declined the invitation. The only exception was Su Shaozhi, who had rarely gone directly on the offensive in the past. But this time, he surprised everyone with an emotional speech in which he angrily denounced the Party for its repeated recourse to repression while paying lip service to the "double-hundred" policy. He also requested the rehabilitation of Li Shu, Yu Guangyuan, Zhou Yang, Wang Ruoshui, and others who had "suffered from unfair treatment" by the Party in recent years. Su Shaozhi was consciously breaking the rules in expressing his disillusionment and anger so openly. On December 26, his speech was printed prominently in the *World Economic Herald*, which was seen as another political rebellion. When the newspaper reached Beijing the next day, the Central Propaganda Department immediately issued an order forbidding the *People's Daily* and other central newspapers from reprinting the speech or publishing anything else by Su Shaozhi, Yan Jiaqi, or other dissident intellectuals without prior approval from the Central Committee.

Because of such incidents, 1989 promised to be even more eventful than 1988. Liberal intellectuals were now extremely active. Fang Lizhi began the new year by sending an open letter to Deng Xiaoping, demanding the release of Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners in the spirit of humanitarianism. On February 13, a group of 33 well-established intellectuals, including Bei Dao, Bin Xin, Li Zehou, Su Xiaokang, Jin Guantao, Bao Zunxin, sent an open letter to the NPC and the Party leadership supporting Fang Lizhi and calling for a "general pardon" of all political prisoners to show respect for human rights. This call was made not only in the name of domestic intellectuals...
but also of overseas Chinese intellectuals as well. In addition to amnesty for political prisoners, the intellectuals demanded that a wide range of human and civil rights be granted the Chinese people. In this act of conscience, the petitioners stated unequivocally that the threat of Party retaliation would not dissuade them from speaking out in the future. Surprisingly, there were few immediate repercussions to the latter, though the police did prevent Fang Lizhi from attending a reception given by visiting President George Bush on February 26. Outside the circle of dissident celebrities, the risks were still great. The great majority of intellectuals therefore continued to express tacit support for liberal political reform while performing their official duties.

On the evening of January 28, 1989, Fang Lizhi, Wang Ruoshui, Su Shaozhi, and several other dissident celebrities gathered at ‘Doule Shuwu,’ a private bookstore in downtown Beijing to discuss the current situation. The participants believed that China was in a period of crisis, but this year, which was not only the 40th anniversary of the People’s Republic and the 70th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement but also the bicentennial of the French Revolution, promised good opportunities to break out of the ideological shackles. On March 26, the World Economic Herald, New Observation (Xin Guancha), the Social Development Research Center of the Beijing Stone Company, and two other institutions held a "theoretical discussion meeting on Chinese democracy" at the new Beijing Library. Over 200 people from academic and media circles participated in the meeting, making it the largest gathering of liberal intellectuals ever held. "The meeting in itself represents a great victory for us," said Cao Siyuan, one of the organizers of the meeting who was among the first to be arrested in June.71
Conservative leaders tried to mobilize the press to attack the liberal intellectuals. But a few newspapers, among them the World Economic Herald, the Economic Weekly, and the Social Science News, refused to print a single word of criticism. On the contrary, they offered positive resistance to conservative attacks. In a lead article on April 3, the World Economic Herald, for example, asked of Party conservatives: "What place do they give to the political and economic reforms?" "Do they want to rectify the situation or are they using rectification as an excuse to get rid of the reforms once and for all?" Even newspapers under direct Party control, such as the People’s Daily, China Youth Daily, Worker’s Daily, and Wenhui Daily, were reluctant to criticize the liberals in the face of so much popular enthusiasm for their ideas. Instead they made every effort to support reformist leaders within the Party.

Meanwhile, students in Beijing resumed their activities debating over political reform. Students in China, as in many other nations, are often more prepared than other social groups to demand for radical changes in periods of general discontent. The impatience of youth, the excitement of new ideas, and the fact that students have flexible hours and no financial burdens make campuses ideal places for social ferment and potential centers of unrest. In late March, Wang Dan, one of the organizers of a weekly "democracy salon" on the campus of Beijing University, read a speech made a few days earlier at a national meeting by Xu Simin, an outspoken CPPCC delegate from Hong Kong. In the speech, Xu publicly criticized the Party’s monopoly of power and urged Deng to imitate Taiwan’s Chiang Ching-kuo in promoting political liberalization. Students posted Dazibao (big character posters) repeating Xu’s criticisms and calling for
democracy and an end to the one-party system. Unexpectedly, the People's Daily published a front-page commentary, which seemed to support the reappearance of Dazibao on the campuses. It said,

What is a dazibao? In the eyes of the 'leaders,' it seems that large characters written on big papers are called dazibao. If you think they do not understand the special political meaning of dazibao, you are wrong. They simply want to cover your mouth with the big stick of accusing you of 'writing dazibao.' It is nothing but the legacy of political suppression during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, our Constitution no longer protects the right of citizens to write dazibao. But it does not stipulate what size of paper or character is to be used in writing your opinions and suggestions. So long as it does not directly attack the socialist system, endanger social order, or smear another's name, citizens have the freedom to write their viewpoints on whatever characters or papers they like, and no one has the right to intervene! 73

This signal from the Party organ undercut the university authorities' efforts to end the student activities. On April 3, an open letter (in the form of dazibao) signed by 57 students appeared on the Beijing University campus urging university authorities to respect the democratic rights of the students to free discussion and to eliminate all form of restrictions on student activities. 74

The scene was thus set for greater events. Everyone in China knew that something of historical significance was about to happen. The only questions were when and how and with what consequences.

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NOTES


4. AFP news, (11/05/87) in FBIS, China Daily Report (Hereafter FBIS), November 6, 1987, p.16.


16. For details of the survey, see Yu Guoming, "Analysis of the Survey of Chinese journalists about the Press Reform" in China's Radio and TV Magazine (Beijing), 1989, No.2, pp.4-12 and Hou Jun, Soft Public Supervision (Beijing: China's Women Press, 1989), pp.11-17. The confidence level of this poll is reportedly about 95%.


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21. Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution, adopted at the Fifth NPC Congress in 1982, provides that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration." Although technically the constitution guarantees various freedoms, the truth is that these freedoms are limited, because Article 51 provides that "the exercise by citizens of the People's Republic of China of their freedoms and rights may not infringe upon the interests of the State." The criterion is the Four Cardinal Principles. Any violation of these principles would be considered as against the law. Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress (Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1983): Article 35, p.22; and Article 51, p.29.

22. The conservative voices were very unpopular and seldom heard during this period. But, after June 1989, the conservatives were able to start their counter attack, criticizing those who advocated freedom of the press as "using bourgeois press freedom to negate the Party's leadership over the press" and "trying to discredit and hurl insults on the Party and government." See, People's Daily, August 6, 1989, p.1.


29. Ibid.


32. Duan Cunzhang, "Press Legislation is Imminent," in People’s Daily, April 13, 1988, p.3.


41. Xinwen Jizhe (Shanghai), 1988, No.1, p.7.

42. Xinwen Jizhe, 1988, No.10, p.11.


47. Su Xiaokang, Wang Luxiang, etc. He Shang (Beijing, Xiandai Chubanshe), 1988. The full translation in JPRS CAR-88-002-L (December 6, 1988).

48. Shuqiang Zhang, "Cultural Nationalism -- A Rallying Call Against Whom," paper presented

49. Zhengming (Hong Kong), September 1988, p.62.


72. Xu Simin’s speech, made on March 25, was summarized in *Pai-Hsing* (Hong Kong), April 16, 1989, pp.9-10.


CHAPTER VII
THE PRESS IN THE 1989 PROTEST MOVEMENT

The sudden death of former Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang on April 15, 1989, triggered a nationwide protest movement that lasted seven weeks. Dissatisfaction among Chinese intellectuals and students over the slow pace and limited scope of political reform combined with the concerns of workers, the unemployed, people on fixed incomes, retirees, and ordinary citizens about inflation, corruption, and loss of social security to produce a series of popular, peaceful demonstrations in Beijing and other major cities. This mass protest provided a real opportunity for journalists to live up to the principles they had been fighting for for a decade: to be the voice of the public, to break the yoke of Party control, and to achieve freedom of the press. And they did. Not only did they bolster the movement through sympathetic coverage of protests and indirect criticism of the government's response to the student demonstrations but they actively participated in the protest movement in the streets. The press played an important role in fanning the fire of popular frustration, thereby increasing popular support for the student demonstrations, which were crucial to sustaining the movement's momentum. As a result, the press suffered severely from the crackdown that followed the June 4 massacre.
INITIAL RESPONSE: GETTING THE NEWS OUT

Within hours of the death of Hu Yaobang, the first outpouring of grievance and outrage appeared in dazibao (big-character posters) on several university campuses in Beijing. Over the next few days, students gathered in large numbers and marched to Tiananmen Square, the symbolic heart of the country, where they laid at the Monument to the People’s Heroes white-paper-flower mourning wreaths adorned with strips of paper bearing elegiac couplets in memory of Hu. But as they had done in April 1976 in honoring the late Premier Zhou, the students were not only mourning the death of a beloved leader; they were also seizing the opportunity to express larger dissatisfactions and to agitate for greater political changes.

In the early hours of April 18, thousands of students from Beijing University and the People’s University marched from their campuses to Tiananmen Square carrying a large memorial banner on which they had written "Soul of China--In honor of Hu Yaobang." In the square, they began a sit-in protest, shouting loudly "Long Live freedom!" "Long live democracy!" "Down with bureaucracy!" At dawn, they proceeded to deliver a petition containing seven demands to the Party and the government. The demands included rehabilitation of Hu Yaobang; renunciation of the anti-bourgeois liberation and the anti-spiritual pollution campaigns; allowing citizens to publish non-official newspapers; revealing the wealth of Party and state leaders; abolishing the 10 rules governing public demonstrations in Beijing; increasing state expenditures for higher education; and providing objective news coverage of student demonstrations.
Those in the forefront of the student movement were sophisticated enough to know that the government monopoly over information was one of the key elements of social control. To popularize their cause and gain support from the masses, the students began their own mimeographed papers and broadcasting stations. Obviously, such efforts were no match for those of the official media in terms of nationwide or even local influence. Therefore, access to and freedom of the press became one of their primary demands throughout the demonstrations. They clearly understood that negative coverage of their activities by the official media would sooner or later turn public opinion against them. For the mass of peasants and workers, the good society consisted of adequate food and clothing, plus public order and social stability. They had little understanding of democracy, and student demand for political freedom sparked little or no interest among them. The students therefore needed the press to help generate public support for their cause and prevent the government from suppressing it. The students believed that if the press presented a true picture of their movement, or at least did not distort it, other sectors of society would come to understand and support them. It would be an added advantage if they could get the press to present their movement as "patriotic."

The press, however, was silent about the student unrest, as it usually was in such matters. Yet newsrooms in Beijing buzzed with excited speculation about even larger protests that were expected to occur. For many journalists, the basic concern was how to get information out and let readers know demonstrations were taking place. Party leaders, on the other hand, wanted the press to ignore the demonstrations completely. When the demonstrations spread across Beijing, however, the leaders decided to use the
media to discredit the students and their movement, while journalists wanted to tell the readers that the demonstrations were peaceful and the movement had patriotic aims.

Late at night on April 18, two young editors at the People's Daily entered the office of Tan Wenrui, the paper's editor-in-chief, and handed him a hand-written draft of a news article put together by reporters who had witnessed the daring demonstrations that had occurred that day. Tan read it in silence. He knew the editors wanted his approval to publish the article, something the People's Daily had never done before. Tan dismissed them without indicating how he would handle the article. The next day, the Daily carried not the news story, but a front-page picture of a gathering crowd in the Square with a caption describing the scene as mourning Hu. Other newspapers ignored the demonstrations completely.

The silence was broken by the Science and Technology Daily (Keji Ribao), a state-run newspaper usually limited to non-political news. At 4 a.m. on April 19, while thousands of students milled around in front of the Xinhua Gate of Zhongnanhai, the CCP headquarters, someone in a by-passing car tossed a bundle of the issue of the Science and Technology Daily containing the crucial account. What the students found in the issue was a detailed, factual account of the demonstration in the square accompanied by a large photograph showing students, some with clenched fists, packed around the huge banner proclaiming "The Soul of China." No one dared to touch the story, let alone publish articles and pictures portraying the students sympathetically. The man who broke this story was the deputy editor-in-chief of the paper, Sun Changjiang, the very person who had rewritten the article "Practice is the Sole Criteria for Testing
Truth" a decade earlier and who was a close follower of Hu Yaobang. The following day, however, Science and Technology Daily bowed to pressure from the CCP Central Propaganda Department, and like other newspapers, ran only the official Xinhua account of the student's "storming" of Zhongnanhai, which was predictably one-sided in favor of the government.

On April 22, reporters from Sun's paper watched more than 100,000 students gathered in the square for memorial services for Hu Yaobang, during which three student leaders knelt on the steps in front of the Great Hall of the People to present their petition. They were deeply moved. A sense of mission drove those reporters to threaten resignation if the editor refused to print their account of the demonstration. After listening to their arguments, chief editor Lin Zexin agreed to run their story. Thus, on April 23, the Science and Technology Daily ran an entire page of news and photos about the student sit-ins at Tiananmen, praising the students for their "patriotism" and the movement itself for promoting "democracy and freedom." When the authorities stopped normal distribution of the offending issue of the paper, reporters and editors personally carried stacks of the issue to post offices around Beijing so they could be delivered to subscribers.3 The issue was promptly circulated throughout Beijing campuses and the paper's office was swamped with calls praising its coverage.

With the Science and Technology Daily as an example, other newspapers began to ignore the restrictions placed on them by the existing propaganda system. In a matter of days, accounts of the student demonstrations appeared in the Worker's Daily, the Chinese Peasant's Daily, the Chinese Youth Daily, and many other official newspapers.
This deviation in the official press alarmed conservative Party leaders. They immediately ordered editors of major newspapers to cover the demonstrations from the official perspective, and warned that any sympathetic report of the subject would inflame the situation. Under such pressure, protesting students were soon appearing in the Party press as "trouble-makers" instigated by "a small number of counter-revolutionaries operating behind the scene". But evidence of rebellion continued to appear. For instance, the Worker's Daily published an article, "The Most Important Thing is to Win the Heart of the People," apparently aimed at Deng:

He has won popular support since he did some good things for the people. But now he feels dizzy, no longer cares for the people, and is forcing his own will on them. He stands above the people and orders them to do what he likes, not to think of how to serve the people, but to dwell on how to deal with people. This is a miserable thing.... So long as he goes against the people's will, he will lose popular support sooner or later, even if he still feels good himself... Thus, whether he can still win popular support and whether he will become a heroic figure in history, it will depend on whether he can win the hearts of the people.

Copies of the offending issue of the Worker's Daily were quickly posted up on bulletin boards on campuses and in the streets, and they drew huge crowds of inquisitive readers.

Meanwhile, the Shanghai-based World Economic Herald, already known as a dissenting voice in the press, prepared a special edition featuring extracts of speeches made at a recent forum in Beijing sponsored by the Herald and the New Observer magazine and attended by dozens of prominent, outspoken intellectuals. At that meeting, Hu Deping, the eldest son of Hu Yaobang, spoke on behalf of his family and asked the Party to "honestly explain" why his father lost his job and to make public the reason for
his father's death. The special edition of the Herald had two purposes: to portray Hu Yaobang as a reform hero whose career demanded reappraisal, and to urge the Party to renounce its anti-liberalization campaigns. On April 22, after previewing proofs of the paper that were ordered sent to them, the Shanghai authorities demanded that the editor delete the most sensitive parts of the articles. Qin Benli, editor-in-chief of the newspaper, refused to do so. Later that night, Shanghai Party chief Jiang Zemin summoned Qin to his office and warned him of the severe consequences of his refusal. Eventually Qin agreed to obey the order, but, as Jiang later learned, only after the printing of the original edition had begun. In all, the government later claimed, 160,000 copies of the banned edition had been printed, hundreds of which found their way into Beijing. After a two-day absence from his office, Qin returned, and while making an insincere apology for his conduct, warned Shanghai leaders that so uncertain a political situation as now existed in Beijing, they might be better off avoiding any action that could embarrass them if the liberals prevailed in the nation's capital.

The situation in Beijing, however, was that the hard-liners prevailed at the moment. In the afternoon of April 24, Li Ximing, the party chief of Beijing, told a meeting of the Municipal Party Committee that the student demonstrations had evolved into turmoil. Revealing "evidence" collected by the secret police during the past few months, Li accused student protesters of being manipulated by a small group of counter-revolutionaries who aimed to overthrow the Party. In a report to the Party Central Committee, Li insisted that the central leadership adopt a clear stance on the demonstration, that all media obey all orders from the Central Committee and thus form
a unified voice, and that the municipal committee be authorized to use whatever force was necessary to stop the turmoil.8

At 8 p.m. that night, Li Peng presided at an emergency meeting of the Politburo, which affirmed the judgment that the student movement was "a planned, organized and premeditated political turmoil ... aimed to overthrow the leadership of the Party and subvert socialist China." The meeting accepted the suggestions of the Beijing Party Committee to strengthen control over the media, and decided to publish an editorial in the People’s Daily making clear the "true nature" (shizhi) of the student unrest. The next morning, April 25, Deng Xiaoping, after hearing a situation brief, said "This is no ordinary student movement, but a political turmoil. We must take a clear stand and take effective measures to end the turmoil quickly." The People’s Daily editorial was written by Xu Weicheng, deputy director of the CCP Propaganda Department and a notorious ultra-leftist during the Cultural Revolution. The editorial was faxed to Zhao, who had been visiting North Korea since April 23, and he approved it in principle.9 The editorial was broadcast by radio and television stations that evening, and then appeared the next day in the People’s Daily and all other major official papers. The editorial condemned the student demonstrations as "an organized conspiracy to create chaos" and orchestrated by "a small number of people with ulterior motives." It said,

The events demonstrate clearly that this small number of people were not carrying out mourning activities in honor of Comrade Hu Yaobang. Nor were they merely proclaiming various private grievances. They ran up the banner of democracy in order to destroy the democratic legal system. Their purpose was to confuse the hearts and minds of the people, to disrupt the entire country, and to destroy the political situation of stability and solidarity. This was a conspiracy with a definite plan. It was an incitement to upheaval. Its true nature was a basic negation of the
leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and a negation of the socialist system. ... We must resolutely struggle to swiftly put an end to this agitation for upheaval.10

On the same day in Shanghai, Jiang Zemin announced at a rally in the city stadium that the World Economic Herald would be reorganized and Qin Benli relieved from his post. The Municipal Party Committee sent a working group headed by the city’s propaganda director to supervise the reorganization of the paper. Meanwhile in Beijing, the Science and Technology Daily and Worker’s Daily were also subjected to investigation.

The editorial in the People’s Daily had achieved nothing for its instigators. It had however added fuel to the fire of the demonstrations, because it clearly contradicted to the feelings of both students and general readers, and thus aroused popular anger that prolonged the social conflicts. On April 27, over 100,000 Beijing students, infuriated by the editorial that portrayed them as enemies of the country, organized the first massive street demonstration and demanded a retraction of the editorial. With onlookers cheering them all over the city, the students penetrated police blockades, marching and shouting such slogans as "The People’s Daily lies to the people!" "Central TV turns black into white!" "Xinhua is a rumor-monger!" and "The Beijing Daily is full of nonsense!" The students believed the government used the media to deceive the public, and that it would never allow the press to tell the truth. "We must take back the tools of public opinion presently controlled by the government and make them serve the people," said a student dazibao. "Without freedom of the press, all our goals would be nothing but wishful thinking."11 But, according to a People’s Daily reporter, "The anger directed at the
press was misplaced." The offending editorial did not represent the views of journalists on the paper’s staff but rather reflected Deng’s assessment of the situation. Most of the paper’s editorial staff did not agree with the editorial. Certainly anyone who today bothers to examine the issues of the paper during this period can easily find evidence of this dissent. For instance, on April 28, two days after publishing the editorial, the People’s Daily carried its first staff report on the demonstrations, which observed that the protest slogans included upholding the Communist Party and the Constitution, suggesting that the students were not trying to overthrow the government.

"WE WANT TO TELL THE TRUTH"

The government clampdown on news reporting of the student demonstrations, the dismissal of Qin Benli and other rebellious editors, and sympathy for the students’ cause combined with the journalists’ antipathy for the government and distaste at being forced to wrote what they knew to be untrue to encourage their fight for freedom of the press. Many journalists, especially young ones who shared the same feelings as the students, felt compelled to speak out. Some of them posted their unpublished articles about the protests in the corridors or offices of newspaper buildings, and others organized to persuade their editors to take bolder actions.

When the students marched again on May 4, several hundred journalists who openly paraded with them under banners with the names of their units, including Xinhua, the Central TV, People’s Daily, Worker’s Daily, Guangming Daily, and Chinese Science and Technology Daily. They gathered in front of the Xinhua building to form their
contingent, and joined the demonstration with banners that proclaimed "We Want to Speak Out But We can't!" "Don't Force Us to Lie!" and "We Want To Tell The Truth!" Their appearance in the streets was a landmark event. Never before in the People's Republic had members of the official press protested against the government. For student activists, it was a heartening indication that their demonstrations were becoming a popular protest movement.

In the afternoon of the same day, the first sign of the growing split within the Party surfaced. The split was precisely over issues of freedom of expression and democratic reform. Speaking to a meeting of the Asian Development Bank in Beijing, Zhao Ziyang made a clear break with the heard-line stance toward the protestors. "There is no big turmoil in China," he said. The student demonstrations "are by no means opposed to our fundamental system," In this remark, Zhao acknowledged the students' good intentions and rejected accusations that they were engaged in an organized conspiracy. "Responsible demands from the students must be met through democratic and legal means," Zhao assured the students.4

By the next morning, the major newspapers had chosen sides in the conflict. The People's Daily carried large photographs of the massive demonstration held the day before, and with them balanced accounts of the demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and other major cities. The accounts duly noted the students' slogans: "Support the Communist Party," "Freedom of the Press," "Patriotism is Guiltless," and "Long Live Democracy." Zhao's speech, according to the paper, had evoked an enthusiastic response from the students. In describing students who gathered at Beijing University
campus to listen to Zhao's speech, the People's Daily said, "No sooner had the broadcast ended than the students burst into thunderous applause." One student was quoted as saying, "Zhao's speech is relatively objective and realistic. I agree with his eight words principle: be calm, be reasonable, exercise restraint, and keep order." A professor was quoted as saying, "This is a mild speech, which will play a positive role in settling current problems."¹⁵ As the Party continued to insist that the crowds in Tiananmen Square consisted of a majority of well-intentioned students being led astray by a few plotters, articles in the People's Daily, Guangming Daily, China Youth Daily, Worker's Daily and many other official newspapers began to describe the demonstrations in positive ways. Generally speaking, their reporting was balanced. In covering meetings between officials and students, for example, they gave opinions from both sides.

On the morning of May 6, Zhao Ziyang told Hu Qili and Rui Xingwen, who were in charge of the Party's propaganda and ideological work, that press freedom was "a key factor" in the present situation. The press "has achieved recently a big breakthrough in its reporting," said Zhao. "It seems that there is no big risk in opening up a bit more by reporting the demonstrations and increasing the openness of news." His words passed promptly to major news units in the capital, which later led hard-liners to accuse Zhao of "setting a fire" in the press circles.¹⁶ Afterwards, the press in Beijing divided, the Beijing Daily and Liberation Army Daily siding with the hard-liners, and most of the others, led by the People's Daily, siding with Zhao and the liberal reformers.

The sacking of Qin Benli and suppression of the World Economic Herald in late April could be seen as a catalyst for journalism activism. Qin had been the Party
secretary and deputy editor-in-chief of Wenhui Daily but was removed from his position during the 1957 anti-rightist movement. He resumed his journalism career in starting the Herald in June 1980 with 20,000 yuan of prepaid advertising money. As a veteran Party member conscious of the need for political changes within the Party, Qin saw his own role as editor-in-chief as that of a mediator between party policy and public opinions. In that role, Qin, with the help of a group of young, energetic journalists, used the paper to air diverse views that might prove useful to policy makers in reform. Under his directorship, the paper frequently published many thoughtful articles and commentaries the nation’s economic and political problems and even promoted some ideas openly voiced by dissidents. Qin was, however, very careful never to be disloyal to the party. Although his views caused him increasing problems with conservatives, his personal support from and relationship with the reform leaders permitted his paper to undertake some creative journalism until early 1989. Because Qin was always pushing, he earned the respect of Western observers. The New York Times praised him and his paper always stood "at the cutting edge of China’s new journalism." At home the 71-year-old editor-in-chief become a symbol of honest journalism.

The removal of Qin became a fuse that promoted journalists to join the call for democratic reforms during the spring of 1989. In Shanghai, the Herald staff published an open letter rebutting the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee’s action and even prepared a lawsuit against Jiang Zemin, challenging his authority to fire Qin on the ground the paper was not an organ of the municipal Party committee and therefore not accountable to the municipal leadership but to a local research institute. This was an
innovative argument given China's lack of legal precedent on such matters. Beijing journalists joined the chorus of protests by sending telegrams to Shanghai voicing their support for Qin.

In the afternoon of May 9, a delegation of journalists from more than 30 news organizations in Beijing delivered a letter of petition to the All-China Journalists Association. At least one member of the delegation admitted to being frightened and worried about his job and family. Nevertheless, 1,013 signatures appeared on the bottom of the petition. "For many journalists that signature was a huge decision," recalled one Xinhua reporter. "We all had the feeling that the decision was the right one, but risky."18 In the petition, the journalists asked for a "sincere and equal" dialogue with Party propaganda officials concerning the reinstatement of Qin Benli, the broader coverage of the demonstrations, and the constitutional guarantee of press freedom. The petition pointed out,

Since the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15, the capital's media has been subjected to all kinds of pressures and restrictions, which made it impossible to completely, fairly and accurately report the events. In addition, there were some irregularities that appeared in some news reports. All these have damaged the reputation of the Chinese press at home and abroad.19

The petition openly challenged statements by government spokesman Yuan Mu that the press was free of all censorship.20 "These statements," the petitioners said, "are seriously at variance with the actual situation of Chinese journalism." The petition was proudly received by two officials of the Chinese Journalists Association, who indicated their "full understanding" of the demands of their fellow journalists and pledged to see
that it reached the authorities as soon as possible. Nearly 1,000 students gathered at the entrance of the journalist association building, a few hundred yards from Tiananmen Square, to cheer the petitioners. One of their placards read, "Chinese Journalists, the conscience of the nation." The next day, over 20,000 students rode bicycles through Beijing, moving from one news institution to another and chanting slogans to support the press rebellion.

The petition by so many employees of the official press was another unprecedented event. It represented the first organized effort in support of the protest movement and gave the students added incentive to continue demonstrating. As the first wave of demonstrations died down, the journalists' action provided a link to the next wave. Their public challenge to Party policy was later highlighted in Chen Xitong's report as "a turning point" for the worse in the demonstrations:

On May 9, several hundred journalists from more than 30 press units took to the streets and submitted a petition. Over 10,000 students from a dozen universities... staged a demonstration, supporting the journalists... Henceforth, the situation took an abrupt turn for the worse and the turmoil was pushed to a new height.

Indeed, following the petition, press coverage became more aggressive. A reporter from the Workers' Daily told readers on May 10 that since mid-April, journalists in Beijing had been working round the clock to cover every aspect of the demonstrations, shuttling back and forth between their offices and the Square, recording on-the-spot interviews, photographing and videotaping the events, and writing detailed reports of what they saw and knew. Despite such herculean efforts, they could not get their stories printed, and as a result the people learned little from the press. Journalists,
the Workers' Daily article said, felt "shameful" for thus failing the people and their professional obligations alike. Commenting on this situation, a China News Agency article blamed some Party leaders,

The mentality of the authorities at various levels toward the control over the press and public opinion has not changed fundamentally. When dealing with some sensitive issues, the journalists cannot report the truth according to their conscience, but are subject to various constraints. Sometimes they have to keep their mouths shut and maintain silence, and sometimes they have to say something that is against their will. This is the greatest agony for the journalists. It is also their humiliation. Now, being inspired by the student movement, and winning support from the students, the journalists will no longer hold themselves back and they also raise their arms and let out their cries.

Following Zhao's speech on May 4, the power struggle within the Party intensified. On May 5, Li Peng told a group of Party officials and the heads of major Beijing universities that Zhao had spoken for himself only, and not for the central committee. On May 8, at a preparatory Politburo meeting, Zhao challenged the accusation by Li Peng and Li Ximing that his May 4 speech was "diametrically opposed to the views of the central committee." Zhao insisted that the student unrest be settled through persuasion and dialogue. He also criticized Jiang Zemin's "poor handling" of Qin's case, thereby "making a mess" of a sensitive situation and landing himself in "a passive position." At the enlarged Politburo meeting on May 10, Zhao proposed, among other things, to retract the April 26 editorial that enraged the students and he himself take full responsibility for its publication. Over the objection of Wan Li, Hu Qili and a few other moderate leaders, the majority vetoed this proposal but agreed to partial concessions to the student's least threatening demands before authorizing a final crackdown. It was with these circumstances in mind that hard-liners carried on a
continuing but insincere dialogue with the students. In the meantime, moderate leaders
such as Yan Mingfu, Li Tieying, and Wen Jiabao worked hard to defuse the situation.
Wan Li called a meeting of NPC chairmen on May 10, at which it was decided to hold
a meeting of the NPC standing committee on June 20 to discuss not only the student
demonstrations but the press law and other democratic reforms as well.26

On May 11, two days after the journalists’ petition, Hu Qili went to the office of
the China Youth Daily for a dialogue with a delegation of journalists. He encouraged the
journalists to speak openly, and they did. "We are profoundly ashamed of our
professional standards and ethics," said Li Datong, a young editor who had hand-
delivered the petition two days earlier. To illustrate his point, Li showed Hu a stack of
more than 30 prohibitive regulations that the Central Propaganda Department had
promulgated in the preceding two years. Another journalist derided Yuan Mu’s statement
previously noted as untrue. Others demanded less control of the press.27 Hu, a long
time ally of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang but always very careful not to contradict the
senior leaders, seemed to give a positive response to the complaints. "The time has now
come when press reform is imperative," he told the journalists. "We need to expand the
freedom of the press and allow different voices in our news reporting."28 In the
following two days, similar dialogues were held in the offices of Xinhua, the People’s
Daily, and several other news units. Everywhere, journalists expressed their strong
dissatisfaction at the way they were forced to work.

The conciliatory tone of the moderate leaders softened the stance of many
students, but not all students. Frustrated by the hard-liners’ refusal to accept their basic
demand to retract the editorial and provide live TV coverage of their dialogues with government officials, some radical students started a hunger strike on May 13. Their numbers soon swelled to 3,000. The hunger strikers sat huddled in the center of the Square surrounded by tens of thousands of other students. The fasting students evoked deep concern from people from all walks of life. Journalists saw in this situation an opportunity to do something to help solve the crisis.

In the afternoon of May 16, many People's Daily reporters and editors gathered in a meeting room on the second floor of the paper's main building to discuss the situation with director Qian Liren. "We are facing a crucial situation and we must make a choice between continuing to be a mouthpiece of the Party and reflecting the voice of the people," said one editor. "Freedom of the press is not a gift from a certain high-ranking leader. It is our basic right. We must fight for it now." Qian responded, "I'll do my best to improve our reporting. And we have made some progress in this regard. I don't care about the consequences to myself but we must do it in a responsible way."

Another young reporter said, "The editorial of April 26 is totally wrong. Why can't we retract it simply because of Deng's words?" Another added, "We should publish an article to tell the truth about the editorial, thus detaching ourselves from it. We understand this means a split with the Party. But we have to do that. Otherwise, we will die with the Party." Others endorsed this suggestion. Qian believed it unpractical but agreed to expand the paper's reporting of events in the Square and of popular responses to these events. A more stormy discussion occurred in the same meeting room the next day when journalists put more pressures on the director to take bolder action.29 When
Qian Liren attended a meeting chaired by Li Peng on May 18, the premier reportedly exclaimed, "We have lost control of your newspaper." Qian responded flatly that his paper had not succumbed to bourgeois liberalism and what it had done was upholding of the basic principles of the Party to reflect the people's will.  

As the student protests gained momentum, press reports became increasingly sympathetic to them. During these crucial days in mid-May, the Chinese press looked as though its censors had melted away. The Party's own organ, the People's Daily emerged as virtually a flagship of rebellion. It published long, detailed, and sympathetic articles about the demonstrations and the hunger strikers. There were now no signs of the paper's earlier caution. On May 18, the Guangming Daily ran seven front-page stories about the demonstrations in Beijing and other cities. "The condition of the students and the future of the country touched the heart of every Chinese who has a conscience," one of these stories said. The press also named senior party and army leaders as well as noted scholars and scientists who supported the students. The accounts not only reported the numbers of people taking part in the demonstration but also the sectors to which they belonged. Large photographs were printed showing contingents of demonstrators from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Council, and even from the CCP Propaganda Department, all of them carrying banners in the streets. To readers of the Chinese press, it seemed "unpatriotic" not to join the demonstrations. 

Journalists not only reported frankly on events in Beijing and elsewhere; they also demonstrated themselves. Contingents from almost all major media joined them. "Over one thousand reporters and editors from our newspaper took part in the demonstrations,
with several renowned and respected writers and editors at the head of the marching line," the People’s Daily reported. It also published a huge picture of its own staff on the march. Some journalists concluded from such events that they were no longer just observers -- reporters of events -- but active participants in them. At the beginning of protest movement, journalists from the official media had been barred from entering the Square because they were mistrusted by the students. Now, however, they were welcomed as comrades. They exchanged information with the students, discussed strategic responses to possible government actions, and otherwise acted as coordinators of student actions. One reporter described the resulting atmosphere this way,

It was so exciting to observe the events unfolding before our eyes. Everyday, we only leave one person in the office to take care of daily events, all others went to the Square or participate in street demonstrations. Sometimes we slept in the office. We looked exhausted but we went on. We are fighting for every paragraph of truth.  

By the time Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in Beijing on May 15 for the historic summit meeting with Deng Xiaoping, there were nearly 1,200 foreign reporters in the city. With the presence of Western media, the student protests became a nationwide movement. On May 17 and 18, the number of protesters surpassed a million as tens of thousands of academics, civil servants, factory workers, store clerks, and even middle school students, police officers, and PLA soldiers joined marches. University students from all over China poured into the capital to join protestors already encamped in the square. The demonstrators became so numerous that their presence almost completely paralyzed Beijing. All of these astonishing happenings were reported fully in the press.
In the first few weeks of the demonstrations, liberal Chinese intellectuals, who had much more political savvy than the naive student demonstrators, had been playing a behind-the-scene role advising and cautioning the students and offering them helps as well. By mid-May, they began to participate more actively in the protests, perhaps because they realized that, no matter what their position on the student protests, they would suffer one way or another no matter what the outcome of the protests. By joining Party liberals, students, and other reform groups, they hoped to help win in the decisive battle against the hard-liners. On the night of May 13, Yan Jiaqi, Su Shaozhi, Bao Zunxin, and others took their first action by putting up a dazibao on the Beijing University campus, which declared, "We can no longer remain silent." The following morning, they published in the Guangming Daily an "urgent appeal in the current situation" demanding the authorities pronounce the student movement both patriotic and democratic, and acknowledge the legality of the student organizations. In the meantime, they asked the students to end their hunger strike and leave the Square. On May 15, some 80,000 intellectuals demonstrated in support of the students, a far larger number than organizers expected. Even larger demonstrations followed in the next two days.\textsuperscript{35}

On May 16 and 17, the intellectuals issued two declarations. The first, signed by nearly 1,000 individuals, was a moderate call for a positive government response to students demands. The second, however, signed by 12 leading dissident intellectuals prominently associated with Zhao's faction, was far more radical, including among other things a direct attack on Deng Xiaoping:

The Qing Dynasty has been extinct for seventy-six (as in original text) years. Yet China still has an emperor without a crown, an aged, fatuous
dictator. Yesterday, Secretary General Zhao Ziyang publicly announced that all of China's major policy decisions must be reviewed by this decrepit dictator, who is behind the times. Without the consent of this dictator, there is no way that the April 26 People's Daily editorial can be repudiated... Reverse the April 26 editorial! Government by old men must end! The dictator must resign!36

This passage reflected not only the distance the protest movement had moved, but also the continuing power struggle within the Party. The conflict between Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng had intensified after May 13. Following two days of futile talks with the hunger strikers, Yan Mingfu told them, "If you insist that there are two factions within the Party, your actions now would cripple the reformist faction." In the early hours of May 15, Zhao decided to visit the students in the Square but called off the visit after Li Peng warned him that such an act would constitute the crime of splitting the Party.37 Meeting Gorbachev on the evening of May 16, a frustrated Zhao told him that Deng Xiaoping still had to be consulted on every important decision, despite the fact that he was not a Politburo member. This was seen by many as an attempt to "direct the fire of criticism" at Deng Xiaoping.38 On May 17, Deng summoned the five Politburo Standing Committee members and Yang Shangkun and Li Xiannian for a meeting. "Retreat? Where do you think we can retreat?" Deng asked Zhao at the meeting. "This would be the last ditch," Yang added. "If we retreat, everything would collapse." Deng tried to persuaded Zhao to stick with the majority of Party leadership, but Zhao said he "had difficulties" in carrying out the official policy. Late that evening, the Standing Committee made a decision to impose martial law in Beijing. Zhao then resigned, but his resignation was not accepted. Zhao's tearful appeal to the hunger strikers in his last public
appearance on the early morning of May 19 and his refusal to preside at a meeting late that night to declare martial law meant his end.39

For about two weeks during these unprecedented events, the Chinese press had enjoyed an unparalleled freedom, reporting fully on the events and voicing public opinions, an impossible happening under normal conditions. This hour of freedom was partly the result of a decade-long struggle on the part of many journalists. But it was also partly a consequence of a temporary paralysis in the control mechanism of the Party caused by strife within the top leadership. It is worth noting that the press coverage in those days was not totally objective; rather, it was clearly pro-student and anti-government. From the government’s perspective, the press fueled the unrest rather than promoting stability. This created more pressure on the hard-liners and confirmed their beliefs that a conspiracy was at work against them and that a free press would always cause turmoil and instability.

DEFIANCE UNDER MARTIAL LAW

At 9:30 a.m. on May 20, the day after Gorbachev left, the Central Television and Radio stations began broadcasting the martial law order signed into effect by Li Peng. The order to police and military authorities was to end the turmoil and restore social order, and to facilitate its implementation, the State Council decided to impose martial law in certain areas of Beijing.40 Nothing could be more provocative to residents of the city. Angered and shocked that the government would resort to military force to suppress peaceful protests, many residents tried to stop soldiers from entering the city and thereby
help protect the students. The resulting dramatic confrontations, non-violent except for pushing and shoving as troops tried to force their way through the crowds, continued for several days. Each time the soldiers had retreated. Martial law had not only failed to end the protests, it led to new and massive demonstrations throughout the nation.

In conjunction with the announcement of martial law, the hard-liners attempted to reinstate strict control of the press. On May 21, Li Peng announced that the Central Propaganda Leading Group headed by Hu Qili and Rui Xingwen had ceased to function. In its place, he organized a new propaganda group, which was composed of five officials: Wang Renzhi, director of the Central Propaganda Department, Yuan Mu, spokesman for the State Council, He Dongchang, vice-chairman of the State Education Commission, Zeng Jianhui, deputy director of the Central Propaganda Department, and Li Zhijian, propaganda chief of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee. The new group immediately contacted the editors of key newspapers and told them that press coverage had had a "negative effect on the recent events" and the situation must be changed immediately. Censors were sent to major news units to provide guidance in shaping public opinion. Special regulations were promulgated to cover press activities during the period of martial law. Journalists were "strictly prohibited from instigative or demagogic reporting in the name of covering stories. Violators would be "handled by all forceful means." The Liberation Army Daily carried an editorial entitled "An Important Step in Protecting Stability in the Capital and the Nation" defending the martial law. Meanwhile, the Beijing municipal government urged all Party members, Communist Youth League members, and cadres at all levels to "launch a political
offensive by creating positive public opinions," "take a clear stand," and "get ready for a major political test." 44

Because of the declaration of martial law, many editors and reporters had little choice but to comply with Party orders. Major news organizations in the capital sharply reduced their coverage of events in the square and on the streets of Beijing. Most of the important pages of the newspapers and key time slots on television and radio were used to report decrees and circulars from the Martial Law Command Headquarters, or to report the "positive response" of various social groups to the martial law. Troops were stationed at the People's Daily, Xinhua, CCTV and other key media buildings. Journalists were tracked and interrogated whenever they entered or exited newsrooms. Martial law authorities issued explicit orders prohibiting reporters from joining the demonstrations or covering the students or their supporters. Journalists were warned that violators would have their wages and bonuses withheld.

Martial law, however, could not force journalists to revert to their familiar role of reporting news according to the official government line only. Some editors-in-chief and directors, including Tan Wenrui and Qian Liren of the People's Daily, checked into hospitals as a way of passive resistance. The vast majority stayed on and tried to find ways to signal their resistance. In the days following the declaration of martial law, thousands of journalists from various news organizations still took to the streets. Several reporters even published an unofficial edition of the People's Daily (an extra) on May 20, which reported Zhao's dispute with the hard-liners and urged on the protestors. 45 Many others continued to write articles sympathetic to the demonstrations. The censors
altered these articles so that they were distorted beyond recognition when they appeared in print.

With open defiance of the press now impossible, journalists turned to indirect means to express their sentiment, often succeeding in escaping the eyes of censors. For example, on May 21, the day after the declaration of martial law, coverage of the protests was sharply curtailed, but at the bottom of the front page of the People's Daily, there appeared a story highlighting the resignation of the prime minister of Italy. That kind of international news had seldom been mentioned in this paper, let alone on the front page. But no careful reader could fail to understand that this item was a swipe at China's own prime minister, Li Peng. On the third page of the same issue, editors placed an eye-catching headline over a Xinhua story: "Khomeini Aged and in Poor Health: Who Will Succeed Him?" -- a clear reference to Deng and other aged Chinese leaders still in power. The following day, another story appeared at the bottom of the front page of the paper quoting a Hungarian leader as saying, "No political force should be permitted to use military troops to solve internal problems.... The most odious characteristic of Stalinist-style rule is the use of military force to suppress its own people. We should absolutely break with such behavior." The paper also ran a new daily feature, a box bearing the heading "Martial Law: Day N," which gave updates on the situation in Beijing. Contrary to official accounts of disorder and anarchy, the feature regularly reported that the "city was as peaceful as usual," "crime rates dropped sharply in recent days," "commuters did not rush for bus seats as they did in the past," and so on. In addition, they used photos to show such events as Beijing residents exuberantly waving
off army trucks, thereby undermining government-inserted announcements from the Martial Law Headquarters.

Outside the official press, still active were various student publications. In addition to dazibao, a favored and effective means of the students, the latter used printed materials such as small papers and handbills to express their viewpoints in order to achieve wider circulation. About half a dozen student publications appeared during this period, including the News Herald, run by the students of Beijing University which published eight issues in all, News Bulletin by Beijing Normal University students, and Hunger Strikers' News Bulletin, which was sometimes released several times a day. The primary purpose of these publications was to coordinate protest activities and keep students and other citizens abreast of recent developments. The News Flash was published on May 23 by some Chinese intellectuals and journalists in reaction to the news blackout imposed by the government. Comparing to the political and literary publications of the 1978-79 Democracy Wall period, the unofficial publications in 1989 were narrower in focus and more news-oriented. Some articles published in the unofficial press were written by journalists who worked in the official press, because these articles could not be published in the official press. For instance, an article that urged the press to have the courage to speak the truth was originally planned to be printed on the third page of the May 26 issue of the Workers' Daily. It had already been typeset when the Party censors ordered it pulled. The censored article was eventually printed in News Flash (No.5) on May 31.47

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Since May 20, one of the major battles fought by the reformist intellectuals and journalists was to rally support for an immediate convocation of an emergency meeting of the NPC Standing Committee, which was the only legal organization that had the power to annul the martial law. As a last-ditch struggle, the Zhao supporters launched a popular movement to ask Wan Li, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, who was on a state visit abroad, to return to Beijing and call the meeting. Leading the struggle was former People's Daily director Hu Jiwei, a NPC Standing Committee member. With the help of Cao Siyuan, head of the non-government Stone Social Development Research Institute, Hu collected twenty-four signatures from his colleagues to start a petition for the immediate convening of an emergency session of the NPC Standing Committee. The petition was published by the Science and Technology Daily, which proposed to "find a correct solution to the crisis through legal channels." On May 24, Wan Li, cutting short his visit, returned to China early, but not directly to Beijing. Instead, he stopped in Shanghai for "health reasons," Two days later, he announced his support of the Party's decision, burying any lingering hope that martial law would be rescinded. Entering the last week of May, the atmosphere permeating the square was of frustration, fear, and a suicidal passion. Tiananmen Square, once a magnet pulling in huge throngs, now resembled a neglected campground filled with garbage and portable toilets. Many expected the axe would come down soon. But few believed that the government would use assault rifles and tanks against their people.

On that fateful night of June 3-4 when PLA soldiers were ordered to shoot their way into Beijing, hundreds of journalists risked their lives to witness and record the
tragedy events. A young Xinhua reporter, who just graduated from college and started his career, was killed by a direct hit at Muxidi, two blocks from his dorm in the Xinhua compound. Another woman photographer was shot from behind by a bullet, which ripped through her lung, piercing her right lung before exiting above her breast. When she was sent to a nearby hospital and identified as a journalist through her blood-soaked press card, she was given immediate attention ahead a long list of other casualties. "We have to serve you first," she remembered the doctor telling her as he dressed her injury. "We have to protect the witness." Indeed, Chinese journalists witnessed and recorded the tragic events, which they could not report but neither could they forget. As the last desperate resistance, a brave young newscaster reported,

Remember June 4, 1989. A most tragic event happened in Beijing. Thousands of people, most of them innocent civilians were killed by fully armed soldiers when they forced their way into the city. Among the killed are our colleagues at Radio Beijing.

The soldiers were riding on armored vehicles and used machine guns against thousands of local residents and students who tried to block their way. When the army convoys made a breakthrough, soldiers continued to spray their bullets indiscriminately at crowds in the street. Eyewitnesses say some armored vehicles even crushed foot soldiers who hesitated in front of the resting civilians.

Radio Beijing's English Department deeply mourns those who died in the tragic incident and appeals to all its listeners to join our protest for this gross violation of human rights and the most barbarous suppression of the people.

The final outcry of the People's Daily was again in the form of disguise: On June 7, a big black headline reading "Guileless Fawns Slaughtered" was used over a small, out-of-date story about unlawful deer hunting in Inner Mongolia. The next day, another accentuated headline saying "Fascist Clique Wantonly Kills Students and Civilians" over
a short story about a South Korean opposition leader’s accusation of the authorities’ bloody suppression of the 1980 Kwangju uprising. Thus ended the free-wheeling activities of the press.

THE PRESS AFTER THE CRACKDOWN

After June 4, 1989, the Party hard-liners regained control of the media and began immediately the work of an organized effort to rewrite the history. The official press blamed the Tiananmen protests and street demonstrations as a "conspiracy" plotted by a small group of people inside and outside the Party who had sought to "manipulate the masses, stir up upheaval, and provoke incidents" with the aim to topple the Chinese Communist Party and overthrow the entire socialist system. This tiny minority was allegedly involved with "various political forces at home and abroad." It claimed the crackdown on the demonstrators "a decisive victory" for the Party and socialist China. This type of conspiracy theory was used frequently in the Party’s history to blame any social or political unrest on a small group of "anti-revolutionary clique" or a few "black hands" who aimed at the overthrow of the Party and government. The using of force was justified as "suppressing a counter-revolutionary rebellion," not to kill unarmed civilians. The press tried to convince the people that martial law enforcement troops opened fire only after the "thugs and hooligans relentlessly attacked the troops." It was said that the so-called ‘bloody massacre’ in Beijing was a rumor fabricated by Western news media. For example, a China Daily editorial stated,

China’s television stations have on many occasions broadcast video tapes on the clearing of Tiananmen Square in the early morning of June 4 and
interviews with many eyewitnesses which show with ironclad evidence that the so-called bloodbath of Tiananmen is a sensational rumor and that during the whole process of the clear-up no one was killed in Tiananmen Square. 55

The press apparently tried to downplay the barbarous nature of the military crackdown while stressing that peace and order returned to Beijing. Numerous articles were published to praise the soldiers who retook Tiananmen and their decisive actions were appreciated by Beijing residents, while claiming that troops suffered greater casualties than the civilian population. 56 To stress newly-established stability, the press reported that foreign tourists and businessmen driven away by the turmoil were back, though there were very few of them. It was reported that the life of the city returned to normal. But the fact was that soldiers and armed police wearing helmets and carrying guns marched in great numbers through streets, detaining and questioning suspicious passers-by. All these efforts were aimed at erasing from the people's mind what really happened in Beijing.

Strictly speaking, the press coverage immediately after the Tiananmen Incident went beyond propaganda. Propaganda is the dissemination of selected information and opinion for the purpose of convincing others to adopt a particular viewpoint. One can remain truthful while propagandizing by selecting the facts that best support the interpretation one wants to promote and ignoring or downplaying the facts that argue against this interpretation. The news reporting during this period might be characterized as disinformation, the spreading of distorted information for the purpose of deceiving or misleading public opinion. The post-June press coverage of the Tiananmen Incident and the subsequent crackdown used both propaganda and manipulation. The picture of
Wu'erkaixi, a student leader eating in a Beijing restaurant during the hunger strike, was purportedly used to discredit the hunger strike. Lengthy articles were published one after another in the Chinese press to attack these dissident intellectuals, depicting them as traitors of the nation. In late May, when Beijing citizens blocked the martial law troops from entering the city, local residents supplied food and drinks to stranded soldiers with the purpose to persuade them retreat. But these facts were used in the post-June press coverage to show that Beijing residents welcomed soldiers entering the city. The Party dictates not only what is right but also what is true.

Anyone who dared to challenge the official line would be silenced. A man named Xiao Bin was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison shortly after the crackdown simply because he told the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) that he believed the casualties of June 4 would reach 20,000. Another art student was arrested in Hangzhou and received a sentence of nine years in prison for informing a correspondent of the Voice of America (VOA) that local authorities were forced by students to fly the Chinese flag at half staff to mourn the dead in Beijing. These actions, in the words of conservative Chinese leader Chen Yun, are "executing one to serve as a warning to a hundred." These sentences were made public in the press and TV networks, with the purpose of warning that anyone who made similar "lies" or "spread rumors" would be severely punished. The foreign press were also subjected to attacks. Several foreign journalists were expelled from China for "fabricating rumors and attacking China." Western newspapers and magazines were removed from luxury hotels.
The logic of the post-June purge demanded a ruthless crackdown in press circles. The official blame for the so-called counter-revolutionary turmoil focused on three sources: Zhao and his followers' behind-the-scene handling; hostile foreign forces; and the news media's misleading reporting. Speaking at the national conference of propaganda chiefs held in Beijing in mid-July, Chinese premier Li Peng referred to the press as "a disaster area hit hardest" by the ideological flooding of bourgeois liberalization. He said,

From the struggle against turmoil and quelling the counter-revolutionary rebellion, we gained further understanding of the importance of propaganda and ideological work. The prolonged ideological trend of bourgeois liberalization is one of the major sources that led to the turmoil and rebellion... During the turmoil, some news media units led public opinion in a wrong direction, due to the fact that a small number of comrades within the Party gave the media wrong guidance, deviating from the Party's stance... This lesson must be learned.⁶⁰

In a long article published in the People's Daily in August, Song Muwen, who replaced Du Daozheng as the new director of SMPO, further elaborated on what appeared to be the official assessment of the press's role in the political turmoil and what happened in Chinese journalism during the decade. Song's statement was wide of the mark, of course. But it did prove that what had happened during the decade was quite significant. In this long article, Song said,

For many years, the ideological trends of 'bourgeois liberalization' and decadent ideas of every description have occupied a great deal of space in the press, such a phenomenon is unprecedented in our history. It almost beyond our imagination. It is a bitter fruit that we have to swallow. The press ... extolling capitalism, smearing China's socialism, negating China's cultural tradition, distorting the entire history, propagating abstract democracy, freedom, and humanism, and directly vilifying and attacking Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought.... All these created a rather perilous situation and aimed at toppling the government...
We must have a strong determination and boldness to recover the grounds we have lost in the press field.

To complete this task, Song urged,

We must rectify the press, ban all kinds of publications that are illegal, reactionary, express grave political errors, or give expression to obscenity, violence, feudal ideas, and thoroughly uproot the source of pollution. We must rectify the press in a big way and to reduce them as the situation requires. All journalists must remain loyal to their duties, and turn out some high-quality spiritual products.\textsuperscript{61}

Thus the press became the first target of "rectification" and suffered severely in the post-June crackdown. Dozens of reporters such as Zhang Shu of the People’s Daily, Dai Qing of the Guangming Daily, and Zhang Weiguo and Chen Lebo of the World Economic Herald, were arrested. Many directors and chief editors of major newspapers were dismissed and replaced, including Tan Wenrui and Qian Liren of the People’s Daily, Lin Zhixin and Sun Changjiang of the Science and Technology Daily, and chief editors of the Guangming Daily and many others. Numerous journalists were either suspended from work for further investigation (\textit{geli shencha}) or transferred from news work. In the People’s Daily alone, half of the senior editors at department level and above were dismissed. By early August, as many as 530 newspapers and journals were closed down, for either propagating bourgeois thought or obscene materials and crimes. In addition, 2,300 sales stands were closed; 2,000 publication units were suspended; and more than 2.66 million copies of books and 8.72 million "illegal" publications were banned.\textsuperscript{62} The banned publications included books written by Yan Jiaqi, Liu Binyan, Su Shaozhi and other dissident intellectuals. Even journalism research and educational institutions were not immune from crackdown. For instance, the graduate school of
journalism under the CASS, which has produced nearly 60% of the journalism master degree holders in China, was dismantled. The Journalism Institute under the CASS was ordered to suspend work for investigation. Hu Jiwei was removed from his office and has been repeatedly decried for his advocacy of press freedom.

Similar to the situation in the nationwide purge that was carried out in many offices and work units, journalists were forced to attend study sessions twice a week, to study the documents and leaders' speeches so as to enhance their understanding of the nature of the turmoil and to make self-criticism. The investigating teams that were sent to the media units were busy in collecting evidence and checking the past activities of each reporter and editor, and dealt with those who were involved with the turmoil with various kinds of disciplinary or other punishments. A Central Committee document published in the wake of the June crackdown, itemized ten kinds of people who were targets to strike down, including those who were regarded as leaders or key members who were "writing, printing, and disseminating counter-revolutionary slogans, dazibao, xiaozibao, and expressing counter-revolutionary views to incite rebellion." It also itemized nine kinds of people who were liable to investigation and a lesser degree of punishment, including loss of job or position, demotion, or other kinds of political discrimination. The latter include,

1. Those who are connected with the plotters and organizers of the counterrevolutionary rebellion;

2. Those who communicated with suspicious people from foreign countries or regions during the period of turmoil and rebellion;

3. Those who joined illegal organizations;
4. Those who supported the turmoil and rebellion and expressed anti-Party and anti-government views or acted in such ways;

5. Those who spread large amounts of political rumors;

6. Those who took part in attacking Party, government and other key offices, barricading PLA soldiers and setting up road blocks to disturb traffic;

7. Those who provided substantial financial aid and practical assistance to the turmoil and rebellion;

8. Those who leaked state secrets; and

9. Those who gave other cause for suspicion and required to be investigated and dealt with.63

These all inclusive categories showed the determination of the conservative hard-liners to eliminate all existing and potential dissidents once and for all and send China in a reign of terror.

But, times really had changed. In the past, an individual journalist had to be fully cooperative during a political purge. It was not enough to avoid opposing the Party openly. He or she must openly express support of the Party in the form of "biaotai," a special Chinese term to take a public position. In the study sessions, they must read and discuss the latest party documents and speeches by leaders very carefully. It was vital for each participant to proclaim full support, which was best and most safely expressed by parroting or paraphrasing the original documents as closely as possible. Withholding of enthusiastic support would be regarded as indication of a hostile attitude towards the official position.64 When a person came under fire for deviation from the Party line, it was the duty of the others, locally or nationally according to the importance of the case, to join in the condemnation, lest they themselves fell victim to the same calumny. In
addition, people were encouraged to report (jiefa) to the authorities anyone for alleged connection or involvement with the demonstrations. Keeping silence in itself would be to commit a crime.

This time, the rule of terror simply did not work. Very few journalists were intimidated (except the initial period) and found it necessary to join the chorus by voicing their support for the government actions as they did before. After all the bitter experiences in the past political purges, they simply refused to join in condemning colleagues as "counter-revolutionaries." Although they stopped temporarily raising any critical voice against any Party policy, past or present, only apathy and mistrust remained. Some "put down their pen" rather than cooperate with the authorities. Many others expressed their real feelings in many other ways. For instance, when China Daily editor-in-chief Chen Li read Chen Xitong's speech to the staff reporters and editors, they raised a lot of pretend-to-be-innocent questions, challenging the official statements. The chief editor did not bother to answer these questions, simply saying, "His speech goes like that. I can't answer these questions. I just read this to you according to the orders from the above. That's all."65

At Xinhua news agency, when they were asked to study the documents and speeches, the editors and reporters simply locked the office door and played chess or cards to kill the time. The investigating team asked each individual to write a self-confession report or fill out a form, giving specific details on such pointed questions as one's whereabouts and daily activities since the martial law was issued. These reports or forms, after being completed, had to be signed by two witnesses who would be held
responsible for their veracity. They all stated that they were working in the newsroom as usual, although the fact was that they had been in the streets. When the investigating team found someone who did not tell the truth and went to check with the department heads, the latter would tell the investigators that the reporter was assigned to cover the story, not to participate in the demonstrations. What is more, few reported on others who had been involved in the student protests. Even those who disagreed with and had not participated the protest movement did not do that. "There was no way for the investigation to go further," recalled a Xinhua reporter who was actively involved in the protest movement. "Even some members in the investigating team were not serious in their investigation."66 Thus, these investigation teams, one after another, withdrew from the media, declaring that they successfully finished their tasks, although they found few troublemakers.

The popular desire for change, the remaining commitment to the reform policies on the part of the reformist wing of the leadership, the mass ideological disaffection, and the sheer tactical difficulties of carrying out such a purge through to the end, led to a nearly absurd situation, a situation that was characterized as both repressive and yet surprisingly lax. Shortly after the June incident, Li Ruihuan, the new Politburo member who replaced Hu Qili as the ideological taskmaster, began to emphasize the need to oppose "ossification" at the same time as attacking "bourgeois liberalization." He was quick to concentrate on the anti-pornography campaign and play down the intellectual purge. In early 1990, he turned to championing the cause of enhancing traditional culture, thereby, perverting the entire course of the political purge.67 It was the very
same kind of balancing act that had led to the downfall of both Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang before him. Resentful of Li’s more conciliatory cultural line, the revived mummies in the propaganda field, ran a special issue with quotations from all the central leaders, pointedly failing to cite Li. By December, Li Ruihuan came to Xinhua, congratulated their success in cleaning house. But one month later, Li Peng said that the investigation at Xinhua was not complete and should be done again. But nobody bothered to come again.68

On the surface, the Chinese press was silenced. Proposals for a free press are no longer published in the Chinese media. The conservatives vowed to "never forget the painful lessons" and to "make sure that the propaganda tool was in the hands of those who remain loyal to the Party."69 But the final chapter of the struggle has not yet been written. The social forces set loose by the changing press have not been eradicated. The elements of a new earthquake exist beneath the surface in China today. In the next period of liberalization, which is bound to come, the Chinese press will certainly rise again to demand for greater freedom.
NOTES


4. For example, see Beijing Daily, April 20, 1989, p.1. What enraged the students most was a Xinhua news story that accused them of trying to break into Zhongnanhai and shouting slogans such as "Down with the Communist Party," a very serious charge in China. The Xinhua story was printed in many newspapers including the People's Daily on April 21.

5. Worker's Daily, April 21, 1989, p.3.


8. 1989: Chronology of Checking the Turmoil and Quelling the Counter-revolutionary Rebellion, op. cit., pp.41-42.


15. Ibid., pp.1-2.


20. In one of their dialogues on April 29 with Yuan Mu, a spokesman of the State Council, government officials, the students insisted that the government should abolish censorship on the press and let the media to report their activities in a more fair and open way. But Yuan said that "there is no censorship in China and the press enjoys freedom." See People's Daily, April 30, 1989, p.1.

21. For reference of the journalist petition, see Hong Kong Standard, May 9, 1989, p.6; Kyoto, AFP, and Xinhua stories in FBIS-CHI-89-088, May 9, 1989, pp. 36-38.

22. Chen Xitong, op.cit., p.5.


27. Seth Faison, op.cit., pp. 157-158.


34. The best account of these events was a page-long article, entitled "History Will Remember This Day," with the byline of the collective report of People's Daily reporters, published on May 18, 1989.


36. The text of May 17 Declaration is quoted from Han Minzhu, op. cit., pp. 221-222.

37. Mu Wang, op. cit.


41. Mu Wang, op. cit.

42. Beijing Municipal government Order No. 3, Beijing Daily, May 20, 1989, p.1. It also stipulated that "foreign reporters and reporters form Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan are not allowed to cover stories, take pictures or make videotape recordings in government organs, social organizations, schools, factories, mines, enterprises, or neighborhoods without the approval of the Beijing municipal government."


45. Two reporters and five print-shop workers of the paper were arrested after June 4 for this action.

46. People's Daily, May 21-30, 1989, p.1. The boxed features run for 10 days until May 30. On June 4, the paper printed a letter, attacking the box for distorted and inflammatory reporting. For reference, see Frank Tan, op. cit.

47. Han Minzhu, op. cit. pp.76-78, 340-342.


52. *People's Daily*, June 7, 1989, p.4; and June 8, p.3.


55. *China Daily*, June 29, 1989, p.3.


65. Interview with Source T, Honolulu, October 1989.


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CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

The press in the post-Mao China has been transforming from a uniform, rigidly controlled, and centrally directed propaganda instrument into a pluralistic, informational, and livelier press. The essence of this transformation is that the vertical, downward communication links that the Party preferred began to be supplemented, if not completely supplanted, by horizontal links that enabled various social groups to learn about each other’s concerns and demands. The new press was thus able to serve not only the political authorities but effectively discharged its duties to inform, enlighten, and entertain the common people and enabled them to gain access to information previously denied them. Although the Chinese press has experienced various political oscillations and still has a long way to go in achieving final political freedom, the historical changes in the press and its significant contributions to the nation’s modernization and democratization process should not be neglected. To appreciate the progress made by the Chinese journalists, one must consider where they had to start from.

The Chinese press was fashioned into a rigidly controlled instrument of propaganda after the Chinese Communists (CCP) gained power in 1949. To the long tradition of an official press, the CCP added its own imperatives as a revolutionary Party and its own version of Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Mao Zedong believed that attitudes, ideas, and thoughts must be first revolutionized in order to build a Communist China.
He was not content with producing merely obedient subjects or opportunistic followers. He wanted to remold the minds of the entire population and cultivate a selfless "Communist man," a task on which he had spent more time and energy than he had on any other activity in the country. Mao defined the role of the press as one to "educate, organize, and mobilize the masses." Under his leadership, as shown in Chapter I, the press became the most important tool in ideological indoctrination and served as the single official channel of information for the people. Nothing inconsistent with the Party line was printed. Such political propaganda reached its epitome during the Cultural Revolution when Mao's supreme words were quoted in bold-face type on newspapers everyday and the monotonous rigidity of the People's Daily was copied verbatim by every newspapers in the country. The content in the press was nothing but political propaganda that was neither readable nor reliable.

This absurd practice began to be questioned in the late 1970s, not only by general readers and the new leadership but also by journalists as well. The myth created by excessive ideological propaganda in the past, as discussed in Chapter II, instead of remolding the public, had created a frustrated, disoriented, and restive population, which increasingly suspended belief in Communism. People were fed up with the repetitive, monotonous style of official propaganda. What they wanted was a press that would tell the truth, a press that would provide a variety of information and entertainment, and a press that would not only provide information service but be a check on the government as well. The new Chinese leadership also acknowledged the severe situation of "crisis of confidence." In contrast to Mao's emphasis on radical revolutionary ideology, Deng
Xiaoping was realistic and pragmatic and put more emphasis on economic development than on ideological purity. Deng and his supporters realized that a limited liberalism was necessary to win back the public. A major goal of Deng was to encourage the media to promote economic modernization. The leadership under Deng was therefore permitting the emergence of differentiated, pluralistic media outlets and more diverse contents, within certain limits.

The pressure for change from both above and below was nonetheless felt within the press. Most reporters and editors felt "shame" for their role of propagandists that had been assigned to them and were strongly motivated to improve their work. They wanted to write what they saw and really believed. They wanted to serve the people and nation rather than only the rulers. They wanted to be respected as professional journalists by providing competent reporting which, for all practical purposes, had been generally neglected during past years when the emphasis was on political propaganda and exhortation in an effort to reeducate the masses. Journalists especially attempted to overcome persisting and cumbersome restrictions and to abandon ineffective practices so as to serve the public more closely. Thus, the de-emphasis of ideology and the desire of the new party leadership to put some distance between itself and the mistakes of the past regime combined with the pressures from both the audience and journalists themselves to make possible livelier media activities and to provide a suitable environment for professional journalism to flourish in China in the 1980s.

Chapter IV discussed in detail the changes in the press. The most notable change was the rapid growth and expansion of the press. At the height of the Cultural
Revolution, only 42 newspapers were published nationwide, with virtually the identical content of the People's Daily. By the mid-1980s, the number of newspapers increased to 2,578. Among them only 16% were Party papers. The remainder, most of them new, were small, nonpolitical publications catering to the special interests of farmers, workers, intellectuals, students, women, children and the elderly. Magazines, radio and television stations were also increasing at an unprecedented speed. The television sets, for example, counted in the tens of thousands in the late 1970s, jumped to 90 million. The expanding TV programs reached vast numbers of Chinese with scenes and dramas never before seen in the ancient nation. This was an "information explosion" that occurred in a largely ignorant population of one billion. In all societies information is power. When a small group can maintain a monopoly on information and decide when and to whom to give it, it is in a position to maintain tight political control. Once the monopoly is broken and people have access to alternative sources of information with which they can make independent judgments about the policies of the authorities, the political control will be weakened and eventually diminish.

Directly related to the press's increased popularity was the return of credibility. The press, no longer a "mouthpiece" simply parroting the Party line, became more service-oriented to the people and the nation. News reporting was more objective, informative, and quicker. Stories celebrating the accomplishment of socialist modernization were often balanced by exposure of problems. Public criticism over corrupted government and Party officials and articles on controversial topics and politically sensitive issues were far more common. International news, human interest
stories, and disaster news were regularly published. Writing style was livelier and layout more appealing. Journalism research and education also boomed. Dozens of journalism research institutions were established and 33 journalism departments appeared in various universities. The proliferation of journalism education has provided a new generation of journalists who were more liberal minded.

The economic reform that bred widespread social change was felt acutely in the press. In the past, the press had operated within the framework of a centralized system, under which the means of production and distribution were owned, financed, and directed by the government. As China gave increasing play to market mechanisms and cut back on subsidies, newspapers were forced to confront the fragility of their financial bases. They had to streamline their operations and open up new sources of income through advertising, running side-line businesses, and self-distribution to meet the rising cost of operations, the changing demands of consumers, and the emergence of media competition. For financial reasons, the press was forced to be more reader-oriented than Party-oriented.

Compared to the changing material environment, the changing attitude and behavior of journalists were much more impressive. When press reform was launched in late 1970s, newspapers rushed to confess that they had used false stories for decades to get the Party line across and promised to make a clean break with the past. Reporters and editors, who had adjusted mentally to the control imposed from above, now vowed to unload the heavy influence of ultra-leftism and return to professional journalism. Their initial efforts, however, focused mainly on technical matters such as reporting techniques,
writing style, accuracy, and speed. Since the mid-1980s, the proliferation and growing sophistication of journalistic work and rising expectations from the readers prompted journalists to rethink their relationship with political authority and question the conventions that circumscribe their professional independence. Liberal journalists began to openly criticize the strict control of the Party and pushed for greater freedom. A survey of 1988, for example, showed that 99.4% of journalists believed that the press should allow public access to information and respect their right to air different opinions; 91.2% believed that the press has the right to criticize the Party and government and their leaders; 80% disagree with the argument that "the press should be under total control of the Party," and the majority believed that the Party propaganda was ineffective. The previous political purges made journalists all too aware of the penalties paid for independent thinking. To guarantee the freedom of the press, Chinese journalists strived for the drafting of a press law, proposed to allow existence of privately-owned newspapers, and urged greater freedom and independence in order to make the press a forum for public discussion and informed criticism. By the end of 1980s, major segments of the Chinese media discarded the original role assigned the press in communist societies and became a forum for the exchange of diverse ideas rather than a political propaganda tool of the ruling party. The direct result of the role reversal was that the vertical, downward communication links that the Party preferred began to be supplemented, if not completely supplanted, by horizontal links that enabled the various groups that exist in society to learn about each other's concerns and demands. The new press effectively discharged its duties to inform, enlighten, and entertain its readers, who
were long accustomed to dry official propaganda. Chinese people were allowed access
to facts and interpretations previously denied to them.

As expected, the new press played a greater role in promoting modernization and
political liberalization. Behaving as the foremost battering ram for change, the press fully
supported the leadership's commitment to economic reform and advocating modernization
and the values accompanying it. Reporters and editors were glad to see their duty shifted
from political indoctrination to promoting economic reforms. They not only offered
liberal interpretations of the Party policies so as to encourage the public to take advantage
of reform for economic improvement, but also frequently took important policy issues
being argued in top Party meeting-rooms to being discussed on the front pages of the
press. On many occasions, it went beyond what national leaders intended or even desired
by advocating free market economy, privatization of state enterprises, and less
government control of the economy. The press tried to educate and encourage the public
on how to change their work and business habits to take advantage of the new free
markets and commercial conditions that had replaced the old command economy. By
doing so, it mobilized the thoughts and activities of the Chinese people behind the
modernization drive and made the transition from a publicly owned and centrally planned
economy to a market-oriented economy irreversible.

In the political sphere, the press helped eliminate the persistent radical influence
of Mao and emancipate people's mind. Over the years, the press published numerous
articles criticizing the nation's authoritarian system, the "excessive centralization of
power" and the ensuing problem of corruption. The "exposure" of corrupt public officials
at national, regional and local levels became a constant subject in the press. Even Western journalists were impressed by the coverage. An American reporter, for instance, admitted that he was "amazed to see a Chinese TV reporter, mike in hand, standing outside the private home that a provincial leader had allegedly built with government funds and trying to question a family member about the allegation as he emerged, stunned and enraged by the live report." The reporting of widespread corruption raised doubts about credibility of the Party. The press also advocated the "people's right to air their views freely," "popular election of public officials," and "democratizing the process of decision." These ideas fanned the fresh winds of change sweeping through China's ossified politics and pushed the nation further toward a more pluralistic society in which public opinion will determine the formation of public policy. The press thus became a forum for diverse ideas and sometimes channels of dissent, which not only opposed the status quo and advocated changes, but paved the way for the democratic movement in 1989. During this movement, journalists, as discussed in Chapter VII, not only showed their sympathy to the students in their reporting of the events but became active participants.

It is important to note that there is a gap between what the leadership expected of the press role and what was demanded by general readers and journalists themselves. Though the Party initiated and allowed a certain "liberalization" in the post-Mao era, it never intended to relinquish its control over the media nor supported any radical change. The Party leaders encouraged "liberalization" because they believed that the modernization programs need cooperation of the intellectuals whose talent can be utilized
only by creating a "liberal environment." They realized that the economic reform could not move ahead without a more livelier, informative press. They also intended to improve the process of decision making so as to improve the efficiency of reform policies. What they tried to do was to pursue economic reforms without yielding political control. The practice of keeping a balance between economic anti-leftism and political anti-rightism, as typified by Deng's "four modernizations" program and his "four cardinal principles," was in essence an attempt to make one-party rule more responsive to and, therefore, accepted and supported by the people. The new policy for the press was thus to promote economic modernization while helping secure a "stable and unified" environment in the interest of economic development. This policy allowed the emergence of more differentiated and pluralistic media outlets and tolerated more diverse content, but within certain limits. Whenever liberalism got out of control, the conservative leaders would come out to compress it back into its desiccated Mao-age shape.

In contrast, ordinary people wanted not only economic improvement but more political freedom. As economic reform went on, demands for open expression of liberal ideas and direct participation in policy discussions were increasing. The combined forces of emerging social groups made repeated efforts to push back the boundaries of tight political control and even challenged the Communist monopoly of power. Such popular pressures were channeled primarily through the press. The best example was the outcry by most working journalists for press freedom and effort to establish a press law to protect this freedom. The candor of the outcry, as shown in Chapter VI, could not have been imagined in the past. It is interesting to note that the less strict the Party controls
became, the more dissatisfied journalists were likely to be, because the pace of reform in the media could not keep up with the growing aspirations among journalists and lagged far behind the needs of rapid economic reforms. So, we may say, if freedom in China increased in the last 10 years, it was not because of the benevolence of the Party but because of the impact of the economic reforms and people's effort to strive for it. The Party has never allowed freedom of the press. There was nothing, for instance, in Deng Xiaoping's collected speeches going back to 1978 to suggest he has ever entertained the slightest sympathy for a free press. But the issue was discussed and pursued publicly by journalists and other reformers. Freedom expanded to such an extent that even Party organs had taken on the character of independent newspapers. As Chinese journalist Liu Binyan later described,

Freedom was like particles in the air that grew and expanded spontaneously.... They all knew their writings might anger leaders such as Wang Zhen and Deng Xiaoping, but whether to publish or not was a calculation of the political climate at the time. So we dared to publish these writings. Occasionally when what we wrote deviated too far from the Party line and they criticized us, we would write self-criticism and send them to the top leaders. After two or three weeks we would again write exactly the same sort of articles. In this way, the freedom of the press increased bit by bit.4

This difference would inevitably be reflected in the power struggles within the Party, because the Party was not an iron plate itself. The dispute between liberal reformers and conservative hard-liners was not on whether to give up Party control over the media but on how much relaxation of control was acceptable. The conservative leaders continued to uphold the thesis that the role of the press in a socialist society—even in the age of reform-- was not to reflect public opinion in all its diversity, but to shape
and mold it in the direction favored by the Party. They insisted that the press must remain under Party control, and that the Party must resist moves towards 'excessive' independence on the part of the press. The reformist leaders, on the other hand, argued that economic prosperity and stability should allow the expansion of journalistic independence and increasing openness in objective reporting. They suggested that important events be made known to the public, major policy issues be subject to public discussion, and citizens have the right to criticize failed policies, bureaucratic ineptness and corrupt practices. Since the boundaries of the new press policy were ill-defined, the two sides clashed frequently over issues regarding journalistic work.

The press was intertwined with the on-going power struggle within the Party and was carried along by the mainstream of Chinese politics. Since the mainstream itself shifted from time to time, former mainstream participants were frequently left stranded in ideological heresy. As it veered right, conservatives were stranded; as it veered left, conservatives were freed and the reformers were left stranded in ideological heresy. The press was thus constantly pulled in these opposite directions, serving as the battleground as well as the sought-after prize, because each side wanted to use it to serve its own purposes.

What was significant is that the majority of Chinese journalists took the side of the reformers and fought against the conservative hard-liners. In this sense, journalists became political actors. Encouraged by reformist politicians and intellectuals who formed an unofficial coalition both to protect the press and to use it to promote liberal reforms, the press did not hesitate in criticizing conservatives for promoting "sham Marxism" and
as the "remnants" of the Gang. Except for a few setbacks such as in 1983 and 1987, liberal journalists dominated the press. Articles written by conservatives were refused publication. Even if published, they were subject to a flood of criticism and their views were "mocked" publicly. The situation changed only after the bloody crackdown of June 1989 when the press was reshuffled as "a disaster area hit hardest" by the ideological flooding of bourgeois liberalization. The fluidity of Chinese politics, which resulted in a confusing situation of both greater freedom and greater frustration, dictated how far journalists will go as professionals and not where they will go.

Despite their hostility toward the conservatives, none of the major groups in Chinese journalist circles in the 1980s had challenged the rule of the Party or abandoned their formal commitment to the "four cardinal principles." Identical to the popular feeling that the Party was the only political force strong enough to hold the nation together, most journalistic reformers, including such prominent figures as Hu Jiwei, Liu Binyan, Qin Benli and Wang Ruoshui, did not regard it realistic to overthrow the Party and opted to work with reformist leaders to seek change within the system. Therefore, they usually confined their arguments and demands for freedom of the press within Marxist principles. They tried to rediscover writings by Marx who, as a young journalist, had insisted on the absolute importance of democracy and press freedom. By doing so, they hoped that press freedom would be recognized as an essential element of socialism and that the Chinese press could be salvaged from rigid and Stalinist control.6

Even radical reformers, in demanding greater press freedom, were not totally out of touch with reality because they understood very well the danger of stepping out of
bounds. One of their tactics was to attack conservative practices with liberal ideas coated in Marxist principles. In other words, they chose the ping-pong tactic of playing the edge of the table: the ball always goes along the line, almost out of bounds, but it is still a good hit. In the context of the times, their anti-dogmatic propensities were daring thoughts. It took no reading between the lines to understand that the Party's monopoly of power and its suppression of civil liberties were under attack, and openly for all to see. But, generally speaking, Chinese journalists, as individuals or a group, did not fight for freedom and democracy as vigorously as their counterparts in Eastern Soviet blocks, although the reforms in the 1980s created better material and social conditions for Chinese journalists to realize more drastic change. It is not because Chinese journalists lacked wisdom or courage. The real reason lies in the nation's long cultural tradition.

The modern Chinese press has grown up and operates today in the shadow of the nation's long tradition and its influence is still plainly visible today. Lack of freedom and democracy has been a deep-seated characteristic of Chinese political life. The authoritarian tradition allowed no free public discussion of policy issues or any individual freedom and liberty. Party and state cadres at all levels have been accustomed to the tradition that the press was nothing but the servant of the rulers. They felt very uncomfortable with the new "openness" in the press. Thus, requests by the press for 'probing' interviews with officials are frequently refused. When they were criticized in the press, they would use their power to mud-sling or discredit the press criticism, or adopt administrative powers to punish individual journalists, or even send them into prison.
For Chinese authorities, educating the masses has been an integral part and one of the most important aspects of the official activities. Scholar-officials, as their spokesmen, were entrusted to propagate the moral line of the imperial rulers. Chinese journalists, long accustomed to the role of establishment intellectuals who were interested in fostering a good and moral society, accepted this traditional role and endeavored to infuse such state propaganda. They had a strong sense of duty, self-discipline, and obedience to authority. Their political ideal was harmony between ruler and ruled and they still believed that any real change as coming from above. They opted to work with the reformist leaders to seek change within the system, destroying rigid formulas, attitudes, and dogmas rather than destroying the system. Just as Liang Qichao did a century ago, the press was used to get the ear of rulers. Journalists, as junior partners of the political elite, defined their interests and performed their work according to the requirements of those in power. Of course, they had never been satisfied with acting simply as promoters of official policy and tried to speak out for the public. At best they could function as a loyal opposition group and what they could offer was an alternative strategy for the ruling class for more effectively running Chinese society. The best example is that many of the most vocal critics of the Party refused to be labelled as "dissidents" even after they were expelled from the Party. Qin Benli, editor of the World Economic Herald, refused to sign on the paper that threw him out of the Party after the June crackdown of 1989 and remained loyal to the Party until his last breath. For them, the Party leadership had gone awry of its professed goals.
This attitude was best summed up by something written by Xu Wenli, editor of one of the most influential Democracy Wall journal:

Reform from below is impossible because Chinese people do not want disorder, nor have they created disorders. The historical experience of Chinese reform also makes it clear that reform from above cannot be carried through to the end, either. For the reform power of an upper stratum alone is not enough to overcome the bureaucratic resistance of the old system. Evidently the only practical road is a combination of reform from above and from below. 8

In addition, Chinese journalists put more emphasis on educating the masses and molding public opinion rather than on Western-style objective reporting. Timothy Cheek observed that the Chinese press is experiencing a "transition from educational function to informational function." 9 But the fact is that although the informational function is increasing, the educational function remains strong. Journalists as a social elite will continue to guide, lead, and mold public opinion, not by political propaganda but by providing more diversified and practical information. For instance, in the process of economic reform, some people who were affected by radical reform programs tried to voice their criticism and complaints. Such views, however, were seldom published because editors felt that these views were not helpful to the reform. This merely replaced one kind of media uniformity with another. For those who advocated freedom of the press, the freedom meant simply they were free to write their ideas rather the ideas of their opponents. It seemed that they were not interested in constructing a truly free press in which not only the liberal reformers, but also their conservative opponents, would be free to argue their positions. The Chinese press was more a political and cultural institution than business venture.
Chinese official propaganda has built on the tradition of educational journalism. The extreme abuse of this traditional style of journalism during the Cultural Revolution led to the experiment of a new journalism that combines traditional journalism and Western style of informational journalism. It was under this circumstance that Western theories of journalism gained increasing influence in China in the 1980s. Approximately a century ago, Chinese intellectuals went from total ignorance of the West to an engagement with its leading currents. In searching for ways to modernize the nation, they debated on how to learn from the West while reviving Chinese cultural tradition. As professionals, Chinese journalists were among the most radical components of modern Chinese society in advocating Western ideas, but as spokesmen of the authorities, they were sensitive to political stability and cultural continuity. As China opened its door to the outside world, Chinese people have been exposed to more Western influence. The development of modern information technologies has made it impossible to block the penetration of new ideas and information across national borders. Chinese people were increasingly aware that rigid thought control and coercive indoctrination imposed by the Party was a clear violation of basic freedom -- freedom to hold, air and exchange ideas and opinions without interference. Freedom of expression is never more important than when popular aspirations come into conflict with the interests of the rulers.

The mass demonstrations of 1989 reflected the new yearning among many Chinese for liberty, humanism, and civil rights, including freedom of thought and expression. None of these could be realized without a free press. The debate on the establishing of a press law in the late 1980s was significant on two points. First, it
represented an effort to "change the rule of man into rule of law" in regard to journalistic work; and second, it acknowledged that the people are the masters of the country whose right of airing their opinion must be protected by the law. People rely on the press to air their opinion or get access to alternative views of events. The press provides such information and options on public issues not because the government has asked it to but because it is part of its duty as a profession.

Some Western observers saw these changes as primarily cosmetic or window-dressing on the propaganda mission. The discussion on press reform, for instance, was seen as "loud thunder but small raindrops." In other words, the rhetoric is louder than the practice. The judgment is only partially true because it neglected the facts that there were increasing currents in China in favor of greater informational openness, better representation of public sentiment, increased press supervision over the political process, and journalistic autonomy. Not to mention these actual changes, the daring discussions themselves were an indication of how much the Party's grip has loosened under popular pressure over the past decade. Another commonplace thesis is that news in China has been and is mere "propaganda" (as the word is negatively defined in the West), while that of Western countries is "objective and independent". The fact is that all news is ideological. The only difference is the direction of the "bias" which prevails in any particular society and the means by which it is reproduced over time. In sam, the rigid, totalitarian, and unpopular feature of the Chinese press is changing at an unprecedented pace. From a historical perspective, political pluralization is an accumulating process, sometimes suffering painful setbacks. We can not expect a fundamental change overnight.
The new press that will eventually emerge from this process will be familiar but not totally identical to that of Western society.

The 1980s marked a period of what, for many Chinese journalists, was both their moment of glory and agony. The military crackdown put an end to the experiment that was taking place in China. The final chapter, however, has not yet been written. The social forces set loose by the reform journalists have not been eradicated. In the next liberalization period, which is bound to come, the legitimacy of the authorities will be questioned again. Chinese journalists will certainly push once more for greater freedom and independence. Hopefully then, a genuinely free press with Chinese characteristics will appear in China.
NOTES


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