

THE FOG OF CENSORSHIP



MEDIA CONTROL IN CHINA

A HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA PUBLICATION

HE QINGLIAN

The Fog of Censorship

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THE FOG OF CENSORSHIP

MEDIA CONTROL IN CHINA

He Qinglian

TRANSLATED BY PAUL FRANK

HRIC

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Preface

Freedom of expression and of the press, along with freedom of association, are critical to promoting accountable and transparent governance and the development of an independent and flourishing civil society. Yet the challenges presented by systemic information control and censorship in China are complex, ongoing, and especially difficult in the face of China's growing international influence and presence.

For many years, He Qinglian, a prominent Chinese journalist, economist and best-selling author, has provided detailed research and trenchant analysis of the problems facing China. Since 2004, Human Rights in China has been fortunate to host He Qinglian as our senior researcher-in-residence. In 2004, HRIC published He Qinglian's ground-breaking Chinese-language report on media censorship, *Media Control in China*. With publication of *The Fog of Censorship*, we are pleased to make available this expanded English-language edition of *Zhongguo zhengfu ruhe kongzhi meiti* [中国政府如何控制媒体] (2003).

HRIC's research and advocacy programs have also addressed issues of censorship and the Internet, and the roles of foreign internet technology (IT) companies and the international community in promoting free flow of information. HRIC's support of independent research such as He Qinglian's projects is an integral part of our contribution to further understanding by promoting the expression of diverse opinions and perspectives. We welcome ongoing discussion and feedback.

SHARON HOM

Executive Director, Human Rights in China

Acknowledgments

The Chinese government's United Front Campaign has been so effective that some foreign individuals and organizations are willing to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in China and sing the government's praises in order to further their own interests. I do not wish to dwell on those who bow to the regime, because their kind has existed throughout human history. Yet even in the darkest eras, there have always been people willing to put aside personal interests for the sake of justice and humanity.

A few international human rights organizations have campaigned tirelessly for human rights in China, particularly Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, and Human Rights in China. The factual information these nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) collect and disseminate under extremely difficult circumstances is a powerful antidote to the disinformation spread by the foreign admirers of the Chinese government. To cite just one example: *Freedom in the World 2004: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (2004 Edition), a report published by the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House, ranked Taiwan the "most free" among Asian countries, fractionally behind Japan. Mainland China was ranked among Asia's "least free," only slightly better than North Korea and Saudi Arabia. It is also thanks to the unceasing efforts of these human rights organizations that the treatment of China's prisoners of conscience has improved since the days of Mao Zedong.

I must also express my admiration for the men and women within China who have never compromised with the regime. Coming from China, I know all too well the price paid by those who refuse to compromise, including being isolated by intellectuals who fear associating with "heretics." This book names and pays homage to many Chinese journalists who have been imprisoned for their efforts to expose corruption. These men and women of conscience are like a lamp with an ever-burning flame. Others have devoted themselves passionately to furthering freedom of speech, some even paying with their lives. Liu

Chengjun, a Falun Gong practitioner, was one of them. On March 5, 2002, Liu and some friends managed to intercept eight cable television networks in Changchun City and Songyuan City, Jilin Province, and televised a program entitled “Self-Immolation or a Staged Act?” exposing the Chinese government’s cover-up of its persecution of Falun Gong and the staged immolation the government claimed was the action of practitioners. Liu was arrested and subjected to 21 months of torture that led directly to his death. He paid with his life, but thanks to his sacrifice, many people learned the truth about the government’s persecution of Falun Gong.

China’s hope lies with the brave men and women who continue to struggle for freedom. This book gives an account of the sacrifices made by heroes in the cause of freedom of the press. Their efforts are changing China little by little. I have learned from a number of World War II documentaries that the Nazi persecution of Jews was welcomed in many European countries because it served the short-term interests of certain governments that collaborated shamefully with Nazi rule. It is my fervent hope that ever fewer foreign companies, organizations, and individuals will sacrifice principle for expediency in regard to China, because the Chinese people desperately need the international support of those who champion democracy and justice.

A China grounded on a solid foundation of constitutional democracy and integrity in government and politics would make a far more positive contribution to world civilization than today’s China, ruled by a corrupt dictatorship that regards ordinary citizens as worthless, pursues an unprincipled foreign policy, and cares only about its own political interests.

I hope that this book will help lift the veil covering China. Only those who understand the real China can effectively assist the Chinese people in building a free and democratic nation.

I would like to especially express my gratitude to Human Rights in China, the NGO that commissioned, supported, and published my research project on media control in China. The first report I wrote was published in Chinese by HRIC in November 2004. Working on this project, in addition to reading numerous articles and other materials, helped to sort out my own experiences during the many years I worked as a journalist in China, in combination with many articles and other materials I read. For the deeper understanding I gained of the principle of freedom of the press and the history of media control in China, I express my heartfelt thanks to Human Rights in China.

Shattering the Myths About China's Media Market

In 2006, the international community finally began to take notice of the Chinese government's increasingly tighter control of the media. Since late 2005, one article after another has circulated on the Internet reporting the purge of a Chinese media outlet: *Xinjingbao* (Beijing News) was forced to stop publication; *Bingdian* (Freezing Point), the weekly supplement of *Zhongguo Qingnianbao* (China Youth Daily), was closed down; the editor-in-chief of *Gongyi Shibao* (Public Interest Times) was replaced; *Shenzhen Fazhi Bao* (Shenzhen Legal Daily) was closed down; and the website of *Baixing* (People) magazine was also temporarily shut down. Although the circumstances behind each closure were different, together they presented a dismal picture of the Chinese government's attacks on the media. Under pressure from human rights groups, the U.S. Congress summoned major Internet companies to Washington to berate them for assisting the Chinese government in censoring the Internet.

In a particularly egregious move, on July 5, 2006, China's National People's Congress passed a draft law imposing fines of 50,000–100,000 *yuan* for unauthorized news reports of outbreaks of disease, natural disasters, social disturbances and other “public emergencies.”¹ This brazen legislative infringement of freedom of the press dealt the final blow to whatever hopes the international community may have entertained for the Chinese government. Foreign correspondents in China are finally expressing some concern that their newsgathering activities may be subject to legal restrictions—a full four and a half years after the publication of the Chinese-language edition of this report, entitled *Zhongguo zhengfu ruhe kongzhi meiti* (*Media Control in China*).

Before I embarked on a life of exile outside China, I worked at a media outlet in Shenzhen and learned firsthand how the Chinese government controls the media. I began to gather materials in the hope that I would one day be able to pub-

lish what I had learned. When I came to the United States, I was able to work on and complete *Media Control in China* in 2003, thanks to support from Human Rights in China, in New York. This English translation is a revised second edition of the Chinese-language report, which was published in Taiwan.

The facts marshaled in this book present a bitter truth: in China, the media, which are supposed to belong to society as a whole, do not fulfill their watchdog function. The only watchdog is the government itself, which has its eye on media organizations and journalists. The main difference between the Chinese and the Western media is evident from the Chinese government's own definition of the media as the "Party's mouthpiece." However, a number of doubts have been raised by foreign journalists who have interviewed me—doubts that reveal widespread misconceptions about the Chinese media, as follows:

THE FIRST MISCONCEPTION

Market liberalization promotes media liberalization

When I proposed to HRIC that I work on *Media Control in China*, one of the questions directed to me was: The Chinese media are currently undergoing a process of market liberalization; and one foreign media outlet after another is entering China. Given that these two processes will inevitably promote the liberalization of the Chinese media landscape, how can the Chinese government succeed in controlling the media? BBC correspondent Tim Luard asked this same question during our interview on February 16, 2006.

I told him a few facts, briefly and pointedly. What Chinese journalists say about market liberalization hits the nail on the head. Forcing a media outlet to "plunge into the sea" (a Chinese expression that means commercializing a state-owned enterprise) while maintaining government controls is like throwing someone into the sea whose hands and feet are tied. In a situation where most real news is off-limits and there is only one source of information, Chinese media outlets that want to gain a foothold in the market are forced to peddle smut. China's online media are among the world's worst in terms of obscene content, but the Chinese government is perfectly happy to see Chinese citizens wallow in carnality—as long as they steer clear of politics. As for foreign media organizations that invest in China, they also have to submit to Chinese news "inspection" regulations and to avoid politically sensitive topics.

Major foreign media groups want to do more than merely have a foot in the

Chinese media market; they want to take a share of the spoils from it. This is a chimerical goal, but it has not stopped media such as the BBC and Rupert Murdoch's empire, News Corporation, from embracing it. They view the Chinese media market as a huge pie, and the ways in which it is divided will affect the interests of the global media market in the twenty-first century. At one point, international media groups may have entertained the idea that, after entering the China market, they would slowly, but surely, promote freedom of the press in China. But since 2000, no media organization has been foolish enough to persist in that notion. The common and unspoken question on everyone's mind is this: Given that China's political leaders call the shots, who will get a slice of the Chinese media market pie?

Nobody is more confident of gaining a slice of this market than Rupert Murdoch who has invested a great deal of money and energy over the years to establish good relations with top Chinese officials, and whose efforts have met with considerable success. His secret is to always steer clear of politics and to show no interest in democracy, freedom, or human rights in China. Even the issue of people's living standards, which the Chinese media do cover, is outside his purview. Consequently, Murdoch has shown studied indifference to liberating the Chinese media. He has also tried to enter the Chinese media market through the back door by investing in Hong Kong's Phoenix TV (a channel that clearly has Chinese government backing). Until August 3, 2005, when the Ministry of Culture issued the Measures Regarding Strengthening the Administration of the Importation of Cultural Products,² anyone who warned that market liberalization would not promote the liberalization of the Chinese media was dismissed as biased. Although the BBC has not yet gone this far, it is trying hard to emulate Murdoch.

After Murdoch's efforts in China hit a brick wall, those who argued that market liberalization would foster the liberalization of the Chinese media were temporarily silenced, but those who insist that there is a direct link between market liberalization and China's democratization are as strident as ever. These people fail to grasp the fundamental fact that a market economy is compatible with a variety of different political systems. In recent history, for example, Nazi totalitarianism, American democracy, Singapore's authoritarianism, and Latin American military dictatorships have all coexisted with market economies.

THE SECOND MISCONCEPTION

The Internet promotes the free spread of information in China

The invention and spread of the Internet is the twentieth century's greatest techno-cultural contribution to humanity. There is no doubt that some years from now, the Internet will have a deep impact on democracy and freedom of the press in China. But it is fallacious to conclude that this will happen within the next five to ten years, because the Chinese government has invested huge amounts of money in controlling the Internet in China.

In understanding how the Chinese government controls the Internet, one English-language report has proven particularly helpful—*China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China*, by Greg Walton.³ When he worked in China on the initial construction of the Chinese Internet and provided technical support to foreign companies operating in China, Walton observed first-hand how foreign high-tech companies assisted the Chinese government in building a system to control the Internet. After returning to the United States, he felt obligated by his conscience to write this report. Ethan Guttman, whose work I also relied upon, comments pointedly that the United States has a responsibility to help Chinese people reclaim the Internet as an instrument for the free exchange of information and as “the communication network for revolution.”⁴

This book's chapter on control of the Internet is based on my own research as well as on these two English-language reports. In subsequent testimony before the U.S. Congress, I repeatedly expressed my hope that the United States would pass legislation restricting this dishonorable collaboration between U.S. companies and the Chinese government.

An important resource for the study of the control of the Internet in China is the OpenNet Initiative (ONI), a collaborative partnership of four leading academic institutions, including the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. ONI has published a report, entitled “Internet Filtering in China in 2004–2005,” part of an ongoing study that follows its 2003 report on the control of the Internet in China. When members of ONI testified before the U.S. Congress' U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission in 2005, they asked Congress to pass legislation to stop U.S. companies from helping the Chinese government control speech on the Internet.

I would like to mention the Paris-based NGO Reporters Without Borders and

the New York–based Committee to Protect Journalists. These two organizations have never bought into the Chinese government's lies and have always worked untiringly to promote freedom of the press in China. When I was persecuted by the Chinese government and was put under 24-hour police surveillance, Reporters Without Borders wrote a letter to Jiang Zemin asking him to put a stop to the government's sanctions against me. These organizations have also followed the cases of other Chinese journalists persecuted by the Chinese government. If, finally, it is becoming more widely understood that the Chinese media are subject to strict controls and that freedom of the press remains a distant dream for the Chinese people, it is thanks to the efforts of the organizations and researchers mentioned above.

THE THIRD MISCONCEPTION

Since Chinese people can insult their leaders, they must enjoy freedom of speech

Many people, including many overseas Chinese who frequently visit China, say that the ability of Chinese people to insult their national leaders demonstrates that they already enjoy freedom of speech. A human rights activist once said to me that her family had told her that Chinese people were now able to say anything they wanted among friends and that no subject was taboo. Unsure about what to believe, she asked me, "Haven't your articles been widely published in the mainland Chinese media?"

I told her that staff members from several media organizations had been fired after publishing articles and essays I had written. To equate the ability to speak freely among family and friends with freedom of speech and of the press is a gross misconception. More than once I have felt obliged to emphasize the fundamental difference between the freedom to speak one's mind in a private setting, among people with whom one shares mutual trust, and the freedom to express one's opinions in the public arena.

The crucial point being ignored is that even in Stalinist Russia there was a "kitchen culture" that enabled people to indulge in all sorts of "reactionary" satire and invective against the government in the privacy of their family circle. China's current political culture, which allows people to criticize the government in private conversations but forces them to lie in public settings, has produced a duplicity of character that induces people to say whatever is politically expedient at any given time.

THE FOURTH MISCONCEPTION

The general public in China does not need freedom of the press

There are two reasons why the Chinese public has no freedom of expression: First, all Chinese media organizations are required to register with and be approved by the government, and must be supervised by both the Party and government through a department-in-charge (*zhuguan bumen*) and a sponsoring unit (*zhuban danwei*) within each system. Media outlets are thus answerable to the Party and the government. Second, and generally unbeknownst to people outside of China, Chinese people have no freedom of association. Moreover, the Chinese government insists that the educational level of most Chinese people remains too low and that the conditions are not yet ripe to implement democracy. Consequently, foreigners often ask, "Don't most ordinary Chinese people think that it is enough to have improved economic living standards and that they don't really need freedom of expression and of the press, as well?"

This question reveals a profound misunderstanding. The incontrovertible fact is that today's neototalitarian rulers, much like the Maoist totalitarian regime before them, abuse their power by rewriting history in order to deprive people an accurate collective memory. In such a country, government control and manipulation of what people think not only distorts their historical memory but also renders them resistant to the values of human rights, freedom, and democracy. Under these circumstances, it is not reasonable to expect China's 900 million rural residents to demand freedom of the press. Nonetheless, over the past decade, people at the lowest levels of Chinese society have approached television stations and other media outlets as if these were official complaints offices, and sought redress for injustices of many kinds. At the very least, this indicates a vague awareness that the mass media can be used to appeal for their rights and to publicize injustice. When such complaints are ignored, as the overwhelming majority of them are, people often turn their anger against the media, saying things like, "You are also in the government's payroll. Government officials always cover up for each other."

Chinese intellectuals are aware that there is a direct, causal relationship between freedom of the press and democratization. In recent years, many of them have set a personal example by speaking the truth and exposing social ills, even when it meant facing persecution from the authorities. To help people understand the price that has been paid by a number of courageous journalists and intellectuals whose conscience has compelled them to work for freedom of speech and of the press, this book includes two chapters on government muzzling and victimiza-

tion of Chinese journalists (see chapter five, Chinese Journalists—Dancing in Shackles and chapter eight, A Prickly Rosebush Cut Off at the Root).

CHINA'S DEMOCRATIZATION MUST BEGIN WITH FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

In all fairness, during the mid-1990s, restrictions on freedom of speech were somewhat relaxed in China. *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend) led the way with a series of outstanding reports. For a brief period, *Shuwu* (Studio) was a leading intellectual magazine. Compared with these publications, the articles that appeared in *China Youth Daily's* supplement *Freezing Point* can hardly be said to have broken new ground. It is just that once the earlier magazines had been purged (that is, outspoken writers and editors fired) and made powerless, *Freezing Point* and *Beijing News* stood out from the crowd and invited the attention of the censors. The fact that these two publications, which covered social issues but steered clear of politics, have been censored by the Propaganda Department shows that the Chinese government has tightened the vise on public opinion to the point where there is not the slightest room for maneuver.

Media publications can be purged at any time in China. In the recent past, whenever a news publication was purged, some members of the intelligentsia said that its articles were too radical and its authors and editors lacked the savvy to protect themselves. It makes little difference whether such intellectuals were being cynical or wisely cautious; the end result is that the Chinese government has become ever more unscrupulous.

The famous poem attributed to Pastor Martin Niemoller entitled, "First They Came," about the consequences of the failure to speak out against the Nazi extermination of Jews, has been much cited in China recently. Here is the version at the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts.⁵

They came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

I want to take this opportunity to remind my Chinese compatriots that struggling for freedom and democracy is our responsibility as Chinese people. At the

same time, I would like to stress that the help of the international community in this endeavor is indispensable. A totalitarian Chinese regime can only have a negative effect on world peace and freedom. That is also why the international community has a responsibility to promote China's democratization.

As long as the political system built on the dictatorship of the Communist Party of China remains, press freedom will not be realized in China. While some Chinese media workers try to combat censorship by individual efforts with high risk, outside observers might misread this as an "increase in press freedom." This misreading may even be backed by "lip service" from the regime. For example, the international media has put high expectations on the official promise that "during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games foreign reporters will have freedom to report as they want." However, this promise has been torn to shreds in past months. In a series of events this year which included the Tibetan protests in March, the Sichuan earthquake in May, and the massive protest in Weng'an, Guizhou on June 28th, no media in China was able to interview and report "freely." Certainly, it will be a long, tough journey for China to reach press freedom. However, on their trek toward this destination, the people of China do need sustained support from the international community.

I am glad to note that in 2006, a growing number of nations have begun to pay more attention to the human rights situation and the problem of press censorship in China. Many in the world of politics have realized that a dictatorial Chinese government cannot become a responsible member of the international community. This attention has helped Chinese people struggling for human rights and democracy feel less isolated. Just as thought must precede action, freedom of the press will not only give people more access to information but will also serve as a vehicle for the communication of valuable independent thought. This is an indispensable precondition for China's democratization.

HE QINGLIAN, *New Jersey, July 2008*

The Fog of Censorship

Media Control and Public Ignorance

The ideal citizen of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, and the distinction between true and false, no longer exists.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

Thought crime does not entail death: thought crime is death.

George Orwell, 1984

Having intelligent and informed citizens who are good at thinking for themselves and at discerning right from wrong makes it easy to govern a country. But foolish and ignorant people who follow blindly are even more easily ruled. Modern democracies make every effort to educate and inform their citizens, because democracy requires civic participation. Public participation in the political process is the foundation of the system of checks and balances.

All repressive states choose policies designed to keep the population ignorant, and, thus, more easily manipulated. In China, this is achieved in two ways. First, the education system instills Communist ideology by embellishing the history of the Communist Party and constantly stressing the importance of “loving the Party” and “loving the leadership.” Second, the media are controlled so as to portray the government and the circumstances of daily life in China in glowing colors and to conceal the dark underbelly of society. To borrow Chinese government terminology, the aim is to “put out more positive reports and fewer or no negative reports” (only report good news; do not report bad news). In a one-party dictatorship, controlling public opinion means controlling people’s thoughts and actions. The Chinese Communist government’s policy of keeping people ignorant originates in ancient Chinese traditions of governance and in methods of thought and speech control learned during the Soviet Union’s Stalinist period.

In ancient China, emperors often referred to local officials as herdsmen (*mu*). In other words, China's rulers regarded the common people as so much livestock and considered governance the equivalent of herding animals. Laozi wrote that the people should have empty hearts but full stomachs.¹ The Chinese government has taken this advice to heart. Although it has never done a very good job of letting the people eat their fill, it has been very successful in turning them into an unthinking herd.

In the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, the media were used as a propaganda tool to spread Communist ideology. Soviet totalitarianism is considered by democratic nations to be a particularly egregious exemplar of the use of brain-washing techniques, but it has been copied wholesale by the Chinese government. In fact, the pupil has surpassed the teacher. Before the 1980s, the Chinese media were controlled mainly through ideological means. In the 1990s, the government began to employ more sophisticated techniques of media control. Today the methods are more insidious, ingenious, and successful than they ever were in the Soviet Union, and they are less easily noticed by the international community.

Media control in China before 1978

The goal of controlling the news is, of course, to manipulate public opinion and influence how people think. During its early years of struggle with the Kuomintang (KMT), the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) already knew the importance of influencing public opinion, and it did so very skillfully.

After gaining political power, the CPC leadership copied the Soviet Union's "report the truth" model of journalism. Even the internal organization of newspaper offices was imitated wholesale. This model had several distinctive features. First, the news media ignored what was actually happening in society and reported only what government documents and directives told them to report. The factual basis of a news report was irrelevant. Journalists of that generation recall that, when writing news reports, they would make every effort to rely on materials and "model reports" provided by higher authorities, and would simply choose sections that were useful in cobbling together a so-called news report. Second, the news media were answerable only to the government and took no notice of readers' views or opinions. Third, news reports were written in boilerplate language that disseminated the same falsehoods and empty phrases found in official pronouncements. Fourth, newspapers were no more than propaganda materials and, as such, did not

rely on market demand. Instead, they were subsidized through the subscriptions required of all government offices and state-run institutions and enterprises.

Since the media are nothing but “Party mouthpieces,” the Chinese Communist regime has never had to consider what news is actually supposed to be. Yet because the current regime wants the international community to consider China a civilized country, it pretends to uphold freedom of the press. This tradition of double-faced pretense can be traced back to the CPC’s power struggles with the KMT. In the 1940s, Zhou Enlai and a group of top Communist theorists and cadres responsible for cultural work launched a brutal ideological purge—as well as the physical elimination—of all dissidents in CPC-controlled areas. At the same time, in order to attack the Nationalist government and win public support, they published a series of articles in KMT-controlled areas advocating freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Interestingly, in 1999 a Chinese intellectual was about to publish a collection of these old CPC essays and newspaper articles under the title *Lishi de Xiansheng (Harbingers of History)*,² but the Central Committee’s Propaganda Department and the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) banned the book on grounds that “we cannot let a small minority of people use our Party’s historical documents to attack the socialist system.” Several Peking University students who read this book told the author they found it hard to believe that the CPC, which maintains such tight control over the media today, spoke so highly of freedom of speech fifty years ago.³

The actions of the CPC show that its calls for freedom of the press and of speech were simply an excuse to attack its political opponent, the KMT. In reality, the Communists never intended to allow freedom of the press. As Mao Zedong saw it, all news reports had to reflect the greatness and supremacy of the Communist Party. He believed that allowing the news media to publish critical political opinions or expose the dark side of society would lead to anarchy.

A small incident illustrates the tyrannical mentality of Mao and the Party. In 1951, the China Democratic League, which had worked hard to help the CPC gain power, believed that Mao would stand by his word and allow it to participate in the government. Based on this promise, it published *Guangming Ribao (Guangming Daily)* with full Party support. *Guangming Daily*’s chief editor was delighted to have a platform for his opinions, but he and his colleagues soon learned a brutal lesson. The CPC’s Central Committee issued a declaration about a particular international incident and, in addition, directed Xinhua (New China) News Agency to release a joint statement about the matter in the name of the central committees of all the democratic parties, in order to show their support of the

CPC's position. Considering itself a representative of these parties, *Guangming Daily* published their official statement as a front-page lead article, with the CPC's declaration as the second lead article.

The CPC leadership was furious about what it considered a "political incident." The Central Committee's Propaganda Department ordered that day's edition of the paper to be recalled, every copy to be destroyed, and a new edition to be typeset and printed. It also instructed *Guangming Daily* to follow the example of *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) and publish all subsequent CPC pronouncements as front-page lead articles, placing statements by the democratic parties in a secondary position. *Guangming Daily's* editor-in-chief, Chu Anping, was repaid for his attempt at independence by being forced to resign, and from then on he was shunned and left out of the political process. During Mao's Anti-Rightist Campaign he was labeled a rightist, and his entire family was persecuted and dispersed.⁴

Objectively speaking, no ruler likes to be subjected to public scrutiny. In the early twentieth century, U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt referred to newspaper reporters who dared to expose corruption as "muckrakers." Nevertheless, American society guaranteed them the right to exist and accorded them due respect. Under China's dictatorial system, on the other hand, all Communist regimes, including those of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin, as well as Hu Jintao's today, have paid lip-service to the media's role in holding the government accountable, but in practice they have resolutely prevented the news media from fulfilling their responsibility as society's critics and watchdogs. In fact, the government considers the unremitting control of the media to be one of its principal tasks.

The main purpose of controlling the press and public opinion is, of course, to consolidate political power. Communist politics has always been composed of two elements. The first is the principle of violence, which Mao Zedong encapsulated when he said that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" and spoke of "class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat." The second element is thought control by means of propaganda and education, in order to convince the public that Communism is the best form of government, that all government actions—including the most brutal acts of violence—are legitimate, and that anyone who has a critical attitude toward the Communist government is a "reactionary and backward element" that must be eliminated. By indoctrinating all news organizations with the same ideas, people are deprived of choice in their sources of information and, thus, become accustomed to groupthink.

Having ruled China for more than half a century by means of political violence, ideological education, and propaganda, the Communist regime has succeeded in

making many Chinese people reject universal human values such as human rights, freedom, democracy, and respect for life as bourgeois principles that do not suit what the government refers to as the country's "current situation." The profound and far-reaching impact of Communist propaganda is illustrated by the fact that most Chinese students who came of age after the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989—even those who had the good fortune to study abroad—consider Western historical accounts of the Korean War, Sino-American relations, the famine in China in the late 1950s that cost thirty million lives, and the Cultural Revolution, to be nothing more than anti-Chinese slander. On returning to China, a great many students become ardent proponents of the official view that "the Chinese people are still too backward to practice democracy." To many American university professors, this is particularly shocking and difficult to understand.

Over the course of more than half a century of dictatorial rule, the Chinese Communist regime has suffered a number of self-inflicted crises, but its huge success in ideological education and propaganda has kept it in power and, what is more, has convinced the majority of Chinese people that democracy brings chaos and that without the Communist government, China would sink into turmoil and confusion.

The second goal that the Communist regime seeks to achieve by controlling the news media is to raise China's international standing. In accordance with Mao Zedong's definition, prior to the policy of "reform and opening-up," the Chinese news media served as a tool in the struggle against imperialism (the West, led by the United States), revisionism (the former Soviet Union), and counterrevolution (Taiwan, Hong Kong, and all "anti-Chinese" forces). Since the reforms were launched, the regime has assigned the media the primary task of presenting China's best possible face in order to attract massive foreign investment. Whether that face corresponds with reality is unimportant, as long as foreign readers believe what they are told. Judging by the expression of international support for the "China boom," it would appear that the Communist regime deserves high marks for its efforts.

Thought control during the Maoist period

To understand the Chinese government's control of the media today, we need to briefly review its methods before 1978.

Upon assuming political power in 1949, the CPC took over all newspapers, magazines, and radio stations established during the Republican period (1911–1949)

and remolded them into a “socialist news industry system,” with *People’s Daily* as the flagship newspaper. The official Xinhua News Agency grew out of the *Hongse Zhonghua Tongxun She* (Red China News Agency), which was established in 1931 in the Communist base of Ruijin, Jiangxi Province. The forerunner of *People’s Daily* was *Zhonggong Huabei Jiguan Bao* (*Newspaper of the CPC’s North China Bureau*). After 1949, the Communist regime proceeded to remold so as to eradicate the non-governmental news media that flourished during the Republican period. Except for CPC organs, the only newspapers that remained were *Wen Hui Bao* (*Wenhui Daily*), *Da Gong Bao* (*Dagong Daily*), and *Guangming Daily*, which were nominally published by the “democratic parties.” But even these newspapers had to march to the CPC’s drumbeat, which dominated the vast expanse of China.

This is an opportune point to raise several cases involving the slaughter of journalists by the newly established Communist regime. In the library of the University of Chicago, I once came across a small book, yellowed with age, entitled *Zhonggong Tusha Jizhe* (*The Communist Party of China’s Murder of Journalists*), which recounts in detail how, in 1951, the CPC murdered several journalists in Guangzhou. That year Communist authorities arrested many journalists and promised them lighter sentences “if they told the truth.” They forced them to write “frank confessions” and “written statements of repentance,” as well as open letters to fellow journalists in Hong Kong and Macau urging them to “surrender” to the CPC. Next, the authorities put six journalists (Zhao Fei, Luo Jinquan, Chen Guangping, Deng Xiaoping, Ye Yunsheng, and Luo Shufan) who worked for *Xingdao Ribao* (*Singtao Daily*) and *Dagong Daily* before a firing squad and arrested several dozen more, many of whom were never heard from again. At the same time, the journalist Huang Cheng was executed in Shanghai, as was Li Juefei in Wuzhou, Guangxi Province. The record shows that the executed journalists were completely innocent. Several of them had even supported and helped the CPC and had been designated “progressive reporters,” “friends,” and “fellow travelers.”⁵

Because a news blackout was in operation during the Maoist years, when “countless people were silently mowed down like grass,” this small book records only incidents the author was able to trace himself. Many more journalists were murdered and lost in the dust of history, and not even their names remain today.

After 1949, *Wenhui Daily* and *Dagong Daily*, nominally published by democratic parties, had no freedom whatsoever to express their own opinions. This demonstrates that under Chinese Communist control, what is important is not who publishes a newspaper, but the policies and methods of control to which that newspaper is subject. Before 1978, the regime copied Soviet methods of control.

Under Mao's iron fist, Chinese society was deprived of any freedom of thought, and Chinese people say that in those days it was as if "one billion people had a single brain"—Mao Zedong's brain. The slogan of the day was "Obey Chairman Mao's words and implement Chairman Mao's instructions," and every individual scrupulously restricted himself or herself to officially sanctioned behavior. Mao's method of social control was to mobilize the masses and to get people to become "activists" who kept watch and informed on those around them. Informers were given a variety of rewards, including higher social status. The discovery of any thought recorded anywhere (such as in a diary) that did not conform to the official version of reality would bring disaster to the person concerned, as well as to his or her family. Individuals had no right to privacy of correspondence, which meant that their unit leaders and colleagues could open their mail. Those categorized as "landlords, rich people, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists" faced particularly harsh discrimination and monitoring.

Li Jiulian, a young woman from Jiangxi Province, happened to express some political criticism in a letter to her boyfriend. He informed on her, and she was arrested as a counterrevolutionary and subjected to the most brutal torture. In order to render this spirited young woman mute, prison guards stuck a sharp, pointed piece of bamboo through her tongue and into her chin. After tormenting her for several years in prison, the authorities put her to death. No one dared bury her corpse, and her body was mutilated. Zhong Haiyuan, an elementary school teacher in her twenties, did not know Li Jiulian, but was driven by a sense of justice to plead for her release. For this she was sentenced to death. At her execution, one of her kidneys was harvested and given to a high-ranking cadre's son.

Readers might incorrectly assume that these crimes were committed during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, although both young women were imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, they were killed in 1977 and 1978, after Mao's death and the overthrow of the Gang of Four. Li Jiulian and Zhong Haiyuan were not the only innocent victims in this case. More than forty other people who tried to help Jiulian were imprisoned, and more than six hundred received penal, administrative, or Party disciplinary sanctions. There were many other miscarriages of justice similar to Li Jiulian's. For example, Zhang Zhixin of Liaoning Province had her throat cut to prevent her from shouting slogans as she was about to be executed. Shi Yunfeng of Changchun City, Jilin Province, had his lips sewn together before his execution.⁶

The Chinese Communist regime has never hesitated to silence or even murder individuals who express political criticism in their private correspondence, and it

is even more determined to banish criticism from newspapers and magazines. Mao's approach to controlling the press was clear and simple: "Report only the good news, not the bad," and "if we do ten things and nine are bad, and they are all published in the press, then we will certainly perish."⁷ In order to follow this directive, China's newspapers had to speak with a single voice—the voice of Mao Zedong—and statements published in the name of the Central Committee were simply attempts to interpret Mao's will.

In summary, never-ending political movements and the punishment of "thought crimes" and "counterrevolutionary" opinions were taken to absurd levels during the Maoist period. Members of "study groups" who expressed the slightest doubt about government pronouncements were sentenced to severe penalties (often the death penalty or life imprisonment), and parents could be harshly punished for a careless comment blurted by a small child.

I remember an incident that happened in my hometown in the winter of 1976, less than two months after Mao's death. I saw a woman in her twenties carted off by police officers to the execution ground with her hands tied behind her back. Her only crime was that her son, who was not even three at the time, had shaken his little fist and shouted, "Hit!" in front of a portrait of Mao Zedong and then-Party chairman Hua Guofeng. The little boy's offense had been reported by neighbors to the authorities, who determined that the boy's "hatred" had been "instigated" by his mother, and sentenced her to death. As the young woman was paraded through the streets, her mother and younger sister followed behind, wailing their grief. I can still hear them to this day.

During this period, unrelenting Communist thought control and a stultifying educational system cut off China almost completely from the West's civilized values of freedom and democracy. Most Chinese people harbored no doubts about the competence of Communist rule, because they did not know that people were living better lives elsewhere. What is more, the brutal regime not only persecuted countless victims to death, but also registered their children and family members as social undesirables, who were then unable to enter college, get a job, or marry a member of the politically privileged class. During the Red Terror, the vast majority of Chinese people had to constantly monitor themselves, being extremely careful not to express "heretical" thoughts that could be reported by others. When I was sent down to the countryside as an "educated youth," I was informed on and publicly criticized for reading foreign novels and classical Chinese poetry. No one thought there was anything disgraceful about this "informer culture," which persists to this day and has become deeply ingrained in the Chinese character.

The Chinese government's brutal system of domination facilitated its control of the media. No newspaper editor or journalist dreamed of publishing political criticism or an opinion contrary to the "voice of Chairman Mao and the Central Committee." Even being a bit slow to "grasp" the ideas of a higher-up or telling a small joke could elicit punishment from the regime. The 1957 case of a "rightist clique" in the headquarters of *Xin Hunan Bao* (*New Hunan Daily*) is a typical example. Of the one hundred and forty-three reporters and editors on this newspaper's staff, fifty-four were labeled "rightists," including the director, the deputy editor-in-chief, and a good number of department heads. More than ten people were imprisoned for circulating a letter in which one of their colleagues told a political joke. Some of them died in reform-through-labor (*laogai*) camps.⁸

During the Cultural Revolution, persecution for "thought crimes" intensified. Mao Zedong dismissed all literary works published between 1949 and 1966 as "products of seventeen years of bourgeois and revisionist thinking in the arts." Even authors whose writings were full of praise for the Party and for Mao himself were often accused of "having ulterior motives," "using the past to disparage the present," and "making oblique accusations," and were subjected to severe criticism.

Lu Dingyi, who twice held the position of head of the Central Propaganda Department during Mao's reign but was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, recalled in his later years, "During the more than ten years that I was head of the Propaganda Department, I did only one thing: purge. When I was done purging one batch of people, I moved on to the next."⁹

In official Communist propaganda, freedom of speech, freedom of publication, and freedom of the press were always dismissed as "decadent bourgeois values." This view is still very much alive, although it is no longer expressed openly in the official media. But every time there is an ideological purge, this hackneyed phrase is brought out again, especially whenever officials have to circulate Central Committee guidelines.

The Chinese media specialized in publishing reports about the "superiority of the socialist system" and the "brilliant wisdom" of the "great leader" and the Party, as well as about the social ills that plagued capitalist countries, particularly the United States. Countless reports about America's energy crisis, the lack of retirement insurance for working people, economic recessions, spiraling inflation, falling wages, and frequent strikes convinced the Chinese people that, outside of China, people lived in an abyss of misery and suffering and were only waiting to be "liberated" by China.

In those days, Western diplomats were fascinated by China's propaganda

machine. When the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) established diplomatic relations in 1972, David Bruce was appointed America's first ambassador to the PRC, serving in the post from May 1973 to September 1974. The observations he recorded in his diary, which was subsequently published, are a valuable source for historical research.¹⁰ But of course, as a foreigner, Ambassador Bruce could not understand the deeply painful social cost of the measures he recorded.

The bloody repression and control continued until 1978. After that, China's political and economic climate began to change and the government altered its approach to controlling the news media.

Media control since “reform and opening-up” in 1978

This period is divided into two phases: before and after 1989.

PHASE ONE

1978 to 1989—a time of relatively relaxed control of the news media

After 1978, China's social and political environment underwent dramatic change. During the first two years of Hua Guofeng's rule, Deng Xiaoping was determined to gain supremacy within the Party and to clear his political name by disavowing some of Mao's mistakes and the Cultural Revolution (to which his own political destiny was intimately tied). At the time, Deng supported “inner-Party democracy” (allowing a diversity of views and critical voices within the Party), which he used as an ideological tool to combat the “Two Whatever’s” (*liang ge fanshi*) policy endorsed by Hua Guofeng (supporting whatever decisions Mao had made and following whatever instructions Mao had given). In doing this, Deng opened a Pandora's box, signaling a change in Chinese politics and in official control of the news media.

Certain social conditions promoted this transformation:¹¹

- China implemented the Open Door policy. Although aimed purely at facilitating trade with the West, this policy had two additional consequences. First, severe criticism of China's cultural autocracy and poor human rights situation by many nations, particularly the United States, spurred the Chinese government to improve its international image. Second, exchanges with

the outside world enabled Chinese people to see that China was an underdeveloped, one-party dictatorship and that the ones who really needed to be liberated were not the “peoples of the world” but the Chinese people, who had long thought of themselves as liberators.

- Communist Party officials who had suffered attacks and personal loss during the Cultural Revolution developed serious doubts about Mao’s despotic rule and formed an “enlightened faction within the Party. As general secretaries of the CPC, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang were relatively open-minded and helped create the social conditions for a more open expression of public opinion.¹² In particular, Zhao Ziyang’s call “not to oppose liberalization in the sphere of economics” (by which he meant putting a stop to ideological purges) ushered in the “thought liberation” movement of the 1980s.
- During this period, the Party’s “enlightened faction” and “conservative faction” engaged in ideological debate over whether inner-Party democracy ought to be implemented to achieve “collective leadership.” Because Deng Xiaoping lacked Mao’s power and prestige, some senior Party veterans, such as Chen Yun and Bo Yibo, were able to level a certain amount of criticism toward Deng’s policies. Newspapers, magazines, and personalities, backed by senior Party veterans, felt free to participate in the debate, creating the image of “openness” that China’s media enjoyed in the 1980s. Nonetheless, these debates were confined to Party insiders, and throughout this period, Deng Xiaoping employed classic Maoist methods against “heretical” views within the Party, launching the Anti-Spiritual-Pollution Campaign in 1983 and the Anti-Bourgeois-Liberalization Campaign in 1987.

Deng’s attitude toward demands for democracy from outside the Party was much harsher. He ordered Wei Jingsheng’s calls for democracy and the Beijing Democracy Wall movement to be suppressed with the utmost severity.¹³ Having abolished the notorious Maoist charge of “counterrevolutionary crimes” as a means of winning popular support, Deng found two new crimes to pin on democracy activists: “leaking state secrets” and “endangering state security.” Chinese people, having been ideologically indoctrinated, were easily convinced to shun those accused of such crimes.

Media control continued throughout this period, but it was not so stringent, first of all because the number of mass media outlets remained small, and secondly

because the government was still learning new methods of media control in the new political and economic context, as is clear from laws and regulations it promulgated and the frequent documents it sent to the lower levels to rectify ideological deviations. Ideological rectification seldom led to dismissal during this period, and the Ministry of State Security (akin to the Soviet KGB) had not yet infiltrated society extensively. In particular, it had not yet openly taken on the task of ideological control, and with political control relatively lax, intellectuals retained their enthusiasm for politics and were generally sympathetic to the victims of ideological rectification campaigns. Finally, with the Party's "enlightened faction" and "conservative faction" each enjoying powerful backers, inner-Party struggles were not as brutal and bloody as they had been during the Cultural Revolution. All these factors worked to the disadvantage of Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues, while enhancing the public reputation of anyone criticized during an ideological struggle.

During this period, a number of new newspapers and journals appeared, such as *Shijie Jingji Daobao* (*World Economic Herald*), *Xin Guancha* (*New Observer*) magazine, *Wenhui Yuekan* (*Literary Monthly*), *Shulin* (*Treasury of Books*), and *Xuexi yu Tansuo* (*Study and Inquiry*). Because the chief editors of these journals belonged to the "enlightened faction" within the CPC, they often published excellent, open-minded articles with new and original points of view, and for a time these publications enjoyed great popularity. This was also the healthiest period in the history of Chinese Communist rule. Chinese people, newly awakened from the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution, were full of enthusiasm for Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms and were optimistic about the future. Ordinary people had not yet lost interest in politics or turned their attention to making money and keeping up with current fads. Political corruption was only just beginning to rear its ugly head. Journalists who look back today all agree that the 1980s were a rare, golden time for the media under Communist Party rule.

PHASE 2

From the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident to today

The Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 was a historical event that changed the world. It triggered a domino effect that resulted in the collapse of the Communist block, the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of the countries of Eastern Europe from the shadow of socialism.

In China this event produced a different scenario. Tiananmen ripped away the

Communist regime's remaining fig leaves of the "people's government" and the "people's army." Deng Xiaoping and other top leaders blamed Tiananmen on Western bourgeois values, reverted to the half-abandoned politico-ideological education system, and renewed control of the media.

During this period, the Chinese government quickly learned new methods of control and implemented them with greater cunning and subtlety than during the Maoist period. Since 1989, media control has exhibited the following characteristics:

- The government continues to apply provisions from the 1980s but has systematized control and management of the news media through new laws, regulations, and statutory directives.
- The central government has implemented a two-track management system in which leaders of Party propaganda departments wield more power than the heads of news publication bureaus.
- The principle of "handling political questions by nonpolitical means" has been firmly established. People are no longer officially punished for political or ideological "crimes" or "crimes of conscience," and only in the absence of evidence of corruption (genuine or fabricated) is a person charged with "endangering state security," "leaking state secrets," or "incitement to subvert state power." Moreover, sentences are no longer announced publicly, in writing, as they were before the Tiananmen Square incident. Lower-level officials are informed about them by telephone or in closed meetings in order to "prevent bourgeois liberal elements from seeking fame."
- The media used to remain silent on taboo topics, but now adopt an approach of telling lies intermingled with a smattering of truth, which misleads the public more effectively. The small minority of Chinese scholars who persist in speaking the truth find themselves disagreeing more and more with foreign scholars about what is happening in China, largely because foreign scholars have no way of sorting out fact from falsehood. Foreign scholars who praise what is happening in China base their arguments on figures published by the State Statistical Bureau, on what they see during visits to a few big cities, and on research they have conducted in China. But they ignore the fact that official statistics are meticulously filtered and fabricated and that their China-based

research is compromised by geographical restrictions and close surveillance by intelligence agents working for the Ministry of State Security.¹⁴ Foreign scholars are even obliged to submit their data to government departments for inspection before they can take it out of the country (a fact that many are loath to admit, because it goes against the academic values they profess).¹⁵

In short, the China that foreign academics see is the China the Chinese government wants the world to see, and the news they hear is what the Chinese government wants the world to hear. What foreign scholars fail to realize is that, even in the case of a seemingly nonpolitical issue such as China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Central Committee's Propaganda Department and General Office sent a 48-article set of top-secret instructions to lower-level officials, explaining which issues could be discussed and under what specifications. Anyone who failed to follow these secret instructions risked various legal sanctions.¹⁶

Incomplete information gives foreigners a one-sided understanding of China. When misinformation or partial information causes them confusion, they can always justify it with the platitude that "China is too big, too mysterious, too unusual." Very few foreigners realize that their misconceptions are the direct result of the regime's high-handed control of the media. It is fair to say that today's massive flow of foreign investment into China is the Chinese propaganda machine's greatest achievement.

- While imposing tight controls on political expression, the government has relaxed strictures on social activities. In terms of those that are nonpolitical, such as sex, dining out, drinking alcohol, and other leisure pastimes, today's China may be even more freewheeling than some Western countries. But a "Westernized" fixation with materialism and fashion comes at the cost of amoral commercialism and loss of interest in politics. Chinese media outlets have followed this trend, with only a small minority of newspapers and magazines taking a more socially responsible approach and, as a result, struggling for survival under constant political pressure from the government.
- The Ministry of State Security intelligence services openly monitor Internet activity and frequently arrest people believed to have "endangered state security." Before the Internet entered China, the outside world had difficulty monitoring human rights violations arising from government control of the print media. Once Chinese people started using the Internet, the govern-

ment's control of the media and public opinion could no longer be kept in a black box of secrecy, and censorship and control became semi-overt. The Chinese government has since set up the world's most extensive Internet firewall and has spent huge sums of money on the "Golden Shield" (*Jindun Gongcheng*) project to facilitate its surveillance and control of citizens' online activities. Although reports of Internet surveillance in China have shocked many in the international community, they fail to realize that the Chinese government focuses so much energy on controlling the media because it feels compelled to hide the dark side of Chinese society.

Because the government maintains tight control over the media, those outside China know only what the Chinese authorities want them to know. Several times a year, the government proudly trots out record-breaking economic growth and phenomenal GDP (gross domestic product) statistics that excite the enthusiasm of a great many foreign scholars, businessmen, and China experts. But there is a huge gap between the China manufactured by the government-controlled media and what people in China's countryside and smaller urban areas experience in their daily lives. The China that the government presents to the world is a showcase of modernization that represents the living conditions of less than 15 percent of the country's population.

The myth of China's "media reform" in 2003

Many nations throughout the world had high hopes for China in 2003. Although the speech that Hu Jintao ultimately delivered on July 1 poured cold water on expectations of political reform, many scholars and those with close ties to the CPC persisted in their wishful thinking by concocting a new fairy tale: "China's media reform finally gets underway."¹⁷ Their optimism was based on a single, brief item broadcast on China Central Television's (CCTV) evening news on June 20, 2003, and published the next day in one short sentence on the front pages of the major government newspapers: "The Central Committee's Department of Propaganda, the General Administration of Press and Publication, and the China State Post Bureau issued a joint statement prohibiting newspapers and magazines from collecting subscriptions for 2004 before September 2003; only science and technology publications are exempt."

This news item made big waves. The Chinese government had unequivocally

stated that this decision was aimed at “putting a stop to the practice of mandatory subscription quotas to increase circulation.” Because China was showing clear signs of “reform fatigue,” optimistic China watchers felt compelled to reassure the world that this decision was a key element in imminent media reforms that, in turn, were harbingers of political reform under the new administration of President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. This unfounded optimism persisted, even as the people of Hong Kong fought off stringent measures planned under Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law.¹⁸ The historically freewheeling former British colony had engaged in increasing self-censorship since its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, but the Chinese government was determined to completely muzzle Hong Kong residents by implementing harsh laws under Article 23. If the Chinese government was proceeding this way in Hong Kong, why would it give mainland residents more freedom?

Nevertheless, optimism lasted until the beginning of August, when the government publicly issued its Detailed Regulations on Implementing the Central Committee and State Council’s “Notice on Improving Control of the Arbitrary Distribution of Party and Government Publications and the Use of Official Authority to Boost Circulation, Thus Lightening the Burden at the Grassroots and Agricultural Levels” (hereafter referred to as Detailed Regulations).¹⁹ These regulations contained no trace whatsoever of reform, unless taking a step backwards qualifies. The Detailed Regulations included the following stipulations:

“Correct political orientation” determines a publication’s life or death²⁰

In a country with a real market economy, a news organization has an independent legal status, with its survival dependent on its investors and market demand. This principle does not apply in China, where the government decides on the life or death of a media publication. The Detailed Regulations set forth several criteria that newspapers and magazines must meet in order to survive. Based on these criteria, three types of publications are allowed to stay in business:

- The government’s “three newspapers and one magazine”—*People’s Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Jingji Ribao* (*Economic Daily*), and *Qiushi* (*Seeking Truth*) magazine—as well as all provincial Party newspapers and magazines
- Publications with a “correct political orientation” that have not broken a law

or regulation for five years, are in solid financial shape, and whose percentage of paying private subscribers exceeds 80 percent (this only applies to provincial publishing houses)

- Offshoot publications of Party newspapers

Publications that failed to meet any of these criteria were to be closed down or absorbed into Party newspapers. Journalists working in the Chinese media estimate that this reorganization resulted in the disappearance of two-thirds of all news publications.

The reorganization helps the Chinese government control the media in two ways. First, by reducing job opportunities in the media industry, the government can impose greater compliance on those who do secure employment. Second, reducing the number of publications reduces the cost of controlling the media. According to GAPP, 677 publications went out of business by November 2003.²¹

The number of local publications has been reduced in favor of a few national-level Party publications.

The high-sounding reason given for the closure of local newspapers and magazines was to eliminate mandatory subscription quotas, thus reducing the financial burden on local organizations.

In fact, requiring mandatory subscriptions to newspapers and magazines is a peculiarly Chinese phenomenon. By the end of 2002, China had 2,137 newspaper titles and 9,029 magazines, but all essentially got their news from a single source, Xinhua News Agency. According to this system, before many newspapers are allowed to solicit private subscriptions, they must first accept a certain number of mandatory subscriptions apportioned to them by their respective supervising government departments. This applies to even national-level Party publications, such as *People's Daily*, *Seeking Truth* magazine, and *Banyuetan* (*China Comment*), the biweekly official magazine of the CPC. According to official statistics, in 2001, five Party magazines and nine educational magazines had a circulation of more than one million because of subscriptions from the government and from schools and universities. Given the heavy work load of Chinese students, eliminating mandatory subscriptions to these kinds of publications was bound to be a very popular move.

While the full title of the Detailed Regulations suggests that this “media reform” was aimed at eliminating mandatory subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, its actual goal was to eradicate the Party’s media competitors. Part IV, Clause 1, of the regulations stipulates that public funds must be used primarily to subscribe to Party publications, whether published nationally (such as *People’s Daily* and *Seeking Truth*), or on the provincial, prefectural, or municipal level. This regulation leaves propaganda work in the hands of Party publications and reduces the number of publicly funded subscriptions to non-Party publications. Research conducted over the past couple of years indicates that, other than a small number of private magazine subscribers, the great majority of Chinese people still rely on publicly funded subscriptions for their newspapers and magazines.

Press censorship will intensify

The Detailed Regulations stipulate that the current “network of national, provincial, prefectural, and municipal Party newspapers (including newspaper groups)” will be preserved and that the original “administrative levels” will also be maintained (the “administrative levels,” unique to China, are explained in chapter two). Thus, Party newspapers and magazines will continue to monopolize the Chinese media landscape.

Some commentators had great expectations for “media reform” and thought the media would no longer be subordinated to departments-in-charge (*zhuguan bumen*) or to the discipline of Party or government agencies—“heads of households,” otherwise known as sponsoring units (*zhuban danwei*). But the Detailed Regulations only stipulate a separation between departments-in-charge and sponsoring units, while forcing the closure of any publication that fails to convince a department or unit to become its “head of household.”²²

In fact, the Chinese government has never expressed any intention of relinquishing control of the press. The Detailed Regulations state that “after being separated from the sponsoring units, the departments-in-charge will continue to exercise control. In particular, they will keep a watch on a periodical’s editorial stance and overall quality . . . and will strengthen the leadership ranks and appoint and dismiss top managers.” China’s GAPP posted on its website an article entitled “After China’s News Reforms, Only Four National Publications Will Be Left.” It analyzed the 2003 media reforms and concluded: “At first glance, this reform will boost competition in mainland China’s newspaper industry and improve the

quality of news reports, but in fact the Central Committee's Propaganda Department will reach its goal of managing and controlling the press by keeping a close watch on it. According to reports, even after media publications gain status as legal entities, they will still continue to be subject to political checks and news vetting. They will also be required to practice rigorous 'self-discipline.'²³

The clearest proof that reform of the news media is a myth is the repressive laws the government has issued in recent years to muzzle public opinion and restrain popular outcries against injustice. Since the 1990s, the regime has repeatedly charged outspoken individuals with the crimes of "endangering state security," "leaking state secrets," and "incitement to subvert state power." For China's media, self-censorship is not merely a means of avoiding sanctions, but an essential means of survival.

It is worth noting that those who insisted that China was about to implement media reform neglected to mention certain important news stories. First, during the outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), a law was established making the spread of rumors about the disease a crime subject to severe punishment. The crux of the law, which was used to arrest dozens of people, was that any published statement that did not conform to the official version of the SARS outbreak was to be deemed a rumor. That such a repressive law can be openly promulgated in China is a serious affront to the dignity of freedom of the press and of the rule of law. Second, in July 2003 the Shenzhen government, considered by most Chinese to be on the leading edge of reform, issued the Early Warning Work Measures Regarding the Orientation of Publications,²⁴ which established a monitoring system for newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations within the city's jurisdiction. The measures stipulate that news publications be read and evaluated for any "deviation in political orientation" and that those found to have such deviations be issued a "notice of early warning." If a publication receives two notices within one year, it is sent an official criticism via internal circular. If it receives three notices, the director will be disciplined or even dismissed. These measures are intended to "systematize" the inspection and control of the news media.²⁵

The Detailed Regulations can be expected to put an end to many newspapers and magazines. Faced with massive political pressure, the Chinese media will have to exercise considerable restraint to survive. During the privatization of the media market in the 1990s, newspapers and magazines strove to report on a wider range of social issues and tried, within limits, to expose corruption and environmental degradation. In fact they were partially successful in abandoning their role as

“mouthpieces of the Party.” But the Detailed Regulations will push the privatization of China’s media market back to its starting point in the early 1990s.

Reading the laws and regulations issued by the Chinese government is a tiresome but necessary task, because they are a very important source of news. The Detailed Regulations can be downloaded from the Sina.com portal and other websites. If commentators were to read them carefully and stop parroting each other’s words, perhaps the myth of China’s media reforms could be decisively put to rest.

Government Control of the Chinese Media

In its first worldwide index of press freedom, published in October 2002, the Paris-based organization Reporters Without Borders ranked China 138th and North Korea 139th out of a total of 139 countries. In its second report, published on October 20, 2003, the organization announced that of the 168 countries on its list, North Korea ranked last and China ranked sixth from last.

Reporters Without Borders¹

Today no country in the world has more freedom of speech or freedom of publication than China. Much of what is said abroad about freedom of the press, speech, and publication in China has no basis in fact. The government helps media organizations fulfill their social function in accordance with the law and clearly stipulates that no organization or individual may unreasonably interfere with the media's management, newsgathering, and broadcasting operations. . . . Cellular phone text messaging has taken China by storm in recent years and is a fast-developing communication medium.

Liu Binjie, PRC Deputy Director of GAPP²

China is one of the few countries in the world that controls its media, and it does so by means of a very comprehensive system, composed of three elements: (1) a series of laws and administrative regulations; (2) media tracking and management carried out by Party propaganda departments and GAPP³ and its subordinate agencies (this may be called technical control); and (3) ideological (or thought) control.

The law versus the constitution

The Chinese government treats the law as if it were a child's game, and it sees political power as superseding the law. China is a nation ruled by individuals, not by laws, and any government official can override the authority of the law in his or her own jurisdiction. This is just one peculiarity of the "rule of law" in China. Even more outrageous is the fact that many Chinese laws clearly violate China's constitution, the most obvious of which are the laws designed to control and manage the media.

Written with China's international image in mind, the constitution had to grant Chinese citizens "freedom of speech." Article 35 of the Chinese constitution stipulates that "citizens of the People's Republic of China have freedom of speech, publication, assembly, association, protest, and demonstration." Article 42 provides that citizens "have the freedom to engage in scientific research, literary and artistic creation, and other cultural pursuits." But in the social reality experienced by Chinese people, the rights guaranteed by the constitution exist only in name. The constitution stands in stark contrast to a continual series of laws, and administrative regulations and orders, most of which have no parallel elsewhere in the world. They contain all manner of provisions designed to control, manage, and restrain the news media and citizens' freedom of speech. Not one of these laws grants the media any rights.

A wide range of laws is specifically aimed at controlling the media. According to the Chinese government's classification, there are more than sixty such laws, administrative regulations, and norms still in effect (not including local legislation), and many more laws that relate in some way to media control. Below are listed only those laws and regulations directly concerned with controlling the media:

- Regulation on the Administration of the Publishing Sector, 1997
- Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Newspapers, 1990
- Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Periodicals, 1988
- Regulation on the Administration of Audio-visual Products, 1994
- Regulation on the Administration of Film, 1996

- Regulation on the Administration of Printing Enterprises, 1997
- Regulation on the Administration of Radio and Television, 1997
- Notice on Striking Hard Against Illegal Publications, 1987
- Regulation on the Administration of Foreign Journalists and Permanent Foreign News Agencies, 1990
- Regulation on the Administration of Ground Receiving Stations for Satellite Television Broadcasting, 1994
- Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Internet Publications, 2002⁴

These regulations apply to almost all mass media and, at first glance, appear to have more of a social management function. But when combined with the power of Party propaganda departments to control the media, the laws transform the media into nothing more than a huge propaganda machine. That is why the government refers to the media the “Party’s mouthpiece.”

The Chinese government’s tracking and management of the media

The Chinese government calls these laws “management hardware.” Under the countless challenges of China’s ever-changing social situation, the only guidance provided to the media are the limits imposed by these laws and regulations that, if followed, would render the media entirely useless. Therefore, the government has implemented a “two-track” system of managing the media.

The first track is comprised of Party propaganda departments at all levels, which supervise and control the media and instruct them to publish “positive propaganda” about government policies. The second track is administrative management (including examination, approval, and other tasks related to professional management), which is the responsibility of GAPP and the provincial press and publication bureaus.

It is important to remember in this context how very different China’s political system is from that found in democratic countries. Because China is a single-party dictatorship, the Party has penetrated every aspect of political life and

controls and restricts all government action. In political life, Party secretaries are more powerful than government officials.

This parallel system of control employs the following methods:

- All media organizations must register with and be approved by the government and, most importantly, must be under the supervision of a government department.
- The media are incorporated into the ranks of the vast Party and government bureaucracy. In political and remunerative terms, this means that media company managers are Party officials instead of news media professionals, and they work at the behest of the Communist Party.
- Media publications are systematically evaluated.
- The propaganda departments periodically determine the focus of news reports and can issue prohibitory regulations at any time.

People working in the media receive salary and housing benefits linked to their “political behavior” or “political attitude,” and they are subjected to ideological controls. This system is quite different from the ideological control practiced during the Maoist period and could be called a form of “technical control.” Under the guise of the policy of “reform and opening up to the world,” it is now more difficult to discern that the Chinese media have thus been turned into an effective propaganda tool.

Political qualifications for media registration

The government’s most important method of media control is the “media registration and approval system.” All media outlets are required to register with and be approved by GAPP or by provincial or municipal press and publication bureaus. A unique feature of this system is the clear restrictions on who is qualified to run a newspaper. Most importantly, Article 10 of the Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Newspapers stipulates that a newspaper must have a fixed and competent department-in-charge and a sponsoring unit. The department-in-charge must be part of a Party or government system, such as a Party

committee, a government organ, a trade union, the China Youth Corps, or the Woman's Federation. Without a department-in-charge that meets these criteria, a newspaper is not even qualified to apply for a publishing permit.

Requiring publishing outlets to register for a license and to operate under a department-in-charge and a sponsoring unit is the key to the Chinese government's control of the media. In June 1993, the National Press and Publication Administration⁵ issued a Provisional Regulation on the Responsibilities of the Sponsoring Unit and the Departments in Charge of Publishing Units,⁶ which clearly stipulates a sponsoring unit's responsibility to ensure that its publishing outlet adheres closely to the Party line; to examine and verify its news reports and publishing plans; to approve important manuscripts (particularly reports that involve politics or that criticize social ills) and to take on a leadership role should the publishing outlet make any "mistakes."

This regulation makes it impossible to publish a private or non-governmental newspaper, which the Chinese government considers an "anti-Party and anti-socialist counterrevolutionary crime." After Tang Yinsun, of the *Hunan Ribao* (*Hunan Daily*), and four friends proposed to "run a newspaper as people who share the same interests," they were labeled "rightists" and sentenced to more than ten years in prison, during which some of them died violent deaths.⁷ Since the 1978 reforms, this type of "crime" has been changed to "incitement to subvert state power" and "endangering state security," for which many people have been imprisoned. In mid-March 2001, Peking University student Yang Zili, Beijing Broadcasting Institute student Zhang Honghai, Beijing Normal University student Xu Wei, and China University of Geosciences student Jin Haike were detained for setting up a website in which they discussed China's political reform and democratization. In 2003, they were sentenced to heavy prison terms for "incitement to subvert state power" and "endangering state security."⁸

Given the stringency of the review and approval process, official registration numbers for publications have become a very rare commodity in China and are often obtained only by bribing officials. There are three categories of registration numbers: national, local, and "internal circulation" (*neibu*), and each is priced differently. Some people go to great lengths to obtain a registration number, not to publish a periodical themselves, but rather to rent out their registration to others for a profit.

Monitoring news publications and broadcasts

The Central Committee's Propaganda Department and GAPP have instituted a comprehensive media monitoring system that has been steadily perfected since 1989. All propaganda departments—from the central government to provincial, city, and county governments with their own media outlets—have formed teams to monitor and censor the media within their own jurisdiction. “Reading teams” monitor the print media, “listening teams” monitor radio broadcasts, and “viewing teams” monitor television programs. The propaganda department-in-charge appoints a government official to head each team, assisted by a former news media manager or retired official with policy research experience.

Personnel on the monitoring teams must meet three criteria: political reliability, relevant work experience, and a willingness to work and to follow orders. Each media monitor is assigned a certain number of publications, radio programs, or television programs and is required to submit written reports about everything he or she reads, hears, or watches.

Considerable overlap in media monitoring allows the government press and publication bureaus and the Party propaganda departments to monitor each other as well. If a monitor working for a government press and publication bureau fails to detect a “serious political error” that is detected by a monitor working for a Party propaganda department, the government monitor is considered to have been delinquent in carrying out professional duties. If the case is determined to be inconsequential, a warning is given; if it is serious, the monitor is dismissed or even subjected to political sanctions. This overlap makes monitors take their jobs very seriously and adopt the attitude that they would “rather send a thousand innocents to their death than let one guilty person slip through.” Unfair criticism and faultfinding have become inevitable features of the news monitoring system.

Faultfinding can be directed at larger issues, such as a newspaper or magazine's overall “political orientation,” or at smaller issues, such as whether or not a particular article or report contains “errors.” Monitors scour the media for a wide range of transgressions, including miswriting national leaders' names; referring to Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau as foreign countries rather than “Taiwan, China” and “China's Hong Kong and Macau special administrative regions”; creating an image of serious public disorder in China through publication of graphic photographs in reports of murder cases; tainting the image of the Party and the government through “excessive reporting of corruption”; publishing specific statistics on unemployment and industrial layoffs; and focusing too much on indus-

trial accidents and natural disasters and not enough on the government's relief efforts and concern for citizens.

If no "serious political incident" is found, the monitors' reports are compiled by supervisors into monthly reports that are distributed to all media organizations within the jurisdiction. If a "serious political incident" is reported, the media manager is immediately notified that the organization has "committed an error" and that he or she must take appropriate action or punish the culprit. For example, when I worked as a journalist for *Shenzhen Legal Daily*, I once miswrote one of the Chinese characters in Premier Li Peng's name in an article that was to go on the front page. Instead of writing the character *peng*, a fabulous bird of Chinese mythology, I wrote the character *diao*, which means vulture. For this slip of the brush, I was summoned that day to the Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee's Propaganda Department and given a severe reprimand. Every member of the paper's editorial board who was on duty that day was fined and made to write a self-criticism.

The Central Committee Propaganda Department's media monitoring reports have come to be known as the Propaganda Department's Monthly Reprimand. Media professionals regard it as a blacklist. If a media organization is criticized once by name in the Monthly Reprimand, everyone considers it an official warning, like a yellow card in soccer. Criticism on several occasions is a sure sign that a media organization will be shut down.

The media monitoring system implemented in China in the 1990s was different from the former Soviet Union's censorship system, in which news reports were read and censored prior to publication. In the China of the 1990s, the media grew so rapidly and media outlets became so numerous that screening reports prior to broadcast or publication would have required a massive deployment of monitors, greatly depleting government coffers. The government therefore decided to practice postpublication monitoring and censoring, impose a series of penalties to intimidate journalists, and promulgate a variety of prohibitory regulations to elicit a high degree of "self-discipline" (self-censorship) from the media.

"Propaganda discipline" supersedes the law

Even with its vast array of laws and regulations and its strict monitoring and censorship system, the government cannot achieve its goal of absolute prevention and control. With Chinese society undergoing tremendous changes, sudden

“mass incidents” (e.g., protests and demonstrations) are occurring with unprecedented frequency, and the government has been obliged to draft new prohibitive laws to address the situation as it develops.

Before the 1990s, most such regulations were issued in written form, such as the Central Committee’s Decision Concerning the Current Propaganda Policy for News Broadcasts, Newspapers and Magazines⁹ (January 29, 1981) and the Central Committee Propaganda Department’s Rules on News Reporting Work¹⁰ (February 6, 1988).

These prohibitory regulations are very specific. For example, the June 1988 Notice Reaffirming the Requirement for a Special Application Concerning Selected Topics¹¹ stipulates that news reports on certain topics must be reviewed and approved by an appropriate higher level authority. Specifically mentioned “selected topics” include top KMT leaders who governed China before 1949 and Communist leaders who once had greater seniority than Mao Zedong but were subsequently accused of having opposed the Party, including Chen Duxiu, Wang Ming, and Zhang Guotao. The Guidelines on Publishing Books about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,¹² also issued in June 1988, stipulate that dictionaries, books, memoirs, biographies, and documentaries about the Cultural Revolution should “in principle” no longer be published. The aim of this is to prevent more light being shed on a particularly dark chapter in the history of the Communist Party. The April 1990 Notice on Strengthening the Management of the Publication of Books Dealing with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,¹³ issued after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, was aimed at preventing books about Eastern Europe’s democratic transition from reaching China. The title of the May 1990 Regulation Regarding Strengthening the Management of Publications Describing Party and National Leaders¹⁴ speaks for itself.

In the early 1990s, many nations leveled strong criticism against the Chinese regime for its censorship of the news media and suppression of freedom of speech. Because international exchanges had given the Chinese government, in its own words, “a wealth of experience in international disputes,” it was able to respond very shrewdly to the criticism. Instead of making a big show of publishing written regulations to control the media, it began to issue them by “internal” methods, via telephone or in small meetings. Some intellectuals in mainland China say that the ruling Party has now adopted the methods of an underground party in its efforts

to control the media. In a curious twist of history, a number of publishers have printed these prohibitory regulations and distributed them as “internal documents” in order to help their editors avoid “stepping on landmines.”

Having worked in the Chinese news media for a number of years, I am personally familiar with the weekly “expanded meeting of the editorial board” that department heads of every newspaper are required to attend. The main item on the agenda is to communicate the latest directives from the Central Committee and provincial and municipal propaganda departments, as well as the latest prohibitory regulations about penalties meted out to journalists and editors who “commit errors.” Except for some very specific and provisional directives, the “media reporting guidelines” issued by the Communist Party in the late 1990s can be summarized as follows:

1. Journalists are prohibited from writing articles, particularly news stories, for foreign publications (including those in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan). Journalists found to have broken this rule are dealt with severely and may be subject to criminal sanctions.
2. News reports about important social or economic issues must first be reviewed and approved by the appropriate department-in-charge. No negative assessments of national economic policy may be published.
3. To avoid giving citizens the impression that the Communist Party has a serious corruption problem, newspapers must limit the frequency of articles about corruption cases, and must focus such articles on Party and government resolve to combat corruption.
4. Newspapers should publish more articles about police apprehending criminals and fewer articles about murder cases. News articles must not use cases to attack the Party or the government and must withhold details, to help prevent copycat crimes.
5. Journalists must not sensationalize stories about sudden “mass incidents,” and reports about natural and man-made disasters must be closely reviewed to avoid fuelling public anger. When a disaster cannot be covered up, newspapers must all read from the same script, focus their reports on the good work of government disaster relief agencies, and feature exemplary acts,

while avoiding specific casualty figures. All casualty figures and other numbers must be reviewed by propaganda departments prior to publication.

6. During sensitive periods, such as the two weeks leading up to June 4 [the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square incident], newspapers may not publish negative reports about politics, economics, or social issues. [After the government began its campaign of repression against the Falun Gong spiritual movement in 1999, the media were barred from publishing any form of advertising containing birthday greetings on May 21, the birthday of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi.]
7. Newspapers must limit the number of sensational stories about lottery winners and the extravagant spending habits of the wealthy. They must also avoid stories about the socially sensitive issue of the widening gap between rich and poor. Reports about industrial layoffs must focus on the Party and the government's concern for unemployed workers. Newspapers are also barred from mentioning pay raises for government employees, which might pique resentment among the poor and the unemployed.
8. Publishing houses must take care not to publish history books that use the past to criticize the present.
9. Publishing houses and newspapers must not publish books or essays about contemporary history in which certain people [that is, people who were victims of political persecution by the Communist Party] "reverse the verdict of history" in their own case. Biographies and memoirs about China's top leaders must be submitted for review and approval by the Party History Office of the General Office of the Central Committee.
10. Publishers must be circumspect when publishing books about national minorities (particularly Tibetans, the Uighurs of Xinjiang, and the Hui Muslims).
11. In order to avoid giving "bourgeois liberal elements" [the Chinese government's term for liberal intellectuals] a platform for expressing their opinions beyond their home province, organizations are forbidden from conducting cross-regional research.

12. The publication of essays that praise Western interpretations of the news or Western values is forbidden.
13. When reporting on major government policies, newspapers and magazines must rely on Xinhua News Agency bulletins. Reports that mention the top leadership and their relatives must be submitted for review and approval.

Because the Central Committee's Propaganda Department is a Party work department, its directives cannot be called "laws" or "regulations" but are instead termed "propaganda disciplines (*xuanchuan jili*)."¹⁵ When government or Party officials transmit Party policy, they often speak of "allowing freedom of speech and enforcing propaganda discipline," meaning that people are free to level criticism in private (an improvement over the Maoist period, when even private criticism was a punishable crime), but that anything published in the media is subject to Party propaganda discipline. Although not expressed in a legal format, propaganda discipline plays a much bigger role than any law, regulation, or administrative rule in assessing, accepting, or rejecting news reports. It makes the "freedom of speech" guaranteed by the Chinese constitution sheer fiction and a taboo element of "bourgeois culture."

As China's social problems have grown worse in recent years, the Chinese government has imposed ever tighter controls on the media, with new regulations issued almost every week and the current total almost impossible to enumerate. The biggest complaint voiced by news professionals is that, although they are continually being told to observe propaganda discipline, enforcement of these disciplinary directives is inconsistent. While one newspaper might report a story without raising official eyebrows, another newspaper could cover the same story and run into political trouble with an overzealous media monitor. As a result, it is anyone's guess which regulations issued by the Central Committee's Propaganda Department several years ago are still in effect.

The ambiguity of propaganda discipline works greatly to the government's advantage by keeping journalists fearful of being blamed for anything they write. The goal is to make news workers keen to understand what the higher authorities expect of them and to exercise greater "self-discipline" (self-censorship). Compared with the 1980s, when the Chinese media played a significant role in the public sphere, today they are increasingly becoming Party mouthpieces under the twin policies of enforcing propaganda discipline and "punishing a few as a warning to many."

“Punished in accordance with the consequences”

Prior to the start of the 16th Communist Party Congress, in November 2002, the Central Committee’s Propaganda Department issued a series of stern warnings to the media to “do as you are told and observe discipline.” It specifically listed what could and could not be reported and in which instances news coverage had to conform to official Xinhua News Agency bulletins. It also enumerated a series of areas that were strictly out of bounds to the media. At the same time, the Propaganda Department and GAPP telephoned the chief editors of every major news outlet, telling them exactly what to report and how. Many editors received several telephone calls a day, and some complained that they “may as well not report anything, then there would be no problems.”

Two particularly blunt disciplinary warnings were issued. The first read, “Party members who work as editors or reporters are strictly prohibited from violating political discipline. Any Party member who goes against regulations in a news report or broadcast, stirs up hatred against the government, upsets social stability, spreads political rumors, tarnishes the images of leaders, propagates heretical beliefs or foreign religions, opposes major Party or state policies, divulges secrets to foreign media, or harms China’s territorial integrity shall be disciplined, expelled from the Party, or punished in accordance with the consequences.” The second disciplinary warning reaffirmed that editors and journalists who were Party members must exercise great caution with respect to foreign media and organizations. Any Party member found guilty of writing a news report that violated regulations, was used by a foreign organization, endangered state security, harmed China’s reputation or interests, or divulged secrets to the foreign media was to be disciplined or expelled from the Party.¹⁶

This was the first time since the reforms were launched in 1978 that the Party had made propaganda discipline violations punishable “in accordance with the consequences.” Strict enforcement of this disciplinary rule against news reports regarded as causing a strong public reaction, social unrest, or other “harmful consequence” has cowed Chinese journalists into silence.

Even the policy of tolerating different opinions within the Party, which the Communist Party had adopted for a time, was explicitly criticized at the National Conference on Propaganda Work, held January 9–12, 2002. For example, in December 2001, Pan Yue, deputy director of the Economic Restructuring Office of the State Council (and son-in-law of Liu Huaqing, former vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission), published an article in the *Shenzhen Tequbao*

(*Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Daily*) arguing that China ought to revise its outmoded definition of religion. Pan was criticized because his views differed from those expressed by Jiang Zemin at a National Work Conference on Religious Affairs, held around the same time. The top CPC leadership issued a statement insisting that “to avoid causing confusion and spreading misleading information, articles by high-ranking officials such as Pan Yue’s must be reviewed [prior to publication].”¹⁷

The authorities detest bad news and often dismiss journalists who publish negative news reports. In October 2003, Hao Jianjun, a journalist for the *Ordos Radio and Television Guide*¹⁸ in Inner Mongolia was fired for writing “too many negative articles.” Hao’s colleagues attested that he took his responsibilities as a journalist very seriously and that his investigative articles exposing social ills were greatly appreciated by local citizens.¹⁹ It is clear from the titles of his articles that he did not focus on politics, but rather on some of the social ills that affected the lives of his readers: “A Journalist Investigates a Fraudulent Employment Agency,” “A Journalist Investigates a ‘Venereal Disease Expert’” (exposing a quack who defrauded patients who had sexually transmitted diseases), and “When Will the Dense Smoke on the Banks of the Hantai River Dissipate?” (criticizing several factories that polluted the environment).

“Unified news coverage” of major incidents

After Jiang Zemin became CPC General Secretary, Party propaganda departments insisted that everyone “sing the same tune.” What this means in practice is that the propaganda departments periodically issue directives about important policies and political events. To prevent media “mishaps” (that is, the voicing of different opinions), central and local authorities must hold frequent news propaganda work meetings to “set the tone.” For instance, about three months before every Party conference, government departments begin to unofficially communicate the latest Party policy from the top leadership. They instruct the propaganda departments to “report that this conference is one of great unity, with everyone’s thoughts in harmony” and to give reports about the conference at specified times and locations, using Xinhua News Agency bulletins as models. Here are some recent examples:

- In March 1999, during and after the National People’s Congress (NPC) and

the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the media were explicitly instructed to explain the positive implications of amending the constitution. They were to report that the Party and the government were increasing protection of the private sector of the economy, but they were not to mention "the inviolability of private property," which might sound like a "bourgeois" concept.

- After Jiang Zemin's July 1, 2001, speech on the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the CPC, propaganda departments instructed all media outlets to report that the entire country was studying Jiang's speech. They specifically told print media what kinds of stories to write, on which page to print them, and when to publish certain topics for discussion. These discussions were meant to solicit the participation of "representatives from all fields," including well-known people from academia, commerce and industry, and the democratic parties. However, nothing written by any of these individuals could deviate from Party policy.
- After Jiang Zemin proposed his slogan of the "Three Represents" (*Sange Daibiao*), the Chinese media had to publicize a "study the Three Represents" movement, which became a very important element of Chinese political life.²⁰ The media were compelled to urge the nation to study the Three Represents, even during the SARS outbreak. The slogan was so ubiquitous that it was evoked satirically throughout the country: "In the spirit of the Three Represents, all items are 40 percent off!" (Shanghai) and "We butcher our animals in accordance with the Three Represents!" (Tongren County, Guizhou Province).
- After China launched the Shenzhou-5 manned spaceflight mission in October 2003, the Central Committee's Propaganda Department issued a three-point order to the media: (1) Report international congratulations and high praise for Shenzhou-5; (2) In covering the launch, emphasize its profound and far-reaching significance for China's political, economic, and military development; (3) make the Chinese public understand that the only people who criticize Shenzhou-5 are those who oppose China, oppose the Communist Party, or lack a basic understanding of space exploration. At the same time, the Chinese government blocked overseas Internet news reports that it considered unfavorable.²¹ Because of the government's effective news filtering efforts, the great majority of Chinese people were unaware of criticism

voiced against Shenzhou-5 or that this criticism affected China's foreign relations in subtle ways.

By “setting the tone” for the media, the regime not only eliminates dissenting opinion, it also presents the Chinese people with a false image of their society. News reports on the Three Gorges Dam project are typical. Non-governmental organizations in China and throughout much of the world are opposed to the project, but the Chinese public hears only approving views. Even voices of opposition within the Party have been silenced. For example, when the resolution for construction of the Three Gorges project was put before the NPC, 177 delegates voted against it, 644 abstained, and 25 did not register a vote,²² but this was not reported anywhere in the Chinese media. The Chinese people saw only articles stating that the NPC endorsed the Three Gorges Dam project, along with essays written by experts and professionals proclaiming the project's “enormous significance.”

A conference report entitled “National News Managers Use Their Individual Strengths to Give Better Publicity to the Three Gorges Project” offers a rare glimpse into how the Party propaganda departments “set the tone.” The conference was sponsored by the Information Office of the State Council (the highest government department in charge of press work), the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry (responsible for issuing news reports to foreign press), and the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (responsible for non-print media). Participants included *People's Daily*, Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television, Central People's Broadcasting Station, and China News Agency. In fact, all the top government-run media outlets were represented. Acting as “hosts” of the event were Lu Youmei, chairman of the state-run China Three Gorges Development Corporation, and his deputy managers Li Yong'an, Wang Jiazhu, and Guo Taoquan. The following excerpt from a newspaper report illustrates the Chinese government's tone-setting efforts:

The third Three Gorges Project News Propaganda Symposium was held at the Three Gorges Dam area on October 26–29, 2001. The managers of all the principal national news organizations who attended the symposium were unanimous in their view that the Three Gorges project presents an image of socialist China and that every news organization is duty-bound to use its respective strengths to offer China and the world comprehensive coverage of the project.

Responding to international criticism of the project, Lu Youmei, chair of the China Three Gorges Development Corporation, said, “These past nine years of con-

struction work have demonstrated that investment in the Three Gorges project is not a bottomless pit, its construction is not an endless marathon, and the quality of work is not shoddy. The Three Gorges project is a rational engineering project that employs cutting-edge technology. It is the crystallization of fifty years of wisdom accumulated by the Chinese people and generations of experts.”

During the symposium, representatives of *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Economic Daily*, and *Gongren Ribao* (*Workers' Daily*) said they must look at the project from the best possible angle and give good publicity to every stage of the project. Representatives of Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television, Central People's Broadcasting Station, and China News Agency declared that they will continue to use their respective strengths to dispel doubts about important issues, carefully draw up plans, and focus on propaganda work. They said that news coverage of the project's technological and scientific aspects, as well as questions to do with equipment and quality, should be interpretative, empirical, and written in popular and easy-to-understand language. Other media organizations echoed these statements.²³

The phrases “dispelling doubts” and “interpretative and empirical reporting” illustrate how the Chinese government indoctrinates the public with its official version of the news. The key to dispelling doubts is to counter international “rumors.” The key to empirical reporting is to publicize the positive experience of building the Three Gorges Dam. Since the collapse of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe in 1989, China and North Korea are among the very few remaining dictatorships still capable of “unifying public opinion.”

The political education and thought control of media professionals

In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping temporarily relaxed government control of the media in order to rally support for his political reforms. There was even talk about speeding through legislation to safeguard journalists' personal safety and their right to report news. But control tightened again after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident and has increased almost yearly since then through an official policy of “proclaiming the main theme and maintaining social stability.” China currently has nearly two hundred news research organizations and more than forty professional journalism periodicals that have published more than two thousand monographs on mass communications. The great majority of these works argue that the Chinese Communist government's control of the media is

perfectly rational and reasonable. As the government puts it, “the task of journalism studies is to provide newsmakers with the correct theoretical underpinnings to practice their profession.”²⁴

Xinwen Zhanxian (*News Frontline*) magazine, published by the Press and Publication Administration (now GAPP), has always played the role of pointing journalists and other members of the media in the right political direction. Political guidance generally takes the form of newspaper or magazine columns (called “essays by commentators”). For example, the government’s now classic formulation of the “Four Benefits” was first defined in 1993 in a *News Frontline* column entitled “Understand the Goal and Steer in the Right Direction.”²⁵ The key section of the essay stated: “In order to help strengthen and improve the Party’s leadership of the news industry, the media must maintain unanimity with the Party Central Committee in reporting all major national principles and policies. They must not ‘push the envelope’ or engage in ‘pluralism.’ News media reforms must contribute to strengthening the Party’s leadership of the news media; they must never weaken this kind of leadership, much less shake it off.”

To show how much importance the Central Committee’s Propaganda Department attached to this statement, on May 6, 1993, *People’s Daily* recommended it to its readers and sent an “internal document” about it to newspaper offices throughout the country. The same old tune is played year after year. In fact the Annual Journalism Conference meets for no other reason than to spout government policy. Sooner or later, most Chinese journalists grow accustomed to exercising considerable “self-discipline” and toeing the Party and government line.

China’s Fourth Annual Journalism Conference, in 2001, is a case in point. Without exception, every speaker talked about the Three Represents and about serving the Party and socialism. Anyone listening to the speeches presented at this conference would have been unable to tell whether this was meant to be a journalism conference or a Communist Party propaganda meeting. Nor was it possible to tell whether the “experts” and “scholars” in attendance had any professional expertise in journalism other than their readiness to extol Party capabilities. Even in the conference panels devoted to news media reform, the main topic of discussion was not the independence and accuracy that ought to define journalism, but how to follow CPC propaganda guidelines.²⁶

Every journalist working in the Chinese media is required to write a personal annual work report, the first section of which deals with “political thought.” Here they must regurgitate slogans, such as “Uphold Marxism and Mao Zedong thought, diligently study Deng Xiaoping theory, ardently love our leaders, and

keep in step with Party line.” Whenever a new Party leader takes office, journalists are required to write the name and mention the leader’s theories in their annual work reports. Until recently, citation of Jiang Zemin and his Three Represents was required; beginning in 2003, the name of Hu Jintao also had to be included.

The consequence of this ideological education is that all those who work in the media, particularly government officials, have become unapologetic spouters of lies. Liu Binjie, deputy director of GAPP, spoke the words quoted at the head of this chapter just as the Chinese government stepped up arrests of anyone posting Internet essays that criticized the government. For his hypocrisy, Liu drew ire and scorn from Internet users: “Government official writes page after page of lies,” Chinese people “live in a society full of deceit and falsehoods,” “the reason people are dishonest is that the government openly deceives and lies to them.” The most extreme posting stated that “the people of China have been raped by the government.” Another critic parodied Liu Binjie’s shameless words in a posting entitled “The Latest Quotations of China’s Government Ministers.”

The life and times of China’s propaganda czars

As noted above, in the relationship between the Chinese media and the government, it is the government that sets the rules of the game and deals the cards. The news media have no choice but to operate under strict government control. This is also the main reason why the content of China’s thousands of media outlets is invariably dull.²⁷ The Newseum, a museum dedicated to journalism in Arlington, Virginia, includes a big display of the front pages of that morning’s newspapers from all across America. The wide variation between them vividly reflects the ideal of freedom of the press. In China, on the other hand, thousands of newspapers all look equally drab and echo each other’s insipid language.

But no matter how tightly the Chinese government controls the media, it never seems to be satisfied. This is clear from the fate of the chief overseers of ideology in China—the directors of the Central Committee’s Propaganda Department. Since the founding of the PRC more than half a century ago, the Propaganda Department has been headed, in succession, by eleven men: Xi Zhongxun, Lu Dingyi, Tao Zhu, Yao Wenyan, Zhang Pinghua, Hu Yaobang, Wang Renzhong, Zhu Houze, Wang Renzhi, Ding Guangen, and Liu Yunshan. It is a thankless position to which no one aspires. Following is a brief sketch of the careers of China’s propaganda czars.

Xi Zhongxun was a veteran Communist Party member who fought with great loyalty during the Party's early struggle for power. He was appointed director of the Propaganda Department in 1952 and retained his post through numerous political movements, including the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. But in 1962, he was associated with Li Jiantong's historical novel *Liu Zhidan*, which Mao Zedong repudiated as "reactionary." Mao declared that "using novels to promote anti-Party activities is a great invention," and accused Xi of leading an anti-Party clique together with Jia Tuofu. Xi was thrown in prison and languished there until the post-1979 reforms. More than one hundred other high-ranking Communist officials were also imprisoned because of this novel.

Lu Dingyi, quoted in chapter one regarding his relentless purges, was the PRC's first director of propaganda. He was replaced by Xi Zhongxun in 1952 and took over the post again when Xi was imprisoned in 1962. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Lu Dingyi's Propaganda Department was accused by Mao of being a "Yama's Court."²⁸ Mao decreed that Lu was a member of the "Peng-Luo-Lu-Yang Anti-Party Clique,"²⁹ and Lu and his wife Yan Weibing spent the long years of the Cultural Revolution in prison, hovering between life and death.³⁰

Lu's statement is worth comparing with an article he published in *Xinhua Ribao* (*Xinhua Daily*), predecessor of Xinhua News Agency, because it illustrates that no political party is better at telling lies than the Communist Party of China. In January 1946, three years before the Communist takeover of power, when the CPC and its allies (the eight major democratic parties mentioned in chapter one) were continually criticizing the KMT for publishing newspapers full of falsehoods, Lu Dingyi wrote:

There are two kinds of newspapers: The first are the newspapers for the masses, which give the people truthful news, stimulate their democratic thinking, and help them become wiser. The other kind are neo-authoritarian newspapers, which spread rumors, close off people's minds, and make them stupid. The former are beneficial to society and the nation. Without them, civilization is unimaginable. The latter poison society, humanity, and the nation. They kill the people through subtle means.

The newspapers the Communist Party published in the years that followed its assumption of power were precisely the poisonous publications that Lu Dingyi criticized during the early years of the revolution.

When Lu Dingyi's luck ran out, Mao personally chose Party veteran Tao Zhu to run the Propaganda Department, but within half a year Tao was purged along

with Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Less fortunate than Deng, Tao died in prison of hunger and disease, his fate as cruel as Liu Shaoqi's.³¹

From Tao Zhu's imprisonment in December 1966 until October 1976, no one nominally held the post of director of the Central Committee's Propaganda Department, but Yao Wenyuan (one of the members of the Gang of Four, along with Mao's wife Jiang Qing) exercised *de facto* control over propaganda and the mass media.³² In October 1976, after the overthrow of the Gang of Four, Yao was sent to prison and labeled a "literary prostitute" by Deng Xiaoping's new government.

The Party still adheres to Mao's four principles: (1) propagandize Party policy; (2) force the media to act as the Party's mouthpiece; (3) unify public opinion; and (4) ban objective journalism. But since the beginning of the Deng Xiaoping era, political struggles within the Communist Party have not been as bloody as they were during the Maoist period. Consequently, although Propaganda Department directors still get no thanks from the government or the people, they no longer need to fear imprisonment or merciless punishment, only dismissal. For example, Deng Xiaoping was very unhappy with Zhang Pinghua, who headed the Propaganda Department for fourteen months during Hua Guofeng's administration, but only demoted him.³³ Hu Yaobang's tenure as director of the Propaganda Department was brief, but he was relatively open-minded and was later promoted. His political fate after becoming chairman of the Party was also extremely unfortunate, but that story is outside the scope of this book.³⁴

The subsequent propaganda directors, Wang Renzhong (appointed in 1980), Deng Liqun (appointed in 1982), and Wang Renzhi (appointed in 1987), were well-known old-guard leftists. Deng and Wang Renzhi, who were two of the "Four Great Leftist Kings," stubbornly imposed Maoist ideology and were very unpopular.³⁵ As the "enlightened faction" began to gain influence in the early 1980s—the most liberal period since the launch of the reforms—Deng Xiaoping dismissed Wang Renzhong. Wang's successor, Deng Liqun, pursued an extreme leftist line and was intensely disliked by the Party's "enlightened faction." He was replaced as director of the Propaganda Department in 1985 by Zhu Houze, a member of that faction.³⁶

Zhu Houze won wide acclaim for his policy of "relaxation, tolerance, and lenience" (*kuansong, kuanrong, kuanhou*) but was driven into retirement in 1987, when Hu Yaobang lost the Party chairmanship. Because Zhu had criticized the government many times in the past, the Propaganda Department placed him under a gag order.

Wang Renzhi, Zhu's successor, quickly made a name for himself as a hardliner for his slogan "Get tougher on both material civilization and spiritual civilization." But Wang himself was later voted out of office in a secret Central Committee ballot.³⁷

When Ding Guangen was appointed director of the Propaganda Department in 1992, he declared that his policy would be to contain the spread of bourgeois liberalization and pornography; what he actually contained, however, was the spread of Western-style democracy, while pornography proliferated.

Since the reforms were launched, China's propaganda czars have come and gone like the shadow figures in a revolving lantern. Ding Guangen held on to his post longer than anyone else by winning the favor of Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin through his ultra-conservative policies and expert elucidation of the leadership's intentions.³⁸ Ding's predecessors, Deng Liqun and Wang Renzhi, prided themselves on their knowledge of "Marxism-Leninism theory" and were keen to match wits with Chinese intellectuals and critique Western "bourgeois liberal democratic ideology." For their part, Chinese intellectuals seized the opportunity to publicize their views in debates with these propaganda czars. Ding Guangen could not comprehend any of this and simply banned all debate he considered harmful to the government and the Party. His name lent itself to popular Chinese puns about his obsession with monitoring and censoring (*ding*) all dissenting opinion, locking up (*guan*) dissidents, and tracking and controlling (*gen*) the media. During his tenure as propaganda czar, hundreds of media outlets were closed down or purged.

Although the fates of China's propaganda czars have varied greatly over the preceding decades, the examples above make it clear that the post of director of the Central Committee's Propaganda Department has brought its incumbents neither the opportunity for promotion nor political honor.

The Political and Economic Control of Media Workers

***Our system does deprive all counterrevolutionaries of freedom of speech. . . .
But in an era in which classes and class struggle still exist both at home and
abroad, we must not allow counterrevolutionary elements to use freedom of
speech to further their own counterrevolutionary aims.***

Mao Zedong¹

***When the KMT was in power and issued a press law, we Communists studied
every clause to seize on its shortcomings and take advantage of its loopholes.
Now that we are in power, I think it would be better if we did not have a press
law, in order to prevent others from taking advantage of our loopholes. Without
a press law, we can take the initiative. If we want to control something, we can
control it.***

Chen Yun, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau²

In democratic countries, the professional standing of a news organization is determined by its circulation or ratings, social credibility, and influence. But in China, a media organization's standing depends on the "administrative rank" (political status) it is assigned by the government, the purpose of which is to ensure effective control of the media.

The institutional framework of media control, examined in chapter two, would not, by itself, provide the government with such an iron grip. The Chinese government is able to exact obedience from the media because it subjects media workers to a dual system of political and economic control. In political terms, each media organization is incorporated into the system of state-run institutions and assigned an administrative rank. All media personnel are considered govern-

ment employees and assigned the rank of “cadre.” In economic terms, because they are ranked as cadres, media workers enjoy the same material benefits as all government officials, including salary, healthcare, housing, and travel expenses. This ranking also carries certain political privileges, such as access to classified documents. These benefits are a tremendous enticement and help establish a very effective system of domination.

The media’s political pyramid

In Chinese official jargon the media are referred to as “partially funded state-run enterprises.”³ The funds for a media outlet’s start-up costs and for its day-to-day working capital (including salaries and administrative expenses) are provided by the government. The government also hires, ranks, and pays the staff as state employees.

Those in charge of Chinese media organizations are appointed in accordance with the same strict ranking system used for Party and government officials. At the top of the media hierarchy are *People’s Daily*, *Seeking Truth* magazine, CCTV, and Xinhua News Agency. These organizations are run by ministerial (*zhengbuji*) government officials, who are usually handpicked by the Central Committee leadership, jointly vetted by the Central Committee’s Organization Department and Propaganda Department, and then formally appointment by the Organization Department.

On a lower level come media organizations such as the highly influential *Southern Weekend*, part of the Southern Daily Group (*Nanfang Ribao She*),⁴ which is the official organ of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee. The Southern Daily Group is ranked as a prefectural-level (*zhengtingji*)⁵ organization and *Southern Weekend* as a municipal-level (*zhengchuji*) organization.

Because the government accords the same status and importance to propaganda work as it does to organization work (employing and deploying cadres), officials working in top-ranked media organizations occupy a very special position in Chinese politics and exert an influence far greater than other officials of the same rank. For example, Wang Ruoshui and Hu Jiwei, former deputy editors-in-chief of *People’s Daily*, played very influential roles in Chinese political life and benefited greatly from their special position.

Other media executives are also divided into different ranks and appointed by government personnel departments and Party Committee organization depart-

ments. In 1995, the National Press and Publication Administration issued a Provisional Regulation Regarding the Conditions to Be Met by Directors and Chief Editors of Newspapers and Magazines,⁶ which laid out in great detail the political requirements demanded of news media managers. However, not all of the rules for appointment are spelled out in this regulation. For example, media managers with a department-level rank (*chuji*) or below must first be vetted by their unit, which then submits a report to the personnel department for approval. On the other hand, managers above the department-level rank must first be vetted by the organization department of a Party Committee, and if it considers the candidate qualified for the post, the appointment is made jointly by the Party Committee and the personnel department. Furthermore, before appointing someone to run a media outlet, organization departments and personnel departments must ask a local propaganda department's opinion about the candidate's "political reliability." This recruitment method ensures that the people in charge of news organizations are not answerable to the public but only to the Party and the government (their actual employers). Meeting the Party and the government's expectations is the only prerequisite for holding onto their job or being promoted.

Journalists and editors must also have a good political record. If one of their news reports breaks a rule, they are liable to punishment commensurate with the seriousness of the offense. The heaviest administrative penalty is dismissal or having entered into one's file the statement that "this person is unsuitable for cultural dissemination work." With this political blemish on one's record, a person can never again be employed by a media or cultural organization, in line with the guiding principle of Chinese Communist political culture that "those who do not obey, do not get to eat."

The function of rank

The Chinese practice of determining a media organization's political status through administrative rank would seem preposterous in democratic countries, but in China it is a fundamental aspect of political culture. However, administrative rank has a different effect on people working in the news media than it does on government officials.

For example, a government official with a higher administrative rank than a particular media outlet can stop that outlet from publishing any reports that are not to the official's advantage. Journalists, however, will be treated differently by

local officials depending on the administrative rank of their news organization. *People's Daily* and Xinhua News Agency, which are Central Committee–level news organizations, have correspondents stationed in every province and directly administered municipality whose responsibility is to monitor the conduct of local officials. They are allowed to use the method of “internal consultation” to send dispatches to their editors, and they have the authority to act as public watchdogs over local governments throughout China.

For this reason, local officials dare not cause offense to *People's Daily* and Xinhua correspondents and do their best to keep good relations with them. To encourage them to write more good reports and fewer bad reports about their government, local officials take pains to provide the correspondents with material benefits and creature comforts, such as free housing and red envelopes with gift money (bribes) at the Lunar New Year. Most locally stationed correspondents of Central Committee–level newspapers are acutely aware that it is in their interest to remain on good terms with the local government and to know what is expected of them. They are careful not to go beyond certain boundaries, and they frequently write articles commending the local government and the locality's social and economic development. Occasionally, they write a couple of “news” reports about the arrest of some minor corrupt official,⁷ to show that the local government “is honest in performing its duties and takes good care of the people.”

Journalists reap obvious benefits from this arrangement. People familiar with the inner workings of *People's Daily* report that in the early 1990s, when private cars were still a rarity in China, the newspaper's compound was full of private cars owned by its journalists. They certainly did not use their salaries to buy them. Unlike *People's Daily* and Xinhua, however, CCTV's popular program “Focus” (“*Jiaodian Fangtan*”) does not have locally stationed correspondents; therefore, local officials are unable to cultivate relationships with them and have to “handle” them by other means that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

It should be clear at this point that media organizations with high administrative rank have the power to act as public watchdogs. In the 1990s, many metropolitan newspapers that were managed by provincial newspapers took advantage of the fact that government officials from cities under provincial administration had no jurisdiction over them, and they rushed to get the scoop on stories that city-level newspapers dared not publish. They thus won a big share of the metropolitan newspaper market and experienced something of a boom.

In one notable example, in April 1998, the Shenzhen City Women's Hospital seriously infected more than 120 women and children with dirty and defective

syringes. The Shenzhen city government immediately prohibited all local newspapers from reporting the incident, in order to “protect the image of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.” At a subsequent trial, the local court sided with the hospital. Not one of Shenzhen’s dozen newspapers, two television stations, or ten news magazines reported a word about this serious incident. For two years, the victims wrote letters of complaint to the government without so much as a single reply. Finally, they appealed to *Southern Weekend* and *Nanfang Dushibao* (*Nanfang Daily*), two provincial-level papers published in Guangzhou. Taking advantage of the fact that they were not under the jurisdiction of the Shenzhen city government, the two papers exposed the incident. The city government, furious but unable to stop the papers from publishing their reports, appealed to Huang Liman, deputy secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee (as well as former deputy mayor of Shenzhen and a former colleague of Jiang Zemin’s at the Ministry of Machine Building). Huang ultimately directed *Southern Weekend* and *Nanfang Daily* to cease their aggressive investigative reporting, but by then the negative publicity had forced the city government to order the local court to amend its ruling.⁸

Local officials merely need to pick up the telephone or say the word, and media outlets within their jurisdiction will report whatever they tell them to report. This is called “an official one rank above crushing the one below him.” Hebei Television Network once aired programs that portrayed Wuji County as a model of economic development. Unaware of what was really going on in Wuji County, television stations in other provinces simply parroted these programs. Some time later, CCTV used a hidden camera to reveal that this model county was, in fact, China’s biggest collection and distribution center for fake medicines.⁹ In January 2003, the Chongqing city government in Sichuan Province ordered all city government departments to appoint special news spokespersons to ensure that everyone would make “unified statements” when announcing news to the public. In other words, news reports had to be based on the same official version. The Chongqing government was quite clear in stating that the aim of this new measure was to ban the publication of negative reports that might tarnish the city’s image.¹⁰

The Chinese government’s concern with image has never been about improving government conduct but, rather, about manipulating public opinion and glossing over its own misconduct. For example, Shenzhen is said to be “on the leading edge of reform and opening up to the world,” but in fact, the city government exerts pressure on the local news media to publish reports portraying the

government as hard-working and concerned for the people. Reporters at news outlets in Guangzhou sneer at Shenzhen newspapers, which they do not consider proper news media. But the political reality of China is that, with the exception of the special case of Guangzhou (and even there, journalism is losing its vigor), almost all local media have been reduced to producing hack work to curry favor with the government.

A number of unwritten rules have been established to handle media organizations beyond the control of local governments. For example, whenever a journalist working for a media outlet from another province wishes to interview someone, regulations require a letter of introduction from his or her department. Otherwise, the official the journalist is investigating can confidently refuse the interview, call the police to physically restrain the journalist, and fire off a message of protest to the equivalent official in the journalist's home province. The Chinese say that "among brothers, harmony is precious" (meaning that all officials had better be on good terms), and local governments do whatever it takes to ensure that the media in their jurisdictions do not stir up trouble.

For example, Guangdong Province's *Southern Weekend* has drawn the ire of officials from other provinces for exposing corruption cases throughout China. Every March, when provincial Party Committee secretaries and governors from every province meet in Beijing, they invariably and unanimously call the leaders of the Guangdong Party Committee to account: "Don't you have any corruption in Guangdong Province? Why don't you report on your own corruption and quit sticking your nose in our business? What makes you the world's policeman, like the United States?" In 2000, the case of a crime syndicate boss who had the government of Rui'an City, Zhejiang Province, in his pocket reverberated across the nation. The scandal was exposed by the secretary of the local disciplinary inspection committee, but because many high-ranking officials were implicated, the Zhejiang provincial government prohibited all local media from covering the story and lobbied the central government to squelch it. When Yang Haipeng, Shanghai correspondent of *Southern Weekend*, looked into the case, the Central Committee's Organization Department ordered the Guangdong Propaganda Department to prohibit the publication of stories about the matter.¹¹

Chinese journalists sum up their public watchdog function as follows: First, it is relatively easy for a higher-level news organization to investigate and report on lower-level government departments or organizations, and investigative journalism is easier for national news media than for local media outlets. Second, it is much easier to criticize an official who has already been accused of corruption by

the central government than an official who is secure in his position—“It is easier to hit a dead tiger than a live one.” Third, it is much easier to criticize a corrupt minor official than a corrupt powerful one—“It is easier to swat a fly than to hit a tiger.”

Although the Communist Party has repeatedly professed the need to “strengthen the news media’s public watchdog function,” this is nothing more than a public relations exercise. Even a prestigious national television program, such as CCTV’s “Focus,” encounters many problems when it tries to fulfill this role. It will do a journalist no good to quote chapter and verse of the laws and regulations to prove that the interviews conducted are perfectly legal. Nor does it matter how many hurdles must be overcome to bring a case of corruption to light. The reality of the Chinese media is that, after many years of practicing “self-discipline” (self-censorship), the editor is very likely to kill the story before publication. In the unlikely event that a criticism in perfect accord with the facts does get published, it will usually fail to meet the expectations of the propaganda department and will, consequently, be officially censured because of its “adverse social effects.” Judging whether a news story has good or bad social effects is not up to the journalist, the newspaper, or the readers, but rather to propaganda officials. When a journalist repeatedly breaks rules, higher authorities conclude, “This journalist is unsuitable to work in the news media and has to be dismissed. From now on, no news organization may employ this person.” In serious cases, journalists are thrown in prison. Chapters seven and nine examine the price Chinese journalists and newspapers have paid for reporting the truth.

CASE STUDY

CCTV’s “Focus”

“Focus” is CCTV’s flagship primetime current affairs program. Former premier Zhu Rongji’s¹² repeated comment that it was his favorite program only added to its popularity. Because “Focus” lacks locally based correspondents and often needs local leads for its investigative reports, officials get very nervous whenever its journalists plan to visit the area to conduct interviews. Even when the reporters go undercover, they are subjected to interference during the news-gathering process and just before the program is about to be aired. Details regarding incidents of this sort are described in an article published by *China Youth Daily* in 1998:

In Beijing's media circles, everyone knows that there are often two groups of people standing in line at the front and back gates of CCTV headquarters. The first group, at the front gate, are ordinary people from all over China who want to give "Focus" journalists the scoop on their hometown. The second group, at the back gate, are government and Party cadres staying in Beijing hotels who have come to lobby "Focus" not to air reports critical of their localities.¹³ [. . .]

There is no comparison between the official lobbyists at the back gate and common people lining up at the front gate. Although the common people hold petition letters marked with red thumbprints¹⁴ from dozens or hundreds of ordinary people back home, they tend to be few in number. According to reliable sources, the official lobbyists are much more welcome than the common people. Quite apart from their lobbying and public relations skills, people staying in fancy hotels have a natural advantage.

The material gulf between the two groups hardly needs mentioning. Tears are the only weapon the folks at the front gate have to get through to the "Focus" producers. The official lobbying teams, on the other hand, often come bearing expensive "local products" and reams of cash.

But the official lobbyists also have other means of persuasion. Because "Focus" footage is evidence everyone can see, it is difficult to claim that it is inaccurate. The lobbyists, therefore, use other arguments to respond to negative reports about their localities. The first thing they say is that the local Party committee and government take the problems reported by "Focus" "very seriously" and that the Party secretary and local mayor are "personally" looking into the matter. Then they remind everyone how hard the local authorities had to work to achieve "stability and unity" in the locality. Sometimes they throw in the argument that "our secretary was transferred here not long ago" or "our government officials have just been replaced." In private, the leaders affected by a report will often say that the petitioners are good-for-nothings just looking for an excuse to stir up trouble, and that they have half a mind to go to Beijing to set the record straight. [. . .]

Generally speaking, the lobbyists sent to Beijing are footmen doing the work of more powerful officials back home. Before and during these lobbyists' trips to the capital, higher-ranking officials work the phones to pull strings with personal contacts and higher-ups in various organizations. [. . .]

I have been told by several Party officials that the reason "Focus" is lobbied so aggressively is that many top leaders make a point of watching this program. How many ordinary television viewers watch "Focus" is not a major concern for the lobbyists. Evening papers and city papers also have a lot of readers, but the Party offi-

cials are not that bothered if they publish an occasional article that criticizes them. What matters to them is preventing the central leadership from hearing anything that makes them look bad.

Southern Weekend is currently the best newspaper in China. It has a circulation of more than one million and it publishes many censorious reports, some of which are much more hard-hitting than anything aired on radio or television. But the officials mentioned in these articles do not spend nearly as much time and energy trying to stop them as the targets of “Focus” reports do. The officials provoked into action by *Southern Weekend* reports are far less numerous and less influential.

The government officials who have been “interviewed” by “Focus”—as well as many who have not—would dearly love to get rid of this program, because it is a symbol of public scrutiny and public opinion. “Focus” is like a fishbone lodged in their throats, and the only way to make it palatable is to turn it into mush.¹⁵

This article reveals a number of things. First, local officials care less about “public opinion” than about their image with the top leadership. Second, politics interferes with every aspect of media work. Third, it is public knowledge that, in China, corruption has seeped into the news media.

“Focus” has managed to survive despite extraordinary difficulties. What it does or does not broadcast is not determined by its producers, but rather by the ability of local officials to sway central government officials. There is a popular satirical ditty about the Chinese media that goes, “I am the Party’s dog and I squat at the Party gate. When the Party tells me to bite someone, I go ahead and bite. When the Party tells me to bite some more, I bite some more.” This ditty first started making the rounds in Beijing news circles to poke fun at “Focus.” Among ordinary people, it is common knowledge that local officials pay off those in charge of “Focus” to stop them from broadcasting certain reports. This case illustrates how utterly ineffectual the Chinese media are as public watchdogs.

It is worth noting that the situation has only gotten worse in recent years. Not only are the national media unable to act as independent guardians of the public interest, but journalists who are simply trying to do their jobs have to fear for their lives. To cover up the truth, local officials often prohibit cadres and ordinary people in their jurisdiction from giving interviews without their permission. They frequently send in police and public security agents to close off crime scenes, and even hire criminal gangs to deal with journalists. Luo Hancheng, a reporter for CCTV, has written a book recounting the misadventures of investigative journalists working with hidden cameras in China.¹⁶ Although Luo’s account does not

deal with high-ranking local officials and the criminal underworld, it does show how perilous the newsgathering process has become for Chinese journalists.

In 2002, *News Frontline* magazine published an article about what happened to a group of *People's Daily* journalists who tried to cover the Nandan coal mine accident in Guangxi Province.¹⁷ The *People's Daily* reporters had to be escorted by armed plainclothes police to reach the scene of the accident. The article describes the collusion between local officials, mine managers, the criminal underworld, and local bullies to stop the truth from being told about the Nandan coal mine accident. Had it not been for the privileged political status of the *People's Daily* reporters, they would never have received police assistance.

If even *People's Daily* and CCTV journalists, who have a particularly privileged political status, encounter so many difficulties when trying to expose the darker sides of society, one can well imagine what it is like for ordinary journalists.

“Internal (*neibu*) Documents” and the Secrecy System

Closed societies rely on rumor. When normal sources of information are unreliable, people turn to friends, family, coworkers, and even casual contacts. Word of mouth, particularly from someone who knows someone who knows someone whose sister-in-law works in a government office, is more likely to be believed than what politicians in the mass media say.

Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*¹

Many aspects of internal Soviet life were regarded as state secrets. No comprehensive information was published on crime, suicide, accidents, structural inadequacies in government services, the extent of poverty, public catastrophes (such as air crashes), and certainly no criticism of the policies or personal deficiencies of the political leadership was allowed.

David Stuart Lane, *Soviet Society Under Perestroika*²

The two epigraphs cited above describe what life was like in the former Soviet Union. What is now history in Russia remains a reality in China. To this day, Chinese people rely on rumors in order to understand their country's political situation, particularly behind-the-scenes personnel changes and power struggles among top leaders. News about a Chinese leader's health, widespread poverty in the nation, public policy, official corruption, natural disasters, industrial accidents, or anything else the authorities may consider potentially harmful to the state's image, is deemed to fall within the scope of state secrets. Moreover, it is often impossible to tell whether news released to the public is true or false.

The unreliability of publicly available news sources has conveyed a highly dis-

torted image of Chinese society to those outside China. American, European, and Japanese scholars do not ordinarily rely solely on rumors and hearsay to investigate and reach conclusions about their own countries’ political and economic landscape, but when conducting research on China, foreign scholars blithely base their conclusions on information from sources that, essentially, constitute a rumor mill. They typically assume that the reliability of the rumor is proportionate to the political status of the source. Once while I was visiting Japan, a group of Japanese scholars told me a piece of news about Sino-Japanese relations that they had heard from a certain source through a certain channel. Based on this information, they concluded that if a certain person were in power in China, war was unlikely to break out between the two countries.

Who can blame foreign scholars for latching onto whatever information they can get, from any available source, when the Chinese government controls almost all the news? Much of what is considered public information in democratic countries is treated as “state secrets” in China. What constitutes a state secret is open to arbitrary interpretation and can be extended to include almost anything. As a result, since the 1990s, an increasing number of people have been sentenced for “leaking state secrets” and “endangering national security.”

Anything can be a state secret

All countries have state secrets, but the Chinese regime is distinguished by the vast range of news secrecy laws and regulations and the frequent imprisonment of journalists for “leaking state secrets.”

Regulations on guarding state secrets in the news media

China has a large number of state secrecy laws and regulations. This chapter examines only the main laws and regulations relating to the news media.

The Chinese government’s Regulation on Guarding Secrets in News Publishing,³ containing four chapters and twenty-three articles, was issued in 1992. It establishes four major principles:

1. News organizations are responsible for monitoring their compliance with secrecy regulations and for submitting news reports to the relevant higher

authorities for examination and approval. According to the National Press and Publication Administration (now GAPP), of the cases in which news media have been charged with divulging state secrets, 90 percent result from failure to submit an article to the competent authority for examination and approval. To address this matter, the government introduced the parallel systems of preventive measures, on the one hand, and investigation and punishment, on the other.

2. News involving state secrets may only be communicated via internal (*neibu*) channels. All newspapers edit “internal reference materials” for limited distribution under varying titles that usually include the word “internal.” Having read many such materials over the years, I have never found them to contain genuine state secrets. They are invariably about unemployment and industrial layoffs, Taiwan-invested enterprises owing their workers back wages, clashes between local officials and farmers, foreign enterprises mistreating workers, incidents of public protests, police beatings, traffic police demanding bribes, and the like. In other words, “internal reference news” is simply negative news the government does not want to see published publicly.
3. Journalists must obtain prior approval to conduct interviews for stories involving “state secrets.” For example, to visit a prison, public security bureau, law court, or procuratorate (prosecuting organ), a journalist must first obtain approval from the persons to be interviewed and then must submit the manuscript to the appropriate authority for examination and approval. Under these circumstances, it is very difficult for journalists to report the facts of a situation.

For example, in China everyone knows that Chinese prisons are terrible places and that prisoners are deprived of all rights. But in the Chinese media, China’s prisons are portrayed as a model to the world, where prisoners affectionately address their guards as elder sister, mama, elder brother, or uncle. Throughout China there have been cases of officials described in (officially approved) news reports as “honest and hardworking,” only to be arrested on charges of corruption a few days later. In the West, this would signal the end of a journalist’s career, but in China no journalist has ever been criticized for such reporting, because it is generally understood that very few journalists can avoid writing this sort of rubbish.

4. The system under which authorities issue news is laid out in the Regulation on Guarding Secrets in News Publishing. It stipulates that, to prevent the spreading of rumors, the central state organs and local government agencies must release information to news organizations in accordance with “propaganda specifications” (as specified by relevant official regulations). Press conferences are held mainly for the distribution of press releases (or Xinhua News Agency bulletins), which journalists are expected to quote verbatim. They may not take liberties with the official version, much less go digging for “state secrets.”

Chinese people (including residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan) can be charged with three specific crimes under the broad category of divulging state secrets: “leaking state secrets,” “passing state secrets or classified information to overseas parties,” and “illegally obtaining or being in the illegal possession of state secrets.” An enormous number of people are tried on these charges. The Supreme Court’s Annual Report does not publish the number of people convicted of this crime, perhaps because the Chinese government also considers it a “state secret.” However, *Selected Documents on News Publishing Work*,⁴ a book used as a reference in journalism schools and departments in charge of media outlets, cites some examples and figures. In 1994, for example, more than three hundred serious “state secrets” cases occurred in China.

A number of well-known cases illustrate that these so-called state secrets amount to nothing more than what is generally considered normal news in democratic countries. Gao Yu, a former deputy editor-in-chief of *Jingjixue Xiaoxibao* (*Economics News*) and who was imprisoned for participating in the pro-democracy movement of 1989, is a case in point. After her release from prison, she made her living writing freelance articles. Gao Chao, an acquaintance of Gao Yu’s who worked in the General Office of the Central Committee, spoke with her in some detail about the case of Yu Zuomin in Daqiu Village, near Tianjin.⁵ Gao Yu subsequently published an article on the case in *Jingbao* (*The Mirror*), a Hong Kong-based magazine to which mainland Chinese readers are allowed to subscribe. This was certainly not a case involving state secrets, because Yu Zuomin’s story had already been splashed all over the Chinese media. Nonetheless, in October 1993, the Chinese government sentenced Gao Yu to ten years in prison for “leaking state secrets,” and Gao Chao was sentenced to thirteen years. Gao Yu suffered untold hardships in the years that followed. After her release from prison, UNESCO awarded her the Guillermo Cano

World Press Freedom Prize to help her resume a normal life. The Chinese government vehemently protested the award as “interference in China’s internal affairs.”⁶

In short, the Chinese Communist government defines “state secrets” very broadly⁷ and, since the 1990s, has used the charge of “leaking state secrets” as its weapon of choice against intellectuals and dissidents who are critical of the state.

Having found this weapon particularly effective, in 2002 the Chinese government prepared to apply it and other state security laws to Hong Kong, which until then had enjoyed a favored status under the “one country, two systems” formula. Laws similar to those on the mainland were to be enacted under Article 23 of Hong Kong’s Basic Law, which targets subversion, leaking state secrets and separatism. After half a million Hong Kong people took to the streets in protest in July 2003, a proposed antsubversion bill was withdrawn.⁸

Without comprehensive access to relevant information, it is impossible to determine whether all cases of “leaking state secrets” have really involved any state secret, but it is clear that a growing number of people are being convicted under this charge, including many who are innocent. The cases below illustrate how the broad and arbitrary application of laws regarding state secrets results in miscarriage of justice and persecution of socially conscious journalists and activists.

CASE 1

The case of Xu Zerong⁹

Xu Zerong (a.k.a. David Tsui) was born in mainland China of parents who were senior cadres in the Communist Party. After obtaining a PhD in international relations from Oxford University,¹⁰ he lived for several years in Hong Kong. Before his arrest, he was director of the *Shehui Keshe Jikan* (*Social Sciences Quarterly*) in Hong Kong and an associate research professor at the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Social Sciences. He was arrested in June 2000 on charges of “illegally passing classified information to overseas parties and running an illegal business operation.” In December 2001, the Shenzhen City Intermediate People’s Court sentenced him to thirteen years in prison.

Xu’s charge of “illegal business operation” stemmed from his printing books and periodicals in China, a common practice among Hong Kong publishers because of the lower printing costs on the mainland. The Chinese government has always turned a blind eye to the practice because of its benefits to the region’s

economic development, but it provided the Chinese authorities with a convenient pretext to arrest and convict Xu Zerong.

The more serious charge was “illegally passing classified information to overseas parties.” The authorities alleged that, in 1992, Xu Zerong gave the director of the South Korean Institute for Strategic Studies two “internal reference” publications from the 1950s, *Kangmei Yuanchao de Jingyan Zongjie* (*Summary of Experiences in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea*) and *Chaoxian Zhanzheng Dijun Ziliao Huiji* (*Collection of Materials on Enemy Forces During the Korean War*), for which he received a payment of US\$2,500. The Ministry of State Security did not even have this evidence against Xu until they searched his home and found a letter in which he asked his wife in Hong Kong to send him the two “internal reference” publications.

The trouble is that these documents were never state secrets. Article 14 of the Implementation Measures for the Law on the Protection of State Secrets (issued in 1990) establishes three grades of classification for state secrets—top secret (*juemi*), highly secret (*jimi*), and secret (*mimi*)—and stipulates that secrecy protection shall apply for time periods appropriate to circumstances.¹¹ The *Regulations on Time Limits for Maintaining the Classification of State Secrets* are even more specific. Article 3 states that, in the absence of specific regulations to the contrary, “top secrets” may not remain classified for more than thirty years, “high-level secrets” for more than twenty years, and “secrets” for more than ten years.¹²

The two “internal reference” publications that formed the basis of the charge against Xu Zerong were published fifty years ago, were never classified as secret by any government agency, and do not fall under any of the three grades of secrecy outlined above. In order to make the charges against Xu stick, the authorities ordered the Guangzhou Military Region State Secrets Commission to issue a temporary determination that these documents were “top secret documents not yet declassified.” Clearly, the Chinese government has an entirely free hand to call anything a state secret.

According to people familiar with the case, the real reason for Xu Zerong’s harsh sentence was an article of his entitled “The Malaysian Communist Party’s Secret Radio Station in Hunan,” which was published by the Hong Kong–based regional weekly *Yazhou Zhoukan* (*Asia Weekly*) on June 26, 2000.¹³ *Asia Weekly* usually hits Hong Kong newsstands two to three days before the official publication date. Xu was arrested in his home in Guangzhou on June 24, the day after this particular issue of the magazine went on sale in Hong Kong.

Xu began looking into the story in May 2000, after hearing rumors of a secret

radio station run by the Malaysian Communist Party on Mt. Sifang near Yueji-qiao, Yiyang Prefecture, Hunan Province. On May 26 he traveled to the area and spent two days taking photographs and interviewing someone who used to work at the radio station. This formed the basis for the article and photos published by *Asia Weekly*.

The Chinese government's support of armed Communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia during the Maoist period has been widely reported by the international press, but never acknowledged by the Chinese government. China's complex relationship with the countries of Southeast Asia has made the activities of those years a sensitive issue, and Xu's article struck a raw nerve. The authorities were particularly incensed because the article came out just as Jiang Zemin was planning to visit Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei at the end of 2000,¹⁴ and they ordered Xu's immediate arrest. Xu had already drawn the attention of China's state security agencies because of a number of articles on the Korean War he had published overseas, and he was made to pay for these old missteps along with the *Asia Weekly* article.

Xu's punishment for scholarly research caused deep concern internationally among academics. Several Hong Kong scholars noted that many Chinese materials classified for "internal distribution" are available at the Service Center for China Studies of Chinese University of Hong Kong—a fact I can confirm through personal experience. Hong Kong scholars often engage in academic exchanges with Taiwanese institutions and receive research fees from them. If the Chinese authorities choose to designate these research institutions as "spy organizations," scholars who consult "internal reference" magazines and books for their research can be accused of having "leaked state secrets."¹⁵ Three hundred and twenty scholars from Europe and America signed an open letter demanding Xu's release, but their call has so far been ignored by the Chinese authorities.¹⁶

CASE 2

AIDS as a "state secret"

In recent years, AIDS has spread to all of China's thirty-one provinces and major cities, and the UN has warned that China could follow in Africa's AIDS-ravaged footsteps. This is no secret to those outside of China, but in China, AIDS cases are still treated as state secrets.

Henan has the highest AIDS rate of any province in China. At an internal meet-

ing in 1992, the director of the Henan Provincial Public Health Department, Liu Quanxi, announced he was establishing a large number of blood collection stations in an effort to develop the service sector. Noting that 80 percent of Henan’s 90 million residents were farmers, Liu projected that one to three percent of them would be willing to sell blood once or twice a year, creating needed income for themselves and a marketable blood bank worth hundreds of millions of *yuan*.

After obtaining funds from local health bureaus, Liu had his younger sister set up a blood collection station in his home county of Yancheng. Six more collection stations were soon established in Xiping, Shangcai, Xihua, Xuchang, Taikang, and Weishi counties, where they were known as the “Liu family’s blood collection stations.” When officials from other parts of China saw how profitable blood collection stations were, they began to emulate Henan’s example. Soon, blood collection stations were set up by local governments, companies, and military units throughout China, and people began to speak of the “blood plasma economy.”

Although ostensibly a measure to alleviate rural poverty, blood sales were of less benefit to farmers than to corrupt officials and “bloodheads” (*xuetou*)—blood-marketing entrepreneurs who were, typically, relatives of the collection station managers. Shuangmiaoji Village in Tacheng County, Henan, one of the localities seriously hit by the AIDS epidemic, was the main blood collection area for the Tianjin Hematology Research Institute. The institute paid 240 *yuan* per 400 milliliters of blood serum, but the farmers received only 40–50 *yuan*; the remaining 200 *yuan* was pocketed by the bloodheads. One farmer had his blood drawn eighty times.

Because the bloodheads were interested only in making money, they mixed blood from many individuals of the same blood group, extracted the plasma with plasma separators, and reinjected the pooled red blood cells into the blood sellers, causing a massive spread of AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Many farmers who became infected with AIDS received no treatment, died, and left behind “AIDS orphans.” To make matters worse, HIV-infected blood from Henan was distributed all over China. Infected blood and blood products were found in Shanghai and Beijing and in Anhui, Henan, Hebei, and Hunan provinces.

To keep their jobs, local officials concealed what was happening from their superiors, as well as from the public, and decided that the AIDS epidemic was a “state secret.” In October 1999, Yu Chen, a journalist for *Henan Kejibao* (*Henan Newspaper of Science and Technology*), received a tip and began to look into the spread of AIDS in Henan. On January 18, 2000, Yu broke the story of Henan’s AIDS villages in Sichuan’s *Huaxi Dushibao* (*Huaxi Capital Daily*). Yu Chen was subjected to enormous pressure after this and was twice fired from his job. In the

end, he was forced to leave Henan Province and make a living as a freelance journalist.¹⁷ The world first took note of the AIDS epidemic in Henan when the *New York Times* began to cover it in August 2000. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, more than one million people are infected with AIDS in Henan Province.

Among many others who have been persecuted by the Chinese authorities for reporting on AIDS is Dr. Wan Yanhai, who was dismissed from the Ministry of Health for expressing concern about the spread of AIDS. After losing his job, Wan set up an AIDS information NGO, Aizhi Action Group (*Aizhi Xiangmu Xingdong*), and came under surveillance by the Bureau of State Security. He was arrested in Beijing on August 24, 2002, and charged with “leaking state secrets” after posting the Henan Public Health Department’s classified “Report on AIDS Prevention and Treatment throughout the Province” on the Internet. Wan Yanhai was released a month after his arrest,¹⁸ but in October 2003, Ma Shiwen, deputy director of the Henan Health Department’s Office of Disease Control, was arrested for “leaking state secrets.” He was suspected of having sent Wan Yanhai the health department’s report.¹⁹

The international community began to get an inkling of the seriousness of China’s AIDS epidemic only after the blood-selling scandal in Henan was exposed. By then, AIDS had spread beyond Henan Province. Journalists reported a serious outbreak in the Shangluo District of Shaanxi Province and were subsequently investigated and prosecuted.

In the spring of 2000, five farmers from Shangzhou City, Shangluo District, who had been suffering from a “strange illness” resistant to prolonged treatment, arrived in Xi’an. One of them, a woman who had received a blood transfusion during childbirth, died later that year. Tests revealed that all had contracted AIDS. Initial follow-up investigations revealed that more than ten thousand farmers in Shangluo District had sold their blood.

The Shaanxi health department took the reports coming from Shangluo District seriously enough to instruct personnel who were going home for the Lunar New Year to conduct blood tests on people who had sold their blood, as well as on their spouses and children, in seven counties. Members of the public were told that these were tests for hepatitis C. Random checks of the tests indicated an infection rate of four percent, far exceeding that of some African countries. Alarmed by the seriousness of the situation, the Shaanxi provincial government terminated the random checks while carrying out no AIDS prevention and treatment work among tens of thousands of potential victims. Throughout the world, it is gener-

ally thought that efforts by local bureaucrats to cover up the truth contribute to the spread of the virus. In this respect, the duplicity of Chinese bureaucrats is not only a crime against the Chinese people but a crime against all of humanity.

Zhao Shilong, a journalist for *Yangcheng Wanbao* (*Yangcheng Evening News*) in Guangzhou, and several journalists for *Shanxi Ribao* (*Shanxi Daily*) and *Sanqin Dushibao* (*Sanqin Daily*), decided to provide society with a true picture of the AIDS situation. The journalists traveled across seven mountainous counties in Shangluo District and ran great risk to interview people whose knowledge of AIDS was minimal. They were spurred on by their sense of social responsibility. In March 2001, the Guangzhou media reported the results of investigations on the spread of AIDS in Shangluo District. When Premier Zhu Rongji read these reports, he immediately wrote an official response, causing a political earthquake in Shangluo government circles.

The victims of this quake, however, were not the Shaanxi officials who had deceived their superiors and defrauded those below them. By 2001, most local officials were no longer afraid of Zhu Rongji’s criticism, because they realized his days in politics were numbered. Following the U.S. spy plane incident in April 2001, Chinese nationalism was running high.²⁰ Soon after this incident, Zhu signed, on behalf of China, a series of agricultural cooperation agreements with the United States and other countries to pave the way for the PRC’s accession to the WTO. Although Zhu was acting under orders when he signed these agreements, the top leadership made sure the Chinese public would perceive this as his personal decision. Their intent was to use the Internet to accuse Zhu of having betrayed China’s interests.²¹ From that point on, Zhu’s instructions and official comments went no further than the paper on which they were written. Consequently, his instructions about how to deal with the AIDS crisis in Shangluo District were ignored—with disastrous results that would ultimately cause widespread outrage.

Zhao Shilong, the *Yangcheng Evening News* journalist in faraway Guangzhou, was beyond the reach of the Shaanxi provincial Party committee and government, which were able to butcher only their own flocks. The Public Security Bureau’s Law and Order Department, which, under current propaganda regulations, has no jurisdiction over newsgathering activities, twice summoned local journalists Du Guangli and Wang Wu for interrogation, demanding, “Who supplied the leads for conducting interviews? How did you meet Zhao Shilong? How does he gather news and conduct interviews under cover?” The Shaanxi provincial government was actually, as the Chinese saying goes, “killing a chicken to frighten the monkey,” that is, punishing “insubordinate” journalists as a warning to others.

The Shaanxi provincial government lost no time in implementing its decision at the lower levels. The director and deputy director of the *Sanquin Daily* features section were dismissed from their posts, and two journalists were fired from the paper on accusations of “revealing state secrets and violating the state secrets law concerning unauthorized publication of information on serious epidemics.” Because an internal regulation of the CC Propaganda Department stipulates that such people may no longer work in the media, this ended the journalists’ careers.²²

The Law on the Protection of State Secrets, upon which local officials based the penalties they imposed, contains seven provisions defining the scope of state secrets and their grades of secrecy:

1. Secret issues regarding significant decisions in national affairs;
2. Secret issues regarding the activities of national defense building and the strength of the armed forces;
3. Secret issues regarding diplomatic activities and foreign affairs and the obligation of maintaining secrets with respect to other nations;
4. Secret issues regarding the economic and social development of citizens;
5. Secret issues regarding science and technology;
6. Secret issues regarding the maintenance of national security and the investigation of criminal activity;
7. Any other issues that the state secrets protection agencies determine should be protected as state secrets.

Article 4 of the Implementation Measures for the Law on the Protection of State Secrets states that any matter that would give rise to any of the following consequences, if it were to be divulged, falls within the scope of a state secret and a specific secrecy grade:

1. If it jeopardizes the ability of the national government to maintain stability and defend itself;

2. If it affects the integrity of the nation’s unity, the unity of its peoples, or its social stability;
3. If it harms political or economic interests of the nation with respect to other nations;
4. If it affects the safety of any national leader or foreign dignitary;
5. If it hinders important national safety or public health work;
6. If it causes a reduction in the effectiveness or reliability of any measures to protect state secrets;
7. If it weakens the nation’s economy or technological strength;
8. If it causes any national organ to lose its ability to exercise its legal authority.²³

None of the above provisions, from the Law on the Protection of State Secrets or the Implementation Measures, specifically stipulates that AIDS falls within the definition of “state secret,” illustrating how the Chinese government applies laws and regulations according to its own whims. Even when accused of violating non-existent laws, defendants often have no way of proving their innocence under the system of justice as currently administered in China. The accused can consider themselves very fortunate if they are not thrown in prison.

It is testimony to the sorry state of present-day China that the government can, with impunity, falsely accuse a few journalists with social consciences of having violated the Law on the Protection of State Secrets and related regulations, when their only crime is to have surmounted overwhelming difficulties to investigate and report on the spread of AIDS.

CASE 3

The frame-up of Shanghai lawyer Zheng Enchong²⁴

Six months after his arrest, on October 28, 2003, the Shanghai Second Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Shanghai lawyer Zheng Enchong to three years in prison on charges of “illegally providing state secrets to entities outside of China.”

As has become common practice in recent years in trials involving crimes of conscience, members of the public were barred from the courtroom during Zheng's trial. Notably, the day after the trial, the Shanghai government published an article entitled "Behind Zheng Enchong's Laurels: A Self-styled Anti-corruption Hero" in its mouthpiece, *Jiefang Ribao* (*Liberation Daily*). The article accused Zheng of having corrupt morals, boasting that he was a "famous lawyer" posing as a man of moral integrity and swindling the public for personal gain. Throwing Zheng in prison was not enough; they also had to use the state's propaganda machine to impugn his character.

The sentence provoked international outrage. Chinese people of conscience also felt deep shame. When the government of a great nation boasts daily of its advances and sinks so low as to frame an innocent man, one cannot help wondering if there is any difference between its actions and those of a crime syndicate—one with the law on its side, which makes it even more terrifying. The only reason Zheng Enchong was thrown in prison was that he stood on the side of justice and told the truth in a case involving high-level political corruption—the case of Shanghai tycoon Zhou Zhengyi.

In 2003, many throughout the world were shocked to learn of the arrest of Shanghai's richest property tycoon, who had been ranked eleventh on *Forbes* magazine's list of the one hundred richest Chinese in 2002. The inside story would turn out to be even more shocking. Zhou Zhengyi was, by all accounts, a man of great ability, with direct access to the highest authorities. He was well connected to Liu Jinbao, head of the Shanghai branch of the Bank of China, and Jiang Zemin's son Jiang Mianheng was a frequent dinner guest at Zhou's home. Zhou was arrested because of his involvement in an urban redevelopment project in Shanghai's Jing'an District. In late May 2002, he secured a contract to redevelop an area measuring 17.64 hectares, the city's biggest urban redevelopment program to date, which involved the forced relocation of twelve thousand residents.

In chapter two of my book *The Pitfalls of Modernization*, "The Land-enclosure Movement of the 1990s," I examine in detail China's shady real estate deals. I cite numerous examples of urban residents whose homes were bulldozed and who were forcibly relocated. Since the late 1990s, cities throughout China have projects underway to tear down old neighborhoods, forcibly relocate their residents, and redevelop the land. All too often, residents are given such inadequate compensation that they cannot afford new housing and end up homeless and destitute. Since the year 2000, violent standoffs between displaced residents and real estate development companies have occurred frequently throughout China.

Because the property developers enjoy the backing of local governments, residents have no recourse to protect their rights, and often protest with their own lives. In 2003, for example, there was a self-immolation protest following a forced relocation in Nanjing; other displaced residents have set themselves ablaze in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The Shanghai standoff was larger than most, but it was only one of thousands of protests by residents all over the country who were forced from their homes.

Zhou Zhengyi and the residents affected by his project entered into a serious dispute over the amount of compensation they were offered for their forced relocation. Resident representatives went several times to the Jing’an district government, the Shanghai municipal government, and the central government in Beijing to appeal for help. When Chinese and international media began to cover the story, the government turned it into a political issue, detaining protesting residents and harassing Zheng Enchong, the lawyer representing them. Between ten and twenty police officers were posted around Zheng’s apartment building and in front of the elevator. His telephone, fax, and computer were monitored, and they frequently malfunctioned, as a result. The people who organized the residents’ appeals were also harassed.

The CPC’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection had already discovered that Zhou Zhengyi played a key role in a case involving the Shanghai branch of the Bank of China. The social reverberations of Zheng Enchong’s efforts to help the residents of Jing’an sue for adequate compensation ultimately led to Zhou’s downfall. After he was arrested on May 26, 2003, Zhou confessed to crimes implicating other property moguls and Shanghai government officials of every level. To preempt more unpleasant surprises, on May 30 the investigators sent Zhou to Beijing for further interrogation. Needless to say, this affair caused a political earthquake in Shanghai. Ten days after Zhou’s arrest, Zheng was also taken into custody. When the foreign media gave considerable publicity to the story, the Chinese press also began to cover it, but they were immediately ordered by propaganda departments to stop publishing reports about the situation. International human rights organizations tried to help Zheng, but that did not stop the Chinese government from conducting a revenge trial against him.

The Chinese print media abided by Party propaganda discipline. Although they had published some reports about the affair, once they were muzzled, it was as though the matter had never occurred. But the Internet was abuzz with the story, and the displaced residents used every available channel to publicize what happened. Shanghai citizens are, collectively, the most educated in China. Many

began learning all they could about international human rights norms and seeking support from human rights organizations and from public opinion abroad. After Zheng Enchong's trial, the Shanghai press was ordered to publish numerous editorials that confused truth with falsehood and defamed Zheng. But an altogether different account was spread on the Internet. Defense attorneys Zhang Sizhi and Guo Guoting took the lead by publishing their plea on behalf of Zheng at his first trial, and explained that they had "remained silent for a variety of reasons," a phrase typically used in China to refer to political pressure.

The defense attorneys noted that the two documents forming the basis of the public prosecutor's indictment were classified as state secrets after the fact, to fit the indictment. The attorneys noted further that the only reason Zheng had been imprisoned on false charges was that he helped an innocent and powerless group of people obtain justice, and exposed rampant corruption and violations of civil rights by local authorities. They concluded that the sentence imposed on Zheng was a disgrace to China's judicial system and a mockery of justice and truth.

On November 5, Jizhe Jiayuan (Journalists' Homestead), a website run by Shanghai journalists, published statements written by six journalists from outside Shanghai who personally covered this case. According to them, *Liberation Daily* and other official newspapers forced a distorted version of events down readers' throats. After the Zhou Zhenyi scandal broke on May 28, 2003, *Ershiyi Shiji Jingji Baodao* (*21st Century Economic Report*)—a well-known Hong Kong weekly—and a Mandarin-language Hong Kong television station interviewed Zheng Enchong, the lawyer most familiar with the details of the case, for more than two hours. But because of political interference from China, none of these interviews were published. After the Journalists' Homestead website published the reporters' statements, it seemed that Zheng's telephone never stopped ringing. Journalists from across China and all over the world called to interview him about the displaced residents in Shanghai's Jing'an District. Given how the incident unfolded, the logical conclusion is that the most immediate reason the Shanghai authorities arrested Zheng was to stop him giving interviews to the Chinese and foreign media and to prevent him from revealing any more facts about Zhou Zhengyi's case.

As for the accusation that Zheng obtained and tried to transmit outside the country documents classified as state secrets by the Shanghai State Secrets Bureau, in any democratic country the two documents in question would be considered ordinary news items. The first was a report about a Xinhua News Agency reporter who was roughed up while trying to interview residents who were forcibly relo-

cated from the Yanpu district in Shanghai. The Xinhua report was labeled “internal reference.” The other “state secret” was a report of how the police dispersed a peaceful sit-in demonstration by a group of Shanghai factory workers.

The six journalists asked whether the reporter or the workers would have been guilty of leaking state secrets had they used a telephone or a fax to report their experiences abroad. The journalists also explained that, after June 6, some of them were visited by “departments concerned” (in the Chinese context this means state security agents), and some were put under surveillance and investigated. On one occasion they were also forced to stop publishing. In the months leading up to October 28, when the Shanghai Second Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Zheng to prison, and particularly while the Shanghai press impugned his personal integrity in “mass criticism” articles, the journalists felt obliged to honor their professional ethics, regardless of the consequences.

The case of Zheng Enchong highlights a dangerous trend in China. The government does not feel committed to pursuing public justice or stated political principles. It has not only abandoned the weak and disadvantaged, but it also trumps up charges against anyone who dares to take a stand, no matter how peacefully, against social injustice or corrupt practices. Fraudulent charges are the inevitable product of the privatization of public rights. They show that the law has become a tool of a minority interest group.

CASE 4

“Whatever we say is a state secret, is a state secret”

Song Yongyi, a senior librarian and researcher at Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, was arrested in 1999 for “stealing state secrets” while conducting research on the Cultural Revolution (mainly collecting Red Guard tabloids).²⁵ There is nothing about these materials that constitutes a state secret. Song was ultimately released, thanks to determined intervention on his behalf by the U.S. government, but the Chinese government never admitted that his detention had been a miscarriage of justice. When Song told his jailers he doubted that widely available Red Guard tabloids published more than thirty years ago could be state secrets, an agent of the Ministry of State Security said, “Whatever we say is a state secret, is a state secret.”

Since the category “counterrevolutionary crimes” was abolished in 1998, many people have been imprisoned every year for “leaking state secrets” and “endanger-

ing national security.” Those accused of one crime are often also accused of the other, because as far as the Chinese government is concerned, whoever is guilty of leaking state secrets is bound to pose a threat to national security.

By now the reader must be wondering why there are so many “internal distribution” documents in China, and what is the use of all these documents? Xu Zerong passed on information about the Korean War of more than half a century ago. Song Yongyi collected Cultural Revolution materials that were published more than thirty years ago. In democratic countries, this sort of information would long ago have been in the public domain. Why is it classified as “state secrets” in China? Why is it that time and again, Chinese scholars are deprived of their freedom for trying to obtain materials of purely historical value and no current national security import?

Classified documents and public access to information

Let us first examine why the Chinese government needed to establish an internal (*neibu*) documents system and how it differs from the systems adopted by governments of other countries.

In addition to the large number of documents classified by the government and the armed forces, a privileged stratum within the Communist Party also has exclusive access to information known as “internal documents.” What “state secrets” do these internal documents contain? In fact, these internal documents contain absolutely no state secrets, but merely news of the sort that is often reported by the media of democratic countries.

Most genuinely important and valuable news is filtered by the government, resulting in a critical shortage of publicly available information. Chinese people must then rely on foreign reports, not only for an understanding of international affairs, but also to find out about important events that occur in China and even in their own city. Consequently, the only reliable source of news in China is the “rumor mill.” Foreigners who have been living in China for a long time also know this to be the case. And most Chinese people have come to take delight in spreading rumors.

To enable the state apparatus to function normally, the Chinese government has to give its officials access to relatively accurate information that tells them what is going on in this vast nation. It has, therefore, established a stringent system of “internal documents” and a series of all-encompassing laws and regulations regarding the secrecy of information. In order to offset problems that arise

from having only incomplete information available to the public, the government makes key political, economic, social, and international information available to its officials in the form of “state secrets” or “internal documents.” In China, rumors are often started by people with access to internal documents.

Types of secret and internal documents

Chinese secret and internal documents can be divided into three categories, each with different political and social functions:

1. *Official documents*—These include binding directives, regulations, and notices sent by Party, government, or military organizations to lower-level units. Documents from the CPC Central Committee are the most authoritative.
2. *Briefings on current developments*—These are briefings from leading Party, government, or military departments, including reports to higher levels and instructions to lower levels. In the Chinese media, the best known briefing is the CC Propaganda Department’s Monthly Reprimand (*yueping*), a circular giving notice of the penalties imposed on media organizations that have violated regulations. This dynamic management (and intimidation) tool enables the Propaganda Department to warn media organizations not to violate propaganda discipline and induces them to exercise “self discipline.”
3. *Reference materials*—These are issued by relatively large and high-ranking news organizations (such as Party or government newspapers). In accordance with propaganda discipline, internal reference materials cover matters that are detrimental to the image of the Party or the government, that affect social stability and unity, or that are inappropriate for open publication, such as graft and corruption, social unrest, and major business fraud. They often include investigative reports by journalists with a sense of responsibility who have surmounted numerous difficulties to conduct interviews. These materials have print runs of only a few dozen copies and are distributed for consultation by leaders and departments concerned. The most authoritative and influential are three types of internal reference materials distributed by Xinhua News Agency.

The first and second categories of secret documents are used in government work, while the third category, “internal reference materials,” is, in fact, news, or rather, rigorously filtered news about Chinese society that only Party and government officials of a certain rank are allowed to read. This system deprives the public of its most fundamental right to information.

Grades of secret documents

Article 9 of the Law on the Protection of State Secrets²⁶ establishes three grades of classification for state secrets—top secret, highly secret, and secret—and states that “internal reference” materials are a fourth grade, which Chinese citizens may read but foreigners may not. Section 2 of the Implementation Measures for the Law on the Protection of State Secrets²⁷ specifies the government department levels that have the authority to classify, reclassify, or declassify information as “state secrets.”

China has separate Party, government, and military administrative hierarchies. The Party system is divided into Party Committees and discipline inspection commissions; the government system is comprised of the People’s Congress, local government, and the Chinese People’s Consultative Conference; and the armed forces into military regions (seven great military regions and provincial military regions subordinate to them). These six organizational structures, and more than one hundred functional departments directly subordinate to them, issue a wide range of official documents, circulars, and replies to run each administration.

The classification grades for state secrets are closely linked to China’s political ranking system. China’s administrative divisions are provinces, districts (and cities under the direct jurisdiction of the central government or a province), and counties. The government hierarchy is divided into ministries (*bu*), departments/bureaus (*tingju*), and offices (*chu*). The armed forces are divided into armies (*jun*), divisions (*shi*), and regiments (*tuan*). Cadres (*ganbu*) are accordingly ranked into provincial, ministerial, or military levels; district, bureau, or division levels; and county, office, or regimental levels. Official documents are divided into “provincial or army level documents,” “district or divisional level documents,” and “county or regimental level documents.” The higher the rank, the higher the level of secrecy within the internal distribution information system. Of the tens of thousands of secret documents in China, Central Committee documents carry the greatest authority, because they communicate orders from China’s top leadership. This is how they are issued: The CC leadership issues an

instruction, a central Party or government organ drafts the document, the CC general office prepares a final version, the CC secretariat examines and approves it, and the CC general secretary signs and issues it. (In the past, the Party Chairman, such as Mao Zedong, signed and issued CC documents). CC documents mainly contain the top leaders’ statements, their most important subject matter. Many top Party leaders, including Mao and Deng Xiaoping, launched policies by issuing “important directives” in the form of CC documents. Since the reforms were introduced, a large number of Chen Yun’s speeches on the economy have been transmitted to the lower levels in CC documents. Deng’s famous 1980 speech on political reform was transmitted to the county and regimental levels in the form of “Central Committee Document No. 66.”²⁸

In Chinese politics, a CC document bears greater authority than a law; in case of conflict between the two, the former usually prevails. Because the title, “Central Committee Document,” is printed in red, they are also known as “red-header documents.”

“Internal news”: A political privilege

Of the wide range of secret documents in use in China, this book discusses only those relevant to government control of the news media, particularly those compiled by the Second Editorial Office of the National News Department of Xinhua News Agency and the editor-in-chief’s office of *People’s Daily*, which are mainly used as news propaganda materials within the Party:

1. “*Guonei Dongtai Qingyang*” (“Final Proofs on Domestic Trends”), edited by Xinhua News Agency. This report is issued once or twice daily. Each issue devotes two to six pages to a single topic, usually a major event in China or a policy proposal from the Party leadership. This relatively high-level classified report was initially designated “top-secret” and distributed to central leadership and ministerial level officials.²⁹ In the 1980s, distribution was extended to secretaries of provincial Party committees and provincial governors. Commonly known as “Big Reference” (*Da Cankao*), it is an important channel for senior Party cadres to obtain timely news about China. Copies must be returned to the sender within a set period, and recipients are held politically responsible if they lose their copies. Generally speaking, the contents are unlikely to be revealed to anyone outside China. At most,

someone authorized to read it could orally convey its contents to someone else, but it is very unlikely that the actual text would be leaked abroad.

2. “*Neibu Cankao*” (“Internal Reference”), edited by Xinhua News Agency. This forty- to fifty-page report about major national events and important speeches is published twice a week. Classed as a “highly secret document” (*jimi wenjian*), it is distributed to district or divisional officials and officers, and is the only official source of classified information about China for middle- and high-level cadres. For example, the news media were forbidden from covering the Shenzhen share purchase certificate riots of August 1992, but the event was reported in *Neibu Cankao*.³⁰
3. “*Neican Xuanbian*” (“Selected Internal Reference”), edited by Xinhua News Agency. This weekly report began publication in the mid-1980s in response to demand from local-level officials. It contains thirty to forty pages of selections from “*Neibu Cankao*” (see above). Classed “secret” (*mimi*), it was initially distributed to county- and regimental-level officials and officers and, later, to rural township heads, town mayors, section-level cadres, and battalion-level officers. Forced to generate income, since the mid-1990s “*Neican Xuanbian*” has effectively become a nonclassified publication. Cadres at the level of deputy official and above can take out private subscriptions and are no longer required to return their copies within a set period.

There are two obvious differences between these types of publications. First, their expeditiousness and, second, their details and omissions. Whenever a disturbance occurs in a particular locality, it tends to be ignored in Xinhua News Agency press releases provided to newspapers and radio stations. Or, long after the trouble has subsided, the incident may be mentioned in passing in an unrelated article, which invariably praises the skilful way local officials stabilized the situation. “*Guonei Dongtai Qingyang*,” on the other hand, has to publish a detailed and comprehensive special report the day the incident occurs, including the “troublemakers’ reactionary statements” and “unreasonable demands” and the measures taken by the local authorities in response. Within a week, “*Neibu Cankao*” will also publish a detailed account of the whole incident from start to finish, including its causes. “*Neican Xuanbian*,” on the other hand, may publish a brief report during the second week following the incident and will be less can-

did than the other two publications about what happened, particularly in regard to the political implications. For example, when a bank failed in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province, in 1999, triggering a run by its customers, “*Neican Xuanbian*” mentioned the matter only in passing, in a statement from a Bank of China manager cautioning local banks to avoid financial risks and to take a warning from the incident. But “*Neibu Cankao*” published a much more detailed report.

4. “*Neibu Canyonue*” (“*Internal Reference Readings*”), edited by *People’s Daily*. This publication is classed “secret” and carries no news but, rather, theory articles outlining policy proposals, as well as survey and investigation reports. Some investigative reports address sensitive issues, such as widespread public dissatisfaction with corruption, and field studies by basic-level rural Party and government organizations. They usually include the authors’ policy recommendations. “*Neibu Canyonue*” is distributed to county- or regimental-level organizations, but head offices of enterprises run by such organizations may also subscribe to it. Since the late 1990s, cadres of deputy office-level and above have been encouraged to take out private subscriptions.

A careful reading of “internal documents” reveals that “internal news” about society and the economy comes from rigorously censored sources monopolized by the Chinese government. In democratic countries there is generally no news about cultural, social, or economic issues that is strictly for internal distribution. But in China, local reports of prostitution, government candidates being voted out of office in village elections, the large-scale manufacture of counterfeit merchandise, and official graft and corruption are invariably designated “for internal distribution.” Very few of these “internal materials” have any intelligence value whatsoever. Exposing such matters of public concern ought to be the job of the news media, but in China, the control of the media makes reading about them a political issue.

The rapid development of the Internet in recent years has seriously undermined the Chinese Communist regime’s monopoly on the news. Internal reference materials are consequently losing their function. Some classified documents are no longer returned to the sender within a set period. Many people keep them, and many offices turn them into wastepaper instead of burning them. One can find copies of “*Neican Xuanbian*” and “*Neibu Canyonue*,” as I once did, lying around in recycling centers. But the Chinese government remains unwilling to change the

classified news and information system. Charges of “leaking state secrets” are frequently brought against people found to have gone abroad with one of the “secret” documents described above. Chinese people are also prosecuted for keeping such documents without authorization.

The Chinese government’s compulsion to control speech leads it to treat as “secret” news that ought to be public. For the same reason, it arbitrarily extends the scope of what constitutes a state secret, reclassifies documents that have already been declassified under the state secrecy laws, and throws Chinese citizens in prison for “leaking state secrets.” That is why people in China are nervous about government documents and consider all of them to be state secrets. Laws, government decrees, regulations, and the official declarations issued during national Party conferences (such as the official report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China) belong in the public domain and ought to be published. In fact, *People’s Daily* often publishes such documents as soon as the government issues them. In no way are they state secrets. Since the early 1980s, the government of the southern city of Shenzhen has required all government and Party newspapers to provide free print space for the full text of numerous bulletins issued by the local government (and the Shenzhen People’s Congress), as well as all new laws and ordinances. Whenever people need to run an errand in a government department, they can obtain the relevant laws and regulations for a small fee. When local citizens cannot consult laws and government documents relevant to their case, it is not because these involve “state secrets,” but because the local government departments are not doing a good job of serving the public.

To maintain power, autocrats shroud themselves in mystery. China’s “internal distribution” documents form a huge system, which is why there are such an extraordinarily large number of secrecy laws and regulations. A Chinese scholar has collected more than 250 secrecy-maintenance laws, regulations, rules, and statutory documents (which total about 600,000 Chinese characters) in an *Encyclopedia on the State Secrets Law of the PRC*.³¹ These laws and regulations are divided into seven categories: general; economics; science and technology; national security and the administration of justice; culture, education, and public health; foreign affairs or matters involving foreign nationals, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan; and statutory policy documents. A careful reading shows that few countries in the world are as lacking in freedom of the press and of speech as China. For example, everyone who lives in China is aware of the problem of inflation. But regardless of what measures the government adopts to bring the problem under control, if a newspaper discusses this issue, the government may well

consider it a “political mistake” and charge the author with “leaking state secrets.” The border trade between Burma (Myanmar) and China is another case in point. The people of Guangxi, Yunnan, and other neighboring provinces know about this trade, and they also know that it is a key link in the drug trade of the “Golden Triangle.” But the Chinese and Burmese governments maintain that laws and regulations governing trade are state secrets that may not be divulged. The Chinese government’s arbitrary extension of the scope of state secrets can also have absurd consequences. In late December 2002, *Xinwen Zhoukan* (*China Newsweek*) published an article calling on the Guangzhou city government to make government information available to the public and to publish all bulletins, rules, and regulations issued by the government and its various departments. At the time, the *Gazette of the People’s Government of Anhui Province* was freely available for purchase, prompting the journalist to comment, “This may signal a quiet administrative revolution in China.” Like most Chinese people, this journalist evidently regarded public government documents as state secrets. Hence, his view that publication of a few of them amounted to an administrative revolution. But in point of fact, as soon as government bulletins and regulations are issued, they are supposed to be published in Party and government newspapers, which are required to provide free print space for them. Such materials are also available as booklets in government offices, where they are certainly not treated as “classified” information. However, unlike in the United States, where government bulletins and regulations are available to citizens free of charge, in China the government charges a fee for them.³²

Chinese Journalists—Dancing in Shackles

Information is the currency of democracy.

(Attribution uncertain.)¹

Advocating press freedom is tantamount to taking to the streets in protest.

Mao Zedong²

The relationship between the Chinese news media and the Chinese government is completely opposite to that between the media and government in democratic societies. In modern democracies, the media often perform the function of societal watchdog. Government policy, the personal integrity of government officials, domestic affairs, and foreign relations are all subjects for criticism and debate by the media. In China, however, the government exercises tight control over public opinion, has designated many areas off-limits to public discussion, and has imposed penalties to restrict journalists' freedom of action.

Control of news sources and reporting

Generally speaking, the central government controls the media by means of political power and a series of top-down coercive policies. Local governments, lacking the supreme power and authority of the central government, rely on a multiplicity of control methods. If a reporter is from a local media outlet, the government can exert direct political control over that person. If a reporter is with a unit outside his or her jurisdiction, the government may exert control either directly, through threats and violence, or indirectly, through what Chinese officialdom commonly refers to as “giving a wave”—alerting officials from the reporters' place of origin to exert pressure on his or her boss in order to bring the journalist into line.

Control is directed first of all at sources of information, in recognition of the fact that news sources are a journalist's lifeblood. The more direct the source of information, the stronger the guarantee that the news will be timely and reliable. At the same time, a journalist needs to broaden the channels of information as much as possible. The essence of journalism is to collect information from all sources and then to use a broad range of media, including newspapers, television, and radio, to disseminate news to the wider public.

On the one hand, the Chinese government controls the actions of its own journalists, a practice which over the years has resulted in the media's habit of "self-censorship." On the other hand, the government controls the source of the news by preventing ordinary people from providing information to domestic media and, even more so, to foreign media. An example of this kind of control is the prohibition forbidding certain scholars from issuing analytical essays on China's social and economic situation.

In addition to the application of various laws and regulations, local government officials have imposed more arbitrary forms of media control, in accordance with the spirit of central government policy. Long years of this type of suppression have made many Chinese journalists resign themselves to either playing the role of "Party mouthpiece" or exploiting their position for personal gain.

However, in a news industry that is largely morally bankrupt, there are still some journalists who feel a sense of social responsibility and who work hard to play the role of muckraker. In order to do this, they adopt a sort of camouflage; they assume that the central government leadership is wise and that the Chinese socialist system is correct, and conclude that low-level corruption and its disastrous consequences can be attributed to the individual actions of a few officials. According to this line of thought, by revealing the facts, journalists help the top leadership understand what is really going on in society so that these problems can be dealt with effectively. These journalists believe that their self-protective approach of "scolding [or exposing] petty officials but not the emperor" will guarantee their personal safety. Prior to the 1990s, before local governments began using hoodlums and gangs to do their dirty work, this method was often successful. But as time went on, these courageous reporters faced ever greater difficulties when trying to expose the darker sides of society, and local governments began to treat the media in the same way as did the central authorities. Nowadays, when journalists are framed or attacked by local officials, and are courageously supported by other local media, the central government maintains a shameful

silence that amounts to tacit consent to—and encouragement of—the unscrupulous behavior of local officials.

The 1990s ushered in a period of widespread graft and corruption, accompanied by shocking events, such as the Nandan coal mine accident in Guangxi, the Nanjing poisoning case, and labor uprisings in Liaoyang. But these stories have very rarely been reported by the Chinese media. Any exposé that does appear in the press represents a hard-won battle by journalists, often at the risk of their lives. It is difficult for non-journalists to appreciate the difficulties involved, not only in getting to the bottom of a story, but in battling various levels of the Chinese bureaucracy. When such reports finally see the light of day and compel the Chinese government to declare that it will “resolve the problem,” they bring no honor to the courageous journalists who fought for them, but more typically spell the end of the journalists’ careers, or even land them in prison.

However poorly the Chinese government runs the country, and however corrupt and incompetent its officials, it has proven extremely efficient and effective in employing a diversity of cunning methods to control the media.

News blackouts of mining disasters

Since the mid-1990s, an increasing number of local leaders have used violent means to prevent journalists from doing their jobs. While the people who carry out the actual obstruction of interviews and news-gathering activities are, typically, drunken vagrants, local thugs, and members of the criminal underworld, they inevitably have the backing of local authorities. The central government’s failure to speak out against violent interference in news work has only emboldened local governments. Following a huge explosion at the Liupanshui Coal Mine in Guizhou Province, none other than the deputy provincial governor, Liu Changgui, ordered the arrest of journalists and the destruction of their film. Guangzhou journalist Zhao Shilong, who has covered a number of significant national events, wrote a vivid essay recounting his own experiences in this “high-risk profession.”³ In the following two cases that occurred in Nandan, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and in Yichun, Jiangxi Province, the people responsible for interfering with journalists’ activities included local officials, public security officers, and public prosecutors.

The mine explosion in Guangxi

After a mining accident on July 17, 2001, that killed eighty-one people in Nandan, Guangxi Province, the Nandan municipal government made every effort to impose a news blackout and ordered police to physically assault any journalist they saw. When Guangxi TV, *Nanguo Zaobao* (*Southern Morning Post*), and *Bagui Dushibao* (*Bagui City Courier*)—all from Guangxi—dispatched reporters to cover the story ten days after the accident, local officials slammed doors in their faces and told them that nothing had happened. The people in charge of the mine also flatly denied that an accident had occurred. The managers of the Nandan mine enlisted the local underworld to threaten miners and make them too afraid to speak to reporters.

One journalist for the *Bagui City Courier*, having failed to gain access to the mining area, came across an overhanging cliff from which he planned to take photos of the mine shaft, which was still leaking water. Suddenly two men armed with knives emerged from a thicket, and one of them shouted at the journalist, “What are you doing here? Are you a reporter?” The other man said, “If he’s a reporter, let’s do him in and chuck him over the cliff.” Frightened, the journalist surreptitiously removed his press and identification cards from his pocket, threw them off the cliff, and told the men he was in Nandan visiting relatives. Since the two men found no identification on him, they settled for simply chasing him away.

Local people eventually guided those same journalists to a particular county that had been hardest hit by the disaster, where they photographed many miners’ families weeping, performing funerary sacrifices, and burning belongings left by the dead. The video footage was a breakthrough in the coverage of this story, but when the journalists showed it to local officials, a number of them insisted it was faked. One deputy secretary of the Guangxi Autonomous Region even shouted abuse at a *People’s Daily* reporter and shut him out of a news conference (literally, “unified control meeting”) concerning the accident.⁴

The fireworks factory explosion in Jiangxi

During the course of the Nandan mining disaster and its aftermath, the Chinese government gained considerable experience in controlling the news media. From then on, whenever a similar accident occurred, journalists found it extremely dif-

difficult to gain access to the scene to conduct interviews. The Jiangxi provincial government's actions following an explosion at a fireworks factory in Huangmao Township, Wanzai County, illustrate how officials were able to effectively impose a full news blackout.

On December 30, 2001, with the Nandan coal mine accident still fresh in the minds of the Chinese public, a huge explosion shook Huangmao Township, transforming several hundred meters around the fireworks factory into scorched earth. The blast flattened buildings and shattered nearly every window within a radius of several kilometers. Even iron gates were warped by the shockwave. After the explosion, local government officials did their utmost to impose a news blackout. The local public security bureau set up roadblocks at all main thoroughfares to prevent journalists from approaching the scene of the accident, and local hospitals admitting casualties posted armed police at the doors. Local Jiangxi media failed to report a single word about the incident. Xinhua News Agency, while reporting the recovery of twenty bodies by the early hours of December 31, made no mention of any missing people. Given the awesome power of the explosion, local residents found it difficult to believe that only twenty people had died, and they joked derisively that this was a case of “statistics with Chinese characteristics.”⁵

Because of the local news blackout, residents of Nanchang, the provincial capital, were unaware that an explosion, which had been shocking news internationally and to the rest of China, had occurred in their province. Only when Jiangxi natives overseas read about the accident on the Internet and telephoned home did people in the province learn the awful news. Netizens were aggrieved not only by the fact that this was the second explosion to happen in Wanzai County in the past year, but also by the extent of the news blackout.

On January 5, 2002, *China Youth Daily* published an article describing in detail the circumstances journalists encountered while attempting to cover the story. Because these incidents are far from rare, it is worth recounting the details of the report.

On the day of the incident, the Jiangxi offices of all government-run media organs (except for Xinhua) were notified that they should not send reporters to the scene. Some publications from Hunan took advantage of their proximity and hurried to the scene, and because full controls were not yet in place, they were able to take many valuable photographs of the devastation. That afternoon, traffic barricades were set up on roadways at a radius of ten kilometers from the explosion. Apart from reporters from Xinhua and the main provincial media outlets, no journalists were allowed on the scene. When *People's Daily* and *Jiangnan*

Shibao (*South China Times*) reporters arrived at Tanbu Township, about ten kilometers away, the road to Huangmao was already blocked, and only police and emergency vehicles were allowed to enter. The reporters proceeded to Zhutan Township, about eleven kilometers away, hoping to discover an alternative road, but their efforts were frustrated. At the suggestion of one of the people directing traffic, reporters from *China Youth Daily* spent an exorbitant sum to purchase three motorcycles, with which they were able to traverse a mountain lane and reach the site of the explosion.

Several journalists from Hunan withdrew to nearby Wenjiashi Township in Hunan's Liuyang City, where they were able to interview some of those who had been injured. As it happened, later that afternoon, several uniformed police officers arrived at the hospital to transfer three injured people to Wanzai County for treatment. The Wenjiashi Township Hospital insisted on handling the transportation, and the Hunan reporters were able to access the scene of the explosion by stowing away inside the hospital's ambulance.

Around 11:00 on the morning of December 21, reporters from *Xiaoxiang Chen Bao* (*Xiaoxiang Morning News*) were intercepted on their way to the scene. In the interview room of the Wanzai County Hotel they found the following regulation posted: "Journalists are not allowed to take photographs or make audio recordings at the scene; searches will be undertaken at every intersection, and every station will have propaganda officials barring reporters from the scene and persuading them to return to the city."

Reporter Zhao Shilong, from Guangzhou's *Yangcheng Evening News*, had arrived at the scene on the day of the explosion, but he was soon contacted by his newspaper and told that Jiangxi officials had sent a fax to the Guangdong Province Propaganda Bureau requiring newspapers to recall their reporters.

On January 4, after hearing that all roads to the site had been reopened, two reporters from *China Youth Daily* drove to Huangmao Township and found the gate to the fireworks factory closed. A young man who looked like a journalist was surrounded by a group of people. His camera was snatched from his hands, while the group of people yelled, "Take him to the police station!" Then someone in the crowd suddenly shouted, "There are two more! Take them, too!" The group of people then charged at the *China Youth Daily* reporters shouting, "Where are you from? Show us your identification!"

The *China Youth Daily* reporters insisted that the others first produce their identification. With neither side prepared to yield, a fat man in a leather jacket ran over and shouted, "Grab them!" The reporters demanded that the man produce

his identification, and he flashed them a card that read, “Deputy Procurator, Wanzai County People’s Procuratorate.” The reporters were unable to read his name, however, because he quickly snatched his card away from them. *China Youth Daily* reporter Wu Xianghan then produced his journalist’s ID, but after looking at it, the deputy procurator said, “This is fake,” and ordered the reporters to go to the police station. A man in his fifties ran up and knocked Wu to the ground and began pushing him toward the police station. In a panic, the other reporter, Li Jingying, telephoned the newspaper, while the deputy procurator shouted, “Grab her cell phone!”

After eventually extracting themselves from the situation, the reporters made their way to Liuyang that afternoon. Several farmers on the side of the road waved them down and took them to look at their homes, which had been flattened by the explosion. Some farmers would only talk to the reporters after they had taken them into the hills, where the farmers revealed that they had been warned by township officials not to talk to any reporters.

That same afternoon, a young man, who had taken a business card from one of the *China Youth Daily* reporters that morning, secretly met them and said that the man who had knocked down Wu was a much-feared local ruffian in the employ of township officials. He said that the group of people whom the reporters had encountered was deployed specifically to grab journalists.

After the explosion, Wanzai County officials implemented a strict news blackout, deployed a legion of police to impede journalists, and insisted that only nine people had died, only later acknowledging a death toll of fourteen. Because Jiangxi provincial Party secretary Meng Jianzhu was a close friend of central Party Secretary Jiang Zemin, even the national media were subjected to numerous restrictions. *People’s Daily*, which had previously played an important role in exposing the tragedy at the tin mine in Nandan County, failed to publish a single word about this accident.

The Jiangxi provincial government claimed that the Wanzai County explosion was a “mishap” caused by a negligent female machine operator, a lie so brazen that it provoked fierce criticism from Beijing newspapers, over which the Jiangxi government had no jurisdiction. On January 7, 2002, Beijing’s *Workers’ Daily* published an editorial entitled “We Cannot Accept This ‘Mishap,’” which stated, “What is most inexplicable is that the cover-up of the facts and the violent treatment of journalists that took place at Nandan has been repeated in Wanzai. Now whenever there is a safety incident at any locality, local officials run about like headless chickens and target reporters to ensure a news blackout. When will these

cover-ups end?” The article went on to say, “We cannot accept the use of the word ‘mishap’ to describe the Wanzai explosion; even less can we accept the unjust deaths caused by the explosion.”⁶

Although government officials deliberately lied about the incident, the facts were widely circulated in Internet chatrooms, and Premier Zhu Rongji was ultimately forced to make a public apology. Even then, no senior government official said anything positive about the role journalists had played. Eighteen days after the accident occurred, the Chinese State Administration of Safety held a news conference on production safety. When some journalists raised the question of local government officials ordering journalists to be beaten for trying to inform the public, the agency’s deputy director, who was presiding over the news conference, replied, “In principle, news reports should not make a big fuss about or exaggerate accidents affecting production safety. There must be unity for the sake of social stability.” He added, “Unified news management ought to be observed with respect to reports from the scene of accidents, the number of casualties, and the handling of the situation.”⁷

Incidents such as these that became known to the public are just a small portion of the many workplace disasters that occur in China every year. A Xinhua dispatch on February 24, 2003, quoted figures from the State Bureau of Production Safety revealing that 1.07 million workplaces accidents occurred in 2002, claiming nearly 140,000 lives. These incidents included some 14,000 mining accidents in which some 15,000 people were killed. (By comparison, only around 2,400 people were killed in the course of some 260,000 fires, or less than one person per 100 incidents, highlighting the extreme peril of mining accidents.)

The Nandan and Wanzai County disasters exposed only the tip of the iceberg of China’s workplace fatalities. Every such incident results in the tragic destruction of lives and livelihoods, but the Chinese government devotes its efforts to controlling public opinion and glossing over the reality rather than improving official oversight. As long as the Chinese government sees control of public discourse as the key to preserving “stability and unity,” such incidents are bound to recur.

The use of violence

Violence against journalists occurs all over China, but newspapers very rarely report such incidents. The case detailed below is typical.

On January 5, 2002, Zhao Jingqiao and Lü Tingchuan, reporters for the *Jinan Shibao* (*Jinan Times*), and Yang Fucheng, a reporter for *Shandong Qingnian* (*Shandong Youth*) magazine, traveled together to follow up on complaints from villagers of Ximeng Village in Ninyang County, Shandong Province. The villagers had accused the local Party branch secretary, Liu Fangzhu, of corruption and of keeping a private “jail cell” where he had villagers beaten and tortured. While driving home after their interviews, the three journalists received a telephone call from the editor of *Shandong Youth*, telling them that Ninyang County public security officers were about to intercept them and that they should hurry back to Jinan. While they were still en route, however, eight police vehicles with howling sirens overtook them at high speed and barred their way. At around 4:30 PM, the deputy director of the Ninyang County Party Committee’s Propaganda Department, Ji Weijian, arrived on the scene and took the journalists back to his office, where he instructed the Sidian town mayor, surnamed Zhang, to take over.

Mayor Zhang told the journalists that the Ximeng villagers had provoked the town government officials into beating them, and he forced the journalists to surrender all their film rolls, interview notes, and audiotapes. At approximately 7:30 PM, Ji Weijian and Mayor Zhang left the office, and a dozen plainclothes police officers burst in and proceeded to beat and kick the three journalists, inflicting severe head injuries on Zhao Jingqiao. Not one propaganda department official stepped forward to stop the assault. The three journalists were then taken to the public security bureau for interrogation, during the course of which Zhao identified the police officers who had assaulted him, only to be beaten once again. It was only after midnight, when a team dispatched by the *Jinan Times* showed up to intervene, that the police released the journalists.⁸

These kinds of attacks on journalists, which are carried out by either police or local thugs at the instruction of government officials, happen so frequently in China that they have become almost routine procedure. One person who was especially concerned about this issue collected the following newspaper reports relating similar attacks on journalists that occurred between the months of September and December 2000:

September 16: Deng Qiang, deputy chief of the Ningde City Public Security Bureau in Fujian Province, not only stopped journalists from filming a public court sentencing, but actually came to blows with them in broad daylight and confiscated their video camcorders.

September 28: A group of journalists and inspectors from the China Association for Quality Promotion and the Xi’an Office of Quality Control went to

Xi'an's Wild Rose Computer City (a computer and software mall) to conduct a statutory inspection. The general manager of the mall, Qian Xiaoyan, ordered his subordinates to tear up the inspectors' IDs, beat the journalists, and chase them off. A CCTV film camera worth 570,000 *yuan* was broken, and two journalists and one inspector were injured. According to reports, the general manager had the backing of local officials.

October 16: Zhang Xiuying, Party committee secretary of the Shanxi Medical Electronic Equipment Factory, led more than twenty men into the reference room of *Shanxi Gongrenbao* (*Shanxi Workers' Daily*) and attacked two journalists, apparently in retaliation for a news article that reported on a merger dispute involving his factory.

October 16: Two journalists from *Nanfang Daily* were beaten on the head with iron clubs and wooden cudgels by members of a village protection team, while gathering information on a violent clan incident in the Baiyun suburb of Guangzhou. The journalists were beaten unconscious and had their cell phones and interview notebooks taken away. Although a crowd of people witnessed the incident, no one reported it to the police. One of the assailants told the journalists, "How dare you reporters come here and nose around! We'll kill you!"

November 7: On the eve of China's Journalists' Day, supposedly devoted to promoting the protection of the rights and interests of journalists, a huge fire broke out at a Taiwanese-owned shoe factory in the outskirts of Guangzhou, razing three warehouses covering an area of more than 1,000 square meters. When four journalists from Guangzhou's *Yangcheng Evening News* went to the scene of the accident to conduct interviews, they were threatened, shoved, chased, and beaten by a mob following orders of the factory management.

November 9: On the day after Journalists' Day, a journalist for *Nanning Wanbao* (*Nanning Evening News*) happened upon a traffic accident involving a drunk driver. He immediately reported it to the police and took photos, but was assaulted by a person at the scene of the accident.

November 20: A collapse at the building site of a heating plant in the southern outskirts of Jinan, Shandong Province, killed four workers and injured one. When journalists for *Shenghuo Ribao* (*Life Daily*) and *Qilu Wanbao* (*Qilu Evening News*) went to the scene, they were insulted, surrounded, and beaten up by plant security staff. One of the journalists suffered a concussion and had his camera equipment destroyed.

November 22: When singer Mao Ning was stabbed, two journalists for *Beijing Qingnian Bao* (*Beijing Youth Daily*) rushed to Zhaoyang Hospital to interview her,

but were blocked and beaten by people at her bedside. Their cameras were stolen and their film exposed. This incident was widely covered by the national media.

December 4: Six journalists for Shaanxi's *Huashang Bao* (*Chinese Business News*), who were covering the Tianlong coal mine explosion in Hejin, Shanxi Province, were attacked with bricks and cudgels by thugs working for the mine. The group of journalists was split up and two of them, who were injured, were reported missing.⁹

The Public Security Bureau and court orders

Some local officials, attempting to legitimize their refusal to submit to public scrutiny, issue their own regulations restricting media activities. For example, at the end of 2001, the Dunhuang City government in Gansu Province issued an Opinion on Strengthening the Supervision of Correspondents' Offices in Dunhuang and Journalists Conducting Interviews in Dunhuang, which stipulates: "Critical reports that involve the leadership of this municipality, and cadres ranked assistant section chief and above, must be submitted to the local propaganda department for approval, and must also be transmitted to the persons concerned and the relevant leaders."¹⁰

The following two remarkable stories illustrate how local governments issue their own directives aimed at curtailing journalists:

In August 2002, the Lanzhou City Public Security Bureau sent a letter to all news media in Lanzhou naming sixteen journalists, from six different city newspapers, who had published "inaccurate" reports about law enforcement personnel breaking the law. The letter declared that the journalists were banned from interviewing any public security officer from that day forward. This notice of a large-scale blacklist, which was not issued through the usual government channels (such as the Propaganda Bureau or GAPP) but, rather, by a local public security bureau, caused tremendous shock and indignation among Lanzhou's media workers.

On August 8, 2002, *Southern Weekend* reported that on August 1 the managing editors of *Lanzhou Chenbao* (*Lanzhou Morning Post*) handed two of their journalists, Hao Dongbai and Liao Ming, an official letter, entitled "Regarding Certain Journalists' Inaccurate Exposés of Police Activities" (hereafter referred to as "Inaccurate Exposés"), which read as follows:

To the *Lanzhou Morning Post*, *Xibu Shangbao* (*Western Region Business News*), *Gansu*

Qingnian Bao (*Gansu Youth Daily*), *Keji Xinbao* (*Science and Technology News*), *Lanzhou Wenbao* (*Lanzhou Evening Post*), and *Dushi Tiandibao* (*City World News*):

Starting from this year . . . there have been a number of serious instances of inaccurate reporting . . . which have damaged the reputations of public security organs and the people's police and which have had a negative impact on public security efforts. . . . [A list of offending articles followed.]

The Party Committee of the Lanzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau is extremely concerned over these media reports and has called on public security organs and police officers at all levels to willingly submit themselves to media scrutiny in order to improve public security work and the quality of police troops.

However, the above reports, when investigated by the municipal Public Security Bureau's Supervision Department, were found to be completely inaccurate Due to the special nature and confidentiality of public security work, it will no longer be appropriate for the aforementioned journalists to request interviews from any public security organ at any level. Should they do so, they must be refused. We also ask the relevant media organizations to protect their own reputations by dealing appropriately with these journalists. Public security organs look forward to the continued cooperation and support of media organizations.

cc: Propaganda Department of the Provincial Party Committee, Propaganda Department of the Municipal Party Committee, Political and Legal Committee of the Municipal Party Committee, and all municipal, county, and branch departments.

July 26, 2002

(Seal of the Lanzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau Propaganda Office)

This "Inaccurate Exposés" document was distributed to all the other journalists mentioned by name. They were shocked and angered by the document and adamantly refuted the allegations of "serious inaccuracies" in their reporting. Out of a sense of professional ethics, and given the controversy over the alleged inaccuracy of the reports, journalists from *Southern Weekend* proceeded to verify them.

A *Lanzhou Morning Post* article by Hao Dongbai and Liao Ming, entitled "Police Car Involved in Hit and Run of Young Boy," described an incident on the afternoon of June 24, in which a Beijing Jeep traveling north on Xigu Gongyuan Road knocked down a boy crossing the intersection on his bicycle. According to witnesses, the driver and the passenger got out of the car, looked for a moment, then sped off. The boy managed to get the rest of the way across the road, supported by his bicycle, then collapsed alongside the road. Police called to the scene

by a bystander escorted the boy to Lanhua Hospital. The reporters arrived at the scene about an hour after the accident and spoke with a number of outraged witnesses, including one who said, “After knocking down the boy, they should at least have taken him to the hospital or contacted his guardians. That’s the least a decent person would do!”

According to what *Southern Weekend* was able to learn, there were three people in the vehicle, including one person wearing dark glasses and a brown, short-sleeved shirt. The victim was a sixteen-year-old student at a nearby secondary school. On August 4, the proprietor of a shop near the scene, Xu Yingmei, was still very angry: “The boy was knocked down and rolled over several times and then lay still. Two people got out of the Jeep, and one of them moved the boy to the side of the road, watched for a moment, and then they drove off. The boy just lay there on the ground.”

The proprietor of a watch stand, Ms. Zhang, said that she had brought a stool over for the boy to sit on until the emergency squad arrived. Both shop owners admitted that, at the time, they did not realize the vehicle involved belonged to the police, but were angry only at the irresponsible behavior of the people inside. As to whether police had later sent officers to investigate, both witnesses said that, apart from the *Southern Weekend* reporter, no one had come to question them about the matter.

The *Lanzhou Morning Post* reporter, Liao Ming, said that on that day, after obtaining the vehicle’s license number from Xu Yingmei, he went to the Xigu District Public Security Bureau, where an official acknowledged that the Jeep was theirs but would provide no further information, because the matter was “under investigation.” A police squad leader named Dou Jirong, who went to the scene of the accident, also confirmed to the journalist that a police vehicle had been involved, and gave the vehicle’s license number to the injured boy’s father.

Reporters Wang Cong and Yang Liang were also on the blacklist for their June 21 article entitled “Drunken Traffic Cop Assaults Journalist Reporting on Highway Traffic Jam.” Ye Zhou, director of the news center at *Lanzhou Morning Post*, was astonished when he learned that the two reporters had been blacklisted. Ye said that he was in a Xining-bound vehicle with Wang and Yang when the three of them personally witnessed the incident.

A *Lanzhou Evening Post* article on May 13 regarding the ransacking of a bridal salon reported the incident as follows: “At 6:40 yesterday afternoon, a man identifying himself as a police officer appeared at the Shishang Jingdian Bridal Salon to return a bridal veil. An argument ensued with the shop proprietor, during

which several people assaulted shop staff, ransacked the establishment, and then ran off with the shop's television and VCD player”

Four other newspapers reported roughly the same facts, and all were blacklisted for inaccuracy. On August 5 and August 6, reporters from *Southern Weekend* went to the bridal salon to carry out their own inquiries. The shop's management provided the journalists with the report made to the police on May 12, which stated that two staff members, Sun Yan and Liu Yang, had been assaulted by a traffic policeman surnamed Zhang and some of his friends and that the shop had been ransacked. “The deputy commander of the Donggang traffic police squad, Li Zhanlin, hurried to the scene and confirmed that Zhang was a member of his squad . . . Sun Yan was taken to the Provincial People's Hospital that evening for treatment.” Since then, the shop had hired new employees. The manager who talked to the *Southern Weekend* reporters said, “The former staff felt they were at physical risk, so they all left.”

The “in-depth investigation” by the Lanzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau's supervision department had determined that these articles were “completely inaccurate” and that they “impugned the reputation of champions of public security.”¹¹ All other articles determined by Lanzhou authorities to be inaccurate were likewise vindicated by *Southern Weekend* inquiries.

A similar incident transpired in Guangzhou on November 21, 2003, when the Guangzhou Provincial Higher People's Court issued a notice to the lower courts under its jurisdiction. The notice, entitled “Regarding the Banning of Rong Mingchang and Five Other Journalists from Attending or Reporting on the Proceedings of All Courts in This Province,” blacklisted six reporters from six newspapers under the *Southern Daily*, *Yangcheng Evening News*, and *Guangzhou Ribao* (*Guangzhou Daily*) groups from November 20, 2003, to November 19, 2004. The reporters were Rong Mingchang, of *Southern Daily*; Lin Jie, from *Yangcheng Evening News*; Wu Xiuyun, from *Nanfang Daily*; Li Chaotao, from *Xinxi Shibao* (*Communication Times*); Wen Jianmin, from *Xin Kuaibao* (*New Express*); and Ke Xuedong, from *Guangzhou Daily*. The notice made no statement about the accuracy of the journalists' reports, but only said that they had interfered with the court's work and had “damaged the dignity of the judiciary and impaired public confidence in the judiciary.”

How had the six reporters offended the court? On November 7 and 11, they had reported on a particular divorce proceeding at the Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate People's Court in which the wife was granted one million *yuan* in assets but was also held responsible for one million *yuan* of her husband's debts.

After the court passed its ruling, the Guangdong Provincial Procuratorate filed an objection and called for a retrial. The blacklisted reporters pointed out that, in June of that year, the relevant provincial organ (i.e., the Guangdong Provincial propaganda department) and the Guangdong Higher People's Court had issued a Specific Regulation on the Criteria for Reporting on Court Proceedings. The current blacklist, they said, was based on that earlier regulation.

These six journalists were less fortunate than their Lanzhou colleagues. Their bosses and those of other local media outlets dared not offend the Guangdong courts and propaganda department, which had the power to crush them, so news of the journalists' oppression at the hands of these powerful bodies was only circulated on the Internet.¹²

The fact that the right to perform journalistic activities is bestowed by the very bodies being reported on can only be attributed to the special powers that these bodies enjoy in China. This routine abuse of power presents a deeply troubling situation.

A Workers' Daily issue recalled

On August 24, 2001, the website of China News Service published the following news item: "Unsold editions of *Workers' Daily* in Lushi County, Henan Province, have reportedly been confiscated for running articles revealing that the county Party secretary was pursuing redundant and extravagant projects."¹³

On August 10, the weekend edition of *Workers' Daily* had published a long lead story, entitled "Factual Report of How Du Baogan, Former Party Secretary of Henan's Impoverished Lushi County, Vigorously Pursued Redundant and Extravagant Projects." Following the publication of this article, people in the mountain areas and towns of Lushi County were bursting with excitement, spreading the news, and practically falling over each other in eagerness to buy copies of the paper.

That day's issue of *Workers' Daily* spread like wild fire across Lushi County. Within a few days, some ten thousand copies had been sold or photocopied by local people. But on August 15, the deputy head of the propaganda department of Sanmenxia City, Henan Province, made a long-distance telephone call to the head of the Lushi County post office, instructing him to confiscate the weekend edition of *Workers' Daily*, as well as the newspaper *Fazhi Wencuibao* (*Legal Miscellany*) and *Jinjian* (*Golden Sword*) magazine, which had reprinted the offending article.

What exactly had the newspapers published? Why did the government take the

trouble to fight back by impounding newspapers? The focus of the newspaper story was how Du Baogan, a former Party secretary of one of the most impoverished counties in the nation, wasted public resources in egregious extravagance and corruption and, more to the point for this discussion, frequently had his critics thrown in jail on false charges. But the real story is about the methods used by Du to suppress criticism—methods that are of a piece with the government’s tactics to control the news media and suppress expression of public opinion.

Since 1997, Zhang Chongbo, a worker at a state-run Chinese medicinal products company in Lushi County, had repeatedly written to the news media, complaining about Du Baogan’s wasteful projects. When Du found out what Zhang was doing, he threatened the manager of Zhang’s company with dismissal if he did not find a way to keep Zhang under control.

On July 17, 1999, *Dahe Bao* (*Great River News*) in Lanzhou published an article entitled “How Can Houses Be Razed Only To Be Rebuilt, and Built Only To Be Razed Again?: The Wild Construction Boom in Duguan and Xiaoji Townships, Lushi County.” The article, advocating justice for the common people, was written jointly by Zhang Chongbo and a journalist for *Great River News*. Zhang subsequently wrote another article, entitled “Snubbing Public Opinion in Duguan Township: Razing Houses and Replacing Them with Multi-story Buildings,” which was published in the “internal reference” edition of *Great River News*. After that, Du Baogan decided to teach Zhang a lesson.

On August 6, 1999, Zhang Chongbo was arrested on a charge of “misappropriation of specially designated funds and property.” On March 30, 2001, the Sanmenxia Intermediate Court upheld the original sentence, but reduced Zhang’s prison term to two years and six months. On the receipt acknowledging service of the appeal ruling, Zhang wrote, “Regarding China’s corrupt judicial system, with its peddling of influence and justice, let us fervently assert: I will never submit.”

Zhang Chongbo was not the only “disobedient” person Du Baogan had thrown in jail. Everyone who brought Lushi County’s problems to the attention of the media or the higher authorities was a target of Du’s attacks. When Lan Cinai, from Zhaizi Village, distributed articles critical of Du that had been published in Nanjing’s *Zhoumo* (*Weekend*) magazine, Du denounced him as a “villain.” Lan replied, “Villainous officials breed villainous citizens.” For this, Lan was sentenced to thirty-seven days in jail.

In the spring of 1999, Du took advantage of the Public Security Bureau’s Fight Crime Campaign to arrest more than four hundred people. Some of them had expressed dissatisfaction with their village cadres; others had spoken up during

village committee elections. This constituted sufficient grounds to be jailed on accusations of “disrupting elections” and other charges. Those arrested were spared the humiliations of imprisonment only if they pledged to take the matter no further.

In order to put a stop to Du Baogan, Zhang Wenxiu, the Party secretary of Xiangziping Village in Wenyu Township, Lushi County, lodged a written complaint against Du with the Central Disciplinary Commission (CDC) in Beijing. In mid-June 2001, Du dispatched public security officers to Beijing to arrest Zhang, instructing them to deceive the Beijing police authorities by accusing Zhang of being a “Falun Gong element” who had gone to the capital to set off a bomb. After being forcibly escorted back to Lushi County, Zhang was thrown in the county detention center on May 20, 2002. But what Du Baogan did not count on was that Zhang had already provided the CDC with irrefutable evidence showing that Du had sought and taken bribes. Since Du was just a minor official and had no connections at the commission, the CDC immediately instructed the relevant departments to investigate and prosecute the case, and on June 4, Du was arrested on criminal charges.

It was this report about Du Baogan, a little more than two months after his arrest, that brought down the wrath of officialdom on *Workers’ Daily*, ostensibly because of the “[bad] image it projects of the Party and the government.”¹⁴ The near-legendary tale of corruption by Du Baogan in Lushi County finally came to public light more than a year later.

The Lushi County incident was hardly isolated. But compared with fellow professionals who have been detained, or even killed, these journalists could at least console themselves with the fact that their fates could have been much worse.

News Censorship and Half-truths

You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

Abraham Lincoln¹

Over the years, the Chinese government has acquired a great deal of practical experience in media control. Since the mid-1990s, it has suppressed mainly two types of news—reports of industrial accidents or natural disasters, and political criticism. Foreign news is naturally the first target of censorship. The second target is criticism in the Chinese media. However, due to widespread use of the Internet, both kinds of news reports are no longer easy to suppress. When the authorities have no alternative but to report a story that they have failed to cover up, their usual course of action is to mix truth with facts. The Communist regime's political propaganda methods demonstrate once again that dictators have taken to heart Joseph Goebbels' golden rule that lies sprinkled with half-truths are more effective than outright lies.

Interference in the Project Hope corruption scandal²

The exposure of the complex scandal involving Project Hope was one of the biggest news stories in China in 2002. The case provides a classic illustration of Propaganda Department control and interference in the Chinese news media, to distort the truth and deliberately misrepresent the facts.

Hong Kong exposés prompt injunction

Project Hope is a non-governmental charitable project launched in 1989 by the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), which is run by the Communist Youth League. Its aim is to raise funds through a variety of channels to help young and impoverished school dropouts return to school. Because the project was aimed at helping disadvantaged children and it enjoyed the full support of the government, Chinese people from all walks of life donated very generously to it. In China, where charities are not yet well established, Project Hope was singularly successful in obtaining government support. I personally witnessed how, every year, the governments of developed cities, such as Shenzhen, would instruct Party and government organizations and business enterprises to ask their personnel to donate a set portion of their salary to Project Hope. At a time when a large number of charities were being launched, only Project Hope, with its claims of iron-clad integrity, could draw such generous donations each year.³

Xu Yongguang, who had previously been head of the Communist Youth League of China's organization bureau, was CYDF's legal representative from its inception. When CYDF was established in 1989, the Youth League's Central Committee appropriated 100,000 *yuan* in registered capital and 10,000 *yuan* in project costs. Unless otherwise stated, assets listed in CYDF financial statements—including total capital, reserve funds, bank deposits, foreign exchange deposits, bank interest, funds allocated to subordinate units, donations pending allocation, investment funds, and real estate acquisition funds—came from charitable donations to Project Hope.

The Chinese public's high regard for Project Hope gave it immense moral stature, and people placed great trust in CYDF. Until January 1994, when the Hong Kong weekly *Yi Zhoukan* (*Next Magazine*) published an article claiming that 70 million *yuan* in donations to Project Hope was unaccounted for, CYDF had never submitted to a financial audit. In response to this article, the Propaganda Department instructed Chinese media organizations not to give any credence to the foreign media's attempts to blacken the project's name. To counter the foreign media's "rumors," the Propaganda Department also distributed several articles praising the project's moral integrity. Project Hope itself also paid several prestigious scholars to publish articles singing its praises.

Southern Weekend aborts article

In late February 2002, Hong Kong's *Ming Bao* (*Ming Pao Daily News*) published another report about corruption in Project Hope. Based on firsthand evidence, and containing highly detailed information, the charges made in this report shocked the public.

Meanwhile, *Southern Weekend*, the influential newspaper published in Guangdong Province, was planning to publish a four-page investigative report on the case in its March 21, 2002, edition. Written by journalist Fang Jinyu and entitled "Director Tarnishes the Reputation of Project Hope by Breaking Investment Laws and Regulations," the article revealed that Xu Yongguang had been involved in large-scale embezzlement and corruption. But on the evening of March 20, *Southern Weekend* received an urgent instruction from the Propaganda Department: "All news organizations, without exception, are barred from publishing reports about alleged problems with Project Hope." Forced to comply with "Party propaganda discipline," the editors of *Southern Weekend* and the management of *Nanfang Ribao* (*Southern Daily*), its parent paper, immediately instructed more than ten printing offices throughout the country to stop the presses and print a new edition, and the newspaper lost more than 300,000 *yuan* as a result. However, a few copies of the original edition had already been printed and had hit the newsstands, resulting in two editions of the paper on March 21, 2002.

It should be noted that when Fang Jinyu began looking into the Project Hope story, he did not believe the accusations of corruption. First of all, because corruption is becoming widespread in China, Chinese people are eager to find reassuring examples of integrity. Secondly, Project Hope was portrayed by the Chinese government as a great philanthropic enterprise, and Chinese people did not want to see this bubble burst. In January 1994, when *Next Magazine* published the article claiming that 70 million *yuan* in donations were missing, Fang considered it defamatory, and he defended Project Hope. CYDF even refused to settle the matter out of court and went on to sue *Next Magazine* for libel. The Hong Kong High Court eventually found the magazine guilty of defaming the project and awarded more than HK\$3 million to CYDF. Xu Yongguang appeared to have been vindicated.⁴ In 1994, when Fang Jinyu was a senior reporter at Xinhua News Agency and head of the features department of *Liaowang* (*Outlook*) magazine, he wrote a long article to help Xu Yongguang counter the "slandorous" accusations made by *Next Magazine*.

People who know Xu Yongguang say he always went out of his way to cooper-

ate with reporters who wrote favorable articles about himself and Project Hope, and he enthusiastically welcomed interviews. On November 29, 2001, a Project Hope staff member surnamed Tang, in Xuanhan County, Sichuan Province, misappropriated 5,400 *yuan* in donations, and forged letters to school students thanking them for their contributions. *Southern Weekend* exposed the scam in an exclusive report, entitled “Getting to the Bottom of Project Hope’s Forged Letters.” Xu Yongguang immediately wrote the magazine a letter thanking it for publishing the report and inviting it to send a journalist to interview him. *Southern Weekend’s* Beijing correspondent, a female journalist, subsequently carried out an interview that was published in the magazine.

But Xu’s attitude changed completely after he read the published interview, which exposed the problems with Project Hope. On February 28, 2002, Hong Kong’s *Ming Pao Daily News* broke the story of Xu’s corrupt dealings and his violation of laws and regulations. *Southern Weekend* immediately sent its Beijing correspondent to once again interview Xu Yongguang, but this time she was turned away. After this, *Southern Weekend’s* repeated requests for interviews with Xu were turned down. On February 28, CYDF issued a “solemn statement”: “In carrying out Project Hope, the China Youth Development Foundation cannot deduct administrative expenses from donations and has never received a penny in allocated funds from the government, but it has nonetheless scored a marvelous achievement and established the most cost-effective charitable undertaking in the world.”

By that time, Fang Jinyu had begun working for *Southern Weekend* and had read evidence about Xu furnished by two whistleblowers, Liu Yang, the former deputy head of CYDF’s accounting department, and Yi Xiao, another former employee who was sentenced to a thirteen-year prison term based on a false accusation by Xu Yongguang. Combined with other firsthand information, the evidence against Xu was so overwhelming that Fang, originally an ardent supporter of Project Hope, changed his mind and decided to write the exposé that was eventually pulped.

Xinhua News Agency issues a notice

The ambiguous attitude of the Communist Youth League’s central committee—and other government departments closely connected to CYDF—toward Project Hope’s corruption scandal lies beyond the scope of this book. Instead, I will focus

on how the Propaganda Department and other news departments interfered in this affair.

After issuing the injunction that caused *Southern Weekend* to reprint its issue of March 21, 2002, the Propaganda Department sent an urgent notice to all employees of Party-run news organizations in China: “All news organizations, without exception, are prohibited from publishing reports about alleged problems with Project Hope.” While the Propaganda Department banned criticism and questions about Xu Yongguang and Project Hope, CYDF issued a statement on the Sina.com website, entitled “Project Hope Suffers a ‘Terrorist Attack’ by Criminal Elements.” The next day, Xinhua News Agency sent its own notice to news organizations throughout the country, stating that “a former employee made false accusations against Xu Yongguang.” From that point on, only statements by Xu defending and praising himself appeared in the Chinese media.

Then, on April 16, shortly after a meeting of CYDF’s board of directors, the organization asked Xinhua to issue a news dispatch from Beijing stating the following: “First, [Xu Yongguang] did not break state laws and regulations when he used some working funds to make investments to defray administrative expenses. Second, we ought to draw lessons from the very small number of Project Hope investments that did lose money. Third, to guard against future risky investments, [CYDF] must dispose of assets in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Law of the PRC applicable to public welfare trusts [charities].”

Given Xinhua’s special status in China’s media landscape, one can easily guess what went on behind the scenes to make this happen. In the first place, Xinhua and *People’s Daily* are not merely news outlets, they are the Party’s paramount mouthpieces, and their political power is such that their news releases cannot be questioned. Secondly, all news organizations are required to use wire copy from Xinhua and *People’s Daily* in order to “unify public opinion.” If the matter had simply been one of protecting Xu Yongguang’s career, Xinhua would not have endorsed him in official news bulletins. However, to protect the reputation of Project Hope and encourage Chinese citizens to continue to donate generously, the Propaganda Department repeatedly used its power and authority to influence news reports about the project.

But Chinese Internet users had already begun spreading news of Xu’s suspected misappropriation of donations to Project Hope. In recent years, the widespread graft and corruption of officials in China has become a poorly kept secret, and exposing the Project Hope scandal at that time had serious consequences. As Fang Jinyu put it, “Our Party and our people face a serious problem. If the inves-

tigation proves that Xu Yongguang was engaged in corruption, this means that Project Hope has been destroyed from within. The tough question we face is this: what are the consequences if, after twelve years of news reports telling us that millions of citizens have donated generously to this most efficient, well-known, and deserving of charitable enterprises, it turns out that it was corrupt to the core? If the glorious image of Project Hope is destroyed, together with that of Xu Yongguang, who will give generously to other charities, such as those that assist poor children and farmers struck by natural disasters?”

Despite the pressure that had been brought to bear against him, Fang Jinyu wrote the article that exposed Project Hope. Given the story’s far-reaching implications, the editors of *Southern Weekend* thought that if they went ahead and published it, the magazine would also come under enormous pressure. Consequently, they asked Fang, who had worked for Xinhua, to use his connections to have the exposé distributed as an “internal reference” (*neican*) report. The facts of the case could thus be revealed without making them public. Fang tried various avenues to get his story distributed, but to no avail. No one wanted to end up being tarred by the same brush as Xu Yongguang. In fact, all evidence against Xu that was furnished by anonymous whistleblowers to the central leadership was sent right to him. After withdrawal of the original *Southern Weekend* edition containing his story, Fang was forced to give up publication of his exposé.

However, even if Fang was willing to let the matter rest, it was now beyond his control. The Propaganda Department would neither tolerate his challenge to the government’s power, nor allow him to tarnish the good name of Project Hope—all the more so because fourth-generation leader Hu Jintao had been a Communist Youth League member and still had countless ties to it. Fang Jinyu’s fate was sealed.

“Leaking state secrets” invoked

The Propaganda Department and other Chinese government departments frequently hold “information meetings,” which are also known as “advance briefings.” Fang Jinyu attended one such meeting on June 5, 2002, during which Propaganda Department officials reiterated the injunction against reporting on Project Hope.

Fang quotes a senior Propaganda Department official as saying, “Recently, some foreign and Chinese newspapers have sensationalized Project Hope’s sup-

posed violation of investment regulations. The impact of these reports has been very damaging. Project Hope has had a huge impact in China and abroad. For more than a decade, millions of people have donated to it. Investigations and audits by the departments concerned have now proven that there is nothing to the allegations regarding Project Hope. These recent reports were made mainly by a former Project Hope employee to stir up trouble. . . . From now on, no one—without exception—may report on the alleged problems of Project Hope.”

According to Fang Jinyu, the injunction resulted from pressure that Xu Yongguang persistently applied to the Propaganda Department through various channels, following publication of the *Ming Pao Daily News* article in February 2002. According to Fang’s understanding, the written injunction issued on March 20 applied only to Guangdong Province. But he goes on to say:

Because *Southern Weekend*, its actual target, suffered a serious setback as a result—the news of which was spread on the Internet—this frightened other news organizations into staying silent. I happen to know that several news outlets had planned to follow *Southern Weekend’s* lead in covering the story. But as we say in Chinese, “the overturned cart in front serves as a warning to the carts behind.” After this, one news outlet after another dropped the articles they had planned to publish. *Sanlian Shenghuo Zhoukan* (*Sanlian Life Weekly*) was an exception, as it published an article on Xu Yongguang after the Propaganda Department issued its injunction. To my knowledge, the magazine was not criticized for this article, because the manuscript was read by Xu before it went to press. Nevertheless, *Sanlian Life Weekly* employed veiled language to damn Xu Yongguang with exaggerated praise, which was very helpful to me. But that is something I will get to later.

The Propaganda Department’s injunction enabled Xu Yongguang to use the media to spread lies, whitewash his own faults, and mislead the public. Within the Party, honest journalists opposed to corruption were prohibited from calling Xu into question.

Fang also rebuffs the Propaganda Department official’s claim that an audit had cleared Project Hope of wrongdoing:

As soon as the meeting was over, I telephoned the National Audit Office to ask for results of the audit. They were surprised by my question, and asked me: “Who told you that we had finished the audit? How do you know that the Propaganda Department said as much at the information meeting? Have you been accurately informed?”

Were you at the meeting yourself, and did you hear this with your own ears?” When I explained that I had been at the information meeting, they said: “They claim that we’ve finished the audit? Nonsense! We just got here!”

After this, Yi Xiao, one of the whistleblowers, was arrested and thrown in prison. Liu Yang, the other whistleblower, somehow managed to escape to safety in the United States. Although the *Southern Weekend* article was pulled, an even worse fate awaited its author, Fang Jinyu, following another “information meeting” on December 17, 2002. During that meeting, a senior Propaganda Department official criticized *Southern Weekend* for a lengthy article on counterterrorism efforts: “This is a serious violation of propaganda discipline and a serious leak of state secrets. We have repeatedly explained that all issues relating to counterterrorism are state secrets of the highest level. After the 9/11 attacks in the United States, we repeatedly and specifically said as much. But they did not listen! Does this editor-in-chief know the first thing about his job?”

Fang observes:

When I checked *Southern Weekend’s* article on counterterrorism, the section that the Propaganda Department had criticized as a serious leak of state secrets was identical with the key points of an article published openly by the State Council Information Office (“The Terrorist Forces in Eastern Turkistan Cannot Escape Responsibility for Their Crimes”) and an interview for CCTV’s program, “Oriental Horizon” (“*Dongfang Shikong*”), which was aired on September 11, with He Ting, director of the Ministry of Public Security’s Counterterrorism Bureau, and Liu Yaohua, deputy director of the Public Security Department of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. It certainly did not divulge any secrets. [...]

The only difference was that director, He Ting, said the professional counterterrorism team had “state-of-the-art equipment,” while an expert interviewed by *Southern Weekend* said that some units were equipped with “police helicopters.” It is also worth noting that, because of the sensitive nature of the subject, the key paragraphs in the article were read aloud to the interviewees prior to publication. After the article was published, none of those interviewed (government experts who write about these issues) raised any objections. How did *Southern Weekend* end up being guilty of a “serious leak of state secrets”?

Anyone aware of how the Chinese Communist regime has dealt with political dissidents and critics knows that since the government adopted the “benevolent

policy” of abolishing the charge of “counterrevolutionary crimes” in the early 1980s, “leaking state secrets” has become the main criminal charge used against intellectuals and journalists. As a journalist of many years’ experience, Fang knew all too well what this accusation augured for his personal future:

I was at the meeting on December 17, 2002, listening. As the senior official criticized *Southern Weekend*, it was obvious from his tone of voice that he was angrier than any other official who criticized the newspaper. He singled out our editor-in-chief and expressed doubts about his professional competence. What was I, the journalist who had written the article about Xu Yongguang’s suspected involvement in corruption, supposed to do?

If you “risk your life” by publishing this sort of thing, you have to bear the consequences. Now the departments and leaders involved could use the charge of “serious leaking of state secrets” to expel me from the Party and dismiss me from my job.

In fact, by issuing this statement, Fang was merely postponing the inevitable. As long as he remained on Chinese soil, the Chinese government could always concoct another charge to punish him.

To protect himself and to save the two whistleblowers from an even worse fate, Fang had no choice but to post his article on the Internet, give up his copyright to it, and allow all media outlets to reprint it. But oddly enough, although the Project Hope story should have attracted a lot of attention in China, only a small number of mainland websites and bulletin boards posted the article. A bottomless pit of silence swallowed up these voices of conscience.

Lies sprinkled with truth: The Nanjing poisoning case

In the case of Project Hope, the Chinese government’s method was to enforce a total news blackout and have Xinhua News Agency patch up its lies. In the Nanjing poisoning case, it adopted another method—first enforce a news blackout, then publish reports sprinkled with partial truths.

The official blackout

In the early morning hours of September 14, 2002, more than four hundred stu-

dents and construction workers in Tangshan Township on the outskirts of Nanjing were stricken with food poisoning after consuming sesame-seed cakes, deep-fried dough sticks, sesame-seed rice dumplings, and soymilk from the Heshengyuan snack shop. Dorm students from Jiangsu Mofan Middle School and Zuochang Middle School collapsed within a minute of eating their snacks, and a number of them died. By 6:20 AM, the news had spread that a large number of people had food poisoning. Between 6:30 and 7:30 AM, the blare of police and ambulance sirens reverberated throughout the township. At 8:20 AM, government officials arrived at the scene. Armed police showed up at 3:00 PM to maintain order and to stop journalists from conducting interviews.

The authorities blacked out news coverage of the poisoning for thirty-six hours, until overseas Chinese began to phone their relatives back in China to inquire after their well-being. Scattered reports began to appear on Chinese websites. On September 14, a photo caption on the Xinhua News Agency website in Beijing stated that forty-one people had died, but the caption was quickly removed.

The Chinese government's multiple instances of negligence during the rescue operation, and the contemptuous attitude exhibited toward the stricken people by numerous school and hospital staff members, lie beyond the scope of this book. Here we will examine only the various methods used by the government to suppress the news about this case.

Immediately after the poisoning case occurred, the central and local governments agreed that their most important task was to suppress all news about the incident in order to maintain "social stability"—even if that stability was only surface deep.

That morning, one vehicle after another rushed poisoning victims to the General Hospital of the Nanjing Military Area Command, the Jiangsu People's Hospital, and eight other hospitals. At 5:00 PM on September 15, a strict news blackout was imposed on General Hospital, and journalists were barred from entering the wards. However, a group of journalists finally managed to find some poisoning victims in wards 36 and 37, and the names of sixty-seven of these patients, mostly students, were posted on the doors of these wards. The iron gates of Zuochang Middle School were locked at 8:00 AM on September 16, although a few individuals with special passes occasionally entered and left the building. The school gatekeepers told journalists that they were under strict orders to prevent unauthorized people from entering the premises. Police guards were posted in the alley where the Heshengyuan snack shop was located, and they prohibited the taking of photographs. On September 16, the head of the village broke in on an

animated conversation between villagers and a Hong Kong television crew near the snack shop, shouting, “This is a political murder case! Without the consent of the central authorities and the Propaganda Department, not even the Xinhua News Agency can report on this.” At that time, the 16th National Congress of the CPC was drawing near, and the Central Committee had declared “counterterrorism and terrorism prevention” to be a central focus in maintaining political stability and public order. Zhongnanhai, the leadership compound in Beijing, considered the poisoning case a serious threat to social stability and designated it a “politically damaging incident.”

The “political wisdom” of news blackouts

The Chinese government’s news blackout of the Nanjing food poisoning incident epitomizes the “political wisdom” it has accumulated over nearly half a century of suppressing news. This “wisdom” comprises the following principles:

1. Play down natural disasters and “sudden mass incidents.” Do not permit any media outlet to publish front-page or lead stories about such incidents; instead, hide such stories in the back of the domestic news section. Use small headlines and avoid attention-grabbing language.
2. News reports should emphasize the seriousness with which top leaders regard accidents and natural disasters, the Party and the government’s concern for the victims, and the measures taken to provide relief.
3. All news media must make “unified statements” (*tongyi koujing*). As a general rule, local government propaganda departments must draft “unified” news releases (wire copy) and distribute them to media outlets for “reference.” (In fact, media outlets are required to base their coverage on such news releases.) Only news that has been vetted at the higher levels may be published. News reports of accidents and natural disasters generally focus on minor incidents and avoid major ones, or they simply cover up the facts.
4. No graphic photos may be taken at the scene of an accident or disaster and no ongoing coverage is permitted. News photographs should show Party and government leaders personally directing relief work at the scene.

5. To play down bad news and feelings of dissatisfaction among the general population, film disaster victims telling how they have benefited from the Party and the government's timely relief. Sometimes the role of ordinary people can be played by government employees.
6. Seal all investigative information and evidence about such incidents in a "black box." Publicize selected or distorted investigation results and accentuate public declarations that the authorities will punish the culprits "swiftly and severely."

A statement posted on Sohu.com a few days after the poisonings demonstrates how skillfully these six principles were applied during the news blackout of the Nanjing poisoning case. The "Draft News Bulletin by the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee's Propaganda Department on the Serious Nanjing Poisoning Case of September 14,"²⁵ signed by the Internet Information Management Office of the Nanjing Propaganda Department, stated that the situation was well under control and that the government had made every effort to help the victims. A careful comparison of news articles shows that, at the time, the Chinese media based its coverage of the incident on this bulletin, a scan of the original document. Because the Propaganda Department has ultimate power over the Chinese media (including Internet media outlets), even if Sohu.com were utterly fearless, it is hardly likely that it would have forged this document. Judging by its form and content, it is genuine and reliable.

What is "news," in the Chinese government's view?

If the Chinese government does not consider "news" a poisoning case that cost so many lives, then what is? A conscientious person kept a record of the main news segments broadcast by CCTV's evening news on September 14, 2002, the day of the Nanjing poisoning case:

- Lead story: The Three Represents at the grassroots level
- Segment 2: The National Reemployment Conference has elicited much interest across the country; laid-off workers express their gratitude to the Secretary General for the concern he has shown them

- Segment 3: Central government tax revenues from January through August have been excellent
- Segment 4: Central Committee Member Li Peng visits the Philippines and delivers a communiqué
- Segment 5: “Heading for Glory”: A special report to welcome the 16th Communist Party Congress
- Segment 6: The closing ceremonies of the 2007 Special Olympics in China
- Segment 7: The Dalian Clothing Festival opens in an atmosphere of joy and happiness
- Segment 8: International news

Apart from local Nanjing television coverage and a news item posted on the Xinhua News Agency website on the afternoon of September 14 (then promptly removed), the official Chinese media completely ignored the Nanjing poisoning case. A number of major official news sites simply reprinted the Xinhua report, displaying a remarkable political awareness of the requirement to make “unified statements” when reporting serious accidents and natural disasters. Some online bulletin boards took the initiative of removing posts about the incident, but posts came in so fast that bulletin-board managers could not keep up. At 8:20 PM, news about the Nanjing poisoning case disappeared from the rolling news feed on Netease.com (China’s largest Internet content provider). There was not a single negative news story from China. The few “bad news” headlines concerned international events:

- Jordanian student sues the U.S. government after being arrested in connection with the 9/11 investigation
- American pilots are charged in friendly-fire deaths of Canadian soldiers
- Powerful earthquake, measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale, hits eastern India, destroying homes and killing two people

Most inexplicable is the fact that, during this brief period, Netease.com devoted significant news coverage to Jiangsu Province and Nanjing. Every one of the eleven articles about the areas sang the praises of public security and government departments for “serving the people,” or of college and university reforms, or of economic development. Not one mentioned the Nanjing poisoning case.

Yet it was widely known that hundreds of poisoning victims were rushed to Nanjing’s hospitals that day and that many of them died. While international media scrambled to cover the Nanjing poisoning case, the Chinese media complied with government instructions and ignored the story.

Internet postings reflected the anger felt by Chinese citizens about this incident. As soon as CCTV’s evening news broadcast of September 14 had ended, people expressed their indignation on the Strong Country Forum hosted by the *People’s Daily* website:⁶

Nothing is more important than human life. An event of this magnitude would be front-page news in any other country. But CCTV won’t even talk about it!

Weep, weep for people treated as no more than ants!

My beloved country, when will I be able to start loving you?

We demand that flags be flown at half-mast in mourning!

The first thing the Propaganda Department did was to ban any news reports of people suffering and dying!

Three days after the tragic incident, the government’s three principal mouthpieces (Xinhua News Agency, *People’s Daily*, and CCTV) were still disseminating only sketchy reports mentioning “numerous” casualties—when what ordinary people were really concerned about was the exact number of deaths. On September 16, CCTV aired a report about the Three Gorges project, while Xinhua and *People’s Daily* published reports about the upcoming 16th Party Congress. Even a story on the market for car loans was deemed to be more important than the Nanjing poisoning case that had shocked people throughout the world.⁷

The official story

On day three, information about the Nanjing poisoning case was finally released, but what was this information and how did it compare to the actual events?

On September 18, the fourth day after the incident, Xinhua News Agency reported that “rescue efforts had failed” for thirty-eight people. That same day, the Hong Kong weekly *Yazhou Zhoukan* (*Asia Weekly*) reported more than one hundred fatalities. The Chinese media also reported that the government took the following measures, out of concern for the victims: (1) It approved a compensation of 60,000 *yuan* for each fatality; (2) As soon as President Jiang Zemin was informed of the poisonings, he ordered a swift and comprehensive effort to help the victims and to identify the source of the poison. During the period immediately following the incident, ten army and local government hospitals dispatched seven medical teams, thirty-five experts, and more than five hundred emergency personnel to the scene. On the day of the incident, Premier Zhu Rongji sent Wang Zhongyu, secretary-general of the State Council, to Nanjing to help deal with the aftermath; (3) In Beijing the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs set up a joint special task force that traveled to Tangshan Township to investigate the poisoning and coordinate relief work.

The Beijing leadership ordered public security agencies to deploy all their forces to solve the case as quickly as possible. A break came the day after the poisonings. The primary suspect was the snack shop owner’s cousin, Chen Zhengping, who held a personal grudge against him. When Chen disappeared shortly after the incident, a nationwide warrant was issued for his arrest. In less than forty-eight hours, he was apprehended on a train in Henan Province. Chen had reportedly been jealous of the success of his cousin’s snack shop, because it had caused his own snack shop to go out of business. He sneaked into the shop and put rat poison in its well and in the flour his cousin used for dough. *Dushuqiang*, the rat poison Chen employed, had been banned by the government. Popularly known as “Rat Annihilator” or “Down in Three Steps,” this poison is reportedly one hundred times deadlier than cyanide and has no known antidote. According to the government, Chen was swiftly executed, “due to tremendous public outrage,” less than a month after the crime was committed.

With the government and Party leaders showing so much concern for the people, and with the case being solved so quickly, what else was there to say? The news may have come a few days late, but after all, it was because the government had to

ensure social “stability and unity,” which everyone knows is the state’s paramount political duty.⁸

Even so, some Chinese citizens expressed doubts about the official story and joked that the case was solved and tried faster than the speed of light. On January 10, 2003, Xiao Han, a legal researcher, posted an article on an Internet discussion forum, entitled “Information Openness and Government Credibility: An Initial Investigation into the Charges Brought Against Chen Zhengping in the September 14 Poisoning Case.”⁹ Xiao consulted a wide range of sources and expressed doubts about the official version of the investigation, arrest, and trial. Based on Chinese law and international practice, he argued that the government had an obligation to publish the trial proceedings, along with specific information about how the case was handled. The article, of twenty thousand words, was not published anywhere in China and could be read only on the Internet.

Xiao Han raised a number of specific questions: (1) Where and when did Chen Zhengping buy the rat poison, and were there any witnesses? (2) What was the name and identity of the person, or persons, who sold the *Dushuqiang* rat poison, and where did it come from? (3) When and where did Chen Zhengping introduce the poison? Did he poison the water, the flour, or the soymilk? Exactly how much poison did he use? Were any containers or bags of unused poison found? (4) Did anyone witness Chen Zhengping lacing the food or water with poison? (5) How many people were poisoned? What were their names and identification card numbers? They should have been clearly identified even if no ID cards were found. (6) How did the police determine that Chen Zhengping was responsible for each of the victims who were poisoned, and how did they determine that he directly caused the deaths of all those who died? Xiao enumerated twenty-five questions about which the government had a responsibility to inform the public, but no information was made public even after the “culprit” was executed.

Xiao noted further that countries with legislation protecting freedom of information have laws that stipulate what kind of information should be made public and what should not, as well as what information should be made temporarily public and what should remain permanently classified (if indeed any information remains classified forever). Thus, under the U.S. and Japanese freedom of information acts, information pertaining to diplomatic secrets, business secrets, and individual privacy is protected from public scrutiny. But in Chen Zhengping’s case, it was hard to find any legal rationale for keeping information about the case secret, even before the trial had begun. Releasing information such as the number of victims and the names of those who died would in no way have impeded a fair

trial. But except for a couple of inconsequential details, such as Chen Zhengping's name and the names of a few of the railroad police officers who arrested him, the authorities kept all relevant information under wraps.

As long as the Chinese government insists on keeping almost all information secret, the public will probably never know for certain whether Chen Zhengping was guilty of the Nanjing poisonings. But the arguments for legal and administrative transparency and the questions raised in Xiao Han's article are indicative of the Chinese public's deep lack of trust in the government. It is safe to say that, if news of the Nanjing poisoning case had not been disseminated on the Internet, it would never have been made public.

On February 2, 2003, during the Lunar New Year Festival, a fire broke out in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, killing thirty-three people. Not only was there no news about this in the national newspapers, but not one word was printed about it even by the local news media. Moreover, because the government had already shut down hundreds of Chinese websites, the ones that remained were cowed into silence. To read the Chinese news media, one would never know the Harbin fire ever happened. More than twenty days after the fire, someone posted an unpublished article, written by Xinhua journalists, on an Internet bulletin board, but it was taken down within twenty-four hours.¹⁰

Journalism as a High-risk Occupation

“China, already the world’s leading jailer of journalists for the fourth year in a row . . . [ended] the year with a total of 39 journalists behind bars.”

Committee to Protect Journalists¹

Unlike journalists in the West, whose most dangerous assignments are usually in war-torn countries, Chinese journalists court danger in their own country in peacetime from source of none other than China’s rulers, and guarding against this sort of danger can be even harder than dodging bullets. Yet, despite the risks they face sacrificing themselves daily in their efforts to tell the truth, Chinese journalists do not enjoy the social status and recognition that their counterparts in other countries receive. Instead, the government often entraps and frames journalists and then charges them with groundless accusations. This section presents some classic examples of the persecution of journalists, based on information collected over the past few years. But it is necessary to point out that most such cases never reach public knowledge, so the examples below represent only part of the story.

The death of Feng Zhaoxia

On January 15, 2002, Feng Zhaoxia, a 48-year-old editor and journalist for the Xi’an-based newspaper *Gejie Daobao* (*World Report*), died under mysterious circumstances. The police concluded that Feng committed suicide, but his family and friends raised many questions and expressed suspicion that he had been murdered in retaliation by triads. The local public security bureau failed to pursue the matter, hastily ruling it a case of suicide and refusing to allow further investiga-

tion. This bizarre attitude made people even more certain that there was something suspicious about the case.

On January 15, around 7:00 AM, the body of a man was found near a cistern in a remote area of Xi'an's Sanqiao Xiyan Subdistrict. The man's throat had been cut and his jugular vein severed. Police identified the dead man as *World Report* editor and journalist Feng Zhaoxia, and determined that a knife found at the scene was the weapon used in his death, with a preliminary suspicion of suicide.

Feng's friends and family believed suicide was out of the question. He had always been a careful, sincere man with no enemies. Shortly before his death he had been out eating and chatting with friends, and there was nothing in his mood to indicate a tendency toward suicide. He had been in the process of moving to a new home on January 14 when someone had contacted him through his pager, after which he had gone out and never returned.

Family members pointed to a number of suspicious circumstances. Feng's body was found in a place far removed from both his old and new homes, and it was an area that he very rarely visited. Secondly, the wound in Feng's neck was very deep, ending his life with a single cut that would have required a chopping motion rather than the cutting motion of a suicide attempt. In addition, on that day, someone had called Feng's workplace asking questions about him, possibly to ascertain his whereabouts.

Family members particularly suspected that a triad gang was responsible for killing Feng, because in 2001, Feng had published a number of controversial exposés on triads in *World Report*, which—being under the management of the People's Consultative Conference of Shaanxi Province—claimed a circulation of almost one hundred thousand and exerted considerable local influence. In particular, Feng had been responsible for numerous reports on corruption and organized crime in Xi'an and its environs, including one particularly controversial story exposing unscrupulous deals and scandalous stories involving ten Xi'an notables.

On January 18, several reporters from a number of Xi'an news organizations went to the Weiyang District Public Security Bureau to make inquiries. The unit head, Song Zhikui, clearly told reporters that the PSB considered this a case of suicide, although the motivation was unknown. The family and the reporters requested to see reports and photos relating to the death scene, but their request was denied. Song told reporters, "I can only tell you it was suicide; if the news media want to make an issue of it, you may find yourselves put under pressure."²

This incident terrified the local media. *World Report* and the Shaanxi Journalists

Association tried several times to discuss the matter further with the police, but they were firmly rebuffed. Finally, the newspaper's management came under official pressure and instructed the paper's reporters to desist in discussing the matter with others and, in particular, to no longer express any views in conflict with the police version of events, otherwise individuals would have to bear the consequences themselves. The obvious cover-up by the government and the police shrouded the matter in mystery, but the general consensus among local media was that political interests had colluded with the underworld in this matter. Not quite four months later, Feng's wife disappeared without a trace.

At one point, I made detailed inquiries in Shaanxi about this case, but by then local media workers had been threatened into silence and no one dared to talk about it.

The arrest of Ma Hailin

That children of senior cadres enrich themselves through their parents' influence in business deals is a matter of common knowledge in China. However, Chinese news organizations have avoided reporting on these questionable dealings, since it would accomplish little, apart from bringing endless grief to those involved in the exposé. It was therefore quite astonishing when *Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan* (*Stock Market Weekly*) published an article by Ma Hailin entitled, "The Mysterious Huaneng Power International Inc.," detailing how the family of former premier Li Peng had acquired its considerable wealth.³

According to the article, state-owned Huaneng International had effectively become Li's family-owned enterprise. His wife, Zhu Lin, was managing director of Huaneng's parent company, Huaneng International Electrical Power Development Company, and his son, Li Xiaopeng, was the operational head of Huaneng International, ship steward to Zhu's captain. In turn, the parent company of Huaneng International, the state-owned entity China Huaneng Group, owned nearly 10 percent of China's energy production. Zhu had other close ties with the electrical power industry. During Li's tenure as China's premier, she was the Beijing representative of Guangdong Province's Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant. Li's daughter, Li Xiaolin, also worked in the electrical power industry, at one time serving as deputy chairman of the Electrical Power Ministry's International Cooperation Office. The article also revealed that she was the deputy managing director of China's largest electrical power producer, China Electrical International Co. Ma

Hailin's article revealed that Zhu and Li Xiaopeng had used their special privileges to make Huaneng International Group the only company that can be listed on the stock exchanges of the United States, Hong Kong, and China, and its share value totaled some 60 billion *yuan*.

The article immediately sent shock waves through the top echelons of the Chinese government, and foreign media competed to report the story.⁴ *Stock Market Weekly* was immediately censored by the CC Propaganda Department. All copies of the issue that had been distributed were impounded. The magazine's issue of December 1, 2001, published a "correction" apologizing for Ma's article, but that issue, too, was confiscated in order to obliterate every trace of the original article. The "correction" stated that Zhu Lin had never held a position at Huaneng International Electrical Development Company, and it apologized for the magazine's "failure to respect the principle of accuracy." Huaneng International's vice president, Huang Long, was quoted as saying, "Ms. Zhu has never held any position in our company or in its parent company."

The magazine's editor-in-chief, Wang Boming, son of CPC veteran Wang Bingnan, had to perform several self-criticisms. Ma, who was also a cadre with the People's Armed Police, was put under house arrest by his unit, and according to a report in *Taiyang Bao* (*The Sun*), on December 4, 2001, Ma's unit commander wrote a letter to Li Peng voicing unanimous accord with the Central Committee and claiming that Ma's wife had actually written the article and submitted it in her husband's name.

On January 10, 2002, the *Washington Post* published a lengthy article about this story, entitled "Corruption Charges Rock China's Leadership."⁵ The article stated that, immediately after the *Stock Market Weekly* article appeared, Li Peng had gone to see Zhou Xiaochuan, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, and Vice Premier Wen Jiabao. Beijing correspondent John Pomfret quoted sources as saying that Li's main topic for discussion was how accusations against a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China could be published without obtaining prior permission from the Politburo. In order to reduce the "harmful influence," in late November 2001, Zhu accepted an interview from *Zhonghua Yingcai* (*China's Talents*) magazine, in which she denied all allegations of stock trading and other corruption.⁶

Allegations regarding the Li Peng family involvement in China's electrical industry had been circulating for years. The *Washington Post* article pointed out that, in a country where the leadership was generally far removed from the public and seldom left its own compounds, many observers were left to wonder why

Zhu had agreed to the interview, and why at this time? The only reasonable answer is that she was attempting to banish allegations of corruption—an example of handling with “Chinese characteristics.”

The jailing of Gao Qinrong

This case, in which local officials entrapped and fabricated allegations against a journalist, reverberated across China. Gao Qinrong, born on January 19, 1955, was a member of the CPC. Originally a journalist for *Shanxi Qingshaonian Bao* (*Shanxi Youth Daily*), Gao was later temporarily transferred to *Jizhe Guancha* (*Journalist Observer*), a magazine published by the Shanxi bureau of Xinhua News Agency. In May 1999, Gao was imprisoned on trumped-up charges after exposing a major irrigation project in Yuncheng District as an elaborate scam.

A multimillion yuan fraudulent irrigation project

According to a local official document, entitled “Economic Work Report for Yuncheng District,” the district was undertaking an irrigation project at a total cost of 285 million *yuan*, which would ultimately provide irrigation for 1.03 million *mu* of land. The newspaper *Yuncheng Ribao* (*Yuncheng Daily*) had previously reported that local investment in the project would only amount to 170 million *yuan* and that the completed project would provide irrigation to 610,000 *mu*, while the government department in charge of the project, the Yuncheng Water Management Bureau, stated 700,000 *mu*. Following up on complaints from local farmers regarding the irrigation project, and noticing the discrepancy in figures in the three reports, Gao looked into the matter. After a year-long investigation, he found that the “model” irrigation project was, in fact, a corrupt and fraudulent expenditure of money and manpower, intended to feather the caps of local officials.

In the course of his inquiries, Gao visited seven or eight counties, inspected many irrigation ponds, and took more than one hundred photographs, in order to accurately record his observations. He stated:

In all the places I visited, especially the irrigation ponds alongside the highways, there were virtually no fields to be irrigated. Some irrigation ponds had frames con-

structed on empty land, and no lining to prevent drainage; other ponds were overgrown with weeds or planted with fruit trees or sunflowers; some actually had water pipes installed, but the pipes were stuffed into the ground, and when lifted up they were found to be clogged with wooden stakes—how could they serve as water sluices? It was a complete fraud! Even worse, many irrigation ponds had no water pipes at all, but were just set there for show. From the highway you could see what looked like irrigation ponds, but on closer inspection they were only half the expected size. I asked local officials about it, and they said, “Who pays as much attention as you do!”

Throughout Gao’s inquiries, officials at all levels refused to comment on the irrigation project, but local residents bluntly described the project as a fraud. When they heard that Wang Gaosheng—the person who invented the irrigation pond and whom the local government called a “model irrigator”—had claimed that in forty days the system would be able to irrigate 500,000 *mu* of land, the residents shook their heads and said, “That’s absolutely impossible—he only said that to impress people at the opening ceremony!”

One villager told Gao, “Just before the opening ceremony, the local government let us use the irrigation pond for six days and even let us lay down some pipes, but once the guests left, the pipes were all pulled out. Later on, local officials learned that reporters were here looking at the project, and they ordered us to dismantle the irrigation pond within three days, or else it would be bulldozed and we’d be fined 50 *yuan*.” A farmer working in a field in Xuezhong Township in Ruicheng County told Gao, “They built the irrigation pond, but they’ve never used it!” A nearby township official who heard the comment immediately scolded the woman, “What are you blabbing about? I’ll teach a lesson to anyone who talks rubbish like that!”

The corrupt are let off and the accuser is punished

Filled with righteous indignation and driven by a strong sense of social responsibility, Gao sent an article to the “internal reference” edition of *People’s Daily* and reported the matter to the Central Disciplinary Committee. Gao never expected that the township official’s threat would soon be carried out against himself.

On May 27, 1998, the “Letters from Readers, Internal Edition” of *People’s Daily* published Gao’s article, entitled “Huge Sums Wasted on an Irrigation Project

Scam in Yuncheng District, Shanxi Province.” Numerous media outlets that were not under the jurisdiction of the Shanxi provincial government immediately picked up the story, including *Southern Weekend*, *Minzhu yu Fazhi Huabao* (*Democracy and Law Illustrated*), CCTV’s programs “*Xinwen Diaocha*” (“Investigative News”) and “*Jiaodian Fangtan*” (“Focus”), *China Youth Daily*, *Nongmin Ribao* (*Farmers’ Daily*), and *Zhonghua Xinwen Bao* (*China News*). Under public pressure, the Central Disciplinary Committee ordered the Shanxi Provincial Disciplinary Committee to initiate an investigation into the matter. This is a standard practice of dealing with corruption in China, where the upper levels of government routinely pass on allegations for investigation to the very officials against whom the allegations are made. The result, of course, is that those who make the allegations end up getting investigated themselves.

And so it was in this case that the target of the investigation was not those responsible for the fraudulent irrigation scheme, but Gao Qinrong, the journalist who had exposed it. When an official from the Shanxi Provincial Disciplinary Committee came to see him, Gao was astonished that the official asked him nothing about the irrigation scheme, but simply posed three questions: (1) Why did he write that internal reference article? (2) What was the motivation behind the article? (3) Who put him onto the story?

This investigation resulted in personal catastrophe for Gao.

Officials turn kidnapers

On the evening of December 4, 1998, while he was back in Beijing writing to the Central Disciplinary Commission and the All-China Journalists’ Association about the matter, Gao received a telephone call from an acquaintance, asking to meet him at a certain restaurant. He went out without a second thought, and as he was walking along in the dark, he was surrounded by a group of men, one of whom said, “Are you Gao Qinrong? Please come with us!” Before the man finished talking, his accomplices had already tied Gao’s hands behind his back, and later that night, they put him into a taxi and brought him back to Shanxi. Gao’s captors took him first to the Xia County Detention Center in Yuncheng, but because there were no formal grounds for detention or formal paperwork, the detention center refused to accept him, and his captors had to take him to the Ruicheng County Detention Center instead.

Having detained Gao before deciding what charges to bring, Gao’s abductors

continued to change their accusations over the period that followed; one moment Gao was accused of “extortion and racketeering” and the next, of “flagrant swindling,” but none of these charges held. Nevertheless, on December 26, 1998, Gao was formally arrested. The Yuncheng City People’s Prosecutor’s Office indicted Gao on April 28, 1999, and the Yuncheng City People’s Court tried him in closed proceedings, ostensibly in the interest of individual privacy.

Framing by officials makes appeal difficult

Gao’s indictment charged him with “taking bribes, fraud, and pimping,” all fabricated to hold him in custody. The so-called fraud charge related to a matter in May 1997 in which Gao took 20,000 *yuan* out of a Yuncheng Hotel account on someone else’s behalf. This matter was not reported until a year and a half later, six days before he was abducted. Gao’s defense counsel determined that the paperwork had been produced at the request of the local public security bureau.

The “pimping” charge accused Gao of two acts (as quoted from the original document): (1) “In June 1996 . . . the accused telephoned a person named Ming Sheng (further details unavailable) to procure a prostitute (further details unavailable) . . .” Gao’s lawyer felt this allegation violated basic legal principles requiring sufficient evidence and that essential facts be clear. (2) “The accused at a certain location offered the services of prostitute Wang XX to a Mr. Zhang, and at a certain location offered the services of prostitute Yang XX to a Mr. Xiao . . .” Gao’s lawyer observed that, in their statements, prostitutes Wang and Yang had, from the outset, denied that their contacts with Zhang and Xiao had anything to do with the accused. Their statements were true and conclusive, and for that reason, the case had been closed without any further action against Gao. Indeed, at the time of the incident, his name had not even been mentioned in the statements of the prostitutes or their clients. All the same, two years later, the authorities went back to those individuals and asked them to accuse Gao of pimping.

The charge of accepting bribes, according to the lawyer’s inquiries, was another empty allegation added to increase the seriousness of Gao’s crimes. Despite the fact that all three charges were groundless, on May 4, 1999, Gao Qinrong was sentenced to twelve years in prison.

It should be mentioned at this point that the perpetrators of Yuncheng’s fraudulent irrigation scheme had already admitted their mistakes. The previous local Party secretary confessed, “I feel a great burden on my conscience for spending so

much money on this deception, wasting manpower and resources in a way that has been very injurious to the Party and the people.” A subsequent Party secretary said, “Looking back, it is clear that the project did not correspond with reality, and the lessons we learned will have a deep effect on our subsequent work.”⁷ Nevertheless, the journalist who exposed the scandal was prosecuted and sentenced to a lengthy prison term. His family members say that, under government orders, he has also been treated with particular brutality in prison.

Some publications in China tried to expose the gross injustice in Gao Qinrong’s case, but they were immediately given warnings by their supervising departments. Some intellectuals also signed a petition on Gao’s behalf, and international human rights organizations have also protested the matter. But ultimately, these protests have had no effect. The Shanxi Party secretariat has maintained an obdurate silence, and the central government has also refused to intervene in the matter.⁸

The recall of a “reactionary book”

The next example—involving a compilation of official government documents that ended up being labeled “reactionary”—is an incident that those outside China may find difficult to comprehend, although Chinese people are well used to the kind of political contradiction it reflects.⁹

Official documents compiled to help farmers

The heavy tax burden shouldered by China’s farmers is a reality the Chinese government has been forced to confront, and the CPC and the central government have issued numerous directives since the mid-1990s ordering local governments to lighten the tax burden on peasants. Nevertheless, inquiries by the Jiangxi Province Rural Areas Work Commission revealed that local cadres had been levying unauthorized fees and taxes on peasants. One of the most onerous and contested of these taxes was called a “money-or-labor” tax scheme, which allowed local cadres to force farmers to either perform manual labor for the local government for free, or pay a tax in lieu of labor if there wasn’t enough work to go around. In some localities, such arbitrary and unfair government taxation had strained relations between cadres and peasants to the point of physical confrontations.

In light of this situation, Gui Xiaoqi, deputy editor of *Nongcun Fazhan Luncong*

(*Commentary on Rural Development*), a magazine published by the Jiangxi Rural Areas Work Commission, decided to compile in one manual all previous statements and documents published by the central government on this matter. The idea was to familiarize farmers with their rights and duties and, ultimately, to reduce conflict between cadres and farmers. The result was *Work Manual on Reducing Farmers' Tax Burden*, published by the same office that published *Commentary on Rural Development*.

Even under the strict provisions of China's current publication regulations, this book complied with the law in all respects. It was divided into the following sections:

1. Twenty-four official documents and regulations issued by the central government, State Council, and central ministries since the 1990s, for the purpose of alleviating the burdens on farmers;
2. Fifteen official documents and regulations issued by Jiangxi, Hunan, and other provinces to comply with the central government's "burden alleviation" policy in respect to rural self-governance, land management, and migrant communities;
3. "One Hundred and Eight Questions and Answers on the Burdens of Farmers," written by Cai Haikang, chair of the Farmers' Burden Alleviation Office, and Cheng Changsheng, head of the Jiangxi Provincial Land Management Bureau's Policy and Regulations Office.
4. Appendix: Possible approaches when peasant burdens are not alleviated: (a) resistance; (b) reporting; (c) application for administrative review; (d) initiating an administrative appeal; (e) petitioning (i.e., reflecting the situation to upper levels of government by letter).

The title page of the manual quoted speeches by CPC General Secretary Jiang Zemin and State Council Premier Zhu Rongji on reducing farmers' burdens, and inside the front cover was the telephone number of the Jiangxi Province Rural Areas Work Commission, which readers could call to ask questions and lodge complaints. Even before the manual was available in bookstores, farmers rushed to the offices of *Commentary on Rural Development* to buy copies, with some 12,000 sold just between July 29 and August 11, 2000. They used this valuable

compilation of government documents as legal substantiation for their claims against local cadres, and in determining which taxes and fees were legal and which were arbitrary.

Official documents labeled “reactionary”

Although this manual contained official Central Committee policies and was published with the approval of the provincial-level press and publications bureau, it met with a surprising fate. Several cadres started claiming that it was a “reactionary pamphlet” produced by the Falun Gong¹⁰ and demanded that farmers surrender their copies of the book.

While the editors of *Commentary on Rural Development* were still congratulating themselves on helping the peasants, they received a surprising order on August 21, 2000, from the higher authorities—stop selling the *Work Manual* and confiscate all copies that had already been sold. Government officials descended upon the villages and went to the addresses provided by farmers when they purchased the manuals, using whatever means necessary to take back each and every book; some local officials went house to house, confiscating books, while others offered to buy back the books for 12 *yuan* each, a 2-*yuan* increase over the original price. Officials quoted the slogan “wherever the book is sold, the evil influence must be destroyed.”

Farmers did not willingly surrender the books they had purchased. At first, officials said they were confiscating the manuals because of an “inappropriate cover design,” but farmers simply agreed to tear off the cover and give it to the officials, while retaining the book. So the officials changed the reason to “proofreading errors in the text,” at which point, farmers offered to correct their copies themselves if the errors were pointed out. Finally, the officials found it easier to offer no reason, but simply to demand the books back. Some officials threatened the farmers by saying, “Anyone who conceals the book will bear the consequences.” Within six months, 11,000 of the 12,000 sold copies were confiscated and sent to Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi, where they were stored in a warehouse. A schoolteacher who photocopied the manual and distributed it to peasants was arrested on charges of “distributing a reactionary book.”

The person responsible for publishing the manual, Gui Xiaoqi, was initially suspended from his post and put under investigation, but the leaders of the Jiangxi Provincial Party Committee disagreed over how to deal with him. The majority of

committee members wanted him severely punished, but the top provincial leadership did not want to take responsibility and hesitated for a while. In the end, they agreed to have him arrested and to decide what crime to charge him with later on. When Gui learned of the decision, he saw he was likely to become a second Gao Qinrong and fled, managing to escape only two hours before he was to be arrested. Jiangxi officials ordered that if Gui returned to Jiangxi, he was to be thrown in jail. To date, he remains a fugitive.¹¹

This incident plunged the Chinese government into a paradoxical situation. It issued various policies and regulations so that citizens could learn about and comply with them. However, the attitude of local officials—who are supposedly in the service of the central government—had always been that they would implement all central government documents that worked to their advantage, and ignore all those that did not. In the latter case, they could not allow members of the public to know about such documents, and therefore had to label them as “reactionary publications.”

After the details of this case were reported in the influential *Southern Weekend*, no one could claim that the central government and top government leaders did not know what had happened. But although Gui Xiaoqi personally wrote a complaint to the Ministry of Agriculture in Beijing, not one official questioned the Jiangxi Provincial government on the matter. This experience was a bitter disappointment to Gui, who was only trying to act in the interests of the Party. When I interviewed him, he said that his only consolation was that he was more fortunate than Gao Qinrong.

Jiang Weiping, jailed for subversion

Liaoning Province has always been a region plagued by graft and corruption, but the people of the province dare not openly voice their outrage. Starting in 1998, Jiang Weiping, bureau chief of the Northeast China bureau of the Hong Kong newspaper *Wenhui Daily*, wrote a series of articles, under a pseudonym, exposing corruption of the top leadership in Liaoning. In an article entitled “The Citizens of Dalian Cry to Heaven Under the Autocratic Rule of Bo Xilai,” Jiang revealed that Bo Xilai, the son of CPC veteran Bo Yibo and a rising star among the “Princelings” (a group composed of children and relatives of the ruling elite), had played a leading role in a series of corruption and sex scandals.

In another article, entitled “Deputy Mayor of Shenyang Gambles Away 40 Mil-

lion *Yuan* in Macau,” Jiang revealed that Shenyang deputy mayor Ma Xiandong had been using public money to gamble, and had lost many millions of *yuan*. Jiang also exposed a scandal involving Qian Dihua, the mayor of Daqing, who used public funds to buy apartments for each of his twenty-nine mistresses. Because such news cannot be published in mainland China, Jiang Weiping published his articles in various Hong Kong-based political magazines, such as *Qian Shao* (*Frontline*), which are considered “anti-Communist” by the CPC.

Although Jiang used a pseudonym and published in Hong Kong, it was not difficult for China’s security services to identify him. Under pressure from the Ministry of State Security, *Wenhui Daily* moved its Northeast China Bureau from Dalian to Shenyang at the end of 1999, unfairly forcing Jiang to resign rather than uproot his Dalian-based family. With nothing more than the newspaper’s name behind him, he had used his own abilities and wide-ranging connections to build up the office’s operations. But from the standpoint of the Party-backed *Wenhui Daily*, the move was inevitable; by effectively dismissing Jiang, the newspaper spared itself from being implicated by anything he said after his arrest.

In December 2000, Jiang was secretly arrested by the Dalian City State Security Bureau. After being held in custody for more than a year, at 2:00 PM on January 25, 2002, Jiang was tried by the Dalian Intermediate People’s Court in “open” proceedings before fifty spectators hand-picked by the authorities. Many people had no understanding of the details of the case, and Jiang’s family members were not allowed to attend the trial. He was charged with “illegally providing state secrets abroad,” “incitement to subvert state power,” and “illegally possessing state secrets,” for which he was given a prison sentence of eight years, with five years’ subsequent deprivation of political rights. But Jiang denied his guilt in court; he cast away the pen he was given to sign the verdict, which he loudly denounced as a “travesty of justice.” He said he would appeal the verdict, even if it ultimately resulted in the original ruling being upheld.

The charges against Jiang were fabricated to meet the needs of the Ministry of State Security. The charge of “illegally providing state secrets abroad” referred to the story he wrote for the Hong Kong magazine about Shenyang official Ma Xiandong’s gambling spree in Macau. Even though the story was true, and Ma’s subsequent arrest was widely reported in the mainland media, Jiang’s story had appeared several months earlier than those of the mainland newspapers, and therefore Jiang was considered to have “provided state secrets.” The charge of “incitement to subvert state power” stemmed from Jiang’s report on plays, presented in a local Dalian theater, that satirized official corruption and reflected the

anger and dissatisfaction of local residents. That theater continues to present these plays, and the participants have not been charged with “incitement to subvert state power,” but Jiang Weiping was charged with that crime merely for reporting on these plays.

The third charge was “illegally possessing state secrets,” and two points of evidence were presented. One matter was Jiang’s reporting on the murder of a Taiwanese city councilor, Lin Dijuan, in Liaoning. At the time, Jiang borrowed a blood test report from the local public security bureau but forgot to return it, and the report had the word “secret” stamped on it. The second matter involved a document issued by the State Council years before, listing mainland publications that had been granted permission to place advertisements in overseas publications. At the time, Jiang Weiping had headed up *Wenhui Daily*’s northeast office and was responsible for soliciting advertising. He needed to be familiar with government regulations in this area, and his possession of the document was completely reasonable.

According to sources familiar with the situation, the three offenses at the center of Jiang’s conviction were determined by the public security bureau only after searching his home. The charges avoided any mention of his reporting on the Bo Xilai corruption scandal, but that was the actual reason behind his arrest.¹²

Exposing official corruption is a punishable offense

The cases presented above amply illustrate that in recent years the Chinese government has rarely punished local officials who have been at the center of corruption scandals, but instead have busied themselves with jailing and obstructing journalists and news media that have had the courage to report the facts. When government departments insist that “expanding public scrutiny is detrimental to social stability and unity,” it is distorting matters and demonstrating that its views of “social stability” are exactly counter to those of democratic countries and to the views of the Chinese people, as well. In the eyes of the Chinese government, it is not official misconduct and corruption that lie at the root of social instability, but rather the media that report on these incidents of malfeasance.

It is commonly known that the CPC has a long tradition of thought and speech control. Before 1979, this kind of “crime” was dealt with under laws governing “counterrevolutionary” activities. Following “reform and opening up,” this category of crime, which had led to the execution of countless innocent people and was considered a symbol of Chinese Communist autocracy, was a particular tar-

get of public hatred and was abolished. But in 1979, Deng Xiaoping cleverly managed to convict and imprison Democracy Wall activist Wei Jingsheng on the charge of “revealing state secrets.” After that, the government recognized that using this charge to convict people was much more effective than the discredited “crimes” of counterrevolution, first of all because the public no longer took thought crimes seriously, and those convicted of such crimes only enjoyed a boost to their public reputations; and secondly, because under a system in which the CPC completely controls all channels of public discourse, people charged with criminal (as opposed to political) offenses have difficulty defending themselves and often suffer blows to their reputations. Consequently, in 1994 Jiang Zemin issued a secret directive: “Deal with political problems by nonpolitical means.” This means that, whenever possible, all those who commit political crimes should be charged with crimes that bring them into social disrepute (such as visiting prostitutes, fraud, graft, and corruption); failing that, one of the following charges should be used: revealing state secrets, conspiring to subvert state power, or endangering state security. Accordingly, the Chinese government has since been guided by this directive in dealing with crimes of conscience.

One way or another, in an authoritarian system where human rights are disregarded, journalists who attempt to hold fast to their professional ethics are at great risk of meeting a tragic fate.

A Prickly Rosebush Cut Off at the Root

Emperor Qin Shihuang was not particularly exceptional. He buried alive only 460 Confucian scholars. We buried 46,000 Confucian scholars. Could we have suppressed counterrevolutionaries without killing some counterrevolutionary intellectuals? I argued with some democratic personages: "You accused us of being Emperor Qin Shihuang. That's wrong: We have outdone Emperor Qin Shihuang more than a hundredfold. To the charge of being Emperor Qin Shihuang, of being a dictator, we have always pleaded guilty. Regrettably you have not said nearly enough, because often we have to go even further."

Mao Zedong¹

Handle political questions through nonpolitical means.²

Secret instruction issued by Jiang Zemin in 1998

S*outhern Weekend* was founded in 1984 with capital from *Southern Daily*, the official newspaper of the Guangdong provincial Party committee. Under the leadership of its first editor-in-chief, Zuo Fang, *Southern Weekend* developed its characteristic style, which helped the Chinese media overcome the collective shame of being the "Party's mouthpiece." The newspaper's star shone brightly for little more than ten years, but it was enough to earn it an important place in the history of Chinese journalism, in contrast to a few outstanding Chinese magazines, such as *Studio*, that managed to survive only two or three years and were unable to extend their influence beyond intellectual circles. The ups and downs experienced by *Southern Weekend* during its decade of existence provide a glimpse into the limits of journalism in a China under strict official control. The history of *Southern Weekend* also exemplifies how long and arduous is the path toward freedom of the press in China.

As Zuo Fang tells it, *Southern Weekend* essentially accomplished two things: it enlightened its readers, and it broke through the mold of *Pravda*-style news-making that turns newspapers into “bastions of proletarian propaganda.” This style of journalism—the dissemination of lies—cannot meet the ethical foundation of true journalism—reporting the truth.

When contemporary Chinese people speak of “enlightening,” they mean spreading Western ideas about freedom and democracy. After the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1978), Chinese intellectuals reassessed what had happened during that period, reconsidered the history of the People’s Republic since 1949, and re-examined the Opium War (1840–1842, fought over Britain’s demand to import opium to China), and contemporary history. They hoped to put China on the path to democracy, but their intellectual debates had no public impact. Once *Southern Weekend* was founded, it quickly became a communication bridge between intellectuals and the Chinese people. In its daily reports, it disseminated the essence of intellectual ideas about freedom and democracy, while also publishing an increasing number of reports about social issues that concerned ordinary people, but that Party newspapers would not touch. This became the editorial line that distinguished *Southern Weekend* from its parent, *Southern Daily*, and which attracted large numbers of general readers.

Zuo Fang’s guiding principle in running his newspaper was an emphasis on “hitting edge balls.” If a newspaper hits the ball (publishes articles) beyond the permissible boundary, it is penalized, but if it always plays a cautious game, its readers lose interest. Thus, “hitting edge balls” means capturing the readers’ interest without breaching Party propaganda discipline. Because *Southern Weekend* avoided Party jargon and stereotypes, published weekly reports about current social ills and real problems experienced by ordinary people, and consistently captured and held its readers attention with “edge-ball” articles, its national sales volume far exceeded that of Party mouthpieces, such as *Southern Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*, and even the relatively informative and interesting *Yangcheng Evening News*.

Southern Weekend’s heyday

I examined a number of *Southern Weekend* articles, published in the 1990s, from four perspectives: (1) geographical area(s) mentioned in the article; (2) organizations and people who were target(s) of criticism; (3) the subject of the article; (4)

industries or fields covered in the article. The following characteristics stood out during the decade leading to the year 2000, when *Southern Weekend* began to suffer particularly intense political interference:

- From 1997 to 1998, *Southern Weekend* published numerous articles of political criticism and made every effort to fulfill its responsibility as a public watchdog. The political climate at the time supported that role. During 1998 my book, *Pitfalls of Modernization (Xiandaihua de Xianjing)*, and Ma Licheng and Ling Zhijun's book, *Crossed Swords (Jiaofeng)*, were published,³ and the country was swept up in a great wave of re-evaluating economic and political reforms and criticizing political corruption. It was also the year in which the Chinese government and a group of Beijing economists claimed that “floodwaters will kick-start new growth points in the economy,” at the very time that floods were ravaging the Yangtze River Valley.⁴ *Southern Weekend* was practically the only newspaper to publish counterarguments to that statement.
- *Southern Weekend* directed its criticism mainly at Party and government-run organizations and institutions, including businesses, tax offices, customs offices, banks, stock exchanges, and monopolies, as well as public security organs, procuratorial organs, and people's courts (including anticorruption bureaus), which had been hotbeds of “power for hire” and corruption for two decades.
- Criticism was focused primarily on places outside *Southern Weekend's* home city of Guangzhou. The provinces of Zhejiang, Hunan, Hubei, Henan, and Guangdong accounted for about half of the paper's censorious reports. There were relatively few articles about the western and northeastern provinces, possibly because of their distance from Guangzhou or, more likely, because people living closer to Guangzhou understood and trusted *Southern Weekend*. According to *its* journalists, it was easier to gather news and conduct interviews in places where readers had a better understanding of the newspaper.

It should be said that Zuo and the other founders positioned the paper with great skill and managed it very successfully. Despite government control of news media, *Southern Weekend* always strove to publish sharp criticism of social ills, and as a result, it became a flagship publication and earned enormous respect in

society. This miracle of contemporary Chinese journalism had more than three million readers, most of whom were private subscribers. Many local governments and corrupt officials were so afraid of *Southern Weekend* that whenever it published a critical report, they bought every copy to prevent that day's edition from hitting the newsstands and reaching local readers. An American journalist remarked that American scholars who studied the Chinese media focused on three publications, one of which was *Southern Weekend*.

But the newspaper's high social esteem also drew the government's envy and hatred. Given its unflinching commitment to the role of public watchdog, *Southern Weekend* inevitably became a thorn in the government's side. Zuo and his successor, Jiang Yiping, used to joke bitterly that writing self-criticisms to the government department in charge of their paper was a "basic skill" an editor-in-chief had to practice all too frequently.

The reader may ask why other newspapers could not be run like *Southern Weekend*. What particular conditions allowed *Southern Weekend* to survive? In fact, given the government's tight control over news media, comprehending the newspaper's miraculous survival requires understanding the social context in which Chinese media are embedded.

From the early 1980s onward, many intellectuals, motivated by a sense of social responsibility, tried their hands at publishing a newspaper or magazine. But they had to decide whether they wanted a short-lived publication that strove to fulfill its responsibility as a social critic, or a secure one that kept a low profile and only occasionally distinguished itself. Naturally, most editors and publishers opted for the latter course, but at times, there were those who stuck their necks out and paid the price. In Europe and America, media organizations fold because they are poorly managed or do not have enough readers, but in China the best news publications are forced to fold even when they have plenty of readers. The only reason the Propaganda Department closes them is because they fulfill their responsibility as social critics.

Of all the government restrictions on the media, particularly absurd is the rule that critiques must be reviewed by the targets of criticism (who invariably are government officials and organizations), and that such reports may be published only with the signed consent of those being criticized or of the department-in-charge. Because of this preposterous rule, a great many investigative reports are never published, because most officials who are targets of criticism refuse to give approval, even when the information is completely factual. The following anecdote is typical.

On one occasion, one of my colleagues received a tip about a seventeen-year-old girl from a small town in Sichuan who had been abducted and forced to work as a prostitute in a bar in Bao'an District, Shenzhen. She was deprived of her personal freedom, and all the money she made was kept by the pimp. After two months of unbearable confinement and daily abuse, the girl tried to kill herself by jumping out of a window, but her suicide attempt failed and she ended up paralyzed. When my colleague went to investigate, she found that another thirty young women were being forced to work as prostitutes at that bar. Motivated by sympathy, my colleague spent more than two weeks interviewing the young women, and wrote a report about their plight. However, her report could not be published without the approval of the government office in charge of the "target of the accusation."

Since the bar was located within the jurisdiction of a police station in Bao'an district, my colleague went to see the local police station chief. He sent her to see his superior, the head of the Bao'an Public Security Bureau. The PSB head received her cordially and proceeded to inform her calmly, "Our one-party state is ruled by the gun and the pen. Those of us in the public security business are the gun, and you in the newspaper business are the pen. We're all in the same family. When you news people have a problem, we're there to help. And when we have a problem, you also have to lend us a hand. It wouldn't do for us to undermine each other, now would it?"

My colleague had heard enough and took her leave. By the time she got back to her office, the PSB head had telephoned her editor-in-chief demanding that the affair be kept under wraps. He also demanded that the journalist be kept in check and said that if the story was sent to another newspaper, the editor would be held personally responsible.

When my colleague told me what had happened, I offered to put her in touch with contacts at *Southern Weekend* to see if she could get her story published there, or in some other publication, under a different name. She immediately discussed the matter with her editors, but a couple of hours later she came back and told me dejectedly, "It's no good." The Bao'an district PSB chief had made it clear that no matter what byline the story was written under, they would know it was hers, and the newspaper would incur serious "public relations" damage.

This story is by no means exceptional; most Chinese journalists have had a similar experience. Many suffer untold hardships to research and write social or political criticism, but see very few of these articles published in their newspapers; and the few that are published often cause nothing but trouble for both journalist and publication.

Young journalists who start out full of enthusiasm eventually lose heart and turn to covering official conferences and writing articles that heap praise on government departments and state-run enterprises. To cultivate useful connections, journalists have to avoid taking risks. Once they acquire a taste for the fringe benefits that come from churning out sycophantic articles, they become old hands at the game. There is a popular saying that goes, “A first-rate reporter plays the stock market, a second-rate reporter solicits advertisements, a third-rate reporter gets kickbacks, and a fourth-rate reporter writes news reports.”

The unreliability of flattering articles in Chinese newspapers has been amply demonstrated in recent years by the continual exposure of corruption among officials who have been heralded by the government as honest and devoted public servants. On the other hand, there is little reason to be skeptical of political or social criticism, because the truth is invariably much worse than what is revealed in the report.

Reasons for *Southern Weekend's* Survival

For many years, *Southern Weekend* suffered a host of ordeals and struggled for survival; each time, it managed to pull through thanks, in large measure, to the uncommon courage and sense of social responsibility of its founder, Zuo Fang, and his successor, Jiang Yiping. But other factors also contributed to *Southern Weekend's* survival:

- *Southern Weekend* is published in Guangdong Province, where the policy of “reform and opening up” was first implemented. Before 1999, Guangdong Province was under the control of the self-styled “Guangdong Gang,” which enjoyed the backing of Party veteran Ye Jianying and his son Ye Xuanping, popularly known as the “Kings of the South.”⁵ Because of them, officials sent to Guangdong by the central government were powerless. The local power-holders were corrupt philistines; in their view, cultural life had little role in the region’s social development. At the same time they placed few restrictions on the profitable commercialization of scholarship and the arts, which gave the local media a unique opportunity for growth. Ambitious journalists converged on Guangdong from many parts of China, transforming the province into a prime journalistic location. As a result, the Guangdong newspaper industry became commercially successful earlier than its counterparts

in other provinces. Not only was financial support from the provincial government unnecessary, but the industry actually paid substantial taxes into the public coffers, making it the proverbial goose that laid golden eggs.

Once the Guangdong media became commercial, news outlets were forced to operate in a fiercely competitive environment and could no longer present themselves as bureaucratic Party organs. To compete for readers, many run-of-the-mill newspapers in Guangdong became far more readable than the best papers in other provinces. If *Southern Weekend* stood head and shoulders above its peers in Guangdong, it was entirely thanks to its boldness and willingness to meet the expectations of its readers for critical and probing reports on the reality of life in China. For this reason it became the only newspaper in Guangdong Province with a national readership. Aware of the local media's intense competitiveness, the Guangdong provincial government was wary of stifling them, and until the political atmosphere took a sharp turn for the worse in 2001, the local government's general attitude was to turn a blind eye.

- *Southern Weekend* is owned by and answerable to *Southern Daily*, the Guangdong provincial Party organ. Time after time, *Southern Daily*'s protective umbrella shielded *Southern Weekend* from disaster. In Guangzhou's newspaper industry, the Southern News Group's most distinguishing characteristic was of a weak parent with powerful subsidiaries. As a provincial Communist Party newspaper, *Southern Daily* could only parrot Party jargon and stereotypes and was unable to attract readers, but its daughter publications, *Southern Weekend* and *Southern Metropolis Daily*, had larger readerships. *Southern Weekend*, in particular, was the group's main source of revenue with a circulation of more than three million. The Southern News Group was in competition with Guangzhou's two other major newspaper groups, *Guangzhou Daily* and *Yangcheng Evening News*, so for the sake of survival, it was in *Southern Daily*'s best interests to exercise its prerogative as a Communist Party organ and protect *Southern Weekend*.
- *Southern Weekend* learned survival strategies through trial and error. In particular, it focused criticism on events and localities outside of Guangzhou (referred to in the trade as "fighting corruption away from home"). Generally speaking, the newspaper refrained from sticking its neck out to report on local corruption scandals and, in that way, greatly mitigated the pressure brought to bear against it.

For these three reasons, the Guangdong provincial Party committee and the provincial government came under criticism from the central government and other provincial governments, which accused the Guangdong authorities of carrying out “minor rectifications” (*zhengdun*) rather than decisive action against *Southern Weekend*, often singled out in the Propaganda Department’s “Monthly Reprimand.” The Propaganda Department upbraided the provincial government for being “so useless that it cannot even discipline a newspaper like *Southern Weekend*,” but understood that local politics played a big part.

Under these peculiar circumstances, *Southern Weekend*’s editor-in-chief became a seasoned writer of “self-criticisms,” which became part of his regular routine every time his newspaper made a “political mistake,” and the newspaper always managed to head off disaster. But the situation took a decisive turn for the worse in 1998, when Li Changchun became secretary of the Guangdong provincial Party committee.

Southern Weekend’s managing editors spent years creating a culture of responsibility and allegiance to the truth, and fostered a deep sense of social responsibility among their journalists. During my years as a journalist, I found that, as a group, my colleagues at *Southern Weekend* stood head and shoulders above those of all other newspapers, particularly in terms of professional integrity. In China, where “presstitution” (writing flattering reports for illicit payment) is widespread, journalists like to joke that old reporters make whores blush, because prostitutes at least provide services in exchange for payment, while too many Chinese journalists lack even that much professional integrity. The journalists of *Southern Weekend* restored dignity to Chinese journalism.

The gradual evisceration of *Southern Weekend*

Since 2000, *Southern Weekend* has been gradually and steadily rendered powerless. A study of *Southern Weekend* shows that from 1999 onward its reports have become less and less hard-hitting, particularly in the following respects:

- There was a relatively large number of investigative reports in 1997 and 1998; after which, the numbers declined.
- After 1999 there was a drop in the number of reports specifically critical of authorities. In reports published between 1997 and 1999, *Southern Weekend*

accurately reflected the reality of official corruption and abuse of power as the chief social ills of modern China. After 1999, reports critical of authorities became increasingly rare.

- The newspaper began to exhibit a tendency to bully the weak and fear the strong. For example, in 1997, 1998, and 1999, *Southern Weekend* published many reports critical of monopolies in the banking, public-utility, and communications sectors, but very few reports after that, although such monopolies remain deeply corrupt. On the other hand, in 1997 and 1998 it published almost no reports that focused criticism on less powerful sectors, including science and education, cultural enterprises (including publishing), public health, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and sideline occupations (including the domestic handicraft industry), but in 2001 and again in 2003, about 50 percent of investigative reports targeted these sectors.
- Beginning in 2000, investigative reports shifted focus from corruption and abuse of power by the Party and the government to exposing social ills such as crime, prostitution, and “feudal superstition” among the general populace. In 2000, some 80 percent of these reports targeted individuals, and 50 percent did so in 2001 and 2002. Most individual targets of criticism were ordinary citizens or senior managers in nonprofit and public institutions. Leading cadres in government organizations accounted for only 26.1 percent of individuals under scrutiny, and most of them were local, city, or department/bureau-level officials. Some mid-level officials, but no high-level officials, were the targets of criticism, and state-owned enterprises also escaped criticism. Most criticized individuals were private entrepreneurs, while only 36 percent were staff of business enterprises and other institutions. These figures demonstrate that, from 2000 onward, *Southern Weekend* shifted its attention from the upper to the lower classes of society.⁶

These four trends illustrate a gradual weakening of *Southern Weekend*'s public watchdog function and assertiveness. Since October 2003, when another group of veteran *Southern Weekend* journalists was forced to resign, this newspaper has published nothing but adulatory articles and leisure and entertainment features. A good number of sycophantic articles are notable for presenting themselves as genuine public opinion.

It should be said that *Southern Weekend* did not choose to lose its assertiveness;

it was forced to give up its editorial philosophy and commitment to hard-hitting journalism because of increasing interference from the government. From 1999 onward, the Southern News Group was repeatedly compelled to dismiss and replace *Southern Weekend's* editor-in-chief and senior staff and to force its best journalists to resign. The newspaper tried to carry on the fight while beating a retreat, but in the end almost all senior editors and journalists were fired and replaced.

Why was *Southern Weekend* incapacitated?

During this time, China's political situation changed. Chinese Internet users (*Southern Weekend* journalists among them) point the finger at Xiang Xi, *Southern Weekend's* editor-in-chief, because criticizing him carries no political risk. But the real power lies with the Propaganda Department.

The year 1998 marked a watershed in Chinese politics. After Deng Xiaoping died in 1997, Jiang Zemin became secretary general of the CPC Central Committee by right and title and took over the reins of government. But at the time, Jiang had an uncertain grasp of China's social reality, and his own position at the helm was still unclear. Chinese intellectuals spotted a political opportunity to express ideas they had been considering for almost a decade. The spring of 1998 saw the publication of a number of books about Chinese current affairs that probed social and political problems more deeply than anything published to date, and sparked off lively national debate, dubbed a "Beijing Spring" by foreign correspondents in the Chinese capital.

Until then, top government leadership, as well as the general public, had harbored the illusion that the central leadership had no way of understanding how serious many social problems really were, because local officials concealed what was happening and the news media habitually reported only good news. Now that these books had presented tactful, yet incisive, examinations of these problems, how would the Central Committee respond?

The Central Committee could not strike a blow with its left fist against its right. It could not solve these deep-rooted systemic problems as long as its members insisted on maintaining the status quo and the privileges that they and their families enjoyed. Given that the Party's bureaucrats were the chief beneficiaries of the commercialization of political power, how could it go against its own interests? The regime's autocratic nature, manifested during the repression following the Tiananmen crisis of 1989, came to the fore once again, and the Party and the gov-

ernment set about a renewed effort to tighten its grip on public opinion as the inevitable next step in the alternating pattern of repression and relaxation that the regime had adopted since launching economic reform.

As an author, I experienced these political ups and downs firsthand. Initially, when pressure brought to bear on me was not too heavy, I was able to get my articles published in China as long as they were not too probing. But every time I wrote a hard-hitting article, I encountered serious difficulties that also affected quite a few editors and media outlets. As far back as June 1998, the Shenzhen Propaganda Department issued a circular to the local media prohibiting them from publishing any of my articles. A similar notice was sent in 1999 to media organizations in Guangdong Province. The pressure increased daily. By 2000, media organizations all over China had been instructed not to publish my articles.

After *Studio* magazine in Hunan Province published my article “A General Analysis of the Evolving Structure of Contemporary Chinese Society,”⁷ the Propaganda Department dispatched a team to the provincial capital of Changsha to “reorganize” the magazine. Within a few months, its chief editor, Zhou Shi, had been discharged, and the entire editorial staff had been replaced. In January 2001, Lijiang Publishing House in Guangxi Province published my collection of essays, “We Are Still Gazing at the Stars.”⁸ For this, it was ordered to cease publication for more than a year. The editors of all Guangxi publishing houses were forced to attend to a month-long “study” seminar to “gain experience and draw lessons,” and Ms. Xiang, the executive editor of Lijiang Publishing House, was dismissed.

After the Ministry of State Security set up a listening post next to my home and put me under round-the-clock surveillance, I broke off contact with people in order to avoid causing anyone more trouble. The newspaper I worked for repeatedly asked me to “show some understanding for its difficult position” and voluntarily hand in my resignation. I was also told that if I did not resign, there would be no other option but to fire me.

One liberal intellectual critic, such as myself, can get into serious trouble, and the experience of *Southern Weekend*, China’s most outspoken newspaper, demonstrates that an institution does not do better. As the political fortunes of Guangdong’s Ye family declined and the Shanghai Gang grew stronger within the central leadership, Guangdong Province lost its backstage support in Beijing.⁹ Jiang Zemin took advantage of a tax fraud scandal, involving billions of *yuan* in Shantou City, to curtail the power of Guangdong’s provincial government,¹⁰ and when Li Changchun was appointed secretary of the Guangdong provincial Party committee, *Southern Weekend*’s troubles began in earnest. The newspaper was still not

ready to give up, and it continued to publish occasional reports of official corruption and abuse of power whenever the opportunity arose. But it could no longer publish as many stories of this kind as in 1997 and 1998, and perceptive readers realized that a new wind was blowing.

When Li took up his new post, he released a statement that was circulated throughout the Guangdong media: “My main job, now that I’m here in Guangdong, is to reorganize the media. I have never read papers, like *Southern Weekend*, that have a strong liberal slant. To protect my children from unwholesome influences, I have never allowed them to read this paper.” This statement was issued as a written directive from the “provincial Party committee leadership” to the heads of all Guangdong media outlets, and I personally saw a copy of it.

Zhang Gaoli, the Shenzhen municipal party committee secretary, soon began parroting Li’s words. The managers of other Shenzhen newspapers began to regard *Southern Weekend* as a breed apart. Whenever a journalist submitted a hard-hitting report, it was spiked on the grounds that “we can’t let our newspaper become another *Southern Weekend*.” But a Chinese dissident wrote that Li had been quoted as saying that while in Guangdong Province he had “read only Hong Kong newspapers and *Southern Weekend*.”¹¹ The essay was translated into English, and when Li was promoted to the Politburo in 2003, a number of foreign China scholars believed that once Li took charge of the Propaganda Department, there would be a major reform of the Chinese media. Apparently it did not occur to these scholars that if he really supported *Southern Weekend*, it would not have been progressively neutralized after 1999, nor its senior editors and star reporters sent packing; it would not have suffered the fate of retaining its name but losing its soul.

The wolf and the lamb

The government purged *Southern Weekend* by degrees. Because the newspaper was held in such high regard, shutting it down would have hurt China’s international image and invited criticism. Consequently, in the 1990s the government found a way to put new wine into an old bottle. It kept the name *Southern Weekend* but transformed its editorial line by replacing its senior editors and top reporters with its own hacks. Although the newspaper turned down a number of articles at the government’s behest, by the second half of 1999, it was unable to avoid a purge.

The Propaganda Department set about remolding *Southern Weekend* by replacing its chief editor. On January 1, 2000, Jiang Yiping, Zuo Fang's successor as editor-in-chief, published a front-page "letter to our readers" in which he tactfully expressed his grief at having to leave *Southern Weekend*. His letter was a little too subtle; except for a few authors and readers who had a close relationship with the paper, most readers had no inkling of what had really happened. Because Qian Gang, the new editor-in-chief, Chen Mingyang, the new deputy editor, and several other members of the news staff were loyal veterans of *Southern Weekend*, the newspaper began to play a cat-and-mouse game with the government. Whenever the "cat" took a nap, the paper published one or two "edge-ball articles." But as noted above, from 1999 onward, *Southern Weekend's* investigative reporting style began to diminish. Readers from all over China complained about the transformation, but there was nothing the paper could do to change or even acknowledge its predicament.

But why would the Chinese government, which wields absolute power, allow a mouse held in its claws to play hide-and-seek? Given that replacing the chief editor had failed to render *Southern Weekend* well-behaved and obedient, there was nothing left but to destroy it completely. The Chinese Communist Party has, from its inception, made a sport of political purges, and over the course of more than eight decades, it has become exceedingly adept at the game. Once the decision was made to purge *Southern Weekend*, an excuse could be found at any time.

The opportunity came when, on April 19, 2001, *Southern Weekend* published an article entitled "The Growth of a Violent Gang,"¹² and on April 26, it published an article entitled "Reexamining the Zhang Jun Case."¹³ Both articles were about Zhang Jun and his criminal gang, who had caused a great stir in China with a series of robberies and murders. Xinhua News Agency issued a wire story about the case, but *Southern Weekend's* report stood out because of the following observation:

In a sense, when people from the lowest rungs of society, such as Zhang Jun, break the rules, they do so because those who make the rules are also breaking them. When people in high places, such as Cheng Kejie (the former vice chairman of the National People's Congress) and Hu Changqing (the former deputy governor of Jiangxi Province), amass huge amounts of wealth by breaking laws overtly and covertly, their conduct is essentially no different from Zhan Jun's.¹⁴ What is more, they set the worst possible example. The only difference is that, thanks to their positions of authority, Cheng Kejie and Hu Changqing were able to amass their wealth in a sophisticated but, nonetheless, illegal manner, while people like Zhang Jun, who lack power and

authority, resort to the only means available to them: brute violence. According to an expert in the field, the poor and powerless are increasingly resorting to violence as a means of redistributing the wealth of the rich and powerful. This should give us pause for reflection.

The Hunan provincial party committee had long nursed a grudge against *Southern Weekend* because of its reports about corrupt local officials and other social ills. As soon as the paper published the articles about Zhang, the Hunan Party committee complained to the Propaganda Department that the articles “neglected the fact that, since the launching of reform, the Hunan government had spent years working hard to improve the lives of the people of Hunan, and stirred up popular discontent against the local government and caused nothing but trouble for the province.” The Propaganda Department, looking for an opportunity to punish *Southern Weekend* and seeing that this complaint provided a perfect excuse, ordered the Guangdong provincial Party committee to investigate and deal with the issue. To step up pressure, the department also ordered the Southern News Group to dismiss the editor of *Southern Metropolitan Daily* on grounds that he had published, on the same page, photographs with a Muslim theme and photographs of pigs, in clear violation of the “Party’s religious policy.”

This time around, *Southern Weekend* was purged from top to bottom. The new editor-in-chief announced that the newspaper’s department heads and the journalists who habitually wrote “negative reports” were all summarily dismissed. The remaining journalists and editors would be retained for a one-year probationary period, after which the decision to keep them would depend on their “political performance” (*zhengzhi biaoxian*). From then on, *Southern Weekend* was no longer able to fulfill its responsibility as public watchdog. All its journalists were able to do was to retreat and put up occasional tokens of resistance. *Southern Weekend’s* intention to expose the Project Hope corruption scandal in its edition of March 21, 2002, infuriated the central authorities (as described in chapter six). After that, a seemingly never-ending list of journalists were reportedly dismissed from the paper.¹⁵ By 2003, the government’s strategy of putting new wine into an old bottle had sapped *Southern Weekend’s* former spirit of social criticism and had met the Guangdong provincial Party committee’s demand to “turn *Southern Weekend* into an ordinary media publication that entertains the Chinese public, much like *Gushihui* (*Story Session*), *Duzhe* (*Reader*) and *Jiating* (*Family*).” The journalists and editors who founded *Southern Weekend* were scattered to the

winds and what had been universally acclaimed as China's foremost weekly newspaper lost its former luster.

Like a beautiful rosebush in full bloom, *Southern Weekend* bore thorns, and for that reason, the Chinese government cut it down and put plastic roses in its place.

Foreign Journalists in China

In the worst-ranked countries, press freedom is a dead letter and independent newspapers do not exist. The only voice heard is of media tightly controlled or monitored by the government. . . . The foreign media is banned or allowed in very small doses, always closely monitored.

Reporters Without Borders¹

The founder of China studies in the United States, the Harvard historian John King Fairbank, once wrote, “China still is a journalist’s dream and a statistician’s nightmare, with more human drama and fewer verifiable facts per square mile than anywhere else in the world.”² Fairbank got the first part wrong. China is most certainly no journalist’s dream. But he was right that stories full of human drama happen every day in China, and they make for good copy. The violent murders that are so rare in Northern Europe are a daily occurrence in China, and China’s endless stream of corruption cases, mind-boggling in their particulars, give investigative journalists as much work as they could possibly handle. But the mountain of data on China that statisticians must wade through is indeed enough to give them headaches, because they have no way of distinguishing what is true from what is false. If you ask Chinese journalists themselves, apart from government hacks who get paid to write fawning articles, none of them think that China is a journalist’s dream.

There are two types of foreign journalists in China. The first are foreign correspondents, most of whom are based in Beijing, with a smaller number based in Shanghai. The second are journalists working for CCTV, *People’s Daily*, and Xinhua News Agency. These foreigners are in the employ of the Chinese government and like to say that they are “serving” the Chinese government. Other than their foreign status, working conditions are no different from those of their Chinese colleagues.

How much leeway do foreign correspondents have in China? Do they have

more or less room for maneuver than Chinese journalists? Are they free to conduct interviews and gather news? To answer these questions, we can start by looking at several regulations on the administration of foreign journalists.

“Free” foreign journalists and “unfree” interviewees

Due to the special nature of their work, foreign journalists are actually subject to many more restrictions than are Chinese journalists. Because of its Cold War mentality, the Chinese government has always blurred the line between news and intelligence. This is apparent from the teaching materials used to this day in journalism departments in Chinese universities. For example, the *Course on Journalism and Communication Laws*, a textbook published by Beijing’s Renmin University of China (*Zhongguo Renmin Daxue*), states, “Because media workers, in general, consider state secrets to be newsworthy and of public interest, journalists are always trying to dig them up. To get a scoop, some are willing to break laws and steal, gather, or buy state secrets, which they publish in sensationalist exposés. Many state secrets are thus leaked by the media. Intelligence services, therefore, consider the news media to be the cheapest, safest, fastest, and most reliable source of intelligence.”³

Since this is how the Chinese government sees the news media, it is only natural that it should keep a tight rein on foreign correspondents. The first set of rules targeting foreign journalists was the State Council’s Provisional Regulations on the Administration of Journalists Working for Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies, issued in 1981.⁴ At that time, China had just launched its policy of “reform and opening up,” and foreign journalists were beginning to pour into China. The 1980s marked a period of temporary relaxation in Chinese politics. The Chinese media, long rigidly controlled, gained a certain amount of freedom, and foreign journalists also had a little more room to maneuver. When the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident occurred and the brutal slaughter of Chinese citizens was revealed to the world by foreign and Hong Kong journalists, the Chinese government was infuriated. Chinese authorities resumed control over foreign journalists’ newsgathering activities in 1990, when the State Council promulgated the Regulations on the Administration of Foreign Journalists and Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies.⁵ These stipulate that foreign journalists “may not distort facts, fabricate rumors, or use improper means to gather news, and may not engage in any activities that are incompatible with their status or that may harm China’s national security, unity, or social and public interests.” Journalists who vio-

late these regulations are subject to deportation. The crux of the regulations is that the government decides what constitutes fact or rumor. For almost a decade, one foreign correspondent after another has been deported for “engaging in activities incompatible with their status.” Kyodo News Agency correspondent Henmi Yō, who was deported while stationed in Beijing, is just one example.⁶

The principal method employed to restrain foreign news media is to control the source of news, that is, to put pressure on anyone who might be interviewed by foreign journalists. For example, the 1990 regulations stipulate that Chinese people must obtain permission from their work unit’s leaders before agreeing to be interviewed by a foreign journalist, and that a member of their unit’s foreign affairs office must be present during the interview. Under these circumstances, the great majority of Chinese people fear being interviewed, and the small minority who agree to an interview seldom feel free to speak their minds. This greatly restricts the news sources available to foreign journalists. The British journalist Jasper Becker found from personal experience that, although foreign journalists are ostensibly allowed to travel and conduct interviews freely, as soon as a journalist begins an interview, the local authorities can move in, detain him, and make him write a “statement of regret,” acknowledging that he engaged in “illegal activity” and revealing whom he interviewed “illegally.” The police can then use his written statement to arrest the people he interviewed.

In a radio interview, Becker recounted his firsthand experience with a group of farmers from the Three Gorges Dam area. They had invited foreign journalists to interview them, because they were very unhappy with the Chinese government’s resettlement policies. In his interviews with the farmers, Becker obtained a great deal of information on corruption in the Three Gorges Dam project. After his report was published in the foreign press, the Public Security Bureau arrested the farmers, and during a subsequent trial, Becker’s news report was cited as evidence against them. When Becker went to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies to try to help the farmers, government officials told him, “You went there without having applied for authorization! These interviews were illegal!” Becker subsequently learned that this sort of experience is a common occurrence.⁷

In December 2003, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas D. Kristof was detained while in Liaoyang to interview the wife of imprisoned labor activist Yao Fuxin. Kristof wrote that three officials accosted him outside of Yao’s home and escorted him to Shenyang Airport, where they saw him onto the next flight for Shanghai. Kristof never had an opportunity to speak with Yao’s wife.⁸

Containing foreign journalists

Because most foreign journalists tend to focus their reporting on Beijing, with Shanghai in second place, the Beijing municipal government has enacted additional detailed measures governing implementation of the 1990 regulations. Below are some sections from Beijing Municipality's Measures for Implementing the "Regulations on the Administration of Journalists Working for Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies":

Article 3: Resident foreign journalists in Beijing and foreign news agencies stationed in Beijing proposing to interview Beijing municipal leaders shall be required first to apply to and obtain approval from the Foreign Affairs Office of the Beijing Municipal People's Government.

Article 4: The Municipal People's Government and its subordinate departments and the people's governments of the various districts and counties may hold periodic press-release meetings and press conferences and invite foreign journalists to attend. The Foreign Affairs Office of the Municipal People's Government may periodically organize trips within Beijing for foreign journalists for sightseeing and newsgathering purposes and may recommend newsworthy items to journalists.

Article 5: Resident foreign journalists and news agencies stationed in Beijing proposing to employ Chinese citizens as staff or service personnel, or planning to lease buildings for office premises, must arrange these matters through the Beijing Foreign Affairs Personnel Service Bureau.⁹

The above-cited regulations establish a set of principles, but even more detailed rules govern their actual implementation. Many such regulations focus on Chaoyang District, the office and residential compound for foreign embassies, foreign diplomats, and major foreign news agencies. A directive issued in February 2002, *On Strengthening the Management of Interviews by Foreign Journalists*, stipulates that no work unit or individual may organize interviews for foreign journalists or receive them without authorization; foreign journalists' requests for conducting social surveys or opinion polls should be tactfully refused; propaganda materials and printed matter sent to foreign journalists must be checked by the

departments in charge of receiving the journalists; and if such materials are found to contain anything illegal, they must not be sent to the foreign journalists and must immediately be reported to the relevant foreign affairs, public security, and security departments.

The directive also requires that foreign journalists be prevented from conducting illegal interviews in sensitive areas and about sensitive issues, including contact with Falun Gong practitioners or democracy activists; access to the courts and places of religious worship; and reporting related to ethnic minorities, religion, human rights, and family planning. Work units that discover illegal newsgathering activities must put an immediate stop to them and report them to the public security and foreign affairs bureaus. Authorities may also confiscate journalists' notes, audio equipment, and cameras to prevent effective spot reporting.

The directive stipulates that if an incident suddenly occurs within a work unit, foreign journalists must be denied entry, in accordance with relevant regulations, and the foreign affairs and public security departments must be promptly informed of the matter. If a foreign journalist is already on the scene, foreign affairs or public security personnel must politely persuade him or her to leave. Failure to comply will mean forcible removal from the scene by a public security officer. After an incident occurs, the department concerned must quickly draft a public declaration and submit it for approval to the municipal and district authorities and appropriate leaders. Without proper authorization, no one may answer questions posed by foreign journalists.¹⁰

Because these regulations are directed at foreign journalists, they are phrased in diplomatic language. The Chinese call this being “soft on foreigners but tough on their own people.” Media organizations from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are subject to many more restrictions, even if they do not have long-term correspondents in mainland China.

From 1989 to 1997, journalists from Hong Kong and Macau who planned to conduct interviews and gather news in China had to comply with the Administrative Measures Concerning Hong Kong and Macau Journalists Conducting Interviews in Mainland China¹¹ and the Guidelines for Hong Kong and Macau Journalists Conducting Interviews in Mainland China,¹² issued in September 1989 by the Propaganda Department and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council. The regulations required that, fifteen days before entering the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau journalists submit an application to the Hong Kong branch of Xinhua News Agency, which would forward the

application to the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office for approval. Only then could they be accredited and obtain an “interview permit” (*caifang zheng*) from the All-China Journalists’ Association and enter the country. The permit could be used only once and for a specific interview. After the interview was completed, the journalist had to leave the mainland.

The procedure was made a little simpler after 1997. Journalists now have to submit an application to the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong (or Macau) Special Administrative Region. They must also obtain consent of the persons to be interviewed and abide by Chinese laws during their stay in the mainland. If the authorities determine that a Hong Kong journalist has gathered news or conducted interviews that involve state secrets, the journalist risks being sentenced to a lengthy prison term. In 1993 Tian Ye, deputy director of the foreign affairs department of the People’s Bank of China, gave economic and financial information to Hong Kong journalist Xi Yang, who used it to write an article published by his newspaper, *Ming Pao Daily News*. On June 6, 1993, Xi was sentenced to twelve years in prison for “stealing state secrets,” and Tian was given a prison term of fifteen years.¹³

Taiwanese journalists are given an even harder time. In 2003, Chinese authorities issued the Regulations Regarding Taiwan Journalists Who Visit the Motherland to Conduct Interviews (Amended).¹⁴ Taiwanese journalists must negotiate endless red tape and submit to numerous restrictions that inevitably affect the quality of their newsgathering.

Chinese authorities mete out severe punishment to citizens who grant interviews to foreign journalists without official authorization, with the severity of the punishment depending on the “degree of harm to the nation.” If the harm is deemed to be very minor, the person interviewed will receive a warning from his work unit. In the most serious cases, the interviewee is sent to prison. Wei Jingsheng, who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 1979, is a famous case in point. The verdict against Wei found that he had furnished important military intelligence to foreigners, endangered state security, and conspired to subvert state power. These charges included having “published a large number of articles outside China through illegal channels” (that is, without the consent of the Chinese government), in which he “attacked the Chinese Government, slandered the socialist system and the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and advocated the independence of Tibet, echoing the call of foreign groups hostile to China to overthrow the people’s democratic dictatorship and the socialist system, and stirring up public opinion to split the country.”¹⁵

Since 1979, many of those outside China have assumed that its economic development would be accompanied by political progress. But in 2002, Li Dawei, a dissident from Gansu Province, was sentenced to eleven years in prison, allegedly for informing Reuters, Agence France Presse, the BBC, and the *New York Times* about the trial of Yue Tianxiang, another dissident.¹⁶ In fact, Li never had any contact with journalists from these news organizations. When his mother visited him in prison, he gave her a message for those outside China: since he had been punished because of reports published in the foreign news media, he hoped they could help him by making an international appeal calling for his release.

Using foreign journalists

When the foreign press publishes reports that please the Chinese government, it responds enthusiastically and considers the reports a sign that China has earned high international regard. Thus, Deng Xiaoping was always very proud of having been featured on the cover of *Time* magazine as its “Man of the Year.” This was considered to be a symbol of China’s much improved international image. However, when a foreign media organization publishes a report that causes the government a loss of face, it is dismissed as “representative of international anti-China forces and a vilification of socialist China.”

Even stranger is the fact that government officials consider it a political privilege to be interviewed by a foreign journalist. A foreign journalist’s interview with an official is regarded by the government as a rare honor, but an interview with an ordinary citizen is forbidden on the grounds that it constitutes “collusion with foreign reactionary forces.” Since 1998, I’ve been interviewed by many foreign journalists. On one occasion, I was interviewed by a Reuters correspondent who, on the same day, also interviewed Li Zibin, mayor of Shenzhen and secretary of the municipal Party committee. The interview with Li made the front page of every newspaper in Shenzhen and was regarded as a great honor for the city, but after my interview, my work unit informed me that I had received a warning from the Shenzhen Security Bureau not to give any more interviews to foreign journalists.

Many foreign journalists in China have experienced being placed under surveillance. The Ministry of State Security prints a booklet of information on foreign journalists and distributes it to all provincial foreign affairs bureaus, which rely on it to decide whether to allow a journalist to visit a particular area. Another method to monitor and control foreign journalists is to require that they live in

specially designated residential compounds that are guarded by armed police. This enables authorities to spy on journalists and their families with secret cameras and to bug their private and work telephones. But as far as the Ministry of State Security is concerned, the main purpose for surveillance of foreign journalists is not to obtain information from them, but rather to intimidate them and obstruct their newsgathering activities. Some foreign journalists have recorded their feelings regarding Chinese government control of their activities. BBC journalist Wei Cheng, for example, wrote an article describing his observations about news conferences held by the Chinese government around the time of the 16th Communist Party Congress in November 2002. Wei reports that Chinese officials habitually turn news conferences into propaganda meetings to tout government achievements. Before a news conference, officials select journalists working for the official Chinese news media, or foreign journalists who are “good friends” of the Chinese government, such as those working for Hong Kong’s *Dagong Daily* or the France-based *Ouzhou Shibao* (*European News*), a newspaper published with a financial subsidy from the Chinese government, and allow them to ask questions that give Chinese officials the opportunity to boast of their achievements. Such orchestrated events are news conferences in name only.¹⁷

To travel anywhere in China, foreign television and film crews must first apply for permission from the authorities, as stipulated by the Regulations on the Administration of Interviewing and Filming by Foreign Broadcast and Television Crews.¹⁸ Even foreign tourists are not free to travel wherever they please in China. On January 18, 2003, Chinese authorities arrested South Korean Jae Hyun Seok, a freelance photographer who worked regularly for the *New York Times*, while he was taking photographs of North Korean refugees in Yantai, Shandong Province. A court in Yantai sentenced him to two years in prison on charges of human trafficking.¹⁹

Under these circumstances, unless they have many years of experience working in China, foreign journalists have almost no way of carrying out thorough investigations into China’s society, politics, or economy. Foreign correspondents who are rotated to a new posting every few years usually spend too little time in each country to become proficient in the local language. Because news is heavily filtered, they have no way of understanding what is really happening in China.

Foreign journalists in Chinese media

Joan Maltese, a Western television journalist who spent several years as an editor

for CCTV-9, wrote an article about her experiences after resigning from CCTV and returning to the United States. Below are some excerpts:

It's the tail end of the graveyard shift in a newsroom in Beijing. Abandoned glasses of shrubby teas stand among the computer terminals, looking like biology experiments. As the on-duty Foreign Expert at China Central Television's English-language news channel, I am tapping out the headlines for the 8 am broadcast, which have been carefully chosen and sequenced by the director and producer. As for me, I'm well versed in the verbiage the censor will require. Accordingly, I write:

Communist Party of China General Secretary Hu Jintao delivers an important speech on how to continue using agriculture to build an all-around well-off society.

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Chairman Li Ruihuan says Macao has witnessed social stability and sustained economic expansion since it returned to the mainland's umbrella.

Plane crashes in Turkey and the United States kill ninety-six.

Maltese points out that this is the headquarters of a news service reaching millions of households in China, as well as satellite subscribers in Britain, France, and the United States. CCTV-9 describes its twenty-four-hour coverage as, "Your first window on China."

Maltese continues, "With the exception of a handful of mostly upbeat field reports and the government-issue propaganda, our news all comes from wire services. Pull it off the computer, shape it to suit the Party line, and shunt it off to the censors, at least one of whom is onsite around the clock." She adds that one of the station's key missions is to show the outside world, "China has opened up and reformed! Our news shows look just like yours! . . . One thing management has provided is a mission: to make our employer, the central government, look good."²⁰

Foreign professionals such as Maltese were working journalists before coming to China, so it is clear to them that the purpose of "news" in China is to create a false impression. She is also aware of the great difference between domestic and foreign coverage of events in China:

When a British tourist was murdered near the Great Wall, CCTV-9 knew nothing about it. When the police shut down all the Internet cafes in Beijing, our coverage never questioned the Party line that it was for safety reasons. When Falun-Gong-hunting cops raided my hostel one winter midnight, putting dozens of for-

eign backpackers and workaday Chinese out on the street without a moment's notice, CCTV-9 staffers were amused and sympathetic, but there was no coverage. When a group of North Koreans made a dramatic break into the Spanish embassy in Beijing that was played repeatedly on CNN, you never heard a word from us.²¹

Maltese also mentions the experiences of two other foreign colleagues. One of them wished to do genuine journalistic work, while another wanted to resign from CCTV. Both were subjected to threats by station management, and the one who resigned was forced to burn her bridges.

After several years at CCTV, Maltese found, to her regret, that because of official control, Chinese people were, by and large, unaware of the terrible human rights conditions under which they lived.

Eventually, out of disgust for “journalistic work” that was an insult to the intelligence, Maltese resigned. She observed:

[T]he propaganda reached such heights of crassness that it provoked some minor revolts among the Foreign Experts and served as the catalyst for my finally sitting down to write all this. We're talking about an authoritarian government with a legacy of tens of millions of murders that claims it has always served the best interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people; it will later censor SARS coverage after supposedly coming clean about its cover-up and establishing information networks on the disease. Now, during the NPC, it is anointing its new elite, with the commander-in-chief of the Tiananmen Square massacre in the field of candidates and an unspecified intention to drag 1.2 billion people headlong into its latest political experiment.²²

Another American editor, David Lore, wrote an article about his experience working for a newspaper in Shanghai for three years, starting in 1999. He came to understand what news items the government did not like, such as those involving Falun Gong, AIDS, or financial scandals in the stock market. He learned which items could not be reported and which could only be reported using certain officially prescribed language, such as referring to Falun Gong as an “evil cult” and to AIDS as “under control.” In spite of the extreme care he took as someone “skating on thin ice,” he was eventually fired for speaking the truth; he was forced to vacate his apartment within forty-eight hours and was blacklisted from future employment with related publications.²³

The experiences of these two journalists correct a common misconception

that foreign journalists can enjoy at least some degree of freedom in China. The truth is that China is a society that respects privilege, having experienced foreign colonialism. From the end of the nineteenth century onward, Chinese officials and ordinary people alike have treated foreigners (that is, citizens of major Western countries) who come to China with much greater respect than they treat local citizens. Even that so-called people's hero, Mao Zedong, acknowledged his gratitude for foreign support in his revolutionary activities. All the same, regardless of how much foreigners might contribute to China's revolution, if they fall afoul of the Chinese leadership, they can still come to an unhappy end. There are many such examples in the history of China under Communist rule.

What shocks people most is not the way in which the Chinese government controls and manages foreign media within China's borders, but the way it tries to control even journalists outside of China. On October 16, 2003, I attended a conference hosted by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, DC, on "Media Control in China: News Censorship, Bias, and Control." At that conference, Claudia Rosett,²⁴ a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, described how she had been harassed by letters from China's ambassador to the United States, harshly chiding her for articles she wrote that were critical of China.

The Chinese government is not content to control the pens of its own journalists, but tries to extend its grip even to that bastion of press freedom, the United States, in hopes of getting the entire world to dance to its tune.

The stories of two foreign journalists

Although a foreign journalist's work environment in China is anything but free, as Jasper Becker has observed, many idealistic and enthusiastic foreign journalists like working in China because they find the lack of freedom challenging and exciting. More importantly, they believe that their work enables them to help those Chinese who oppose the dictatorship. Foreign journalists come and go, and the intelligent and ambitious among them write books about their experiences in China. A few bestselling journalistic memoirs have even succeeded in changing Western perceptions of China. But the Communist Party of China has always relied on a two-pronged strategy of using and containing foreign journalists. It employed this strategy before it seized power in 1949, and it has continued to do so since. It takes decades for some journalists to wake up to the reality that their friendship with the Chinese Communist regime amounts to nothing more than using and being used.

More than half a century ago, a number of left-wing idealists from Europe and North America flocked to China to participate in the Chinese revolution. The two most famous, Anna Louise Strong and Edgar Snow, were journalists. The friendship between these honored guests and Chinese Communists did not come to a good end. The way in which they were treated and the regrets they came to feel in their later years are a perfect illustration of how the Chinese government uses foreign journalists.

Anna Louise Strong

In the late 1940s, the American journalist Anna Louise Strong visited Yan'an,²⁵ where she interviewed Mao Zedong. During this interview, Mao famously declared that “all reactionaries are paper tigers,”²⁶ a statement that is remembered to this day in American political circles.²⁷ Strong was fascinated by Mao, considered China her second home, and eventually decided to settle permanently in Beijing.

During the Cultural Revolution, when many foreign experts were imprisoned as “American imperialists” or “Soviet revisionists,” the 81-year-old Strong became a founding member of the first foreign “rebel faction.” When Mao received the Red Guards, she was accorded the honor of sitting on the Tiananmen Square rostrum as a “foreign friend.” In her “Letters from China,” a bulletin with twenty-one thousand subscribers in the United States, Strong introduced the Cultural Revolution with enthusiasm and praised the Red Guards, who had Mao’s backing, as something new and exciting.

But her enthusiasm was short-lived. Before long, she was accused of being a foreign spy, as numerous other foreigners had been before her. Sidney Rittenberg, who had traveled with Strong throughout China as a reporter, prior to the Cultural Revolution, was first arrested in 1949 on trumped-up charges of being a member of Strong’s “international spy network.” Although he spent six years in confinement, he was still in thrall to the revolutionary cause after his release, never imagining that he would be imprisoned a second time during the Cultural Revolution. After being accused of being a spy, Strong fell into a deep depression. When her grand-nephew tried to visit her, the Chinese government refused to let him into the country. Strong wrote to Zhou Enlai, whom she had always considered to be a close friend, asking to be allowed to travel to Phnom Penh to see her grand-nephew. Zhou did not reply.

Toward the end, Strong was frail and confined to her house. She could not

understand what had become of the Cultural Revolution and the Communist Party of China she had celebrated with such zeal a few years before. In 1970, her health took a turn for the worse and she had to be hospitalized. To express her protest against the Communist regime, she refused all food and medical treatment. Zhou was worried that her attitude could have negative international repercussions, so he went to her bedside and managed to persuade her to cooperate with her doctors. He also sent word to Strong's grand-nephew to come to China, but by then it was too late. Anna Louise Strong died that day.²⁸

Strong left no last words to express what she felt about Mao and the Communist Party of China she had supported with all her heart. But one can well imagine that in the last years of her life, she must have had second thoughts about the choices she had made as one of the many "daughters of the Revolution" who were eventually swallowed up by that revolution.

Edgar Snow

Edgar Snow's name will always be associated with his book *Red Star Over China*, a history of the Communist Party of China, that shook the world when it was first published. The book painted Mao Zedong's leadership of the Chinese revolution in glowing terms and won the Chinese Communists support around the world. It also stirred many young Chinese to rush to Yan'an and join Mao's revolution. Mao and the Chinese government referred to Snow as "our American friend," and even accorded him the rare honor of being allowed to stand beside Mao on the rostrum overlooking Tiananmen Square during a National Day parade.

Had it not been for a return trip he took to China from 1970 to 1971, Snow might never have had cause for regret in his later years. Shortly after arriving in Guangzhou from Hong Kong in 1970 with his wife Lois, he noted that "China is a country with a single scenario." In Beijing, he found that everyone was religiously reciting and memorizing phrases from Mao's *Little Red Book*. Later, the Snows visited the May Seventh Cadre School near Yan'an, where Snow had previously interviewed Mao and which was now one of the "sacred places of the revolution." During the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals and government officials had been sent to the cadre school to undergo "reform through labor." To Snow, conditions there seemed as harsh as being in prison. This ardent supporter of the revolution observed privately that all rival thought or doctrine was now considered "heresy as interpreted in the eyes of a rising new priesthood."

On a visit to Peking University, where he had once lectured, Snow was told that before 1949 it had been a “cultural imperialist institution,” in contrast to its “new beginnings after liberation.” He was shocked by this flagrant denial of a proud educational tradition. When Snow finally had an opportunity to meet with Mao during this trip, the chairman reviled China’s academic community as bourgeois “stinking intellectuals” who needed to be subjected to dictatorship. Mao told Snow that the massive propagation of the Mao cult had been essential. Assuming an air of false humility, Mao also claimed that he was a rather simple man, “only a lone monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella.” Snow was deeply upset to learn that Allen, the adopted son of his long-time friend Rewi Alley (who had stayed in China since the early days of the revolution), had been imprisoned on false charges during the Cultural Revolution. Alley told Snow that while Allen was in prison, “all around him, comrades were dying of beatings, starvation, exposure, and suicide.” Allen managed to survive the ordeal and escape due to the intervention of Zhou Enlai.²⁹

During this trip, Snow discovered Mao’s most contemptible side and regretted ever having written *Red Star Over China*. Snow died a year later of cancer. His tragic story is recorded in the diary he kept for more than four decades, which forms the basis of S. Bernard Thomas’ *Season of High Adventure: Edgar Snow in China* (from which the above quotations were taken).

Snow would certainly have felt even deeper regret if he had been aware of what his wife, Lois, subsequently experienced. In 2000, she went to Beijing, hoping to return her husband’s remains to America and to deliver donations from abroad to the Tiananmen Mothers, a group of people who lost family members during the Tiananmen Square massacre. Upon her arrival in China, Mrs. Snow was followed everywhere by secret police for her own “protection.” Chinese authorities refused to let her take her husband’s ashes and would not allow her to contact anyone in China. When she went to Renmin University of China to meet with Professor Ding Zilin, the founder of the Tiananmen Mothers, Mrs. Snow was prevented from seeing her and was forcibly removed by the police.³⁰ She was humiliated and came away deeply disappointed in the Chinese revolution to which her husband had devoted his life. Since then, she has become one of the staunchest supporters of China’s human rights movement.

It is clear from these cases that, as long as Mao Zedong needed foreign journalists, he was prepared to treat them as friends, and even as state guests. But as soon as journalists lost their usefulness to him, he treated them as enemies. Since the reforms were launched, the Chinese government has adhered to Mao’s approach.

Because there are too many negative aspects to China's reality and the government cannot control what foreign journalists write, its method of choice is to restrain and keep them under surveillance. When it sees no alternative, the government shows foreign journalists the door.³¹

Foreign Investment in China's Media Industry

Certain standards will never change: The role of the media is to be the mouthpiece of the Party, the Party shall administer the media and media personnel, and the media will still be responsible for guiding public opinion in the right direction.

Xu Guangchun, Deputy Director of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television¹

Chinese media companies should operate according to a business model, but they should also pay attention to ideology and to their duty to guide public opinion in the right direction.

Li Congjun, Deputy Minister of Propaganda²

Since China joined the WTO in 2001, a popular myth has circulated that the Chinese news media would begin operating under WTO rules. However, of all the international agreements China signed as a condition of membership, not one of them involved the media industry. Despite this fact, many scholars and journalists have published articles hinting that “the media have joined the WTO” and that foreign investment in the Chinese media market is already a reality. Indeed, Chinese media organizations have warned that “media imperialism” has already forced its way through their doors. Optimists think this will lead to the commercialization of China’s media and severely weaken government control over the press. These articles announce, with some degree of apprehension, that China is preparing to open its doors to foreign media corporations and investors and that scores of unprecedented changes and reforms are imminent. But is this really the case?

Chinese media off-limits to foreign investors

An examination of Chinese laws and directives regarding foreign investment in the media reveals the government's true intentions:

The Detailed Rules and Regulations on Implementing the Law on Foreign-invested Enterprises³ (1990) explicitly stipulate that no foreign-owned news, publishing, television, or film enterprises may be established. Since 1990, GAPP and the Ministry of Broadcasting and Television have frequently issued documents and directives reaffirming that no Chinese-foreign joint ventures, or enterprises involving foreign cooperation, may be established in the broadcasting and television sector, and that cable television channels may not be leased to foreign enterprises.

In 1994, GAPP issued a Notice Regarding the Prohibition Against Sino-foreign Joint Ventures in Newspapers, Magazines, and Publishing Houses,⁴ which reaffirmed the 1990 measure and extended the prohibition to include companies from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

The 1997 Regulations on the Administration of the Publishing Sector, which instituted the system of “departments in charge” and “sponsoring units,” in effect made it all but impossible for foreign enterprises or investors to publish newspapers or magazines in China, since no Party or government agency would be willing to act in such a capacity on behalf of a foreign entity. Although China has signed no media-related agreements with foreign countries since joining the WTO, its news industry faces an increasingly globalized operating environment, and the Chinese government has, accordingly, made some policy adjustments. For example, rather than ban outright any foreign investment in publishing, the government places restrictions on such investment.

The 2001 amended version of the 1990 measure mentioned above also does not directly prohibit foreign-owned publishing companies in China. However, Article 4 states: “The work of prohibiting or placing restrictions on industries that set up foreign-invested enterprises shall be carried out according to the state’s regulations guiding foreign investment and the List of Industrial Guidelines for Foreign Investment.”⁵

This list, in effect since 1998, essentially prohibits foreign investment in the print media, radio, and television industries and restricts such investment in the publishing industry. Restrictions apply to printing, publication, and distribution (in companies where “the Chinese party controls shares or holds a majority of

shares”) and to the publication, manufacture, and distribution of audio and video products and electronic publications (in companies where “the Chinese party controls shares or holds a majority of shares”). Apart from this, the Chinese government has not adopted any policies to relax restrictions on foreign investment in the publishing industry. In the late 1980s the Chinese government transformed publishing houses from “propaganda departments” into “nonprofit units” (*shiyewei*)⁶ that were to be “run on a commercial basis.” However, the primary purpose was to relieve the government’s financial burden of subsidizing media operations; as commercial enterprises, they are now subject to taxation by local and central governments, like any other business. “Nonprofit units” in the news media are, nevertheless, still required to function as the “Party’s mouthpiece.”⁷

During negotiations over its entry into the WTO, China made only two compromises regarding the media: (1) Foreigners may invest in international Internet companies, including those that provide content currently prohibited by the Chinese government; and (2) the Chinese government will import twenty foreign movies each year and allow foreign movie and music companies to share in profits. Apart from these undertakings, foreign radio and television stations are not allowed reception in China, and foreign publications may not be circulated in China.

Because the Chinese media and publishing houses form a single industry with the propaganda departments and are tightly controlled by government agencies, the best way to enter the China media market is to establish cooperative relationships with government departments or organizations that have a government background. Consequently, many multinational groups and well-known international publishers have sought Chinese partners.⁸ A notable example is Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, which invested US\$5.4 million in 1997 in the *People’s Daily* subsidiary, *Chinabyte*, and founded a joint-venture company, Beijing PDN Xinren Information Technology Co. Ltd., which planned to develop Internet services and a publishing business.⁹ Clearly, foreign joint-venture partners anticipate that ensuring benefit to Chinese government organizations will make the Chinese government more amenable to their efforts to enter the China media market.¹⁰ However, News Corporation has as yet to see even a little benefit from its “cooperation” with *People’s Daily*.

When it joined the WTO, China promised to permit foreign investment in its wholesale publishing industry by December 2004. Accordingly, in December 2002, China began allowing foreign companies to enter certain sectors, such as retail sales of newspapers, magazines, and books. In May 2003, GAPP began accepting applications for investment by foreign companies. However, it should

be stressed that foreign investment is allowed only in the wholesale and retail publishing sectors, not in news media organizations, where there has been no relaxation in the government's basic policy of strict media control.

A pack of lies

In recent years, Chinese newspapers and websites have published a great many articles announcing the entry of foreign capital into China's media market. Much of the information in these reports is incorrect yet still has been widely cited and circulated. Liu Jianming, professor of journalism studies at Tsinghua University, specifically refuted these myths:¹¹

- According to one article, Viacom's MTV broadcasts four twenty-four-hour channels in Asia alone, reaching more than 120 million households across Asia. MTV's Chinese-language syndicate was founded in 1995, and the program "Tianlai Village" is a joint production of MTV Worldwide and Chinese Cable Network. The sixty-minute daily segment of "Tianlai Village" has become the highest-rated program created by a foreign-domestic cooperative venture.¹²

Liu comments: The unsubstantiated assertions in this article are quite shocking. First, China has never had a "Chinese Cable Network." Second, the notion of the daily segment of "Tianlai Village" enjoying top viewership ratings is pure nonsense. In China, only big hotels and a tiny minority of viewers receive the satellite service that would allow them to watch MTV programs.¹³

- Reuters and the Qingniao.net website reportedly initiated a joint venture to create a webguide to Chinese media, in affiliation with *Chuanmei Shiye* (*Media View*) magazine. This news led to false reports that Reuters was investing in Qingniao at Peking University, which would mean that foreign capital has already made its way into a Chinese media business.

Liu comments: Jeffrey Parker is Reuters' representative in Asia and is responsible for supervising broadcast content. He made a point of clarifying the facts, during a speech, when he said that although Reuters does invest in Qingniao.net, it is not the one affiliated with Peking University, nor has Reuters collaborated to create a web-guide to China's media. This shows that the idea of foreign capital flowing

into China's media is really nothing more than a crazy story inspired by the illusion of a "looming media empire."

Liu also pointed out, "It is common knowledge that China's treaty of accession to the WTO contains no agreement to allow foreign news media into China or vice versa. Yet, in 2001, just about every journalism magazine ran articles repeatedly asserting just this—and it was a very hot topic. Journalistic research based on illusion is a tragedy. We have to ask, where did our country's scholarship go wrong?"

High-ranking officials and relevant government documents have repeatedly stated that foreign political news organizations may not enter China and that foreign capital may not be invested in state-owned newspapers, periodicals, broadcast television stations, or even state-owned websites. The state-owned Qianlong.net, Longying.net, and others had visions of attracting foreign investment, but official permission has been consistently denied. The Chinese government's attitude is perfectly clear: the state media are not included in China's accession to the WTO. China's media officials repeat their mantra, "This rule is for the country's good; other nations have similar rules," and they have emphasized that the prohibition against foreign investment in Chinese newspapers, broadcast stations, and periodicals is sensible and wise.

As one Chinese official stated during an internal (*neibu*) conference, "This avenue is closed, there is no room for discussion. Television is too sensitive; it has a direct impact on national security and national interests."¹⁴ The truth is that opening up the news media would not pose a threat to China's security as a nation; rather, official control of the media, particularly television, is a reflection of the authoritarian government's concern that opening up foreign access to Chinese media would threaten the government's power to control.

Controlling access to foreign news in China

The Chinese government has never allowed foreign newspapers and magazines free entry into China; although it can force obedience from Chinese media, it has no way of controlling the pens of foreign journalists. So to prevent Chinese people from seeing factual reports about what is happening in China, the government has always relied on tightly controlling news entering the country from abroad, including from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, otherwise known as "resisting the incursion of capitalist ideology."

Controlling access to foreign publications

When the Chinese Communists gained power in 1949, they issued strict orders that no newspaper or magazine was to publish dispatches from Western press agencies and that all international news must be broadcast or published in accordance with Xinhua News Agency bulletins. This rule was in force until 1992, when the CC Propaganda Department and other government agencies declared that nothing from international news agencies could be published in China apart from what was distributed by Xinhua and the four largest Western news agencies (Associated Press, United Press, Reuters, and Agence France Presse). News-agency press releases distributed free of charge could also be published, but with the exception of Xinhua, no Chinese media outlet was allowed to buy news from foreign wire services, nor were radio and television networks allowed to broadcast foreign news programs directly. In late 1995, the Chinese government modified this rule slightly. Foreign news agencies and their subsidiary organizations are now allowed to publish financial news in China, but they must first submit articles to Xinhua for examination and approval. Chinese news organizations that want to buy financial news from foreign news agencies must do so through Xinhua, as well. Political and social news distributed by the foreign media remains as strictly controlled as ever.

Restricting import of foreign publications

The CC Propaganda Department and GAPP have ruled that the importation of all foreign publications, including those from Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan, must be handled solely by the China National Publications Import & Export Corporation. Without proper authorization, no Chinese organization or individual may sell newspapers or magazines published outside of mainland China. Regulations on the Administration of the Publishing Sector stipulate that those who print, reproduce, or distribute overseas publications shall have their publications and illegal proceeds confiscated (by their local press and publication bureaus, industry and commerce bureaus, or public security bureaus); in addition, they shall be fined from two to five times the amount of their illegal proceeds. If the case is serious, they will be ordered to halt operations and put their business in compliance, or their license will be revoked.

In 2003, when rumors circulated that foreign media would be allowed in China,

Xinhua News Agency reiterated that, under Chinese laws and regulations, no foreign print media could be published in China. Also addressing the rumors, an unnamed GAPP official was quoted as saying that, for the time being, there would be no Chinese-language editions of *Newsweek* and *Forbes* in mainland China, although editions of these magazines were being published in Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to this official, *Business Week* was the only American magazine with a Chinese-language edition in mainland China. He added that foreign publishers could enter the China market by other means, for example, by publishing foreign magazine content in Chinese publications. Chinese fashion magazines are allowed to carry up to 50 percent of their content from foreign magazines; scientific periodicals, up to 70 percent. After all, neither fashion nor science has much to do with politics.

There are a small number of foreign newspapers and periodicals currently sold in China, all of which are censored by the Chinese government. Britain's *Financial Times*, through its good relationship with Chinese authorities, obtained permission to be sold to work units dealing with foreign affairs and to foreign companies operating in China. On September 22, 2003, the paper published, on page three of its newly launched Asian edition, an in-depth report on the Chinese and Indian economies. The article noted the different political systems of the two countries and quoted a mainland Chinese analyst, who argued that the Chinese leadership's past corruption and mistakes constitute a serious liability for the nation. The article noted further that India has a number of assets that China lacks, particularly an independent judiciary. The Chinese authorities were so rattled by this article that they ordered pages three, four, eleven, and twelve of that edition to be scrapped.¹⁵ Although foreign publications like *Financial Times* are not sold openly on Chinese newsstands and are only distributed to subscribers in certain work units and companies, they are still censored by the Chinese government. Even this select group of readers is not allowed access to articles that incur the displeasure of the Chinese government.

Vetting foreign films and television shows

The Regulations on the Administration of Radio and Television stipulate that the Ministry of Broadcasting and Television must examine and approve for broadcast all foreign films and television shows, including radio or television broadcasts via satellite. Unauthorized broadcasting is punishable by a warning, confiscation of

illegal proceeds, and a fine of up to 20,000 *yuan*. If the case is serious, the ministry can revoke the broadcaster's license and confiscate equipment.

Media censorship helps government authorities manipulate citizens into developing a distorted sense of values. The Chinese people have been exposed to propaganda for so long that they have become numb to it, but to anyone who has lived in the West it is patently clear that Chinese television, films, newspapers, and magazines purvey nothing but inane political propaganda. Thomas P. Bernstein, an American academic who lived for many years in China, hit the nail on the head when he said, "Communists have taken their ideology, which shows utter contempt for individual values, to the extreme. They continue to ensnare ordinary people with honeyed words and to demand that they set no store by individual values, their own happiness, and their own lives. Ordinary citizens are barred from questioning the government or cherishing their own values, happiness, and dignity."¹⁶

A Chinese PhD graduate from an American university, who worked for a time in China and has since returned to live in the United States, once told me, "I can put up with environmental pollution and a lower standard of living in China. After all, that's where I grew up. What I cannot stand is the stupefying political propaganda in Chinese newspapers, magazines, and television programs. When I realized that my children would be living in a country that regards its own citizens as mentally deficient and that they would be indoctrinated to the point of being unable to think for themselves, I decided to leave China again."

Because of the government's strict media control, information available to the Chinese people is extremely uniform, and they are very keen to get their hands on foreign books and magazines. With economic ties between China and Hong Kong increasing in recent years, large numbers of mainland tourists are buying books in Hong Kong that are banned in China. There is such demand that even small grocery stores have begun stocking anti-Communist works. Chinese customs officials have, consequently, stepped up inspection of publications brought in by tourists, and they routinely confiscate books and periodicals banned in China. Nonetheless, a large number of foreign publications do make it into China, where many people thirst for the free flow of information.

Can foreign investment bring press freedom?

In commentary such as "China's Media Reform Finally Takes Off"¹⁷ much is made of scattered references to "news media reform" and the belief that if foreign

investors and Chinese entrepreneurs are allowed to buy shares of news publishing companies, the Chinese government will be unable to prevent the emergence of media outlets with an independent voice. However, the Detailed Regulations issued in August 2003 (discussed in chapter one)¹⁸ indicate no plans to reform the news media; on the contrary, these measures further extend government control.

Even if foreign businesses were allowed to invest in China's media, a free press would not result without substantial political reform. In 1996, Hong Kong's Singtao Newspaper Group invested tens of millions of *yuan* in a joint venture with the *Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Daily*, owned by the Shenzhen city government, to start up *Shenxing Shibao* (*Shenxing Daily*). The Hong Kong group's flagship newspaper, *Singtao Daily*, entered the partnership with an 85-percent controlling interest but was, nonetheless, unable to prevent the new paper from falling into line as a "Party mouthpiece." During its brief existence, *Shenxing Daily's* political reports parroted the official line with front-page, banner-headlined articles such as "Police Heroes Show Their Mettle in the Arrest of Evildoers" or "The Shenzhen Party Committee Sets an Example: Visible Results in the Establishment of Honest and Clean Government." Limping along with a circulation of no more than twenty thousand, it closed business after two years.¹⁹

Some magazines published with private funds have emerged in China, such as *Huanqiu Qiye Jia* (*Global Entrepreneur Magazine*, published in Shanghai), *Gang'ao Jingji* (*Hong Kong-Macao Economy*, published in Guangzhou), and *Xin Zhoukan* (*New Weekly*, published in Shenzhen and Guangzhou). However, they are not allowed to openly list their investors and, judging by their content, these magazines have never dared to sing anything other than the government's tune. Any originality is limited to apolitical articles and the magazine's binding and layout.

Recent changes in the Hong Kong media also demonstrate that freedom of the press cannot be guaranteed by private investment. With the exception of *Wenhui Daily* and *Dagong Daily*, which rely on Chinese government funding, most Hong Kong media outlets remain in private hands. Yet since its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong has experienced a steady erosion of freedom of speech, and many newspapers have been cowed into silence. The Chinese government tried, unsuccessfully, to pressure Hong Kong into adopting Article 23 into the Basic Law, which would have applied mainland state security laws to Hong Kong. If such a measure is ever passed, Hong Kong's freedom of speech will become a thing of the past, regardless of how many media outlets remain in private or foreign hands.

A 1999 news report showing precisely how the Chinese government views

media ownership rights went largely unnoticed by the public and the press. A front-page story in the October 21 edition of *Xinwen Chubao* (*Press and Publishing Journal*) revealed that, in a directive to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences entitled “Notice Regarding How to Determine Ownership of *Zhongguo Jingying Bao* (*Chinese Economics*) and *Jingpin Gouwu Zhinan* (*Guide to Shopping Best-quality Goods*),” the State Administration for the Affairs of State Council Organs, the Ministry of Finance, and GAPP unequivocally stated that, because China’s news media are considered a special activity, different from ordinary business ventures and nonprofit units (*shiyedanyuan*), the principle of “investor as owner” does not apply. All news media are considered state-owned assets. The directive, which has statutory effect, stressed further that this rule applies to all Chinese newspapers. Clearly, if foreigners who put up the money to launch media outlets in China hope to look after their rights and interests as investors, they will have to wait until the Chinese government rescinds this regulation.

Unexpectedly, in August 2005, just as foreign media companies were kowtowing to the Chinese government in hopes of gaining access to the China market, the government issued a regulation entitled *Measures Regarding Strengthening the Administration of the Importation of Cultural Products*,²⁰ which signaled an even more significant restriction of foreign media and proved to be a serious blow to that “friend of the Chinese government,” News Corporation chairman Rupert Murdoch. At a forum hosted by former U.S. president Bill Clinton in New York a month later, Murdoch acknowledged that his company had “hit a brick wall in China,” and he criticized Chinese authorities for being “quite paranoid about what gets through” to readers.²¹ Murdoch said that Chinese authorities had originally promised to allow overseas and multinational companies to run print and electronic media in China, but that it was now clear the policy had been reversed.

The truth is that foreign media conglomerates have been talking about China’s media reforms in order to soothe their own consciences. They know full well that if they are to break into the China market, they will have to relinquish the principle of freedom of the press.

The Hijacked Potential of China's Internet

Chairman Mao knew the utility of briefly loosening controls to create a dragnet. In effect, the current Chinese leadership promoted a "hundred flowers" period of relative Internet freedom—again, not to capture terrorists, but to expose anyone who disagreed with the legitimacy of their rule and to attract massive Western investment. American technologies of surveillance, encryption, firewalls, and viruses have now been transferred to Chinese partners—and might even one day be turned against our own ludicrously open Internet. We funded, built, and pushed into China what we thought was a Trojan Horse, but we forgot to build the hatch.

Ethan Gutmann, "Who Lost China's Internet?"¹

When the Internet arrived in China in the 1990s, the international community and Chinese advocates of democracy and freedom were full of hope and confidence that it would break government news censorship and promote China's democratization. But cold reality has shattered this myth. The Chinese regime has turned the Internet, which ought to be an engine for social progress, into a political mockery.

China's Internet industry has indeed experienced extraordinarily rapid growth, but the Chinese government's technological capabilities for controlling the Internet have advanced even faster. Assisted by several European and American high-tech companies, the Chinese government initially built a firewall and then invested enormous sums in the Golden Shield Project, the world's biggest cyber police force and the largest and most advanced Internet control system. This sophisticated system, described in detail later in this chapter, enables the government to effectively defend its autocratic rule. Experts predict that by 2008, China will have become the world's largest and most intrusive police state.

The development of the Internet in China

The PRC officially joined the World Wide Web on March 20, 1994, and in May 1995 the Internet became available for public use. Having developed very rapidly in recent years, the Internet now has a significant and visible impact on the country's economy, culture, politics, and education system. According to a survey conducted by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in January 2006, China has 110 million Internet users and 49.5 million computers with Internet access.² As of December 2004, the number of domain names and websites registered under the domain name “.cn” (the domain designation for China) was 430,000 and 669,000, respectively. China's international bandwidth capacity measured 74,429 megabits per second, and almost 59.9 million unique Internet protocol (IP) addresses had been assigned to computers in China.³

The Chinese government and the Chinese people are proud of the fact that although the country arrived at the atomic and electronic ages decades and perhaps even a century late, it entered the Internet age in purely quantitative terms, at almost the same time as the United States and Europe.⁴

Analyses of China's Internet users reveal the following characteristics:

- The absolute number of Chinese Internet users is high, but according to 2005 figures, they comprise less than 8.5 percent of the total population of 1.3 billion. In this respect, China lags far behind developed countries, and even behind Hong Kong (3.3 million users; 51 percent of the population), Macau (201,000 users; 46 percent of the population), and Taiwan (13 million users; 57 percent of the population).⁵
- The Internet has developed in an extremely unbalanced way throughout China, with a high number of users in economically developed cities and a much lower number in underdeveloped areas, resulting in regional differences in the availability of information.
- Internet news outlets are subject to the same sorts of restraints as other forms of news media. Apart from a small number of powerfully placed Internet content providers (ICPs) and Internet traditional content providers (ITCPs), most websites and portals that publish news provide little content of their own, so the news landscape is riddled with boilerplate language, plagiarism, and empty political commentary.

- Most Chinese Internet users are under thirty-five years of age, and their relative youth informs their political views. After the Tiananmen Square incident, the Chinese government reverted to the Maoist-era ideological strategy of defaming Western democratic values. As a result, those who grew up during this period were fed a steady diet of official ideology, propaganda, and indoctrination that has led to a seriously distorted view of Western concepts of democracy and freedom. As a number of online postings indicate, it is not uncommon for young people to hold the view that “as a scientific and technological superpower, America controls the main Web portals and uses them to promote its hegemony.” In general, people under thirty years of age do not demand the same types of news as the previous generation; they are interested mainly in entertainment and sports.⁶

These four characteristics have conditioned the development of online news in China. According to some communication theorists, a communication medium must reach 20 percent of the population to be considered part of the mass media. In China that would mean 260 million Internet users.⁷ But given the country's level of economic development and the rural population's low level of education, this goal will not be attained anytime soon.

Following rapid initial growth, China's Internet industry now faces a reversing trend; most middle-sized and small websites are struggling to stay in business, and many others are closing down. Only a small number of major websites are able to survive. For Internet companies operating in a cutthroat business environment, the government's censorship of online news and speech is insult added to injury. From the Chinese government's perspective, Internet censorship may retard economic growth, but that is a price the regime considers worth paying to protect itself. Economic growth means little to the Communist Party if it comes at the price of losing power.

Government control of the Internet

The speed and convenience of the Internet has posed a serious challenge to the government, which was initially caught off balance. In recent years, however, the government has spent huge sums for cutting-edge technology from foreign companies in order to set up a powerful and unprecedented system of Internet monitoring and control.

Because propaganda departments lacked personnel with the requisite techni-

cal expertise, state security agencies were charged with managing the system; they censor online speech and have introduced political terror and violence into cyberspace. In 1998 the Bureau of State Security and the provincial and municipal state security bureaus began retiring older personnel and staffing a new cyber police force with large numbers of university students, most of whom are computer science graduates.⁸ Their principal task is to inspect and control the Internet by continually searching websites and critical nodes within websites (particularly online discussion forums) and blocking or shutting them down when they discover prohibited content, such as potential “state secrets,” “anti-Party and anti-socialist speech,” and criticism of the country’s leadership.

The cyber police employ different censoring methods, depending on whether websites are located in China or abroad, or are owned by a work unit or an individual. When forbidden content appears on a Chinese website, the cyber police can quickly ascertain the site’s location and ownership, then send a secret e-mail warning to the site managers, instructing them to find out who posted the content. If the warning is not heeded, the local public security bureau dispatches police officers to threaten the culprit. There are also technical means to shut down the site’s host server. When prohibited content appears on a website located abroad, Chinese cyber police have no way of blocking its host server, but they can block access to its directory or modify Chinese Web pages linking to it.

Further control is achieved by means of a website registration system. Since GAPP issued the 1996 Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Electronic Publications,⁹ the government has repeatedly revised laws and regulations in order to tame the “wild horse” that is the Internet.

Its first approach was to control domain names. Then, in May 1997, the State Council’s Information Office issued its Guidelines on Disseminating International News by Means of the Internet,¹⁰ which stipulated, “All news organizations that publish international news content on the Internet must do so via the Central Committee’s foreign news information platform; they may not use other channels to access the Internet. Under no circumstances may they access the Internet from overseas.”

But the Internet developed so rapidly that this rule had to be revised soon after it was laid down. In the early summer of 2000, the CPC’s Central Committee convened a meeting to discuss ideological and political work involving the Internet. Soon afterward, *People’s Daily* published a column criticizing “the negative influence of the Internet.”¹¹ On November 27, 2000, *Jiancha Ribao’s* (*Procuratorate Daily*) Web page Justice, sponsored by the Supreme People’s Procuratorate, pub-

lished an article declaring, “The online media pose a serious challenge to China’s traditional media management system. Given the huge impact they have on the nation and on society, we cannot let them go unchecked. We must speed up efforts to formulate policies and draft laws to take control of the online media.”

In August 2002, the government issued the Provisional Regulations on the Administration of Internet Publications (hereafter, Internet Publications Regulations), aimed primarily at websites with a political orientation.¹² Key provisions are as follows:

1. Anyone who wishes to engage in Internet publishing activities must first obtain official approval. No unlicensed organization or individual may engage in Internet publishing activities.
2. In addition to complying with the provisions of the Measures for the Administration of Internet Information Services, anyone running an Internet publishing business is required to have: a definite scope of publication; articles of association in compliance with laws and regulations; a professional editorial board and editorial staff; and sufficient funds, technical equipment, and offices appropriate for a publishing business [conditions beyond the reach of most individuals].
3. Pursuant to record-keeping regulations, Internet publishers shall report to GAPP all instances of topics involving national security or social unrest.
4. Forbidden content for Internet publications includes anything that propagates heretical cults (e.g., Falun Gong) or superstitions, contravenes the PRC constitution, endangers national unity, or involves state secrets or state security.
5. Internet publications targeted at minors may not include content that induces them to imitate illegal behavior or acts that violate social morals, or that is terrifying or cruel and impairs their physical or mental health.
6. Publications may not include content specifically forbidden by laws and regulations.
7. Internet publishers shall adopt a system of editorial responsibility whereby

special editorial staff review for compliance with the law all content submitted for publication on the Internet.

The Internet Publications Regulations stipulate a series of punishments for anyone found to have engaged in Internet publishing activities without official approval. Depending on the extent of the violation, the organization or individual may be punished with a warning, an order to halt operations and restructure, an order to close down the website, the confiscation of the equipment used in illegal publishing activities and illegal proceeds, or a fine. In addition, anyone already engaged in Internet publishing activities at the time the regulations were issued had to submit to examination and approval procedures within sixty days of their implementation.

Thus far, government efforts to control Internet activity have been largely successful. In regard to its news content, China's Internet is a domestic rather than a genuinely international network, and one that is not characterized by freedom of expression. Chinese people who engage in online discussions and communication are spied upon and intimidated by the secret police. Those who think that employing online pseudonyms will allow them to safely speak their minds misunderstand the nature of the surveillance systems. The Chinese government's Golden Shield Project allows officials to track any Internet poster's IP address and true identity.

However, even these restrictions were not considered by the government to be sufficient. After an article exposing local misgovernment was posted on the Internet in 2005,¹³ authorities introduced online "public opinion guides"—government officials posing as ordinary citizens while posting messages, monitoring, controlling, and influencing discussions on online bulletin boards and forums.¹⁴

China's "Big Brother"—The Golden Shield Project

George Orwell's book *1984*, based on Soviet totalitarianism, is set in a country where citizens are constantly monitored by Big Brother. Whether they are at home or away, at work or at rest, Big Brother is always watching. The most terrifying aspect of life in *1984* is how little it takes for citizens to be found guilty of "thought crimes," for which they can be imprisoned or executed.

The Chinese government's Golden Shield Project, when fully implemented, will establish the world's biggest police state, founded on the latest technological

tools. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.” Chinese people have been struggling for these rights for a very long time, but the goal seems to be receding ever farther.

Before discussing Project Golden Shield in detail, I would like to mention a story that former U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton recounts in her autobiography, *Living History*. Although a translation of the book was published in China, this incident, which occurred in 1985 while Clinton attended the United Nation’s Fourth World Women’s Conference in Beijing, was expurgated from the Chinese version:

While the Chinese officials would try to control what their citizens heard, they kept themselves surprisingly well-informed, as I learned when we retreated to the hotel to relax for a few hours after the speech. I hadn’t seen a newspaper since leaving Hawaii and casually mentioned to my aides that it would be nice to get a copy of the *International Herald Tribune*. Within minutes, we heard a thump against the door to my room. The *Tribune* had arrived, as if on cue. But we had no idea who heard that I wanted it or who had delivered it.¹⁵

Clinton sees black humor in this anecdote, but behind it lies a harsh social reality. Despite China’s claims of “reform and opening up” to the world, it is still an autocratic state under the tight grip of the military and the police. Important Western guests (including foreign journalists who have been critical of the Chinese government), dissidents, and social critics are invariably spied upon or harassed. The Chinese government is exceedingly corrupt, irresponsible, and inefficient—with one exception: its public security agencies have always been highly efficient.

The Golden Shield

On September 3, 2003, CCTV’s evening news announced the launch of the government’s Internet security system, the Golden Shield Project, headed by Huang Ju, a member of the Central Committee’s Political Bureau and the project’s chief technical expert.¹⁶ The vast majority of Chinese people have little or no comprehension of this project or how it might relate to their daily lives.

As early as 2001, Greg Walton, a freelance researcher working with several foreign organizations, published a detailed report on the project's implications for freedom and human rights, *China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China*.¹⁷

At the South China Information Technology Exhibition, in June 2002, Qu Yanwen, director of the Center for the State Information Security and Computer Examination, declared that the Ministry of Public Security was establishing a nationwide public information network security and monitoring system, which would monitor information on the Internet, locate foreign websites that require filtering, block content deemed "undesirable," investigate matters of security, and monitor and collect evidence on criminal activities.¹⁸ Outside China, it was widely thought that the project would not be completed by 2008; however, the Chinese government declared as early as September 2003 that Project Golden Shield was already underway. Since then, the project has gradually shifted focus from functioning as a "Great Firewall" Internet filtering system for a national intranet to a high-tech surveillance and control system of individual electronic devices (computers and cellular telephones).¹⁹

Technological innovation is not one of China's strengths, so the Chinese government, in its quest for Internet control, turned for help to a number of prominent Western high-tech corporations, including the Canada-based Nortel. For the right price, these corporations have actively helped the Chinese regime set up a flagrant system of surveillance and control.

Greg Walton reports that at Security China 2000, an annual trade show held in Beijing, the biggest international names in Web technology peddled their wares to China's secret police and security officials.²⁰ Although these companies originally touted the fact that no government controls the Web, of the \$20 billion worth of telecom equipment they sell each year to China, a large proportion of the government's purchases are used to monitor and control its citizens. The largest Chinese customer is the Central Committee's Commission for the Comprehensive Management of Social Security, which runs the state security apparatus. The commission's primary function is to control social protests by workers and farmers and to monitor dissident activity.²¹

The Chinese government envisions the Golden Shield as a database-driven remote surveillance system—offering immediate access to national and local records on every person in China, while linking to vast networks of cameras designed to increase police efficiency. The ultimate aim is to integrate an enormous online database with an all-encompassing surveillance network—incorpo-

rating speech and face recognition, closed-circuit television, smart cards, credit records, and Internet surveillance technologies.²²

As Walton explains:

The success of the Golden Shield project depends on a wide range of advanced technologies. While Chinese research is advancing rapidly in these areas, and other related fields, Chinese scientists have developed none of the components necessary to implement Golden Shield independently. In each case, they have relied on assistance from Western corporations, either by purchasing components as turnkey solutions, or through technology transfer—either through formal business deals or in exchange for greater market access.²³

Technology allows the network to “hear” through speech signal processing—enabling, for example, automatic monitoring of telephone conversations by searching for keywords and phrases. Similarly, video signal processing lies behind a surveillance camera’s ability to “see,” that is, to recognize individual faces in a crowd of people. According to Walton, one of the goals of the Golden Shield Project is to integrate CCTV surveillance networks into the urban environment.²⁴

When they want to establish economic ties with China, foreign corporations often used the slogan that “technological innovation works in favor of freedom and democracy.” The irony is that the Chinese government uses these sophisticated technologies for the opposite goal: to step up its repression of Chinese citizens, especially of those who advocate freedom and democracy.

An unholy technological alliance

The corrupt business alliance between foreign corporations and the Chinese government was first exposed in writings by foreign experts who participated in the establishment of the Internet in China—Greg Walton’s report, referred to above, and Ethan Gutmann’s article, “Who Lost China’s Internet?”²⁵

To get a piece of the China market, many multinational corporations have broken their early promises to use business ties with China to promote its democratization. In fact, as Gutmann reports, Microsoft is the only foreign corporation to have once refused one of the Chinese government’s appalling requests: “When Chinese authorities ordered Microsoft to surrender its software’s underlying source codes, the keys to encryption, as the price of doing business there, Microsoft

chose to fight, spearheading an unprecedented Beijing-based coalition of American, Japanese, and European Chambers of Commerce. Faced with being left behind technologically, the Chinese authorities dropped their demands.”²⁶ But soon afterward Microsoft became concerned that it would fall behind its competition, and it agreed to collaborate closely with the Chinese government:

Gutmann describes the early stages of this corporate/government cooperation:

Theoretically, China’s desire to be part of the Internet should have given the capitalists who wired it similar leverage. Instead, the leverage all seems to have remained with the government, as Western companies fell all over themselves bidding for its favor. AOL, Netscape Communications, and Sun Microsystems all helped disseminate government propaganda by backing China Internet Corp., an arm of the state-run Xinhua News Agency. Not to be outdone, Sparkice, a Canadian Internet colossus, splashily announced that it would serve up only state-sanctioned news on its website. Nortel provides wraparound software for voice and closed-circuit camera recognition, technology that the Public Security Bureau has already put to good use, according to the Chinese press. . . . China Telecom is considering purchasing software from iCognito, an Israeli company that invented a program called “artificial content recognition,” which surfs along just ahead of you, learning as it censors in real time. It was built to filter “gambling, shopping, job search, pornography, stock quotes, or other non-business material,” but the first question from the Chinese buyers is invariably: Can it stop Falun Gong?²⁷

James Mulvenon of RAND Corporation reveals that “Network Associates [better known as the producers of McAfee AntiVirus], Symantec [Norton AntiVirus], and Trend Micro of Tokyo gained entry to the Chinese market by helpfully donating three hundred live computer viruses to the PSB.”²⁸ According to a RAND report, there is evidence that the Chinese government has not only used the Internet to spread political propaganda, but also to criticize dissidents, to flood and disable their e-mail inboxes by means of massive spam attacks, and to cripple websites and personal Web pages with viruses.²⁹ The advanced technologies needed to perform these functions were purchased by the government from prominent Western corporations. One statistic speaks volumes: China accounts for about 25 percent of the world’s market for telecommunications equipment, and that figure is expanding exponentially. A good portion of this is money spent by the Chinese government to build its “security system.”³⁰

In May 2005, the Ministry of Public Security required Chinese Internet service

providers to install two “black boxes”—monitoring devices dedicated to tracking the content and activity of individual e-mail accounts. Around the same time, Chinese authorities were also working with technology experts at Shenzhen University to develop an e-mail filtration system that could detect and delete “unwanted” e-mails without the recipient’s knowledge or consent. The Ministry of Public Security has also been involved in creating fake proxy servers to conduct surveillance of Web surfers who try to circumvent official firewalls.³¹ Numerous multinational telecommunications giants, including U.S.-based companies Lucent, Motorola, Cisco Systems, and Sun Microsystems, German-based Siemens, and Canadian-based Bell Northern Research (BNR) and Nortel Networks, have cooperated with the Chinese government in introducing these technologies to China. Cisco Systems provided a large proportion of the routers and firewalls in China’s network.³² These companies know full well that the technology they provide is not aimed at “improving the quality of people’s work and lives”³³ but, instead, is used to spy on, wiretap, and monitor online communications, thus violating the fundamental human rights of Chinese citizens. Playing deaf and dumb, some companies argue, “If we don’t do business with China, companies from other countries will!”

Ethan Gutmann provides more details:

Consider a Chinese user in search of an unblocked news site (weeklystandard.com, for example). He won’t expect to get through, and if he does, it will be cause for alarm, for the site may be a tripwire—not for spam, but for state security. Everything he does on the Web might conceivably be used against him. Pornography? Potentially, a two-year sentence. Political? Possible permanent loss of career, family, and freedom. E-mail may be the most risky: Two years ago, working from my office in a Chinese TV studio, I received an e-mail from a U.S. friend (in a browser-based Hotmail account, no less, which in theory should be difficult to monitor) with the words “China,” “unrest,” “labor,” and “Xinjiang” in queer half-tone brackets, as if the words had been picked out by a filter. I now realize that it was a warning; any savvy Chinese user would have sensed it instantly.³⁴

The government’s “Great Firewall” is not completely invulnerable. Gutmann describes technologies such as Triangle Boy, developed by Stephen Hsu of the University of Oregon, which exploit vulnerabilities in China’s censorship through a constantly shifting fleet of proxy servers. But Gutmann adds, “As surely as Triangle Boy works to liberate the surfing Chinese masses, you can bet State Security is looking for a way to pounce on this latest proxy rebellion. The simplest one will

be to enlist American companies, still eager to curry favor in Beijing, and get them to develop software allowing the Public Security Bureau to sniff out and block proxies as quickly as they are created”.

Without the enthusiastic cooperation of foreign companies, the Chinese government would lack the advanced technology it needs to maintain autocratic power more effectively.

The commonly held myth that the Internet will promote free exchange of information in China and, thus, will also promote China’s democratization, flies in the face of China’s reality. Ethan Gutmann concludes:

As the father of the Chinese Internet, Michael Robinson, notes, “In the Chinese Internet’s infancy, the first three sites that the government blocked were two anti-government sites—and one Maoist site. What threatens them? . . . The heartland.” Ultimately, it won’t be the intellectuals who are key to bringing democracy to China. Irate overtaxed peasants with Internet-enabled cell phones ten years from now are the real target market. And those whose dream is democracy in China are operating with diminishing points of entry. The American business presence in China is deeply, perhaps fatally, compromised as an agent for liberalizing change. The Internet remains the strongest force for democracy available to the Chinese people. But it remains a mere potentiality, yet another American dream, unless we first grapple with the question: Who lost China’s Internet? Well, we did. But we can still repair the damage. We can, in Michael’s words, “lay down the communication network for revolution.” If we don’t, his progeny may not forgive us.³⁵

The psychological Great Wall of China

Project Golden Shield is only part of the Chinese government’s system of Internet control. There is also the media’s “self-discipline,”—more accurately, “self-censorship”—a term borrowed from the Hong Kong media, after that city’s reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. Because mainland Chinese media lived under similar political constraints during the Maoist era, the government has not had to spend much effort ensuring that they practice “self-discipline” once again.

Under severe pressure from the government, Chinese websites have erected a “psychological Great Wall” and, so, practice self-restraint in a variety of ways.

Routine control

Most Chinese Internet home pages contain similarly phrased “rules on prohibited content subject to deletion” aimed at that which constitutes “subversion of state power,” “endangering state security,” or “leaking state secrets.” For example, Peking University’s popular Triangle Forum (*Beida Sanjiaodi*), hosted by a university-owned computer company, lists the following New Rules on Prohibited Content Subject to Deletion on its home page:

We have repeatedly posted our administrative regulations, but most people have not bothered to read them. Consequently, whenever a message is deleted or blocked, there are always public complaints about this website. We are now restating our Rules on Prohibited Content Subject to Deletion. From now on, these rules will be implemented without further explanation:

Article 2. Persons who post any of the content listed below shall be removed from the Forum and have their account terminated and their IP address blocked:

- i. Information on the heretical Falun Gong cult
- ii. Attacks on our country’s leaders
- iii. Anti-Chinese reports published in the foreign news media
- iv. Rumor-mongering or inflammatory speech

Article 3. A Few Points of Explanation

- i. Please read these rules before registering with or posting to the Triangle Bulletin Board Service (BBS). If you feel that you can only submit posts that fall under items 1 or 2, or if you are disappointed with the Triangle BBS, you are welcome to go somewhere else.
- ii. This is not an official Peking University website. Articles and other postings found here do not represent Peking University. In fact, more than 95 percent of visitors to this site are not affiliated with Peking University. Any praise or criticism should therefore be directed to this website and not to Peking University.
- iii. In accordance with relevant PRC laws and regulations, this website has the right and the duty to cooperate with relevant government agencies in conducting investigations.
- iv. We reserve the right to close down the Peking University forum and the Triangle BBS without further notice.³⁶

Similar rules are found on the home pages of most Chinese websites, includ-

ing those popular among educated Chinese, such as Century Salon, *Tianya zhi Sheng* (Voice from the Far Corners of the World), and *Guxiang* (Hometown).

Censorship during sensitive periods

The Chinese government becomes jittery whenever there is a major political event, such as the 16th Communist Party Congress. During such periods, websites come under extremely strict control.

One keen observer kept a record of public announcements posted on Chinese Internet portals and bulletin boards, beginning with the opening of the 16th Party Congress on November 8, 2002:

Administrative announcement from Netease.com concerning the discussion forum during the period of the 16th Party Congress: To improve our administrative work during the period of the 16th Congress, our message-posting service will be suspended each night from 10:00 PM to 9:00 AM and all day on weekends.

Wonderful 21st Century Forum (*21 Shiji Jingcai Luntan*) announcement: As the 16th Party Congress approaches, everyone is kindly reminded not to post anything illegal! Postings with reactionary or sensitive content are strictly prohibited. Violators will have their user ID blocked and, depending on circumstances, may be referred to the public security bureau for prosecution! Everyone is asked to cooperate!

Lycos home-page service announcement: To cooperate with the authorities as they deal with harmful Internet content, Lycos plans to clear all harmful content from our free Web pages. While work is carried out from November 7–18, access to the free Web pages will be suspended.

Peking University Forum announcement: During system maintenance, all postings are temporarily suspended!

AOL announcement: Internet closed for system maintenance.

Intellectual Review/Sinoliberal.com (*Sixiang Pinglun Luntan*) and Yahoo! Hong Kong: The page you wish to visit is currently unavailable. The website may be experiencing difficulties or you may need to readjust your browser.

It is no coincidence that these announcements are almost identical; during periods the Chinese government considers sensitive, Chinese websites bend over backwards to cooperate with the government in stepping up its control and surveillance of online discussion forums.

Foreign Internet portals in service to the regime

Under pressure from the Chinese government, numerous foreign portals in China are also exercising “self-discipline.” As *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*South German Newspaper*) and other newspapers have reported, the American Internet company Yahoo!, in a classic example of cooperation with the Chinese government, drew criticism from overseas NGOs, such as Human Rights in China and Human Rights Watch, for signing an agreement with the Chinese authorities to assist the latter in investigating Web pages. Yahoo! also agreed not to publish on its China Web pages any content that threatens the country’s national security or political stability.³⁷

Gutmann argues that the Internet has long since stopped being as free as people would like to think it is. He explains:

All Chinese chat rooms or discussion groups have a “big mama,” a supervisor for a team of censors who wipe out politically incorrect comments in real time. Yahoo! handles things differently. If in the midst of a discussion you type, “We should have nationwide multiparty elections in China!!” no one else will react to your comment. How could they? It appears on your screen, but only you and Yahoo!’s big mama actually see your thought crime. After intercepting it and preventing its transmission, Mother Yahoo! then solicitously generates a friendly e-mail suggesting that you cool your rhetoric—censorship, but with a New Age nod to self-esteem.³⁸

According to Reporters Without Borders, forty-five countries have regulations that place restrictions on their citizens’ ability to access information on the Internet. On the pretext of defending “national security,” these countries remove content from the Internet, block Web pages, and close down Internet cafés. But the participation of Yahoo! ensures that Internet control is even more thorough and widespread in China than anywhere else.³⁹

In September 2005, Chinese journalist Shi Tao was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison for “divulging state secrets abroad,” based on information provided to the Chinese authorities by Yahoo!.⁴⁰ Other similar cases also exist. On

September 22, 2005, dissident writer Zheng Yichun of Liaoning Province was sentenced to seven years in prison on the charge of “inciting subversion.” A few dozen e-mail messages were cited as evidence against him, another case in which Internet companies did the authorities a “small service.”

In 2004, to break into the China market, Google launched a “new Google News China edition” that complies with Chinese government requirements. The company openly acknowledges that this edition does not provide links to news sources that are blocked by the Chinese government.⁴¹

Self-discipline pledges by ISPs

Government pressure has persuaded an increasing number of ISPs to sign “self-discipline pledges” (*zili gongyue*) to combat “cyber crime” and guard against “harmful information” and “unhealthy competition.” In March 2002, Xinhua, quoting an official from the Internet Society of China, reported that ISPs throughout China had begun signing the pledge, including twenty-two ISPs in Tianjin City alone, and the main ISPs in Guizhou, Fujian, Liaoning, and Hubei provinces.

In June 2003, a fire broke out in a Beijing Internet café. The government responded by closing down thousands of Internet cafés, purportedly for safety reasons, and stepped up its monitoring and control of the Internet.⁴² In 2003, the Chinese government announced that within three years it would select ten major culture and telecommunications companies to form a nationwide chain of Internet cafés, with each province required to choose up to three such companies to establish cafés in the region, as part of a national chain. Thus, China’s more than one hundred and ten thousand Internet cafés would be consolidated into fewer than one hundred under “standardized management,”⁴³ an official euphemism for controlling activities on the Internet.

Many foreigners cannot understand why Chinese people would “exercise self-restraint” as if they were obedient children. Nor do they understand that “self-discipline” is a conditioned reflex acquired over the course of the government’s countless ideological campaigns. For those who have not lived under the Chinese Communist dictatorship (and also done some serious soul-searching as a result of engagement with Western culture), it is very difficult to understand how people’s thinking can be so easily subdued. When an online discussion forum is closed down or the participants punished for publishing comments on a topic the authorities have pronounced taboo, website managers and other users direct their

criticism not at the government but at the poster who had the temerity to express a personal opinion.⁴⁴

The Chinese government's interference in the Internet

As Greg Walton has observed, from the first linking of China to the global Internet in 1994, the central authorities have consistently sought to control China's Internet connections, whether domestic or international. The Chinese government engages in several types of hacking activity, and also employs firewalls, "rectification," filtering, and the use of online activity as a weapon against dissidents.

Building the world's biggest firewall

A key principle in China's nascent Internet security strategy was to heavily restrict international connections. To this day, China's five major networks all pass through proxy servers at official international "gateways," where filtering and monitoring of network traffic take place. Derisively termed "The Great Firewall,"⁴⁵ Chinese Internet portals are designed to filter out "sensitive" keywords, such as "democracy," "human rights," "freedom," "64" (for June 4, the Tiananmen Square incident), and "*dafa*" and "disciple" (terms associated with the prohibited Falun Gong movement). Text in which the proper names of Communist Party of China leaders appear in disrespectful contexts is also deleted.

As government filtering becomes increasingly rigorous, many Chinese substitute sensitive keywords with XX to ensure that their e-mail messages get through. For example, "XXfall" replaces "freedfall," the year 1964 is written "19XX," and the term "Shaolin disciple" is written "ShaolinXX." When Chinese Internet users complained that the government's blacklisting of keywords was excessive, online discussion forum managers stopped such discussions by including the string "illegal keywords" in their blacklist, so that even that phrase is filtered out. In 2001, the Western trade journal *Security World* predicted a 20 percent annual increase in China's expenditure on "security" during the following three to five years. By the end of the decade, the size of China's security market is expected to become second only to that of the United States.⁴⁶

Foreign journalists began taking note of China's controlling approach to the Internet in October 2001, when attendees of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooper-

ation (APEC) forum in Shanghai found that numerous international news sites at the forum's computer center were blocked. One reporter from Voice of America said he was unable to access his own site, and foreign journalists quoted by the BBC reported blocked access to the Web pages of several Taiwanese and foreign Western media outlets, including Voice of America, the BBC, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*.

When Zhang Qiyue, a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman assigned to the APEC forum, announced that the Chinese government would hold a press conference about the Internet and regional economic development, a foreign journalist asked her why numerous websites were being blocked. After an initial "No comment," Zhang suggested, "Maybe there is some problem with online communications," eliciting derisive laughter from the assembled foreign journalists. She added that it is "natural for any government to take measures to keep a firewall on the Internet," and insisted that along with its many benefits, the Internet is also a vehicle for bad influences.⁴⁷

"Rectifying" domestic websites

The Chinese government has closed down websites incessantly since China joined the Internet. After the July 1, 2001 celebrations marking the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, the government declared that China needed a "good public opinion environment" and stepped up its efforts to "rectify" online news activity. A Xinhua News Agency report from December 2001 quoted Li Rongrong, Minister for the State Economic and Trade Commission, as saying that, in the previous six months, more than 45,000 Internet cafés had been inspected, 12,000 temporarily closed, and more than 3,300 permanently closed.⁴⁸ The following websites were also shut down:

- *Sixiang de Jingjie* (Frontiers of Thought) was a website created by Li Yonggang, a young lecturer at Nanjing University's Department of Political Science and Administration. Dedicated to major issues of academic debate, it was very popular among intellectuals. Previous suspensions of the site had caused a stir among foreign readers and had been reported by the foreign media. But such advocacy only prompted the Nanjing State Security Bureau to shut down Li's website permanently. To quell international criticism, the authorities forced Li to issue a statement that he had closed the site of his own free will.

- After *Southern Weekend* was “rectified” (that is, allowed to continue publishing) in May 2001, much criticism of the government’s actions was voiced on the newspaper’s site, *Zhoumo Luntan* (*Weekend Forum*). On June 18, the forum was suddenly shut down.
- *Xici Hutong* (*Western Temple Alley*) was China’s most popular online bulletin board. In June 2001, it was announced that the BBS was “stopping operation for one week.” Then the *Minzhu Yu Renquan* (*Democracy and Human Rights*) forum, which was operated by the *Xici Hutong* BBS, was shut down. Both sites were closed shortly afterward and have not reopened since.
- Soim.com’s *Remen Huati* (*Hot Topics*), an e-zine first published November 27, 1997, grew very popular, with more than 235,000 e-mail subscribers. On June 18, 2001, after its eight-hundredth issue, it was announced that *Hot Topics* was ceasing publication. In a farewell letter to his readers, the editor was unable to contain his anger: “Much of what we said was like a fishbone in their throat; they were not content until they got rid of it. . . .”⁴⁹

The government has shut down many other websites, including *Bumei Luntan* (*Sleepless Nights*) and *Tianya Zongheng* (*Across the World*). Some sites issued closing statements, but many others remained silent. A small number of farewell statements expressed outrage. Others declared that they were folding for “personal reasons” and only hinted at what had really happened. When traditional print media are purged for political reasons, only journalists find out about it, but by censoring the Internet and closing down websites, the Chinese Communist government has unwittingly publicized its abhorrent efforts to silence the media.

China’s Internet censors and their opponents are embroiled in a fierce struggle. Although the government continually blocks websites, there are always more people prepared to open new ones to discuss the prospects for democracy in China. Some of these sites have been quite influential, including Qiu Feng’s *Sixiang Pinglun* (*Commentary on Ideas*); Yang Zhizhu’s *Xue er Si* (*Study and Thought*); *Chunlei Xingdong* (*Operation Spring Buds*), produced by Wen Kejian and others; and *Xiangzheng Lunheng* (*Disquisitions on Constitutional Government Weighed in the Balance*), produced by Wang Yi and others. Moderators and editors looked for every opportunity to start up again; some sites, such as *Minzhu yu Ziyou* (*Democracy and Freedom*), were reopened and closed almost thirty times. But after October 2003, the authorities closed down nearly all of these websites permanently.

Some moderators have paid dearly in their struggle for freedom of speech. For example, five well-known moderators for the Democracy and Freedom forum were arrested, among them the twenty-two-year-old Beijing Normal University student Liu Di, known by her Internet pseudonym “Stainless Steel Rat.” Another person was fired from his job, and another received a visit from public security agents, who ransacked his home and confiscated his computer and other equipment and materials. Two others were summoned for interrogation by the police.⁵⁰

Before 2005, the Chinese government censored primarily sites dedicated to intellectual and cultural debate. University websites initially escaped closure because the government wanted to deceive those outside China into believing that its universities were a cradle of democratic culture; but since 2004, even university websites have been subjected to increasing restrictions. The first sign of trouble was the closure of Peking University’s *Yita Hutu* (A Big Fat Mess) BBS on September 13, 2004. Some professors protested, but their appeals were like stones dropped into the sea.

In March 2005, the PRC’s Ministry of Information Industry issued a set of Measures on the Administration and Record-keeping of Noncommercial Internet Information Services,⁵¹ which enabled the government to investigate websites of all sizes and stipulated that all Internet services must re-register with the authorities by April 15. The first result was that university bulletin boards were either closed or blocked to external access.

Some universities started requiring students to re-register with the BBS using their real names and student numbers, otherwise they would not be allowed to post messages. Consequently, in March 2005, Tsinghua University’s *Shuimu Qinghua* BBS, Nanjing University’s *Xiaobaihe* BBS, Fudan University’s *Riyue Guanghua* BBS, Nankai University’s *Wo Ai Nankai*, and Wuhan University’s *Baiyun Huanghe* became read-only sites. People with university e-mail accounts were no longer allowed to post messages, and IPs outside the university were not allowed access. To explain these changes, the managers of *Shuimu Qinghua* BBS posted a notice stating, “We made this decision in accordance with a decision made by the Department of Education.” Wuhan and Nankai universities announced, “The BBS is a platform for communication within the university; it is not open to anyone outside the university.”⁵²

University BBSs were China’s last relatively uncensored venue for free expression and debate. Since the launch of Project Golden Shield, many Chinese websites dedicated to intellectual and cultural discourse have been shut down.⁵³ Traces of debate about politically sensitive questions and popular culture are now

found only on a small number of university website chat rooms and bulletin boards. Although users know that whatever they write might be deleted as soon as it is posted, they can at least deploy guerilla tactics to play a game of cat-and-mouse with the cyber police.

The government could, of course, arrest everyone who posts prohibited speech on the Internet, but arresting too many people could easily lead to international criticism of China's human rights record and damage the government's image abroad. Not allowing such speech in the first place is a much easier method of control.

In recent years, numerous human rights cases have been brought to light through the Internet, such as the cases of Sun Zhigang,⁵⁴ the Harbin BMW accident,⁵⁵ and Li Siyi.⁵⁶ It was only after Internet reports on these incidents were circulated—igniting storms of popular protest—that the government was forced to take action. Today, the sites that originally reported these cases are all closed. Thus, although the technology of the Internet era opened up a new arena for public debate in China, the government soon found ways, using the new technology, to substantially reduce it again.

Filtering overseas websites

Jiang Mianheng, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and son of former PRC president Jiang Zemin, declared at a conference in Shanghai, "China needs to build a national Internet network that is separate from the World Wide Web." This dream has been realized.

An "Empirical Analysis of Internet Filtering in China," conducted in 2002 by Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society, revealed that of the 204,012 distinct websites that were requested from within China, more than 50,000 were inaccessible from at least one point in China on at least one occasion.⁵⁷ Adopting a more conservative standard for determining which inaccessible sites were intentionally blocked and which were unreachable solely due to temporary glitches, the Berkman Center researchers found that 18,931 sites were inaccessible from at least two distinct proxy servers within China on at least two distinct days. Ben Edelman, a researcher at the Berkman Center, told a Voice of America journalist that, in all probability, 10 percent of content was being filtered by the Chinese authorities, though the precise figure was impossible to determine. The Berkman Center study, which was more extensive than many similar,

previous studies, concluded that “China does indeed block a range of Web content beyond that which is sexually explicit. For example, we found blocking of thousands of sites offering information about news, health, education, and entertainment, as well as some 3,284 sites from Taiwan.”

According to the survey, the following types of websites are blocked or filtered in China:

- Human rights and dissident websites, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights in China, and Human Rights Watch, as well as dozens of Falun Gong sites;
- BBC News Online is always blocked; CNN and the *Time* magazine websites are sometimes blocked; sites for the U.S. network PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the *Miami Herald*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* are, also, often blocked. Other sites blocked by the Chinese authorities include those of U.S. broadcasters ABC and CBS, the Alta Vista search engine, and several American universities;
- Public health sites, including the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and the Internet Mental Health websites;
- Websites related to Taiwan and Tibet;
- Religious websites, including the Atheist Network, the Catholic Civil Rights League, the Asian American Baptist Caucus, and numerous websites dedicated to *feng shui*.

Of Google’s list of the world’s one hundred most popular news sites, forty-two are blocked by the Chinese government. Experts note that Chinese authorities continually update their blacklist. Even usually accessible websites are blocked whenever they publish sensitive content.

According to Edelman and Jonathan Zittrain, authors of the Berkman Center study, the Chinese government now uses at least four distinct and independently operable methods of Internet filtering, with a documentable leap in filtering sophistication after September 2002. “There is some evidence that the government has attempted to prevent the spread of unwanted material by preventing the spread of the Internet itself, but a concomitant desire to capture the economic

benefits of networked computing has led to a variety of strategies to split the difference. For example, the government might encourage Internet access through cybercafés rather than in private spaces so that customers' surfing can be physically monitored by others in the café.⁵⁸

From late August to early September 2002, the Chinese government blocked access to the widely used Google search engine, which had become increasingly popular among Chinese Web surfers because of its ability to search in a variety of languages and scripts, including the simplified Chinese characters used in the PRC. Search engines like Google are not news media outlets and do not represent any particular political, cultural, moral, or legal viewpoint. Their business is merely to offer information search services. But Google became a target of censorship precisely because its powerful search and navigation capabilities give the Chinese access to foreign online news that the government considers reactionary and harmful.

An article posted by an unidentified person on NetEase.com (www.163.com) reveals that, in order to pass official censorship, Chinese ISPs offering information search services must filter their search results. The article can be summed up as follows:

Chinese Yahoo!, which uses Google search services, has repeatedly published a liability disclaimer for Google search results. Clearly, Yahoo! is aware that if it wants to continue providing such services in China it must comply with local laws. But considered from another angle, by complying with local laws, isn't Yahoo! relinquishing its own responsibility? . . . In any case, many other countries besides China use this kind of method to carry out strict surveillance and control.⁵⁹

The article argues that search service providers ought to exercise "self-discipline" and that China's restrictions on Google are no different from those imposed by many other countries; in other words, China is merely monitoring and controlling harmful information. Hence, Google and other powerful search engines are often blocked in China,⁶⁰ and the keyword search, cache, and spider functions on Google's Chinese-language pages are censored with sophisticated filtering technologies.⁶¹ But it is common knowledge that, although the Chinese government claims to inspect and control political and sexually explicit content, its only real target is political information it considers "harmful to national security." The government blocks sexual content only as an excuse to go after its real target. Lumping together sexually explicit material and political information also means that people might associate the two and start to see political news in a bad light.

The Internet as a weapon against dissidents

To further tighten its control of Chinese Web surfers, the Chinese government has introduced a system of electronic access cards in Internet cafés. In Jiangxi, the first province to introduce the system, all Internet cafés now have computers equipped with card readers. The system requires users to swipe their card, which transmits personal information about them to a provincial public security bureau database. To go online, they must first secure access from a police Internet monitor by means of an IP tunnel. On September 1, 2001, the Jiangxi Province Public Security Bureau issued an order prohibiting Internet cafés from admitting customers without a Jiangxi Province Internet Café Personal Access Card. The system enables the Chinese government not only to censor speech on the Internet but also to determine the identity of anyone who posts messages or articles online.⁶² By 2003, this ID card system had been introduced in Internet cafés throughout China.

Punishment of “unlawful acts,” such as criticizing the government, was already being meted out before the online registration system was introduced. Xinhua News Agency announced in January 2001 that using a computer network or other means to engage in “espionage,” including “stealing, disclosing, buying, or publicizing state secrets,” was punishable by death or a sentence ranging from ten years to life in prison.⁶³

The Chinese had high hopes that, during the 16th Communist Party Congress in 2002, the new generation of leaders would implement a system of political reforms. Instead, the government tightened its control and monitoring of the Internet to arrest even more “dissidents,” many of whom are nothing of the sort. They have neither advocated political positions, nor been involved in political activities; many have merely expressed some online criticism of the government.

On November 7, 2002, the day before the opening of the 16th Party Congress, the government arrested Liu Di, a.k.a., “Stainless Steel Rat.”⁶⁴ Li Yibin, publisher of the online magazine *Democracy and Freedom*, who used the pseudonyms Yangchun Baixue (Spring Snow) and Yangchun (Springtime), was arrested at the same time.⁶⁵ along with Wu Yiran, a student at Shanghai’s Jiaotong University.

According to a friend of Liu’s who wishes to remain unnamed, Liu was probably arrested because she shared a meal with a labor activist from the northeast, whom she met while chatting online. Liu was an ordinary young woman who liked to study, express her thoughts in writing, and share them with anyone who was interested. She never took part in political activities. Thirty days after the Bei-

jing police arrested her, she was formally charged with “endangering state security.” On December 25, 2003, after more than a year of international calls for their release, Liu, Wu, and Li were informed by the No. 2 Branch of the Beijing Procuratorate that the lawsuit against them was dropped in accordance with Paragraph 2, Article 142, of the Criminal Procedure Law of the PRC because their “crimes were minor.”⁶⁶ Wu refused to accept this judgment, maintaining that they were not guilty of any crime.

Another innocent arrestee was not so fortunate. After Li Zhi posted an article exposing corrupt local officials, the Dazhou Intermediate People’s Court in Sichuan Province sentenced him to eight years in prison for “incitement to subvert state power.”⁶⁷

In China, even minors can be arrested for expressing their opinions online. In July 2003, a fifteen-year-old girl, surnamed Wang, posted an online message listing fifty ways in which a “certain organization” and “certain people” were worse than prostitutes. Her posting reflects how most ordinary Chinese people feel about corrupt Communist officials. The following is a brief excerpt:

Prostitutes trust their customers, unlike certain people who lie to hold on to power. Prostitutes’ price lists are reliable, but many laws are not worth the paper they are written on. Prostitutes don’t erect memorial arches to advertise themselves, unlike certain people who control the media to make themselves look good. Prostitutes have to please their customers to earn their living, unlike certain people who remain in power by bullying and oppressing ordinary folk. Prostitutes know that they won’t live forever, unlike certain organizations that think they will. Prostitutes allow others to disagree with them, but certain organizations arrest those who oppose them. Prostitutes sometimes put their past behind them and get married, but certain organizations never admit their mistakes or surrender power. Prostitutes don’t presume to represent other people’s interests, unlike certain organizations that profess to represent everybody’s interests. If you don’t like a prostitute you can simply avoid her, unlike certain organizations which you can’t avoid no matter how much you dislike them.

This text was removed by the cyber police immediately after it was posted. The girl who wrote it was arrested shortly thereafter.⁶⁸

The list is growing. According to Human Rights in China, by October 2003 at least sixty-nine journalists and dissidents had been detained or imprisoned for publishing or distributing essays on the Internet. Most were convicted of “incitement to subvert the state,” “endangering national security,” or “leaking state secrets.” These

arrests and heavy sentences were intended to intimidate other cyber dissidents into silence.⁶⁹ The arrest of Zhao Yan, Liu Shui, and more than eight other journalists in 2004 earned China a reputation as the world's biggest prison for authors and journalists.⁷⁰

Censorship's double standard

What infuriates many Chinese people is that, while the government bans all debate about freedom and democracy, it permits many types of pornography. I once set my antivirus software to block access to "sex" sites, but I quickly realized that this was not practical, because it also blocked access to many other websites in China, including numerous provincial Party newspapers.

In November 2003, a magazine columnist with the pen name Mu Zimei started an online diary revealing details of her sexual exploits. It became a hot Internet destination and was much commented on in overseas Chinese-language websites, including many in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. Having read a number of reviews of Mu Zimei's writings, I cannot help but sigh. The Chinese government is, in certain respects, remarkably tolerant and open-minded; it has flung open the doors to lewdness and licentiousness.

This tolerance contrasts markedly with the long and growing list of Chinese citizens who have been imprisoned for discussing democratic politics online. On August 1, 2002, the Chinese government issued the Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Internet Publications,⁷¹ which banned the following content from the Internet:

Content that opposes the basic principles determined by the Constitution; content that threatens national unity and sovereignty and territorial integrity; content that divulges state secrets, threatens national security, or damages the reputation and interests of the state; content that incites ethnic hostilities and ethnic discrimination, jeopardizes unity among the ethnic groups, or infringes upon ethnic customs and habits; content that advocates perverse religious sects or superstitions.

It also prohibits "content that disseminates rumors, disturbs the social order, or damages social stability." These provisions have been widely enforced against content that is critical of the government, promotes Falun Gong or other forbidden religious practices, or disseminates information of public interest, as during

the SARS epidemic. But also prohibited is “content that disseminates obscenity, gambling, or violence, or incites crime; content that impairs social morality or the national culture and tradition,” and “content inducing minors to imitate behavior in breach of social morality and illegal and criminal behavior, in addition to terror, cruelty, or other content harming the physical and psychological health of minors.” Mu’s online sex diary meets at least three of these banned criteria, but authorities turn a blind eye to the publication and dissemination of such material on the Internet.

Beyond meeting basic subsistence needs, we also need the sustenance of social interaction. But since any discussion of politics, democracy, freedom, and human rights is prohibited in China, people are drawn to areas forbidden by the government, where they seek to satisfy sexual desires. In fact, the Chinese public’s inability to distinguish right from wrong has been painstakingly manufactured by the Chinese government. The strategy of domination that the government has pursued since the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 has evidently been a success.

According to an old Chinese saying, “leniency and severity can be seen in the rules and regulations,” meaning that the government adopts laws and measures to encourage people to act as it wishes them to act and to punish those who flout its laws. The Chinese Communist government’s uncompromising interdiction of political debate and its permissiveness toward pornography and sexually explicit Internet content shows that it lacks any sense of responsibility for China’s future.

With its policy of strict social control, the Chinese government has met its goal of keeping citizens ignorant. The Chinese people are like a pan of loose sand, isolated from one another and woefully lacking in organizational capacity and the ability to engage in political activity. Consequently, they are utterly incapable of opposing government corruption, not matter how blatant. A state that resorts to the methods described in this chapter to control the Internet and manipulate people’s thinking commits a crime against the nation’s citizens, its history, and its future.⁷²

Media Control and Foreign Relations

The two sides of China's psyche tug at one another—yin and yang. China's state system struggles to find the right balance with its burgeoning free market sector. The Communist Party welcomes rich entrepreneurs even as it tries to preserve its monopoly on power. The U.S. is perceived in one glance as the great bully and in another as the Mecca for young, nationalistic students. China espouses noninterference in the internal affairs of other states but has a long record of fighting with its neighbors. Lastly, for problems inside the country, the Chinese government still manages to demonize the U.S. and Japan even though its leaders know the roots of their problems are domestic and internal.

James Lilley, former U.S. Ambassador to China¹

Reports on the embassy bombing in Yugoslavia must follow the "spirit of the central government" and follow the guidelines as set out by Xinhua News Agency. But newspapers must also do their best not to copy headlines from Xinhua and People's Daily reports. If all headlines are identical, the international community is liable to think that we have unified public opinion.

Telephone instruction issued by the Central Committee's Propaganda Department on May 10, 1999

There is an irrational gap between the Chinese government's view of international relations and its foreign policy. The former is largely a legacy of the Cold War mentality of the Maoist period, while the latter is a classic example of state opportunism. The difficulty for the Chinese government is that a rigid Cold War mentality is completely at odds with the needs of a flexible, opportunistic foreign policy. Especially now that the Internet is providing Chinese citizens—many of whom were reared on Cold War thinking—with an ideal platform for venting years of nationalist resentment, the government is facing a new set of challenges. In 2003, China ran into a great deal of difficulty regarding

its foreign policy. In particular, U.S.-China relations became exceedingly sensitive and volatile. Both sides made outward declarations of mutual respect and spoke of a “cooperative relationship,” but under the table they kept kicking each other in the shins. For example, in the last few years a number of Chinese citizens were arrested in the United States and charged with stealing technological secrets for China. At around the same time, many Chinese students wishing to study in the United States found it extremely difficult to obtain student visas; in 2003, as many as 60 percent were refused visas.

There were other foreign policy setbacks for the Chinese government: Following the Russian government’s arrest of a business tycoon who had pursued an agreement with the Chinese to build an oil pipeline to China, the Chinese government was forced to alter its energy plans;² Japan decreased its economic aid to China for two years running; and, in recent Hong Kong elections, pro-democracy candidates defeated candidates aligned with Beijing. Despite these problems, the Chinese government has failed to engage in a critical reassessment of its obsolete Cold War mentality, its foreign policy mistakes, and the disastrous results of the gap between its view of international relations and its foreign policy. Instead, it continues to oil the wheels of the propaganda machine and stir up nationalist sentiment. The Chinese media continuously spout platitudes about the “vain attempts of international anti-China forces to contain China.” But when outpourings of nationalist fervor go beyond the parameters established by the government, or when they fail to serve its interests (as has been the case in Sino-Japanese relations), it chastises the media for being more hindrance than help.

The continued influence of Cold War ideology on China’s international relations

Decades of Cold War ideological education and indoctrination continue to shape the Chinese public’s perception of international relations, and the government continues to use its orchestrated expressions of public opinion as a bargaining chip in foreign policy. Cold War clichés about “hegemony” and “attempts by anti-China forces to isolate China” have not been retired from official discourse. Xinhua News Agency and *People’s Daily* invoke them to stoke nationalist fervor whenever international tension escalates. But a significant change has occurred in recent years. The Internet has offered young people a platform for open debate about international relations, making it increasingly difficult for the government

to control public opinion. Like the evils that emerged from Pandora's box, nationalist fervor is now beyond the complete control of the government.

To understand this point, we need to begin with the Chinese government's ideological strategy. The government may have dropped some old slogans and battle cries, but its hostility to democracy, freedom, and human rights is entirely a manifestation of Mao's ideological legacy.

Ideological indoctrination and the creation of enemies

In recent years, intense anti-American sentiment has become increasingly widespread among the younger generation. Nationalistic displays by Chinese youth have accompanied every diplomatic clash between the United States and China since 1999. But when young people gloat over tragedies such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster, it is a direct consequence of years of propaganda and indoctrination from government-controlled media.

A defining characteristic of the Chinese dictatorship is its ability to create enemies and attack them in propaganda campaigns designed to persuade the public that "imperialists are still bent on subjugating China" and that "every historical calamity has been brought about by the enemy." Enemies can be foreign or domestic. Denigrating the United States serves the purpose of diverting the public's attention from problems at home and deflecting popular resentment brought about by domestic social conflict. Identifying domestic enemies—such as "class enemies" and the victims of "class struggle" that were so much a part of the indoctrination of the Maoist era—makes ordinary people, whose own lives are far from easy, feel that there is a political class with a status even lower than theirs. Many derive intense satisfaction from vilifying members of this underclass, with the active encouragement of the authorities.

For many years, the government-controlled media have served as a political tool to stir up popular feelings against enemies. Although "class enemies" are rarely mentioned in recent years, Chinese political propaganda still finds a ready audience for its persistent harping on the long-standing scapegoats of "overseas anti-China forces" and "hegemonism."

While the Chinese government strives to create enemies, at the same time it must have some "friends" to show that justice is on its side, that it enjoys abundant support, and that it is not isolated internationally. Any foreigner who has lived in

China knows that the government cares a great deal about how many other nations it can count as friends. Even oppressive dictators reviled throughout the world, such as Cambodia's Pol Pot, the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos, and Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, have been received as guests of honor by the Chinese government and supported with financial aid. Before normalization of U.S.-China diplomatic relations in 1972, these dictators were given front-page coverage in *People's Daily* whenever they visited China, and loudspeakers throughout cities and countryside blared the song lyrics, "We have friends all over the world; our future is glorious beyond compare."

But as times change, so do the names and relative positions of friends and enemies. From 1949 until 1971, China's number one enemy was the United States. After 1960, "Soviet revisionism" ("Soviet socialist imperialism" after 1968) joined the select club of China's enemies. Mao Zedong's famous nine polemics against this enemy were published with much fanfare in *People's Daily* and repeatedly broadcast on national radio.³ Even primary school children were told that the essays were the finest in the world. Chinese authorities had two reasons for demonizing the Soviet Union during the Maoist period. First, after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union pursued policies that were more moderate than China's, particularly that of de-Stalinization and rejection of the cult of personality,⁴ which were diametrically opposed to Maoism. Second, Mao resented having lost the contest for leadership of the international Communist movement to the Soviet Union.

Even after diplomatic relations were reestablished with the United States in 1972, the Chinese government continued to refer to that nation as one of the "two hegemons," but clearly considered "Soviet socialist imperialism" its paramount enemy. "International anti-China forces" now referred to the Soviet Union, while the United States was relegated to a secondary position. After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989, the Chinese government readjusted its foreign policy strategy, giving renewed prominence to "U.S. hegemonism" as the "anti-China force." Without such an enemy, it has no scapegoat to blame when the "socialist modernization drive" runs into trouble and popular dissatisfaction arises.

Why America became the main "international anti-China force"

There are profound ideological reasons why China views the United States as its enemy. America is an implacable foe of Communist countries; liberal democratic values and Communist ideology are as incompatible as fire and water. The Maoist

regime believed that the very existence of democratic governments and the potential for proliferation of that political philosophy posed a threat to totalitarianism. Pragmatic considerations eventually prompted the Chinese government to ease tensions with the United States on a superficial level, but anti-Americanism remains an essential element of ideological education and media propaganda.

Chinese people born after the 1940s have a simplistic notion of international relations. They were educated with such ideas as “The victims of capitalist exploitation are our friends, but all capitalist countries are our enemies,” “America is the main capitalist country,” and “Two-thirds of the world’s population live in an abyss of misery and are waiting to be liberated by us.” For decades, government propaganda and education portrayed American imperialism as the enemy of all peace-loving countries: “Not only does U.S. imperialism brutally exploit its own people, but it also wages wars of aggression all over the world and has forcibly occupied China’s territory of Taiwan. Its crimes are too numerous to count.” Before normalization of U.S.-China diplomatic relations, primary school children often began their day singing, “The crimes of American imperialism reach up to heaven. America holds butcher’s knives in its bloody hands and commits evil deeds day in, day out. A thousand, ten thousand, a million evil deeds piling up like mountains.” Chinese media and textbooks never failed to portray the U.S. government as an armed-to-the-teeth demon that started wars of aggression across the world. “America’s working people live in an abyss of suffering” was also often heard.

As recently as 2001, some twenty-two years after the policy of “reform and opening up” was initiated, the Chinese government published a white paper in *People’s Daily* on the “Human Rights Situation in the United States,” claiming that supermarket checkout clerks were being worked so hard that they did not have time to go to the lavatory and were forced to urinate in adult diapers. According to this report, America has one of the world’s worst human rights records. Official Chinese propaganda has long portrayed American society as a dark and reactionary hell driven by class oppression, racial discrimination, violence, murder, drugs, and prostitution.

In order to inculcate patriotism in young people, the Chinese government often hires scholars to rewrite and distort history. To this day, China’s middle schools and universities teach that American capitalism finds itself “in its death throes,” and similar Marxist-Leninist dogmas. This propaganda has left deep and indelible ideological imprints on Chinese society that affect Sino-American relations to this day and will continue to do so in the future.

Although Sino-American relations have markedly improved since the reestablishment of diplomatic ties, China's official ideology remains essentially unaltered due to the huge gap between the two countries' values and political systems. To be sure, the regime no longer demonizes America as it did during the Cultural Revolution, but it still considers it to be the paramount threat—the United States is not only technologically the most advanced and economically most powerful country in the world, but it is also a liberal democracy. To Chinese people who have experienced poverty and political persecution, America exerts a magnetic pull. Consequently, the Chinese government sees no alternative but to acknowledge that America is rich and strong while maintaining that its political system and values are unsuited for China. To gloss over this contradiction, in the past two decades the regime has insisted on the need to “build socialism with Chinese characteristics” and to maintain “unified public opinion” and news control. Continued friction between China and the United States over the issues of human rights and the political status of Taiwan only exacerbates existing contradictions.

The effect of propaganda on social ethics

Because all information channels are strictly controlled, it is very difficult for the Chinese public to gain an accurate understanding of major foreign and domestic events. People have been ideologically conditioned to rely on the propaganda machine's version of reality, and many lack the knowledge and ability to make independent judgments. Having been conditioned by years of indoctrination, people subconsciously fall back on the language and assumptions of the official ideology, even when they want to express discontent toward the authorities. A case in point is a retired official I know who can only express his disappointment and dissatisfaction with China's leadership by criticizing the United States. I once heard him burst out in dismay, “Americans can attack anyone they want. There is no country left in the world which dares say ‘No’ to America.”⁵

The Chinese propaganda and education system brainwashes people into thinking that America's enemies, no matter how oppressive, are naturally China's friends. In the years following 1989, as one Communist government after another collapsed, Chinese media and public opinion invariably sided with the crumbling dictatorships. Whenever people took to the streets demanding democracy, Chinese television showed flattering images of the besieged dictators, broadcasting their statements and denouncing the demonstrators. Before the Romanian Com-

munist Party fell from power, the Chinese state media expressed strong support for Nicolae Ceausescu. When news of his execution could no longer be concealed, it was reported in a single sentence.

During the first Gulf War, in 1991, the Chinese media shouted themselves hoarse praising Saddam Hussein as a “hero who stands up to hegemonism.” The Chinese public had no inkling of the brutal methods Saddam employed to sustain his dictatorship, or of the conditions under which ordinary Iraqis lived. The government’s relentless propaganda campaign even turned Saddam into one of China’s “ten biggest teen idols.” One youngster who received his school’s citation for good character and scholastic achievement declared, “Most countries are afraid of America, but Saddam is not afraid. He has integrity.”⁶ Such naiveté is the direct result of the media’s manipulation of public opinion.

When the United States waged the second Iraq war, in 2003, the Chinese government instructed official media to continue to support Saddam, and their disappointment when he lost the war was palpable. Even the facial expression of the CCTV news anchor who announced Saddam’s capture by the U.S. Army in December 2003 betrayed his disappointment, but a smile played at the corners of his mouth when he later reported a roadside attack on U.S. soldiers.

Former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic was another “heroic figure” whitewashed by the Chinese media, which never reported the large-scale ethnic-cleansing campaigns and other war crimes he orchestrated. During the NATO air campaign, Chinese viewers were shown only Serbian people risking their lives to defend bridges, and they heard only Milosevic’s forceful defense before the International Criminal Court. They were never told that this “hero” had been handed over to the court by his own people, nor did they ever hear the cheers for the International Criminal Court that rose from the people of the former Yugoslavia. Because the Chinese media reported only Milosevic’s own grievances and complaints, much of the Chinese public still feels sorry for him and believes that his arrest is yet another crime committed by “American hegemony.”

Chinese people born before the 1960s are partially immune to this type of indoctrination, because the Cultural Revolution dealt a mortal blow to the credibility of Communist propaganda. To begin with, the Lin Biao Affair in 1971 came as a deep shock to Chinese people and discredited Mao Zedong and the Chinese government. Long presented as Mao’s “closest comrade-in-arms” and “heir and successor,” Lin Biao was accused of being a traitor and tried to flee China. Secondly, China’s foreign friends and enemies have changed too often. What used to be China’s “Soviet elder brother” became China’s enemy. Vietnam was China’s

“comrade and younger brother” and then became China’s enemy. Now America, once the “number one enemy,” is the country China considers most important. In the first few years after the United States and China resumed diplomatic relations, polemics about “America’s aggression against China” disappeared almost completely from the Chinese media and were replaced by stories about General Claire Chennault’s Flying Tigers, a volunteer group of American pilots who flew missions for China during World War II. Chennault’s widow, Anna (Chen Xiangmei), was treated as a guest of honor by the Chinese government, and several Chinese-language biographies of her were published in the PRC.

Before the 1980s, few Chinese people dared listen to Chinese-language foreign radio broadcasts, but the government still jammed them. Voice of America, Moscow’s Radio Peace and Progress, Hong Kong-based Gospel Radio (*Fuyin zhi Sheng*), and Taiwan’s Radio Free China were considered “enemy broadcasting stations,” and listening to them was a “political crime” subject to criminal punishment. Only after Mao’s death and the economic reforms and Open Door policy began were people able to benefit from economic and cultural influences of the West. Restrictions on listening to foreign broadcasts were somewhat relaxed in the 1980s. But following the Tiananmen Square incident, the old charge of “listening to enemy broadcasts” was brought back as a weapon against the spread of Western concepts of freedom and democracy, and several dissidents have been arrested for this crime.

Exposure to these constant shifts in propaganda and indoctrination has gradually given China’s older generation the ability to see through political propaganda. The thaw in Sino-American relations also let in a breath of fresh air to a country that had been closed off for too long. Chinese people realized that there was a completely different world beyond their borders. A great many people of this generation have painful memories of the Cultural Revolution, when they were sent as urban youths to the countryside to be reeducated by laboring alongside peasants. They have personal, bitter experience of life in the lowest rungs of Communist society and are not likely to be taken in by Communist propaganda once again.

Young Chinese who were born after the 1960s and grew up during the reform period have not developed the same immunity to government propaganda. More than two decades after the “reform and opening up” policy was launched, text-

books used in China's primary and middle schools are still replete with the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, such as "serve the people" and "struggle to the end for Communism." Year after year, the education system forces students to recite political slogans and doles out rewards and punishments in keeping with the state ideology. But government officials teach by deed as much as by word. Their shameless corruption contrasts sharply with the ideological propriety trumpeted in school textbooks. Children learn early on that "practice what you preach" actually means that "higher officials can crush those below them." This is where social ethics begin to collapse.

What really happened in history, particularly during major upheavals since the foundation of the Communist Party, is a closely guarded official secret. The government's consistent approach is to cover up, distort, and whitewash. In July 2001, the Chinese government opened an exhibition devoted to "Eighty Glorious Years Since the Founding of the Communist Party of China" at the Museum of the Revolution. Visitors would have looked in vain not just for any mention of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, but also for anything related to the Cultural Revolution, the thirty million people who starved to death during the Great Leap Forward, or the brutal Anti-Rightists Movement of 1957. The authorities have blotted out these extraordinarily painful episodes from the historical record. Among young people, there is now wide disagreement about what really happened on June 4, 1989. To them, the Cultural Revolution and the suffering it visited on the Chinese people lies in the remote past, or even an idealistic period of "mass democracy" with no corruption led by a sanctified Mao Zedong.

Over time, Communist anti-American indoctrination has corroded the soul of China's young people. Even Chinese people who benefited from higher education in the United States will quite happily ingratiate themselves with the authorities by claiming that "America is a phony democracy and a real hegemonic power" and that "freedom of the press is a complete sham in America." Anti-American propaganda from the mouths of people who studied in America is very useful to the Chinese Communist regime.

The government's control over news and public opinion

Little by little, official propaganda has planted and nourished enmity against America among China's youth—an outlook the government now uses as a bargaining chip in Sino-American relations. Between 1999, when U.S.-led NATO

warplanes bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and 2001, when a U.S. Navy spy plane and a Chinese fighter jet collided over the South China Sea, the Chinese government used its media to turn simmering public resentment against America into a wave of anti-Americanism.

The bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade⁷

Before war began in the Balkans, the Chinese public knew next to nothing about the conflict. Due to the Chinese government's practice of news censorship, and its disparaging attitude toward NATO, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese public believed that the war was a case of America bullying the weak and interfering in another country's internal affairs. During an allied bombardment of Yugoslav military facilities on May 8, 1999, a number of NATO bunker-busting guided missiles plowed into the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. One of the missiles struck the basement, destroying equipment and killing three people. The Chinese government announced that the three dead were journalists, including a reporter for *Guangming Daily*, a small-circulation newspaper aimed at intellectual and cultural circles. Because only the Chinese government's version of what happened was reported in China, a wave of anti-American sentiment swept across the country. Based on the logic that "my enemies' enemies are my friends," the Chinese media lambasted the United States, demanding "payment of a blood debt" on the one hand and expressing deep sympathy with the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic on the other.

On May 8, CCTV was the only Chinese media outlet to report news of the bombing, and it did so in a brief bulletin. Chinese citizens had to turn to the Internet for even a snippet of information. The following day, journalists at nearly every news outlet were summoned to editorial meetings to listen to an "urgent telephone notice" from the Central Committee's Propaganda Department. (Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, certain government notices or directives have not been transmitted in writing but only read aloud. Note taking is not permitted and the written original is collected after the meeting, in order to prevent leaks with "potential damaging political consequences," and to be able to deny any oral directives that are leaked.) The content of this particular "urgent notice" was as follows:

- Reports about this incident must be based on Xinhua News Agency bulletins or *People's Daily* articles. Foreign reports must not influence public opinion.

- All news reports and editorials must conform to the spirit of the central authorities' announcements, but not so closely as to parrot Xinhua bulletins word for word. A little variety is necessary to prevent those outside China from thinking that the Chinese government leadership is imposing uniformity.
- Daily reports on new developments must conform to specific Propaganda Department instructions.
- Anyone found to have violated Party propaganda discipline will be held politically or even criminally responsible.
- School and university Party organizations are to organize student demonstrations, but personnel in government enterprises and institutions must to go to work as usual.

Within a few days, newspapers all over the country carried daily front-page articles that were either copied word for word from Xinhua News Agency bulletins or based on Xinhua wire copy and presented as their own "commentary." Before they were published, these articles still had to be submitted to the Propaganda Department for review and approval regarding details such as the size and wording of banner headlines and how the "outrage of the Chinese people" was to be covered in the articles. When the higher-ups gave permission, newspapers had to report the public's anger; when the higher-ups told them to stop, they stopped.

On May 10, all media outlets in Shenzhen, where I lived and worked, were instructed by the Propaganda Department that Shenzhen University was staging a student demonstration and that journalists were to rush to the scene to interview students and report on the demonstration. When a group of reporters arrived, Jiang Zhong, secretary of the Shenzhen University Party Committee, explained that she was going to have the students "express their anger in a reasonable, beneficial, and restrained manner." Obviously pleased with herself, she said that students at the front of the march would carry banners that read "Oppose Hegemonism," and added that there would be no "inappropriate slogans," because they had all been written by student union cadres under Party branch supervision. The students were also given money to buy ink and paper for the banners and soft drinks for the march. Student lunch subsidies and overtime pay for the teaching staff had already been distributed. Ms. Jiang concluded, "Everything is in order. The reporters can start filming."

As an example of “inappropriate slogans,” on May 9, while several Beijing colleges and universities were preparing for student marches, one particular banner that read “American Imperialism: Get Out of China!” drew immediate criticism. The Propaganda Department argued that this slogan could give the false impression that China was changing its policy of inviting foreign investment, which it very much needed to attract. On that same day, an undergraduate student at Peking University and a graduate student at Hunan Normal University both told me that political counselors had informed them that protest at their schools involved “vital national interests” and that their “performance” would be recorded in their personal file and taken into account if they applied to join the Party.

Chinese news media displayed such a high degree of uniformity during this period that the Propaganda Department expressed concern that the international community would believe the government was imposing the same script on all media outlets. One Guangzhou newspaper responded “with creativity”—it decided to “remain consistent with the central authorities” without copying Xinhua headlines. This earned the paper praise from the Propaganda Department. A deputy editor at my paper had a particularly bright idea for a patriotic headline: “The Anti-American Tide Drowns McDonald’s—American Capitalists are Panicking.” On reflection, our editor-in-chief decided this headline might be subject to criticism, and dropped it.

Government-staged expressions of “anti-American patriotism” continued until May 11. Around noon that day, as news photographers were preparing to attend an anti-U.S. student demonstration organized by Shenzhen University, the order came down by telephone from the Shenzhen Propaganda Department that all colleges and universities were to resume regular classes immediately:

The Central Committee fully understands the patriotic fervor felt by the entire nation. But now we must turn grief into strength and stand fast at our posts. The most effective way to deal a blow against hegemonism is to fulfill our academic and production responsibilities. The next step in reporting the indignation felt by Chinese people is to publish some smaller front-page stories or second-page stories. . . . The Central Committee’s Propaganda Department will issue instructions if further action needs to be taken. Media outlets should do what the Propaganda Department says.

Subjected to a one-sided propaganda onslaught during this incident, even intellectuals—to say nothing of the general public—proved unable to maintain independent opinions. Many issued anti-American statements, while those who refused

to join in the chorus were isolated. Most deplorable is the fact that denunciations of the U.S. bombing of the embassy turned into criticism of American democracy. This was the fulfillment of a goal long sought by the Chinese government.

The 2001 air collision incident

On April 1, 2001, two Chinese F-8 fighter jets began shadowing a U.S. Navy EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft in international waters over the South China Sea, flying within a few feet of it. One of the Chinese pilots flew too close to the EP-3 and collided with a propeller, losing control and crashing into the sea. The EP-3 suffered damage to an engine, but the American pilot managed to guide his aircraft to an emergency landing at a military airfield on China's Hainan Island. This became known as the China-U.S. Air Collision incident.

Immediately following the accident, the Chinese government began a multi-episode "patriotic show" directed by the Propaganda Department and modeled on the Chinese Embassy bombing event. The Chinese authorities took the facts of the case—a Chinese fighter jet had crashed into an American reconnaissance plane—and twisted them into an altogether different story: the slower, propeller-powered, American plane had intentionally collided with a supersonic Chinese fighter jet. China's print media followed the Propaganda Department's script to the letter—in "a reasonable, beneficial, and restrained manner." Xinhua's version of the story was reprinted in newspapers throughout the country, and Chinese citizens were once again incensed, believing that "America's violation of Chinese airspace was a reckless provocation." During the crisis, the Chinese media abandoned any attempt to present useful information, instead, parroting the official line and demanding that America "admit its mistake and make a formal apology."

Some people have wondered why Chinese pilots did not shoot down the American plane that had supposedly violated China's airspace, but the Chinese government refused to divulge any details beyond a CCTV computer simulation of the official version of the incident. If there was any criticism of the authorities within China, it was that "the government is weak and the Americans have pushed us too far." Others argued that "Mao Zedong was a great national hero. If he were still with us, he would never allow American imperialism to rattle its sabers and pick on us." The Chinese public had no idea that their government had once again fed them lies mingled with partial truths.

In fact, this collision was only one in a series of mid-air incidents between

American and Chinese airplanes. Chinese fighters and American reconnaissance aircraft had long been playing aggressive games of aerial chicken over international waters. Around the time of the collision, *Jianchuan Zhishi* (*Naval and Merchant Ship Knowledge*) magazine published a report entitled “Patrolling the Skies of the South China Sea,” which recounted how Wang Wei, the Chinese pilot whose jet crashed, and Duan Hui, the pilot of the lead fighter jet, used to hot-dog near U.S. aircraft prior to the collision:

International law stipulates that aircraft flying over international waters maintain a minimum separation (safety distance) of 300 meters from each other in all directions. But Duan Hui knew that he faced a wily opponent. If he drew back, the foreign aircraft would close in on him, and if he flew toward it, it would draw back. These aerial games of chicken are like the back-and-forth of a see-saw: their job is to gather military intelligence and our job is to prevent them from doing so.⁸

Duan Hui had to pilot his jet and at the same time keep an eye on the foreign reconnaissance plane’s movements. Through the cockpit, he could see the foreign aviators making provocative gestures: some made an okay sign with thumb and index finger; some waved their hands at them; and some took off the hats they were wearing and gestured with their hands.⁹

Quite apart from the innocuous nature of the “OK” hand gesture, what is worth noting in this article is that the distance between two high-speed planes would have to be extremely small for one pilot to see the other making that sign. In fact, it is quite likely that the Chinese pilot had violated the minimum safety distance. The article also confirms Internet reports: Wang Wei was so well-known for hot-dogging and risking his life that American pilots had learned to fear him.

After the collision, the Chinese public was entitled to know at least two things—whether international law permits U.S. reconnaissance planes to conduct surveillance missions over international waters and whether the American plane had violated China’s territorial airspace. Although China has an extensive news media network, the Chinese public saw no reliable reports exploring these questions. Web managers immediately deleted Internet postings containing any foreign news reports that differed from the official Chinese government version or that were deemed unfavorable to China. Occasional posts missed by the censors invariably drew invective. But messages heaping a variety of insults on the United States remained online for long periods of time. On the afternoon of April 3, 2001, the Center for International Communication Studies of Tsinghua Univer-

sity organized a conference on the “National Consciousness in the U.S. and Chinese Media as Reflected in the Air Collision Incident.” The participants included media experts, journalists, academics, and graduate students from Xinhua News Agency, *People’s Daily*, Hong Kong’s *Dagong Daily* and *Wenhui Daily* newspapers, Tsinghua University, Hong Kong Baptist University, and Beijing Foreign Studies University. They agreed that the incident had provoked an impassioned response from the American media, while the Chinese media had remained cool and restrained. That is why, it was argued, the Chinese government’s protestations had appeared so feeble. According to one participant, the government initially had made no comment, although later, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhu Bangzao did make a brief and vague statement. When foreign journalists telephoned the Ministry of Defense requesting an interview, they were rebuffed.

One analyst noted that the first Chinese reports about the incident were three articles in *People’s Daily Online*, three articles on Xinhuanet.com, and three reports on CCTV. All were largely identical, with only minor differences between them. The first article, published by each source, was a brief news item about the incident; the second, a report about the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s statement and popular protests; and the third, a story about the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) search mission and Jiang Zemin’s concern for the missing pilot. American coverage was of a far higher quality. The American media published detailed information about the twenty-four airmen aboard the U.S. reconnaissance plane, including their names and ages, their military responsibilities, the names of their family members and hometowns, and so on. The Chinese media, on the other hand, would not even reveal the pilots’ names.

At the conference, journalists from *People’s Daily* and Xinhua countered these criticisms with a euphemistic putdown of their own—the fault could not lie with the news media, because they did not choose what to report. The three Chinese and six English articles published by Xinhua and *People’s Daily* a few days after the incident were all Foreign Ministry wire copy; none were based on information gathered by journalists. A *Dagong Daily* journalist attending the conference made no bones about the fact that a number of Hong Kong newspapers, including his own and *Wenhui Daily*, are “Party mouthpieces” fed stories by the Chinese Foreign Ministry. The only difference, said the journalist, was that the Hong Kong papers got their stories even before Xinhua did and their coverage was more reader-friendly, mixing Foreign Ministry statements with photographs, news, and commentary by academics.¹⁰

Cheering in China after 9/11

The public expression of nationalistic feeling following the Chinese Embassy bombing and air collision incidents was largely brought on by government-orchestrated “patriotic shows.” However, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States, on September 11, 2001, the Chinese government displayed astonishing *schadenfreude* or indifference, and China’s youth, coaxed by their government, were nearly hysterical with glee at America’s tragedy. This came as a deep shock to many people throughout the world and awoke the American public to the reality of Chinese anti-American sentiment.

Two days after September 11, Chinese newspapers, television networks, and Internet news sites had yet to provide any detailed reports on the background to the attacks and their disastrous consequences. Even the highbrow *Guangming Daily* carried only a brief item in the bottom corner of the second page. CCTV sent no reporter to the site of the World Trade Center, did not broadcast other networks’ footage, did not have its overseas correspondents solicit public reactions, and even failed to interview Chinese experts for background information and analysis of the attacks. The contrast with its diatribes after the Chinese Embassy bombing and the Air Collision Incident could not have been more pointed.

CCTV enjoys nearly limitless resources and claims a viewership of more than one billion. Its popular programs, “Focus,” “Zhitong Xianchang” (“Live from the Scene”), “Jinri Shijie” (“Today’s World”), and “Frankly Speaking,” deploy state-of-the-art technology to present live coverage of major events such as Hong Kong’s and Macau’s “return to the motherland” in 1997 and 1999, respectively. But during and after the events of 9/11, the cutting-edge resources of China’s leading newspapers and television networks sat idle. Hungry for timely information, many Chinese viewers turned to Hong Kong’s Phoenix TV for live coverage of the attacks and their aftermath. At the time, a few Chinese intellectuals wrote in-depth analyses about these incidents and how they were viewed in China, but their findings were never published domestically. The authors of a number of these articles—some of which constitute a valuable contemporary record—had to smuggle their works out of China and publish them in overseas magazines.

One such author is the Chinese historian Zhi Xiaomin, who observed that, while the international community was condemning the terrorist attacks and those who planned them, many Chinese people “greeted the attacks with shouts of jubilation.” Zhi Xiaomin recorded his impressions at the time:

I remember the afternoon I heard about the attacks. On the way to the post office to mail a letter, I saw a man, a worker judging by his looks, reading a newspaper bulletin board. Barely able to contain his excitement, he turned to me and exclaimed, “Wonderful. Wonderful! Somebody has finally taught America a lesson.” I was astounded by this outburst. What could have inspired such hatred for America in this man, to the point that he lacked even the most basic empathy for innocent victims? Seeing that I failed to respond, he said in a tone of mingled pity and rebuke, “You’re acting like nothing happened. This is a big deal.” I must have come across as apathetic and indifferent to an event of great national and international significance. A few days later, a colleague told me that she was attending an academic conference when news of the attacks came; the almost universal response among the participants was that it was a “very good thing.” When I expressed my opinion in simple terms, another colleague took me to task for being “pro-American.” After he pinned this nasty label on me, I felt like dropping the subject. Sometime later I heard someone say that, after 9/11, many teachers had made all sorts of wild comments in front of their class. Pronouncements such as, “It serves them right,” “They got their just desserts,” “America has only itself to blame,” and “Bin Laden is a hero,” drew hearty applause from students. When educators make such irresponsible remarks, it’s no wonder that youngsters insult America on the Internet and cheer on the terrorists. It was by no means rare to hear Chinese people from all walks of life, including workers, farmers, students, academics, government officials, and school teachers, shout “Bravo!” on learning of September 11. Very few people reacted like that outside the Arab world.¹¹

That so many people gloated and cheered after 9/11 is also partly due to news censorship in China. Zhi Xiaomin explains the psychology behind this phenomenon:

The reason such a retrograde system of media censorship has endured for so long in China is that certain people (i.e., the government) see themselves as saviors and [see] ordinary citizens as the “common herd” (i.e., stupid and ignorant). They censor news and restrict the freedom of the press because they fear that if ordinary people had a real grasp of reality, their myths would be shattered and their vested interests compromised. In a country where the media are a mouthpiece and a tool of the state, where subservience to authority is a virtue and where citizens are taught to be cogs in the state machine, most people allow themselves to be duped and controlled. Deprived of the right to be informed, Chinese people have lost the capacity for independent thought and have grown simple-minded and have a very narrow view of the

world. These traits are passed on from generation to generation. Over time, a peculiar attitude has developed throughout society: we don't reflect on the dishonorable things that China has done in the past, nor do we seek to understand the reasons our nation has been deceived and led astray for so long. Instead, we blame China's corruption and backwardness on outsiders. . . . This is why so many Chinese people cheered and gloated on hearing of the September 11 attacks.¹²

Under the influence of their government and media, many Chinese people are convinced that U.S. foreign policy has seriously damaged the interests of Arab countries and China. Moreover, a number of Chinese scholars—including Han Deqiang, a professor of economics at Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, who spent one month in the United States—have returned from brief overseas visits, arguing that America has achieved its wealth and economic development by plundering the developing world. These academics give America-bashing a scholarly imprimatur and turn an already anti-American public against the political values of freedom and democracy that America represents. This is why so many Chinese people have expressed vigorous support for tyrants in Iraq and North Korea and for Islamic fundamentalists around the world, and why so many of them responded with jubilation to 9/11. Nor are such attitudes on the wane. On January 31, 2003, as America mourned the astronauts who perished in the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster, Chinese nationalists posted messages on the Internet expressing joy at America's misfortune: "Let's celebrate with firecrackers"; "It's a pity so few of them died"; "Thanks be to Allah. May he protect Iraq."¹³ Such attitudes are the consequence of an autocratic cultural policy inimical to humanitarian values.

During the U.S.-British campaign against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi government in 2003, the Chinese government instructed its media to cheer for Saddam, with the four CCTV channels presenting him as a Third World hero resisting American aggression. Naturally, other media outlets also "maintained unanimity with the Party Central Committee." Chinese citizens who managed to obtain factual information about the war from the Internet were incensed by government efforts to keep citizens ignorant, but Internet bulletin boards were the only outlet for their outrage.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

How Far is China from Democracy?

China still is a journalist's dream and a statistician's nightmare, with more human drama and fewer verifiable facts per square mile than anywhere else in the world.

John King Fairbank¹

China has undergone tremendous change over the past quarter century. Many people who have visited, no matter how briefly, think they understand it. A Chinese sociologist who teaches at the University of Chicago once told me, "When I went to China, I took a cab to the outskirts of Shanghai. Does that mean I understand China?" I did not know whether to laugh or cry at the thought of a social scientist carrying out fieldwork by taxi.

The wealth of impressions China produces can crowd a visitor's mind and leave him like the six blind men in the old parable, who each touched a different part of an elephant and made mistaken pronouncements about what was in front of him. There is no doubt that Chinese society is undergoing an unprecedented transformation, as a few days in any of China's big cities will attest. But amid this dizzying pace of change, one thing remains constant—the government continues to deploy massive resources to preserve its autocratic system of rule.

Change and continuity in China

Of the many changes experienced by China in recent years, the greatest are those affecting its economic system. Formerly, the government sought national unity through its ownership of the means of production; now, multiple forms of ownership coexist. Because authority to allocate resources remains in the hands of officials at various levels of government, members of the political elite are the biggest beneficiaries of these changes. Meanwhile, there has been almost no alteration of China's political system—a one-party dictatorship. In recent years, there has been

some discussion of “signals of political reform,” but at best these apply to the administrative system and do not indicate change in the political power structure.

Administrative reform involves only how government is organized and managed, while genuine political reform alters the source of government authority, which can, for example, derive from democratic elections or be vested in a one-party state.

As skilled as the Chinese government has proven at weaving lies, it has never claimed to have implemented democracy. On December 10, 2003, during a talk at Harvard University, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao replied to a question from the audience that “conditions are not yet ripe for the direct election of senior officials.” He went on to say that, because the educational level of most ordinary Chinese people is low, they lack the ability to elect the country’s leaders.² Throughout modern history, this has been a common pretext to reject establishment of a democratic political system.

However, the argument rings hollow when one considers that, in the countryside, where the educational level of the population is lowest, the government has introduced direct village-committee elections, while showing no such flexibility in the cities, where the education level of the population is much higher.³ This demonstrates that the reason the government refuses to allow democracy, is not because Chinese citizens are not ready, but rather because the government itself is not ready to relinquish autocratic control.

The lineage of China’s current authoritarian system of government can be traced to the totalitarianism of the Maoist period, which followed in the footsteps of Soviet Russia. The political philosopher Hannah Arendt identified key characteristics of totalitarianism with remarkable precision:

Wherever it rose to power, it developed entirely new political institutions and destroyed all social, legal, and political traditions of the country. No matter what the specifically national tradition or the particular spiritual source of its ideology, totalitarian government always transformed classes into masses, supplanted the party system, not by one-party dictatorships, but by a mass movement, shifted the center of power from the army to the police, and established a foreign policy openly directed toward world domination . . . none of our traditional legal, moral, or common sense utilitarian categories could any longer help us to come to terms with, or judge, or predict their course of action.⁴

No Chinese translation of Hannah Arendt’s book has ever been published in

China. On the other hand, foreign scholars who accept the government's argument that democracy would be lost on the poor masses always find a warm welcome in China. For example, the late Professor Tang Tsou of the University of Chicago (a China-born U.S. citizen) was always treated as a guest of honor in China because he argued that autocracy had a rational historical foundation in China. His sympathy and praise for the Cultural Revolution stupefied Chinese people who had lived through it.

The constitution of the People's Republic of China, probably the world's most peculiar, was adopted by the CPC-controlled National People's Congress to legitimize the Party's supreme political authority over the Chinese people.⁵ Most significantly, it allows the Party to simply amend a constitutional provision whenever it no longer meets the Party's political needs. China's constitution has also been the longest in the making. After Japan became a constitutional monarchy during the Meiji Restoration in 1889, the late Qing imperial state looked to it as a model. Japan's "Peace Constitution" after World War II set the country squarely on the road to modern democracy, but during the past century, China has drafted several "constitutions" without ever establishing a genuine constitutional government.

To this day, the Chinese Communist Party maintains eight "democratic parties."⁶ It pays all their expenses, salaries, and welfare benefits, including the cost of running and publishing party newspapers and magazines, through its United Front Work Department budget. The Party's personnel departments and the United Front Work Department are in charge of appointments, rankings, transfers, and promotions in the democratic parties, which for years have served as nothing more than political window dressing for China's "socialist democracy." They applaud and acclaim whatever the Communist Party decides to do, no matter how outrageous (including the bloody suppression of the democracy movement in 1989 and of the Falun Gong movement in 1999). Other than these parties, the CPC outlaws all popular or civic organizations—even simple study groups—that it does not control.

China's leaders still rely on the armed forces as an instrument of last resort to maintain their hold on power. Every transition of political power from one supreme leader to the next has been signaled by a change in the chairmanship of the Military Affairs Commission, which is why Deng Xiaoping—although he held no formal position as China's supreme leader—insisted on retaining the chairmanship of the commission. In addition, since the mid-1990s the Ministry of State Security's secret police have stepped up interference in social and public

life. Spying on dissidents and intellectuals critical of the government and censoring the Internet have become part of the daily routine of the Ministry and its agencies. All levels of government increasingly rely on use of police violence to quell social unrest and instability, and the police are becoming more arbitrary in their use of force. The death of Sun Zhigang in police custody in 2003 (see chapter eleven) eventually made the headlines, but there have been many more deaths like his.

Today's dominant ideology represents a radical break with China's traditional civilization and culture. No other country in the world has experienced such a thorough repudiation of its traditions by its own leaders. Even during the Stalinist period, the Communist Party of the USSR expressed respect and pride for Russia's cultural achievements since the days of Peter the Great. The Chinese Communist Party, on the other hand, "has swept the rubbish of feudalism onto the garbage heap of history," cutting Chinese people off from their cultural roots and spiritual homeland. One of the Communist Party's greatest "political achievements" was the destruction of traditional clan organizations, reducing the traditional tripartite social organization of government, clan, and individual into one composed of the state and the individual, and eliminating all community or non-governmental organizational resources.

To Chinese people, there is tragic irony in the steady stream of foreign investment pouring into China that provides a tremendous shot in the arm for the regime. China's city dwellers have benefited from the foreign bounty, but its 900 million rural residents are struggling to eke out an existence. By early 2003, some 80 million peasants had lost their land.⁷ According to official statistics, the rural suicide rate is three times that of urban areas, with poison used in 150,000 successful suicides and 500,000 suicide attempts among peasants every year. Studies have shown that the main causes of rural suicide are poverty and the abuse of power by local government officials.⁸

Nowhere in China is the struggle for civil and human rights more stirring and tragic than in the countryside. Armed with the most primitive weapons, farmers have marshaled organized resistance, with some 10,000 such incidents recorded each year since the late 1990s.⁹ All resistance is put down by armed government forces, with farmers reporting that their hoes, knives, and fowling pieces are no match for the government's weapons. The farmers have no choice but to endure.

Sitting atop this smoldering volcano, the Chinese government continues to compel the media to spread lies and glorify China's "peace and prosperity."

Spreading lies to the world

The Chinese media proclaim how good life is in China through cheerful stories that circulate through government-controlled outlets overseas, as well as domestically. Whenever European or American journalists publish articles exposing the dark side of Chinese society, certain China scholars do their best to cast the government in a more positive light. At a conference hosted by Columbia University's East Asian Institute in early December 2002, professor Shi Tianjian, a political scientist at Duke University, presented survey statistics demonstrating that the "vast majority" of Chinese people were "satisfied or very satisfied" with the government and the status quo. Responding to incredulity from the audience, he declared rather complacently, "Even Chinese government officials told me that the level of popular satisfaction with the reforms found in my survey was several percentage points higher than in their own surveys. I assured these officials that my investigations were based on scientific methods and that there was nothing unreliable about my findings." In response to Shi Tianjian's claims, I cited two regulations issued by the Chinese government since 2000 barring foreign institutions from conducting independent research in China (discussed in chapter ten), and pointed out that data obtained under the supervision of the Ministry of State Security have no credibility whatsoever. But that did not prevent Shi Tianjian from later publishing an article on this subject in English, which will no doubt perpetuate his claims through quotation in other scholarly articles.

The main job of China's embassies and consulates around the world is not to assist Chinese travelers and overseas Chinese, who are routinely turned away by indifferent consular staff, but rather to carry out "united front work" to enhance the Chinese government's image abroad. Thanks to government funding and "united front" efforts, many overseas Chinese-language media outlets are also falling into line, and their China coverage is increasingly at odds with that of the Western mainstream media. In November 2001, the Jamestown Foundation published a revealing article, "How China's Government Is Attempting to Control Chinese Media in America,"¹⁰ which concluded that the government has spent huge sums of money infiltrating Chinese-language media in the United States. The regime's principal strategy is to acquire controlling interests in overseas Chinese media outlets, allowing it to fill key positions with its own personnel and help the companies develop profitable business ties in China. Numerous Chinese-language media organizations have either been bought out or are simply

unwilling to offend China's Communist government. Even the language they use increasingly resembles Chinese government doublespeak.

When overseas Chinese media occasionally print critical articles, they focus only on side issues or low-level officials, and corrupt officials are mentioned only after having been arrested or after previous exposure by other media. Nevertheless, overseas Chinese media always support the mainland government on major issues; whatever minor criticism they publish simply creates the impression of fairness and impartiality. The government's opportunistic policy in regard to the outside world manifests itself even in the smallest matters. For example, in mainland China, research on educated youth sent to work in the countryside is strictly off-limits, but the government allows the Chinese consulate in Los Angeles to organize an "Educated Youth Social Club" every year. Of all its efforts to court opinion abroad, the government is especially proud of the fact that in December 2003 the United Nations Human Rights Award was presented to Deng Xiaoping's son Deng Pufang for his work with the China Disabled Persons' Federation. Setting aside whatever indirect responsibility Deng's sons and daughters may bear for the Tiananmen Square massacre, the federation has served as a source of illicit personal enrichment for Deng's offspring.

How far is China from democracy?

Brave Chinese individuals and groups have waged a tireless struggle for democracy for more than half a century, but so far the goal has remained beyond their reach. Yet I firmly believe that globalization and advances in communication and information technologies will help eventually bring democracy to China. How long this will take depends on the moves the government and the democratic opposition make in the game of chess they are currently playing. The key factor will be whether China's newspapers and television stations will be able to win freedom of the press; the simple truth is that democracy is impossible in a country where news is censored.

In democratic countries, the media are a bellwether for social change as well as an important conduit for public opinion. But in China, the government's policy of keeping citizens ignorant is coming home to haunt it. By "reporting only the good news, not the bad," the Chinese media also keep the government in the dark. News censorship ultimately stops information from reaching the higher authorities and prevents them from understanding what is really happening in society.

Making effective policy decisions is impossible under these conditions. Social attitudes in China have changed tremendously during the past twenty-five years. Intergenerational communication has become extremely difficult. The youngest members of China's top leadership stratum are in their sixties. Even in countries where information is not censored in any way, rapid social change tends to isolate the older generation from what is happening around them. When information is censored and controlled, communication between generations becomes even more difficult. It is inconceivable that a cohort of complacent and hidebound old men is qualified to lead a vast nation of 1.3 billion people.

The image of prosperity projected by a censored media may fool the outside world, but it cannot fool the Chinese people forever. In 1912, after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, Yuan Shikai became the first president of the republic. When he attempted to enthrone himself as emperor and establish a new dynasty a few years later, there was a storm of protest throughout China. Yuan Shikai's eldest son, Yuan Keding, was determined to inherit the throne and did everything he could to prevent his father from hearing critical voices. To flatter his father with accolades to his dynastic scheme, he even had a phony edition of *Shuntian Shibao* (*Beijing Times*) printed for him. No one but Yuan Shikai was fooled. Less than three months later, Yuan's political career was finished.¹¹ Today, the Chinese government's control of the media is of a piece with Yuan Keding's phony edition of the *Beijing Times*: it is at best a comforting self-delusion.

More than anything, the government's media control reveals its own insecurity. I am now living in the United States, a country where people are free to express their opinions. Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and many other American cities have bookstores with names like "Revolution Books" or "Red Books" specializing in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong, and left-wing groups are very actively engaged in criticizing U.S. capitalism. Yet the American government has never banned their activities or deprived them of the freedom to discuss, publish, or disseminate their theories, because it believes that "government by the people" requires citizens to squarely confront all arguments for and against their system of government. There is a wide consensus in American society that the public's freedom of speech must not be restricted, because doing so would destroy the foundations of a government by the people.

When I was a visiting scholar at the University of Chicago, a member of a politically radical group named "Spartacus" came to see me to discuss Marxism and socialism. This gentleman complained that working class people in America lacked revolutionary spirit because they lived in too much comfort. I told him,

“When China’s workers and peasants have enough to eat, revolution is the last thing on their minds. Having endured untold hardships under the socialist system you yearn for, the highest aspiration of the Chinese people is to live in the capitalist system that left-wingers like you hate so much. If you and your comrades lived in socialist China, your daily calls for the overthrow of the government would have landed you in prison long ago, yet the capitalist system guarantees your right to rage against it without fear of imprisonment. I would ask you to seriously consider which is the better system.”

The fact that America allows a wide variety of radical political activism is one of the strengths that draws people to it; it is also one of the main reasons America became the strongest nation in the world.

The Chinese government learned its censorship methods from the former Soviet Union, where the hand of the KGB was everywhere. Any citizen’s telephone could be tapped or correspondence opened at any time, and the agency violated citizens’ most basic rights for reasons of “national security” and “national interest.” In his political novel *The First Circle*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn described the KGB’s arbitrary provocation of terror among citizens and the lies people were forced to tell under the Soviet regime. Soviet leaders believed that surveillance, repression, violence, and intimidation would guarantee political continuity indefinitely. But in the end, the once mighty Soviet empire disappeared in the dust of history, and the Soviet Communist Party has become synonymous with repudiating dictators. By walking in the footsteps of the Soviet Communists, the Chinese Communist regime could very well share the same fate.

Glossary of Publications

Alphabetized by English Title

English	Pinyin	Chinese
21st Century Economic Report	Ershiyi Shiji Jingji Baodao	21世纪经济报道
21st Century World Herald	Ershiyi Shiji Huanqiu Baodao	二十一世纪环球报道
Asia Weekly	Yazhou Zhoukan	亚洲周刊
Bagui City Courier	Bagui Dushibao	八桂都市报
China Comment	Banyuetan	半月谈
China News	Zhonghua Xinwen Bao	中华新闻报
China Newsweek	Xinwen Zhoukan	新闻周刊
China Youth Daily	Zhongguo Qingnian Bao	中国青年报
China's Talents	Zhonghua Yingcai	中华英才
Chinese Business News	Huashang Bao	华商报
Chinese Economics	Zhongguo Jingying Bao	中国经营报
City World News	Dushi Tiandibao	都市天地报
Commentary on Rural Development	Nongcun Fazhan Luncong	农村发展论丛
Communication Times	Xinxi Shibao	信息时报
Democracy and Law Illustrated	Minzhu yu Fazhi Huabao	民主与法制画报
Economic Daily	Jingji Ribao	经济日报
Economics News	Jingjixue Xiaoxibao	经济学消息报
European News	Ouzhou Shibao	欧洲时报
Farmers Daily	Nongmin Ribao	农民日报
Foundry Proofs on Domestic Trends	Guonei Dongtai Qingyang	国内动态清样
FrontPage	Qianshao Zazhi	前哨杂志
Gansu Youth Daily	Gansu Qingnian Bao	甘肃耑年报
Global Entrepreneur Magazine	Huanqiu Qiye Jia	环球企业家
Golden Sword	Jinjian	金剑
Great River News	Dahebao	大河报
Guangming Daily	Guangming Ribao	光明日报
Guide to Shopping Best-Quality Goods	Jingpin Gouwu Zhinan	精品购物指南
Henan Newspaper of Science and Technology	Henan Kejibao	河南科技报
Hong Kong-Macao Economy	Gang'ao Jingji	港澳经济

English	Pinyin	Chinese
Huaxi Capital Daily	Huaxi Dushibao	华西都市报
Hunan Daily	Hunan Ribao	湖南日报
Jiangnan Times	Jiangnan Shibao	江南时报
Jinan Times	Jinan Shibao	济南时报
Journalists' Homestead	Shanghai Jizhe Jiayuan	上海记者家园
Lanzhou Evening Post	Lanzhou Wan Bao	兰州晚报
Lanzhou Morning News	Lanzhou Chenbao	兰州晨报
Legal Miscellany	Fazhi Wencuibao	法制文萃报
Life Daily	Shenghuo Ribao	生活日报
Literary Monthly	Wenhui Yuekan	文汇月刊
Media View	Chuanmei Shiye Zazhi	《传媒视野》杂志
Ming Pao Daily News	Ming Bao	明报
Nanfang Daily	Nanfang Dushi Bao	南方都市报
Nanning Evening News	Nanning Wanbao	南宁晚报
New Express	Xin Kuaibao	新快报
New Hunan Daily	Xin Hunan Bao	新湖南报
New Observer	Xin Guancha Zazhi	新观察杂志
New Weekly	Xin Zhoukan	新周刊
News Front	Xinwen Zhanxian	新闻战线
Newspaper of the CCP's North China Bureau	Zhonggong Huabeiju Jiguan Bao	中共华北局机关报
Outlook	Liaowang Zhoukan	《了望》周刊
People's Daily	Renmin Ribao	人民日报
Press and Publishing Journal	Xinwen Chubanshao	新闻出版报
Procuratorate Daily	Jiancha Ribao	检察日报
Qilu Evening News	Qilu Wanbao	齐鲁晚报
Red China News Agency	Hongse Zhonghua Tongxun She	红色中华通讯社
Red Flag	Hongqi Zazhi	红旗杂志
Sanlian Life Weekly	Sanlian Shenghuo Zhoukan	三联生活周刊
Sanqin Daily	Sanqin Dushibao	三秦都市报
Science and Technology News	Keji Xinbao	科技新报
Seeking Truth	Qiushi Zazhi	《求是》杂志
Shaanxi Daily	Shanxi Ribao	陕西日报
Shandong Youth	Shandong Qingnian Zazhi	《山东青年》杂志
Shanxi Workers' Daily	Shanxi Gongrenbao	山西工人报
Shanxi Youth Daily	Shanxi Qingshaonian Bao	山西青少年报
Shenxing Daily	Shenxing Shibao	深星时报
Shenzhen Legal Daily	Shenzhen Fazhi Bao	深圳法制报
Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Daily	Shenzhen Tequ Bao	深圳特区报
Singapore Daily	Xingdao Ribao	星岛日报
South Morning Post	Nanguo Zaobao	南国早报
Southern Daily	Nanfang Ribao	南方日报
Southern Metropolis Daily	Nanfang Dushibao	南方都市报
Southern Weekend	Nanfang Zhoumo	南方周末
Stock Market Weekly	Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan	证券市场周刊
Studio	Shuwu	书屋
Study and Inquiry	Xuexi yu Tansuo	学习与探索

English	Pinyin	Chinese
Ta Kung Daily	Ta Kung Pao	大公报
The Journalist Observer	Jizhe Guancha	记者观察
The Mirror	Jingbao	镜报
The Sun	Taiyang Bao	太阳报
Treasury of Books	Shulin	书林
Weekend	Zhoumo	周末
Wen Wei Daily	Wen Wei Po	文汇报
Western Region Business News	Xibu Shangbao	西部商报
Workers Daily	Gongren Ribao	工人日报
World Economic Herald	Shijie Jingji Daobao	世界经济导报
World Report	Gejie Daobao	各界导报
Xiaoxiang Morning News	Xiaoxiang Chenbao	潇湘晨报
Xinhua [New China] News Agency	Xinhua She	新华社
Xinhua Daily	Xinhua Ribao	新华日报
Yangcheng Evening News	Yangcheng Wanbao	羊城晚报
Youth Reference	Qingnian Cankao	青年参考

Alphabetized by Pinyin Title

Pinyin	Chinese	English
Bagui Dushibao	八桂都市报	Bagui City Courier
Banyuetan	半月谈	China Comment
Chuanmei Shiye Zazhi	《传媒视野》杂志	Media View
Dahebao	大河报	Great River News
Dushi Tiandibao	都市天地报	City World News
Ershiyi Shiji Huanqiu Baodao	二十一世纪环球报道	21st Century World Herald
Ershiyi Shiji Jingji Baodao	21世纪经济报道	21st Century Economic Report
Fazhi Wencuibao	法制文萃报	Legal Miscellany
Gang' Ao Jingji	港澳经济	Hong Kong-Macao Economy
Gansu Qingnian Bao	甘肃青年报	Gansu Youth Daily
Gejie Daobao	各界导报	World Report
Gongren Ribao	工人日报	Workers Daily
Guangming Ribao	光明日报	Guangming Daily
Guonei Dongtai Qingyang	国内动态清样	Foundry Proofs on Domestic Trends
Henan Kejibao	河南科技报	Henan Newspaper of Science and Technology
Hongqi Zazhi	红旗杂志	Red Flag
Hongse Zhonghua Tongxun She	红色中华通讯社	Red China News Agency
Huanqiu Qiye Jia	环球企业家	Global Entrepreneur Magazine
Huashang Bao	华商报	Chinese Business News
Huaxi Dushibao	华西都市报	Huaxi Capital Daily
Hunan Ribao	湖南日报	Hunan Daily
Jiancha Ribao	检察日报	Procuratorate Daily

Pinyin	Chinese	English
Jiangnan Shibao	江南时报	Jiangnan Times
Jinan Shibao	济南时报	Jinan Times
Jingbao	镜报	The Mirror
Jingji Ribao	经济日报	Economic Daily
Jingjixue Xiaoxibao	经济学消息报	Economics News
Jingpin Gouwu Zhinan	精品购物指南	Guide to Shopping Best-Quality Goods
Jinjian	金剑	Golden Sword
Jizhe Guancha	记者观察	The Journalist Observer
Keji Xinbao	科技新报	Science and Technology News
Lanzhou Chenbao	兰州晨报	Lanzhou Morning News
Lanzhou Wan Bao	兰州晚报	Lanzhou Evening Post
Liaowang Zhoukan	《了望》周刊	Outlook
Ming Bao	明报	Ming Pao Daily News
Minzhu yu Fazhi Huabao	民主与法制画报	Democracy and Law Illustrated
Nanfang Dushibao	南方都市报	Southern Metropolis Daily
Nanfang Ribao	南方日报	Southern Daily
Nanfang Zhoumo	南方周末	Southern Weekend
Nanguo Zaobao	南国早报	South Morning Post
Nanning Wanbao	南宁晚报	Nanning Evening News
Nongcun Fazhan Luncong	农村发展论丛	Commentary on Rural Development
Nongmin Ribao	农民日报	Farmers Daily
Ouzhou Shibao	欧洲时报	European Times
Qianshao Zazhi	前哨杂志	FrontPage Magazine
Qilu Wanbao	齐鲁晚报	Qilu Evening News
Qingnian Cankao	青年参考	Youth Reference
Qiushi Zazhi	《求是》杂志	Seeking Truth
Renmin Ribao	人民日报	People's Daily
Sanlian Shenghuo Zhoukan	三联生活周刊	Sanlian Life Weekly
Sanqin Dushibao	三秦都市报	Sanqin Daily
Shandong Qingnian Zazhi	《山东青年》杂志	Shandong Youth
Shanghai Jizhe Jiayuan	上海记者家园	Journalists' Homestead
Shanxi Gongrenbao	山西工人报	Shanxi Workers' Daily
Shanxi Qingshaonian Bao	山西青少年报	Shanxi Youth Daily
Shanxi Ribao	陕西日报	Shaanxi Daily
Shenghuo Ribao	生活日报	Life Daily
Shenxing Shibao	深星时报	Shenxing Times
Shenzhen Fazhi Bao	深圳法制报	Shenzhen Legal Daily
Shenzhen Tequ Bao	深圳特区报	Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Daily
Shijie Jingji Daobao	世界经济导报	World Economic Herald
Shulin	书林	Treasury of Books
Shuwu	书屋	Studio
Ta Kung Pao	大公报	Ta Kung Daily
Taiyang Bao	太阳报	The Sun
Wen Wei Pao	文汇报	Wen Hui Daily
Wenhui Yuekan	文汇月刊	Literary Monthly
Xiaoxiang Chenbao	潇湘晨报	Xiaoxiang Morning News

Pinyin	Chinese	English
Xibu Shangbao	西部商报	Western Region Business News
Xin GuanCha Zazhi	新观察杂志	New Observer
Xin Hunan Bao	新湖南报	New Hunan Daily
Xin Kuaibao	新快报	New Express
Xin Zhoukan	新周刊	New Weekly
Xingdao Ribao	星岛日报	Singapore Daily
Xinhua Ribao	新华日报	Xinhua Daily
Xinhua She	新华社	Xinhua [New China] News Agency
Xinwen Chubanshao	新闻出版报	Press and Publishing Journal
Xinwen Zhanxian	新闻战线	News Front
Xinwen Zhoukan	新闻周刊	China Newsweek
Xinxi Shibao	信息时报	Communication Times
Xuexi yu Tansuo	学习与探索	Study and Inquiry
Yangcheng Wanbao	羊城晚报	Yangcheng Evening News
Yazhou Zhoukan	亚洲周刊	Asia Weekly
Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan	证券市场周刊	Stock Market Weekly
Zhonggong Huabeiju Jiguan Bao	中共华北局机关报	Newspaper of the CCP's North China Bureau
Zhongguo Jingying Bao	中国经营报	Chinese Economics
Zhongguo Qingnian Bao	中国青年报	China Youth Daily
Zhonghua Xinwen Bao	中华新闻报	China News
Zhonghua Yingcai	中华英才	China's Talents
Zhoumo	周末	Weekend

Notes

PREFACE: *Shattering the Myths about China's Media Markets*

1. *Tufa shijian yingduifa (cao'an)* (Draft Law on Handling Emergency Response), National People's Congress July 5, 2006.
2. *Guanyu jiaqiang wenhua chanpin jinkou guanli banfa*.
3. Greg Walton, *China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China*, Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 2001, <http://www.ichrdd.ca/english/commdoc/publications/globalization/goldenShieldEng.html>.
4. Ethan Gutmann, "Who Lost China's Internet," *The Weekly Standard*, February 15, 2002.
5. Translator's note: Many different versions of this poem are in circulation. Niemoller himself repeated different versions on different occasions. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_they_came...>.

CHAPTER ONE: *Media Control and Public Ignorance*

1. Translator's note: Laozi wrote in the *Daodejing*, "Therefore the Sage rules/By emptying their hearts/And filling their bellies/Weakening their intelligence/And toughening their sinews." See Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), p. 145.
2. Xiao Shu, ed., *Lishi de xiansheng—Zhongguo bange shiji qian dui renmin de zhuangyan chengnuo* (Harbingers of History: The Solemn Promise Made by the Chinese Communist Party to the People 50 Years Ago), Hong Kong: Bosi Chubanshe, 2002.
3. Wang Ruoshui, "Rectification Movements Overwhelmed Enlightenment: The Collision of the Spirit of May Fourth and Party Culture," *Modern China Studies*, Princeton, December 2001; Gao Hua, *Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqi de* (How did the Red Sun Rise?), Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000; Wang Shiwei, *Ye baihehua* (Wild Lilies), Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1992. Translator's note: Wang Shiwei's "Wild Lilies" essay, which criticized the Communist Party for becoming a self-serving elite, was first published in 1942 and made Wang one of the main targets of the Yan'an rectification campaigns.
4. Zhang Yihe, "*Huiyi Chu Anping: liangpian luoye, ouran fengchui zai yiqi*," (Remembering Chu Anping, Two Fallen Leaves Blown in Together in the Wind), <http://www.taosl.net/wcp/zhangyh002.htm> (last accessed March 15, 2006).
5. Huang Xinmin, *Zhonggong tusha jizhe* (The Chinese Communist Party's Murder of Journalists), Hong Kong: Xianggang Ziyou Chubanshe, 1951.

6. Lao Gui, *Xuese huanghun* (Bloodred Sunset), Beijing: Gongren chubanshe, 1987; Dai Huang, “Wei ‘egong yinming lingxiu Hua zhuxi sinanzhe Li Jiulian zhaoxue” (Exonerating Li Jiulian, Unjustly Executed by Wise Leader Chairman Hua), New Century Net, March 10, 2003; Hu Ping, “Zhongguo de mouzi” (China’s Eyes Unpeeled) in *Zhongguo nüxin beihuanlu* (A Record of the Sufferings and Joys of Chinese Women), Guangzhou: Huacheng Chubanshe, 1993.
7. Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Lushan Conference,” July 23, 1959.
8. Zhu Zheng, 1957: *Xin Hunan Bao ren* (1957: The Journalists of the New Hunan Daily). The former deputy editor-in-chief of the *Xin Hunan Bao* who edited this book was unable to find someone to publish it for several years. In the end, the author put up his own money and had 1000 copies printed in April 2000, and distributed them to friends. I was given a copy by Li Rui (Mao’s former secretary, who was persecuted for speaking out about the Great Leap Forward). My copy was smuggled out of China by Li Rui’s daughter.
9. Quoted in Sha Yexin, “Yulun qipianshu kaishi pochan” (The Art of Deceiving Public Opinion Begins to Go Bankrupt), *Kaifang*, October 2003.
10. Nelson Lankford, *The Last American Aristocrat: The Biography of Ambassador David K. E. Bruce*, Boston: Little Brown, 1996; Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce, 1973–1974*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001.
11. Translator’s note: Deng said in 1977, “If this principle were correct, there could be no justification for my rehabilitation.” The “Two Whatever’s” policy was officially repudiated at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978. A Central Committee communiqué endorsed “practice as the sole criterion of truth” and declared that Mao Zedong Thought was not static but flexible: “If everything had to be done according to books and thinking became ossified, progress would become impossible, life itself would stop and the Party and country would perish.” Alan R. Kluver, *Legitimizing the Chinese Economic Reforms: A Rhetoric of Myth and Orthodoxy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 46–48.
12. Translator’s note: Hu Yaobang was CCP Secretary General from 1981 to 1987; Zhao Ziyang held the post from 1987 to 1989.
13. Translator’s note: In 1978 and 1979, citizens posted “big-character posters” demanding democracy on a wall near Xidan Street in downtown Beijing. Democracy Wall has since become a symbol in Chinese history.
14. For details, see “Guanyu waiguoren zai woguo lüxing guanli de guiding” (Regulations Concerning the Administration of Foreigners Traveling in China) issued on October 8, 1982, by the State Council and Military Commission of the CCP Central Committee to the Ministry of Public Security, the General Staff Headquarters, the Foreign Ministry, and the National Tourism Administration. Since 1978, more than 60 statutory instructions on keeping information secret from foreign nationals and people from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan have been issued by the central government, the State Council and various ministries and commissions. These regulations remain in force and involve tourism, publications, taking photographs, photocopying, reading materials in libraries, issuing statistics, maintaining secrecy in providing materials to foreign partners in joint ventures and in scientific and technological exchanges, submissions for publication, foreign exchanges, science and technology exhibits, and so forth. Li Zhidong et al., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baomifa quan-shu* (Encyclopedia on the State Secrets Law of the PRC), Changchun: Jilin Renmin Chubanshe, 1999.
15. The “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tongjifa shishi xize” (Detailed Rules and Regulations on the Implementation of the Statistics Law of the People’s Republic of China) stipulate

- that groups or individuals from outside the PRC who need to conduct statistical research within the PRC must entrust Chinese organizations responsible for conducting statistical research on behalf of foreign nationals with this task. Relevant regulations are “Shewai shehui diaocha huodong guanli zaxing banfa” (Temporary Method for the Administration of Social Investigation Activities Involving Foreigners), March 15, 2001; “Shewai shehui diaocha xiangmu shenbao xuzhi” (A Declaration Guide for Social Investigation Projects Involving Foreign Nationals), March 20, 2000. According to the above regulations, all social investigations involving foreign nationals must be conducted by organizations approved by the Division for the Administration of Non-Governmental and Foreign-Related Surveys, National Bureau of Statistics (Guojia tongjiju minjian yu shewai diaocha guanli chu). Name rosters are recorded in “Shewai shehui diaocha xukezheng banfa gonggao (1)” (Notice of Licenses Issued for Social Investigations Involving Foreign Nationals [1]), July 28, 2000; and “Shewai shehui diaocha xukezheng banfa gonggao (2)” (Notice of Licenses Issued for Social Investigations Involving Foreign Nationals [2]), August 17, 2000.
16. Translator’s note: Regulation 48, which was issued jointly by the Central Committee’s Propaganda Department and its General Office, detailed a series of sanctions for failure to comply, including dismissal from an official position or government job and expulsion from the Party. A copy obtained by He Qinglian was secretly removed from her apartment by government agents. (Personal communication from He Qinglian)
 17. Sina.com, “Zhongguo meiti gaige zhongyu qicheng” (China’s Media Reform Finally Gets Underway), July 7, 2003, www.sina.net.
 18. Translator’s note: Article 23 of the Basic Law aims at the heart of Hong Kong’s democracy movement and specifically requires the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to “enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People’s Government.”
 19. “Guanyu luoshi zhongban, guoban ‘guanyu jinyibu zhili dangzheng bumen baokan san lan he liyong zhiquan faxing, jianqing jiceng he nongmin fudan de tongzhi.”
 20. Translator’s note: For some of the paragraphs that follow, I am indebted to Jonathan Kaufman’s translation of the second half of He Qinglian’s article, “Media Control in China,” *China Rights Forum* No. 4, 2004. I translated the first half of that article.
 21. *People’s Daily*, November 28, 2003.
 22. Translator’s note: According to the Administration of Publication Regulations (Chuban guanli tiaoli) of 1997, both Party and non-Party newspapers are required to have a sponsoring unit (*zhuban danwei*, sometimes translated as state affiliated sponsor) and a department in charge (*zhuguan bumen*). This ensures that all newspapers are unit-based and that individuals cannot start publications without government approval. The regulations require that the sponsoring unit be supervised by a department in charge, i.e., an approved government department. For national newspapers, the department in charge must have the minimum rank of a central government ministry; for a provincial paper, the minimum rank of a provincial bureau; and for a county paper, of a county-level government entity. See Joseph Man Chan, “Administrative boundaries and media marketization: a Comparative Analysis of the Newspaper, TV and Internet Market in China,” in Chin-Chuan Lee, *Chinese Media, Global Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 161–162; Perry Keller, “Privilege and punishment: press governance in China,” *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal* v. 21 no. 1 (2003): 87–138; Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 127.
 23. CDDC.net, July 10, 2003.

24. “Chuban daoxiang yujing gongzuo banfa.”
25. *Mingbao*, Hong Kong, July 11, 2003.

CHAPTER TWO: *The Government’s Control of the News Media*

1. “First Worldwide Press Freedom Index,” October 2002, Reporters without Borders, www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=4116. “Second Worldwide Press Freedom Index,” October 2003, Reporters without Borders, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=8247.
2. Liu was speaking at the Bo’ao Forum for Asia on November 2, 2003.
3. Translator’s note: The Central Bureau of Publishing of the PRC (Zhongyang renmin zhengfu chuban zongshu) was established in 1949 and was abolished in 1954, when publishing came under the Ministry of Culture. In 1973, the government established the National Publishing Administration of China (Guojia chuban ju). It was replaced in 1987 by the National Press and Publication Administration (Guojia xinwen chuban shu), also known as the State Copyright Administration (Guojia banquanju). In 2000, this agency was renamed the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People’s Republic of China (GAPP, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xinwen chuban zongshu). See GAPP Web site, <http://www.gapp.gov.cn/Templates/zsjs.htm>.
4. The Chinese titles for these regulations are provided in the Glossary at the end of this report.
5. Translator’s note: *Guojia xinwen chuban shu* was renamed the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People’s Republic of China (GAPP, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xinwen chuban zongshu) in 2000.
6. *Guanyu chuban danwei de zhuban danwei he zhuguan danwei zhize de zanxing guiding*.
7. Zhu Zheng. *Xin Hunan Bao Ren* (1957: The Journalists of the New Hunan Daily). How this book came to be published illustrates the lack of freedom of the press in China. Zhu Zheng, the editor of the *Xin Hunan Bao*, was labelled a rightist in 1957. He was not alone. Of the 143 reporters and editors on this newspaper’s staff, 54 were labeled “rightists,” including the director, deputy editor-in-chief, and several editorial board and department heads. Many of them died during more than 20 years of “political remolding.” For many years, Zhu Zheng and a few other survivors wanted to publish their recollections, but could not find a publisher. The book has now been printed but not by a publishing house. A notice on the inside of the title page reads, “No. 161 (2001), Jिंगgang Print Shop, Tianxin district, Changsha City.”
8. See the Chinese Web site of Human Rights in China at www.renyurenquan.org.
9. *Guanyu dangqian baokan xinwen guangbo xuanchuan fangzhen de jueding*.
10. *Guanyu xinwen baodao gongzuo de jidian guiding*.
11. *Chongshen jilei xu jing zhuanxiang shenqing de xuanti de tongzhi*.
12. *Guanyu chuban ‘wenhua da geming’ tushu wenti de ruogan guiding*.
13. *Guanyu sheji sulian, dong’ou guojia tushu de chuban jiaqiang guanli de tongzhi*.
14. *Guanyu dui miaoxie dang he guojia lingdaoren de chubanwu jiachang guanli de guiding*.
15. Translator’s note: *Xuanchuan jilü* can be translated as “disciplinary directives concerning propaganda work” or “propaganda discipline.” In Chinese *jilü* is both discipline or a directive or regulation.
16. *Mingbao*, Hong Kong, September 26, 2002.
17. *South China Morning Post*, January 12, 2002. Translator’s note: Pan Yue also published an

- article in the *Huaxia Shibao* (China Times) advocating a more liberal approach to religion. See Pan Yue, “Makeese zhuyi zongjiao guan bixu yu shi jujing” (The Marxist view on Religion must Change with the Times), *Huaxia Shibao*, December 15, 2001.
18. *E’erduosi guangbo dianshi bao*.
 19. “Newspaper Suddenly Fires Journalist for Writing ‘A Few Too Many Negative Reports’” (“Baoshe turan chaodiao jizhe cheng qi ‘fanmian baodao you dian duo’”), *Nei Menggu Zao Bao* (Inner Mongolia Morning News), October 21, 2003, republished in Boxun.com, October 22, 2003.
 20. Translator’s note: In February 2000, Jiang Zemin stated that “Only if the Party [represents] the development of China’s advanced social productive forces, the forward direction for China’s cultural advancement, and the fundamental interests of China’s vast population will the Party always be able to maintain an invincible position.” In July 2001, Jiang enlarged the scope of the “Three Represents” to embrace the goals and “advanced culture” of middle-class businesspeople and entrepreneurs. The theory of the “Three Represents” was enshrined in the Party constitution at the 16th Party Congress in November 2002.
 21. Essentially the same reports were published by the *People’s Daily*, the *People’s Daily Online*, the Xinhua News Agency Web page, and most Chinese media outlets from October 14 to 25, 2003.
 22. Translator’s note: The NPC formally adopted the “Resolution on the Construction of the Yangtze River Three Gorges Project” on April 3, 1992.
 23. *Sanxia Gongcheng bao* (Three Gorges Project Daily), November 15, 2001.
 24. “Zhongguo di si jie quanguo xinwen xueshu nianhui huiyi zongshu” (Abstracts of China’s Fourth Annual National Journalism Conference), September 25, 2001, China Journalism Center (Zhongguo xinwen yanjiu zhongxin), www.CDDC.net.
 25. “Renqing mubiao, bawo fangxiang,” *Xinwen Zhanxian*, 1993, Issue No. 5.
 26. “Zhongguo di si jie quanguo xinwen xueshu nianhui huiyi zongshu,” op. cit.
 27. According official figures, in 2002 there were 2,137 different newspapers, 9,029 magazines, 306 radio stations, 360 TV stations, and 1,300 radio and TV stations in China.
 28. Translator’s note: In Chinese Buddhism, King Yama is one of the ten judges of the underworld, each with his own court, and presides over the superintendents of prisons. In Buddhist texts the mere mention of King Yama is a reference to the underground prisons through which all people must pass. See Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 2, 175.
 29. Translator’s note: Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, Lu Dingyi, and Yang Shankun, the initial targets of the Cultural Revolution.
 30. Quoted in Sha Yexin, “Yulun qipian shu kaishi pochan” (The Art of Deceiving Public Opinion Begins to go Bankrupt), *Kaifang*, October, 2003.
 31. Translator’s note: Tao Zhu was appointed director of the Propaganda Department in May 1966, and he was purged in December 1966 for speaking up for Liu Shaoqi. He died in prison in 1969. Yan Jiaqi, Gao Gao, Jiaqi Yan, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), p. 117.
 32. Translator’s note: Jiang Qing met Yao Wenyuan when he was still a writer in the internal-circulation publications division of the Shanghai Party Committee. Yao’s scathing critique of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, published in November 1965, was later hailed as the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution. Elizabeth J. Perry, Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), p. 9.
 33. Zhang Pinghua was appointed Propaganda Department director in December 1977. Mal-

- colm Lamb, *Directory of Officials and Organizations in China: A Quarter-Century Guide* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 57.
34. Translator's note: Hu Yaobang was appointed director of the Propaganda Department in December 1977, a position that enabled him to rehabilitate many people who had been wrongly accused and persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. In 1980 he was appointed general secretary of the PC and in 1981 he was promoted to the Party chairmanship. In early 1987, after several weeks of student pro-democracy demonstrations, he was forced to resign for "mistakes on major issues of political policy." This set off the 1987 campaign against "bourgeois liberalization." See Christopher Howe et al., *China's Economic Reform* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 20.
 35. Translator's note: He Jingzhi (Minister of Culture) and He Dongchang (Minister of Education) were the other two of the "Four Great Leftist Kings."
 36. Translator's note: On July 13, 1985 the Chinese government announced that Deng Liqun had been dismissed as head of the Propaganda Department in favor of Zhu Houze. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in October 1987, delegates voted in a secret ballot to exclude Deng from the Central Committee. See Colin Mackerras, *Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 44.
 37. Translator's note: Wang Renzhi was forced to step down following Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in early 1992. See Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 199.
 38. Translator's note: Ding Guangen was appointed in December 1992. He retired in 2002 for age reasons.

CHAPTER THREE: *The Political and Economic Control of Media Workers*

1. See Mao Zedong, "In Refutation of 'Uniformity of Public Opinion,'" vol. 5, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*.
2. Zhong Peizhang, former director of the News Section of the Central Committee's Propaganda Department, citing a "high-level political figure." In *Tongzhou Gongjin* (*One Ship Moving Forward*, a monthly magazine published in Guangzhou), February 2003. According to Sha Yexin, this political figure is Chen Yun. See Sha Yexin, "Mao Zedong si da xuanchuan lilun" ("Mao Zedong's Four Big Propaganda Theories"), *Open Magazine (Kaifang)*, September 2003.
3. Two types of organizations receive state funding in China: The first are government and Party organizations at all levels. These "fully funded units" have their administrative expenses, salaries, employee benefits (including housing), and pensions paid by the government. The second type are the state-run institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, schools, and media organizations that have their administrative expenses and basic wages partially paid by the government but must raise their own funds to cover housing and employee benefits.
4. The government began organizing newspapers into newspaper groups in early 2001.
5. Officials are ranked according to central government (ministries and commissions), provincial, prefectural, municipal, county, township, and village levels. For every post at every level there is also a deputy post. The *zhengtingji* level is the equivalent of a prefectural party committee secretary or an army division commander.
6. *Baokanshe shezhang zongbian ji (zhubian) renzhi tiaojian de zanxing guiding*.

7. Translator's note: In Chinese, such officials are known as "flies" (*cangying*).
8. See *Southern Daily* and *Nanfang Daily* reports from April 14 to May 5, 2000.
9. Luo Hancheng, *CCTV toupai shilu* (CCTV's Hidden Camera Diaries), Nanfang Ribao chubanshe, August 2000.
10. Radio Free Asia, February 7, 2003.
11. At the time, Jiang Yiping was the editor-in-chief of *Nanfang Zhoumo*. When Yang Haipeng saw that there was no way to get his story published, he sent a copy of his manuscript to the *Shenzhen Fazhi Bao* (Shenzhen Legal Daily), where I was the deputy director. As soon as I learned the details of the case, I contacted the secretary of the Rui'an disciplinary inspection committee and, after verifying the facts, I published the story on January 6, 2000. Three days later, Chen Weigao, the director of the Rui'an public security bureau, paid me a visit and threatened me in person. I then sent my article to *Banyuetan* (Bimonthly Forum) magazine, published by the Xinhua News Agency, and *Jinri Mingliu* (Contemporary Celebrities) magazine, published in Hebei, and asked them to publish it. Before long, my article had been reprinted by newspapers all over China. It was only thanks to all this publicity that the corrupt officials were finally brought to trial and sentenced to two-year prison terms.
12. Premier from 1998 to 2003.
13. The Chinese term translated here as "lobbying" is literally "public relations" (*gongguan*). In Chinese, "public relations" has come to mean exploiting one's connections to obtain something "through the back door."
14. Translator's note: Fingerprints are used as signatures by people who cannot sign their names.
15. Article by Ni Ming in *China Youth Daily*, November 5, 1998. Reprinted in *Southern Weekend*, November 13, 1998.
16. Luo Hancheng, op. cit.
17. "Yiqi 'guan, kuang, hei, e' xianghu goujie, you zuzhi, you yumou de yinman zhenxiang de teda kuangan" ("The Organized and Premeditated Collusion Between Local Officials, Mine Managers, the Local Criminal Underworld and Local Bullies to Conceal What Really Happened During the Nandan Coal Mine Accident"), *News Frontline*, vol. 3, 2002.

CHAPTER FOUR: "Internal (neibu) Documents" and the Secrecy System

1. Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 267.
2. David Stuart Lane, *Soviet Society Under Perestroika* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 321.
3. *Xinwen chubanshe baomi guiding*, in Li Zhidong, Tan Wenxiang, eds., *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu* (Encyclopedia on the PRC State Secrets Law) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1999), p. 363. A notice on the flyleaf of this encyclopedia reads, "This book is only available for use by departments, organizations and personnel charged with the maintenance of secrets." But in fact it is openly sold in Xinhua bookstores.
4. *Xinwen chubanshe gongzuo wenjian xuanbian*, 1995.
5. Translator's note: In the early 1990s, while Yu Zuomin was concurrently the mayor of Daqiu Village, its Party chief and president of its holding company, the official media published countless paeans to him. But to the villagers of Daqiu, he was known for beating workers, stashing away millions in communal funds, and keeping a fleet of Mercedes. In 1990, the Tianjin bureau chief of *Fazhi Ribao* (Legal Daily) wrote the first of several "internal refer-

- ence” reports to the Beijing leadership describing Yu’s involvement in the beating to death of a local worker. Yu escaped punishment. It was not until early 1993, after Yu attempted to block a police investigation into another murder in which he had been implicated, that he was arrested following a clash with armed police. He and other village officials were sentenced to 20 years in prison. See Bruce Gilley, *Tiger on the Brink: Jiang Zemin and China’s New Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 206–207; Bruce Gilley, “The Yu Zuomin Phenomenon: Entrepreneurs and Politics in Rural China,” in Victoria Bonnell et al. eds., *The New Entrepreneurs of Europe and Asia: Patterns of Business Development in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), p. 72.
6. VOA News, May 6, 1997.
 7. See *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa* (Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of State Secrets), September 5, 1988; *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa shishi banfa* (Implementation Measures for the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of State Secrets), May 25, 1990; *Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui changwuweiyuanhui guanyu chengzhi xielu guojia jimi fazui de buchong guiding* (Supplemental Regulations from the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress on Punishing the Crime of Leaking State Secrets), September 5, 1988. For the texts of these laws, see Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*.
 8. Translator’s note: Toward the end of 2002, the Chinese government tried to get the Hong Kong government to push through an antsubversion bill based on Article 23 of the Basic Law. Following mass demonstrations on July 1, 2003, the bill was shelved and later withdrawn.
 9. This section is based on articles published in March and April, 2002, in Hong Kong’s *Open Magazine* (Kaifang), on an appeal written by Xu Zerong’s mother and on sources cited in other notes.
 10. Translator’s note: Xu Zerong, “Chinese Military Intervention in the Korean War,” Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1999.
 11. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa shishi banfa* (Implementation Measures for the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of State Secrets), May 25, 1990, in Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*.
 12. *Guojia mimi baomi qixian de guiding*, in Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*, p. 83.
 13. Xu Zerong, “Magong mimi diantai Hunan baoguang,” *Yazhou Zhoukan*, June 26, 2000.
 14. Translator’s note: Mao Zedong declared in 1948 that before taking any actions related to foreign affairs, local authorities had to first report to the central government. This was the principle that “in diplomacy, nothing is too small to report” (*waijiao wu xiaoshi*). See Michael Sheng, “Mao’s Ideology, Personality and the CCP’s Foreign Relations,” in Li Hongshan and Hong Zhaohui eds., *Image, Perception, and the Making of U.S.-China Relations* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998), p. 184.
 15. *Mingbao*, Hong Kong, April 8, 2002.
 16. Editor’s note: At time of press, although he remains in prison, a nine-month sentence reduction for Xu Zerong was approved in September 2006. He will be due for release in September 2012.
 17. “Duli zhuangaoren Yu Chen fangtan shilu” (An interview with independent journalist Yu Chen), media.sohu.com, December 31, 2003.
 18. “Hundreds of Police Storm ‘AIDS village’ in China, Arrest 13 farmers,” Agence France Press, July 6, 2003; “New Revelations about the Attack by the Shanghai County Police and Gov-

- ernment on Xionqiao Village,” by Wan Yanhai, Director of the Beijing Aizhi Health Education Institute, July 13, 2003; “Aizi yigu: gen wo huijia” (Aids Orphans: A Visit to my Hometown), *Nanfang Zhoumo*, August 21, 2003; “Locked Doors: The Human Rights of People Living with HIV in China,” Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/china0803/>; “Xuehuo zhentian aizi beige” (“The AIDS catastrophe shakes the world”), <http://bbs.taisha.org/cgi-bin/view.cgi?forum=60&topic=2804>.
19. Radio Free Asia, October 6, 2003.
 20. Translator’s note: On April 1, 2001, a U.S. surveillance plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet near Hainan Island, causing the death of one Chinese pilot and the emergency landing in China of the U.S. plane. Twenty-four American crew members were detained by the Chinese government. China demanded an apology, and anti-American sentiment, largely fueled by the official Chinese press, intensified. The government-controlled media used the opportunity to trumpet nationalism and Chinese heroism. Xin Lu, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 177–178.
 21. Translator’s note: At the time, Jiang Zemin was chairman of Central Military Commission and the Central Committee as well as President of the PRC.
 22. Zhao Shilong, “Shi shui zai zunao caifang?” (Who is stopping journalists from conducting interviews), *Nanfeng Chuang* (South Wind Window), February 2002.
 23. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia jimifa* (Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of State Secrets), May 1989; *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa shishi banfa* (Implementation Measures for the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of State Secrets), May 1990, in Li Zhidong et al., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baomifa quanshu*.
 24. *Ershiyi Shiji Jingji Baodao* (21st Century Economic Report), Guangzhou, June 4, 2003; *Zhoumo* (Weekend), June 4, 2003; *New York Times*, June 3, 2003; “Zheng Enchong lüshi gei Shanghai shizhang de xin” (A Letter from Shanghai lawyer Zheng Enchong to the mayor of Shanghai), “Zhang Sizhi, Guo Guoting lüshi wei Zheng Enchong an de yishen bianhuci” (Plea made by attorneys Zhang Sizhi and Guo Guoting on behalf of Zheng Enchong at his first trial), bbs.chinesenewsnet.com, October 30, 2003.
 25. Yongyi Song, “Behind Bars in Beijing: I was no spy—and neither are China’s other prisoners,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2001.
 26. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa*, September 5, 1988, in Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*.
 27. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo baoshou guojia mimifa shishi banfa*, May 25, 1990, in Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*.
 28. *Zhonggong Nianbao* (Chinese Communist Party Yearbook), 1980 (Taipei: Zhonggong yan-jiu zazhishe, 1980), p. 7.
 29. Translator’s note: Citing Yan Huai, David Lampton explains, “In the Chinese political system there is a very strict definition of the term *zhongyang lingdao*, the central leadership, more often known in the Chinese media as *dang he guojia lingdaoren*, the party and state leaders. Officially the term refers to members of the CCP Politburo and Secretariat, the secretary of the CCP Central Discipline Inspection Committee, the president and vice president of the state, the premier and vice premiers of the State Council, the state councilors, the chairman and vice chairmen of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, the chairman and vice chairmen of the National People’s Political Consultative Conference, the president of the Supreme People’s Court, the procurator general of the

- Supreme People's Procurate, and chairman and vice chairmen of the Party Central Military Commission." David Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978–2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 412, note 4.
30. Translator's note: In August 1992 demand for stocks in Shenzhen was such that the city's exchange stopped selling actual shares. Instead, it sold "share purchase certificates" for 30 yuan each, which entitled holders to enter a lottery in which the winners would be allocated whatever stocks became available. Half a million people lined up for a sale of certificates in Shenzhen on August 8 and 9. Rioting ensued on August 10, when the certificates ran out and rumors spread that government officials had sold them to friends and relatives. Rumor on the stock market had it that more than a dozen people lost their lives in the repression that followed. The central government took swift and severe action against the Shenzhen officials involved in this corruption. See Joe Studwell, *The China Dream: The Quest for the Last Great Untapped Market on Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), p. 66; Ellen Hertz, *The Trading Crowd: An Ethnography of the Shanghai Stock Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 180.
 31. See Li Zhidong, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo baomifa quanshu*.
 32. For more on China's state secrets system, see *State Secrets: China's Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China, 2007.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Chinese Journalists: Dancing in Shackles*

1. Translator's note: This quote is widely attributed to Thomas Jefferson, but the Jefferson Library notes that the attribution is spurious. See <http://www.monticello.org/library/reference/quotes.html>.
2. In 1956, in reference to protests then occurring in Poland and Hungary, Li Shenzhi sent a message to Mao through his secretary Lin Ke suggesting greater press freedom. Mao made this response, after which Li Shenzhi became China's first "Rightist." Li recounts this incident in his book, *Fengyu canghuang wushinian* (Fifty Years of Turmoil), Mirror Publishing (Hong Kong), 2003.
3. Zhao Shilong, "Shi shui zai zurao caifang?" (Who Is Stopping Journalists from Conducting Interviews?), *Nanfeng Chuang* (Southern Exposure), February 2002.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *The Sun* (Taiyang Po), Hong Kong, January 1, 2002.
6. "Baozhu chang da baozha, Jiangxi wangmin chi guanyuan tai fubai (Big Explosion at Fireworks Factory, Jiangxi Netizens Criticize Official Corruption)," *Duowei News*, January 1, 2002; "Wanzai baozha an waide xinwen fengsuo zhan (Battle over News Blackout on Wanzai Explosion)," *Duowei News*, January 5, 2002.
7. *Fazhi Ribao* (Legal Daily), Beijing, January 17, 2001. Editor's note: On February 20, 2004, the Xinhua News Agency reported that Wan Ruizhong, a former county Party head in southwestern Guangxi, was executed after being found guilty of taking 3.2 million yuan in bribes from the operators of the Lajiapo tin mine in return for concealing a fatal flooding of the mine, which killed at least 81 people in 2001. The Xinhua report said that armed thugs were hired to keep reporters away, as a result of which the incident was not reported until two weeks after it occurred.
8. "Shandong jizhe fang tangwu'an zao jingcha duda" (Shandong Journalists Beaten While Investigating Corruption Case), *Pingguo Ribao* (Apple Daily), Hong Kong, January 8, 2002.

9. “Zhongguo jizhe de hong yu hei” (The Good and Bad Among Chinese Journalists), a critique of the current state of Chinese journalism. Source: bbs.beida-online.com.
10. *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth Daily), January 14, 2002.
11. “Lanzhoushi gonganju fachu ‘heimingdan’ jin 16 ming jizhe caifang (Lanzhou Public Security Bureau Issues ‘blacklist’ of 16 Journalists),” *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), August 8, 2002.
12. Binlangyuan Wenxue Shuyuan (Betelnut Garden Literary Institute), <http://libins.cc333.com/cgi-bin/index>.
13. Translator’s note: *Xingxiang gongcheng* could also be translated as Potemkin-village-style projects, i.e., redundant projects designed to boost the prestige and fill the pockets of the party leaders who pursue them.
14. “Pilu xianweishuji dagao xingxianggongcheng Gongren Ribao zai Henan Lushixian bei tongzhi shoujiao” (Unsold Editions of *Gongren Ribao* in Lushi County, Henan Province, Reportedly Confiscated for Running Articles Revealing that the County Party Secretary was Pursuing Redundant and Extravagant Projects), *Zhongxing wang* (China News Service), August 24, 2001.

CHAPTER SIX: *News Censorship and Half-Truths*

1. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 3. Rutgers University Press, 1953.
2. This section is based on the following articles and Internet posts: (1) Fang Jinyu, “Xiwang gongcheng de xiwang zai nali? Xu Yongguang shexian fubai de diaocha yu sikao” (Where Is the Hope in Project Hope? An Investigation into and Some Reflections on Xu Yongguang’s Suspected Involvement in Corruption), Chinese News Net (dwnews.com), December 29, 2002; also downloaded from *Zhongguo Xinwen Chuanmei Wang* (www.ccdc.net) on January 2, 2003; (2) Century China’s (www.cc.org.cn) bulletin board also had postings about this case, but they were quickly removed from the site; (3) Fang Jinyu’s aborted article “Zhongguo qingjihui bangong jingfei yinman le shenme?” (What is Hidden Behind the China Youth Development Foundation’s “Administrative Expenses?”), *Nanfang Zhoumo* (also printed in *Nanfang Ribao*, April 13, 2002); (4) “Pilu xiwang gongcheng bi’an Nanfang Zhoumo 30 wan fen zao fengcun” (300,000 Copies of a *Nanfang Zhoumo* Edition Exposing the Project Hope Corruption Case Have Been Confiscated), posted March 22, 2002 at 4:06 a.m. Beijing time on Chinese News Net (dwnews.com); (5) “Nanfang Zhoumo liang ge banben yidui mituan” (Two Editions of *Nanfang Zhoumo* and One Mystery), posted April 4, 20002 at 3:05 a.m. Beijing time on Chinese News Net.
3. Deng Xiaoping’s son Deng Pufang, Chairman of the China Federation for Disabled Persons, has also benefited from money raised for his federation under government orders, but he enjoys a special privilege in that his main source of funds are national lottery profits allocated by the government.
4. Translator’s note: The *People’s Daily* headline of June 22, 2000, the day after the verdict, read, “HK Court Backs Project Hope Over Libel.” But as Arnold Zeitlin explains: “The *Apple Daily*, another Chinese Hong Kong newspaper with a reputation for free-wheeling reporting, apparently rejected the story. In June 2000, its sister magazine, *Next*, had lost an HK\$3.7 million (US\$447,000) libel suit for a January 1994 story on alleged misuse of funds by Project Hope. The decision against publishing serves as an indicator of how libel and defamation suits can control news coverage.” See Zeitlin, “Project Hope: They Could not Keep a Good Scandal Down,” *China Brief*, Volume 2, Issue 8 (April 11, 2002).

5. “Nanjingshi weixuan chuanbu jiu ‘9·14’ teda toudu an de gaojian,” September 17, 2002. The bulletin is no longer available on the Sohu.com Web site, but a scan of the original document can still be found on the Beelink Web site: <http://news.beelink.com.cn/20020918/1208329.shtml>.
6. *Qiangguo luntan*, <http://www.qglt.com>.
7. Ren Bumei, “Nanjing buzai gudu” (Nanjing is No Longer Alone), *Suidao* (Tunnel) online magazine, vol. 201, September 23, 2002.
8. “Nanjing Tangshan zhen fasheng teda luodu an” (Major Poisoning Case in Tangshan Township, Nanjing). Dwnnews.com, September 26, 2002.
9. Xiao Han, “Xinxi gongkai yu zhengfu gongxinli—dui zhongguo su Cheng Zhengping (914 toudu an) de chubu yanjiu,” posted at 2:46 p.m., January 10, 2003, in *Shiji shalong* (Century Salon), hosted by the *Shiji Zhongguo* (Century China) Web site at www.cc.org.cn.
10. “Meiti pipan: yangnian chusan, zhongguo meiti siwang zhi ri” (A Critique of the Media: February 3, 2003—the Day the Chinese Media Died), February 23, 2003, *Shiji Shalong* (Century Salon), hosted by the *Shiji Zhongguo* (Century China) Web site at www.cc.org.cn. Posted by Alunte (Arendt); includes article by Xinhua journalists Yang Haibin and Li Yong, “Xinhua she Ha’erbin 2 yue 3 ri dian: Ha’erbin teda huozai, 33 ren siwang 10 ren shoushang” (Xinhua News Agency dispatch, February 3: Big Fire in Harbin, 33 Dead, 10 Injured).

CHAPTER SEVEN: *Journalism as a High-Risk Occupation*

1. *Attacks on the Press in 2002*, Committee to Protect Journalists, <http://www.cpj.org/attacks02/AOP31mar03na.html>
2. “Qin peng tuiduan shi heishehui baofu sha ren: Shaanxi yi jizhe shenmi siwang,” (The Mysterious Death of a Shaanxi Reporter: Friends and Family Suspect Triads Are Responsible), *Sanqin Dushi Bao* (Sanqin Daily), January 30, 2002.
3. See *Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan* (Stock Market Weekly), Vol. 93, November 24, 2001, published by the Chinese Stock Market Research Center (*Zhongguo zhengquan shichang sheji yanjiu lianhe bangongshi*).
4. The December 4, 2001, issue of *The Sun*, a Chinese-language Hong Kong newspaper, reported that the *Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan* article came as a big shock to the Beijing political elite.
5. John Pomfret, “Corruption Charges Rock China’s Leaders,” *The Washington Post*, January 10/2002, available online at <http://www.threegorgesprobe.org/TgP/index.cfm?DSP=content&ContentID=3940>
6. *Zhonghua Yingcai* (China’s Talents), No. 23, 2001.
7. “Yi ming jizhe de gong zui shi fei” (A Journalist’s Achievements Become a Crime), *Zhongguo Shehui Dao Kan* (China Society Periodical), No. 1, 2001; “Haofei yi yuan zhizao kangzao shenhua yangban gongcheng yuanlai loudong baichu” (Model Engineering Project to Combat Drought Wasted Several Hundred Million Yuan), *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), January 11, 2001.
8. Gao Qinrong was released on December 11, 2006 after receiving sentence reductions for “good behavior.”
9. “Yiben qishu de qiyu” (The Remarkable Story of a Remarkable Book), *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), October 12, 2000.
10. The Chinese government, through the Central Committee of the CCP, declared Falun Gong an illegal organization on July 21, 1999.

11. Personal interview between the author and Gui Xiaoqi in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, in May 2001.
12. *The Price of Integrity*, Committee to Protect Journalists' International Press Freedom Awards 2001, <http://www.cpj.org/awards01/Jiang.html>. "Bo Xilai pohai fantan jizhe Jiang Weiping" (Bo Xilai Persecutes Anti-Corruption Reporter Jiang Weiping), *Open Magazine* (Hong Kong), August 2001. Editor's note: Jiang Weiping was released on January 3, 2006 after receiving a sentence reduction for "good behavior."

CHAPTER EIGHT: *A Prickly Rosebush Cut Off at the Root*

1. Speech at the Second Session of the Eighth Party Congress, May 8, 1958
2. The intent is to find criminal pretexts such as corruption to detain and imprison advocates of freedom of speech and democracy, in order to avoid protests from international human rights groups.
3. Ma Licheng and Ling Zhijun, *Jiao Feng: Dangdai Zhongguo sance sixiang jiefang shilu* (Crossed Swords: The Third Thought Liberation Campaign in Contemporary China), Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo chubanshe, 1998.
4. Translator's note: The 1998 Yangtze River floods, which killed more than 4000 people and affected over a quarter of China's 1.2 billion people, were the worst since 1954, when 30,000 people died. See William James Burroughs, ed., *Climate: Into the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13.
5. Translator's note: Ye Xuanping is a son of the late Marshal Ye Jianying and has held the posts of vice-governor of Guangdong Province, mayor of Guangzhou, deputy secretary of the CCP Guangdong Provincial Committee, and governor of Guangdong Province. He was also a member of the 12th, 13th and 14th CCP Central Committees. See China Vitae at www.chinavitae.com/biography_display.php?id=1170.
6. Zhang Xiaoli, "Cong Nanfang Zhoumo de pipingxing baodao kan yulun jiandu" (The public watchdog function of *Southern Weekend's* critical reports), www.CDDC.net.
7. "Dangdai Zhongguo shehui jiegou yanbian de zongtixing fenxi."
8. "Women renguang zai yangwang xingkong."
9. Translator's note: When Deng Xiaoping promoted Jiang Zemin to become Party general secretary after the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, Jiang brought Zeng Qinghong (his chief-of-staff), You Xigui (his bodyguard), and Jia Tingan (his personal secretary) from Shanghai to Beijing with him. This became the core of Jiang's "Shanghai Gang" (or Shanghai Faction). Jiang Zemin was mayor of Shanghai and secretary of the Shanghai municipal Party committee in the mid-1980s and general secretary of the Central Committee from 1989 to 2002. Zeng Qinghong held senior Party positions in Shanghai in the mid-1980s, was head of the Central Committee Organization Department from 1999–2002, and was elected member of the Central Committee in 2002 and Vice President of the PRC in 2003. See Andrew Scobell, Larry Wortzel, *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutes, and Ideas after the 16th Party Congress* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), p. 217; see also China Vitae at http://www.chinavitae.com/biography_display.php?id=23.
10. Translator's note: In December 2001, the Chinese press reported the completion of a probe into the biggest tax fraud case in the history of the PRC. Investigators uncovered fake value-added tax receipts worth more than 32.3 billion *yuan* for which businessmen claimed refunds. Government officials were also involved in the scandal. See Donald Porter, *Govern-*

- nance and Public Sector Reform in Asia: Paradigm Shift Or Business as Usual? (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 75; *People's Daily* (English edition), December 13, 2001, at http://english.people.com.cn/200112/13/eng20011213_86554.shtml.
11. This quote appeared in Liu Xiaobo, “Minjian shehui di chengchang yu zhengzhi minzhuhua [The Rise of Civil Society in China],” posted on the Web site of *China Monthly* (www.chinamz.org) in March 2003: <http://www.chinamz.org/ftpgb/mz0303b.gb>.
 12. “Yige jiduan baoli jituan de chengzhang.”
 13. “Zhang Jun zai jiantao.”
 14. Translator’s note: Cheng Kejie was executed in September 2000. He had been found guilty of having amassed a fortune of tens of millions of *yuan* from bribes paid by officials seeking his help with promotions and by ordering state-owned enterprises and agencies to sell real estate and commodities at below market prices through his mistress, who remitted the profits to Hong Kong. Hu Changqing was executed in March 2000 for taking bribes of 5.45 million *yuan*. See Christopher Hood et al., *Reward for High Public Office: Asian and Pacific Rim States* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 63; Robert Harris, *Political Corruption: In and Beyond the Nation State* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 88.
 15. This section is based on my own research as well as on the following sources: “Nanfang Zhoumo tongren de quxiang” (Where have our *Southern Weekend* colleagues gone?), May 31, 2002; Miao Ye, “Zhen yao gaobie Nanfang Zhoumo ma?” (Do we really have to say goodbye to *Southern Weekend*?), Yazhou Shibao (*Asia Times*), October 8, 2003; “Nanfang Zhoumo huaguo piaoling” (The flowers and fruits of *Southern Weekend* fade and fall [i.e., the journalists of *Southern Weekend* are sent into the cold]), Shiji shalong (*Century Salon*) website, August 9, 2002; “Nanfang Zhoumo lingdaoceng gengdie fengge dabian jizhe lizhi” (Major change of style among top leadership of *Southern Weekend* and the dismissal of its journalists), *Radio Free Asia* newscast, October 24, 2003.

CHAPTER NINE: Foreign Journalists in China

1. First Worldwide Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders, October 2002, http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=4116.
2. John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 4th Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 484.
3. Wei Yongzheng, *Xinwen Chuanbofa Jiaocheng* (Course on Journalism and Communication Laws), Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, Beijing, 2002.
4. *Guowuyuan guanlyu guanli waiguo xinwen jigou changzhu jizhe de zhanhang guiding*.
5. *Guanyu guanli waiguo xinwen jigou changzhu jizhe de zhanhang guiding*.
6. *People's Daily*, May 13, 1987.
7. Jasper Becker is a well-known journalist and China expert. From 1985 to 1990, he was a China correspondent for the British *Guardian* newspaper, BBC television, the *Economist*, the *Spectator*, and later the Beijing bureau chief of Hong Kong’s English-language *South China Morning Post*. He is currently the Beijing correspondent for Britain’s *Independent*. He has published three books on China, most notably *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine* (London: John Murray, 1996). This sober and forthright historical study has earned him high praise in the West as well as the Fourth PIOOM (Interdisciplinary Program of Research on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations) Foundation Award. This book has been banned in China. Becker’s book *The Chinese* (London: John Murray, 2000) demol-

- ishes a series of Western clichés about China and tells the secret history of the world's most populous country. In November 2003, Becker told the Radio Free Asia journalist Bei Ming about his experience with the Three Gorges Project.
8. Nicholas Kristof, "China's Velvet Glove," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/17/opinion/17KRIS.html>.
 9. Measures of Beijing Municipality for Implementation of the "Regulation Concerning Foreign Journalists and Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies," promulgated on March 19, 1990, by the Beijing Municipal People's Government. For the Chinese version, see www.mediachina.net; for an English translation, see <http://product.chinawe.com/cgi-bin/lawdetail.pl?LawID=328>.
 10. "Beijing Guanfang Ruhe Duifui Jingwei Jizhe" (How the Beijing Authorities Deal with Foreign Journalists), op-ed, Duowei Xinwenshe (Duowei News Service), May 10, 2002. For the regulations, see *Guanyu Jiaqing dui Jingwai Jizhe Caifang Shixiang he Guanli Gongzuo de Tongzhi* (On Strengthening the Management Interviews by Foreign Journalists), Foreign Affairs Office of Beijing Chaoyang District People's Government, February 9, 2002, signed and issued by Su Jingmei.
 11. *Gang Ao jizhe lai neidi caifang de guanli banfa*.
 12. *Gang Ao jizhe lai neidi caifang de zhuyi shixiang*.
 13. *People's Daily*, October 8, 1993; April 16, 1994; January 26, 1997.
 14. *Guanyu Taiwan jizhe lai zuguo dalu caifang de guiding (xiudingban)*.
 15. *People's Daily*, December 14, 1995.
 16. Gansu Province Higher People's Court Criminal Verdict (2002), First Trial Docket No. 297.
 17. "Weicheng Riji: Jizhehui shang de Xujia" (Wei Cheng's Diary: Phony Press Conferences), Chinese-language version of the BBC website, November 12, 2002.
 18. *Jingwai guangbo dianshi congyerenyuan caifang paiguan de guanli*. See "Guangyu yinfa 'Jingwai guangbo dianshi congyerenyuan caifang paiguan de guanli' de tongzhi" (Circular on the Printing and Distribution of the Regulation on the Administration of Interviewing and Filming by Foreign Broadcast and Television Crews), www.mediachina.net/law; also available at <http://www.jincao.com/fa/law23.s04.htm>.
 19. "Chinese Court Rejects South Korean Photographer's Appeal—Journalist to Remain Jailed," Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), December 23, 2003, www.cpj.org/news/2003/China23dec03na.html.
 20. Joan Maltese, "How China's Propaganda Machine Works," Part 1, Special for NewsMax.com? July 4, 2003. <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/7/3/134334.shtml>
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Joan Maltese, "How China's Propaganda Machine Tries to Fool the World," Special for NewsMax.com, July 9, 2003. <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/7/8/133729.shtml>
 23. "The Perils of Speaking Out in China," by David Lore, *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2003.
 24. Claudia Rosett, a former member of the editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal*, won an Overseas Press Club Citation for Excellence in 1990 for her onsite coverage of China's 1989 Tiananmen Incident.
 25. Translator's note: Yan'an, a city in Shaanxi Province, was the terminus of the Long March and the main base (1936–47, 1948–9) of the Chinese Communists.
 26. "Talk with the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong" (August 1946), in *Mao Tse-tung Selected Works*, Volume Five, 1945–1949 (New York: New York International Publishers, 1954), pp. 97–101.
 27. In a recent example, after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. September 11, 2002, President

- George W. Bush declared that America would let the world know that “America is no paper tiger.”
28. He Shu, “Bei fengkuang de niandai yunong de waiguoren—zai hua waiguo zhuanjia de wenge jingli” (Foreigners Duped by China’s Crazy Years—the Experience of Foreign Experts in China During the Cultural Revolution), *Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu* (Modern China Studies), Princeton, NJ, Vol. 2, 2002.
 29. This paragraph is based on S. Bernard Thomas, *Season of High Adventure: Edgar Snow in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 320–323.
 30. Translator’s note: Ding Zilin, a former associate professor of philosophy at the People’s University of China, lost her son, Jiang Jieliang, on June 3, 1989. Since then, she has led a movement to demand an accounting. In 1991, Ding began meeting with other victims’ mothers, including Zhang Xianling, Su Bingxian, Zhou Shuzhuang, Li Xuewen, and Xu Jue. Together they coordinated self-help efforts among the victims’ families and organized a movement that is now known as the Tiananmen Mothers.
 31. Editor’s note: In the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games, a new set of Chinese regulations have been issued specifically relating to reporting activities of foreign journalists on the Olympic Games and “related matters” for the period leading up to the Summer Games and the Paralympic Games in 2008. Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period, December 1, 2006. The regulations went into effect on January 1, 2007, and are set to expire on October 17, 2008. For an overview of these regulations and related information, see Human Rights in China, “Incorporating Responsibility 2008 HRIC FAQ: Foreign Journalists operating in China During the 2008 Beijing Olympics,” *China Rights Forum* No. 4, 2003.

CHAPTER TEN: *Foreign Investment in China’s Media Industry*

1. “Zhongguo meiti gaige zhongyu qicheng” (China’s Media Reform Finally Takes Off), Phoenix TV, July 7, 2003, <http://www.phoenixtv.com/home/finance/fortune/200307/07/83157.html>.
2. Ibid.
3. *Waize qiye fa shishi xize* (1990).
4. *Guanyu jinzhi zai wo (Zhongguo) jingnei yu waizi heban baozhi qikan chubanshe de tongzhi* (1994).
5. *Waishang touzi chanye zhidao mulu*.
6. Translator’s note. *Shiye danwei*: Jean Oi and Andrew Walder explain that “State agencies in China fall into two categories: *jiguan danwei* and *shiye danwei*. The former consist of party organizations and functional departments of the government, whereas the latter include nonprofit units that have no administrative, allocative, or regulatory authorities beyond their own organizational boundaries, such as newspapers, research institutes, and hospitals.” Lu Xiaobo and Elizabeth Perry translate *shiye danwei* as “nonproduction, nonprofit units.” See Jean C. Oi and Andrew G. Walder, *Property Rights and Economic Reform in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 205; Xiaobo Lu and Elizabeth Perry in *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 7.
7. Bu Yi, “Zhongguo chubanye zai gaige kaifang zhong qianjin” (The Progress of China’s Publishing industry During the Reforms), *Chuban Faxing Yanjiu* (Publishing Research), vol. 4, 1998.

8. Mike Hayes, “When China Wakes: China’s Magazine Industry,” *Folio*, June 1, 1998.
9. “Murdoch Vaults into China with a \$5.4M New Deal,” *Advertising Age*, 66(25) (June 19, 1995), p. 6.
10. Ben Dolven and Alkman Granitsas, “Please, Let Us Entertain You,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 26, 2002–January 2, 2003.
11. China News Research Center, China Media, September 22, 2002, www.CDDC.net.
12. *Disanjie yatai diqu meiti yu keji he shehui fazhan yantaohui lunwenji* (Collected Papers from the Third Annual Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Media, Technology, and Societal Development), November 2001, p. 62, print copy.
13. *Guangbo dianying dianshibu guanyu binguan, fandian bixu wanzheng zhuanbo guonei youguan diantai, dianshitai jiemu de tongzhi* (Bureau of Television and Motion Picture Broadcasting Notice to Hotels and Restaurants Ordering that They Must Broadcast Only Domestic Radio and Television Stations), *Guangfa Shezi* (1995), no. 467. This document is still in effect today. The few foreign stations that can be received in China’s large hotels have concluded individual negotiations with the Broadcasting Bureau. This does not indicate a change in the law as a whole.
14. Peng Li, “Jiaru WTO: Zhongguo yingshi” (China’s Film and Television Industries after Joining the WTO), *Beijing Ribao* (*Beijing Daily*), October 28, 2001. See also Wen Xian, “Zhongguo rushi hou zai xuanchuan wenhua fangmian de chengnuo” (China’s Promises about Propaganda and Cultural Policies after Joining the WTO).
15. *Straits Times* (Singapore), September 23, 2003.
16. Tangmu Boensi (Tom Bernstein), “Zhang Yimou wanle” (Zhang Yimou Is Finished), *Kaifang* (Hong Kong), November 2003.
17. “Zhongguo meiti gaige zhongyu qicheng” (China’s Media Reform Finally Takes Off), Phoenix TV, July 10, 2003, <http://www.phoenixtv.com/home/finance/fortune/200307/07/83157.html>.
18. The full title is “Detailed Regulations on Implementing the Central Committee and State Council’s ‘Notice on Improving Control of the Arbitrary Distribution of Party and Government Publications and the Use of Official Authority to Boost Circulation, Thus Lightening the Burden at the Grassroots and Agricultural Levels’” (*Guanyu luoshi zhongban, guoban ‘guanyu jinyibu zhili dangzheng bumen baokan san lan he liyong zhiquan faxing, jianqing jiceng he nongmin fudan de tongzhi’*).
19. I followed *Shenxing Daily*’s short life by reading it, asking questions about the activities of its journalists and editors and paying close attention to its editorial line. Every day, I studied its front-page news and examined the layout and content of the headlines.
20. *Guanyu jiaqiang wenhua chanpin jinkou guanli de banfa*, issued on August 3, 2005. See *Guangming Daily*, August 3, 2005.
21. “Murdoch Says News Corp. Has Hit ‘Brick Wall’ in China,” *Bloomberg News*, September 19, 2005.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *The Hijacked Potential of China’s Internet*

1. Ethan Gutmann, “Who Lost China’s Internet?” *The Weekly Standard*, February 15, 2002, online at http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=922
2. China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 17th Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China, January 2006.

3. CNNIC, *15th Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China* (January 2005), <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/download/2005/2005012701.pdf>
4. Chen Hong, Zhou Qing'an, "Hulianwang: women yu shijie tongbu" (The Internet: We're Keeping Up with the World), *Guoji Xinwen Shijie* (International News World), Vol. 4 (2000), p. 27.
5. NetEase Technology report, March 23, 2005, <http://tech.163.com>; more detailed results are available from the CNNIC Web site at <http://cnnic.cn>.
6. "Wanglu baquan: ni wei dao zu, wo wei yurou" (Internet Hegemony: You're the Blade, We're the Flesh), *Century Salon* (Shiji Shalongs), February 24, 2003, http://www.51haimeng.com/lm/lm01_4.asp
7. Wang Xisong, "Zhongguo wanglu meiti zou xiang hefang" (Where Are China's Online Media Headed?), <http://www.media-china.com/zynr/mtzt/wl sd/zxhf.htm>.
8. These measures were taken by the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau. As far as the author knows, other provinces and cities followed the same practice.
9. General Administration of Press and Publication, Order No. 6, *Dianzi chubanwu guanli zanxing guiding* (Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Electronic Publications), March 14, 1996.
10. State Council Dispatch No. 1, *Liyong guoji hulianwanglu kaizhan dui wai xinwen xuanchuan de zhuyi shixiang* (Guidelines on Disseminating International News by Means of the Internet), 1997.
11. "Zaoyi chouhua de duoxiang fagui zhengce lianxu chutai, guaqi le hulianwang shang de baofengzouyu" (A Series of Previous Laws and Policies Stir Up Violent Storm on the Internet), *People's Daily*.
12. General Administration of Press and Publication and Ministry of Information Industry, Order No. 17, *Hulianwang chuban guanli zanxing guiding* (Provisional Regulation on the Administration of Internet Publications). This regulation was promulgated in June 2002 and went into effect on August 1, 2002.
13. *Southern Weekend*, May 22, 2005.
14. See "Zhongguo wangmin zengguo zhongguo kongzhi jiaqiang" (The Chinese Government's Control Is Reinforced as the Number of Chinese Internet Users Grows), *The Epoch Times* Chinese edition, December 27, 2005, <http://www.epochtimes.com/gb/5/12/27/n1168574.htm>.
15. Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), p. 306.
16. Translator's note: Huang Ju graduated from the Department of Electrical Machinery Engineering of Tsinghua University with a major in electrical machinery manufacturing. He is the former mayor of Shanghai and secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. At the end of June 2004, the Chinese authorities banned the media from investigating or using articles on a corruption case implicating Huang and Shanghai business community leaders. See *China Vitae* at http://www.chinavitae.com/biography_display.php?id=25; Reporters Without Borders, *China—Annual Report 2004*, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=10166.
17. Greg Walton, *China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China*, Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 2001, <http://www.ichrdd.ca/english/commdoc/publications/globalization/goldenShieldEng.html>
18. *Epoch Times* Chinese edition, July 1–7, 2002.
19. Translator's note: Greg Walton explains: "The pace and scale of the development of China's

Internet have reduced the significance of the ‘Great Firewall’ strategy of gateways linking to a secure national ‘intranet’. . . . One approach to the problem China’s security apparatus faces with the decline in effectiveness of the ‘Great Firewall’ is to shift the focus of content-filtration firewalls from the national level to individual homes and offices—in effect, redistributing the ‘Great Firewall’ from five international gateways to millions of household PCs and cellular phones.” See Walton, “China’s Golden Shield,” *op. cit.*

20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Gutmann, “Who Lost China’s Internet?,” *op. cit.*
26. Ethan Gutmann, “U.S. Capitalists Spread China’s Communist Propaganda,” NewsMax.com Wires, May 2, 2002, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/5/1/180312.shtml>. First published in Weekly Standard.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. RAND Corporation, *You’ve Got Dissent! Chinese Dissident Use of the Internet and Beijing’s Counter-Strategies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002.
30. Walton, “China’s Golden Shield,” *op. cit.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. This was Philips’ slogan at the Security China 2000 Fair. See Walton, “China’s Golden Shield,” *op. cit.*
34. Gutmann, “Who Lost China’s Internet?,” *op. cit.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. Peking University Triangle Bulletin Board, bbs.beida-online.com, accessed July 7, 2002.
37. Translator’s note: Human Rights Watch reported in August 2002 that Yahoo! was a signatory to China’s Public Pledge on Self-discipline for the Chinese Internet Industry, which requires signatories to agree to investigate all Web sites to which they provide links, block anything the Chinese government would consider “harmful information,” and report those sites to Chinese authorities. See “Yahoo! Risks Abusing Rights in China,” Human Rights Watch, August 9, 2002, <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/08/yahoo080902.htm>
38. Gutmann, *op. cit.*
39. “Dailifuwuqi jishu yu zhongguo zhengzhi zongjiao ziyou luntan” (Proxy Server Technology and Chinese Forums Advocating Political and Religious Freedom), <http://fangyingkan.yeah.net>, source: Triangle Forum, Peking University, bbs.beida-online.com.
40. Xiang Ling, “Overseas News and Information Sources Kowtow to China,” *The Epoch Times*, October 8, 2005, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/5-10-8/33090.html>.
41. “China, Google News and Source Inclusion,” Google Blog, September 27, 2004, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2004/09/china-google-news-and-source-inclusion.html>.
42. “Baocheng zhongguo wanglu xiangying zilü” (China’s Internet Reportedly Practices “Self-discipline”), BBC Chinese online service, July 5, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/chinese/simp/hi/default.stm>
43. Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, October 25, 2003.
44. “Tianya zongheng zanshi guanbi de shengming” (Statement on the Temporary Closure of ‘Tianya Zongheng’), posted on the *Shiji Shalong* (Century Salon) forum in August 2001. http://www.51haimeng.com/lm/lm01_4.asp

45. Greg Walton, *China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China*, Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 2001, <http://www.ichrdd.ca/english/commdoc/publications/globalization/goldenShieldEng.html>
46. *Ibid.*
47. "Internet Block Hits APEC Visitors," BBC News Online, October 17, 2001. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1604523.stm>
48. "Zhongguo guanbi sanqianduo jia wangba" (China Shuts Down More Than 3,000 Internet Cafés), BBC News Online Chinese edition, December 27, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/chinese/simp/hi/default.stm>
49. "Neidi fengsha wangshang luntan" (The Closure of Internet Forums in China), special report, *Xianggang Minzhu zhi Sheng* (Hong Kong Voice of Democracy), June 2001.
50. Bei Ming, "Zhongguo dalu sixiang wangzhan de zuowei ji qi suo mianlin de kunjing" (The Achievement of Mainland China's [Frontiers of] Thought Web site and its Current Predicament), *Yi Bao* (China EWeekly), November 25, 2003, <http://www.chinaeweekly.com>.
51. Ministry of Information Industry of the People's Republic of China, Order No. 33, *Feijingyingxing hulianwang xinxi fuwu bei'an guanli banfa* (Measures on the Administration and Record-keeping of Non-commercial Internet Information Services), promulgated February 8, 2005, put into effect on March 20, 2005: http://www.mii.gov.cn/art/2005/12/17/art_521_2665.html.
52. "Shuimu Qinghua BBS duiwai guanbi suo yinqi de huati" (The Closure of Tsinghua University's *Shuimu Qinghua* BBS to People Outside the University)" March 26, 2005, www.54tsinghua.cn/online.php; "BBS guanbi fengbo shimo" (The Ins and Outs of the Controversy over the BBS Closures), March 25, 2005, www.donews.net/greyrainbow/archive/2005/03/18/305508.aspx.
53. Translator's note: Stanford University's Shireen Brathwaite et al. explain: "Using a massive surveillance system, the Golden Shield's aim is to integrate a gigantic online database with comprehensive surveillance network—incorporating speech and face recognition, closed-circuit television, smart cards, credit records, and Internet surveillance technologies. The Golden Shield offers immediate access to records on every citizen in China, while linking to vast networks of cameras designed to increase police efficiency." See Shireen Brathwaite et al., "China's Golden Shield Project," http://www.stanford.edu/~mdelgado/cs201/golden_shield.htm.
54. Translator's note: In 2003, the university graduate and migrant worker Sun Zhigang died in police custody in Guangzhou after being picked up without an identity card and temporary residence permit. Public pressure generated by a *Southern Metropolis Daily* article about the incident which circulated on the Internet eventually led the central government to turn migrant detention centers into voluntary service centers and to abolish the temporary residence permit requirement. Human Rights Watch, "*Southern Metropolis Daily* Article on the Case of Sun Zhigang," <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/china/beijing08/sun.htm>
55. Translator's note: On October 16, 2003, Su Xiuwen, the wife of an engineering tycoon, accused farmer Dai Yiquan of scratching the mirror on her BMW with his vegetable cart. Su then slapped Dai, got behind the wheel of her car and plowed into 13 onlookers, killing Dai's wife. A judge acquitted her of manslaughter but gave her a two-year suspended sentence for negligence. *China Daily*, "BMW Drives Wedge Between Rich, Poor," January 18, 2004, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/doc/2004-01/18/content_300105.htm
56. Translator's note: On the case of three-year-old Li Siyi, who died of starvation while her

- mother was in a detention center, see Ren Bumei, “After Li Siyi,” *China Rights Forum* No. 4, 2003, http://www.hrichina.org/fs/view/downloadables/pdf/downloadable-resources/a3_Lisiyi4.2003.pdf
57. Jonathan Zittrain and Benjamin Edelman, “Empirical Analysis of Internet Filtering in China,” Berkman Center for Internet & Society Harvard Law School, 2002, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/china/>.
 58. Zittrain and Edelman, *op. cit.*; see also Anh-Thu Phan, “Probe into Blocked Net Sites,” *South China Morning Post*, September 4, 2002.
 59. “Wangyi kuaibao, Google bei Zhongguo lengchuli”? (Has China Given Netease News/Google the Cold Shoulder?) September 1, 2002, Dwnnews.com repost of an article originally published online by NetEase News. <http://www4.chinesenewsnet.com/index.html>
 60. “Google juran bei feng le” (Google Has Been Unexpectedly Censored), Boxun, October 20, 2003. www.boxun.com/
 61. “Fengsha Google de hei neimu” (The Inside Story of the Blocking of Google), Boxun, February 8, 2003, www.boxun.com/
 62. Shao Buding, “Zhonggong de hulianwang IC ka” (The Chinese Communist Government’s Internet IC Card), Dwnnews.com, December 15, 2002, <http://www4.chinesenewsnet.com/index.html>
 63. Walton, *op. cit.*
 64. Voice of America Chinese news service, “Buxiugang laoshu—Beijing Shida xuesheng Liu Di wangshang yizheng beibu” (Stainless Steel Rat: Beijing Normal University Student Liu Di arrested for discussing politics on the Internet), December 6, 2002. Editor’s note: Liu’s penname is also translated “Stainless Steel Mouse,” but insiders say she is a fan of Harry Harrison’s Stainless Steel Rat series of novels, and that the less pleasant-sounding “rat” is the correct translation.
 65. “Zhongguo xinxi liutong guanzhi geng qu yanmi” (Tighter News Controls in China), *Epoch Times* Chinese edition, December 21–27, 2001, <http://www.epochtimes.com/>
 66. Reporters Without Borders, “Charges Dropped Against Young Internet-user Liu Di,” December 26, 2003, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=8418
 67. *Zhongqing Zaixian* (China Youth Online), November 21, 2003, <http://bbs.cyol.com/>.
 68. “Henan 15 sui shaonian wang shang fabu fandong yanlun yingshe zhengfu shi jinü shou dao chufa” (Fifteen-year-old Girl Who Posted a Reactionary Message on the Internet Insinuating that the Government is a Prostitute Has Been Punished), Xinhua Net, July 7, 2003.
 69. Human Rights in China, “New China Internet Study Ignores Internet Crackdown Markle/CASS Report Methodology’ Misleading,” November 25, 2003, <http://hrichina.org/public/contents/press?revision%5fid=11812&item%5fid=11811>
 70. Zhao Dagong, “Zhongguo guanya zuojia shijie zhi guan” (China Tops the World in Jailing Writers), *Open Magazine* (Kaifang), Hong Kong, November 2004, p. 44.
 71. An English translation is available online at <http://www.chinaitlaw.org/?p1=print&p2=050611165049>.
 72. For more on efforts to evade China’s Internet censors, see HRIC’s forthcoming white paper on the Internet in China.

CHAPTER TWELVE: *Media Control and Foreign Relations*

1. Translator’s note: James Lilley, *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and*

- Diplomacy in Asia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 381. The Chinese translation of James Lilley's memoir was first published in Taipei in 2003 by China Times Publishing.
2. Translator's note: *The New York Times* reported that Mikhail Khodorkovsky "independently pursued an agreement with the Chinese to build an oil pipeline to China, even though the Kremlin had vetoed a Chinese effort to buy a Russian energy concern last year." See "Putin vs. the Jailed Tycoon: Defining Russia's New Rules," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2004.
 3. Translator's note: Mao's nine polemics were: "The origin and development of the differences between the leadership of the CPSU and ourselves"; "On the question of Stalin"; "Is Yugoslavia a socialist country?"; "Apologists of neo-colonialism"; "Two different lines on the question of war and peace"; "Peaceful coexistence—two diametrically opposed policies"; "The leaders of the CPSU are the greatest splitters of our times"; "The proletarian revolution and Khrushchev's revisionism"; and "On Khrushchev's phoney communism and its historical lessons for the world." Roderick MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Volume 3: *The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 360–61.
 4. Translator's note: Stalin died in 1953. In February 1956, Khrushchev gave his famous speech to the Twentieth Party Congress condemning Stalin's terror in the 1930s.
 5. I am writing from personal experience. Such statements are frequently made by Radio Free Asia listeners.
 6. In 1993, Nanjing TV aired a show in which 20 primary and secondary school students who had received good character and scholastic achievement citations were asked to choose the "Ten Biggest Teen Idols." *Changjiang Ribao* (Changjiang Daily) digest edition, April 7, 1993.
 7. This section is based on my personal experience. I was still in China during the embassy bombing incident and was working as a senior editor for *Shenzhen Fazhibao* (Shenzhen Legal Daily).
 8. Translator's note: The *People's Daily* commented: "[T]he US military scouting plane often took advantage of the difference in the performances of the planes of both sides, especially exploited its strong point of being good at flying at low speed, it played various tricks and intrigues, such as 'reducing speed,' and 'flying through clouds,' in an attempt to shake off our tracking plane. The frantic and arrogant US plane now flew now up and now down and suddenly took sloping turns left and right and time and again conducted very dangerous actions to provoke pilots of the Chinese side." See "Wang Wei—Guardian of Territorial Airspace and Waters," *People's Daily* (English edition), April 25, 2001, http://english.people.com.cn/english/200104/25/eng20010425_68581.html.
 9. Translator's note: According to the *People's Daily*, "As the target was coming nearer, it revealed itself to be a large US military electronic surveillance plane! They found that sitting in the cockpit were pilots wearing 'Christmas caps'. In the West, the kindly Father Christmas sends people blessing and is the symbol of peace and good luck. But at that time, the pilot in 'Christmas cap' of a country's military reconnaissance plane was approaching the airspace of another sovereign State, and the "Christmas gifts" sent in were threat and provocation!" See *People's Daily*, "Wang Wei—Guardian of Territorial Airspace and Waters."
 10. "Cong zhongmei feiji xiangzhuang kan liangguo meiti de guojia yishi" (National Conscientiousness in the U.S. and Chinese Media as Reflected in the Air Collision Incident), Tsinghua University Minutes of Meetings (Excerpt), *Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu* (Modern China Studies, Princeton, NJ), Vol. 2, No. 73, 2001.

11. Zhi Xiaomin, “Miandui 9/11 shijian, tamen weishenme hecai?” (Why Did They Cheer at 9/11?), *Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu* (Modern China Studies, Princeton, NJ), Vol. 2, No. 76, 2002.
12. *Ibid.*
13. These and similar statements were posted on several major Chinese Web sites. I downloaded several from the Century Salon (*Shiji shalong*) BBS, hosted by the *Shiji Zhongguo* (Century China) Web site (www.cc.org.cn), Peking University’s Triangle Forum (*Sanjiaodi*) and the Sina.com portal. For an informative review of the issue, see *Epoch Times*, Chinese edition, February 9–15, 2003.
14. Xiaoguo Guamin (a pseudonym meaning “A Small Country with Few People”), “Meiti zhengzai huimie zhongguo de waijiao chengguo” (The Media are Wrecking China’s Achievements in Foreign Relations), Century Salon (*Shiji shalong*) BBS, *Shiji Zhongguo* (Century China), www.cc.org.cn, March 24, 2003; He Qinglian, “Bie ba renmin dang roupiao, bie ba wuchi dang xuewen!—zhi yangshi zhuanjia Zhang Tianping” (Don’t Hold the People for Ransom; Don’t Hold Shamelessness up as Scholarship! A Message for CCTV Expert Zhang Tianping), March 31, 2003; Chen Yu, “Yibufen daxuesheng dui Mei-Yi zhangzheng rang ni wufa xiangxiang de kanfa” (Some Students Hold Mind-boggling Views about the U.S.-Iraq War), reposted on the Guantian Tea House (*Guantian Chashe*) BBS, Tianya Web site, March 30, 2003; Francis Markus, “China’s Media Wary on Iraq’s Fall,” BBC News, April 10, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2934943.stm>, published in Chinese on April 10, 2003; “Sadamu daotai kan zhongguo guangfang meijie de yuyan” (Downfall of Saddam-Chinese Media), Voice of America Chinese broadcast, April 11, 2003, www.voa.gov/chinese/archive/worldfocus/apr2003/fri/04110397downfalofsaddam-chine.htm.

CONCLUSION: *How Far is China from Democracy?*

1. John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 4th Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 484.
2. See “Remarks of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao: ‘Turning Your Eyes to China,’” *Harvard Gazette*, December 10, 2003, <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2003/12.11/10-wen-speech.html>.
3. Translator’s note: For a useful review and analysis of China’s village-committee elections, see Liu Yawei, “Consequences of Villager Committee Elections in China: Better Local Governance or More Consolidation of State Power?,” *China Perspectives*, no. 31, September–October 2000, http://www.cfcf.com.hk/uk/pc/articles/art_ligne.php?num_art_ligne=3102.
4. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, new edition, 1973), p. 460.
5. Translator’s note: The Third Amendment of Paragraph 7 of the Preamble of the Constitution, approved on March 15, 1999, contains the following declaration: “Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese people of all nationalities will continue to adhere to the people’s democratic dictatorship and follow the socialist road . . .” See <http://english.people.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>.
6. Editor’s note: The eight democratic parties are: The Revolutionary Committee of the Guomindang (Zhongguo Guomindang Geming Weiyuanhui), The China Democratic League (Zhongguo Minzhu Tongmeng), The China Democratic National Construction Associa-

- tion (Zhongguo Minzhu Jianguo Hui), The China Association for Promoting Democracy (Zhongguo Minzhu Cujin Hui), the Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party (Zhongguo Nong Gong Minzhu Dang), the China Party for Public Interest (Zhongguo Zhi Gong Dang), the September 3 Society (Jiu San Xueshe), and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League (Taiwan Minzhu Zizhi Tongmeng). "Minzhu Dangpai" (Democratic Parties), Xinhua News Web site, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2002-01/28/content_256326.htm.
7. Ying Xiaowo, "Zhongguo tudi yousilu" (A Record of Concerns about China's Land Problems), *Taishan Tongxun* (Mount Tai Bulletin), Supplementary Issue 36, September 30, 2003.
 8. *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth Daily), November 20, 2003.
 9. Translator's note: By the central government's own count, there were 87,000 "public-order disturbances" in 2005, up from 10,000 in 1994. See Hannah Beech and Pan Long, "Inside the Pitchfork Rebellion," *Time Magazine*, March 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1169902,00.html>.
 10. Mei Duzhe, "How China's Government is Attempting to Control Chinese Media in America," *China Brief*, Volume 1, Issue 10 (November 21, 2001), http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=17&&issue_id=638.
 11. Translator's note: In response to "overwhelming popular demand," Yuan fixed the date for his own enthronement as January 1, 1916. Public protests forced him to restore the republic on March 22, 1916. See Suisheng Zhao, *Power by Design: Constitution-Making in Nationalist China* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1996), p. 23.

The Chinese government, in its effort to maintain political and social control, imposes severe limitations on access to information, as well as the right to freedoms of expression and of association. It devotes significant resources to censorship and control of the media, the Internet, non-governmental organizations, and political and religious expression.

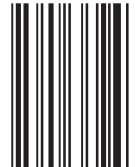
*Based upon detailed research and analysis, **The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China** describes how media control in China is carried out through an elaborate architecture of pervasive Party supervision, a broad and vague state secrets system, stringent publishing and licensing mechanisms, control over key personnel, and the concentration of press groups under a handful of media organizations operating directly under the Party. He Qinglian also describes how new technologies, provided in part by Western companies, have strengthened Internet surveillance and censorship.*

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*Founded by Chinese students and scholars in March 1989, **Human Rights in China (HRIC)** is an international, Chinese, non-governmental organization with a mission to promote international human rights and advance the institutional protection of these rights in the People's Republic of China. For more information, see HRIC's website: www.hrichina.org.*

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