JOURNALISTIC POLITICS:
NEWSPEOPLE, POLITICIANS, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY’S JOURNALISTIC NORMS
by
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Abstract

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Journalistic Politics: Newspeople, Politicians, and the Establishment of the Chinese Communist Party’s Journalistic Norms
Thesis directed by Associate Professor Timothy B. Weston

After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established Soviet-style journalism, marking a break with traditional Chinese journalism. This meant that the liberal journalists had to adapt to a new political and journalistic environment. How was this journalism formed? How did it operate? Was the traditional Chinese style of journalism thoroughly eradicated? Did the relationship between the newspeople and the political powers change completely?

This dissertation consists of four parts. The first part explores the relationship between the newspeople and political power holders in China, and the development of CCP journalism before 1949. In the second part, I discuss how CCP journalism developed and operated under the influence of Soviet journalism. The third part is an examination of how non-Party journalism was transformed and utilized by the Party, and the newspeople’s experience under the Communist regime in the 1950s. The last part describes how the Party converted its newspapers and the entire country into news-theaters in which the news and even the layout of the newspapers were ritualized and people had to behave according to what they learned from the newspapers.

This dissertation suggests that although journalism in China underwent dramatic changes after 1949, many aspects lasted, especially the relationship between the newspeople and political
I argue that the new journalism was characterized by its close connection with the Party organization. Benefiting from this connection, the Party newspapers were able to operate and bring the Party’s messages to the grassroots effectively, even though this connection also indicated that the newspapers were strictly supervised by Party authorities. By contrast, the internal bulletin system, a significant part of the Party’s journalism, was established to bring what was happening in the country to the leadership, but in many cases, it could not perform the tasks it was intended to. Finally, the Party’s journalism transformed the country into a news-theater in which individuals had to show their support for the Party publicly, so everyone simultaneously became an actor and an audience member. In the daily performance, the Party’s ideology was repeatedly confirmed.
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TERMINOLOGY

Journalism refers to the production and distribution of reports on current affairs. Ideally, these reports should be objective (further discussion on objectivity is provided below). However, Peter Kenez’s *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, describes socialist states as propaganda states and their media as a part of their propaganda machine, which means that their news reports were not necessarily based on facts and were utilized to indoctrinate the masses with the Communist parties’ tenets.¹ In this case, can the media of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) be referred to as “journalism”? This dissertation concludes that it can, because as can be seen in the body of this dissertation, especially in Chapter 6, the CCP did require its journalists to provide it with reports based on facts, although it worked hard to keep the common people from accessing these reports. Also, the media in the West, to a certain degree, also functions as an instrument of propaganda. To treat the Party’s media as journalism rather than a propaganda apparatus allows us to challenge the Cold War paradigm that highlights the dominance of Communist ideology in deciding all affairs in socialist states.

The journalistic media examined in this dissertation is limited to print media, namely newspapers, magazines, and their variants—wall and blackboard newspapers (a detailed discussion of these two forms of newspapers will be provided in the dissertation). This dissertation does not explore the broadcast or TV programs.

Moreover, in this dissertation, “newspeople” refers to the individuals who served as writers, editors, managers, and publishers of both newspapers and magazines. There are two

reasons for this: first, in Chinese, all these people were called baoren (报人), a traditional Chinese term referring to journalists, which can be directly translated into newspeople; and second, newspapers and magazines are closely related, and it would be hard to differentiate them. As Timothy B. Weston argues, “In fact, it is unreasonable to separate newspapers and magazines. Obviously, they are two kinds of publications that are closely related to each other. They have similar content and audiences and work together closely in the commercial field.”

Furthermore, to highlight the traditional feature of the journalists from civilian-run newspapers/magazines during the Republican era, I use newspeople to refer to them exclusively. By contrast, I use “news workers,” a direct translation from the CCP’s term xinwen gongzuozhe (新闻工作者), to refer to the journalists who were subject to CCP oversight in order to emphasize that they were a part of the Party organization.

In addition, please note that running a magazine or newspaper requires different kinds of jobs. These include typesetting, printing, advertising, distribution, and editorial work. This division of labor means that there is a hierarchy of participants within the press organizations. While acknowledging the importance of the other positions, the newspeople and news workers discussed in this dissertation are mainly editors and journalists owing to their huge social impact and to the fact that their role is arguably the most significant within the press organizations. Although the newspeople and news workers examined in this dissertation are all male, it does not mean that there were no prominent female journalists from the 1930s to 1950s, the period covered by this dissertation. In fact, there were many significant female journalists, including Pu Xixiu (浦熙修), a significant member of the Wenhuibao, Yang Gang (杨刚), an editorial writer

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for the *Dagongbao* (大公报 L'Impartial) and later vice editor-in-chief of the *Jinbu ribo* (进步日报 Progress Daily), Peng Zigang (彭子岗), a well-known journalist who worked for the *Dagongbao*, *Jinbu ribao*, and *Renmin ribao* (人民日报 People’s Daily), and Ge Yang (戈扬), a high official at the Xinhua News Agency (新华社 New China News Agency). Pu, Yang, Peng, and Ge together were referred to as the Four Greatest Female Journalists (新闻界四大名旦).

The reason that this dissertation does not feature these female journalists is that they were not as influential as the prominent male journalists at the time, such as Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), Chu Anping (储安平), and Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成), who are the subjects of this dissertation. The significance of Wang, Chu, and Xu is reflected in the fact that they were three of the only four non-Party representatives from the journalistic circles in the First Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 1949. In addition, the newspapers and magazines of which they were in charge were among the most important non-partisan newspapers from the 1930s to 1950s. Yang Gang was the only female representative from journalistic circles in the First CPPCC, but she had joined the Communist Party by 1928 and is thus not a fitting subject for this dissertation, which examines the relationship between non-partisan journalists and political parties. To a large degree, this lack of influential female non-partisan journalists reflected gender inequality at the time.

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3 There are fourteen representatives from the journalistic circles in the First CPPCC. Only four of them are non-Party individuals. Han Shu, *Chu Anping zhuan* (储安平传 A biography of Chu Anping) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 301.

4 In concrete terms, few people will doubt that Wang Yunsheng’s *Dagongbao* was the most significant non-partisan newspapers in the 1940s and, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, Chu Anping’s *Guangcha* (观察 Observation) was the most reliable and influential magazine about current affairs in late 1940s. Also, as exhibited in Chapters 9, Chu’s *Guangming ribao* (光明日报 Enlightenment Daily) and Xu’s *Wenhuibao* symbolized the experience of non-Party media in the 1950s, especially during the Anti-Rightist Movement.
The word, “ideology,” a complex term, is frequently used in this dissertation. Herein, it refers to a system of political beliefs. This dissertation shows how the Party, influenced by ideology (especially its guiding ideas on the news that are examined in Chapter 2), disregarded journalistic objectivity.\(^5\) Although objectivity is nearly impossible to achieve in Western countries even now and is considered a myth by many critics, including Edward S. Herman, Noam Chomsky, David Mindich, and Gaye Tuchman,\(^6\) Western journalists would not ignore objectivity in practice at least. The Party’s blatant disregard of objectivity, at least before Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in 1978, pushed the Party news workers to outrageously fabricate and choose news stories according to the Party’s ideology, which eroded the reliability of the Party newspapers.

In this dissertation, “intellectual” is used for the Chinese word “zhishi fenzi” (知识分子, the educated or intellectuals). Although the word “intellectual” originated in the West and does not perfectly fit the Chinese context, it is still the most common translation. It is often used in China studies and is thus the most suitable choice. In Timothy Cheek’s words, “It is in such common use in English-language studies of China that it would be more confusing to change to another term.”\(^7\) Notably, in comparison with “intellectual” in the Western sense, zhishi fenzi refers to a much broader group of individuals. According to Eddy U, in the 1950s, the CCP

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\(^5\) In this dissertation, journalistic objectivity refers to “factuality, non-partisanship, independence,” through its academic definition is far more complicated than this and it has different meanings in different period and geographical regions. See Stephen J.A. Ward, *Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), p. 175.


defined zhishi fenzi as “virtually all those who had completed junior high school or had an equivalent education.” This is why this dissertation considers journalists as intellectuals.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
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<td>CPPCC</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPSU</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>General Administration of Publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang (国民党) or Nationalist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCNA</td>
<td>New China News Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>GZWX</td>
<td><em>Mao Zedong xinwen gongzuo wenxuan</em> (毛泽东新闻工作文选  The Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Journalism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCNA</td>
<td>Red China News Agency (红色中华通讯社)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XWHB</td>
<td><em>Zhongguo gongchandang xinwen gongzuo wenjian huibian</em> (中国共产党新闻工作文件汇编  A Collection of the CCP’s Documents on News Work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XCXB</td>
<td><em>Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian</em> (中国共产党宣传工作文献选编  Selections from the CCP’s Propaganda Work Documents)</td>
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Introduction

Although journalism during the Republican era (1912-1949) was restricted by politics, economy, and personnel, it is still considered a golden age of journalism in Chinese history. There were not only many famous newspeople who were considered the personal embodiment of freedom of press, such as Huang Yuansheng (黄远生), Shao Piaoping (邵飘萍), and Shi Liangcai (史量才), but also a considerable number of civilian-run (民用 minying) newspapers, including the most influential ones: the Shenbao (申报 The Shanghai News), Dagongbao (大公报 The Impartial), and Wenhuibao (文汇报 Mercury). Among these newspapers, the Dagongbao was even awarded a Missouri Honor Medal for its distinguished service in journalism, including its factual news reports and critical editorials\(^1\)—the only newspaper in China ever to have won this honor.

However, after 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was noted for its strict control of the media. Soon after the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established, the civilian-run papers were either closed down or fell under the control of the Party. At the same time, the local newspapers all became clones of the Renmin ribao (人民日报 People’s Daily), the mouthpiece of the Central Committee of the CCP. No newspapers were permitted to print dissenting opinions.

How did this journalistic transformation happen? After the dramatic changes, was there anything that persisted after 1949? What happened to the newspeople and their newspapers

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during the transformation? Moreover, what kind of journalism was the Party’s journalism? How did it develop? Did it help the Party to create new socialist men and women? If so, how? This dissertation attempts to answer these questions.

By addressing all these questions, this dissertation provides a broad narrative on the transformation of journalism in Mainland China before and after 1949 and thus fills an academic gap. In past scholarship, there is no study that covers all these questions. The most relevant studies, including those on the Party’s journalism during the Mao years by Frederick Yu, Alan Liu, and Nicolai Volland, discuss only the Party’s journalistic institutions and concepts and overlook the experience of the Republican newspeople and their papers under the Communist regime.²

Furthermore, I am particularly interested in the question of “after the dramatic changes, was there anything that persisted after 1949?” Through answering this question, this dissertation adds to the scholarship on the continuity-discontinuity issue pre- and post-1949. The foremost aspect that shows continuity is the relationship between the newspeople, as a group of Chinese intellectuals, and political power holders in China. In addition, in order to answer the questions of “what kind of journalism was the Party’s journalism,” and “did it help it to create new socialist men and women,” this dissertation examines the role of the Party’s journalism in consolidating the Communist regime, which has not been fully addressed in the scholarship. Notably, the questions in the list above have been explored by scholars to varying degrees and I will discuss the relevant secondary literature at the start of each chapter.

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The journalists’ relationship with the political powers

Although China’s journalism changed dramatically after 1949, there were still some aspects that persisted. The foremost aspect that demonstrated continuity was the close relationship between the newspeople, who were a significant group within the body of Chinese intellectuals, and the political powers. Indeed, the newspeople had maintained a close relationship with the political powers even before 1949.

Whereas the Republican era was noted for its freedom of the press, recent studies reveal an intermingled relationship between the liberal newspeople and the Nationalists—a finding remarkably distinct from past scholarship that highlighted their independence. This intertwined relationship suggests that these journalists not only participated in the reconstruction of culture, but also tended to work with or join political organizations, either political parties or the government.

Indeed, a great number of journalists have worked in or for different political organizations—a process which I refer to as “self-partification” and explain in more detail below. For example, according to Tang Xiaobing’s study, among the contributors of the Weekly Paper, a supplement of the Dagongbao, a considerable number of them, like Jiang

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3 The main scholarship that I refer to include: Tang Xiaobing, Xiandai zhongguo de gonggong yulun: Yi Dagongbao “xingqi lunwen” he shenbao “ziyoutan” weili (现代中国的公共舆论——以《大公报》“星期论文”和《申报》“自由谈”为例 Modern China’s public opinion—the use of the “weekly papers” of the Dagongbao and “liberalist talks” of the Shenbao, for example. (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012); Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai: 1949 nian qianhou de shusheng yu zhengzhi (《忍不住的关怀：1949年前后的书生与政治》(The intolerable concern: Scholars and politics around 1949) (Guilin: Guanxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013); Yu Fan, “Shilun xinji dagongbao yu jiangzhengfu zhi guanxi—yi Taipei “guoshiguan” cang “Chiang Kai-shek dangan” wei zhongxin de kaocha” (试论新记《大公报》与蒋政府之关系——以台北“国史馆”藏“蒋介石档案”为中心的考察 A tentative discussion on the relationship between the Xinji Dagongbao and the Chiang Administration—Research centered on the Chiang Kai-shek Achieves in the Taipei Academia Historia Office), Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu, 5(2013):100-116, and others.
Tingfu (蔣廷黻), Weng Wenhao (翁文灏), Fu Sinian (傅斯年), and Zhou Meisu (周枚芬), later joined the KMT government. Tang notes that many of the contributors “either joined the government or got involved in the political process as representatives in the National Political Counsel.”

Zhang Jiluan was also widely viewed as the representative of the free press. However, according to recent studies and especially Yu Fan’s research on the Chiang Kai-shek archives, Zhang participated in the making of the domestic and diplomatic policies of the Chiang administration after 1937. Moreover, from 1933 to 1941, Chiang repeatedly required Zhang to publish articles in the Dagongbao in order to channel public opinion in a direction favorable to him.

In the late 1940s, many journalists, including the well-known ones such as Chu Anping (储安平), Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成), and Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), chose to work with the CCP. Xu Zhucheng had become a leftist by 1946. In his own words, “In 1946, the Wenhuibao started on the path of progress.” Also, according to Lei Jieqiong (雷洁琼), who took part in the 1946 Nanjing peace petition, “At the time, the only two newspapers that sided with the people were the Wenhuibao based in Shanghai and the Xinhua ribao (新华日报 New China Daily, the CCP’s mouthpiece in the areas controlled by the KMT) in Chongqing.” By 1948, Xu’s newly-

4 Tang Xiaobing, Xiandai zhongguo de gonggong yulun, pp. 192-193.
established *Wenhuibao*, Hong Kong edition, was already viewed by Guo Moruo (郭沫若) as part of the cultural army of the CCP during the civil war. In Chen Jianyun’s words, “Xu Zhucheng and the *Wenhuibao* had already turned left during the Hong Kong era. Xu was no longer an independent newspaperman, nor was the *Wenhuibao* an independent newspaper.”

Wang Yunsheng and Chu Anping were widely viewed as the two leading liberal newspeople in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, both opted to work with the CCP around 1949. According to Yang Kuisong’s study of Wang Yunsheng, at the time, Wang really believed that “he saw the long-sought sun” and thus “worked hard to follow the Party’s policies and kept a very high level of enthusiasm for political participation.” Thus, while keeping his position at the *Dagongbao*, he held several government positions, such as member of the East China Military and Administrative Committee, Shanghai People’s Government Councilor, and Vice-Chairman of the Chinese National Institute of Journalists. Chu Anping is widely viewed by current Chinese scholars as the last inheritor of the “literati-cum-political commentators” tradition. However, feeling disappointed about China’s national crisis and America’s Far East policy, the

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8 Chen Jianyun, *Dabianju zhongde minjian baoren yu baokan* (大变局中的民间报人与报刊 The nongovernmental newspeople and press that underwent dramatic transformation) (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), p. 28.
articles in his *Guancha* (观察 Observation) magazine gradually became more leftist.\textsuperscript{12}

Furthermore, in the Communist regime, Chu became a loyal state cadre. According to Feng Yingzi, one of Chu’s friends, Chu was quite happy with his position. Feng described him in 1953 as “looking handsome in his cadre uniform and gaining weight.”\textsuperscript{13} From 1954 to 1956, Chu acted as a journalist, conducting a survey in Xinjiang. In amazement due to the dramatic changes that had taken place there under the new regime, including new roads, railways, and improvements in the standard of living of the locals, he wrote numerous reports in praise of the Party.\textsuperscript{14}

So why did the journalists who had lived through the May Fourth Movement and the ensuing introduction of Western liberal thought fail to remain autonomous from political organizations? I argue that despite the journalists being influenced by the Western liberal thought, they, as one of the most active groups of Chinese intellectuals to take part in the country’s cultural and political reconstitution, still maintained their traditional intellectual traits, wittingly or unwittingly. Inspired by traditional ideas and practices as well as the socio-political circumstances of the time, the journalists were inclined to work with rather than distance themselves from political organizations. These intellectuals were willing to subordinate liberal thought to their ultimate aim of helping China develop into a powerful, wealthy country. To this end, many of them even supported the adoption of authoritarianism. Moreover, when the political organizations with which they cooperated disappointed them, the journalists distanced themselves from those organizations and served as newspeople again. Therefore, the mid-twentieth century frequently saw Chinese intellectuals changing their identities from newspeople


\textsuperscript{13} Feng Yingzi, “Huiyi Chu Anping xiansheng” (回忆储安平先生), in *Zuiyi Chu Anping* (追忆储安平), p. 11.

\textsuperscript{14} Han Shu, *Chu Anping zhuan*, p. 326.
to political activists, and vice versa. This corresponds with Merle Goldman and Timothy Cheek’s observation on modern Chinese intellectuals: “A number of intellectuals have rotated among these roles [ideological spokesmen, professional and academic elite, and critical intellectuals] at different times in their careers.”

The intermingling of intellectuals and politicians poses a challenge to the popular notion of the public sphere and its variants among the scholars in China studies, both in China and the West. Jurgen Habermas’ notion of the public sphere, which emphasizes the antagonism between intellectuals and the state, can hardly explain the frequent identity changes of the Chinese intellectuals. Instead, the traditional complementary Chinese notions of zaiye (在野 “in the wilderness,” or out of office) and zaichao (在朝 in active service at the court), which are explained below, perfectly illustrate the porous boundary between Chinese authorities and the press. It has not been uncommon for modern Chinese intellectuals to utilize these two traditional notions to describe their relationship with the government. As late as the mid-1950s, many

15 Merle Goldman and Timothy Cheek, “Introduction: Uncertain Change,” in Merle Goldman, Timothy Cheek, and Carol L. Hamrin, eds., China’s Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1987), p. 3. Notably, although I quote Goldman and Cheek here, it does not indicate I completely agree with their viewpoint. For example, according to Huang Yu, the concept of “establishment intellectuals” puts emphasis on Chinese intellectuals’ dependence on government. It views intellectuals as politicians’ agents and could only conduct political activities under political patronage. Thus, it underestimates Chinese intellectuals’ independence, as my concepts “self-partification” and “zaichao” and “zaiye” suggest. See Carol Lee Hamrin and Timothy Cheek, eds., China’s Establishment Intellectuals (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1986); and Merle Goldman, and Edward Gu, eds., Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 6-7. Also see, Huang Yu, “Zhishi fenzi yu guojia: Duili, yifu yu ronghe” (知识分子与国家：对立、依附与融合 Intellectuals and states: Dichotomy, dependence, and intermingling), Kaifang shidai, 6(2016): 55-69.


17 Wolfgang Franke translated zaiye into retired scholar-officials, which is not accurate. In fact, zaiye scholar-officials refers to those who were out of office for any reason. See Wolfgang Franke, “Historical Writing During the Ming,” in Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., The Cambridge History of China, Vol.7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 756.
intellectuals still relied on these two notions. As Zhao Chaogou (赵超构), the editor in chief of the *Xinminbao* (新民报 The New People’s Evening News), put it in 1957, “Nowadays, seven or eight years since Liberation, I still hear some friends talking about the question of *zaichao* and *zaiye.*”

**The Party’s journalism, relationship with politics, and influence on society**

In the past several decades, an increasing number of scholars such as Elizabeth J. Perry, Chang-tai Hung, James Z. Gao, and Brian James DeMare have paid attention to how the CCP skillfully manipulated cultural resources and institutions, including dramas, films, paintings, exhibitions, speaking bitterness rallies, and mass rallies to disseminate its ideals among the people and consolidate its rule. For example, in her study on Anyuan, Perry demonstrates how Party leaders utilized traditional cultural sources to smooth the people’s acceptance of Marxism-Leninism and how the revolutionary tradition was “sanctified yet sanitized to reinforce the ruling authority of new party state.”

Similarly, Hung regards the Communist Revolution “not merely as a radical change of modern China’s political, economic, and social systems but, more importantly, as the rise and dissemination of a new political culture dictated by the ruling Party for political reasons.” He also argues that a package of cultural and art forms, including monumental buildings, oil paintings, and New Year prints, were harnessed by the Party to

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“consolidate its hold in China, justify its legitimacy, and instill a new socialist culture in the nation.” To use Lynn Hunt’s definition, “political culture,” herein refers to “the values, expectations, and implicit rules that expressed and shaped collective intentions and actions.”

By comparison, few scholars in China and the West have discussed the role of the Party’s journalism in consolidating the new regime. Possible reasons for this include the perception that the Party papers were full of propaganda and lies, and there were a limited number of readers. In China at the time, relatively few people were literate and thus able to read the newspapers. As a result, the Party newspapers have not drawn enough scholarly attention.

The lack of scholarly attention also originates from an underestimation of the complexity of the Party’s newspaper system. Without an understanding of the CCP’s journalism, it is natural for Chinese and Western scholars to regard the Party’s journalism simply as a set of newspapers. However, the Party’s journalism was far from limited to newspapers, which most people could not read and probably would not read even if they could, and instead was an intricate system bearing the heavy imprint of Soviet journalism. This system contained a number of intuitions that were designed to facilitate the Party’s rule and to bring the Party’s creeds to the people, including those who were illiterate and disinterested.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the complexity of the Party’s newspaper system. The first reason the Party’s newspaper system was complicated is that the Party papers were effective daily instruments through which the Party directed its cadres. From the Yan’an

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21 Hung, Mao’s New World, p. 2.
23 In this dissertation, the word “cadre” refers to individuals who held certain positions within the Party or the PRC, but a cadre was not necessarily a CCP member.
years (1937-1947) on, the Party cadres were responsible for reading the Party papers in order to understand the formal directives. A Party resolution issued in 1942 reads, “All levels of the Party leadership need to organize [the Party members] to study, discuss, and implement [the speeches and articles in the papers]. They cannot ignore them under the pretext of having not received direct notice from the Party.” Consequently, the Party papers became what Huang Dan refers to as “the baton of the [Party’s] work” (工作的指挥棒).

To direct the Party’s work at all levels and in all fields, a well-planned newspaper system was established. Vertically, the Party established central-, provincial-, prefectural-, and county-level newspapers according to the administrative level of the Party committees they were attached to. The lowest level papers were the blackboard and wall newspapers (黑板报、墙报)—two types of simple “newspapers” that used blackboards or large pieces of paper or cloth mounted on walls as information carriers and contained simplified messages from newspapers and other sources, and that every local Party branch was expected to manage. All these papers were tasked with discussing the Party’s messages based on the local situation. Thus, with the press hierarchy, the Party’s creeds could be brought to the people layer by layer and explained in the local context to maximize the effects of the propaganda.

Even the lowest blackboard and wall papers played a significant role, since they “represent[ed] the farthest step the press [could] take in relating the central line to the problems of a locality or a group,” as Wilbur Schramm’s observation of the newspapers in the Soviet

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Union suggests. Simultaneously, to conduct its work in different fields, the Party established horizontal newspapers. Almost all the provinces had papers for youth, children, teachers, workers, and peasants to direct the Party’s work in these fields. Therefore, the Party could ensure that its messages would be delivered to different fields thus enabling it to instruct people in all professions.

The second reason the Party’s newspaper system was so complex is that in order to ensure that its newspaper messages were received by the people, the Party developed a series of mass journalistic institutions, including newspaper-reading groups (读报组), worker-peasant correspondents (工农通讯员 a type of amateur correspondent), and blackboard/wall newspapers, to saturate the common people with the Party’s doctrines. For example, every community, regardless of urban or rural, was obligated to organize its own newspaper-reading groups. Meanwhile, the people, in principle, were obligated to attend the groups. In order to ensure that “correct” information was delivered to the masses, the local Party committees would appoint a “newspaper reader” (读报员) for each group and select the content for the newspaper readers to read. To achieve an even better effect, many of these “newspaper readers” would sing, dance, or perform the information that they were supposed to deliver. In addition, to avoid being punished, the audience would express their support for the Party doctrines even if they did not agree with what they heard. Eventually, reading papers became an everyday ritual in people’s lives. Through the everyday performance of this ritual, the Party’s rhetoric and ideals were distributed among the people.27

27 For more information about newspaper-reading groups, please see Chapters 3 and 10.
The third reason for the complexity of the Party’s newspaper system is that the primary function of the Party newspapers was to direct work rather than to inform the Party leadership of what was happening on the ground, so the Party desperately needed a new, daily information channel. Consequently, the internal bulletin (内参 neican) system was created to meet this demand. Essentially, that system was a status-based, classified information system for circulation exclusively within the Party. Party cadres were entitled to read internal bulletins corresponding to their rank within the bureaucratic system or lower.

Because the internal bulletins were the only periodical publications allowed to reveal the dark side of what was happening in the country, they had a pivotal place in the Party’s bureaucratic system. The leaders, after reading the internal bulletins, frequently wrote their instructions in certain articles. These instructions would be delivered to proper authorities and given top priority. Therefore, theoretically, the internal bulletins would serve to connect the leadership with the grassroots and help the Party to solve its problems. 28

Nevertheless, in practice, the internal bulletins turned out to be a strategic instrument that all the players in the Party strove to control. To prevent local problems from being published in the internal bulletins, the regional Party cadres always tried to keep the reporters directly under their thumb. At the top, the leaders, especially Mao, preferred to receive internal reports favorable to their own positions. Consequently, the editors of the internal bulletins became fearful of printing any news that might upset the leaders. Therefore, the internal bulletins became mired in the power struggles and were soon corrupted. The Party leaders were unable to find

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objective reporting in the internal bulletins, even though this channel had been created for that purpose.

The fourth reason that the Party newspaper system was far from simple was that many of the Party’s journalistic institutions, including worker-peasant correspondents (工农通讯员), letters from readers (读者来信), internal bulletins, and newspaper-reading groups functioned as an intelligence-collecting method. In principle, the worker-peasant correspondents, newspaper readers, and journalists were all responsible for gathering anti-Party materials and submitting them to the Party committees. For example, Zheng Xiaofeng (郑笑枫), a reporter from the *Guangming ribao* (光明日报  Enlightenment Daily), remembered that in 1957 he was almost dispatched to monitor Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), a noted scholar:

[After Mao’s two speeches calling for the Hundred Flowers Campaign], comrade Chang Zhiqing (常芝清), the chief of the press, asked me to visit his office. [In his office,] he told me, “Liang Shuming is going to visit Guilin to inspect the implementation of Mao’s speeches. The Central Committee asked us to send a reporter to go with him. [The reporter] should not write news and has no reporting tasks. However, the reporter is responsible for writing articles for the internal bulletins about what [Liang] says on the tour and then submitting this report to the Central Committee.”

Likewise, the worker-peasant correspondents and newspaper readers were also obligated to provide the Party with this kind of intelligence.

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29 Zheng Xiaofeng, “Yitiao neican dailai de e’yun—jianji 1957 nian guangming ribao fanyou douzheng qianqian houhou”  (一条内参带来的厄运——兼记 1957 年光明日报反右斗争前前后后  Misfortune brought by an internal bulletin report—An article that also records the whole story of the Anti-Rightist Movement inside the *Guangming ribao* in 1957), in Liang Gangjian and Yu Guoying, eds., *Guangming ribao xinwen neiqing* (光明日报新闻内情 The inside story of news reports in the *Guangming ribao*) (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1999), p. 33.
From the above discussion, we can see, on one hand, that the dual news system—newspapers and internal bulletins—played a crucial role in the Party’s political system. Through the newspapers, the Party was able to bring its messages to its cadres in all fields, level by level. By using internal bulletins, the Party expected to be able to identify and solve the problems that it faced, though this turned out to be a dysfunctional system.

On the other hand, even though only a small portion of the population was literate and would read newspapers under the Communist regime, the newspapers had an essential place in their everyday lives. Through a series of mass journalistic institutions, significant messages in the newspapers were transmitted to the common people. Indeed, through wall and blackboard newspapers located in all the key places in the communities, the messages were converted to concise but coarse slogans. It was hard for people to escape from these ubiquitous “papers.” Furthermore, in the newspaper-reading groups, which were compulsory for everyone, the newspaper readers would repeatedly talk about the messages selected by the local Party committees. While being indoctrinated into the Party’s creeds through the newspapers, the people had to voice their support even if they disagreed, since this participation “was a means of securing a place in a society that was ruthless toward outsiders and misfits,” as Jeffrey Brooks notes in describing the social situation in the Soviet Union.30

As a result, the process of being inundated with the Party’s messages in the newspapers and the demand to express support for the Party became a daily ritual for the common people in China. Whether they actually bought into it or not, the people took part in the performance that transformed the whole country into a theater. Although this journalistic ritual alone could not

convert everyone in the country into a true believer in the Party’s tenets, it did contribute to the consolidation of Party rule. In W. Lance Bennett’s words, “Ritual is a set of routine procedures used by participants in a recurring situation to establish and display the social principles embodied in myth.”\(^{31}\) Similarly, James W. Carey’s theory of the ritual view of communication could also explain the role of the journalistic rituals in the establishment of the Party’s creeds. In news-theater, reading news was less about “sending or gaining information” and more about “attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new [was] learned” but in which the Party’s “view of the world [was] portrayed and confirmed.”\(^{32}\) As time went on, the Party’s “ordered, meaningful cultural world” was constructed and served “as a control and container for human action.”\(^{33}\) Therefore, although the Party’s journalism was far from a well-oiled machine and a considerable part of the population might not have believed the messages in the papers, newspapers still played a vital role in the consolidation of the new Communist regime.

**Concepts**

In the following section, I will introduce four concepts that are crucial to understanding the relationship between journalists and politics, the Communist Party’s journalism, and the influence of Party journalism on the people: self-partification, *zaichao* and *zaiye*, organizational journalism, and news-theater.

*Self-Partification*

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\(^{33}\) Carey, *Communication as Culture*, p.15.
From the 1930s to the early 1950s, many newspeople voluntarily chose to work with the Nationalist or the Communist parties, a process I call self-partification. In contrast to previous scholarship emphasizing the independence of Chinese journalists before 1949, quite a number of Chinese newspeople, including Hu Shi (胡适), Zhang Jiluan (张季鸾), Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成), and the members of China’s Missouri mafia,34 underwent a process through which they transformed themselves into partified newspeople, even though they were widely viewed as liberal newspeople who were educated in Western journalism. The same phenomenon also happened in the early period of the Communist regime, which demonstrated a profound continuity between pre- and post-1949 Chinese journalism.

Self-partification was mainly caused by the overriding nationalism of the newspeople. It was even hard for the foremost liberal newspeople of the era, such as Hu Shi and Chu Anping, to avoid being influenced by nationalism.35 This meant that Chinese newspeople were willing to sacrifice a free press in their country’s interests, which made possible their collaboration with the political parties when they felt it necessary. This tendency had taken root at the beginning of


Chinese modern journalism. Scholars have discovered that the early influential journalists, like Yan Fu (严复) and Liang Qichao (梁启超), had already tended to put the power and wealth of their nation above individual rights.\textsuperscript{36} China’s desperate situation in the 1930s and 1940s due to foreign imperialism, endless warfare, corrupt officials, and widespread poverty reinforced the nationalist tendencies of the Chinese intellectuals.

In English-language scholarship, Wen-Hsin Yeh has examined the partification of education (党化教育) in the Republican years through which the KMT tried to imbue the students with its spirit.\textsuperscript{37} By contrast, I regard self-partification as the newspeople’s self-identification with certain political power holders. Self-partification only lasted a short time and does not mean that the newspeople had to join any political parties. Rather, what self-partification means is that they were willing to sacrifice their independence and accept the party policies, or even orders, or to establish political parties themselves. This phenomenon was particularly prominent from the 1930s to the early 1950s.\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, I view this as different from “being partisan,” since “being partisan” does not exhibit the autonomy of the newspeople. Additionally, “being partisan” is a fixed state; by comparison, “self-partification” is a dynamic process through which the newspeople identified themselves with political power holders. It allows for the possibility of parting ways with political powers based on their agency.


\textsuperscript{38} Li Jinquan has briefly talked about this phenomenon. He argues, “When the intellectuals worked with the Kuomintang, [what they did] would inevitably conflict with their ideals.” He Qiliang summarizes Li’s argument as “their (the intellectuals’) willingness to submit to the state authorities at the expense of journalistic freedom.” See Li Jinquan, “Wenren lunzheng: Zhishifenzi yu baokan,” p. 8; He Qiliang, \textit{Newspapers and the Journalistic Public in Republican China}, p. 16.
Zaichao and zaiye

A considerable number of English-language scholars on Chinese modern history have adopted Habermas’s notion of the public sphere to describe the relationship between the government and the emerging gentry, merchants, and intellectuals. Admittedly, this approach captures certain aspects of Chinese modern history, such as the decline of central administration and the rise of the local authorities, the development of the gentry and merchants as a class, and the appearance of new intellectuals. However, this mechanical application of a Western concept to the Chinese context is highly problematic since it neglects China’s own historical trajectory, the political turbulence and social structure of modern China, and Chinese intellectuals’ perception of their own problems. In addition, the binary opposition between public sphere and state can hardly explain the frequent identity changes of Chinese intellectuals from newspeople to government cooperators or employees, and vice versa.

Therefore, this dissertation adopts the complementary Chinese notions of “zaiye” and “zaichao” to characterize the relationship between Chinese authorities and the press. It is not uncommon for modern Chinese intellectuals to use these two traditional terms to describe their status, and as late as the mid-1950s many intellectuals still employed them. Of course, in utilizing these two notions, I am not suggesting that the Republican intellectuals, many of whom served as newspeople, had the same worldview as their imperial counterparts, nor that they

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resisted the social changes brought by the Westerners. I am merely trying to highlight the traditional features of the Republican intellectuals and thus better describe the relationship between the state and the intellectuals.

In comparison with the notion of zaichao (在朝 in active service at the court) that can be understood literally, the notion of zaiye (在野 “in the wilderness,” or out of office) is far more subtle. In imperial China, the zaiye scholar-officials were usually dissidents or individuals who wanted to stay aloof and thus viewed things more from the common people’s perspective. In the words of Wolfgang Franke, they “may have felt more freedom to express a personal view or even to criticize the government.”40 However, this does not mean that their relationship with the government was antagonistic. On the contrary, the zaiye scholar-officials often endeavored to help or to correct the government and many of them would have liked to join the government when the government exhibited justice and capability, when their opinions were accepted by the government, or when there were changes in the political situation.

Historically, the zaiye scholar-officials and students from the Imperial Academy(太学) in the late Eastern Han, and the Donglin faction (东林党) in the late Ming best exemplified the relationship between the zaiye scholar-officials and the government. Through “pure discussion” (清议) or discussion in the shuyuan (书院 Academy), they fiercely criticized the officials in office. However, once the groups they opposed were removed from office, these zaiye scholar-officials were willing to join the government.41 At the same time, the imperial government did

40 Franke, “Historical Writing During the Ming,” p. 756
not permanently reject the *zaiye* intellectuals. Rather, the government frequently showed them respect and even drew them into the political system. In the end, though, the *zaichao* scholar-officials would again assume *zaiye* status if they felt disappointed with the government.

From this, it is evident that the scholar-officials could flexibly change their status between *zaichao* and *zaiye*. Indeed, as Fan Zhongyan (范仲淹), a leading Song scholar famously said, “When they were at the loftiness of [imperial] temples and halls, the scholar-officials worried for their people; when they were in the remoteness of rivers and lakes they worried for their ruler. Hence entering [the court], they worried; and leaving it, they also worried.”

This saying clearly shows this flexibility. Hence, the notions of *zaichao* and *zaiye* can explain the flexible shifts from independent newspeople to government cooperators, and the interaction between the newspeople and the government.

*Organizational Journalism*

I call the journalism in the PRC “organizational journalism” to highlight the close relationship between the Party organization and its journalism, and the crucial role that the Party’s journalism played in facilitating the operation of the Party organization. “Organizational” here has two meanings. The first is that the Party’s newspapers were run by and attached to the Party organization, layer by layer. This form of journalism could not work without the support of the Party organization. The papers were made by the Party at all levels, reflecting the idea that

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42 For Fan’s words, see Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thoughts of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 115.
“the entire Party shall run the press” (全党办报). At the upper levels, Party leaders were principally obligated to write for and to exercise leadership over the papers. At the lower levels, the Party developed a vast worker-peasant correspondent (工农通讯员) network to contribute to the Party papers. Moreover, the Party controlled the distribution channels of the papers. When the Party felt it appropriate, it would mobilize the Party organization at all levels to promote the distribution of papers. By contrast, in a Communist society that opposed commercial activities, the papers without the support of the Party organization could barely survive.

The second meaning of “organizational” is that the Party newspapers were the organizers of the Party work and greatly facilitated the daily operations of the Party organization. In the Communist regime, the Party organization maintained the daily operations of society. As sociologist Franz Schurmann observes, “Communist China is like a vast building made of different kinds of brick and stone. However it was put together, it stands. What holds it together is ideology and organization.” He continues to state that the Party organization “pulls and holds society together.”

To keep its organization running smoothly, the Party instituted a complex newspaper system containing the vertical and horizontal papers as mentioned above. The Communist officials were obligated to publish their directives and work experience in these papers. As a result, the Party papers became the organizers of the Party work and thus played a crucial role in the Communist regime.

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43 The worker-peasant correspondents were a type of amateur correspondent organized by the Party to report what happened at the grassroots level.
45 Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, pp. 7-8.
News-Theater

In this dissertation, I use the term “news-theater” to stress the theatricality of the editing, layout (编排), and content in the Party newspapers, and the influence of the newspapers on the people. First, the editing and layout of the newspapers became increasingly ritualized, as they were expected to embody the real political order and world view of the regime. Certain texts had to be decorated with an obligatory typeface, font size, and typesetting, and had to be put in precise places in the layout. For example, Mao Zedong’s words were printed in bold characters. Also, the papers strictly arranged the name lists of the Party leaders according to their political rank. As a result, newspapers under the CCP were gradually transformed into news-theater through ritualized editing and prescribed layouts in order to facilitate the establishment of a “correct” world view among the people.

Second, mainly due to the disjunction between the news and objective reality, the theatrical nature of the news caused the newspapers to resemble stages in theaters. Objectivity played an insignificant role in the Party newspeople’s work. Instead, they were required to view news materials from the perspective of the people. Of course, in practice, the most important standard in their work was not whether the news was in alignment with the people’s interests, but whether it was consistent with the Party’s policies, since the Party always represented the interests of the people, short-term or long-term, in the Party discourse.46 Only the facts complying with the revolutionary policies were seen as “real” facts; otherwise they were

46 Ning Shufan, Ning Shufan wenji (宁树藩文集 The works of Ning Shufan) (Shantou: Shantou daxue chubanshe, 2003), p. 452.
criticized as fake and lacking in essential authenticity. Therefore, the news, like dramas, was not necessarily based on objective reality and was employed to indoctrinate and mobilize the people.

Third, these “theatrical stages” extended from the newspapers throughout society by means of the Party’s propaganda institutions such as the wall and blackboard newspapers, newspaper-reading groups, and political study meetings. On the wall and blackboard papers that could be found in every community across the country, the newspaper excerpts were reduced to slogan-like lines. Meanwhile, newspapers were the main reading materials in the meetings held for newspaper reading and political study, which became an indispensable part of the people’s daily life. As a result, few were able to escape the influence of the newspapers.

Besides reading and discussing articles in the newspapers, people were expected to express their support of the Party by using the Party’s neologisms and to do so in prescribed ways, such as chanting the Party’s slogans, demonstrating in the streets, and posting dazibao (big-character posters), regardless of whether they agreed with the Party. As a result, reading the news, discussing it in the context of the Party’s ideas, and then performing in set ways became a daily ritual. Through words and actions, the people participated in the

47 Gao Hua, Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide: Yan’an zhengfeng yundong de lailong qumai (How the red sun rose: The origins and development of the Yan’an Rectification Movement) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), p. 376.
48 The work units organized political study during and after working hours. During the Cultural Revolution, people spent even more time on political study than on their own work. The main materials for political study were Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, newspapers (especially the editorials), and various official documents. See Andrew G. Walder, China under Mao: A Revolution Derailed (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 79; Lei Yi, “Tuchu zhengzhi de guannianshi” (A conceptual history highlighting politics), Nanfang zhoumo, Oct. 15, 2008.
49 Neologism herein refers to the new words developed or used almost exclusively by the Communist Party. Typical neologisms include fanshen (翻身 to turn over), jiefang (解放 to liberate), jinbu (进步 to progress), and luohou (落后 backward).
performance of news-theater. Everyone was both an actor on the stage and a part of audience, simultaneously, which transformed the country into a daily theater. Through daily performance, the people internalized Party thought and rhetoric.

It is noteworthy that scholars, such as Philip Huang, Ban Wang, Steven W. Mosher, and Brian J. DeMare, have analyzed the theatricality of the people’s lives under the Communist regime. However, their emphasis is on the distinction between the Party’s representation and its practice. For example, Huang highlights the disjunction between the representational construction of rural class struggle and the objective reality during Land Reform (1946-53) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). By contrast, I use theatricality to spotlight the power of the Party’s propaganda machine and its influence on the people’s lives. Through continuous production of news that met the Party’s criteria and then putting it on the stage of the news-theater, the Party was able to indoctrinate and mobilize the people, thus achieving its political goals. This drastically changed the social landscape, including people’s perception of the world and their life and work styles.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into four parts. The first part, “Republican-era Journalism and the CCP’s Journalism before 1949,” includes Chapters 1, 2, and 3. In this part, I examine the state of Chinese journalism in the 1930s and 1940s with an emphasis on the late 1940s. In the

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50 Philip C.C. Huang, “Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution,” Modern China, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), pp. 105-143; Ban Wang, The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-century China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Steven W. Mosher, Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese (New York: The Free Press, 1983); DeMare, Mao’s Cultural Army.

51 Huang, “Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution,” p. 111.
first chapter, I survey the relationship between journalists and political power holders. I contend that although Chinese intellectuals were heavily influenced by Western ideas and journalistic norms, they still tended to work with the government rather than to maintain their independence, thus demonstrating the profound influence Chinese tradition had on them.

I devote the second and third chapters to the formation and development of the CCP’s guiding ideas on the news and its practice of journalism before 1949. Chapter 2 maintains that the Party’s guiding ideas on the news are best summarized as “four characteristics, one unification” (四性一统), which means that the Party newspapers had four fundamental characteristics: party characteristics, mass characteristics, combat characteristics, and organizational characteristics, with the foremost being the party characteristics. Chapter 3 provides a systematic exploration of how the Party news workers worked and the mass journalistic institutions that they utilized to disseminate news with the Party’s ideas, including worker-peasant correspondents, blackboard newspapers, wall newspapers, and newspaper-reading groups. In addition, this chapter examines the operation of the internal bulletin system during the Mao era.

The second part of the dissertation, “The Establishment of the CCP's Journalism in Mainland China,” is about the establishment and operation of the Party’s dual newspaper system, namely newspapers and internal bulletins. This part consists of Chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 4 examines the process by which the Party adopted the Soviet model of journalism in the early 1950s. I contend that, although the 1956 Renmin ribao reshuffle posed a challenge to the Soviet journalistic institutions and principles, most of these institutions and principles survived this reform and persist today. Chapter 5 conceptualizes the Party’s journalism after 1949 as organizational journalism to highlight the newspapers’ role in the Communist regime. I argue
that if the Party organization served as the different “body organs” of Communist China that “pull and hold society together,” in Franz Schurmann’s words, the papers served as the “blood vessels.”

Chapter 6 offers a comprehensive and critical study of the internal bulletins during Mao years. I suggest that although internal bulletins were supposed to provide the leaders timely, accurate, and comprehensive information, they gradually lost their efficacy due to endless interference from the Party leaders, especially Mao.

The transformation of the civilian-run papers and the non-Party newspeople’s experiences are the themes of Part III, “The Transformation of Civilian-run Journalism,” which contains Chapters 7 to 9. Chapter 7 discusses the transformation of the private papers in Shanghai, including the Dagongbao, Wenhuibao, and Xinminbao. This chapter examines the process whereby the presses accepted the Party’s journalistic norms, and the long-lasting influence of the civilian-run papers on the PRC’s politics; both have largely escaped scholarly attention. Chapter 8 focuses on the relationship between the newspeople and the Party before 1957. I argue that even though these newspeople felt repressed in the new sociopolitical and journalistic environment, they still believed in the Party and especially in Mao and were willing to work with the government. Chapter 9 examines the newspeople’s experiences in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement. Viewing the newspeople’s activities in historical context, I argue that although the newspeople made suggestions to the Party, many of which reflected their discontent with it, they voiced their opinions out of their willingness to work with the Party. Additionally, the newspeople’s activities during the movement were based on their experiences in the journalistic circles and the bureaucratic system under the new regime.

The last chapter, “News-Theater: Ritualization, Exhibition, and the Performance of News in High Socialism,” constitutes the final part of this dissertation. In this chapter, I argue that using the Party’s news institutions, as well as other propaganda methods, the Party successfully transformed all of China into a news-theater. Indeed, with the rise of the newspapers’ false content and expressive features, newspapers in Mainland China increasingly resembled theaters. At the same time, through news institutions including newspaper-reading groups and blackboard newspapers, the ideas in newspapers were present in the scenes of people’s everyday lives, such as in neighborhoods, streets, and lanes, and were read, sung, and acted in various meetings that included a newspaper-reading section. Although few of these institutions lasted for long, in the various waves of propaganda campaigns, China was transformed into a daily news-theater. Even though people may not have believed what was printed in the newspapers, they had to behave according to what they learned from the papers, thus becoming actors in the eyes of one another. Therefore, in these ways, the Party’s news system contributed to the establishment and maintenance of the Communist regime.

**Primary Materials**

This dissertation is mainly based on three types of primary sources: archival materials from the Shanghai Municipal Archives, memoirs by journalists, and newspapers. All of them have their merits, but each one is also problematic.

The archival materials I found in Shanghai include the official documents issued by the authorities about a wide range of press affairs, including meeting minutes, speeches by Party officials, reports submitted to the authorities by the Party members in the press, letters between Party officials or between Party officials and newspeople, and the working reports and plans by the major newspapers in Shanghai. Together, these materials delineate the process by which the
Party’s journalistic norms were established and reinforced in Shanghai, how the Party led and monitored the process, and how the liberal newspeople were converted into state cadres. However, due to the Party’s censorship, some of the archival documents that were used by scholars in the past have been removed from the database, which handicapped my research. For example, Zhang Shunji frequently quoted two letters titled “On the adjustment of the Shanghai newspapers” (关于调整上海各报纸的问题) in her study of the transformation of Shanghai journalism.53 However, these two significant letters were unavailable when I visited the Shanghai Municipal Archives in summer 2018.

Besides the archives from Shanghai, I have also drawn on published archives. These archives mainly include materials collected by Song Yongyi, such as the Political Conclusions and Personal Archives of One Thousand Chinese Rightists (千名中国右派的处理结论和个人档案), Top Secret Anti-Rightist Documents (反右绝密文件), and Classified Archival Materials of Guangxi during the Cultural Revolution (广西文革机密档案资料). These collections contain many valuable materials regarding the “rightist” journalists.

The second type of primary material is memoirs by former newspeople. Whereas memoirs are not as accurate as archives and contain certain errors due to prejudice and memory bias, this type of material, especially those published in the past two decades, provide us with the newspeople’s feelings about the Party’s journalistic norms. Many of these memoirs contained complaints rather than praise, which indicates that even the Party journalists did not fully believe in the Party’s repressive style of journalism and thus the Party’s propaganda apparatus was far

from a well-oiled one. Moreover, there are many memoirs that have been underexploited by previous scholars. For example, the memoirs of the two high-ranking officials of the New China News Agency (NCNA), Zhang Xinmin (张辛民) and Xia Gongran (夏公然), have been underused by previous scholars. However, because both Zhang and Xia directed the editing of the internal bulletins, their memoirs were extremely useful to my study of the internal bulletins, which are difficult to access.

The last type of primary material is newspapers. The main newspapers examined in this dissertation include the Renmin ribao, Yan’an’s Jiefang ribao (解放日报 Liberation Daily), and the Wenhuibao. It is undeniable that these newspapers under the Communist regime are rife with distortions of the truth and formulaic language. People had to read between the lines to decipher the newspapers. However, this subtle method of expression was one key part of the Party’s journalistic conventions. Decoding the language in the newspapers was an intriguing part of people’s lives. It is largely in that spirit that I analyze newspapers in this dissertation.
PART I: Republican-era Journalism and the CCP’s Journalism Before 1949

1. Self-Partification of the Republican-era Journalists from the 1930s to the Early 1950s

To understand the journalistic transformation after 1949, we need to understand Republican-era journalism. While recognizing the independence of the Republican journalists, this chapter also maintains that the Republican journalists were still deeply influenced by traditional Chinese ideas and practice and kept a relatively close relationship with the political powers. This relationship did not change with the establishment of the Communist regime. As demonstrated below, many journalists identified themselves with the Communists as 1949 approached. This indicates that in terms of the relationship between journalists and the political powers, 1949 was a gentle rather than a forcible transformation. Also, the close relationship between the journalists and the political powers before and after 1949 exhibited profound continuity.

Admittedly, during the Republican years, Western ideals such as liberty and democracy left a lasting mark on Chinese intellectuals. As Suzanne Pepper suggests, “true liberals” were “the representatives of China’s intellectual elite.”1 In a similar vein, Yu Fengzheng observes, the core of modern Chinese intellectuals was made up of those who had studied in Europe and America. In his own words, the mainstream “were the liberals who were not far-right nor far-left. Politically, this group of individuals admired Western democracy, the rule of law, and liberty.”2

Journalists, as intellectuals who actively took part in the reconstruction of Chinese society with their knowledge and daily observation of current affairs, were no exception. The

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Republican era witnessed the introduction of Western journalistic thoughts and norms. As Timothy B. Weston puts it, in the 1920s and 1930s, the journalism reformers who were “deeply influenced by American standards of responsible journalism and example of American democracy” established “journalism as a formal academic discipline at institutions of higher learning,” and thus “imported into a Chinese context the concept of journalism as a specialized field of knowledge.” In parallel, the current literature in Mainland China and the West celebrates the liberalism of the Republican press and views that period as a golden age.

However, while acknowledging the profound influence of Western journalistic thought on Chinese journalism, I argue that except for a few studies, the previous scholarship ignores the influence of the Chinese intellectuals’ traditions, ideas, and practices, on the journalists. To put it in another way, the Republican journalists should not be simplistically regarded as advocates of Western journalistic norms. Instead, they should be viewed as individuals affected both by Western journalistic ideas and by Chinese intellectuals’ traditions. Due to the influence of this


4 The major examples include Fang, Dagongbao bainianshi; Zhang Yuren, Ziyou delicheng—zhongguo ziyou zhuyi xinwen sixiangshi (自由的历程——中国自由主义新闻思想史 A journey of freedom: liberal journalistic intellectual history of China) (Kunming: Yunan renmin chubanshe, 2002); Pang Rongdi, Shi Liangcai: Xiandai baoye juzi (寺良才 现代报业巨子 Shi Liangcai: A modern journalistic tycoon) (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999); Wang Runze, Zhang Jiluan yu dagongbao (张季鸾与大公报 Zhang Jiluan and the Dagongbao) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008); Xie Yong, Chu Anping yu Guancha (尉安平与观察 Chu Anping yu Guancha) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 2005); Xie Yong, Chu Anping: Yitiao heliu bande youyu (尉安平：一条河流般的忧虑 Chu Anping: Melancholy Like a River) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1999); and Pepper, Civil War in China.

tradition as well as other factors that will be explored in the following paragraphs, Chinese journalists tended to maintain a close relationship with political organizations and even submitted themselves and their ideals to the political parties rather than maintaining a distance from politics, which I refer to as self-partification.

In this chapter, I offer a survey of the interactions between the newspeople and politics from the 1930s to the early 1950s, with an emphasis on the newspeople of the late 1940s in order to draw attention to the 1949 transition. In addition, this chapter will explain the reason the Republican journalists were inclined to partify themselves at the time.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. In the first part, I will describe the phenomenon of self-partification during these decades. The second part will explain this phenomenon from the perspective of modern Chinese journalism history, the interaction between the government and the newspeople, cultural traditions, and the social and political conditions of the time. Through this, I show a more flexible relationship between the political parties and the newspeople, thus challenging the rigid classification between the Chinese political powers and intellectuals. As a result, this chapter suggests that the traditional notion of zaichao (在朝 in active service at the court) and zaiye (在野 in the “wilderness,” out of office) is a more suitable hermeneutic device for analyzing the relationship between the Chinese political powers and newspeople than the concept of the public sphere.

Self-partification as a phenomenon

As stated in the introduction, a number of Chinese newspeople, including Hu Shi (胡适), Zhang Jiluan (张季鸾), Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成), and the members of China’s Missouri mafia, to some extent underwent a process in which they identified themselves
with certain political parties during the 1930s and the early 1950s, even though they were widely viewed as liberal newspeople or had received Western journalism education. I use the term self-partification for this process. It perhaps lasted only for a short time and it was not necessary for the newspeople to join any political parties. What aligns them with self-partification was that they were willing to abnegate their independence and accept the policies or even orders from political parties or to establish political parties. In the following paragraphs, I will explore the relationship between the newspeople and the political parties, thus demonstrating this self-partification.

Hu Shi is widely viewed as the foremost liberal intellectual of the Republican era. Just as Zhang Yuren observes, “The general commander of the liberalism movement is no one but the gentle and cultivated Mr. Hu Shi who always wore a long Chinese gown.” Hu Shi served as the editor of many journals, such as the New Youth, Nuli (努力 Effort), Xinyue (新月 Crescent Moon), Duli pinglun (独立评论 Independent Critic), and Ziyou zhongguo (自由中国 Free China). Undoubtedly, these editing and publishing activities further cemented his leadership in the liberal camp.

However, a number of studies of the journals that Hu Shi was involved in the 1930s shed light on the close relationship between Hu Shi and the KMT government. Those journals include the Duli pinglun that he ran from 1932 to 1937 and the Xingqi lunwen (星期论文 Weekly Papers), a supplement of the Dagongbao, to which he contributed frequently from 1934 to 1937. Zhang Qing maintains that Hu Shi and other contributors to the Duli pinglun participated in national political life on a large scale. Hu expected the contributors who served the government

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to act as zhengcheng (诤臣 a minister who speaks frankly to the emperor) and zhengyou (诤友 a friend who gives unreserved criticism). In a similar manner, Tang Xiaobing contends the contributors of the Xingqi lunwen, including Hu Shi, identified themselves as the government’s zhencheng, zhengyou, or binshi (宾客 guest teacher). This is to say that these intellectuals, to some degree, identified themselves as the brave and righteous scholar-officials who devoted themselves to revealing the malfeasance and corruption within the government. Their criticism against the government should be regarded as an effort to uncover the mistakes of the government, rather than standing in opposition to the government. Moreover, many of these contributors to Duli pinglun and Xingqi lunwen, such as Jiang Tingfu (蒋廷黻), Weng Wenhao (翁文灏), Fu Sinian (傅斯年), Zhou Meisun (周枚荪), Wu Jingchao (吴景超), Ren Hongjuan (任鸿隽), and Zhang Xiruo (张奚若), later became government officials, which reveals the trend toward self-partification among Hu’s colleagues. While it is true that these intellectuals had connections with certain political figures and that they came from the same schools and social circles, all of which might have contributed to their collective choice to join the KMT government, it is undeniable that their desire to serve the country played a crucial role in their choices.

Furthermore, after the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), Hu Shi became increasingly close to the KMT government and his political stance was almost identical to that of the government. In 1937, he became “a semi-official envoy to plead China’s case in the United

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8 Tang Xiaobing, Xiandai zhongguo de gonggong yu lun, pp. 192-193.
States and Europe” and in the next year he became the Chinese ambassador to the U.S. Jerome B. Grieder characterizes this as “the end of Hu’s effective involvement in the struggle for social and intellectual reform.”9 From then on, Hu, to a large degree, gave up his nonpartisan stance. With the escalation of the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), Hu further became a supporter of the KMT government. Grieder states, “As the balance tipped from unstable dictatorship to open insurrection in 1947 and 1948, he came increasingly to identify with those who sought to bolster the diminishing authority of the National regime.”10 In the interim, Hu refused to contribute to Chu Anping’s *Guancha* magazine in the late 1940s because he saw Chu’s magazine as being too critical of the Chiang administration.11 Hu’s pro-KMT stance was one of the reasons why he chose to leave Mainland China in 1949 even though most Chinese liberal intellectuals opted to work with the Communist Party.12

Similar to Hu Shi, Zhang Jiluan was also widely viewed as a representative of the free press. However, many studies reveal a close relationship between Zhang and the KMT government. Zhang was a member of the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance (同盟会) and had

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served as secretary to Sun Yat-sen in 1912. He was also widely viewed as a member of the Political Studies Clique (政学系). Thus, Zhang “enjoyed a wide circle of acquaintances among the KMT members, benefiting the Dagongbao enormously.”

Hu Zhengzhi (胡政之), his partner, admitted that Zhang’s status as a KMT insider made him well-informed, which greatly benefited the Dagongbao. Second, Zhang had a good personal relationship with Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang viewed him as a zhengyou. For this, he put aside his famous “Four-No-isms slogan (四不主义: No party affiliation 不党 No political endorsement 不卖, No self-promotion 不私, No ignorance 不盲)” and set a new rule for the Dagongbao: “Except for Mr. Chiang, we can criticize any person we deem fit.”

Third, Zhang worked for Chiang’s administration, participating in the making of the domestic and diplomatic policies after 1937. To give an example, Zhang, as Chiang’s special envoy, participated in the secret peace talks between China and Japan between 1937 and 1941.

Lastly, contrary to its budang (不党 no party affiliation) principle that emphasized the newspaper’s independence, the Dagongbao did accept the government’s support and even direct

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13 He Qiliang, Newspapers and the Journalistic Public in Republican China, p. 71.
16 For the Four-No-isms, please see Zhao and Sun, A History of Journalism and Communication in China, p. 61.
orders from Chiang. Although the newspaper did not accept money from the government, it had long received special treatment from the government on things like news stories, newsprint, official-rate foreign exchange, and typecasting metals. In fact, from about 1940, the KMT propaganda department began to support the *Dagongbao*, asserting its authority on public opinion. Moreover, according to Yu Fan’s study of the Chiang Kai-shek archives, from 1933 to 1941, Chiang had dictated directly to Zhang many times.\(^{19}\) Therefore, we can hardly say that Zhang was a journalist in step with his Four-No-isms slogan.

Furthermore, many members of the well-known Missouri Mafia, which was composed of a group of Chinese journalists who had been trained in Missouri School of Journalism, the first journalism school in the U.S. and the world, such as Hollington Tong (董显光 Dongxianguang), Huang Xianzhao (黄宪昭), and Ma Xingye (马星野), became members of the KMT propaganda system and censors, even though they had been educated in Western journalism. According to Zhang Yong’s observation, among these overseas students:

Hollington Tong, Qian Bohan (钱伯涵), Wang Yingbin(汪英宾), and other early Chinese Missouri graduates had run newspapers or established journalism schools but due to the national calamities had to join the government and thus became the leaders of the propaganda system. By contrast, Shen Jianhong (沈剑虹), Tang Dechen (汤德臣), Gao Keyi (高客毅), and other graduates in the 1930s chose to work with Tong, working in the International Publicity Bureau (国宣处) or the Central News Agency (中央社).\(^{20}\)

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20 Zhang Yong, “Yi ‘zhenxiang’ de mingyi: Liuxue zhishi fenzi dui xifang baodao de pipan ji dui xinwen jiancha de xuandao” (以“真相”的名义：留学知识分子对西方报道的批判及对新闻检查的宣导), Li Jinquan, ed., *Baoren baoguo: Overseas intellectuals’ criticism of Western reports and censorship of the press*, Li Jinquan, ed., *Baoren baoguo:...*
Among these students, Tong not only became the primary international propaganda official of the KMT government, but also designed the war-time censorship for the government, both of which were at odds with the idea of a free press. Ma Xingye served as the director of the Zhongyang ribao (中央日报 Central Daily), the KMT’s mouthpiece, in the late 1940s and put forward the idea of the “Journalism of the Three Principles of the People” (三民主义的新闻事业), conceptualizing the partified news thought.\(^{21}\)

In Xu Jilin’s classification of Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century, Hu Shi, Zhang Jiluan, and Hollington Tong all belonged to the post-1915 generation. Although these intellectuals basically received their education in the new-style schools that mixed Chinese and Western learning, and had studied in Japan, Europe, or America, they had also received a Confucian education in their childhood. Thus, their cultural mindset and morals were still rooted in Chinese tradition.\(^ {22}\) We can see an explicit traditional vein in them. For example, both Hu and Zhang viewed themselves as the government’s zhengyou, likening their relationship with the government to that between remonstrative officials and emperors. Xu Zhucheng even believed Zhang wanted to be a wangzheshi (王者师 the king’s mentor), which was a scholar-official’s dream.\(^ {23}\)

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\(^{23}\) Xu Zhucheng, Baohai jiuwen (报海旧闻 Anecdotes in the journalist circles) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2010), p. 82.
By contrast, the next generation, born between 1895 and 1910, either experienced the May Fourth Movement during their student years or was greatly influenced by the Western values of the movement, were less influenced by Confucian ideas, and were more professional.\textsuperscript{24} Wang Yunsheng, Xu Zhucheng, and Chu Anping were all born in the 1900s.\textsuperscript{25} Compared with Hu and Zhang, they were actual professional newsmen and insisted more on journalistic professionalism,\textsuperscript{26} since none of them had assumed government positions during the Republican era as Hu and Zhang did. However, this does not mean that they did not partify themselves at some points in their careers. In effect, influenced by nationalism, statism, and the overriding collectivism, they were willing to sacrifice a free press and to accept certain policies of the political parties, especially when they agreed with these policies in a general way.

Xu had become a lefty by 1946. In his own words, “In 1946, the Wenhuibao started on the path of progress.”\textsuperscript{27} In that year, he left the Dagongbao, where he had worked for around eighteen years. One of the reasons that he left was that his leftist editorials were too hardline for the Dagongbao’s general manager, Hu Zhengzhi, as well as for the KMT government.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} See Xu Jilin, “Ershi shiji zhongguo liudaishi zhishi fenzi,” p. 83.
\textsuperscript{25} Wang Yunsheng was born in 1901; Xu Zhucheng in 1907; Chu Anping in 1909.
\textsuperscript{26} Journalistic professionalism can be simply understood as objectivity in reporting and the independence of the press. However, it is critical to note that there is no universally agreed upon definition of journalistic professionalism. Wang Haiyan argues that “media professionalism often varies across different social and political contexts.” Daniel Hallin contends, “The notion of journalistic professionalism is vague and in many ways dubious.” Silvio Waisbord maintains, “There is no consensus about what professionalism actually means either in journalism or academia, and the reason largely rests on the juxtaposition of an analytical and a normative dimension in the concept.” See Wang Haiyan, The Transformation of Investigative Journalism in China (Lanham: Lexington books, 2016), pp. 95-96; Zhou Jin, “Xinwen zhuanye zhuyi de bentuhua tansuo” (新闻专业主义的本土化探索 An exploration of the localization of journalistic professionalism), Xinwen daxue, 4(2013): 133-140; Pan Zhongdang and Lu Ye, “Zouxiang gonggong: Xinwen zhuanye zhuyi zai chufa” (走向公共: 新闻专业主义再出发 Going public: Journalistic professionalism revisited), Guoji xinwenjie, 10(2017): 91-117.
\textsuperscript{27} Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng zishu: Yundong dangan huibian (徐铸成回忆录 徐铸成’s memoir) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1998), pp. 126-127.
Meanwhile, his *Wenhuibao* had already taken a similar political stand with the CCP. According to Lei Jieqiong (雷洁琼), who had taken part in the Nanjing peace petition in 1946, “At the time, the only two newspapers that sided with the people were the *Wenhuibao* based in Shanghai and the *Xinhua ribao* (新华日报 The New China Daily, the CCP’s mouthpiece in the areas controlled by the KMT) in Chongqing.”\(^{29}\) In 1948, Xu even sought to persuade Wu Shaoshu (吴绍澍), a KMT official, to defect to the CCP.\(^{30}\) In the same year, his newly-established *Wenhuibao* edition in Hong Kong had already been described by Guo Moruo (郭沫若) as part of the cultural army of the CCP during the civil war. Many influential leftists, like Guo Moruo, Mao Dun (茅盾), Song Yunbin (宋云彬), and Jian Bozan (翦伯赞) served as the editors of this paper, making the Hong Kong edition even more leftist than the previous Shanghai version.\(^{31}\) Therefore, Xu Zhucheng basically took a similar political stand with the CCP after 1948. In Chen Jianyun’s words, “Xu Zhucheng and the *Wenhuibao* had already turned left during the Hong Kong era. Xu was no longer an independent newspaperman, nor was the *Wenhuibao* an independent newspaper.”\(^{32}\)

Wang Yunsheng and Chu Anping were widely viewed as the two leading liberal newspeople in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, both opted to work with different political parties during certain periods. Wang Yunsheng began to serve as the Chief Editor of the *Dagongbao* in the late 1930s. From then to 1947, when the civil war broke out, Wang’s *Dagongbao* was basically consistent with the KMT government’s policies, although it is not hard to find criticisms of the KMT government in it. Wang even was willing to accept the orders from the

\(^{30}\) Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huiyilu*, pp. 159-160.
\(^{31}\) Chen Jianyun, *Dabianju zhongde minjian baoren yu baokan*, pp. 25-27.
\(^{32}\) Chen Jianyun, *Dabianju zhongde minjian baoren yu baokan*, p. 28.
government. As Yang Kuisong contends, “The Dagongbao was close to Chiang Kai-shek in recent years [the 1930s and 1940s], and from this the Dagongbao gained plenty of benefits. Thus, it had to keep the government in mind in its editorial considerations. So, the Dagongbao frequently spoke contrary to other citizen-run newspapers.” In a similar manner, although acknowledging that the Dagongbao was a liberal newspaper in general, Li Bin argues, “The Dagongbao was not a detached newspaper or independent from the KMT government.”

Furthermore, Wang’s cooperation with the KMT sowed the seeds of his self-partification under the Communist regime. According to Jiang Weidong and Wu Tingjun’s study, the Dagongbao, compared with Shanghai’s Jiefang ribao, which was the most significant Party newspaper in the metropolis after 1949, published more laudatory and fewer critical editorials from June 17, 1949 to June 26, 1950. Though this was partly due to the Dagongbao’s weaker position compared with the Party newspapers, this phenomenon did demonstrate Wang’s attitude to the new government. In Yang Kuisong’s words, at the time, Wang really believed “he saw the long-sought sun;” and “he worked hard to follow the Party’s policies and kept a high level of enthusiasm for political participation.” Thus, while keeping his position at the Dagongbao, he held several government positions, such as East China Military and Administrative Committee member, Shanghai People Government Councilor, and the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese National Institute of Journalists.

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33 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, p. 97.
34 Li Bin, Zhongguo xinwen shehuishi, version 2, pp. 275-286.
36 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, p. 110, 131.
37 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, p. 111.
Chu Anping was widely viewed as the last inheritor of the “literati-cum-political commentators” tradition.\(^{38}\) In the late 1940s, Chu’s *Guancha* magazine was regarded as the most reliable media in the eyes of the contemporary liberal intellectuals. Suzanne Pepper writes that “[The *Guancha*] has been used here as the basic source of information on the political views of the intelligentsia in the KMT areas during the civil war.”\(^{39}\) Chu’s magazine was so influential that the period from the end of the Anti-Japanese war to 1949 was even called “Chu Anping era.”\(^{40}\)

However, as Chu began feeling disappointed in China’s national crisis and America’s Far East policy, the articles in the *Guancha* gradually turned leftist. As historian Wang Rongzu puts it:

The liberals accused the U.S. of supporting the undemocratic [KMT] government, attempting to make China a battlefield in the war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and sacrificing China’s interest for America’s strategy. They predicted America’s support for Japan during the Cold War. [We] can find this opinion in the *Guancha*, which pushed many centrists to the left. This left-leaning tendency was about not only political attitude, but also ideological tendency. These liberals began to pin their hopes on socialism….

Why did they turn left? I think the primary reason was the economic collapse at the time.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{38}\) “Literati-cum-political commentators” was widely viewed as a defining characteristic of Chinese journalism. This notion considers Republican newspeople the successors of the traditional scholar-officials, celebrating their independence and courage in criticizing the government. See He Qiliang, *Newspapers and the Journalistic Public in Republican China*, pp. 16-17; Li Jinquan (Chin-Chuan Lee), “Wenren lunzheng: Zhishifenzi yu baokan, pp. 1-29; Volz and Lee, “American Pragmatism and Chinese Modernization,” pp. 711-730.

\(^{39}\) Pepper, *Civil War in China*, p. 133.

\(^{40}\) Pepper, *Civil War in China*, p. 133. Also see Wang Rongzhu, “Zhanhou disanshili weishenme zhujiang zuozhuan.”

\(^{41}\) Wang Rongzu, “Zhanhou disanshili weishenm zhujiang zuozhuan.”
In the Communist regime, Chu became a loyal state cadre. According to Feng Yingzi, one of Chu’s friends, Chu was quite satisfied with his position. In Feng’s phrase, in 1953, Chu Anping “was in a cadre uniform and looked handsome, gaining weight.”\(^{42}\) His student, Wang Huo, also recalled, “Around the spring of 1953, I met Professor Chu on Wangfujing Street. He was in a modest cadre uniform, with fine color in his cheeks and in fine fettle.”\(^{43}\) From 1954 to 1956, as a journalist, he conducted a survey in Xinjiang. He was shocked by the dramatic changes, including new roads, railways, and the improvement of the residents’ living standards, in Xinjiang under the new regime. Thus, he wrote many eulogistic reports on the Party. Although it could be argued that these articles were written under a certain pressure from the Party, to some degree, they did reveal his internal feelings. As Chu’s biographer Han Shu puts it: “Although these articles were filled with verses extolling the Party…. they were also his visceral sense.”\(^{44}\) Otherwise, Chu would not have chosen to publish so many reports. It is likely that he had been forced to write one or two of these articles, but he would not have had to write so many. If he had not liked his work in Xinjiang, Chu could have stopped working there. After all, before the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the intellectuals had a certain degree of freedom.

From this discussion, it is plain to see that many prominent journalists from the 1930s to the early 1950s underwent a self-partification process, even though these journalists can be divided into two generations and were profoundly affected by Western journalistic ideas and practice.


\(^{43}\) Wang Huo, “Yi Chu Anping jiaoshou” (忆储安平教授  In memory of Professor Chu Anping), in Xie Yong and Cheng Chaofu, eds., Zhuixun Chu Anping, p. 29.

\(^{44}\) Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuoan, p. 326.
Explanation

This self-partification phenomenon made what happened to the liberal newspapers in 1949 more like a smooth transformation than the rupture that scholarship produced during the Cold War period (1947-1991) suggests. Thus, we need to explain how this occurred and why it happened so frequently in the relatively short history of Chinese journalism.

The utilitarian tradition of Chinese modern journalism

Chinese journalism was utilized to push forward political agendas from the very beginning. As Li Bin observes, “The self-strengthening consciousness served as the midwife of Chinese journalism, which is one of the greatest differences between Chinese and Western journalism.” Inspired by the missionaries who used newspapers to promote their religious beliefs, the earliest Chinese newspeople, like Wang Tao (王韬), Liang Qichao (梁启超), and others, viewed newspapers from a utilitarian perspective, seeking to use newspapers to achieve their political goals. Of course, these journalists’ political efforts oftentimes started from or were accompanied by their efforts to transform traditional society and culture.

Wang Tao was generally regarded as the founder of Chinese journalism. According to Huang Dan, Wang Tao, as well as his contemporaries, Hong Renxuan (洪仁轩) and Zheng Guanying (郑观应), all emphasized newspapers’ political function, seeking to harness the newspapers to pursue their respective political goals. This tradition laid the foundation for the

45 The scholarship includes Frederick T.C. Yu’s Mass Persuasion in Communist China and Alan P. Liu’s Communications and National Integration in Communist China. In fact, a large number of scholars in the West and China, including myself, are or were influenced by the Cold War mentality.
46 Li Bin, Zhongguo xinwen shehuishi, version 2, p. 73.
later development of Chinese journalism. In Huang’s phrase, “Thanks to politics, people pay attention to and then study newspapers and magazines. This is the fundamental impetus to the development of Chinese journalistic thought.”

In the same way, Liang Qichao’s journalism practice greatly pushed the partification of newspapers. While he had introduced a great number of Western political ideas to China and claimed that newspapers should “adhere to the broader public interest and not follow any political faction,” he was also the very scholar who proposed the notion of the newspaper as party organ (党报). In an article written in 1901, he indicated that he viewed his three papers, the Shiwubao (时务报 The Chinese Progress), Zhixinbao (知新报 The China Reformer), and Qingyibao (清议报 The China Discussion) as, at least partly, party organs and sought to use these newspapers and his other newspapers to promote the Constitutionalist Party’s ideas. This was the reason that Liang suggested in 1918 that Kang Youwei should stop funding the Shibao. He stated, “[The Shibao] has never contributed to our factional affairs. The arguments in it are by

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48 Huang Dan, “Wang Tao Xinwen sixiang shilun” (王韬新闻思想试论 A discussion of Wang Tao’s journalistic thought), Xinwen daxue (Autumn 1998): 70
49 Li Bin, Zhongguo xinwen shehuishi, version 2, p. 83.
50 In his article, “Benguan diyi baihe zhuzui binglun baoguan zhi zeren ji benguan zhi jingli” (本馆第一百册祝辞并论报馆之责任及本馆之经历), Liang frankly admitted the Shiwubao and Zhixinbao had evolved from personal newspapers into factional ones, and the Qingyibao was between factional and national newspapers. See Zhang Zhan, Wang Renzhi, eds., Xinhai geming qian shenian ji shilun xuanji (辛亥革命前十年间时论选集 Selected news reviews during the ten years before 1911 Revolution) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1960), pp. 51-52.
51 In his career as a journalist, Liang had been involved in running a number of newspapers: the Zhongwai jiwen (中外纪闻 Chinese and Foreign Chronicles), Shiwubao, Zhixinbao, Qingyibao, Xinmin congbao (新闻丛报 The News Repository), Shibao (时报 Times), and the Guomin congbao (国民公报 National Gazette).
no means consistent with those of our faction and it has seriously defamed our faction.” As a result, Liang’s activities further reinforced the partisan feature of Chinese newspapers.

In the early 1900s, Liang’s legacy was inherited by Sun Yat-sen and his followers who established many newspapers to promote their ideas. Among these newspapers were Yu Youren (于右任)’s Minlibao (民立报 The People’s Stand), Minhubao (民呼报 The People’s Voice), and Minyubao (民吁报 The People’s Appeal). These revolutionary newspapers greatly contributed to the success of the 1911 revolution. In Sun Yat-sen’s words, “[We have fought for] this revolution for several decades, going through ups and downs. Now, the revolution has finally succeeded, which is a result of the papers’ advocacy.”

However, in the familiar narratives of Chinese journalism during the Republican era, scholarship usually highlights the nationalism of these partisan newspapers, thus neglecting to call attention to their factional features. For example, in his History of Chinese Journalism (中国报学史), Ge Gongzhen (戈公振) argued that the revolutionary newspapers, including the Zhongguo ribao (中国日报 China Daily), Subao (苏报 Su Daily), and Guomin riribao (国民日报 Citizen Daily), all promoted nationalism and anti-Manchu thought. Moreover, he counted both the Constitutionalist and revolutionary newspapers as citizen-run, contrary to the official and foreigner-run papers. Thus, Ge ignored the political features of these newspapers and their

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52 Ding Wenjing and Zhao Fengtian, Liang Qichao nianpu changbian (梁启超年谱长编 The chronicle of Liang Qichao) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 432. Also see, Joan Judge, Print and Politics: Shibao and the Cultural Reform in Late Qing China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 53.

53 Sun Yat-sen, “Baoding zhenli yiwang buyu” (定真理 一往不渝 Standing up unwswervingly for the truth), in Meng Qingpeng, ed., Sun Yat-sen wenji (孙中山文集 The collected works of Sun Yat-sen) (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1997), p. 1003.

potential impact. Similar to Ge, Lin Yutang (林语堂), in his *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*, viewed the years from 1895 to 1911 as a golden age in Chinese journalism history. He maintained that at the time the newspapers [of which the Constitutionalist and revolutionary newspapers counted as a large part] had “triggered Chinese intellectuals’ nationalism and political consciousness. Their hot flood of nationalism eventually overthrew the Qing dynasty.”\(^5\) Apparently, he was unaware of the potential danger that the partisan newspapers posed to journalism. Therefore, by confusing nationalism with the spirit of the free press, Ge’s and Lin’s works, to some degree, legitimized the partification of newspapers. Furthermore, this approach set the tone for the revolutionary paradigm that highlights the role played by journalism in China’s continual revolutions against feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucratic capitalism. This paradigm has dominated the field of Chinese journalism history in Mainland China for many years.\(^6\)

In summary, modern Chinese journalism was frequently regarded as a means rather than an end by journalists and politicians. In addition, this instrumental use of newspapers was not chastised but was commended by the Republican journalism scholars, which further encouraged the utilitarian nature of journalism. As a result, the use of papers to push forward a political agenda prevailed among newspeople. Furthermore, in order to achieve their political goals, the newspeople, who lacked military and administrative resources, had to cooperate with the political powers. In China, as in the modern world as a whole, the most powerful and lasting political powers are the political parties, which were dubbed “modern prince[s]” by Antonio

Gramsci. Consequently, the instrumental use of papers created a bridge between newspeople and the political parties, thus giving rise to the newspeople’s self-partification.

**Chinese liberalism and the newspeople**

Apart from establishing the self-partification tradition in Chinese journalism, Liang Qichao also pioneered the nationalist tendency in liberal practice in China. As Hao Chang observes, although having imported much liberal thought into China, Liang was “sharply critical of liberal democratism in the West.” He “upheld the collectivistic notion that over and above government and the people there exists the state” and “never grasped clearly the core of British liberalism—guarantism, that is, that a state is established first of all for the protection of civil liberties and the rights of the individual citizen”\(^5\) Thus, Liang was not a pure liberal but was between a liberal and a nationalist.

As with Liang, most of the Chinese newspeople were not *bona fide* liberals. Instead, they bore the profound imprint of traditional Confucianism and nationalism. Impacted by the Confucian legacy, the newspeople felt a strong sense of responsibility for the country and their nationalism made them willing to sacrifice a free press for the sake of the country. Consequently, Chinese newspeople could hardly resist the temptation to engage in politics and become dependent on political powers. In the following paragraphs, I will use Hu Shi, Zhang Jiluan, and Chu Anping as examples to show these characteristics in the Chinese journalists.

Hu Shi, the leading liberal in China, was attracted by socialism in the 1920s and inclined to cooperate with the KMT government after 1937. Luo Zhitian, a specialist on Hu Shi,

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maintains that after his visit to the Soviet Union in 1926, “Hu Shi was once attracted to socialism and saw it as the future direction of the world…. He included the unprecedented great political experiment of Russian socialism in his ‘new religious creeds’ through which the world should develop.” So why did Hu Shi, a liberal who was supposedly opposed to autocracy embedded in socialism extol the Soviet Union? Luo argues it was because Russia was able to change “an entire country’s orientation in a short period” and became “a new nation,” which was the “ultimate goal that Hu Shi worked his entire life to achieve.” Therefore, Hu Shi began to agree with Bertrand Russell’s observations that “China should be socialist” and that he should “sacrifice his own [liberal] views for the sake of his country.”

Furthermore, Hu Shi cooperated with the KMT government after 1937. Tang Xiaobing maintains that, beginning in 1937, Hu Shi no longer demanded freedom of speech as he had in the early 1930s, which indicated that he had established a close relationship with the KMT’s power network. Therefore, although widely regarded as the leading liberal in China, Hu was, in effect, inclined to sacrifice his personal views for the sake of the nation and to prioritize the state over individualism. Xu Jilin states that Hu Shi “lacks the independent spirit of the true liberals politically. Although he was a gentle critic of the government, in his bones he revered the extant political order, worshipping the government like a philistine.”

In a similar vein, Zhang Jiluan was also deeply influenced by nationalism and traditional ideas, although he was widely viewed as a symbol of a free press. In L. Sophia Wang’s words, Zhang “remained a traditional Confucian critic.” Wang contends that although Zhang promoted

60 Tang Xiaobing, Xiandai zhongguo de gonggong yulun, p. 199.
61 Xu Jilin, Lingyizhong qimeng, p. 15.
the free press, what concerned him was not the free press itself, but the impact of the free press on the country. This led to his long-term cooperation with Chiang Kai-shek. As stated above, he not only participated in the peace talks between China and Japan, but also reported the news in accordance with the orders from the Chiang administration.

Although being viewed as one of the most noteworthy Chinese liberals by Suzanne Pepper, Chu Anping was also unable to separate his nationalism from liberalism. Through a close examination of Chu Anping’s life, Han Shu concludes that Chu was less a liberal than a nationalist. Historian Chen Yongzhong contends that, like Yan Fu, “Chu Anping regarded liberalism as an indispensable instrument for China to get rid of ignorance and backwardness and to achieve power and wealth.”

In addition, as an admirer of English political theorist Harold Joseph Laski, who promoted socialism although his thought incorporated “liberal and pluralist elements in its make up,” Chu did not reject socialism, even if he once said that “I do not believe that under the CCP, the people can have basic freedoms, like freedom of thought or freedom of speech.” Therefore, Chu frequently prioritized the state or the people over liberalism and individualism. It is not uncommon to find words like nation, sacrifice, and justice in his speeches and articles.

For example, in his letter to Hu Shi, Chu wrote: “In this world, how many individuals can

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64 Moscovitch, “A Liberal Ghost,” p. 935.


sacrifice their personal interests for the public, for an ideal, and do everything they can to benefit the country?”

To conclude, the leading liberal journalists, exemplified by Hu Shi, Zhang Jiluan, and Chu Anping, were all profoundly affected by traditional ideas and nationalism. Consequently, it was not unusual for them to prioritize national interests over liberalism, and collectivism over individualism, which facilitated their cooperation with the political powers and contributed to their partification.

*Chinese Newspeople’s Elitism*

Chinese intellectuals’ elitist inclinations made possible their cooperation with the political powers, because both the intellectuals and politicians devoted themselves to transforming the masses rather than identifying themselves with the people. On the one hand, the Chinese state had a long tradition on which to base its teachings to the people. *Jiaohua* (教化, transformative teaching, or civilizing) was a core concept of Confucianism. The imperial Chinese state made every endeavor to *jiaohua* its people. As William Rowe writes, “The mission to conduct *jiaohua* was essential as well as to the ruler or the state; performing this function effectively was both a political imperative and the most reliable index of good governance.”

In practice, Nicolai Volland observes, in Qing China, the emperors, including Shunzhi, Kangxi, and Yongzheng, employed “rural compact” (乡约) lectures to teach their people. In the lectures

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about rural compacts, the moral principles sanctioned by the emperors would be read publicly in front of the rural population twice a month.69

By contrast, although Chinese newspeople constantly called for political changes in the name of the people, they preferred to push forward their enlightening agenda rather than to formulate an agenda of the people. As Joan Judge concludes in her study of the journalists of the Shibao in the early twentieth century:

Although they were would-be populists, their reformist ambitions never completely overwhelmed their elitist inclinations. Filtering the common people’s issues and grievances through their own lens and their own texts, the journalists were not creating the discourse of the common people but their own discourse on the common people.70

Likewise, Yu Ying-shih asserts that elitism had a profound impact on Hu Shi, although he had received a systematic Western education. Yu contends,

Hu Shi had received a quite complete modern education in the U.S. Also, he gave a clear opposition against the binary opposition between ‘our scholar-officials’ and ‘their common people.’ However, when he talked about China’s reconstruction, he unwittingly showed his unconscious ‘scholar-official’ mind. Hence, he attributed Japan’s success to a dozen individuals, such as Ito Hirobumi, Okubo Toshimichi, and Saigo Takamori, by

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70 Judge, Print and Politics, p. 121.
which he implied that he wished the small number of leading Chinese intellectuals could make similar efforts.\textsuperscript{71}

Therefore, at least, some Chinese intellectuals had elitist tendencies.

As a result, as Chinese intellectuals, the newspeople’s elitist inclinations led them to opt to work with the politicians and thus to \textit{jiaohua} the people, rather than to blend themselves in with the people and create a discourse of the people. This further promoted the self-partification of the journalists.

\textit{The relationship between the political powers and the newspeople}

For the most part, the newspeople’s relationship with the KMT government in the 1930s and 1940s had a strong resemblance to that between the \textit{zaiye} scholar-officials and the imperial government. On the one hand, despite the abolition of the imperial examination and the fall of the imperial system, the modern Chinese intellectuals still kept many traditional traits, especially in regard to their relationship with the political organizations. One main reason for this was that civil society had not been successfully established in Republican China. Yu Keping describes this state:

\begin{quote}
In the modernization process, Chinese intellectuals had never constituted an independent social stratum. The necessary social economic and political foundation for the intellectuals to form an independent social stratum had never emerged in modern China…. Civil society in China appeared and disappeared in the modernization process but was never independent from the political state. The country firmly controlled all
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
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social life, including political and economic aspects…. The intellectuals were not only supervised by the state politically, but they also had to rely on the state economically…. Therefore, the modernization process did not transform the internal structure of the state politically.72

Therefore, while it was relatively easy for newspeople to remain independent in the chaotic situation in the 1910s and 1920s, the growing power of the political parties, especially the Nationalists and Communists in the 1930s and 1940s, left little room for independent newspeople. As Jerome B. Grieder, Hu Shi’s bibliographer, observes, “In any case, genuine nonpartisanism [that prevailed in the 1920s], difficult enough in the 1930s, was virtually impossible after the war [the Anti-Japanese War, 1937-1945]. For a man of Hu’s persuasion, there was no longer any middle ground.”73 With the rise of the two parties, their partisan newspapers, and their censorship, the newspeople felt it was increasingly hard to remain autonomous. Thus, a number of them chose to change their status from zaiye to zaichao, and partified themselves during the last two decades of the Republican era.

Furthermore, newspapers as an institution provided the intellectuals a tempting platform through which they could contribute to the government while staying zaiye. Fu Sinian maintained, “Joining the government is not as good as establishing political parties, and establishing political parties is not as good as running newspapers. If we want to work hard, we need to stay zaiye. Once we join the government, we can no longer work hard.”74 Similarly, Chu

73 Grieder, Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 300
Anping argued that by commenting on the politics in a zaiye position, they could make as many contributions to the country as those in power. In effect, like the zaiye scholar-officials, Hu Shi and Zhang Jiluan, sought to correct or to help the government rather than to oppose it.

On the other hand, political leaders sought to pull the zaiye intellectuals over to their side. There were two major reasons for this. First, as did the journalists, Chinese politicians strove to transform the country. The same ultimate goal paved the way for their cooperation. Second and more directly, through persuading newspeople, politicians could interfere with and even control public opinion. Thus, the political leaders were willing to pay a certain amount of respect to the newspeople. An obvious example is Chiang Kai-shek’s relationship with Zhang Jiluan. To win Zhang and the Dagongbao over, Chiang treated Zhang as his most distinguished friend. In 1934, Chiang treated the KMT officials in Nanjing to a feast. At the feast, Zhang sat next to Chiang, and Chiang even poured wine for Zhang, which shocked the officials and gave them the feeling that Chiang would appoint Zhang premier. In addition, in order to utilize the Shenbao (申报), Chiang Kai-shek maintained an intimate relationship with Chen Leng (陈冷), the chief of the paper in the 1920s, and in the early 1930s he attempted to win over Shi Liangcai, the manager of the paper, though he failed. In a similar vein, Hu Shi acknowledged at a national education

75 Chu Anping, “Zhengfu liren zhixiang Guancha (政府利刃指向《观察》The government is going to shut down Guangcha),” in Zhang Xinying, ed., Chu Anping Wenji, volume 2, p. 245.
conference in 1928, “the government wishes [scholars] to do some constructive work (建设的事业) [for the country]. We would not abort this mission.”\textsuperscript{78}

Consequently, a great number of scholars gained fame through their articles in periodical publications and went on to become government officials. As mentioned above, among the contributors of the \textit{Duli pinglun} and \textit{Xingqi lunwen}, many of them, like Jiang Tingfu, Weng Wenhai, Fu Sinian, Zhou Meisun, Wu Jingchao, Ren Hongjuan, and Zhang Xiruo later joined the government. In Tang Xiaobing’s words, many of the contributors “either joined the government or got involved in the political practice as representatives in the National Political Counsel.”\textsuperscript{79} In his book on Hu Shi, Jerome B. Grieder called these individuals “notable defectors from the democratic cause,” whom Hu criticized as people who sang “the praises of autocracy” before Hu joined the government himself.\textsuperscript{80}

In summary, without the support of a stable civil society, the Chinese newspeople could hardly keep their independence in the 1930s, when the two political parties made every effort to control political opinion. Meanwhile, political leaders managed to attract intellectuals into their camp based on their shared goals—the transformation of society— or on their ambition to control public opinion. Therefore, a number of newspeople changed from \textit{zaiye} to \textit{zaichao}, which indicated that the relationship between these newspeople and the political parties was intermingled rather than antagonistic.

\textit{Literati-cum-political commentators}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Hu Shi riji} (胡适日记 The diaries of Hu Shi), May 19, 1928, quoted in Zhang Qing, “Xueshu shehui de jiangou yu zhishi fenzi de quanshi wangluo,” p. 373.


\textsuperscript{80} Grieder, \textit{Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance}, p. 278.
Zhang Jiluan argues that in comparison with their counterparts in the West, which were principally commercial institutions, Chinese newspapers were the institution of literati-cum-political commentators (文人政).81 This is to say a distinctive feature of Chinese newspapers was their political commentary. Many scholars in the West also agree with this point. Timothy Weston maintains that intellectuals in China embraced “the press as a transformative medium.”82 Stephen Mackinnon notes that journalism in China performed like “competing political parties.”83 Alan Liu suggests that “ politicization is the birthmark of the modern Chinese press.”84

Facing censorship, the journalists, therefore, had to be careful with their newspapers’ political standing. This implies that newspeople had to maintain their relationships with certain political figures. This situation was in alignment with Wang Fansen’s observation of Fu Sinian, a top Republican scholar: “Anyone who wanted to become a star scholar or scholar-tyrant must have a [guanxi] network outside academic circles and a tight relationship with the government.”85 Otherwise, newspapers would be shut down by politicians sooner or later, which happened to Xu Zhucheng’s Wenhuibao in 1947 and Chu Anping’s Guancha in 1948. In the areas controlled by the Communist Party, there were no newspapers that were not controlled by the Party.

82 Weston, “Journalism as a Field of Knowledge in Republican China,” p. 243.
As stated above, most Chinese newspeople were nationalists rather than genuine liberals. This actually made their choice an easy one. As long as the authorities were not too abhorrent, the newspeople would not be too reluctant to work with them and to some degree sacrifice their own free speech. This is the reason why the Dagongbao could keep a close relationship with Chiang Kai-shek’s administration until 1947, when the vast majority of the population could hardly make a living. Even Chu Anping initially sided with the KMT government. Right after the Anti-Japanese War, Chu argued, almost all Chinese people supported the KMT administration, because it was the center of the country.⁸⁶

Overall, we can see that the outstanding political feature of the Chinese newspapers made them an arena that the government felt it had to occupy. Meanwhile, this feature prompted newspeople to partify themselves to a certain degree.

*Political reality during the 1930s and 1940s*

In the 1930s and 1940s, the long-lasting political turbulence pushed the newspeople to work with certain political factions to save China. On the one side, China’s political failures since 1912 had made a number of intellectuals increasingly skeptical about democracy, and they turned toward support of dictatorships in the middle of the 1930s. This made possible the newspeople’s self-identification with the KMT, despite the fact that it was a dictatorship. Indeed, the debate on democracy and dictatorship among the intellectuals of the day indicated that many intellectuals had changed their minds and began to advocate dictatorship. As Lloyd Eastman states, “By the 1930s the political alternatives had narrowed, and the intellectuals seemed sobered by the political failures of the preceding generation…. One theme that suffused the

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⁸⁶ Chu Anping, “Yituanzao de zeren wenti” (一团糟的 责任问题 Who should be held responsible for the complete mess?), in Zhang Xinying, ed., *Chu Anping wenji*, volume 2, p. 5.
political dialogue of the 1930s was disillusionment that all Chinese intellectuals sensed as a result of the nation’s experience with democratic institutions since 1912.”

Edmund S. K. Fung observes, “Ding Wenjiang and the American-trained diplomatic historian Jiang Tingfu (Ph.D. Columbia University), who had all the appearances of a liberal in the 1920s, advocated a ‘new-style dictatorship’ in 1934.” From Eastman’s and Fung’s observations, it is plain to see that the failures of the democratic system in China since 1912 had made many intellectuals believe that a dictatorship was an expedient solution for China.

On the other side, as China suffered from a series of national disasters such as the Mukden Incident, the Anti-Japanese War, and the civil war, the 1930s and 1940s witnessed the rise of nationalism in China. In such a situation, few intellectuals could transcend the times. In particular, in order to prepare for the upcoming war against Japan, many newspeople, such as Ma Xingye and Zhang Jiluan, at a journalism symposium in 1936 publicly advocated for sacrificing a free press for the national interest. Therefore, in order to save China from warfare, many intellectuals chose to work with the government at the price of their liberal creeds. In short, the political turbulence during the Republican Era contributed to Chinese intellectuals’ self-partification in the 1930s and 1940s. That is to say that while the political tradition of Chinese journalism and the traditional relationship between intellectuals and the government were the underlying causes for the newspeople’s self-identification with certain political parties, the

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political turbulence during Republican years directly catalyzed the newspeople’s self-partification.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, past scholarship has not paid enough attention to the internal factors of Chinese journalism, especially its connection with Chinese cultural traditions.\(^90\) In Li Bin’s phrase, “[the current scholarship on China’s] journalism history advocates Western standards and emphasizes the Western factors. All the research frameworks and essential topics come from the West and are not based on China’s traditions. Even if [Chinese] traditions are included, they are treated as negative stuff.”\(^91\)

This chapter fills in this blank, analyzing the traditional dimension of Chinese journalism history. Indeed, influenced by a traditional and primarily Confucian heritage, the Chinese newspeople had a strong sense of responsibility for the country. The tendency to favor nationalism over individualism curbed the development of real liberalism and a free press. The practice of sacrificing a free press for the sake of the country began with the earliest modern Chinese journalists like Wang Tao, Yan Fu, and Liang Qichao. It did not disappear over the course of history but remained resilient. The most representative liberals in the 1930s and 1940s, Hu Shi and Chu Anping, still tended to prioritize national benefit over a free press. As mentioned earlier, Hu emphasized working for the country in his speeches; Chu often called for “sacrifice for the country” in his articles in *Guancha*.

\(^90\) This idea is inspired by Paul Cohen’s “China-centered approach” (versus Western-centric approach) that puts emphasis on indigenous factors in China rather than exogenous ones. See Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

It is noteworthy that the resilience of tradition and nationalism did not mean the stagnation of free press. Instead, journalistic professionalism developed fast in China. It is not unreasonable to argue that the idea of a free press had already become an integral part of Chinese journalism during the Republican era. Even before the end of the Anti-Japanese War, some newspeople had called for a free press. As He Qiliang observes: “Since 1944 when the Allies’ final victory in WWII was in sight, Ma Xingye, along with quite a number of fellow journalists and students of journalism in China, had altered his views on journalism and restored the rhetoric of freedom of speech.”92 Later, in both Taiwan and Mainland China, the newspeople advocated for free press after the civil war. In Taiwan, Lei Zhen (雷震) ran the noted *Free China* (自由中国), which advocated for liberalism in the 1950s.93 In Mainland China, Xia Gongran (夏公然), who worked as a Party journalist beginning in 1941, recalled, “At the time [1949], we hoped that after the establishment of a new China, our Party would have enough strength and confidence to offer a free news environment where people could say whatever they wanted.”94 During the Hundred Flowers Campaign, many newspeople, including Party members, aired their support for journalistic freedom. For example, Li Shenzhi (李慎之), a senior Party editor of the NCNA, told Lin Ke (林克) (one of Mao Zedong’s secretaries who visited the NCNA to collect the masses’ opinions for Mao after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956), “We want the lifting of [the ban on]

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press freedom.”

This undoubtedly demonstrates the resilience of the idea of a free press in China, even though Chinese journalists might have had a different interpretation of freedom of the press and journalistic professionalism than their Western counterparts. Overall, modern Chinese journalism history (the 1840s to 1950s) is a history in which tradition and nationalism remained resilient, while journalistic professionalism and a free press continuously advanced.

The resilience of tradition and nationalism created a closer relationship between the newspeople and the government. The Chinese newspeople usually preferred to collaborate with the government rather than to fight against it, although they could be fierce critics. Some newspeople, like Chen Bulei, Hollington Tong, Tao Xisheng, and others, eventually joined the government. Among those staying outside the government, Hu Shi and Zhang Jiluan showed a passion for working with the government in their articles and speeches. With the change of the political and social conditions, the new generation of newspeople, like Wang Yunsheng, Xu Zhucheng, and Chu Anping, sought to work with the rising Communists who at least were more likely to bring peace and prosperity to China, even though people like Chu were explicitly aware that there would be no freedom under Communist rule.

On all accounts, while the fall of the KMT government in 1949 witnessed the withering away of the liberal free press, the efforts that the government made to control the press, the newspeople’s tendency to sacrifice a free press for the country, and their willingness to work

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96 See Chu Anping, “Zhongguo de zhengju” (中国的政局 The political situation of China), in Cai Shangsi, Zhongguo xiandai sixiangshi ziliao jianbian, p. 35.
with the government continued in the early PRC. As a result, the transformation of journalism in 1949 was a fairly mild, as the majority of the newspeople voluntarily accepted Communist rule.

After gaining an understanding of Republican journalism, we need to explore Communist journalism before 1949, or we will not have a comprehensive grasp of the journalistic transformation after 1949. The next two chapters offer an examination of the Communist Party’s guiding ideas on the news and journalistic practice in the 1930s and 1940s.
2. The CCP’s Guiding Ideas on the News Before 1949

The Communist Party’s guiding ideas on the news set the tone for how the Party viewed and used its media and how it would change Republican journalism. To understand the journalistic transformation after 1949, it is imperative to delve into the Party’s guiding ideas on the news. These were formed during the Yan’an era (1935-1948), and especially during the Yan’an Rectification Movement (1942-1944)\(^1\) a movement that was not only a fierce power struggle, but also an ideological mass campaign.\(^2\) By the time the movement had ended, Mao had not only consolidated his paramount position within the Party, but he had also grasped the power of ideological interpretation. Therefore, he was able to transform the Party’s journalism according to his ideas, which laid the foundation of that journalism after 1949. No wonder that historian Gao Hua calls the Party journalism “Maoist journalism” (毛氏新闻学).\(^3\)

Based on Mao’s journalistic ideas, Bo Gu (博古 also known as Qin Bangxian 秦邦宪), the head of the Jiefang ribao (解放日报  拆头日报), in his “Zhiduzhe” (致读者 致读者 To the Readers) editorial of in April 01, 1942,\(^4\) issued a manifesto for the reshuffle (改版声明) of the


\(^3\) Gao Hua, *Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide*, p. 372.

\(^4\) The *Jiefang ribao*’s reshuffle in 1942 is widely viewed by Chinese scholars as a reshuffle that laid the foundations for the CCP’s guiding ideas on the news and signified Mao’s complete control of the Party’s media. Huang Dan and Zhou Yefei. “Xinxing jizhe: Zhuti gaizao yu chongsu” (新型记者: 主体的改造与重塑—延安解放日报改版之再考察 A new type of journalist: the transformation and remodeling of subject—A re-examination of Yan’an’s Jiefang ribao’s reshuffle) in Li Jinquan, ed., *Baoren baoguo*, pp. 325-354; Wang Runze, “Chongsu dangbao: Jiefang ribao gaiban shenceng dongle zhi tanxi” (重塑党报：解放日报改版深层动力之探析 Reshaping the Party newspaper:
paper, by enumerating four principles for the Party’s newspapers: that they must display the party characteristics (党性); the characteristics of the masses (群众性); combat characteristics (战斗性); and organizational characteristics (组织性), also called instructional characteristics (指导性). Most Chinese scholarship maintains that these elements became the fundamental characteristics of the Party newspapers. Although some scholars, such as Gao Hua and Nicolai Volland, put the Party’s journalistic principles in different ways, their theories do not go beyond the four characteristics put forward by the Jiefang ribao. Therefore, this chapter will continue to categorize the Party’s guiding ideas on the news according to these four characteristics.


5 The fourth category, organizational characteristics, is also known as instructional characteristics (指导性). Although the two terms are different, they were both drawn from the fourth principle in “Zhiduzuhe” and thus have the same meaning. This principle reads: “To answer the Party’s call or to instruct the mass movement according to the Party’s policies, we [the Jiefang ribao] will oversee and instruct the development of [mass] movements and help various mass movements and struggles of the workers and peasants. The Party newspapers are not newspapers that will record what has been heard but are promoters and organizers of various movements.” In “To the Readers” (致读者), Jiefang ribao, April 1, 1942.


7 Gao Hua deems that the characteristics of Maoist journalism were the “Party characteristics,” “the principle of opposing ‘sham truth,’” “the speed of the news must be weighed against the Party’s interests,” “the principle of utilizing newspapers to direct campaigns,” and “the principle of news confidentiality and access to classified
1. Party characteristics

“Party characteristics” is the foremost characteristic of the Party papers. The fundamental character of the Party papers has often been summarized as “sixing yitong” (四性一统 four characteristics unified as one), which means that while the party papers were defined by the Party characteristics, mass characteristics, combat characteristics, and organizational characteristics, the Party characteristics are foremost and the other three are subordinate to it. Lenin first brought forward the term “party characteristics.” In his 1905 article, “Party Organization and Party Literature,” Lenin claims,

What is this principle of party literature? It is not simply that, for the socialist proletariat, literature cannot be a means of enriching individuals or groups: it cannot, in fact, be an individual undertaking, independent of the common cause of the proletariat. Down with non-partisan writers! Down with literary supermen! Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, “a cog and a screw” of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component of organized, planned and

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Volland argues that the six core points of the Party’s media concept are: 1) The media must represent the unified, single voice of the party; 2) They are indispensable tools of party propaganda and party building; 3) they assist the party, the avant-garde of the working class, to raise the consciousness of the people; 4) they do so by focusing on the concrete concerns of the masses and becoming one with the masses; 5) the media are essentially about education; 6) they are a weapon as well as a battleground of class struggle and must fight against any attempt of the enemy to gain ground in the superstructure. Although Gao’s and Volland’s points demonstrate different aspects of the Party papers, their theories do not go beyond the four characteristics put forward by Jiefang ribao. As is discussed in this chapter, the characteristics that Gao Hua points out fall into the categories of the party and organizational characteristics. Volland’s points one and two are representations of the Party characteristics. Points three to five can be classified as the mass characteristics. Point six is similar to the combat characteristics. See Gao Hua, How the Red Sun Rose, pp. 398-400; Gao Hua, Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide, pp. 373-374; Volland, “The Control of the Media in the People’s Republic of China,” p. 129.

8 Li Bin, Shuimu shutan, p. 87; Huang Dan, “Cong buwanquan dangbao dao wanquan dangbao,” p. 279
integrated Social-Democratic Party work…. Newspapers must become the organs of the various party organizations, and their writers must by all means become members of these organizations. Publishing and distributing centers, bookshops and reading-rooms, libraries and similar establishments—must all be under party control.9

In another article, Lenin argues, “Materialism includes partisanship, so to speak, and enjoins the direct and open adoption of the standpoint of a definite social group in any assessment of events.”10 From Lenin’s argument, we can see that Party characteristics means: 1) papers must be consistent with “the common cause of the proletariat;” 2) papers and writers must all be under party control; and 3) papers must become “a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work.”11 Ma Chao maintains, due to the difficulties that the Party faced in the 1920s and 1930s such as the oppression from and warfare with the KMT, the Party did not pay enough attention to Lenin’s concept of Party characteristics. It was not until the Yan’an era that this concept gained momentum.12

Indeed, the concept of party characteristics greatly inspired the Party news workers in Yan’an. In “To the Readers,” Bo Gu advocates that every article, piece of news, and message must be in line with the Party’s standpoints and understanding, and newspapers must become the pioneer promotor of all the Party’s policies and agendas.13 As a result, the Party completely

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11 Also see Chen Lidan, Makesi zhuyi xinwengan sixiang tixi (The Marxist journalistic ideas system) (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2006), pp. 328-332.
13 “Zhiduzhe” (致读者 To the readers), Jiefang ribao, April 1, 1942.
controlled the Party newspapers. As Huang Dan, a leading historian of journalism, puts it, the Party’s newspapers were transformed from partial Party newspapers into complete Party newspapers in the Yan’an years.\(^\text{14}\)

Furthermore, based on Lenin’s ideas, in 1944 Mao advocated the idea that “the entire Party shall run the press (全党办报),” and called on the Party branches at all the levels to run the newspapers.\(^\text{15}\) In 1948, Mao further developed this idea, asking the masses to contribute to the Party’s newspapers. Therefore, the various levels of Party committees established their own newspapers to instruct the work at the local level. Eventually, the newspapers became an integral part of the Party’s working methods. With Mao’s encouragement, Party leaders became adept at utilizing the newspapers to initiate and push forward the Party’s policies, power and ideological struggles, warfare, and campaigns. In Gao Hua’s words, “From a campaign’s launch until its peak, reporting must be focused to reach a propagandistic scale, allowing it to educate the cadres and the masses and intimidate and attack the enemy.”\(^\text{16}\)

Whereas the Party’s tight rein on its newspapers and its use of them had greatly increased its efficiency, it also had another effect, which was the reduction of journalistic objectivity and freedom of speech. The Party refuted the idea of journalistic objectivity. According to its idea of class struggle, the press has a class nature and is the weapon of the ruling class. In Lu Dingyi’s words, “In class society, every piece of news retains its class nature or political nature in the


The newspapers of the different classes could only speak for their own class. As a proletarian party, the CCP had to ensure that its newspapers were consistent with “the common cause of the proletariat.” Therefore, the news in the Party’s newspapers had to conform to the Party’s standpoints. As Lu puts it, “Respecting the truth and political revolution are inseparable…only if [we] combine respect for the truth with revolutionary standpoints, can we be fully materialistic news workers.” In other words, only the news in line with the Party’s interests could be published in the Party newspapers.

Furthermore, the timing of releasing the news depended on when it was best for the Party, rather than on when the news event happened. As Gao Hua points out, “The speed of the news must be weighed against the Party’s interests.” In 1957, in his conversation with the press representatives, Mao claimed, “We need to do specific analysis on concrete problems, as well as on the timing of the release of the news. For certain problems, it is no longer about the speed of the news: those news stories should not be released at all.” This idea was later formally summarized into the concept of “New news (新闻), old news (旧闻), and no news (无闻).” Chen Lidan argues that, although this concept was formally put forward in the 1950s, Mao actually had already asked the press to publish certain news at certain times or to block certain news as early as the Anti-Japanese War. This concept indicates the subordination of journalism to politics. The news would be postponed or ignored whenever it was deemed necessary to do so.

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17 Lu Dingyi, “Women dui xinwenxue de jiben guandian” (我们对新闻学的基本观点 Our basic position on journalism), Jiefang ribao, September 1, 1943.
18 Lu Dingyi, “Women dui xinwenxue de jiben guandian.”
19 Mao Zedong, “Tong xinwen chubanjie daibiao de tanhua” (同新闻出版界代表的谈话 Talks with representatives from journalistic circles), in GZWX, p. 193.
20 Chen Lidan, Makesi zhuyi xinwen sixiang gailun (马克思主义新闻思想概论) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2003), p. 271; Also see Kang Huayi, “Xinwen jiwen buwen” (新闻,旧闻,不闻 New news, old news,
2. Mass characteristics

As a proletarian party, the Party constantly viewed itself as the representative of the majority of the people—those who were exploited by the bourgeoisie. Hence, it was no surprise for the Party to claim that its newspapers were created with “mass characteristics.” In the manifesto, “To the Readers,” on the reshuffle of the *Jiefang ribao* in 1942, Bo Gu claims that on the one hand the Party newspapers would “work closely with the masses, reflecting their feelings, needs, and demands, and would record their heroic stories, making their voices heard.” On the other hand, the newspapers would “enrich the masses’ knowledge, broaden their horizons, improve their political consciousness, teach them, organize them, and become their tongue and throat and friend.” In other words, “mass characteristics” has two meanings: first, the Party newspapers would speak for the masses and second, they would infuse the masses with Party ideology. It is easy to see that these two meanings are in conflict, since it requires the Party newspapers to represent the “students” and “teachers” at the same time. Nevertheless, in practice, they did not conflict with each other, since the Party put more emphasis on the latter.

These mass characteristics in part originated from the theory of imbuerment in Marxism-Leninism. Among the writers of the Marxist classics, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Kautsky all talked about imbuerment. However, it was Lenin who elaborated this notion. Peter no news, *Faxing chuban yanjiu*, 6(2006): 74-76; Hu Xiaojian and Zhao Yunze, “Mao Zedong de xinwen jiwen buwen sixiang” (毛泽东的新闻旧闻不闻思想), *Xinwenjie*, 03(2014): 53-54.


Kenez even hails this notion as Lenin’s advancement of Marxism. As Kenez puts it, “Lenin’s most fundamental revision of Marxist thought was the rejection of the notion that the workers in the process of class struggle would develop the necessary class consciousness to bring about the revolution.”

It was in his influential article, “What Is To Be Done,” that Lenin developed his theory of imbuement: “Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers.” As a result, it suffices to say that although the Communist parties highlighted the necessity to speak for the masses, the foremost task, from their perspective, was to teach the masses, not to listen to them.

As Mao highlighted the concept of mass line in 1943, the Party further required its news workers to work at the grassroots level and listen to the ordinary people. However, Mao’s mass line still put more emphasis on imbuement. In his writings about the mass line, Mao argued:

> In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily ‘from the masses, to the masses.’ This means, take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are preserved in and carried

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through. And so on, over and over in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more
correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge.25

It was still the Party who would make the choices and decide what was to be propagated and explained to the masses, despite the emphasis on taking ideas from the masses. Only those ideas in line with the Party’s policies were selected, though the Party might adjust its policies according to what it heard from the people. Although the situation in Yan’an was different from that after 1949, Philip Huang’s description of the peasants after 1949 is largely consistent with that in Yan’an: “There can be no denying the strongly conspiratorial mentality and work style of the Leninist Communist Party, its protestations of a ‘mass line’ notwithstanding. Peasants in post-1949 China remain in many respects the objects of party manipulation, rather than the supposed masters of the revolution made in their name.”26

In a similar vein, Stuart Schram reveals the similarity between Mao’s mass line and Lenin’s theory of imbuenment:

Mao’s injunction to ‘link the nucleus of leadership closely with the broad masses,’ and to sum up the experience of mass struggles’ was seriously meant. But in the end the aim was to take the ‘scattered and unsystematic ideas of the masses,’ turn them into ‘concentrated and systematic ideas,’ and then ‘go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own…. In other words, the people were to be made interiorize ideas which they were quite incapable of elaborating

for themselves. There is a remarkable parallel between this last phrase and Lenin’s view that class consciousness could only be imported into the proletariat from outside.27 Therefore, we can conclude that the so-called mass characteristics of the Party newspapers were less about listening to the masses than imbuing them with the Party’s ideology. Listening to the masses to some degree just served to legitimate the Party’s imbuing activities. As Chen Yongfa’s comment on the Party’s mass line suggests, “It was not unreasonable for the CCP to stress the masses’ participation. However, [this] concealed the Party organization’s central role in its mass line and attempted to mislead the public opinion… Although [the pressure from the masses] was led by the CCP’s organization stealthily, it appeared like something developed by the masses themselves, which made them more acceptable for ordinary people.” 28

3. Combat characteristics

As the name suggests, combat characteristics highlight the Party newspapers’ “fighting feature.” This concept partially derived from Stalin’s well-known phrase on newspapers, namely that the press is the “sharpest and strongest weapon of our party,”—an often-quoted phrase among the Party news workers.29 Furthermore, Stalin’s work, History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course, greatly shaped Mao’s and his colleagues’ understanding of the combat feature of its newspapers, though that book was not directly about journalism. In Andrew G. Walder’s phrase, Short Course “had a major impact on Mao, and for the rest of his life it shaped his understanding of Marxism-Leninism and the building of

28 Chen Yongfa, Yan’an de yinying, p. 151.
29 “Zhi duzhe,” Jiefang ribao, April 1, 1942.
socialism.” In this book, Stalin depicted the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as one full of struggles between different political lines, thus presenting “a version of Marxist-Leninist theory more radical and more aggressive than the kind of Marxism-Leninism that had hitherto been known in China.” Inspired by this book, Mao asked Party intellectuals such as Ren Bishi (任弼时) and Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木) to edit a collection of the CCP’s historical documents within which his line defeated the (erroneous) lines represented by Wang Ming (王明), Bo Gu (博古) and Zhou Enlai (周恩来). Moreover, Mao made Short Course mandatory reading material during the Rectification Movement in Yan’an and after, which meant it had an enormous effect on the Party members. According to Guo Huaruo (郭化若), Mao’s military secretary, Mao once said in a cadre conference, “Short Course is a book. I have read through it ten times. I recommend it to you.” From 1939 to the 1950s, Mao called on all Party members to read Short Course no less than ten times. As a result, Short Course had a huge impact on many aspects of the Party’s practice, and, of course, on its journalism. As Volland puts it, “Short Course has exercised an influence on Chinese Communist thinking that can hardly be overestimated. The worldview advertised in this product of Stalin’s historians has penetrated not only CCP Party historiography, but many other fields, including the media sector.”

Under the impact of Stalin’s ideas and Short Course, the combat characteristics were listed as one of the key four characteristics of the Communist Party’s journalism. “To the Reader,” mentioned above, claimed that Party papers should fight for the Party’s political lines

33 See Gao Hua, Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqi de, pp. 187-188.
and be powerful tools for self-criticism within the Party. However, the Party papers were used less as tools for self-criticism within the Party than as weapons to fight for the right political lines, namely Mao’ leadership, and to vehemently attack other lines or dissidents.

The Party news workers learned the belligerent writing style from *Short Course*. In Hua-yu Li’s words, “It is commonly known among well-informed Chinese Communists that the CCP has emulated the writing style of *Short Course* in many contexts.” This influence was so long-lasting that the Party’s news workers still took the writing style of *Short Course* as the standard in the 1970s. Li reports on one interview that took place during her research and she states the following about the interviewee, Zheng Yifan (郑异凡):

Zheng consciously emulated the writing style of the *Short Course* at the time he was writing an article critical of the ‘Gang of the Four.’ Zheng was asked by his unit superior to write a newspaper article denouncing the Gang of Four. Zheng first checked the section in the *Short Course* where Trotsky was being condemned. In the article criticizing the Gang of Four, he then used language that was provocative and sharply condemnatory in tone, similar to the language used in the section in the *Short Course* condemning Trotsky. Zheng told me that he felt very good after writing the article.35

In short, the combat characteristics were embodied in both the purpose of the Party’s journalism and the Party news workers’ writing style.

4. Organizational characteristics

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The Party newspapers’ organizational or instructional characteristics highlight the Party papers’ serving as promotors and organizers of mass movements in accordance with the Party policies. Lenin’s article, “What Is to Be Done,” has had the strongest influence on this concept. In this article, Lenin claimed that the Party’s newspapers should function as the Party’s promoter, propagandist, and organizer. This idea was so influential in China that every Party news worker was familiar this phrase. “To the Readers” maintains: “What were Party newspapers? Whenever we think about this problem, ‘A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organizer’ would certainly pass through our mind.”36 Huang Dan argues that this phrase soon gained popularity and was frequently quoted by the Party leaders in the 1930s, becoming “the standard interpretation of the Party newspapers’ nature, status, and function.”37 In the same manner, Volland contends, Lenin’s phrase “became the locus classicus in all references concerning the relationship between organization and propaganda in the Communist Party’s work.”38

However, Chen Lidan suggests, while Lenin’s phrase on the Party newspapers’ function exercised a great impact on the organizational characteristics, the sentences about this characteristic in “To the Readers” directly derives from Stalin’s theory of the Party newspapers’ organizational function. Stalin’s theory included three core points: 1) large scale propaganda campaigns should be organized to respond to and work on the Party’s central tasks; 2) the press should launch mass movements according to the Party’s central tasks; 3) the press should pay attention to the problems that occurred within the mass movements.39 Stalin further stressed the

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36 “Zhi duzhe,” Jiefang ribao, April 1, 1942.
39 Chen Lidan,Makesi zhuxi xinwen cidian, p. 82.
connection between the party newspapers and the party’s central tasks. Hence, the Party newspapers became the Party’s most significant instrument in motivating the masses and performing the Party’s tasks.

In practice, this characteristic did promote the Party’s core work (中心任务). The news materials that were related to the Party’s core work were intensively reported, which surprised Zhao Chaogou (赵超构), a liberal journalist who visited Yan’an in 1944. In his travel notes, he wrote, “The newspapers and brochures functioned like cheerleaders loudly cheering the heroes of labor. Nine out of ten pieces of news on the second page of the Jiefang ribao were about production. The news was generally about who got up early to open up the wasteland in the mountains, how much wasteland one opened up to set a new record…. Following the cheering, all this sort of news was delivered to the poor neighborhoods [in Yan’an].”

This practice gradually evolved into a journalistic tradition. As Sun Xupei puts it, “The later-formed tradition was that as long as the news materials were about the propaganda of the central tasks, or would contribute to central tasks, they would become the focus of the media, no matter whether they appealed to the readers.”

However, on the other hand, this characteristic of the Party newspapers eroded the fundamental function of the Party newspapers as media—the transfer of information. Beside the news that would facilitate the Party’s work, most of which was political or economic, other news would often be neglected by the Party news workers. Wang Xiaolan suggests, “The exploration of the universe, volcano eruptions, and earthquakes were supra-class news. Thus, Party newspapers in the base areas rarely reported on them. The limited space in the newspapers was

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40 Zhao Chaogou, Yan’an yiyue (延安一月 One month in Yan’an) (Shanghai: Xinmin baoguan, 1946), p. 81.
given to the fierce Anti-Japanese War, struggles between lines, and various construction projects.”

Hence, this concept to certain degree transformed the Party newspapers into the Party’s bulletin boards. Many articles in the CCP newspapers read like announcements (公告). Until the 1980s, Mu Qing (穆青), the head of the NCNA, still complained that “many news reports read like official documents, or report summaries.”

To highlight the organizational characteristics, the Party newspapers emphasized the local news. Indeed, the reorganized Jiefang ribao prioritized the news about the Party and the borderland region over the international news. Before the Jiefang ribao’s reorganization, the paper’s front page mainly printed the international news. As Patricia Stranahan observes, before the reform, “international news, editorials, and essays dominated the Liberation Daily…. Topics given the least consideration included Border Region news, the first stages of rectification, the Guomindang, public opinion, and literature. In other words, events not related directly to life in the Border Region formed the backbone of the newspaper.”

By contrast, after the reorganization, the front page mostly consisted of news about the borderland region. Stranahan contends, after the reform, “Border Region matters received more emphasis than international news. Articles concerning working people became, for a time, the lead stories on page 1.”

This change reflected the Party’s emphasis on the organizational characteristics of its newspapers. After the reform, the Party papers were transformed into the organizers of local work. Huang Dan writes, “This arrangement was never simply a reorganization of [the paper’s] layout, but a fundamental change of the paper’s policy. The paper was transformed from the

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42 Wang Xiaolan, “Kangzhan shiqi zhonggong guanyu xinwen zhenshixing he dangxing yuanze lunshu,” p. 140.
44 Patricia Stranahan, Molding the Medium, p. 25.
45 Patricia Stranahan, Molding the Medium, p. 38.
transferer of news and presenter of [the Party’s] policies into the specific instructor, promoter, and organizer of [the Party’s] work.”46 Indeed, to uphold the Party newspapers’ organizational characteristics, international news was never put on the front page of the Party papers from then until 1986.47

Significantly, this emphasis on the local news imitated the Soviet press. In the Soviet Union, the priority of international news over local or national news started in the beginning of the Stalin era. As Matthew Lenoe maintains, “International news has been displaced from the front page by ‘all-Union’ news from the great construction sites and new factories of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932).”48 Similarly, as Angus Roxburgh describes, “One remarkable feature [of Pravda] is the predominance… of home affairs over international affairs.”49

In sum, the Party newspapers’ four characteristics were all derivative of media concepts developed earlier in the Soviet Union, especially those by Stalin. As Gao Hua states, “The basic standpoints of Mao’s journalism did not diverge substantially from those of Wang Ming and Bo Gu, which likewise were rooted in the journalistic theories of Lenin and Stalin. Mao merely put a greater emphasis on Party characteristics than Wang Ming and Bo Gu and he was more Stalinist—perhaps even more Stalinist than Stalin.”50 Similarly, Volland maintains, “Media thinking in the PRC is firmly rooted within the world of Marxist philosophy and its practical

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46 Huang Dan, “Cong buwanquan dangbao dao wanquan dangbao,” p. 269.
50 Gao Hua, How the Red Sun Rose, p. 401.
application, as realized in the Soviet Union.” Undoubtedly, the advocacy and utilitarian journalistic tradition, and the national crisis in the 1930s and 1940s mentioned in Chapter 1 streamlined the process by which these concepts were accepted by the CCP members.

Through these media concepts from the Soviet Union, the Party succeeded in transforming the its papers into the “sharpest and strongest weapon” for the Party to use in imbuing the masses with its ideology, attacking dissidents or its enemies internally or externally, motivating the masses, and pushing forward the implementation of its core work. Although the Party newspapers’ guiding ideas on the news greatly facilitated the Party’s revolutionary cause, they exhibited the Party’s didactic style and crippled the basic function of the newspaper which was the transfer of information.

With its guiding ideas on the news, the Party changed its papers, but this raises some new questions. Did these changes help the Party’s practice? Did they help the Party indoctrinate the masses with its ideology and mobilize them? If so, how? Given that these guiding ideas, especially the party characteristics, crippled the Party papers’ information transmission function, how could the Party leaders know what was happening at the grassroots level? The next chapter attempts to answer these questions.

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52 On this point, please see Volland, “The Control of the Media in the PRC,” pp. 131-188.

The Party’s news practice and the development of its internal bulletin system (内参系统) before 1949 greatly changed the landscape of Chinese journalism and laid the foundation for the PRC’s journalism. Without a good understanding of them, it would be hard for us to understand the journalistic transformation under the Communist regime. This chapter will offer a comprehensive exploration of the Party’s news practice and the development of the Party’s internal bulletin system before 1949.

While there has already been much research on the Party’s journalistic practice before 1949, current scholarship primarily focuses on how the Party established its control over its newspapers.¹ No single work has systematically delved into the question of how the Party news workers operated at the grassroots level and the methods that they utilized to disseminate news based on Party thought (although there are many studies that focus on specific aspects such as worker-peasant correspondents, blackboard newspapers, and newspaper-reading groups).²

Compared to speaking bitterness (诉苦) and public accusation meetings (控诉会) that are widely regarded as the most efficient techniques of mass mobilization by the Party, these mass journalistic institutions operated on a daily, continuous basis at the grassroots level. Thus, they also contributed to the Party’s mobilization of the masses and to the Communist revolution, though this subject has attracted far less scholarly attention.\(^3\)

Moreover, I disagree with the previous scholarship that claims the experience with the grassroots functioned as an ideological transformation for the Party newspeople, making them believe in the Party’s guiding ideas on the news and even the Party’s Communist ideology.\(^4\) Instead, I argue while there is no doubt that the Party’s guiding ideas on the news and working methods established during the Rectification Movement became an integral part of the Party’s journalism, the guiding ideas and working methods were not uncontested for the Party news workers. In fact, the Party’s guiding ideas on the news had been continually questioned and even challenged from the time they were established in 1942.

Meanwhile, there has been almost no scholarly attention paid to the Party’s internal bulletin system before 1949. The limited scholarship on this field includes Wan Jinghua’s studies of two early internal bulletins, the *Jinri xinwen* (今日新闻 Today’s News) and the early *Cankao*...
xiaoxi (参考消息 Reference News), and Yin Yungong and Liu Xiange’s study of the Party’s internal bulletin system. Although Yin and Liu have studied the internal bulletin system in its entirety, they only briefly discussed the pre-1949 system. Thus, prior to this dissertation, no study has focused on the early internal bulletin system.

This chapter principally consists of two parts. The first part is a systematic exploration of the Party’s journalistic practice and how the Party newspapers worked at the grassroots level. The second part traces the development of the Party’s internal bulletin system before 1949.

The Party’s news practice

In the process of establishing its guiding ideas the on news, the Party strove to translate these concepts into formal institutions. In order to reinforce control of the papers, the Party established a systematic set of institutions to manage its press. Moreover, the Party news workers were required not only to write new-style news that was represented by the “typical reports” (典型报道), but also to uphold the mass line, thus working at the grassroots level and promoting the masses’ participation in the Party news system.

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This part of this chapter does not discuss the Party’s journalistic practice in the areas controlled by the KMT, and in particular their experience of running of the *Xinhua ribao* (新华日报 Xinhua Daily) in Chongqing, although that was a significant part of the its journalistic practice. The primary reason is that he journalistic practice in the Party’s base areas became the mainstream of Party journalism and laid the foundation for its journalistic practice after 1949.6

*The Party’s strict control of its press*

The Yan’an years witnessed the establishment of the Party’s absolute control over its papers as the Party papers were incorporated into the Party’s bureaucratic system. The Party authorities were required to supervise, use, and contribute to the Party newspapers while the Party news workers were asked to attend certain government meetings in order to gain a better understanding of Party policies. As a result, the Party newspapers became an indispensable part of the Party’s bureaucracy and a crucial instrument of the Party. The Party’s strict control of its newspapers was exemplified by its relationship with the *Jiefang ribao*. Obviously, during the turbulence caused by endless warfare and talent shortages before 1949, few Party branches could afford to adopt the *Jiefang ribao* model.

During the Yan’an rectification movement, and after his defeat of Wang Ming and Wang’s ally Bo Gu, Mao gained control of the *Jiefang ribao* and made a series of rules to

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6 According to Wu Jing, “‘After the establishment of PRC, Yan’an’s *Jiefang ribao* became the Party’s only model of running newspapers. The party newspapers mainly carried on the Party’s journalistic tradition in the rural revolutionary base areas. The tradition of *Xinhua ribao* almost disappeared.’” Furthermore, Huang Dan argues that the remodeling of the *Jiefang ribao* set the model for the further Party’s newspapers. See Wu Jing (伍静), “Dangbao de lingyizhong chuantong—Yan’an Jiefang ribao yu Chongqing Xinhuaribao de bijiao he butong mingyun” (党报的另一种传统——延安《解放日报》与重庆《新华日报》的比较及不同命运 The Party newspapers’ other tradition—a comparison of the Yan’an *Jiefang ribao* and the Chongqing *Xinhua ribao* and their different fates), *Xinwen jizhe*, 11(2015): 49.
reinforce that control. He made Lu Dingyi, one of his right-hand men, the chief editor of the *Jiefang ribao*, replacing Bo Gu.\(^7\) Under Mao’s instructions, Lu established a series of institutions to ensure Party control of the paper, including 1) periodic inspections of the paper; 2) a paper-reviewing system: The editors were obligated to ask permission from the Central Committee on all the significant issues ranging from news briefs (消息) to editorials. In the *Jiefang ribao*, the writers were not allowed to clamor for the independence of a single word (阑独立性). 3) The approval of final proofs: Only the final proofs signed by the individuals in charge could be printed by the Party’s printing plants. 4) All parts of the *Jiefang ribao*, including the editorials, monographs (专论), and front pages, needed to be signed by the specific individuals in charge in order to ensure their political correctness.\(^8\)

Furthermore, the Party papers were incorporated into the Party bureaucracy and became an indispensable instrument of the Party. As the *Jiefang ribao* evolved into the mouthpiece of the Central Committee and the Northwest Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, it became obligatory reading for Party members. The Party branches were required to treat the papers as formal Party documents and to discuss and carry out the policies it outlined. An instrument from the Northwest Bureau reads, “All levels of the Party leadership need to organize [the Party members] to study, discuss, and implement [the speeches and articles in the paper]. They cannot ignore them under the pretext of having not received direct notice from the Party.”\(^9\) Huang Dan


Moreover, Party authorities were required to supervise, use, and contribute to the *Jiefang ribao* and certain leaders of the Northwest Bureau had to attend the editorial meetings. Additionally, the heads of the propaganda section at all levels of the Party branches were asked to serve as correspondents (通讯员) for the newspaper. Hu Qiaomu contended, “Mao Zedong and other central leaders all contributed to the *Jiefang ribao*…. Among them, Mao wrote more articles and more types of articles than any of the other leaders. Beside writing editorials and news, he also wrote speeches and comments under the name ‘Spokesman of the Party Center’ and ‘Reporter from the NCNA.’” Volland observes that the Party required “its high-ranking cadres to deliver fixed monthly quotas of articles to the Party papers.” The leaders were also obligated to develop, regulate, and censor the worker-peasant correspondents, who had no professional training or experience in journalism, in their administrative regions in order to ensure the political correctness of the news. For their part, the news workers of the *Jiefang ribao* needed to attend the various meetings of the Northwest bureau regularly in order to gain a better understanding of the Party’s policies and work with the Party authorities. Hence, the *Jiefang ribao* became an indispensable part and crucial instrument of the Northwest Bureau.

To conclude, the Party established strict control over the Party newspapers and transformed them into an essential part of the Party bureaucracy. Huang Dan explained, “The

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editorial department of the Party newspapers was connected with the Party’s leadership…. The Party’s newspapers, as the Party’s throat and tongue, took root in the Party organization.”

“Typical reports”

For the Party’s news workers, doing “typical reports” (典型报道) meant they needed to focus on the models set by the Party and write as many news reports about them as possible in a very brief time. This type of report was the most significant type of news writing developed after the reshuffle of the Jiefang ribao and later became a distinct feature of Party journalism and a significant method of work in the Party’s tool kit. In the Yan’an years, this type of news writing not only responded to Mao’s call to “oppose stereotypical Party writing” (反对党八股), thus making the news writing much more lively and attractive, but also fulfilled the function of the newspapers as the Party’s collective propagandist, agitator, and organizer, helping the Party to solve the hardships caused by the KMT’s economic blockade.

“Oppose stereotypical Party writing” was a key aim of the Rectification Movement. For the Party news workers, this meant they needed to stop the long-winded, theoretical writings and make their reports fresh, vivid, lively, and interesting. The rise of these typical reports helped the Party news workers change their writing style. Zhu Muzhi (朱穆之), who had worked as the

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15 Stereotypical Party writing, or “eight-legged Party writing,” was condemned by Mao as long-winded, theoretical writing that lacked substance and vividness, thus failing to appeal to the proletariat readers. In Mao’s words, this kind of writing was like “the foot-bonding of a slattern, long as well as smelly.” See Mao Zedong, “Fandui dangbagu” (反对党八股), in GZWX, pp. 70-89; Xing Lu, The Rhetoric of Mao Zedong: Transforming China and Its People (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 61-68.
deputy chief editor of the NCNA in the 1950s and become its head after the Cultural Revolution, illustrated the relationship between the new writing requirements and the typical reports: “In the new China, what are the richest, the most moving, and the most representative things in the people’s lives? Aren’t they the exemplary people and experiences?... If we pay enough attention to the news reports on exemplary people and experiences, our news reports will be fresh and instructive. If we fail to so, our reports will lose their freshness and instructive nature.”

Although Zhu delivered this speech in 1951, it fits the Yan’an context. In addition, in 1948, Mao also suggested that propaganda materials that “included typical experiences were livelier and more abundant than the resolutions and directives issued by the leadership.”

Indeed, through the typical reports the Party news workers dramatically changed their writing style. Instead of mechanically introducing Party policy, the Party newspeople demonstrated those policies through reporting on specific exemplary people or experiences. In other words, the typical reports were concrete, personalized, dramatic demonstrations of the Party’s policies, and were obviously more attractive than the stereotypical Party writings.

Apparently, this new writing style better fulfilled the Party newspapers’ function as the promoters of Party policies. In the early 1940s, the CCP was confronted with economic woes resulting from a blockade by the KMT and “a lack of cadres engaged in production.” To solve this problem, the Party launched the Great Production Movement (大生产运动) and proposed the slogan, “Ample Food and Clothing.” In this campaign, finding China’s Stakhanov—a model

17 Zhu Muzhi, Fengyun jidang qishinian (风云激荡七十年  The great seventy years), Volume 1 (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2007), pp. 54-55.
18 Mao Zedong, “Jishi bofa Shanxi guoxian tugai de hao jingyan” (及时播发山西崞县土改的好经验 Timely promotion of the good experience of Land Reform in Guo County, Shanxi Province), in GZWX, p. 145.
laborer—was regarded as a fruitful approach for pushing it forward. Shortly after the beginning of the Rectification Movement, Mo Ai (莫艾), a Jiefang ribao journalist, invented the Party’s first Stakhanovite, Wu Manyou (吴满有), and wrote the first typical reports in the Party’s journalism history. Mo told the life story of Wu who succeeded in improving himself from being a poor peasant to a rich one relying on the land distributed by the Party. After getting rich, he continuously expressed his gratitude to the Party through paying more taxes than required and purchasing government bonds.

These reports vividly proved the correctness of the Party’s land policy, legitimating the Party regime. Eventually, Wu’s story helped the Party promote its Great Production Movement. Zhu De (朱德) stated that the social value of the Wu Manyou coverage was worth 200,000 dan (担/石) of grain, which equated to the total amount of agricultural tax that the borderland government received in 1941. Inspired by the success of this story, such reports gradually become the primary feature of CCP journalism. Over the following year, more than 600 models emerged in the Party newspapers, including Ma Pi’en (马丕恩), the hero of immigrant laborers; Xue Pitang (薛丕棠), the hero of refugee laborers; model Party member Shen Changlin (申长林); Huang Lide (黄立德), the hero of the laborers among the government officials; and several

20 In April 30th, 1942, the Jiefang ribao published two reports and one editorial about Wu Manyou. These three articles were the beginning of the intense coverage on Wu. The two reports were titled, “Mofan nongcun laodong yingxiong Wu Manyou” (模范农村劳动英雄吴满有 Model rural labor hero Wu Manyou), and “Budanshi zhongzhuangjia mofan hai shi yige mofan gongmin” (不但是种庄稼模范 还是一个模范公民 Not only a model peasant but also a model citizen).
female models such as model weaver Chang Jinhua and the female heroes of labor, Li Fenglian (李凤莲), Liu Nü’er (刘女儿), and Cao Nüzi (曹女子). Huang Dan and Zhou Yefei suggest that almost all the noted journalists in China became famous for their typical reports before the reform and opening-up in 1978.

However, it is worth noting that not all the models were a success because they followed the Party policies. Rather, their success resulted from their hard work and intelligence. As Patricia Stranahan puts it, “In my own research on labor heroines based on articles from the Liberation Daily, I found that with rare exception the most successful heroines did not follow the accepted Party line. In fact, most pursued independent capitalistic courses working for their own material benefit rather than for any belief in the correctness of current policy.” Moreover, in many cases, the typical reports were used to justify the Party leadership. Thus, the Party news workers emphasized the political significance of the typical reports rather than their reliability. While speaking highly of the typical reports, Zhu Qinghe admits, “The political purpose and revolutionary passion of launching an overwhelming production campaign to some degree resulted in the neglect of the reliability of the typical reports.” In sum, to some degree, the typical reports were well-constructed stories that were used to persuade and mobilize the masses, but they were not necessarily factual. This tendency to neglect reliability led to the

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25 Stranahan, Molding the Medium, p. 40.
theatricalization of news after 1949, especially during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which will be discussed in Chapter 10.

From then on, using typical reports to promote its policies became one of the most fundamental working methods of the Party. Mao regarded using papers as a working method and he viewed typical reports as a fundamental use of the papers. In his talk in March 1944, Mao argued, “In the past, we learned a working method: meetings (开会)…. If you can adopt running papers as a working method, many theories and models can be promoted through them. This is a working method.” In the second part of this talk, Mao discussed how typical reports would work: “Previously, we set forth a plan to increase the amount of public grain (公粮) by 400 thousand dan. Even though no one understood how to do this,… [later we] figured out a Wu Manyou and thus we knew how to increase it.” According to this experience, Mao suggested that the Party cadres use models to promote literacy groups in the Border areas.27 As well, in March 1948, Mao Zedong asked the Party leaders to “pay attention to collecting and spreading the chosen typical experiences, after issuing resolutions or directives on various kinds of significant work.”28

Li Liangrong, a scholar, observes that “‘Bearing the overall situation in our breasts and having models in our hands (胸中有全局，手中有榜样)’ became an essential method of Party leadership. In the countryside, every village had models; in industrial and mining enterprises, every team had models; in the army, every company had models. The Party established models for every policy and called it ‘using models to clear the way (典型开道).’”29

29 Li Liangrong, “Shehui shengtai yu zhongguo xinwen gaige” (社会生态与中国新闻改革 Social ecology and the journalistic reform of China), in Li Lingrong, Li Liangrong zixuanji, p. 30.
Connecting with the grassroots: mass journalistic institutions

Although Mao’s primary purpose of emphasizing the mass line was to transform the *Jiefang ribao* into the Party’s propaganda weapon and to imbue the people with the Party’s creeds rather than to speak for them, this emphasis did greatly change the ways in which the Party news workers conducted their work. They were required to reach the grassroots level, to work in the countryside, to use the language of the masses, and to establish institutions of mass journalism, such as the worker-peasant correspondents (工农通讯员), newspaper-reading groups, and blackboard/wall newspapers. These institutions enabled the Party to disseminate news that consisted of its rhetoric and ideology to the grassroots level.

To follow Mao’s mass line, the Party newspapers organized their workers to “go down to the countryside.” In Yan’an, Mu Haileng (缪海楼), a well-known NCNA reporter who went to work and live in the Longdong Division (陇东专区) of the countryside in 1942 recalled, “When we went down to the countryside, I always lived in the peasants’ homes, eating with them from the same pots, and sleeping with them in the same beds. In the daytime, I worked with them in the field. In the evening, I talked with them. When I was free, I fetched water, chopped firewood, and swept the yard for the peasants. I took time to take part in weeding in the spring, ploughing in the summer, harvesting in the autumn, and the storing of grain in the winter.”30 Similarly, Hu Jiwei (胡绩伟), the chief editor of the *Bianqu qunzhongbao* (边区群众报 Border Masses News, *Qunzhongbao*) and later the head of the *Renmin ribao*, remembered that at the time, at the *Qunzhongbao*, nobody stayed in the office. Instead, there was a special rule: both the editors and

30 Ding Jicang (丁济沧) and Su Ruowang (苏若望), eds., *Women tong dangbao yiqi chengzhan—huiyi yan’an suiyüe* (我们同党报一起成长——回忆延安岁月 Growing up with the Party newspapers—in memory of the Yan’an years) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1989), p. 49.
the correspondents needed to spend most of their time outside the office. Each news worker needed to have a certain village in which to conduct a deep investigation.31

Similarly, in other areas controlled by the Party, the news workers were also required to go down to the countryside. In Shangdong, the Dazhong ribao (大众日报 The Public Daily) developed the jidian system (基点制 basis-point system) that required all its news workers to live and work at certain villages or district to carry out investigations. In other words, the news workers had to immerse themselves in local affairs, working as reporters and participating in the various local activities organized by the Party. It was through this system that Song Ying (宋英), who worked and lived in a village for about a year as a reporter for the Dazhong ribao found Zheng Xin (郑信), their first model worker.32

The reporters were encouraged to learn the language of the masses which also required them to leave their ivory towers and live and work with the ordinary people. In Hu Qiaomu’s words, “The fresh, lively, vibrant, inspirational works are not the result of study behind the closed doors, but of establishing a connection with the masses. We need to express ourselves in a form that fits into the people’s context, to use the words and grammar of the masses, to decorate ourselves in the people’s ways, to employ the people’s tones and gestures. Without those things,

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31 Hu Jiwei, “Ban yizhang renmin qunzhong xiwenlejian de baozhi—Huiyi yan’an bianqu qunzhongbao” (办一张人民群众喜闻乐见的报纸 To run a newspaper beloved by the masses), in Fang Wutian (方午田) and Meng Renfang (蒙人方), eds., Yan’an Jizhe (延安记者 Yan’an journalists) (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), p. 156.
there can be no authenticity.”33 Hu’s call was a response to Mao’s “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,” in which Mao called for the literary and art workers to familiarize themselves with the people’s rich, lively words (人民群众的丰富的生动的语言) in order to identify with the masses.

To supply its papers with concrete news sources, the Party called on the people to serve as the Party’s worker-peasant correspondents at the grassroots level. The concept of worker-peasant correspondents was inspired by Lenin’s concept of worker-peasant reporters. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) endeavored to develop these worker-peasant correspondents after the October Revolution. Nikolai Bukharin, the chief editor of Pravda, and other Party leaders like Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Mikhail Kalinin, attached great importance to the development of a local correspondence system, frequently receiving the local reporters and praising them through speeches and articles. In 1926, there were already up to 200,000 peasant-worker correspondents in the Soviet Union.34

The CCP did not fully develop its worker-peasant correspondents until the Yan’an Rectification Movement,35 primarily due to the unstable and perilous situation that the Party had faced before the Yan’an era that had distracted it from developing the papers. During the Yan’an era, the Party had a stable base area for the first time, though its relationship with the KMT government was fragile. The Xin zhonghuabao (新华报 New China Daily), one of the predecessors of the Jiefang ribao, began to adopt writings by worker-peasant correspondents in

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33 Hu Qiaomu, “Cong chunjie xuanchuan kan wenyi de xinfangxiang” (从春节宣传看文艺的新方向 The new literature and art tendency in Spring Festival propaganda), Jiefang ribao, April 25th, 1943, in Hu Qiaomu, Hu Qiaomu wenji, volume 1, p. 98.
34 Zhou Feng, “tongxunyuan zhidu de shengcheng yu yunzuo,” p. 45.
late 1937. By November 1944, there were 1,952 worker-peasant reporters in the borderland, which meant that one out of 770 individuals served as correspondents.³⁶ It is worth noting that these correspondents were not mainly composed of peasants and workers as in the Soviet Union. Instead, most of them were educated people, such as Party cadres and teachers. As An Gang (安岗), the vice chief-editor of the Renmin ribao, stated in 1949: “Almost all of our worker-peasant correspondents were cadres…most of the worker-peasant correspondents were the cadres of the propaganda sections of county-level Party committees and country organization.”³⁷ Hu Jiwei, the chief editor of the Qunzhongbao, maintained that most worker-peasant correspondents of the paper were “cadres in county, district, and town governments, teachers in normal, primary, and middle schools, and cadres in drama troupes, factories, and armies.”³⁸

The Party news workers were required to keep close ties with the local worker-peasant correspondents. In order to do so, the newspeople adopted many methods, including replying to manuscripts as carefully as possible, holding symposia for the local worker-peasant correspondents, and even establishing special journals. The news workers attached great importance to writing comments on the manuscripts. According to Hu Jiwei, the news workers would accept as many worker-peasants’ manuscripts as they could. If they could not accept a manuscript, they would reply to it carefully, teaching the contributor how to collect materials, write reports, and improve their political and cultural levels.³⁹ Wu Ren (午人), who later became

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³⁶ Liu Mobing, “Bianqu wenjiao gongzuo de zhenrong—Cong wenjiao chenlieshi li kandaode” (边区文教工作的阵容——从文教陈列室里看到的 The cultural and education work in the border region: What I saw in the Culture and Education Display Room), Jiefang ribao, November 16, 1944.
a journalist, once talked about his experience as a worker-peasant correspondent, “I often received replies to the manuscripts I submitted to the Jiefang ribao, which informed me of things like why my articles were accepted, why they were revised, or why they could not be accepted, as well as the recent propaganda focus in the countryside.”  

The Party news workers held special symposia to help the worker-peasant correspondents. Wu reflects, “The reporters of the Jiefang ribao frequently conducted their work in Ansai county… Besides writing their own reports, they also held symposia for the local worker-peasant correspondents, introducing the requirements for interviewing and writing reports and talking about the principles for reporting.”

The Party news workers even published special journals to teach the worker-peasant correspondents, including the Tongxun (通讯 Communication) by the Jiefang ribao and Dazhong xizuo (大众习作 Mass Writing) by the Qunzhongbao. As a result, the Party newspapers received an increasing number of manuscripts from their worker-peasant correspondents. According to Huang Dan’s survey, in November 1943, the number of articles by worker-peasant correspondents in the Jiefang ribao was equal to that of the Party’s professional news workers.

In short, the worker-peasant correspondents, on the one hand, collected news materials at the most grassroots level, exposing every detail of the social situation to the party. On the other hand, they stretched the capillary vessels of the Party’s power into the grassroots of society, imbuing the people with Party ideology, promoting the reception of various policies, and eventually legitimating the Party’s rule.

40 Wuren, “Jiefang ribao chengwei xinwen hanshou xuexiao—baoshe bianjibu dui yeyu tongxunyuan de reqing zhidao” (《解放日报》成为新闻函授学校——报社编辑部对业余通讯员的热情指导 The Jiefang ribao became a journalism correspondence school—the editorial department passionately instructed the worker-peasant correspondents), in Fang Wutian and Meng Renfang, eds., Yan’an Jizhe, p. 213.


Moreover, in order to disseminate their news at the grassroots level, the Party newspaper workers committed themselves to establishing newspaper-reading groups (读报组) and blackboard newspapers (黑板报) at the grassroots level. First, the Party established a number of newspaper-reading groups (读报小组) in the areas it controlled. These groups derived from the newspaper-reading societies (阅报社) that emerged from the local level in the beginning of the twentieth century. Those societies were led by voluntary newspaper commentators (讲报人) who devoted themselves to the enlightenment of the masses in the beginning, but gradually came under the control of the Qing government who used them to promote the Late Qing Reforms and control society. 43 Like the Qing government, the Party managed to utilize the newspaper-reading groups to indoctrinate its cadres and the masses daily and continuously, while informing them of current affairs. In the newspaper-reading groups, the members were expected to learn from the models in the newspaper and thereby improve their own works.

One article published in the Jiefang ribao in 1944 told the story of Wen Hansheng (温汉生), a model member of an exemplary newspaper-reading group. Through reading the newspapers, Wen was familiar with the models held up by the Party like Wu Manyou, Shi Mingde (石明德), Liu Shenghai (刘生海), and Feng Yunqing (冯云卿). As a result, Wen not only attempted to plan his agricultural production according to the models’ working plan in the

43 Tang Chuanfu and Huang Daming, Zhishang de huoyan: 1815-1915 de baojie yu guoyun (纸上的火焰：1815-1915的报界与国运 Fire in the newspapers: the press circles and national fortune 1815-1915) (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013), pp. 211-216. For more information about newspaper-reading societies, see Li Xiaoti, Qingmo de xiacheng shehui qimeng yundong: 1901-1911 (略末的下层社会启蒙运动 The social enlightenment movement in the late Qing dynasty) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001); Yang Zao, Qingmo minchu Beijing yulan huajing yu xinwenhua de dengchang (清末民初北京舆论环境与新文化运动的登场 The environment of public opinion and the start of the New Culture Movement in the late Qing and early Republican era) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008).
newspapers, but he was also indoctrinated in the Party’s prescribed phrases and ideology. In his conversation with reporters, he frequently used the phrases from the paper, such as “It is hard for one to help ten individuals; it is easy for ten to help one individual” (一人扶十人扶不起，十人扶一人就扶起了).

In addition, to broaden the spread of the news, the Party also published blackboard newspapers, especially in the rural areas under its control. According to a report in the Jiefang ribao in November 1944, there were 668 blackboard newspapers in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region. Most of the blackboard newspapers in the border areas were located in the marketplaces and were usually published during the market days. Thus, once a blackboard newspaper was put up, it would be surrounded by people. The news in those papers would be distributed to the whole village immediately.

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44 Liu Mobing, “Bianqu wenjiao gongzuo de zhenrong.”
45 Li Wen, “Qunzong banbao sixiang de zhongyao shijian jichu—Heibanbao” (群众办报思想的重要实践基础——黑板报——A significant practical basis of the idea of running newspaper by the masses—blackboard newspapers), Xinwen zhishi, 03(2008): 66.
46 “Yananshi liangge jiaohao de heibanbao” (延安市两个较好的黑板报——Two good blackboard newspapers in Yan’an), Jiefang ribao, September 23, 1944.
Confronting the ninety-percent illiteracy rate in the borderlands, the editors of blackboard newspapers strove to make the news more accessible. One approach was to keep the sentences and reports short as the editors in Xinshichangkou did. To help those who could not read well, they made the sentences extraordinarily short. Similarly, in the blackboard newspapers run by Zhenjing, the news was simple and often as short as a single sentence.

The editors also used local dialect, adopted news into local ditties or doggerel, and added illustrations to help the local people understand the blackboard newspapers. Ge Luo, an editor of the blackboard newspaper in Qianzhen, stated, “To cater to popular taste, I added local songs, used the local dialect to write the news, and added illustrations to my blackboard newspaper. For example, in order to praise a person, I asked the cadres from the Art School of Yan’an University to draw a portrait of the person.”

As a result, the news published on the blackboard newspaper was usually short, simple, and more accessible to the local people, which helped make the newspapers popular in the countryside. In the words of one Party news worker, the content of the blackboard newspapers “…reflected the local situation. The essays were short and pedestrian. The masses were familiar

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47 This photo was taken by Sha Fei (沙飞), a well-noted Communist photographer. See Sha Fei and Huang Daoxuan, Zhongguo kangzhan: Jinchaji genjudi kangri yingxiang (中国抗战：晋察冀根据地抗日影像 War of Resistance: Anti-Japanese Photos in the Jinchaji Base Area) (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2015), p. 109.
49 “Yananshi liangge jiaohao de heibanbao.”
50 Ge Luo, “Yanshi qiaozhenxiang de heibanbao” (延市桥镇乡的黑板报 The blackboard newspapers in Qiaozhen town, Yan’an city), Jiefang ribao, November 14, 1944.
with the timelines and figures [in the blackboard newspapers]. Thus, [they] were very popular among the masses.”\footnote{Unknown, “Suide yihe quwei zhuban heibanbao dashou qunzhong huanying, meifen jishi qushu douqu jiancha bing zhengqiu qunzhong yijian” (绥德义合区委主办黑板报大受群众欢迎, 每逢集市区书就去检查并征求群众意见 The blackboard newspaper run by Yihe district, Suide, were well received. The district secretary solicits opinions from the masses every market day), \textit{Jiefang ribao}, May 21, 1944.}

Typical news in the blackboard newspapers during Yan’an years included reports such as these: “Zhao Wanmin and Yang Shenghua’s family have never hired shamans, but they have never been sick because they are clean.” “Yao Yizhuang, a teacher in a civilian-run school, treats kids enthusiastically and kindly.” “He Tiancai’s family made four spinning wheels and one cotton gin (弹毛弓), and now they are making a hand machine. By mobilizing all the women in his family to weave, he has formed a family spinnery.”\footnote{Zhang Chao, “Qunzhong chuangban de heibanbao” (群众创办的黑板报 Blackboard newspapers run by the masses), in Fang Wutian and Meng Renfang, eds., \textit{Yan’an jizhe}, pp. 326-327.}

As short as this news was, it still embodied the Party’s policies and ideology, helping the Party to organize local production and to discipline the masses. The Party had deep insight into these blackboard newspaper’s functions. In the words of a Party news workers, “[The blackboard newspapers] have already been a powerful tool of criticism, praise, the development of democracy, unification of the people, improvement of work, and the changing of bad habits, becoming the most immediate public opinion institution for the people.”\footnote{Unknown, “Bianqu heibanbao xunsu fazhan” (边区黑板报迅速发展 The blackboard newspapers developed rapidly), \textit{Jiefang ribao}, November 15, 1944.} In concrete terms, news about Zhao Wanmin and Yang Shenghua showed the atheism in the Party’s ideology. Likewise, the news about He Tiancai epitomized the Party’s policy of boosting production. It
was said in blackboard newspaper that after reading the news, He Tiancai got so excited that he decided to make one more cotton gin and to help all the villagers with spinning.\(^5^4\)

At the same time, the blackboard newspapers also served to discipline the people. For example, in Qiaozhen, the masses cared deeply about what the blackboard newspapers reported. They said good deeds in the blackboard newspapers were “\textit{shangheibanbao}” (上黑板报 to be posted in the blackboard newspapers) and bad deeds were “\textit{paheibanbao}” (爬黑板报 to crawl into the blackboard newspapers). Both of these terms were popular among the local people. Once they discovered a bad deed or something at odds with Party policies, they would say “If you do that again, I will make you \textit{paheibanbao},” and that would stop the person from doing the same thing again.\(^5^5\)

To conclude, the newspaper-reading groups and blackboard newspapers transformed newspaper-reading from a private activity into a public event; from a gradual, secret ritual into a collective activity. In this public event, the Party became a dictator who was able to determine right and wrong, to mobilize the masses legally, and to hold power over people’s lives. This phenomenon foreshowed the large-scale mass movements in the PRC, as well as the suffering and death of ordinary people during these movements.

These mass journalistic practices and institutions enabled the Party to spread its ideology and policies to the grassroots level of society in an unprecedented fashion, and to push forward the development of the Party’s various social movements like the literacy campaign, the sanitation campaign, and the \textit{biangong} (变工 a kind of agricultural cooperative) movement. To use the literacy campaign as an example, in Qiaozhen, contributing to the blackboard newspapers

\(^5^4\) Zhang Chao, “Qunzhong chuangban de heibanbao,” p. 327.

\(^5^5\) Ge Luo, “Yanshi qiaozhenxiang de heibanbao.”
was one of the courses in the local night schools. Wen Hansheng, the model member of the local newspaper-reading group mentioned above, learned more than 400 characters in three months.\(^{56}\)

Eventually, this grassroots news practice proved highly effective for the Party. In 1944, the Party’s propaganda cadres concluded, “Where there were good newspaper-reading groups and blackboard newspapers, the Party’s policies and leaders’ appeals were conducted easily, the work on production, hygiene, and education was easily carried out, and fewer meetings could be held. Where there were good worker-peasant correspondent networks, we could understand the working conditions and experiences easily and the cadres made rapid progress in politics and culture.”\(^{57}\)

Although through these mass practices the Party’s newspapers demonstrated the news of the grassroots to an unprecedented degree, the Party newspapers were still by no means mass newspapers. Although the masses were able to take part in the writing and even editing of the Party newspapers, the newspapers were actually supervised by the Party at all times and their foremost principle was to follow the Party line on propaganda and education.\(^{58}\)

The Party firmly controlled all levels of its newspapers and journalists, both professional and amateur. Although the simple sentences, accessible style, and visual news made the papers more accessible to the common people, the Party newspapers were patriarchal and didactic. Hu Qiaomu was succinct about this: “Newspapers are the textbooks for the people and Party newspapers are the textbooks

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\(^{56}\) Wu Ren, “Yige dubao zuyuan de fangwen” (一个读报组的访问 A visit to a newspaper-reading group), in Fang, ed., *Yan’an Jizhe*, p. 217.

\(^{57}\) “Shaanganing bianqu wenjiao dahui guanyu fazhan quzhong dubao banfa yu tongxun gongzuo de jueyi” (陕甘宁边区文教大会关于发展群众读报办法与通讯工作的决议), *XWHB*, volume 1, p. 168.

for the Party.” Thanks to the general consistency between the Party’s and the people’s interests before 1949, the Party newspapers enabled the Party to implement its policies smoothly, and simultaneously improved the education level and lives of the people. However, the primary function of the Party newspaper was still to serve as the Party’s sharpest and strongest weapon, which meant its main goal was to help the Party, rather than the people.

**Ideological transformation of the Party news workers**

In the Party’s discourse, the 1942 *Jiefang ribao* reshuffle was not only viewed as a major overhaul of the Party’s guiding ideas on the news and practice, but also as an ideological transformation of the Party’s news workers. For example, in 1944, Bo Gu contended that the experience of living and working at the grassroots facilitated the Party news workers’ ideological transformation. In his words:

> Before the Rectification Movement, many of [the Party news workers] were unable to work with the workers, peasants, and soldiers. They often looked down on the workers, peasants, and soldiers from the perspective of the petty bourgeoisie. At the time, the relationship between these intellectuals and worker-peasant correspondents or other staff became a barrier between the papers and the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Soon, the situation changed dramatically. Most corrected their mistakes after the Party’s teaching in the Great Rectification Movement, and thus became a conduit between our paper and the workers, peasants, and soldiers.  

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60 Bo Gu, “Benbao chuangkan yiqianqi” (The thousandth issue since the establishment of the paper), *Jiefang ribao*, February 16, 1944.
In previous scholarship, Huang Dan made a similar point about the Party. He observed that through the Rectification Movement, the Party news workers, around eighty percent of whom were young intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie individualists, were transformed into a new type of reporter (新型记者) who upheld collectivism and worked as the Party’s instruments and were its throat and tongue.61

However, I argue that these arguments overstate the influence of the Rectification Movement on journalists. It is beyond dispute that the Party’s guiding ideas on the news and its work methods established during the Rectification Movement became an integral part of the Party’s journalism industry. However, I argue that the coercive, repressive, and unnatural journalistic ideas were not uncontested ideals for the Party news workers. In fact, many Party newspapers continually expressed their discontent with and even challenged the Party’s media notions from the time they were established in 1942.

In the Border Region, the Party news workers were particularly dissatisfied with the Party’s repression of critical reports. For example, Hu Jiwei, the chief editor of the *Qunzhongbao*, felt confused when the wall newspaper *Qingqidui* (轻骑队 Light Cavalry) was castigated by the Party because it had published a number of critical articles including Wang Shiwei’s “Wild Lily (野百合花).”62 Hu contended, “The criticism of *Qingqidui* did not make sense to me. I felt repressed and was always upset because of [the conflicts between this

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62 *Qingqidui* was the most well-known wall newspaper in Yan’an and often published critical articles. It was founded in 1941 and shut down by the Party in 1942. Wang Shiwei’s “Wild Lily” was an article criticizing the hierarchy in Yan’an. For more information about *Qingqidui*, please read Song Jinshou, “Yan’an zhengfeng qianhou de Qingqidui qiangbao” (延安整风前后的轻骑队墙报 The Light Cavalry during the Yan’an Rectification Movement), *Xinwenxue shiliao* 08(2000): 35-41; For more information about Wang’s “Wild Lily,” please read Dai Qing, *Wang Shiwei and Wild Lilies: Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942-1944* (New York: M.E Sharpe, 1994).
criticism and] my own journalistic ideas.” He continued, “Was it necessary to raise a punitive expedition against such a small wall newspaper that had just published a few individuals’ short essays in such a large Yan’an?” Hu mentioned that many of his colleagues agreed on this point and were even more critical.63

Some of the Party news workers temporarily accepted the Party’s journalistic norms because of the wartime situation. Xia Gongran, who had been a Party news worker since 1941, recalled:

The purpose and function of running newspapers during the war years was relatively simple: to praise the brightness, to criticize the darkness, and to do everything for victory. At the time, there were many intellectuals from the metropolis on our journalistic team who detested the dictatorship of the KMT, the KMT’s killing of Shi Liangcai, its implementation of censorship, and its limits on the freedom of the press… We all hope that after the establishment of the new China our Party will have enough strength and confidence to offer a free news environment where people can say whatever they want.64

Indeed, given the fact that a great number of individuals went to Yan’an to escape from censorship, the wartime situation provided one of the few acceptable excuses they could use when carrying out the CCP’s journalistic norms.

After the PRC was established, a considerable number of the Party news workers held to the idea of free press. During the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956, many these news workers expressed their discontent with the Party’s journalistic norms. As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the movement, Li Shenzhi, a senior editor of the NCNA, told Mao Zedong’s secretary

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64 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji,” part 7, p.11.
Lin Ke, “We want [the ban on] press freedom lifted.” In Shanghai, Wang Zhong (王中), who joined the Party in 1938 and was in charge of the Party’s take-over of the city’s journalism industry in 1949, was accused of systematically promoting “capitalist reactionary journalistic theory,” in 1956. In Hebei, Yu Shan (于山), a Party member and editor of the Hebei ribao (河北日报 Hebei Daily), was seen as holding more systematic rightist ideas than the other rightists who worked in journalism and publication because he advocated for competition among newspapers.

Eventually and ironically, while a great number of liberal newspeople were criticized and labelled rightists during the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, the press organization that had more journalists labelled “rightists” than any other was not one led by the liberal newspeople, but was a Party paper—the Xin Hunanbao (新湖南报 New Hunan Daily). Li Rui (李锐), who had worked as the chief of the paper, said, “Among the some one hundred cadres in the editorial department, as many as fifty-four were labelled rightists. All of them were the core members. This number exceeded the total number of the rightists in Xu Zhucheng’s Wenhuibao and Zhang Bojun and Chu Anping’s Guangming ribao.” As is mentioned in Chapter 9, the Wenhuibao and Guangming ribao were the two papers criticized by Mao Zedong himself in the Renmin ribao during the Anti-Rightist Movement. Thus, it is easy to imagine how “rightist” the Xin Hunanbao was. Even the official history of Hunan journalism published in 1993 admitted, “Among the 154 journalists in the editorial department of the Xin Hunanbao, 54 were labelled rightists, which

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comprised one third of its members…. Eight were the editorial committee members, including the former chief editor Deng Junhong (邓钧洪), and the former vice-chief editor Su Xintao (苏辛涛)…. The high percentage and the huge loss made [the Xin Hunanbao] the number one case across the country.”

Therefore, obviously, the Party news workers did not completely accept the Party’s guiding ideas on news. Notably, Hu Jiwei, Wang Zhong, and Deng Tuo were all Party news workers who worked in the liberated areas. However, they still voiced their discontent with the Party’s guiding ideas on the news after Liberation.

This created a challenge for the popular classification of the Party journalists who were categorized into two groups: the Northern School (北方流派) and the Southern School (南方流派). According to Luo Tao, the first group of party journalists, represented by Lu Dingyi, Hu Qiaomu, Wu Lengxi, Deng Tuo, Hu Jiwei, and others, was made up of those who worked in the Party’s base areas. Because in the 1940s most of those areas were in North China, this group of Party journalists was called the Northern School. The other groups of Party journalists, namely the Southern School, were those who worked in the areas ruled by the KMT. These newspeople include Xia Yan (夏衍), Fan Changjiang (范长江), and Yan Qi (杨奇). Many of them had worked at citizen-run newspapers such as the Shenbao and Dagongbao. Generally, the journalists from the Northern School were believed to be the ones with real faith in the Party’s

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69 Luo Tao, “Shilun xiandai xinwen shishang de ‘nanfang liupai’” (试论现代新闻史上的“南方流派” On the Southern School in the history of modern journalism); in Yang Qi, Yuegang feihong taxueni—Yangqi banbao wenxuan (粤港飞鸿踏雪泥——杨奇办报文选 Yang Qi’s selected works on running newspapers) (Guangzhou: Yangcheng wanbao chubanshe, 2008), pp. 1-5. Also see Wu Jing, “Dangbao de lingyizhong chuantong,” pp. 49-59.
guiding ideas on the news while their counterparts from the Southern School were not. However, the cases of Hu Jiwei, Wang Zhong and Deng Tuo proved that at least some of the journalists from the Northern School did not fully believe in the Party’s guiding ideas on the news.

To summarize, the Yan’an years witnessed the establishment of the Party’s strict control over its newspapers, the typical reports, and the efforts that the Party made to connect its press with the grassroots. Meanwhile, during the Rectification Movement, the Party’s news workers were transformed into machinery of the Party’s propaganda apparatus. All of this would benefit the Party considerably in making revolution. However, the Party news workers’ experience with the grassroots did not function as an ideological transformation for the Party news workers. Indeed, many of them, including those in the Northern School, were skeptical of the Party’s guiding ideas on the news.

The internal bulletin system

The internal bulletin system was a crucial part of the CCP news system. Compared to the Party’s newspapers, the internal bulletins contained more negative information about the Party. In principle, the Party news workers would publish any unfavorable news for the Party in the internal bulletins, rather than in newspapers, in order to prevent damage to the Party’s reputation and legitimacy. In comparison with the hierarchical, bureaucratic information reporting system within the government or the Party, the internal bulletin system, in theory, was a special system through which the Party’s leadership could have a direct connection with the local people. In short, the internal bulletins were a type of classified internal news carrier issued for the CCP’s leadership, with the purpose of protecting the Party’s legitimacy and keeping the leadership informed.
In his noted book, *How the Red Sun Rose*, Gao Hua contends that Maoist journalism, including internal bulletins, was formed during the Yan'an Rectification Movement.\(^{70}\) I argue, however, that the Party’s internal bulletin system did not reach a full-fledged status until the end of the 1940s, even though the Party had established some internal bulletins by the 1930s. The major reason was that until the middle of the 1940s, Party journalists were not required to report negative news, nor was there any internal bulletin for the Party’s journalists to print the negative coverage themselves. In 1945, Feng Senlin (冯森龄), a famous reporter who had worked for the *Qunzongbao, Jiefang ribao*, and later the NCNA, had to write letters to the *Qunzongbao* and *Jiefang ribao* to reveal a variety of administrative problems with the local government, including the fake model worker problem in a model county, and local leaders who did not work hard to carry out Party policies.\(^{71}\) In addition, according to my reading of the *Cankao xiaoxi* (参考消息 Reference News), the Party’s primary internal bulletin of the day, from June 1944 to November 1945 there was not a single piece of news written by the NCNA about the Party that was negative.\(^{72}\) By contrast, after 1949, the Party’s reporters, and even the worker-peasant correspondents, were responsible for writing unfavorable news for the Party.\(^{73}\) The Party even established a series of periodicals to print this kind of news. In order to gain a better


\(^{71}\) Yin Yungong referred to Feng’s letters as internal bulletins (内参 neican). However, Feng Senlin’s biography indicates that these so-called internal bulletins were only letters that Feng wrote to the *Jiefang ribao*. This suggests there was no internal bulletin in which the Party news workers could print negative reports. See, Qiao Yunxia, ed., *Zhongguo mingjizhe zhuanlve yu mingpian shangxi* (中国名记者传略与名篇赏析 Biographies of famous Chinese journalists and their notable works), Revised version (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2010), p. 225-226; Yin Yungong, “Lun Zhongguo duchuang tese de neibu cankao xinxi chuanbo jiqi jizhi,” p. 5.

\(^{72}\) The part of *Cankaoxiaoxi* from June 144 to November 1945 has been published. See Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, ed., *Cankaoxiaoxi* (参考消息 Reference News): June 1944–November 1945, Volumes 1–4 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006).

understanding of internal bulletins, in the following paragraphs, I will explore the development of the Party’s internal bulletin system before 1949.

The Party’s internal bulletins started during the Jiangxi Soviet (1931-1934). During this period, they mainly printed news reports collected from the major news agencies, both domestic and international. This situation remained unchanged until the late 1940s. In 1931, the Party established its news agency, the Red China News Agency (红色中华通讯社 RCNA), which was later changed to the New China News Agency (NCNA) in 1937. One of the major tasks of the RCNA was to edit an internal bulletin for the Party’s leaders titled *Wuxiandian cailiao* (无线电材料 Wireless Materials) [later changed to *Wuxiandian rixun* (无线电日讯 Wireless Daily), and *Meiri dianxun* (每日电讯 Daily Telecommunication)]. Their news mainly came from the major news agencies of the day, including the KMT’s Central News Agency (中央社), the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union, Agence Havas, and the Associated Press, as well as the Party’s intelligence agencies around the country, and intercepts from the KMT’s military telegraphs. The length of this journal varied between four and eight pages and the circulation was only around forty or fifty.76

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With the fall of the Jiangxi Soviet and the start of the Long March (1934-1935), the RCNA stopped its broadcasting work and only collected news materials from the domestic and foreign news agency for the leaders. The *Wuxian dairixun* was not restored until the Red Army arrived in Wayaobu (瓦窑堡), North Shaanxi, in November 1935. When the Party headquarters moved to Yan’an in January 1937, just as the RCNA had changed its name to the NCNA, the *Wuxiandian rixun* changed its name first to *Meiri dianxun* (每日电讯 Daily Telecommunication) in early 1937, and then to *Cankao xiaoxi* in October 1937. To show the nature of these journals, the phrase “zhigong cankao zhiyong” (只供参考之用 “For reference only”) was printed on the masthead. The length increased from several pages in the Jiangxi era to twenty or thirty pages. Meanwhile, the circulation increased from forty or fifty to four hundred.

In December 1938, the *Cankao xiaoxi* changed its name to *Jinri xinwen* (今日新闻 Today’s News). In March 1940, the Party began to adopt letterpress printing to print the *Jinri xinwen*. Like the internal bulletins in Jiangxi, those in Shaanbei mainly consisted of news collected from other news agencies, domestic or foreign. However, with the development of the Party’s base areas behind the enemy lines, the *Jinri xinwen* collected an increasing number of news reports by the reporters of the NCNA in different base areas. Of course, the news reports from the NCNA were mainly positive ones for the Party. Typical news included the visit by Chen Jiageng (陈嘉庚) to Yan’an and the national newspaper exhibition of the *Xinzhonghua bao* (新中华报 New China Daily). Another change was that although the phrase “For reference

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78 Wan Jinghua, “Jinrixinwen: Liushi duonian qiande cankao baozhi,” p. 44.
only” was still on its masthead, the Jinri xinwen had become, in part, a public journal. Students in Yan’an could also read this newspaper and it was available in branches of the Xinhua Bookstore (新华书店 New China Bookstore), which was in charge of the public sales of books and newspapers in Yan’an. There were even advertisements in the Jinri xinwen.\textsuperscript{81} According to Wan Jinghua’s research, ordinary cadres and students made up a large part of the Jinri xinwen’s readership.\textsuperscript{82}

In May 1941, due to a shortage of newsprint and printing equipment caused by the KMT’s blockade, the Jinri xinwen and Xinhonghua bao were combined into the Jiefang ribao. Meanwhile, the Party constituted a new Cankao xiaoxi that has lasted until the present to supersede the Jinri xinwen’s role as the Party’s internal bulletin.

In the beginning, the Cankao xiaoxi was printed by mimeograph but on December 1, 1942, the NCNA began to use letterpress to print it. The content consisted mainly of the news collected from various domestic and foreign news agencies that were deemed as not for public consumption (不宜公开发表).\textsuperscript{83} Meanwhile, the Cankao xiaoxi began to print news from the NCNA.\textsuperscript{84} Besides the news not for public consumption, the Cankao xiaoxi also printed the news that was not ready to be published in the Jiefang ribao. For example, news that the Party’s telecom receivers failed to receive completely or that contained unclear words would be published in the Cankao xiaoxi.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{81} Wan Jinghua, “Jinri xinwen: Liushi duonian qiande cankao baozhi,” p. 45.
\textsuperscript{82} Wan Jinghua, “Guanyu cankaoxiaoxi zaoqi banben de yanjiu,” Xinwen chunqiu, 03(2013), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{84} Wan Jinghua, “Guanyu cankao xiaoxi zaoqi banben de yanjiu,” p. 13.
In contrast to the *Jinri xinwen*, only Party leaders were eligible to read the *Cankao xiaoxi*.\(^{86}\) Gao Hua observes that this further established the confidentiality of internal bulletins.\(^{87}\) While I have no problem with this argument, using it as evidence to prove the establishment of Maoist journalistic principles, especially those regarding internal bulletins, is insufficient. As stated above, the major reason was that the initial establishment of the confidentiality of the internal bulletins did not indicate the formation of the internal bulletin system. Thus, it could not support the idea that the Maoist journalistic principles about internal bulletins were mature at this point. In addition, Gao Hua claims that the classified reading system of internal bulletins was established during the Rectification Movement. However, he does not provide any evidence for this\(^{88}\) and I have not found any evidence to support his argument. Hence, it is doubtful that the classified reading system of internal bulletins had been established, which makes Gao’s argument on the formation of internal bulletin system during the Rectification Movement a shaky one.

In the late 1940s, Party journalists were assigned the task of investigating and writing negative news for the Party, which indicated that the Party journalists began to have a dual role: “educating the population and producing classified reports on local conditions for the leaders’ eyes only,” in Anne-Marie Brady’s words.\(^{89}\) This marked the initial formation of the Party’s internal bulletin system. There were two major reasons for the need to do this: First, during the civil war (1947-1949), the areas that the Party controlled were constantly expanding. A growing number of problems about the local governments emerged. Given that the lower levels of the


\(^{88}\) Gao Hua, *Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqi de*, p. 374.

Party organization would be reluctant to report negative news about themselves, it became imperative for the Party to establish a routine information channel to provide such news besides the one within the Party. In Yin Yungong’s words, “With the continuous victories of the people’s revolutionary wars, the scale of the liberated areas has increased continuously, and the tasks facing our Party have increased drastically and become increasingly difficult. Hence, the Party’s demand for information has greatly increased.”\(^9^0\) In order to facilitate the transfer of negative information, the Party had to optimize an internal bulletins system.

Second, with the Party controlling an increasing number of areas, the number of civilian-run or Nationalist papers and news agencies dropped dramatically. It became increasingly difficult for the Party to hear negative news about itself, especially in the domestic news and that gleaned through field investigations. Merely relying on collecting the news from foreign news agencies no longer satisfied the Party leadership. To solve this problem, the Party required its journalists to do field investigations and write unfavorable reports for the Party, given that the Party would never allow its reporters to report negative news freely.

In sum, the background of the improvements to the internal bulletin system was the Party’s transformation from an underground opposition political party to an administrative one in the late 1940s. With the Party’s geographic expansion, the bureaucratization of the Party’s administrative system, and the reduction of the newspapers and news agencies that were not controlled by the Party, the Party was badly in need of another channel of information to ensure that it could to know what was happening on the ground routinely and in a timely way.

Liu Shaoqi’s speech to the Party’s news workers in October 1948 reflected this anxiety:

\(^{90}\) Yin Yungong, “Lun zhongguo duchuang tese de neibu cankao xinxi chuanbo gongzuojiqi jizhi,” p. 5.
The Party doesn’t fear anything except for one thing. We never feared American imperialism or the atomic bomb…. We only fear becoming divorced from the masses.…

The center relies on you as an instrument to keep in touch with the masses.91

He further expounded on why it was important for journalists to collect data for the leaders directly and the difference between this channel and the existing ones, such as the People’s Congress (人民代表大会) and cooperative societies (合作社):

[We] want to know the masses’ feelings, sufferings, requirements, and what they want.

We would have no other ways to know these, if we do not go through many channels, including the cadres, the People’s Congress, and journalists, to learn from the masses. That would be very dangerous. If we just sit here, that is very dangerous. Is there any problem with our policies? That is a problem that we frequently think about…. Your work and your cause are the most significant one among the thousands of connections [between the Party and the masses]. Your newspapers meet the masses every day, informing them of the Party’s policies. Military force is a bridge between the Party and the masses. The People’s Congress and cooperative societies are also such bridges. If these channels did not exist, the connection between the Party and the people would break down and there would be a gap between the Party and the people. We must have these bridges. Among all these bridges and lines, the newspapers are the most significant. The People’s Congress only lasts a few days. Your newspapers are issued every day.92


92 Liu Shaoqi, “Dui huabei jizhe tuan de jianghua.”
From Liu’s speech, it is plain to see that the “most efficient direct voice” from the people that the internal bulletins were supposed to provide every day, made the internal bulletins an indispensable information channel for the Party, even if the Party had “its own elaborate organization” that Andrew Nathan says stretched to “virtually every workplace and residential unit in Chinese society.”

In the same year (1948), Mao required all levels of the Party branches to make full use of the Party’s news agencies and newspapers to stay closely connected to each other, to exchange intelligence and experiences, to correct mistakes, and to carry forward achievements. He further stressed, “For such reports and directives often become out of date, losing all or part of their usefulness. And mistakes are made and cannot be corrected in time, causing serious damage. What the whole Party urgently needs is reports and directives that are timely, lively, and concrete.”

Mao’s and Liu’s ideas were explicitly delivered to the Party news workers, many of whom gathered in Xibaipo (西柏坡), where the Central Committee Leadership worked at the time. Xiao Hang (萧航) was one of these Party news workers. He recalled, from that time on, the Party news workers had a new task—that of investigating the local conditions and providing the Party committees who needed to make decisions and carry out policies consistently with reference materials. From Liu’s and Mao’s words, we can see the significance of this internal

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93 Nathan, Chinese Democracy, p. 154.
bulletin system to the Party’s work. The Party needed its news workers to provide it with negative news about itself.

As a result, on June 5, 1948, the Party’s central leadership issued “The CCP’s Central Committee’s Decision that the Xinhua News Agency Must Provide a Wide Range of Materials (中共中央关于新华社应供给多种资料的指示)” to the NCNA. Yin Yungong suggests, “These instructions from the Central Committee were the first central document about the work of internal bulletins before Liberation, and the only one since. In our Party’s journalism history, especially the history of our Party’s internal bulletin system, this document was a milestone.”

In these instructions, the Central Committee required the NCNA to provide it with a variety of materials besides the news manuscripts that were to be published: local documents issued by Party factions in the liberated areas such as statutes, orders, decision letters, editorials, and abstracts; important not-for-publication news on significant local situations; investigations designated by the Central leadership, as well as collected materials that secret radio stations and ground transportation could not deliver. Furthermore, to ensure the implementation of this order, the Party demanded that the NCNA and its branches around the country assign people to take charge of this matter.

This document indicates that internal bulletins began to include the negative news reports about the Party from the Party’s own news workers. The Party’s news workers were no longer merely journalists; they were now the Party’s secret investigators as well.

96 Yin Yungong, “Lun zhongguo duchuang tese de neibu cankao xinxi chuan gong zuo ji ji zhi,” p. 5.
In addition, in September 1949, the Party instituted the *Neibu cankao* (内部参考 Internal Reference), an internal bulletin that concentrated on domestic issues. From then on, the “improper” news materials collected by the NCNA reporters that were formerly printed in the *Cankao xiaoxi* began to be published in the *Neibu cankao*. Simultaneously, the *Cankao xiaoxi* became an internal bulletin for collecting “improper” news from the foreign news agencies and newspapers. This indicates that the Party’s internal bulletin system was divided into two major branches, one concentrating on domestic issues, represented by the *Neibu cankao*, and one focusing on international issues, especially those involving China, represented by the *Cankao xiaoxi*. 98

From this discussion, we can see that the fundamental idea of this system, obtaining the “improper” news for the Party in order to keep the leaders informed, never changed. However, the Party’s internal bulletin system kept evolving after 1931, the Jiangxi Soviet period. During the Yan’an Rectification Movement, the Central Committee began to stress the confidentiality of the internal bulletins. At the end of the 1940s, the Party had dramatically improved its internal bulletin system by requiring the NCNA to provide it with secret conditions and investigative materials in liberated areas. In 1949, the internal bulletins developed into two major systems, domestic and international. Therefore, it does not suffice to argue that the Maoist journalistic principles were fully established during the Yan’an Rectification Movement. Indeed, the internal bulletins, a significant part of the Party’s dual news system, were not fully developed until the late 1940s.

Conclusion

During the Yan’an years, the Party established strict control of its press and connected its newspapers with the Party organization, making newspapers the Party’s strongest and sharpest propaganda weapon. The Party also developed typical reports, a new form of news writing. As a personalized and dramatic demonstration of the Party’s policies, this news writing made the Party’s newspapers more readable and better advocates for the Party’s policies. The Party’s mass journalistic practice connected the Party with the grassroots and improved its ability to understand the common people, to imbue them with its ideology, and to mobilize them.

However, these mass journalistic practices failed to serve as an ideological transformation for the Party news workers.

Although the Party had started to establish its internal bulletins system in the early 1930s, it was not until the end of the 1940s that it had a fully operational internal bulletins system. Indeed, prior to the end of the 1940s, the Party did not have a good understanding of the internal bulletin system and even sold its internal bulletins publicly. During the Yan’an Rectification Movement, the Party began to stress the confidentiality of the bulletins. Finally, in the late 1940s as the Party underwent a transformation from opposition to ruling party, it began to require that its news workers write unfavorable reports for the Party, thus developing the Party’s internal bulletin system into a full-fledged one.

From the discussion in this chapter, we can see that Soviet journalistic ideas and institutions had a strong influence on CCP journalism, which set Party journalism apart from Chinese journalism in the regions that were not ruled by the Party. Did Soviet journalism continue to influence the Party’s journalism after 1949? Did the Soviet journalistic principles and
institutions introduced in China eliminate China’s journalistic tradition when the Party came to power? The next chapter attempts to answer these questions.
PART II: The Establishment of CCP Journalism in Mainland China


The early years of the PRC saw an uncritical introduction of Soviet-style socialism.

Frederick Teiwes observes:

In the 1949-59 period, broad agreement existed within the CCP leadership on adopting the Soviet model of socialism. This model provided patterns of state organization, an urban-oriented developmental strategy, modern military techniques, and policies and methods in a wide variety of specialized areas…. Propaganda treatment of the Soviet Union as a respected ‘elder brother’ and such slogans as ‘The Soviet Union of today is our tomorrow’ hardly encouraged critical emulation, with the result that mindless copying did occur in many fields.¹

Likewise, Thomas Bernstein suggests:

When the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949, they were determined to learn from the Soviet Union…. Between 1949 and 1956, China intensively emulated Soviet experiences and practices in a wide variety of fields, often, but not always quite uncritically…. At a high level of generality, China accepted the entire Stalinist model of socialist construction, including the basic components of a socialist state such as state ownership and central planning.²

In this wave of learning from the Soviet Union, China also copied the Soviet model of journalism. Through a series of exchange visits, speeches, and publications, the Party news workers learned about and emulated the way their Soviet counterparts compiled newspapers. This imitation was so meticulous that the Party news workers copied nearly everything in the Soviet press, including columns, slogans, style, titles, and even fonts. More profoundly, the Party actually introduced the whole package of Soviet approaches to control its papers, including the combination of the Party newspapers with those of the government, the use of a single national news agency, the combination of the newspapers distribution channel with the postal system, and the nationwide newspaper division. Consequently, this emulation laid the foundation for the PRC’s journalism system during the Mao era and still has a profound influence on the journalism system of the country today. The newly introduced Soviet journalistic ideas and institutions set the PRC journalism apart from the Republican-era journalism, demonstrating a clear discontinuity. However, does this indicate that the Chinese journalistic tradition was eliminated? Was there any continuity within the discontinuity? This chapter will address these questions.

There is no comprehensive, critical study of this emulation either in English or Chinese scholarship. In English scholarship on this subject, Nicolai Volland’s dissertation is the only work focusing on the establishment of Soviet-style journalism in China. However, Volland regards the establishment of Soviet-style journalism as the result of the Party putting the

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journalistic concepts established in Yan’an into practice, thus ignoring the ongoing influence that Soviet journalism had on the PRC.⁴ Moreover, he concentrates on the Party mechanisms of media control, such as the “general ideological framework,” the “institutional structure,” and the “web of bureaucratic regulations,” rather than on the journalistic institutions themselves. By contrast, this chapter shows that the establishment of Soviet-style journalism in China was the result of the Party news workers’ continued imitation of Soviet journalism after 1949, while acknowledging the significance of the Party’s guiding ideas on the news that the Party had established in the Yan’an years. In comparison with the Yan’an period when the Party news workers mainly imported Soviet journalistic concepts, the Party news workers committed themselves to emulating Soviet journalistic institutions and practice after 1949, and to formalizing the journalistic institutions that had been introduced before. Therefore, this chapter presents the history of how the PRC’s journalistic institutions were established and their relationship with the Soviet journalistic institutions.

In Chinese scholarship, Wu Tingjun’s and Wu Yanling’s works are the two studies on this subject. However, neither is a comprehensive study of what the Chinese journalists learned from their Soviet counterparts.⁵ In addition, those studies concentrate on lessons Chinese journalists learned from their Soviet counterparts and overlook what they did not learn. This chapter fills that void.

This chapter is composed of five parts. The first part provides a definition of the Soviet model of journalism. The second explains why the Party chose to adopt the Soviet model of journalism. The third part talks about the institutions that the Party adopted from the Soviet Union to regulate its newspapers. The fourth is about the detailed principles and practices that the Party news workers learned from the Soviet newspapers using the *Renmin ribao* as an example. I will show that although the Party news workers at the *Renmin ribao* imitated almost everything they found in *Pravda* (the Soviet counterpart to the *Renmin ribao*), they did not adopt all of *Pravda’s* principles including the appointment of a Politburo member as the editor-in-chief, the regular publication of satirical essays, or the cult of personality. The last part of the chapter is devoted to talking about the influence of the Soviet model of journalism in China. I will demonstrate that although the Soviet journalistic model was challenged during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the major characteristics of the Soviet system remained, which demonstrated a discontinuity in China’s journalism prior to and after 1949.

**The Soviet model of journalism emulated by China**

The Soviet model of journalism imported by China in the early 1950s is what the Chinese scholars Li Chi, Kang Meng, Chen Lidan, and Sun Xupei refer to as the Stalinist journalistic model (斯大林新闻模式). These scholars believe the Stalinist journalistic model was characterized by the Communist Party’s tight control of newspapers, the normalization of the journalistic principles developed during wartime, a mix of propaganda and news in terms of style
and content, freedom of speech based on class theory, a hierarchical news system, and the rule of man rather than the rule of law.  

These arguments accurately assess the militarized, bureaucratized features of the Stalinist journalism model, but they ignore Stalin’s emphasis on mass participation in journalism, such as the worker-peasant correspondents (工农通讯员), newspaper-reading groups, wall papers, and letters from readers. As with Mao’s mass line, the stress on mass participation was aimed at disseminating the Party’s creeds and mobilizing the masses rather than at reporting the people’s thoughts.  

No one can deny that mass participation was an integral part of the Stalinist model of journalism. Moreover, the ability of the CPSU to mobilize the masses greatly contributed to its cause. As Peter Kenez observes: “One of the important sources of the success of the Soviet experiment was the ability of the regime to advance social mobility, to bring into politics large groups of people who hitherto had been excluded.”  

Hence, overall, the Stalinist model of journalism was characterized by militarization, bureaucratization, and mass participation.

**Reasons for the PRC’s adoption of the Soviet model of journalism**

Besides the Party’s call “to learn from the Soviet Union,” there were two reasons for the adaptation of the Stalinist journalistic model. First, the Party’s guiding ideas on the news established in the Yan’an era (1937-1947) were consistent with the Stalinist model of journalism. Gao Hua notes, the Maoist principles of journalism established in Yan’an “were rooted in the

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journalistic theories of Lenin and Stalin”; and Mao was “even more Stalinist than Stalin.”

Second, more profoundly, the newly introduced planned economy and highly centralized bureaucracy forbade the Party papers from being the watchdog of the government. Instead, they required the Party papers to be the promoter of the Party’s political and economic policies. Any moves that attempted to change this were doomed to failure. For example, Li Liangrong attributes the failure of the 1956 journalism reforms, which promoted free discussion in papers and a diversity of newspaper styles as well as meeting readers’ demands, to the conflicts between the purpose of the reform and the planned economy:

Among the sub-systems in the social-ecological environment, the economic system is the most crucial. The planned economy exercises influence not only on how the economy works, but also on a wide range of political, social, and cultural programs. The planned economy naturally needs centralization of power. Otherwise, the economic plans would become vacuous words…. In the Soviet Union, it was said that the [economic] plans were the law. However, the second journalism reform [the one in 1956] ran counter to the planned economy.10

Therefore, to maintain its political and economic system, it was imperative for the Party to adopt the Stalinist model of journalism.

**Party control of the press**

The Party continued to learn from Soviet journalism after the establishment of the PRC. In 1949, when the Soviet Union became the closest ally of the new PRC, and “lean to the side of Soviet Union” became the basic foreign policy of China. Besides this foreign policy, the long-

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10 Li Liangrong, “Shehui shengtai yu zhongguo xinwen gaige,” in Li Liangrong, *Li Liangrong zixuanji*, p. 32.
term influence of the Soviet Union on the Party, ideologically and institutionally, prompted the Party to adopt the Soviet socialist model. As Frederick Teiwes puts it,

More fundamental, however, was a long-term ideological orientation toward Soviet Russia. This not only involved a sense of being part of a common movement against international capitalism and imperialism but was also reflected in basic organizational principles and practices. Despite unique emphases and Mao's insistence on independence, in a fundamental sense the CCP had been following the Soviet model since its earliest days, when Leninist organizational principles and methods were infused into the fledgling Party by agents of the Communist International.11

As a result, Chinese people in all walks of life carried out a series of activities to learn from the Soviet Union, as did the Party news workers.

In the early 1950s, the Party news workers made every attempt to study the example of the Soviet Union, including translating Soviet journalism works into Chinese, running supplements and columns to introduce the Soviet experience to China, and sending journalist delegations to the Soviet Union.12 In fact, Chinese news workers almost copied every detail of the journalism in the Soviet Union.

With the introduction of the Soviet model, the Party greatly reinforced its control over the newspapers. The primary measures that the Party adopted from the Soviet Union included the blending of the Party newspapers with the government newspapers, the use of a one national

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news agency, the merging of the newspaper distribution channels with the postal system, and a nationwide division of newspaper circulation.

The first measure the Party introduced from the Soviet Union to reinforce its control over the newspapers was the combining of the Party newspapers with those of the government. On August 7, 1952, impacted by the Stalinist model, the Party abolished the General Administration of the Press (新闻总署 GAP) that had been established on November 11, 1949, and was in charge of the nationwide journalism. The Central Committee and the local Party committees replaced the government agencies to take direct control the press and propaganda work, which meant an abandonment of the policy of commercialization of the press that had been set in December 1949. The press organizations became directly affiliated institutions under the Party committees. The chief editors of the newspapers had to be appointed by the Party committees. As a result, every word in the newspapers was required to follow the Party’s creeds and instructions. The newspapers became the microphones of the Party, speaking for the Party and functioning as official documents and leaders’ speeches. This measure also led to the acceleration of the abolition of civilian-run newspapers in China and the uniformity of public opinion (舆论一律) in China’s newspapers.\(^\text{13}\)

The second measure that the Party introduced from the Soviet Union to reinforce its control over the newspapers was the single national news agency. In the Soviet Union, the establishment of the single national news agency, the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS), enabled the CPSU to control the information sources for the newspapers and consequently, the whole press organizations. Not surprisingly, the CCP also adopted this institution. In May 1949, the Party began requiring the local Party committees “not [to] promote

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\(^{13}\) Wu Tingjun, “Dui xuexi sulian xinwen gongzuo jingyan de lishi kaocha,” p. 105.
any news agencies besides the NCNA.\textsuperscript{14} Before long, the NCNA was established as China’s single national news agency. For any significant national events and even a part of the regional news, especially those involving the government, the papers had to use the wire services provided by the NCNA.\textsuperscript{15} Hence, the information sources for the newspapers also fell under the control of the Party. Yang Kuisong notes, “The most effective method adopted by the Party to control the media was to unify the information sources and prohibit the media from obtaining information from channels outside those controlled by the Party.”\textsuperscript{16} This establishment of the single national news agency greatly shored up the Party’s control of the newspapers.

The third Soviet measure that the Party introduced to reinforce its control over the newspapers was the combining of the newspapers’ distribution channel with the postal system. In December 1949, the GAP convened a national newspaper management conference (全国报纸经理会议) and at the conference it was decided that merging the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system would be adopted as a measure to reduce the financial deficit of the nationwide newspapers: “Based on the experience in the Soviet Union, the Northeast and Shandong, the distribution of the newspapers will be delegated to the post office in order to save money and the loss of the distribution work.”\textsuperscript{17} However, the claim that this policy was designed to reduce the deficit of the press was merely a superficial reason.

\textsuperscript{14} “Zhongyang guanyu dachen gushi baozhi wenti gei nanjing shiwei de zhishi” (中央关于大城市报纸问题给南京市委的指示 The Central Committee’s instructions on the newspapers in the metropolises to the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee), in \textit{XCWX 1937-1949}, p. 828.
\textsuperscript{16} Yang Kuisong, \textit{Renbuzhu de guanhuai}, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{17} “Guanyu quanguo baozhi jingli huiyi e baogao” (关于全国报纸经理会议的报告 A report on the National Newspaper Management Conference), in \textit{XWHB, volume 1}, pp. 294-295. It is noteworthy that the newspaper
But, grasping the distribution of the newspapers was a far more important reason for the Party to combine the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system. As the scholar Ye Yandu maintains, “The so-called Soviet experience in newspaper distribution was nothing but to use the distribution system controlled by the party-state to replace the other distribution channels. From the Party’s view of the function of newspapers, this result [Party control of the distribution of newspapers which ensured that its voice was delivered to the people] was probably the deeper reason [why the Party carried out the merging of the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system].”

Zhu Xuefan (朱学范), Minister of Posts and Communications (邮电部长) at the time, acknowledged the need for the Party to control newspaper circulation and bring its voice to the people:

In what circumstances was the decision to combine the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system made? At the time, Mainland China was basically liberated; the political consciousness of the whole nation was improved; our economic and cultural undertakings were recovering. Therefore, in this situation, we needed many newspapers to guide the masses into engagement in the struggle against our enemies and for production, as well as other work. This situation required the rapid development of newspaper circulation. The policy of combining the newspaper distribution channel with

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circulation policy in the Soviet Union was more complicated than that of the PRC. In the USSR, the newspapers were first given to a public soyuzpechat (united print distribution company) that was run by the Soviet republics. Then, this company would send the newspapers to the post offices according to the numbers provided. However, in China, the entire distribution of the newspapers was controlled by the postal system. See Ye Yandu, “Youfaheyi: Zhonggong jianguohou baoye faxing de bianju (1949-1954)” (邮发合一：中共建国后报业发行的变局 The combination of postal system and distribution: Changes to the newspaper distribution after 1949), Taida lishi xuebao, 42(2008): 66.

the postal system was made under the condition of requiring the rapid development of newspaper circulation.¹⁹

Furthermore, the press had to allow the postal office to participate in the process of making the distribution plans.²⁰ This was a great burden even for the Party papers, not to mention the civilian ones. According to a report of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, some newspapers “always wanted a higher circulation, but frequently had issues with the post department.”²¹

To give a specific example, Yang Qi (杨奇), one of the founders and editor-in-chief of the celebrated Yangcheng wanbao (羊城晚报 Yangcheng Evening News), recalled his experience with postal officials: “Our country had emulated the Soviet journalistic experience since liberation, combining the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system. This empowered the postal office to handle the distribution of newspapers, so we had to discuss our distribution system with them.”²² However, his discussion with the postal officials was a frustrating one, because the postal office only gave the newspaper a quota of 50,000 copies when

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²⁰ “Zhongyang renmin zhengfu youdianbu xinwen zongshu guanyu youdianju faxing baozhizhanxing banfa” [中央人民政府邮电部新闻总署关于邮电局发行报纸暂行办法 Provisional measures on distributing newspapers by the Post Office issued by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the General Administration of the Press], in Du Qingyun, Zhongguo baokan faxingshi shiliao, pp. 27-30.
²¹ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhuanfa youdianbu dangzu he chuban zongshu guanyu baokan faxing gongzuogu de zhishi” [中共中央关于转发邮电部党组和出版总署党组关于报刊发行工作的报告的指示 The CCP Central Committee’s instructions on the circulation of the Party Committee of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the General Administration of the Press’s report on newspaper and magazine distribution work ], in Du Qingyun, Zhongguo baokan faxingshi shiliao, p. 19.
²² Yang Qi, Yuegang feihong taxueni, p. 11.
it asked for 100,000. This conflict led the *Yangcheng wanbao* to break the combination of the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system for the first time in the history of the PRC and establish its own distribution network, resulting in a spirited debate between the *Yangcheng wanbao* and the postal officials. This debate was held by the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee. Finally, they worked out a compromise: the postal office incorporated the new distribution network developed by the *Yangcheng wanbao*, but at the same time, the paper had to cede its distribution rights to the postal office.

From Yang’s experience, it can be concluded that any distribution that did not go through the postal system would be outlawed. This implies that the Party deprived the newspapers of their distribution rights, thus controlling their revenue stream. Without an independent revenue stream, the papers had to live up to the dictates of the Party and thus became further dependent on the Party. In He Bixiao and Fu Xin Xin’s words, combining the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system “accelerated the elimination of independence in the newspapers’ editorial policies.”

From another angle, the implementation of the combining of the newspaper distribution channel with the postal system can be regarded as a normalization of wartime journalistic principles. As He and Fu state, “After 1949, this distribution mode, developed during wartime and consumed with the idea of war and enemy consciousness, was added to the journalism system in a peaceful era.” The Party introduced this institution in the early 1940s. During the Anti-Japanese War, to ensure that the Party papers could be delivered to the readers through the

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24 He Bixiao and Fu Xin Xin, “1950 niandai chuqi shanghai siying baoye faxing zhidu de biange,” p. 87.
enemy lines, the Party branch in Shandong had combined the circulation of Party papers with its military postal system. In 1947, the Party branch in Manchuria adopted this same measure.\textsuperscript{25} This highly efficient militarization of newspaper distribution was very satisfying to the Party leaders, who had become accustomed to using the mindset they had developed during the war era. Yang Kuisong states that the Communist leaders exploited the experience gained in the process of struggling to seize state power (打天下) to establish the new state.\textsuperscript{26} Later, after Liberation, the militarization model of newspaper dissemination was established nationwide.

The fourth measure that the Party introduced from the Soviet Union to reinforce its control over the newspapers was the nationwide newspaper division. Based on the Soviet model, the Party established a centralized newspaper hierarchy by categorizing newspapers into different levels: national, provincial, and municipal. At the same time, it assigned certain newspapers to target certain readers.

This policy was first announced in May 1949. Instructions that the Party gave to the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee state: “Besides the Party newspapers, depending on the specific situation, we shall run one or two and even several non-party newspapers in the large cities in order to link us with the broader social classes. Based on the experience in Beiping and Tianjin, this practice will be beneficial to us. (It will be even better if we have Party members in the press). However, it is not advisable to have too many newspapers, since that could lead to


\textsuperscript{26} Yang Kuisong, \textit{Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu 1} (中华人民共和国建国史研究) (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2009), pp. 4-5.
problems with paper, manpower, sales, and the circulation division of the newspapers.”

Next, at the Beijing and Tianjin News Work Conference (京津新闻工作会议) of March 1950, the division of the newspapers according to task and target audience, a crucial proposal of the conference, was established as a fundamental principle for journalism in the “New China.”

With the division of the newspapers, the newspapers were organized vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the newspapers were divided into different levels according to the administrative level of the Party committees to which they were attached: the Party papers were categorized as central-level, provincial-level, prefectural-level, and county-level, all the way down to the blackboard papers and wall papers.

The blackboard papers and wall papers were at the very bottom of the press hierarchy. However, even the editors of the lowest level papers closely followed the lines of the central level ones. Predictably, this made all levels of the newspapers into clones of the Renmin ribao.

Ian Stewart, an observer, grumbled, “There were many days when one felt that the printing of several newspapers, instead of one [the Renmin ribao] was a sheer waste of paper, ink and printing machines—though it may have saved labor in editorial office.”

Nevertheless, in effect, the lower level papers were able to combine the local situations with the central press’s line. Therefore, with press hierarchy, the Party’s discourse could be brought to the people layer by layer and explained in the local context to maximize the propaganda effect. In Wilbur Schramm’s words about the situation in the Soviet Union, the wall papers could be read as channels through which the central party line was transmitted to local audiences.

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27 “Zhongyang guanyu dachegnshi baozhi wenti gei nanjing shiwei de zhishi” (中央关于大城市报纸问题给南京市委的指示  The CC’s instructions to the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee on newspapers in the big cities), in XCB 1937-1949, p. 828.

28 “Jingjin Xinwen gongzuo huiyi taolun yaodian chubu yijian” (京津新闻工作会议讨论要点初步意见  Preliminary consensus reached at the Beijing and Tianjin News Work Conference), XWHB, Volume 2, pp. 160-161.

and blackboard papers, “which [have] a circulation of one,” actually “represent the farthest step the press can take in relating the central line to the problems of a locality or a group.”

Moreover, like those in the Soviet Union, the papers were prohibited from criticizing the Party organization or cadres at the same level with them or higher. For example, the municipal newspapers were not allowed to criticize municipal, provincial, or central level individuals or affairs. Therefore, within the press hierarchy, there was, as in the USSR, a “hierarchy of criticism.”

Horizontally, the Party ran vocationalized papers for different groups of people such as teachers, peasants, workers, youth, and soldiers. For example, at the central level, the Party established the Gongren ribao (工人日报  Workers’ Daily), Zhongguo qingnianbao (中国青年报  China Youth Daily), Zhongguo shaonianbao (中国少年报  China Teenager Daily), Renmin tielubao (人民铁道报  People’s Railway Daily), Jiankangbao (健康报  Health Daily), and Jiefangjun bao (解放軍报  Liberation Army Daily). Like the provincial or municipal level papers, these vocationalized papers also closely followed the editorial line of the Renmin ribao. However, they used “a language appropriate in style, expression, and accent” for their audience and taught them how to carry out the Party’s policies in their specific areas.

The non-Party newspapers, including the previously civilian-run newspapers and those run by the minor parties and groups (a topic taken up later) were also divided into different levels and were assigned to certain groups of readers. For example, the Guangming ribao (光明日报

31 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 23.
32 Fang Hanqi and Chen Yeshao, eds., Zhongguo dangdai xinwen shiyeshi (中国当代新闻事业史) (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1992), pp. 4-5.
Enlightenment Daily) was categorized as a national newspaper and targeted the petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and the minor parties and groups; the Jinbu ribao (进步日报 Progress Daily) was categorized as a local newspaper in Tianjin and targeted the national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and intellectuals in that city. In Shanghai, classified as a municipal-level newspaper, the Wenhuibao targeted young intellectuals. Likewise, the Dagongbao catered to merchants and senior intellectuals.\textsuperscript{34}

As a result, these non-Party newspapers were gradually vocationalized and localized. For example, the Wenhuibao gradually became a newspaper aimed at primary and middle school teachers. Later, the Party even attempted to further transform it into a full-fledged teachers’ newspaper. Yao Fangzhao, a journalist at the Wenhuibao, remembered that at the time, journalists at the Wenhuibao treated the book, Pedagogy by N. A. Kaiipod (a Soviet educator), as their bible. The newspaper was full of Kaiipod and Pedagogy, which made many newspeople, who were accustomed to speaking for the public rather than to certain groups of people and who were not familiar with the pedagogical terms, feel exhausted and uncomfortable. In one case, Ke Ling (柯灵), who had worked for the Wenhuibao for a long time as its vice editor-in-chief, resigned from the press because he was not interested in pedagogy.\textsuperscript{35}

Similarly, the Dagongbao was made into a financial newspaper, which was quite depressing to its staff. Some of the old editors grumbled, “People can only find business and cooperatives in our newspaper after they open it,” and “In the past, our readers appreciated three things in the Dagongbao: editorials, reportage, and supplements. Now, none of them exists. Our

\textsuperscript{34} Wu Yanting, “Xinzhongguo xuexi sulian xinwen gongzuo jingyan de lishi kaocha,” pp. 107-109.
\textsuperscript{35} Yao Fangzao (姚芳藻), Ke Ling zhuan (柯灵传 A biography of Ke Ling) (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), p. 324. Also see Zheng Zhong, Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao (毛泽东与文汇报 Mao Zedong and the Wenhuibao) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), p. 85.
old readers do not like to read our newspaper anymore,” and “We should have the newspaper division, but the Dagongbao has become so vocational. Does it still match the concept of newspaper in our minds?”

The major Party newspapers in certain places were not assigned to target certain readers exclusively, which indicates that they could speak to everyone. In one case, while all the civilian-run newspapers were aimed at certain readers, the Party did not limit the readers of the Jiefang ribao (解放日报), the main Party newspaper in Shanghai. By assigning certain readers to the civilian-run newspapers and localizing them, the Party ensured the dominant position of the Party newspapers. As Zhang Shunji notes about Shanghai, “By curbing the civilian-run newspapers’ tendency to develop into national papers, [the Party] established a new structure in which the comprehensive Jiefang ribao played a leading role with the cooperation of the vocational newspapers.”

In short, dividing newspapers by task and target audience enabled the Party to reinforce its control over journalism and to establish a well-planned, centralized newspaper hierarchy in which the Party newspapers enjoyed the dominant position, while civilian-run newspapers were gradually vocationalized and localized. As a result, every newspaper needed to operate along the lines that the Party set for it. Competition among newspapers could no longer occur.

Incomplete emulation of the Soviet newspapers

36 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, pp. 170-171.
37 This Jiefang ribao was the mouthpiece of Shanghai Municipal Party Committee established in 1949 and was different from the Jiefang ribao in Yan’an that ran from 1941-1947. These two papers just shared the same name.
Besides the management mechanism, the impact of the Soviet journalistic model on the day-to-day operation of the newspapers was tremendous. In the early 1950s, every paper in China including the non-Party ones did its best to learn from and imitate the Soviet newspapers. This imitation was so well executed that they nearly uncritically emulated the style, columns, titles, and even fonts in the Soviet newspapers. In the following paragraphs, I will use the Renmin ribao as an example to illustrate this point. In order to learn from Pravda, the Renmin ribao organized several delegations to visit this press in Moscow. Moreover, in 1950, the Renmin ribao ran a special journal, the Xinwen gongzuo (新闻工作 Journalistic Work), to introduce the journalistic experience in the Soviet Union to Chinese journalists. The Xinwen gongzuo published approximately sixty articles by Lenin, Stalin, and others about journalistic work in the Soviet Union. To strengthen this movement, in 1954, the Renmin ribao established a house journal, titled Zhenlibao wenxuan (真理报文选 Selections from Pravda), to publish the layout of and articles in Pravda. As a result, the news workers of the Renmin ribao copied Pravda at both the institutional and stylistic levels.

Additionally, the Renmin ribao also introduced almost all of Pravda’s institutions, such as proofreading groups (校对组), first readers (第一读者), professional reviewers of international issues, and a secretariat of the editorial board (编辑部秘书处). This emulation was so complete that the Party news workers even changed the name of each section of the Renmin ribao from xx zu (组 group) into xx bu (部 department).

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39 Wu Tingjun, “Dui xuexi sulian xinwen gongzuo jingyan de lishi kaocha,” p. 103.
Among the institutions that were introduced, the Editorial Committee (编辑委员会) was the most crucial. Although some Party newspapers, such as the Xinhua ribao in Chongqing and the Jiefang ribao in Yan’an, had already established this during the Anti-Japanese War, the beginning years of the PRC witnessed the formalization of the institution. The primary duty of the editorial committees was to make working plans and propaganda plans, including scheduling the editorials and the papers’ commentary on public affairs. According to a description of the editorial committees in a working report of the Wenhuibao, “The editorial committee was meant to be a crucial body in making propaganda plans, political commentary plans, and working plans…. The editorial committee members met on Saturdays to create the working plan for and the major content of the paper of the next week.”

It is crucial to note that these plans were not based on the journalists’ will but on the Party’s overall plans, such as the five-year plans, and the Party leaders’ detailed instructions that the press might receive at any moment. Through these plans, the Party ensured that the papers operated apace with the country’s planned economy and society, thus making them an integral part of the planning system. And, the working plans of the press were constantly modified by the Party leaders. As a result, through the editorial committees and the plans, the Party had effective control of the press. Simultaneously, the work of the Party’s journalists was primarily based on plans well-articulated in advance rather than on unpredictable current affairs—a situation which was strikingly different from that of their Western counterparts. As Angus Roxburgh observed about Pravda, “While the editorials or leading articles of Western papers are

41 G20-1-24, “Wenhuibao guanyu bianjibu zenyang gaijin gongzuo de baogao” (文汇报关于编辑部怎样改进工作的报告 The Wenhuibao’s report on how the Editorial Committee could improve its work), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 1950.
42 This was inspired by Angus Roxburgh’s discussion of Pravda’s plans. See Roxburgh, Pravda, p. 64.
reactions to the latest news, Pravda’s editorials are planned well in advance.”⁴³ Apparently, the
Renmin ribao was no different than its Soviet counterpart in this regard.

Remarkably, although the Party news workers made every effort to introduce the Soviet journalistic institutions, there were some pivotal institutions that they did not emulate. One was prepublication censorship. The Soviet Union began carrying out prepublication censorship in the 1920s. It was implemented by Glavlit, the Central Directorate of Literature, and “its successor organizations (different names, same functions).”⁴⁴ According to Matthew Lenoe, “Glavlit representatives were placed at all Soviet newspapers” after 1927.⁴⁵

By comparison, in China, although many important writings in the Renmin ribao, such as editorials and critical reports, needed approval from the Party leaders before publication,⁴⁶ the Party largely carried out post-publication censorship and self-censorship of the publications. Perry Link states, “The Soviet Union maintained a huge censorial bureaucracy that was responsible for cleansing manuscripts of illicit words and ideas that were specifically listed for bureaucrats in periodic handbooks. In China there was no such bureaucracy but self-censorship, induced by fear of punishment, more than made up the difference.”⁴⁷ Likewise, Volland maintains, “While many countries in the socialist world emulated the Soviet system, the CCP

⁴³ Roxburgh, Pravda, p. 64.
⁴⁵ Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 19.
⁴⁶ See “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai baozhi kanwushang zhankai piping he ziwo piping de jueding” (中共中央关于在报纸刊物上展开批评与自我批评的决定 The CCP Central Committee’s Resolution on the Implementation of Criticism and Self-Criticism in the Newspapers), XWHB, Volume 2, p. 6; Lu Dingyi, “Guanyu baozhi gongzuo de jige wenti” (关于报纸工作的几个问题 Several Problems of Newspaper Work), in Lu Dingyi, Lu Dingyi wenji (陆定一新闻文选 Lu Dingyi’s selected works on journalism) (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1987), p. 42.
opted for a different path. In the PRC, no institutional bureaucratic regime of pre-publication censorship was ever instituted."

He continues, “In the majority of cases, however, the CCP relies on post-publication censorship to check the compliance of the media.”

So why did the Party decide not to carry out prepublication censorship? One possible reason was the poor reputation of the KMT’s prepublication censorship. The KMT embarked on prepublication censorship in 1933. With the outbreak of the War of Resistance, it reinforced its censorship. This strict censorship created widespread anger among intellectuals. Consequently, in 1945, the intelligentsia launched a “Rejection of Censorship Movement” (拒检运动).

Possibly in order to win the intellectuals’ support and produce a more democratic image, the Party abandoned this institution. In addition, the Party’s strict control of the production process of the newspapers, the “an interlocking system of control,” (detailed in the next chapter) eliminated the Party’s need to implement prepublication censorship.

Another institution that the Party news workers chose not to adopt was the Soviet Union’s Press Bureau which controlled access to the state institutions and was responsible for providing journalists with “after-the-fact accounts, protocols, or stenographic reports.” As a result, reporters were converted into “responsible couriers picking up documents prepared by the

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Press Bureaus.” By contrast, no institution monopolized access to the state institutions in China. The Chinese reporters were required to attend meetings and write reports.

The Renmin ribao also learned many principles from Pravda. Among them, the most notable concerned the editorial system, the iron rule of “never publishing corrections,” and not publishing advertisements. First, since Pravda printed editorials daily which were regarded as the Communist Party’s “flags,” the news workers at the Renmin ribao managed to do the same thing. However, the Chinese news workers soon found that they did not have enough topics for editorials and that many of their editorials were not meaningful enough. As the editor-in-chief and head of the Renmin ribao, Deng Tuo (邓拓) was exhausted by editorials. He complained, “We need to publish an editorial every day, regardless of whether we have significant problems to discuss, regardless of the quality of the editorials. This is doctrinairism and subjectivism.”

It is noteworthy that the chief editors of the civilian-run newspapers would do their best to write daily editorials prior to Liberation. In addition, before the Jiefang ribao reform in 1942, Bo Gu insisted that an editorial should appear daily. Li Rui (李锐), an editor of the paper during the Yan’an years, recalled that the paper “ran editorials every day, sticking to the tradition of the Chinese urban papers.” Therefore, running a daily editorial was a significant tradition in Chinese journalism. One possible reason the Party news workers disliked this rule in the early 1950s was the Party’s rigid control over editorials. Regarding editorials as its “flags,” the Party

55 Stranahan, Molding the Medium, p. 29.
56 Ding Dong (丁冬) and Li Nanyang (李南央), Li Rui koushu wangshi (李锐口述往事 An oral history of Li Rui) (Hong Kong: Dashan wenhua chubanshe, 2017), p. 105; For this tradition, also see Hu Qiaomu, Hu Qiaomu huiyi Mao Zedong, p. 449.
underlined their importance as they had to speak for the Central Committee. Moreover, in general, editorialis were to be submitted to the Central Committee several days in advance and could not be printed until they were approved. Thus, unlike the editors-in-chief of the civilian newspapers before Liberation, the editors of the Renmin ribao did not dare to write on topics that they were interested in or in the way they liked. Hence, people like Deng Tuo felt extremely frustrated and exhausted by the editorials.

The lack of editorials in newspapers after Liberation left even the Party members who lived in cities feel disappointed. Xia Yan (夏衍) complained, “We can read the official documents of the Party and government in the newspapers. However, why isn’t there a single editorial every few days or even one week in the Party newspapers that are the Party’s throat and tongue.”57 Therefore, although many principles that the Renmin ribao learned from Pravda were abandoned after 1956, the editors of the newspaper still stuck to this rule to a degree after that. Although the paper did not publish a daily editorial, the frequency was dramatically increased. According to Deng Tuo’s survey, the number of editorials in the Renmin ribao increased from eight per month in 1948 to twenty-two in 1954. In 1956, the Renmin ribao ran an editorial almost every day.58 To choose two periods randomly, in June 1958 and November 1960, the Renmin ribao published editorials twenty-five out of thirty days. Although many of the Soviet principles were not fitting in the Chinese context, some of them put the Party newspapers on the right track.

The second principle that the Renmin ribao adopted was “no corrections.” Because Pravda never published corrections, the Renmin ribao followed suit. According to Sun Xupei,

57 Xia Yan, Lanxun jiunenglu (兰新旧梦录) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2000), pp. 428-429
58 Deng Tuo, “Guanyu baozhi de shelun” (关于报纸的社论 On editorials in the newspapers), in Deng Tuo, Deng Tuo Wenji (邓拓文集 The collected works of Deng Tuo), Volume 1 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1986), p. 308. Also see Cheek, Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China, p. 144.
the foremost thing that the Renmin ribao members learned from the visit to Pravda was that
“Our language is the Party’s language, the class’s language, and the people’s language; our work
style is the Party’s work style. Thus, every one of our words represents the Central Committee.”
Since the Party could never make mistakes, neither could its newspapers. Thus, in order to keep
the Renmin ribao mistake-free, no one dared to make any changes to the fixed rules.59

The third principle that Renmin ribao emulated was “no-advertisements.” Since the
newspapers in Soviet Union did not publish advertisements, the Renmin ribao removed almost
all advertisements, which eliminated its commercial feature. According to Zhu Jin’s study, in
October 1949 and 1950, 1.5 of 6 pages of the Renmin ribao were advertisements. The rate of
advertising pages to total pages was 25%. By comparison, in October 1953, 1954, and 1955, only
0.15 of 4 pages were used to print advertisements. The rate of advertising pages to total pages
dropped to 3.6%.60 As a result, politics became the overwhelming feature of the paper.
Interestingly, this rule did not take root deeply in China. During the 1956 reforms that will be
discuss in the last part of this chapter, this rule was eased. The Renmin ribao began to publish
advertisements at the bottom of its back pages. These advertisements included advertisements for
books, magazines, traffic equipment, and airlines. Although the number and space of these
advertisements were very limited, they proved that this Soviet journalistic principle did not fit
with the Chinese context. From 1956 on, the Renmin ribao published advertisements every day
except during the Cultural Revolution.61

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Stylistically, the news workers at the Renmin ribao tried to learn the language, titles, and format of Pravda. Among the most compelling anecdotes in this process was the imitation of the single-line titles (单行标题) in Pravda. These were command-form headlines, in Matthew Lenoe’s terminology, that were developed during the Soviet Union’s First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932). Lenoe contends this type of headline “repeated a single slogan over and over, avoided difficult technical terms, continued for a prolonged period of time, and was maximally militant.” Exemplary titles included “Prepare for the Winter and Spring Sowing!” “Oh, Life, You’re Our Workshop!” and “Stick It to the Pickpockets!” These titles did not inform readers what the corresponding articles were about. As Roxburgh complained, “The [single-line] headlines… rarely convey anything of the article’s content…. The headlines are so unhelpful.” In comparison to this type of single-line title, traditional Chinese headings were generally comprised of a kicker (肩题 or 引题), a title, and a subtitle. This type of title was given the nickname “staircase-style titles” (楼梯式标题) by Chinese newspeople due to their appearance.

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63 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 38. To find more single-line titles, please see Roxburgh, Pravda, pp. 79, 107-268.
64 Ibid., p. 40.
65 Roxburgh, Pravda, p. 79.
By contrast, the command-form titles were given the nickname “shoulder pole-style titles” (扁担式标题) or “Utility-pole-style titles.”

Figure 2a/b. A comparison of multi-line and single-line titles. The left is the front page of the *Renmin ribao* on November 02, 1949, before the wave of learning from the Soviet Union. The right is the front page of the *Renmin ribao* on December 31, 1955.

This imitation of the command-form headlines made the layout of the *Renmin ribao* plain and stiff; they were not at all to the tastes of the Chinese newspeople accustomed to the traditional headlines that highlighted the information content and were literary and graceful. Li Zhuang, an editor of the *Renmin ribao*, complained that *Pravda* often used the same universal title, “Under Lenin’s Flag,” for its editorials. He continued: “[With the single-line titles], we were unable to adjust the fineness and coarseness nor the length of the titles, let alone the level or

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obscure nature of the titles due to the different aesthetic standards and literary expressions. I can only recall a handful of fine titles in our newspapers during certain years in the 1950s.”

Likewise, Wang Yingxiu (王英秀), a Russian translator for the Renmin ribao, complained, “The big-character [single-line] titles look like some pillars on open land. They not only make our newspaper look rigid, but also keep readers from finding important information; it is a departure from our newspaper traditions.” Therefore, as lithography was very popular in China due to the aesthetic appeal of Chinese texts printed with it, the Russian-style titles were soon abandoned by the Party news workers because of their limited aesthetic appeal.

In a similar manner, since Pravda did not have supplements (副刊), the Renmin ribao stopped its supplements. According to Jiang Deming (姜德明), who served as an editor in the Art and Literature Department (文艺部) of the paper in 1956: “After entering [Beijing], the Renmin ribao had two art and literature supplements, the weekly Renmin wenyi (人民文艺 People’s Art and Literature) and the comprehensive daily Renmin yuandi (人民园地 The People’s Garden). Due to the wave of learning from Pravda, which did not have supplements, we stopped these two supplements.” Although supplements were not a journalistic practice invented by the Chinese, it was widely viewed as a significant tradition within Chinese journalism. Even the Party acknowledged the importance of supplements to the Chinese newspapers. For example, instructions that the Party issued in 1948 stated: “Supplements are a

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69 Li Zhuang, Li Zhuang wenji—huiyilu bian, volume 2, p. 150.
very significant part of papers in cities. We must run supplements.”73 Therefore, as with the multi-line titles, this tradition was restored in 1956, which also displayed the resilience of Chinese journalistic tradition.

Another significant principle of Pravda that the Renmin ribao news workers did not adopt from the Soviet Union was that the chief editors of Pravda were usually Politburo members or other senior Party officials. As Matthew Lenoe observes:

Senior and deputy editors [of the major newspapers in the Soviet Union] were usually prominent party officials who were in constant touch with the Central Committee agenda through attendance at high-level party meetings. Nikolai Bukharin, editor-in-chief of Pravda until 1929, was a Politburo member…. At Izvestiia, Ivan Skvortsov-Stepanov (editor-in-chief from late 1925 until 1928) was a member of the Central Committee and in the first months of 1928 regularly attended Politburo sessions.74

This ensured that Pravda had enough power to reject the control of other high officials and to criticize the high-level government agencies when it felt that it was necessary. By contrast, Deng Tuo, the editor-in-chief of the Renmin ribao, had never served in the CCP’s Central Committee, not to mention the Politburo. This meant that Deng was frequently forced to accept whatever the high officials ordered him to publish, which further reduced the Renmin ribao’s independence and limited the subjects and scale of the critical reports in this paper. Deng lamented: “Many ministers of the government… are members of the Central Committee and can sign orders for People’s Daily to publish their speeches, articles, or reports of meetings. I know better than

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73 “Zhongxuanbu guanyu chengshi dangbao fangzhen de zhishi” (中宣部关于城市党报方针的指示 Publicity Department of the CCP about the principle of running newspapers in cities), XWHB, volume 1, p. 202.
74 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 19.
anybody else that readers don’t even look at the stuff, but even so, I can’t refuse to publish it.”

This rule has lasted for a long time. When Roderick MacFarquhar visited the Renmin ribao in the early 1970s, he was told that “there were no CC members on the paper’s staff, or on that of the Red Flag (红旗杂志, the most important central-level Party magazine during the Cultural Revolution).”

In addition, although Pravda often published satirical essays (фельетон in Russian, derived from the French word “feuilleton”; 小品文 xiaopinwen or 杂文 zawen in Chinese, a type of critical essay aimed at anything considered undesirable) and the Renmin ribao had published some articles to promote satirical essays in 1954, the Renmin ribao had very few satirical essays in the early 1950s. According to Yuan Ying (袁鹰) who worked for the newspaper as an arts and literature editor from 1945 to 1986, there were only a few satirical essays at either the central or local level newspapers in the early 1950s.

The main reason was that during and after the campaign to learn from Pravda, few writers who were accomplished in satirical essays had the courage to write them as they had just suffered from the “big criticisms” of Hu Feng (胡风), Hu Shi, and Dream of the Red Chamber.

Yuan Ying’s colleague, Li Xifan (李希凡), stated that “even when the satirical essays were

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77 See Chen Xuzong, “Xiaopinwen—jinxing sixiang douzheng zui linghuo de wuqi” (小品文——进行思想斗争最灵活的武器 Satirical Essays: The Most Flexible Weapon in Ideological Struggles), Renmin ribao, April 18th, 1954; Xia Yan, “Tan xiaopinwen” (谈小品文 A Discussion on Satirical Essays), Renmin ribao, May 16th, 1954. Also, there are some difference between 小品文 and 杂文. Generally, 杂文 could be regarded as 小品文 or at least 小品文 with Chinese character. See Xia Yan, “Tan xiaopinwen”; Yuan Ying, Fengyun ceji: Wo zai renmin ribao fukan de suiyue (风云侧记: 我在人民日报副刊工作的岁月 My Life Working for People’s Daily’s Supplements) (Beijing: Zhongguo dang’an chubanshe, 2006), pp.16-19.

78 Yuan Ying, Fengyun ceji, p. 17.
gaining popularity in China, there were only three or four satirical essays in the *Renmin ribao* each month.\(^7^9\) Moreover, in light of Yuan’s observation, even among the few satirical essays in newspapers, few were satirical enough.\(^8^0\) Furthermore, the lack of these satirical essays was a departure not only from *Pravda*’s conventions, but also from the Chinese journalistic tradition. Party intellectuals like Hu Qiaomu acknowledged the importance of satirical essays and considered them the soul of supplement.\(^8^1\) The dearth of the essays reflected the repressive political atmosphere among the intellectuals.

Another Soviet principle that the *Renmin ribao* did not follow during this period was the cult of personality found in *Pravda*. In the early 1950s, when the personality cult of Stalin had reached its peak, the paper published letters daily from peasants and workers in which they reported their achievements to Stalin and thanked him. According to Jeffrey Brooks, “In 1949, the year of [Stalin’s] seventieth birthday,” *Pravda* allotted twenty-seven percent of its front page to letters and reports that were addressed to Stalin personally, and thereafter, more than ten percent.”\(^8^2\) In 1951 and 1952, the *Renmin ribao* also followed this example and published some letters from readers thanking Mao.\(^8^3\) However, unlike *Pravda*, the *Renmin ribao* put this section

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\(^7^9\) Li Xifan, *Lixifan wenji*, volume 7 (李希凡文集 Li Xifan’s Works) (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2014), p. 239.
\(^8^0\) Yuan Ying, *Fengyun ceji*, p.19.
\(^8^1\) Hu Qiaomu comments on zawen, “satirical essays are the soul of compliments. We should put satirical essays in the primary position. Normally, we need to use satirical essays as the headline of the compliment.” in Yuan Ying, *Fengyunceji*, p. 43. Li Xifan, who worked for the supplement of *Renmin ribao* since the 1950s, contend, “satirical essays are the soul of compliments. If there are no good satirical essay in the compliment, I would not feel satisfied.” in Li Xifan, *Lixifan wenji*, volume 7, p. 281.
\(^8^3\) To give several examples: “Hubei jianglingxian sanhexiang nongmin ganxie maozhuxi lingdao tamen fenledi” (湖北江陵县三合乡农民感谢毛主席领导他们分了地 The Formers in Jiangling County, Hubei Province Thank Chairman Mao’s Leading Role in Land Distribution), *Renmin ribao*, March 7, 1951; “Ganxie maozhuxi geiwode jiaoyu” (感谢毛主席给我的教育 Thank Chairman Mao’ Teaching), *Renmin ribao*, May 4, 1951; “Zhengzhou
on page 2, page 5, or page 6 rather than on the front page and published them much less frequently—fewer than one letter per month. Moreover, as central leaders such as Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, and even Mao Zedong himself criticized this practice, it was soon terminated. As a result, after 1952, there were very few letters expressing thanks to Chairman Mao in the Renmin ribao, although it is not hard to find the phrase “Thank you, Chairman Mao” (感谢毛主席) in the newspaper. On one hand, this indicates that the Party leadership in the 1950s had not succumbed to the cult of personality. On the other, it reveals the dangerous possibility that Party newspapers could go too far down the road of personality cult when the Party leaders lost their heads—something that actually happened in the following two decades.

Although the lack of satirical essays and the limitations on reports about the personality cult of Mao display two dramatically different sides of the Party’s control of the newspapers, they both powerfully indicate the Party leaders’ unrestrained and regular interventions in the press. Even though this intervention could be rewarding at times for the press, it damaged the independence of the press in the long run.

From this discussion, we can see that on the one hand, no matter how the overwhelming the movement of learning from Pravda was, it still could not change the aesthetic taste of Chinese readers—their fondness for literacy grace and more distinct titles. On the other hand,

sanwei canjiaguo erqi bagong de laogognren tuixiuhou xixiexin ganxie maozhuxi” (郑州三位参加过“二七”罢工的老工人退休后写信感谢毛主席 Three Old Workers Who Participated in the Erqi Strike Write Letters Thanking Chairman Mao after Retirement), Renmin ribao, June 20, 1951, and so on.

84 An Gang, “Ban yizhang zuihao de dangzhongyang jiguanbao” (办一张最好的党中央机关报 To Run the Best Official Newspaper of the Party Central Committee); An Gang, “Zai xinwen gongzuozhong cong zhou enlai dedaode jiaodao” (在新闻工作中从周恩来得到的教导 Learning from Zhou Enlai in Journalism Work); “Nongye xuanchuan shizhong juyu zhongyao diwei—ji sanjian maozedong dedao de qishi” (农业宣传始终居于重要地位——记三见毛泽东得到的启示 The Dominant Position of Agricultural Propaganda—Learning from Mao Zedong in My Meeting with Him), in An Gang, An Gang xinwen lunji (An Gang’s Journalistic Articles) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2015), pp. 23, 107, 128-129.
Although the idea was to thoroughly learn from *Pravda*, practices such as naming an editor-in-chief who had a high official status and the publishing of satirical essays that might weaken the Party control over the newspapers were not adopted.

Although the discussion above is specifically about the *Renmin ribao*, the experience of that paper highlights the influence of the Soviet newspapers. Indeed, under the wave of learning from the Soviet Union, all the press in China spent time and energy learning from the Soviet newspapers. To cite an example, most of the newspapers in the early 1950s, even the non-Party papers such as the *Xinwen ribao* (*新闻日报*), *Wenhuibao*, *Guangming ribao*, and *Dagongbao*, established editorial committees.85

As the leading Party newspaper, the *Renmin ribao* exerted a great influence on the other newspapers, thus expanding the influence of the Soviet model on the Chinese press. In Hu Qiaomu’s phrase, the *Renmin ribao* was the measure of all things and the leader of public opinion.”86 Similarly, Xu Zhucheng once said, “The *Renmin ribao* is a snake’s head. All other newspapers need to follow it. If the snake turns several times, our newspaper, the snake’s tail, will break into pieces.”87 The local newspapers usually emulated the Beijing newspapers, especially the *Renmin ribao*. In his 1956 novella, “The Inside Story of Our Newspaper (本报内部消息),” Liu Binyan (刘宾雁) vividly describes this situation. To convince his colleagues that his approach was correct, Zhang Ye (张野), a very bureaucratic editor, said, “I just talked with

85 A22-2-249, “Shanghai xinwenbao, laodongbao, wenhuibao, xinminbao zonghe qingkuang huibian” (上海新闻报，劳动报，文汇报，新民报综合情况报告 A Comprehensive Report on Shanghai’s *Xinwenbao*, *Laodongbao*, *Wenhuibao*, and *Xinminbao*),, Shanghai Municipal Archives, 195403-195410.
the two newspapers in Beijing by telephone. They both used this approach.... Call Beijing first and then make plans. How could this be problematic? ”

Though there is no direct evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the Renmin ribao was one of “the two newspapers in Beijing.” In sum, the Renmin ribao’s learning from Pravda epitomized the nationwide emulating Soviet journalism.

From the discussion above, we can see that the Soviet model laid the foundation for the administrative system over the press, the inner institutions of the Chinese newspapers, and even styles, although much of what the Chinese journalists had learned from the Soviet Union was abandoned after 1956. The Soviet model helped the Party strengthen its control over the press and completely transformed the Chinese press into the Party’s propaganda apparatus and a government organ that closely worked with the Party leadership and other government agencies.

Legacy

The Party leaders soon realized the shortcomings of a complete emulation of the Soviet model. Bo Yibo (薄一波) recalled, “Mao proposed the idea of drawing lessons from the Soviet Union (以苏为鉴) at the end of 1955. At the time, we had gained some experience in economic construction. We also found that some aspects of the Soviet experience were not suitable for our country. Therefore, like the socialist transformation, whether we can find a road suitable for our situation and experience is a key problem for China’s socialist construction.”

89 Bo Yibo, Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu (若干重大决策与历史事件的回顾 A review of several major decisions and historical events) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2008), p. 472.
The denunciation of Stalin’s dictatorship and cult of personality at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU further urged the CCP leaders to reflect on the Soviet model. As Bo put it, “Hearing the news about the criticism of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU… [our] idea of drawing lessons from the Soviet became sharper.” Furthermore, the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises prompted Mao to initiate the One Hundreds Flowers Campaign. To a great degree, this movement was designed to eliminate the impact of the Stalinist model of socialism, characterized by bureaucracy and oppressive control, on China. Merle Goldman’s writes, “[The Hundred Flowers Campaign] paralleled the thaw in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death and specially the criticism of dogmatism and oppressive controls following Khrushchev’s secret speech denouncing Stalin.” Likewise, Roderick MacFarquhar contends, “With Khrushchev’s revelations,… Mao must have begun to wonder how best to eliminate Stalinism in the running of the Chinese state…. Thus by mid-1956 Mao had made two major policy proposals relating to the problems raised by the 20th Congress—‘Long-term coexistence and mutual supervision’ and ‘Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend.’”

In response to the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Party officials in different sections managed to purge Stalin’s influence and pursued a more liberal, pluralistic approach. The Party news workers also strove to make changes. Among these, the most influential was the Renmin ribao’s reshuffle in 1956. Of course, this reshuffle was based on the Party news workers’ grievances about the Soviet model. Li Zhuang (李庄), a former chief editor of the Renmin ribao, recalled, “The reason we must conduct reform was that everyone, including the news workers of…

90 Bo Yibo, Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu, volume 1, p. 472.
the Renmin ribao, was dissatisfied with the paper…. The vivid, rigorous writing was gradually replaced by stereotyped, tedious writing…. [This was] a side-effect of learning from Pravda.”

In a similar vein, Qian Jiang contended,

The tendency to emulate Pravda uncritically resulted in formulaic, wooden, uncreative writing in the Renmin ribao…. In 1954 and 1955, the front pages of the Renmin ribao were rife with a variety of news about conferences (会议新闻) and welcome and farewell ceremonies (迎来送往). Only a small amount of news discussed domestic industrial and agricultural construction—which went against journalistic professionalism…. [Facing this situation], Deng Tuo explicitly questioned the Pravda model, “What can we do if this situation continues?” Hu Jiwei, Wang Ji, the [two] vice chief editors of the Renmin ribao, agreed with him.

On July 1, 1956, the Renmin ribao published a manifesto about this reshuffle, which was also titled “To the Readers” (致读者). The article put forward three reorganization principles: “Broaden the scope of reporting (扩大报道范围);” “Initiate free discussion (开展自由讨论);” and “Change the writing style (改进文风).” These principles aimed to challenge the Soviet-style newspapers that were characterized by an emphasis on political and economic news, a paternalistic tone, and long, blunt, dry writing. This was intended to transform the Renmin ribao from a Party paper to a “Party’s and people’s newspaper,” and to make the paper a public weapon, public property, and a servant of the people. Here is a part of the reshuffle manifesto:

93 Li Zhuang, “Sishi nianjian san dashi” (四十年间三大事 Three significant event during the 40 years), in Renmin ribao baoshi bianjizu, Renmin ribao huiyilu (人民日报回忆录 Memories of Renmin ribao) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1988), p. 55.

First, on broadening the scope of reports: [We will publish] the significant and the novel—whether it comes from the socialist camp or the capitalist countries; whether it occurs in the large metropolises or the remote villages; whether it directly concerns [socialist] construction or not; and whether it makes pleasant reading or not….We will strive to adjust to our readers’ demands.

Second, on initiating free discussion: newspapers are our society’s speech institutions (社会的言论机关). In any society, the members cannot all hold the same view on any specific problem. The Party’s and the people’s papers are responsible for leading public opinion along the correct road. However, to achieve this goal, we cannot adopt simple, coercive methods…. [We] should not prohibit instructive discussions…. Our paper has done a bad job on initiation of discussion, which deprived it of its animation. From now on, we will endeavor to improve [the paper].

Third, about changing the writing style—generally, there are too many blunt, dull, and long articles in our papers. Vacuous, arbitrary, stereotypical Party writings and incoherent articles still exist. We will work to improve this situation.95

Current scholarship in China sees these principles as having great significance. Wang Xiaomei contends that they would shift the Renmin ribao from a Party-oriented newspaper to a news-oriented one.96 Xia Xingzhen suggests that “in terms of communication, the Jiefang ribao’s reshuffle in 1942 served to transform [the function of Party papers] from social to organizational communications. From then on, the Jiefang ribao was no longer a common newspaper… but the flag and megaphone of the proletariat party. By contrast, the Renmin

95 “Zhiduzhe” (致读者 To the readers), Renmin ribao, July 1, 1956; For the first part of this translation, please see Cheek, Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China, p.147.
ribao’s reorganization attempted to partially transform [the function of Party papers] from organizational to social communication.”97 Likewise, Wu Feng argues, the reshuffle “was a reflection on and transcendence of the Party papers’ characteristics and functions. It attempted to change the pure political nature of the Party newspapers [the “Party characteristics”] and to endow them with an affinity to the people (人民性).”98

However, the reform was ineffective. Timothy Cheek observes, “The results were lukewarm… The hoped-for variety did not appear,” since this statement was “too cautious an approval for the increasingly experienced intellectuals of the PRC.”99 Furthermore, with the start of the Anti-Rightist Movement, no news worker dared to carry out the reorganization principles. In Li Zhuang’s words, “In the political situation of the day, the reorganization had to be terminated.”100

Besides the cautious approval and political change, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Party newspapers in the Yan’an years had already become an integral part of the Party bureaucratic system, and a significant instrument in Party officials’ toolkit. After Liberation, the Party newspapers became the Party’s instrument to promote the social and economic construction. As Wang Xiaomei states, “As a Party representative who communicated with the masses every day, the Renmin ribao was the cornerstone of the nationwide implementation of policies under the Party’s leadership. It issued and disseminated a wide range of policies for the

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98 Xu Xin, “Zhonggong sanci xinwen gaige yu chuanmei gonggongxing de bianqian” (中共三次新闻改革与传媒公共性的变迁 The CCP’s three journalistic reforms and the changes of the publicity of media), Jinan xuebao, 4 (2012): 148-149.
99 Cheek, Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China, pp.147-148.
100 Li Zhuang, Renmin ribao fengyu sishinian (人民日报风雨四十年 People’s Daily’s Forty Years) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe), p. 55.
Party and gradually became Mao’s assistant in pushing forward the socialist transformation and construction based on his ideas.”

Therefore, changing the Party newspapers would not only change the Party’s journalism, but also required a complete overhaul of the whole bureaucratic system, the Party’s operating methods, and the planned economy that was established in 1949. Without the Party newspapers serving as the Party’s propaganda mouthpiece, organizer, agitator, and sharpest weapon, the rigid bureaucracy and planned economy would have constantly been challenged by different opinions and thus could hardly have been carried out. Hence, unless the Party leadership intended to change their whole bureaucratic and economic system, they could not allow the 1956 reshuffle to succeed. As Li Liangrong explains, “The planned economy required the media to serve as a unified, concentrated, manipulative instrument. The second journalistic reform (the 1956 reshuffle) stressed that the media were societal tools (社会公器) promoting pluralistic, diverse, and free journalistic values. Would the media submit to the planned economy, or would the planned economy submit to the media? The result of the conflict was predictable.”

As a result, the only changes during the 1956 reshuffle that persisted after the Anti-Rightist Movement were the expansion of the Renmin ribao from four to eight pages, and the return of advertisements, supplements, and multi-line titles. These changes were only superficial and aesthetic. By contrast, the characteristics of the Soviet-style newspapers mentioned above have lasted until the present.

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The persistence of the Soviet model was not limited to the Party journalism. In fact, it was followed in all professions and trades. As Thomas Bernstein says, “China, despite Mao’s critical comment in the ‘Ten Great Relationships,’ retained major features of the Stalinist system as whole, whether revolutionary or bureaucratic.” In a similar vein, Frederick C. Teiwes maintains that “many Soviet influences inevitably remained,” even though the Party leaders “saw the need to break away from the Soviet path after 1957.”

In conclusion, with the introduction of the Soviet journalistic model in the early years of the PRC, the CCP established Soviet-style journalism, which was fundamentally discontinuous with Chinese journalism before and after 1949. Although this Soviet-style journalism was challenged during the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957, most of the Soviet journalistic norms persisted. The few changes that did occur were either aesthetic or relatively insignificant, although they did demonstrate some continuities in Chinese journalism. In addition, the Party’s emulation of the Soviet Journalistic was an incomplete one. The difference between the PRC’s and the Soviet Union’s journalism exhibited the trajectory of Chinese journalism history.

Questions remaining to be answered include: How did this Soviet-style journalism operate under the Chinese Communist regime? How were newspapers made under this new journalistic system? How did this journalism interact with the Party organization?

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103 Bernstein, “Introductions,” pp. 16-17.
104 Teiwes, “The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime,” p. 67,
5. Organizational Journalism: The Production Process and the Political Function of Newspapers in the Early PRC

Past scholarship has sporadically examined journalism in the PRC, including the production process of newspapers and their political function. However, these studies are based on the scholars’ observations of the specific parts of the Party’s journalism and simply view the Party’s journalism as an arm of the Party, thus failing to accurately conceptualize journalism under the CCP.

In previous scholarship on Soviet-style journalism, we find an analytic tool in Matthew Lenoe’s concept of mass journalism. With this concept, Lenoe highlights the role and the vulgar taste of the new generation of “mass” journalists in the early Stalin era (1928-53) because of their non-elite background and deep involvement in promotion of socialist production. While acknowledging the distinction between the Party news workers and traditional newspeople as well as the news workers’ participation in socialist construction, I suggest that Lenoe neglects the fact that the mass journalists were merely carrying out the directives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They had only a superficial impact on journalism in the Leninist-Stalinist political and economic system in the Soviet Union.

In this dissertation, I characterize Soviet-style journalism as organizational journalism. This term fits all Soviet-style journalism, including that in the Soviet Union and China. In this

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2 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 103.
chapter, I will use the Chinese situation to explain why Soviet-style journalism is called “organizational journalism.” “Organizational” in “organizational journalism” has two meanings. First, it means that the Party’s newspapers were run by and attached to the Party organization, layer by layer. Second, “organizational” means that the Party newspapers were the “organizers” of the Party’s work and greatly facilitated its daily operation. Organizational journalism demonstrates not only how newspapers were made and how messages in the papers were delivered to the masses, but also the intricate interaction between politics and journalism under the Communist regime.

This chapter has three parts. The first provides a fuller discussion of the “organizational journalism” concept. The second examines the production process of newspapers in the early 1950s. In this part, I suggest that through a series of institutions, the Party became deeply involved in the production process of newspapers. Although the Party had tried to separate the press from the Party organization, this move quickly failed because few Party leaders were willing to relax their control of the papers. The third part talks about the political function of the papers in the Communist regime.

Although this chapter only explores the early PRC, (roughly 1949 to 1956), the conclusions also apply to the later Mao era. Even if journalism during the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was quite distinct from other time periods during the Mao era, their similarities vastly outstripped their differences. As Alan Liu puts it, “The Cultural Revolution has had only marginal effect on the content and function of Chinese newspapers. At most, the press on mainland China was made to conform more literally to Mao’s ideals.”3 Thus, this chapter will sometimes draw upon examples from after 1956.

What is organizational journalism?

I contend that the overall feature of the PRC journalism was the combination of the Party organization and journalism. On one hand, papers were produced by the Party at all levels, as the idea, “the entire Party shall run the press” (全党办报) suggests. Also, the ideas in the papers were not disseminated without the Party organization’s promotion. As Timothy Cheek observes, from the perspective of Party propaganda cadres such as Deng Tuo, who was “a leading authority on Party journalism,” the Party’s press and propaganda work was “backed up by organizational muscle to promote and protect group goals.”

On the other hand, the Party journalism facilitated the daily operations of the Party organization. In the PRC, the Party organization served as the different “body organs.” As sociologist Franz Schurmann observes, “Communist China is like a vast building made of different kinds of brick and stone. However it was put together, it stands. What holds it together is ideology and organization.” In another paragraph, Schurmann maintains, the Party organization “pulls and holds society together.” Similarly, Andrew G. Walder suggests, “The party organization was at the core of the new state…. Its reach extended into all social institutions and economic enterprise, right down to the village, the factory floor, and the staff office.” In addition, Zheng Yongnian regards the CCP as an organizational emperor. Zheng highlights the similarities between the Party’s rule and traditional rule and the significant role played by the Party organization in the Communist regime. Moreover, in comparison to the

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4 Cheek, Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China, pp. 139,142.
6 Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, pp. 7-8
7 Walder, China Under Mao, 101.
traditional rule of individual emperors, Zheng contends, “At the organizational level, the Leninist party system materialized ‘imperial power’ more effectively than traditional organizing principles of imperial power had.”  

To ensure that the Party organization functioned well, the vertical and horizontal newspaper systems mentioned in Chapter 4 were established. Vertically, the national-level, provincial-level, prefectural-level, and the blackboard/wall newspapers were run to ensure that the Party was able to bring its message to its members and the masses effectively. Horizontally, the different vocationalized papers, such as peasant, worker, and teacher newspapers were established to make certain that different groups of people were being instructed by the Party.

At the upper level, the Party committees were required to utilize papers to push forward their work. As will be demonstrated below, Party leaders led and were involved in all stages of newspaper production. In concrete terms, the Party news workers made their editorial plans according to the directives that the leaders gave; the reporters could not conduct interviews until their plans were approved by the relevant Party authorities; Party leaders could conduct censorship on the papers at any time, although there was no specific pre-publication censorship organization; last, according to the idea “Let the entire Party run the newspapers,” all the Party members and political activists (积极分子) were obligated to provide news materials to the press.

At the lower levels, the Party cadres treated the Party papers as instructions from the leadership. On the one hand, they were obligated to carry out the policies in the papers if the policies related to them. On the other hand, the propaganda sectors would be required to explain

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the policies in the context of the local conditions, making them more accessible to the audience. Meanwhile, the propagandists had to establish blackboard and wall newspapers, newspaper-reading groups, the broadcasting stations, and the worker-peasant correspondent networks to bring the Party’s creeds to the masses. For the press, this meant that the papers could not function effectively without the Party organization’s cooperation.

In sum, the papers served as the “blood vessels” of the Party organization which held the brick and stone of the country together. The papers facilitated the operations of the Party organization. The Party had a thorough understanding of the role played by the papers in its system. As Mao put it, the Yan’an Jiefang ribao was “an organizer” who was able to “organize the political and cultural life across the whole Border region.” Moreover, he urged the Party leaders to “hold the papers in their hands and treat them as a weapon for organizing all the work.”10 Meanwhile, the Party press could not work without the Party organization.

**Newspaper Production**

During the Mao era, newspaper production was characterized by its close connection to the Party organization and was under the firm control of the Party. It was the Party leadership, rather than the editors, that actually made the editorial plans. In previous scholarship, Chang-tai Hung termed this “an interlocking system of control,” to highlight how the Party committees at all the levels could intervene in the making of the papers at any moment.11 As a result, the news agencies, the newspapers, and the Party news workers were principally the performers of the Party leaders’ ideas and the Party’s “domestic instrument” (驯服工具). They could not make

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10 Mao Zedong, “Baozhi shi zhidao gognzuo jiaoyu quanzhong de wuqi” (报纸是指导工作教育群众的武器 Newspapers are Weapons to Guide the Work and Educate the Masses), in GZWX, pp. 112-113.

decisions on their work. In the words of Liu Binyan (刘宾雁), a journalist with the Zhongguo qingnianbao in the 1950s, “No decision needed my participation and opinion. No major problems needed our discussion. Our jobs were just to listen and take notes restlessly…. We needed to give ourselves to the Party, to give all we had to the Party, and to follow the Party’s orders.”

Below, I will discuss the process of making newspapers in detail. At the end of this part, I will show that although the Party had relaxed its control over this process, it soon re-tightened its control.

The production of the news started with attending relevant conferences and accepting the Party leaders’ instructions. The Party news workers could attend certain levels of the Party and the government conferences and work closely with certain Party leaders. The purpose was to help them to gain an understanding of the latest policies or the leaders’ intentions, which would enable them to make editorial and reporting plans. As stated in Chapter 3, this rule started during the Yan’an era. In the 1950s, it was formalized by the Central Committee. “The CCP’s Central Leadership’s Resolution on the Improvement of the Work of Newspapers (中共中央关于改进报纸工作的决议)” was approved by the Party Politburo on July 17, 1954, and reads, “All the departments under the [Central] Party committee and the government should have the cadres of the Party newspapers and other newspapers attend their meetings.”

Li Zhuang, a former editor of the Renmin ribao and the newspaper’s chief editor in the 1980s, recalled this situation: “At the time [1950], the most difficult problem we faced was that we did not have a good understanding of the central leadership’s intentions and local affairs. After approval by the central leadership, the press dispatched members of the editorial committee”

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13 XWHB, volume 2, p. 329
and group leaders to contact different departments of the government about attending their Party committee conferences.”

To be more specific, Xia Gongran observes that, as the head of the NCNA, Wu Lengxi (吴冷西) often attended central level conferences, like the Politburo Conference (政治局会议) chaired by Liu Shaoqi, and the Secretary-General’s meeting (秘书长会议) chaired by Deng Xiaoping. However, he was not routinely eligible to attend the meetings of the Secretariat of the Central Committee (中央书记处会议) held by Mao Zedong, which was the core meeting of the central leadership.

Furthermore, at the time, the Party news workers were categorized into different editorial boards, such as the industrial and commercial group (工商组), the agricultural group (农业组), and the education group (教育组). Different categories of reporters were supposed to connect with the different branches of the authorities by attending the conferences the authorities held.

For example, Nie Meichu (聂眉初), a reporter for Renmin ribao who focused on industrial reports, attended every telephone conference held by the central leadership on the production of steel during the Great Leap Forward. In addition, he recalled that he had to visit the National Economic Committee (国家经济委员会 NEC) and the Metallurgy Department (冶金部) frequently and that many of the propaganda ideas were set by Bo Yibo (薄一波), the director of

14 Li Zhuang, Renmin ribao fengyu sishinian, p. 126.
15 Wu Lengxi, Yi Maozhuxi—wo qinshen jinglide ruogan zhongda lishi shijian pianduan (忆毛主席——我亲身经历的若干重大历史事件片段 My Memory of Mao Zedong—The Significant Historical Events I Experienced), (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1995), p. 2.
16 Nie Meichu, “Tounao fare de rizi” (头脑发热的日子 Crazy days), in Renmin ribao baoshi bianjizu, ed., Renmin ribao huiyilu, p. 144.
the NEC. As a result of these meetings, they were to keep in mind how to assist in the work of the Party before their interviews and investigations were conducted.

Moreover, to better connect the press with the government sectors, the “extra-press editorial board” (社外编委) was established. Certain leaders of different government sectors would serve as the press’s editorial board members. This institution was designed to help the press to understand the policies of the different government departments, and thus facilitate their reporting on and resolution of problems. For example, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee required its operational affiliates (业务机关) to dispatch the cadres in charge (负责 同志) to attend the press’s editorial committee meetings. The Shanghai Education Bureau, Municipal Youth Commission, Municipal Scholar Association, and Educational Workers’ Union were required to send cadres to take part in the editing work of the Wenhuibao. The duty of the extra-press editorial board members was to introduce the situation in their work units and to help with making the editorial plans. They had the right to comment on the propaganda articles of the press and to censor the manuscripts. From this we can be seen that the government sectors formally gained the right to censor writings about their work. Thus, along with the Party committees, the different branches of the government were also connected to the press.

18 A22-2-163-1, “Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei guanyu Shanghai xinwen gaizaohou jiaqiang lingdao wenti de tongzhi” ( 上海市委关于上海新闻改造后加强领导问题的通知 Shanghai Municipal Party Committee’s Notice on strengthening leadership after the reform of Shanghai journalism), 1952.
20 A22-2-249, “Shanghai Xinwenbao, Laodongbao, Wenhuibao, Xinminbao zonghe qingkuan g baogao” ( 上海新闻 报、劳动报、文汇报、新民报综合情况报告 A report on the comprehensive situations of Shanghai’s Xinwenbao Laodongbao, Wenhuibao, and Xinminbao), 195403-195410
In this way, the newspapers became a shared propaganda instrument of the Party, rather than its watchdog. Reports critical of the Party could hardly be published. Many Party news workers felt very dissatisfied with this rule. Feng Gang (冯岗), who had served as the deputy editor of the Shanghai Jiefang ribao, complained in a conference held by the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, “The [government] operational sectors should not convert the Party newspapers to their operational agencies. [Newspapers should] mainly solve ideological problems and settle the contradictions among the people.”21 This dissatisfaction did nothing to change the institution.

Of course, the press did show their own agency when dealing with the extra-press editorial board. For example, Xu Zhucheng managed to invite the people that he liked to serve as the extra-press editorial board members for the Wenhuibao. In 1956, he invited many distinguished scholars and writers to work as extra-press editorial board members, including Fu Lei (傅雷), Zhou Gucheng (周谷城), Wang Zhong (王中), Shen Zhiyuan (沈志远), and Tang Tao (唐弢). These people not only made many valuable suggestions to the Wenhuibao, but also wrote a number of high-quality articles for the newspaper. Both the press and extra-press editorial board members benefited from this institution. 22 It should be noted that this happened in 1956 when the Hundred Flowers Campaign was being carried out. No evidence indicates that the newspeople were able to do the same thing in any other year.

After attending the relevant conferences, based on what they learned from the authorities, the editorial committee members would hold a pre-editing conference (编前会议) to make their work plans; then assigned the tasks to the reporters. In order to finish their job, the Party news workers needed to work closely with the related government sectors. According to Liu Binyan, “The CCP has a rule called ‘go through the organization’ (通过组织),”²³ which demonstrates how the work of the news workers remained under the control of the Party.

This undoubtedly entitled the Party officials to control the reporters’ work. In his autobiography, Liu Binyan described his frustration with this rule. He recalled, how, in order to bypass the Party organization and conduct a free survey, he posted a poster in a factory that he visited in 1956 asking for people to talk with him. This act violated the rule and thus became one of his “crimes” during the Anti-Rightist movement.²⁴

A report from the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee in 1956 that I found in Shanghai Municipal Archives also sheds light on this point:

In the past several years, due to the fact that the political history of a considerable number of news workers has not been examined thoroughly, we have continued the rule of introducing [journalists] at each individual level, one level at a time (层层介绍),²⁵ [the meaning is not clear] which dramatically confined the reporters’ activities…. The Xinwen ribao had invited a noted artist to paint the steelworkers in a steel mill. However, when [the painter] arrived at the plant, the security section [of the plant] kept him from entering their workshops. Instead, the painter had to paint workers in the gatehouse who were

²³ Liu Binyan, Liu Binyan zizhuan, p. 79.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ The rule of introducing level-by-level means the journalists needed to pass identity checks by each of the different levels of the Party committees or government in order to conduct their interviews.
pretending that they were making steel. Also, there was a press photographer who wanted to take some photos of the construction sites of Kongjiang New Village (控江新村). He had to be introduced from the construction company’s headquarters to its branch office and then to the construction site level by level. He worked on the introduction procedures for two days and failed to get the photos.26

In short, reporters’ work was closely supervised by the Party organization.

Furthermore, the Party organization provided its papers with many reports and articles. Roderick MacFarquhar visited the Renmin ribao in 1973 and considered this “an interesting difference” between Western and Chinese journalism. He states, “While western correspondents are employed almost exclusively to write, those who work for the People’s Daily seem to spend much of their time helping outsiders—officials or representatives of the masses—to write their own articles for the paper.”27

Indeed, to demonstrate the mass line and the idea that “the entire Party shall run the press,” news workers in China spent a lot of time and energy soliciting articles from the Party officials and worker-peasant correspondents. Meanwhile, Party leaders were obligated to contribute to the Party papers and Party committees at all levels established their worker-peasant correspondent network to collect news materials for the Party papers. It is no exaggeration to argue that without the Party organization’s support, it would have been hard for the Party papers to maintain their daily operations.

Once the editors received the reports from their reporters and worker-peasant correspondents, they conducted thorough self-censorship to ensure that the pieces they were going to publish were in alignment with the Party’s policies. Indeed, being aware of the papers’

role as instruments of the Party and out of the fear of the potential punishment, editorial boards worked hard to check the writings. This meant that the editorial boards of the Party press were generally conservative and unwilling to criticize the government.

Liu Binyan, in his noted novella, “Our Internal News” (本报内部消息), which was based on his observation of the daily work of the press, described a typical editor-in-chief, Chen Lidong (陈立栋), who would either revise the critical reports to make them less critical or reject them on the grounds that they were too one-sided (片面). The term “one-sided” should be viewed as “newspeak” in George Orwell’s terminology. It was frequently used by the Party leaders to deal with negative information. A typical example was Mao’s likening of the relationship between the achievements and problems during the Great Leap Forward to nine fingers and one finger. In other words, while Mao recognized the problems, he would remind his followers that it would be too one-sided to focus on the problems and told them to look at the forest, not the trees, resulting in the problems being ignored or neglected.

To give another example of self-censorship, according to Chang-tai Hung’s research on the archives of the Beijing ribao (北京日报  Beijing Daily), the editors of that paper “made up an internal list of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ entitled ‘The Limits of Criticism’ (piping jiexian). These fell roughly into three categories: ‘cannot be published’ (bufa), ‘minimal reporting’ (shaodeng) and ‘can be published’ (kedeng).” The category of “cannot be published” included “criticism of China’s economic and social system, divulging the conditions of the state market supply, discussion of the quality of industrial products and mentioning China’s backwardness.” The list of “minimal reporting” contained, “stories about fires, industrial failures, gas poisoning incidents

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and the rise of commodity prices.” Finally, “can be published” were confined to “stories about the everyday life of the people, covering topics such as customers’ demand for goods, an increase in the choice of products, and better customer service.”

Predictably, operating under such a list, few if any critical comments could be printed in the Beijing ribao.

Besides the self-censorship, the important pieces, such as editorials (the most significant being the New Year’s editorials 元旦社论 and the National Day editorials 国庆节社论), could not be published until they were approved by the Party leaders. For example, when Roderick MacFarquhar visited the Renmin ribao in 1973, he found that important editorials needed to go through a process of “collective drafting, renewed consultation with the Central Committee, redrafting, and further consultation, until finally, the editorial was approved.”

Of course, this process happened after the main points were dictated by the leaders. Although MacFarquhar visited the press in 1973, this situation also describes the 1950s. The Chronicle of Mao Zedong 1949-1976 suggests Mao took part in the editing work of the New Year’s editorials almost every year. In 1955, Zhou Enlai revised the upcoming 1956 New Year’s editorial five times.

Although the Party’s tight control over the press made it a baton of the Party, enhancing the papers’ effect, it also led to the journalists’ dissatisfaction with the whole system. For example, the news workers from the Shanghai Jiefang ribao felt thwarted by the endless directives from the Party. Yang Yongzhi (杨永直), the head of the paper, complained:

“Tremendous pressure was imposed on us from everywhere…. The comments from every side

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30 MacFarquhar, “A Visit to the Chinese Press,” p.149.
had an influence on us, which gave rise to bureaucratic rigidity within the press.”

Feng Gang, the vice-chief editor of the paper, contended, “One article would be reviewed by four people. They must have had some problems [with the articles].”

Of course, the non-Party newspeople who had worked for the civilian-run press before Liberation felt even more dissatisfied with the directives from the Party officials. These old hands from the Wenhuibao felt uncomfortable with the fact that directives from the leaders that could arrive at any time. Zheng Zhong writes:

Another thing that made Xu Zhucheng uncomfortable was that the paper often had to change articles [because of the orders from the Party officials]. Sometimes, the proof was ready and was sent to the printing plant after being signed. But, [then he would receive the order] asking him to replace that story with another and he had to reorganize the proof. Late one night, the proof had been reviewed and was ready to be printed. Guo Gen (郭根) who was in charge of the night work was going to go home to sleep. Suddenly, [he] received an order from the leadership saying that one of the articles could not be published…

Although the editors were not happy with the Party’s intervention, what they opposed (or what they were allowed to oppose) was the excessive Party intervention. Control over the papers by the Party branches was not only legal but encouraged by the Central Committee.

Besides the dissatisfaction it produced among the news workers, the Party’s excessive intervention in newspapers also led to a lack of critical reports in the papers. The experience of

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33 A73-1-286, “Jiefang ribao fuze tongzhi zuo guanyu gaijin baozhi gongzuo baogao de jilu” (解放日报负责同志关于改进报纸工作报告的记录 The record of the Jiefang fangribao leaders’ report on how to improve their work), 19570416-19570728.

34 A73-1-277, “Jiefangribao fuze tongzhi zai Shanghai shiwei zhaokai de xinwenjie dangwei fuze ganbu huiyi shangde fayan jilu,” 19570413.
Yu Ming (于明), a reporter from the *Renmin ribao*, demonstrates the Party’s intervention in the press. On July 18, 1956, Yu Ming published a report introducing the First Anhui Provincial Party Representative Conference in the *Renmin ribao*. In that report, Yu faintly mentioned some of the drawbacks of the Anhui Provincial Party Committee, including its subjectivism and mandatory orders, although overall, he spoke highly of the Provincial Committee’s achievements. Even though this report passed the regular censorship of the provincial government, it still aggravated some provincial leaders, who later forced the *Renmin ribao* to publish a rectification of Yu’s report that was up to 1,600 characters long—almost three times the length of Yu’s report.\(^{35}\)

Hence, due to the Party’s tight control over the press, seriously critical reports could hardly be published in the papers.

Aware of these problems, the Party attempted to make changes. In 1950, the Party decided to launch a criticism and self-criticism movement in the newspapers, allowing the papers more freedom. On April 14, 1950, the Party released a resolution titled “The Central Committee Committee’s Resolution on Carrying out Criticism and Self-Criticism (中共中央关于在报纸刊物上展开批评与自我批评的决定).” This resolution reads, “Due to the [high] status of the government leaders and extension of their prestige, it is easy for them to become conceited, and thus to reject criticism from Party and non-Party members or to stifle criticism.” Therefore, the Party decided to “do criticism and self-criticism of all the mistakes and drawbacks in public,

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\(^{35}\) Yu Ming, “Jizhe shenghuo zhongde shiyufei” (记者生活中的是与非 Right and Wrong in My Career as A Journalist), in Renmin ribao baoshi bianjiz, ed., *Renmin ribao huìyìlù*, pp. 102-103. Also see “Anhui sheng zhaokai diyici dangdaibiao dahui” (安徽省召开第一次党代表大会 Anhui province held its first Party representative conference) in *Renmin ribao*, July 18, 1956, and “Anhui sheng zhishu jiguan chuxi sheng dangdaibiao dahui de daibiao, dui benbao guanyu anhui sheng dangdaibiao dahui baodao de yijian” (安徽省直属机关出席省党代表大会的代表，对本报关于安徽省党代表大会报到的意见 The representatives who had attended the Anhui provincial Party representative conference criticized our report on the conference), in *Renmin ribao*, August 6, 1956.
especially in the papers and other publications.” Furthermore, to encourage the journalists, the Party allowed “the reporters and editors of the newspapers and other publications to take responsibility for the published criticism in their publications independently.”36 This implied that for the first and last time in its history, the Party allowed the newspapers to publish reports without the approval of the relevant leaders.37

Responding to the Party’s call, many Party papers published critical reports. The number of in the *Renmin ribao* rose from 347 in 1949 to 757 in 1950, 1749 in 1951, and 1741 in 1952. On average, there were four critical reports in the *Renmin ribao* each day from 1950 to 1952.38 The subjects included the government office negligence, illegal activities, bureaucracy, and the waste of talent. Moreover, the authorities were required to respond to these criticisms in the papers.

However, it is noticeable that a considerable number of papers did not actively carry out the Party’s resolution. A report from the Central South Bureau (中南局) in March 1953 grumbled:

[Many papers] failed to persist in conducting criticism and self-criticism or did not do criticism in time…. The *Guangxi Daily* (广西日报) only ran four critical articles on criticism and self-criticism…. [We] have not found any critical reports in the *Hubei Daily* (湖北日报) or the *Yangzi River Daily* (长江日报) for a long time…. There are papers

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36 “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai baozhi kanwushang zhankai piping he ziwo piping de jueding” (中共中央关于在报纸刊物上展开批评与自我批评的决定 The Central Committee’s Resolution on Conducting Criticism and Self-Criticism in the Newspapers and Magazines), *XWHB*, volume 2, pp. 5-6.


38 Jing Ming, “Jianguo chuqi women xinwen yulun yulun jiandu de fanfu yu fansi,” p. 61.
everywhere that are unwilling to publish significant critical reports until after the cases have been addressed [by the Party], thus becoming the bulletin boards (告示栏) of the Commission for Discipline Inspection (纪律检查委员会) and the People’s Court. [These papers] abdicated their responsibility to encourage the masses to do criticism, and to supervise and push forward the Party’s and government’s work.\textsuperscript{39}

In addition, Liu Shaoqi admitted in 1954 that the resolution was “poorly executed” by local Party committees and the press.\textsuperscript{40} Subsequently, a statement from the Central leadership contended that “the criticism and self-criticism work that was done by most of the Party committees and the papers was not basically good, but basically bad.”\textsuperscript{41}

Apparently, not all the local Party committees heeded the Party’s call. Without the support of the local Party committee, the local newspapers could not afford to be critical and independent. As Liu Shaoqi stated, the Party committees at all the levels should mainly be held responsible for the poor implementation of the resolution. In his words, “[Party leaders] did not lead the work well. They did not fully support the criticism in the newspapers, which reflected their excessive pride. No one can afford to criticize them.”\textsuperscript{42} In a similar vein, Lu Dingyi maintained, “One of the reasons for that was that there was indeed a small number of people, or some people, who were too arrogant and silenced criticism.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{XWHB, volume 2}, p. 281.
\textsuperscript{40} Xiong Fu, “Zai baozhi shang you lingdao de kaizhan zhengque dee piping yu ziwo piping” (在报纸上有领导地开展正确的批评与自我批评 To conduct criticism and self-criticism under leadership in the newspapers), \textit{Xinwen zhanxian}, 3(1980): 6.
\textsuperscript{41} “Zhongguo gongyang guanyu gaijin baozhi gongzuo de jueyi” (中共中央关于改进报纸工作的决议 The Central Committee’s Resolution on the Improvement of Newspapers Work), \textit{XWHB, volume 2}, p. 323.
\textsuperscript{42} Xiong Fu, “Zai baozhi shang you lingdao de kaizhan zhengque dee piping yu ziwo piping,” p. 6.
\textsuperscript{43} Lu Dingyi, “Guanyu baozhi gongzuo de jige wenti,” p. 44.
Moreover, in 1953, the well-known Yishan Nongminbao Event (宜山农民报事件 Yishan Peasant Daily Event) in Guangxi Province further crippled the resolution. In March 4, 1953, the Yishan nongminbao, a prefectural-level paper, ran report critical of a Secretary of the County Party Committee who had violated the marriage law and human rights. The paper also criticized the prefectural Party leadership who did not handle the problem in a timely way. This criticism broke an unwritten rule of the day: that the Party papers were not entitled to criticize the Party committees that were on the same level as they were. As with many other rules, this was borrowed from the Soviet Union. Matthew Lenoe contends, “A newspaper could find fault with party organizations lower down the administrative pyramid, but not with those on the same level or higher.” Later, this event was brought to the attention of several Central leaders, including Lu Dingyi, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi. Instead of encouraging criticism in the papers, the Party leadership regarded this event as the result of the loose control that the local Party committee exercised over the newspaper.

Consequently, in March 1953, the Party issued a statement prohibiting the papers from being independent from the Party organization or criticizing Party committees at the same level. On July 17, 1954, the Central Committee passed a new resolution, titled “The Central Committee’s Resolution on the Improvement of Newspaper Work (中共中央关于改进报纸工作的决议).” This resolution required the Party committees at all levels to strengthen their

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45 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 23.
46 Jing Ming, “Jianguo chuqi women xinwen yulun jiandu de fanfu yu fansi,” part 1, p. 63.
47 “Zhongxuanbu guanyu dangbao bude piping tongji dangwei wenti gei guangxi shengwei xuanchuanbu de fushi” (中宣部关于党报不得批评同级党委问题给广西省委宣传部的复示 The Reply to Guangxi Provincial Propaganda Department on Prohibiting the Party Newspapers from Criticizing Party Committees at the Same Level), XWHB, volume 2, p. 279.
leadership over the local papers. Newspapers were no longer allowed to take responsibility for their own reporters independently. Instead, they were required to “take responsibility for [their reports] under the active leadership of the Party committees.” In other words, the papers were stripped of their right to take responsibility for their reports independently and were put under the strict control of the Party committees.

Therefore, the rule that the Party papers could not criticize the Party committees at the same level became one of the ironclad laws for Party news workers. Jing Ming contends that, on the one hand, the critical reports of the government and civil servants were drastically weakened. On the other hand, the targets of criticism in the newspapers gradually became unimportant. This was exactly what Liu Binyan observed in the 1950s: “The critical pieces in the newspapers always lagged behind the objective situation. The Party newspapers would not report on issues with the government unless the Party committees convened conferences about them. Also, the criticism targets were usually the county-level cadres or below.” Most of the critical reports were put in internal bulletins, if not ignored or smothered directly.

From the discussion above, it suffices to say that the press could hardly be separated from the Party organization. Although the Party attempted to leave more freedom for the Party news workers in the 1950 resolution titled “The Central Committee Committee’s Resolution on

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48 “Zhongguo gongyang guanyu gaijin baozhi gongzuo de jueyi” (中共中央关于改进报纸工作的决议 The Central Committee’s Resolution on the Improvement of Newspapers Work), *XWHB, volume 2*, pp. 319-329.
50 Liu Binyan, “Benbao neibu xiaoxi,” p. 8. It is worth noting that the editors deleted the sentence, “Huang Guiying (黄桂英) also realizes, ‘newspapers were not sensitive to new things. The critical works on newspapers only develop with the development of objective situation’” in Liu’s selected reportage, which perhaps was due to the criticalness of this line. See Liu Binyan, *Liu Binyan baogao wenxue xuan* (刘宾雁报告文学选 Selected Reportage of Liu Binyan) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), pp. 74-75.
Carrying out Criticism and Self-Criticism,” few Party cadres supported the Party’s decision. There were mainly two reasons. First, obviously, few individuals were willing to be criticized by the papers. Second, without a newspaper system that was well connected to the Party organization, it would be hard for the Party to conduct its work. As a result, the tight connection between the press and the Party committees at all levels became the norm. The frequent political interference in the process of making news was not against the law, but a necessary procedure required by the Central Committee.

The political function of the newspapers in the PRC

During the Mao era, newspapers played a crucial role in both the Party’s daily work and the continual political movements that characterized the Party’s governance. Party leaders were required by the Central Committee and by Mao to use the papers to carry out their work. The Party cadres treated the newspapers as directives from the leaders and would diligently carry out the policies related to them. During the campaigns, the papers functioned like the Party’s baton. As historian Lei Yi observes, “An editorial, a comment, or a report [in the papers] might foreshadow the beginning, development, transformation, and end of a nationwide political movement that could exert influence on the fate of all people in the country.”51 Meanwhile, the typical reports became a powerful instrument in the Party cadre’s toolkit that helped the Party to push forward various movements. At the bottom, the newspaper-reading groups, an important institution of mass journalism, helped the Party cadres to deliver the Party’s messages to the

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people and to control the grassroots. Therefore, Party journalism was transformed into an effective instrument for the Party and was crucial to the state-building project of the Party.

As mentioned in the second part of this chapter, the papers in the PRC were produced under the supervision of the Party leaders. The Party leaders were also responsible for keeping the press under control and employing the papers in their daily work. In June 1948, Mao asked the Party authorities to strictly control the propaganda work. Meanwhile, he demanded that the newspaper proofs be reviewed by the Party committees before printing. 52 In July 1957, Mao asked the provincial leaders to “pay special attention to newspapers and magazines…. Each of those leaders needs to read five papers and five magazines at least and then compare them in order to improve their papers.” 53 In January 1957, Mao sent a letter to the Guangxi provincial leaders asking them to study the layout, news, and editorials of papers with the editors and to think about “the organizing, encouraging, inspiring, criticizing, and promotional functions of the provincial papers.” 54

Being aware of this fact, the Party cadres considered the messages in the papers guides in their work. The sophisticated cadres were able to read between the lines in the papers and understand what they were expected to do next. Even Mao felt surprised at the effect of the papers. In his talk with the press representatives in 1957, he said, “At the end of the year before last, Beijing achieved public-private partnership in all walks of life within several days, announcing that it had moved into the phase of socialism. We should have treated this news with

52 Mao Zedong, “Dangbao bixu wutiaojian de xuanchuan zhongyang de luxian he zhengce” (The Party newspapers must support the CC’s lines and policies), in GZW X, p. 176.
53 Mao Zedong, “Peiyang chushe de bianji he jizhe” (To cultivate excellent editors and reporters), in GZW X, p. 201.
discretion. However, it was aired, which led to all areas across the country rushing forward without taking their actual situations into consideration.”\(^{55}\) In a similar vein, Li Rui (李锐), one of Mao’s secretaries, observed, “When Mao visited the People’s Communes in Henan and Shandong in August [1959], he told a journalist, ‘The People’s Communes are good.’ Then, all of a sudden, the whole country was full of People’s Communes.”\(^{56}\) According to Li, Mao regretted this: “When we talked about the emergence of the [nationwide] People’s Communes, Mao Zedong said, ‘In Qilixing (七里营) [Henan], a reporter asked me, “Are the communes good or not?” I said, ‘They are good.’ Unexpectedly, the phrase ‘the People’s Communes are good’ was printed in the papers.”\(^{57}\) It is plain to see that once something was put in the newspapers, it drew the Party cadres’ attention immediately and was forcefully implemented by them.

Furthermore, scholars both in China and the West, such as Elizabeth Perry and Li Lifeng, believe that the Party’s governance was characterized by campaign-style governance or campaign methods.\(^{58}\) In this system, the newspapers functioned like batons and megaphones in the endless campaigns, thus playing a pivotal role. Mao was very skilled at unitizing the papers to launch campaigns. In order to launch the Anti-Rightist Movement, Mao made a “battle plan” for the Party to “repulse the Rightists’ wild attacks” on June 8, 1957, in which papers played a central role. The following was Mao’s plan:

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\(^{56}\) Li Rui (李锐), \textit{Lushan huiyi shilu} (庐山会议实录 Records of Lushan Conference) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 1993), p. 4.

\(^{57}\) Li Rui (李锐), \textit{Lushan huiyi shilu}, pp. 68-69.

Please watch out for the wild attacks of the reactionary elements in the minor parties and groups (MPGs). Get each of these parties to organize forums with the Left, Centrist, and Right elements all taking part, let both positive and negative opinions be voiced, and send reporters to cover these discussions. We should tactfully encourage the Left and Centrist elements to speak out at the meetings and refute the Rightists. This is very effective. The Party paper in each locality should have dozens of articles ready and publish them from day to day when the high tide of the attacks begins to ebb. Make a point of organizing the Centrist and Left elements to write for the press. But before the tide ebbs, the Party papers should restrict the number of articles expressing positive views. (They can publish articles written by the Centrist elements.) …

Also, during the movement to promote the new Marriage Law in 1953, Mao gave written instructions asking Liu Jingfan (刘景范), a leader of the movement, to publish articles in the internal briefing publicly once every several days in order to keep the movement on the right track. Indeed, during his tenure, Mao employed papers to start campaigns constantly, which made Zheng Zhong, a journalist who had worked at the Wenhuibao, see Mao as a “propaganda master.”

In addition, in order make the papers a more effective, efficient organizational instrument, the Party emphasized the use of typical reports to propel the movements. The Party news workers devoted themselves to writing the typical reports while the Party officials were urged to use them to push forward their work. Impressed by the effectiveness of the typical

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60 Mao Zedong, “Zhongshi dianxing baodao” (重视典型报道 Emphasizing typical reports), in GZWX, p. 176.
reports during the Yan’an years, the Party officials put the method of “finding models” (抓典型) into their tool kits, which led to the popularity of the typical reports in the PRC. Mao was succinct on this point: “All the typical things, including the good instances (好事例) in Gucheng County and the bad instances (好事例) in all other places, should be reported publicly.”

In practice, in the 1950s, Party newspapers around the country adopted this method in their work. In order to highlight the typical reports, the Party news workers continued to develop the journalistic practice that they had used to strengthen the typical reports in the 1940s, namely series reporting (连续报道) and focused-reporting (重点报道). In other words, to propagandize a certain model, the Party newspapers would report on the model continuously and intensively within a certain period. One example is the well-known Huang Yifeng (黄逸峰) case in which Huang was labelled as a negative model who silenced criticism by Mao himself. The Jiefang ribao, the mouthpiece of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, published 51 articles about this case within 13 days from January 19, 1953 to the end of this month. During this period, there was an average of 3.9 reports about this subject per day. Moreover, Party newspapers around the country would either publish similar articles about the model or reprint the articles from the major newspapers, thus forming an overwhelming nationwide news campaign, which taught the readers a profound lesson.

In sum, the 1950s saw the establishment of the connection between the Party organization and the typical reports. Besides participating in the discovery of models, the local Party authorities also forced the people to study significant editorials and articles about the models.

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62 Mao Zedong, Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao (建国以来毛泽东文稿), volume 4 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990), p. 120.
Everyone needed to express their support for the central leadership’s ideas in order to pass ideological examination under the supervision of their peers. As a result, a county-wide indoctrination camp using the newspapers as the textbook formed in China and greatly contributed to the Party’s various campaigns, including those centered on production and ideology.

At the grassroots level, through newspaper-reading groups and other institutions such as mass criticism meetings, speaking bitterness meetings, films, and dramas, the Party was able to bring its messages to the people within a short time. Meanwhile, this institution became a part of the Party’s intelligence network.

In 1950, the National News Work Conference issued a resolution titled, “The Resolution on Improving the Work of the Newspapers” (关于改进报纸工作的决议). According to this resolution, the press was obligated to view the establishment of newspapers-reading groups as a significant political task. In the work reports that both the Party and non-Party papers had to submit to the authorities, they were required to talk about how many newspaper-reading groups they had started, and what they had done to help their newspaper-reading groups.

The newspaper-reading groups served as small classrooms that the Party used to teach the common people. Generally, both the press and the local authorities including those in neighborhoods and factories were required to develop the newspaper-reading groups. In these groups, there was usually a “newspaper reader” (读报员) who was chosen by the Party authorities to interpret the selected parts of the newspapers for his audience.

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64 “Zhongyang renminzhengfu xinwen zongshu guanyu gaijin baozhi gongzuo de jueyi” (中央人民政府新闻总署关于改进报纸工作的决议 The GAP’s Resolution on improvement of newspaper work), XWHB, volume 2, p.76.
According to work reports on newspaper-reading groups in Shanghai, some were led by the group members in turn. However, they soon found that this approach did not work very well. Subsequently, the general pattern was to name a qualified reader and to choose certain content to be read, which would ensure that the “textbook”—the newspapers—were taught correctly. For example, in 1955, a report about the newspaper-reading groups in three factories states, “Blackboard and newspaper-reading groups were both directly led by the propaganda committee of the labor union. Before reading the newspapers, the propaganda committee chose articles to be read, based on the current core work and suggestions from the advisers of the *Laodongbao* (Labor 劳动报)... Most of the newspaper readers were our propagandists.”

It is crucial to note that during the early 1950s few newspaper-reading groups in Shanghai lasted for long. One of the reasons was that the meeting time for the reading groups frequently conflicted with their work schedules, so even the members of the local Party committees were reluctant to attend. For example, the report mentioned above showed that only the newspaper-reading groups in one of the three factories lasted longer than two years. The newspaper-reading groups in the other two factories were either dismissed due to poor management or ended due to the time conflicts with the other activities of the labor union. Also, only the political activists were accustomed to attending the newspaper-reading group on time. Many other workers preferred to play basketball during that time. Moreover, one article in the journal published by the *Jiefang ribao* for its worker-peasant correspondents titled *Tongxun yu*

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66 A22-2-342-85, “Zhonggong shanghai shiwei xuanchuanbu guanyu hezuo guoying erji shanghai dianxianchang de dubao qingkuang de baogao (caogao)” [中共上海市委宣传部关于合作国营二机上海电线厂的读报情况的报告（草稿）] Propaganda Department of Shanghai Municipal CCP Committee’s report on the newspaper reading situation of Collaborated National No. 2 Locomotive Factory and Shanghai Electric Wire Factory (draft), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 1955.

The newspaper-reading groups were part of the Party’s intelligence network. The newspaper readers were obligated to report the opinions of group members to the higher authorities. Instructions issued by the General Administration of Press in 1950 said: “Newspaper-reading groups should be the everyday, organized students and propagandists of the texts in the papers. At the same time, they should report the local information and the masses’ opinions to the press.” To cite one example, a worker surnamed Shi from Shenyang asked in a newspaper-reading meeting for workers, “Who dares to oppose Chairman Mao? Even the supernatural beings in heaven do not dare. Anyone who dares to oppose him is a dead man. Nobody dares to oppose him, even if he is wrong.” Consequently, he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison.

It is worth noting that other mass journalistic institutions, such as the worker-peasant correspondents and letters from the readers, also acted as part of the Party’s intelligence network. In many cases, the readers’ letters would be given to the relevant authorities or be put into the internal bulletins. Under certain circumstances, the letters would imperil the writers if they criticized the leadership. Zhu Zheng (朱正), a news worker with the Xin Hunanbao (新湖南报 The New Hunan Daily), recalled that during the Korean War he wrote a letter to the Renmin
ribao to denounce one of his leaders who bought a watch in Hong Kong for his lover during an official trip. However, because of this letter, Zhu was put into the first group of individuals in his unit that was forced to participate in Land Reform in the countryside. This situation was identical to those in the Soviet Union, where “citizens who wrote to complain about the wrongdoings of their superiors took a certain risk.” Moreover, many of the letters were put into the internal bulletins. In effect, the readers’ letters were one of the major sources of the Party’s internal bulletins.

Likewise, the Party expected the worker-peasant correspondents to write what happened at the grassroots level and thus to serve as “spies” for the Party. It is not unusual for the Party news workers to solicit their worker-peasant correspondents to write the full truth at the grassroots level. One article in the Tongxun yu dubao claimed, “The press proposes that from now on worker-peasant correspondents should prioritize qingkuang (情况 situation/writings about what really happened that generally would not be published) over gaojian (稿件 manuscript/writings in line with the Party’s policies that would be considered for publishing).” It explained, “The difference between the so-called qingkuang and gaojian is their usage modes, subjects, and purposes…. Qingkuang is a reference (参考) to the news workers and higher Party committee members. Gaojian is used to educate the public.”

72 Roxburgh, Pravda, p. 98.
74 C25-2-5-95, “Jiefang ribao bianjibu bianyin de Jiefang ribao, Qingnianbao tongxunyudubao” (解放日报编辑部编印的《解放日报、青年报通讯与读报》Correspondent and Newspaper Reading edited by the Jiefang ribao and Qingnianbao), issue 20, 1951, 19510910, p. 18.
In sum, the Party’s journalism was a significant instrument for the Party leaders in conducting their daily work. At the lowest level, the newspaper-reading groups, a mass journalistic institution, helped the Party deliver its message to the masses and were part of the Party’s intelligence system. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to argue that the Party’s journalism played a significant role in the Party’s political system.

Conclusion

To conclude, PRC journalism before Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in 1978 was organizational journalism. It was created, maintained, and disseminated by the Party organization to keep it operating well. The production process of the news was strictly controlled by the Party. First, the editors would make their editorial plans according to what they learned from Party leaders. Second, the reporters were not able to conduct their work freely. Instead, their interviewees were usually arranged by the local Party committees. Third, review by the targets of the critical reports and the Party committees was required for key writings, including critical materials and editorials. The editors would also conduct serious self-censorship in order to avoid any political mistakes. Moreover, direct political interference was possible at any step in the news production. Consequently, the editorial department of the papers in the Communist regime was largely a megaphone of the Party organization.

In addition, the papers were a highly effective tool for the Party leadership. The articles in the papers were always loaded with the leaders’ intentions. Sophisticated Party officials were able to read between the lines and knew what they were expected to focus on. Additionally, the typical reports became a regular instrument in the Party cadres’ toolkit and was a great help for them in pushing forward their agenda. In the Party’s campaign-style governance, the newspapers functioned as batons in the ceaseless campaigns. Also, the mass journalistic institutions, such as
newspaper-reading groups, helped the Party deliver its messages to the people, and served as a part of the Party’s intelligence network.

Obviously, the Party’s organizational journalism was designed to smooth the operations of the Party organization, rather than to provide timely and objective reporting. So, how could Party leaders know what exactly was happening in their country? In the next chapter, I will provide an exploration of the internal bulletin system that was supposed to provide the leaders with truthful information. It also revealed a complicated interaction between journalism and politics.
6. The Operation of the Internal Bulletin System during the Mao Years

The internal bulletins and newspapers together constituted the dual news-system of the Party. While the papers increasingly served as the Party’s "tongue and throat" (喉舌) for instructing the Party cadres and the masses, and thus lost the ability to keep the leadership informed of what was happening across the country, internal bulletins worked as the Party’s "eyes and ears" (耳目), offering real news material, especially sensitive ones, to the leadership.¹ Due to their importance, it is necessary to conduct a study on the internal bulletins.

Currently, few studies have addressed this subject; to date almost all the studies that have been done were carried out by scholars in China. However, while they provide some basic information about internal bulletins, such as categories, readership, and historical development, these studies are not critical enough.² The two major studies done outside Mainland China are Michael Schoenhals’ “Elite Information in China” and Huang Zhengkai’s thesis, “The Function of the CCP Xinhua News Agency’s Internal Reference System and Its Transformation in the

¹ This idea is inspired by Huang Dan’s article: “Ermu yu houshe de lishixing zhuanhuan: Zhongguo bainian xinwen sixiang zhushao lun” (耳目与喉舌的历史性转换：中国百年新闻思想主潮论 The historical transformation of ‘eyes and ears’ and ‘throats and mouths’: The mainstream of China’s one hundred years’ of journalistic thought), Xinwen jizhe, 10(1998): 54-55.
Both Schoenhals’ article and Huang’s thesis explore the editorial guidelines and contents of the *Cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials 参考资料), a significant internal bulletin run by the NCNA, as well as the role that it played in China’s bureaucratic system. Both authors make compelling arguments that this internal bulletin was misused by Party leaders, especially by Mao. Schoenhals contends that whereas the paper was designed to provide the leadership with the “objective reporting of facts… ‘it [was] used covertly by some members of the elite to try to lobby for their own stand in important policy matters.’” Thus, he dismisses this internal bulletin as an “unreliable crutch.” In a similar vein, Huang argues that during the Great Leap Forward, the *Cankao ziliao* was utilized by Mao Zedong to inform his subordinates of his intentions.

While Schoenhals’ and Huang’s studies provide insightful examinations of one of the internal bulletins, there has not been a study on the internal bulletins overall.

Based on past scholarship and some memoir materials, this chapter offers a comprehensive overview and critical study of the internal bulletins during the Mao years. The two main underused memoirs that are used in this chapter are *Canhai jiushi* (参海旧事 Anecdotes about *Cankao ziliao*) by Zhang Xinmin (张辛民) and “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji” (激情岁月中的清白墨迹 Clean ink during the years of passion) by Xia Gongran (夏公然). Because both Zhang and Xia held high positions in the NCNA and were in charge of

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5 Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi* (参海旧事 Anecdotes about *Cankao ziliao*) (Self-published, 2006).
6 Xia Gongran’s memorial, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji” (激情岁月中的清白墨迹 Clean ink during the years of passion), is divided into fourteen parts published in different issues of the *Guancha yu sikao* (观察与思考
certain internal bulletins, their memoirs provide us with valuable primary sources about the internal bulletins.

This chapter consists of six parts. In the first, I review why the internal bulletins were necessary for the new regime. In the second part, I explore the categories of the internal bulletins. The third part examines the institution of the internal bulletins. The fourth part is devoted to the content of the internal bulletins. The fifth part is about the leaders’ comments (批示) on the internal bulletins and in the last part, I discuss how the internal bulletin system became corrupted and its impact on China’s politics.

Why were the internal bulletins necessary?

In the transformation from an opposition party to a ruling party in the late 1940s, the CCP strengthened its internal bulletins system. There were three main reasons for this. First, the Party emphasized the organizational and propagandistic role of its newspapers, which meant the Party’s papers strove to bring the Party’s messages to the masses rather than to deliver the events across the country to the leadership.

Second, since the 1930s, the Party had worked to separate the negative news about it from the ordinary people in case its legitimacy was undermined. After 1949, the Party further clarified that the press should mainly report the positive news (以正面报道为主). As an increasing number of problems emerged around the country, it became necessary for the Party to further develop its internal bulletin system to hide some of that news from the people and simultaneously keep the leadership informed. A Party news worker in Shanghai admitted in Watch and Think) from 2001 to 2002. Please note that since the e-version of the journals was not well-printed, I could not read the page numbers in many cases so the page numbers in this chapter may not be accurate.
1956, “It is hard for the Municipal Party Committee to gain information about what the people are thinking, doing, and worrying about, what problems they have, how the Party’s policies are carried out, and what the shortcomings of these policies are….No wonder all the departments wanted to run their own internal publications.”

Gradually, the boundary between the Party papers and internal bulletins become clear. To use Mao’s metaphor, the relationship between the Party newspapers represented by the Renmin ribao and internal bulletins represented by the Neibu cankao were two-sided (两面派):

“The public reports should only discuss the positive things, while the Neibu cankao should report the negative things. We need the Neibu cankao as a place to talk about the negative things.”

Third, dictators are constantly concern that the lower levels of government may conceal information from them. On this point, the leaders of the PRC were hardly different from their predecessors, the Qing emperors. Therefore, like the Qing emperors who solicited confidential reports from their governors and established the palace memorial (奏折) system, the PRC leaders needed internal bulletins to know what exactly was happening across the country, which

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7 A22-1-260, “Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanchuanbu zhaokai baozhi gongzuo huiyi, jilu, huiyiwenjian” (中共上海市委宣传部召开报纸工作会议、记录、会议文件 Records and Documents of the newspaper work conference held by the Propaganda Department of Shanghai Municipal Party Committee), 195608.
8 Wu Lengxi, Yi Maozhuxi, p. 136. Also see, Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqin suiyue zhongde qingbai moji ,” part 8, p.21.
9 Palace memorials were the high officials’ memorials that were sent to the emperors directly. The system was established by the Kangxi Emperor to keep messages from being concealed or interrupted by the bureaucracy. For more information on palace memorials, please see Mark Elliott, “The Manchu-Language Archives of the Qing Dynasty and the Origins of the Palace Memorial Systems,” Late Imperial China, Volume 22, 01(2001): 1-70; Mark Elliott, The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 160; and Philip A. Kuhn, Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 201.
demonstrates a continuity of Chinese history. Pan Ying, a reporter, even called the internal bulletins a palace-memorial-style information channel.\(^\text{10}\)

It was not uncommon for the lower levels of government to conceal information from the central leaders during the early years of the PRC. To give an example, in order to conceal the local news about the Great Famine between 1959 and 1961, the Xinyang (信阳) Municipal Government withheld all the letters sent to outside areas and forbade famine refugees to leave Xinyang. Consequently, the starving peasants could only stay at home and wait to die.\(^\text{11}\) Mao complained in 1961, “The damned bureaucracy has blocked the messages.”\(^\text{12}\) As a result, the central leadership needed an additional routine information channel to function as its “ears and eyes” beside the “official bureaucracy” that served “as the primary conduit for routine state-society communication and compliance,” in Elizabeth Perry’s words describing the Party’s work teams (工作队).\(^\text{13}\)

**The categories of internal bulletins**

Within several years, the Party established a complicated internal bulletin system. The prefectural-level papers and above were allowed to run internal bulletins to supply the leaders with more comprehensive news\(^\text{14}\) and many crucial sectors of the government ran their own internal bulletins. For example, the General Office of the CCP Central Committee (中央办公厅)

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13 Perry, “Making Communism Work,” p. 1

ran two internal bulletins, *Qunzhong fanying* (群众反映 Reports on the Masses), and *Qingkuang fanying* (情况反映 Reports on the Current Situation).\(^\text{15}\) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ran an internal bulletin called *Xinqingkuang* (新情况 New Situation). The internal bulletin run by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CPC (中宣部) was titled *Xuanjiao dongtai* (宣教动态 Propaganda and Education News). Of course, among all the internal bulletins, the most significant were those edited by the NCNA.\(^\text{16}\) As a result, the paragraphs below will focus on the internal bulletins edited by the NCNA.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the NCNA’s internal bulletins fell into two categories, the domestic ones represented by the *Neibu cankao* (内部参考 Internal Reference), and the international ones represented by the *Cankao xiaoxi* (参考消息 Reference News). In the 1950s and 1960s the domestic ones included the *Neibu cankao, Neican zengkan* (内参增刊 Internal Reference Supplement), *Qingkuang jianbao* (情况简报 Briefings on Current Situation), *Neican xuanbian* (内参选编 Internal Reference Selections), *Jizhe fanying* (记者反映 Reporters’ Opinions),\(^\text{17}\) and others. The international ones mainly consisted of the *Cankao ziliao* (参考资料 Reporters’ Opinions), *Cankao xiaoxi, Meiri yaowen* (每日要闻 The Daily Top Stories), *Sulian baokan ziliao* (苏联报刊材料 News from the Soviet Press),\(^\text{18}\) *Waiguo baokan dui zhongguo de*  

\(^\text{15}\) Qi Benyu, *Qi Benyu huiyilu* (戚本禹回忆录 Qi Benyu’s memoir) (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenge lishi chubanshe, 2016), p. 284-286.
\(^\text{17}\) There is reason to think that the *Jizhefanying* was the precursor to the current *Guonei dongtai qingyang* (国内动态清样 Domestic News Proofs) and the *Guonei dongtai qingyang fuye* (国内动态清样附页 Attached Sheets of Domestic News Proofs), since they are all the top internal bulletins and only available to the highest leadership.
\(^\text{18}\) This journal later changed its name to *Xiongdidang he xiongdi guojia baokan cailiao* (兄弟党和兄弟国家报刊材料 News from the Press of Our Brother Parties and Brother Countries) and to *Guoji gongyun cankao cailiao* (国际共运参考材料 Reference Materials on International Communist Movements).
fan ying (外国报刊对中国的反映 News about China in the Foreign Press), Dongfang qingkuang (东方情况 The Situation of the East), Xi‘ou beimei qingkuang (西欧北美情况 The Western European and North American Situation), and Feizhou qingkuang (非洲情况 The African Situation). In addition, these internal bulletins were categorized according to their degree of confidentiality into juemi (绝密 top-secret), jimi (机密 confidential), and mimi (秘密 secret), from higher to lower, respectively. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a brief introduction to the major domestic and international internal bulletins.

Within the domestic internal bulletins, the highest juemi bulletin was the Jizhe fanying. This bulletin was only given to a few top leaders, including the members of the CCP Politburo (中共中央政治局委员) and the members of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee (中共中央书记处书记). Sometimes, the most controversial news coverage would only be delivered to one leader. The Neibu cankao was available to the “prefecture and department level leaders” and above. The lowest internal bulletin was the Neican xuanbian. All the keji (科级 section level) and higher Party members, such as the township heads, factory directors, battalion commanders, and so on, were eligible to read it.

21 For example, the four article by Lian Yunshan (连云山), who is a reporter of the Renmin ribao (人民日报 People’s daily), about the great escape to Hong Kong, was only given to Deng Xiaoping. See Xia, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji,” p. 23. Also see Chen Bing’an, Dataogang (大逃港 Fleeing to Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhonghe chuban youxian gongsi, 2016), pp. 212-215; Xiao Zhou and Tong Xinshe, “Xunfang Lian Yunshan” (寻访连云山 A visit to Lian Yunshan), Dangshi tiandi, 06(2000): 36.
The international internal bulletins mainly consisted of the *Reference News* and *Reference Materials*. In 1953, the *Cankao xiaoxi* was divided into the *Cankao xiaoxi* and *Cankao ziliao*. From 1953 to 1966, the *Cankao xiaoxi* could be viewed as a digest of the *Cankao ziliao*.\(^{24}\)

In the 1950s and 1960s, following Mao’s directions on the *Cankao xiaoxi*, including “let [the cadres and the masses) go through wind and rain to broaden their horizons” (经风雨，见世面)” and “be vaccinated” (种牛痘), the readership of the *Cankao xiaoxi* expanded dramatically.\(^{25}\) In 1955, it was only available to the vice-ministerial level leaders and higher. In 1956, impacted by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in which Stalin’s personal cult and dictatorship was castigated and the Khrushchev Thaw initiated, Mao “opted for a relaxation of the regulations governing the strictly controlled public sphere and even allowed for critical viewpoints to be published in the Party media.”\(^{26}\) As a result, in the same year, the Party allowed the cadres with a rank equal to the Party’s county committee members or higher to read the *Cankao xiaoxi*. In 1964, all the Party cadres and intellectuals were allowed to read it. The circulation of the *Cankao xiaoxi* increased from less than 2,000 to around 1,000,000 in this process. Nowadays, it is distributed to almost every news stand in China and anyone can buy it.\(^{27}\) Of course, the other crucial reason that the Party agreed to let the lower-level cadres read this journal was that the messages in this journal were not so explosive. Sidney Rittenberg, the first American member of the CCP, enjoyed a high position in the Party’s propaganda system, and recalled, “The digests of

\(^{24}\) Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, p. 4.

\(^{25}\) Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, p. 85.

\(^{26}\) Leese, *Mao Cult*, p. 55. Also see, Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang wushinian*, p. 123.

\(^{27}\) Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, pp. 3-5; Yin Yungong, “Lun zhongguo duchuang tese de neibu cankao xinxi chuanbo gongzuo jiqi jizhi,” pp. 8-9; Wei Guangyi, “Mao Zedong yu daxiao cankao,” *Dangde wenxian*, p. 83.
foreign news in [the Cankao xiaoxi] ...[were] considered safe for the average low-level cadre to read.”

By comparison, the Cankao ziliao was still a highly confidential internal bulletin. It was only circulated among the central leadership and few other senior cadres. In Rittenberg’s words, the Cankao ziliao “was circulated among higher-ranking officials, like central department heads and provincial party secretaries, and to those of us in propaganda organizations.” Not surprisingly, this journal contained more critical news than the Cankao xiaoxi. Rittenberg recalled, “The more important and possibly explosive international news, like political attacks on China by foreign leaders and writers, went in there.” It was also much longer than the Cankao xiaoxi. Starting in 1955, it was published three times a day with morning, noon, and afternoon versions. The total number of characters was up to 300,000. As a result, it was called dacankao (大参考 big reference), in contrast to the Cankao xiaoxi, the xiaocankao (小参考 little reference) or xiaobao (小报 tabloid).

The two international internal bulletins that were more highly confidential than the big and little references in the 1950s and the 1960s were the Meiri yaowen and Cankao qingyang (参考清样 Reference Proofs). According to Zhang Xinmin, the Meiri yaowen, established in 1961, was the most significant and central carrier of reference news. It was published daily in the morning and afternoon. As a briefing on the latest international news, it was much shorter and

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29 Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, p.102.
30 Rittenberg and Bennett, The Man Who Stayed Behind, p. 194.
31 Rittenberg and Bennett, The Man Who Stayed Behind, p. 194.
32 Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, pp. 85-86.
33 The title of this journal was changed to Cankao yaowen (参考要闻 Reference Top News) after the Cultural Revolution.
more timely than the Neibu cankao, which made it a must read for the central leadership and one of the few publications that Mao read late in the day.\textsuperscript{34} The most highly confidential internal bulletin was the Cankao qingyang and only the Politburo members were allowed to read it.\textsuperscript{35}

Besides these periodical internal bulletins, an irregular collection of international materials called Cankao ziliao zhuangji (参考资料专辑 A Collection of Reference Materials, CKZLZJ) was also published. This journal was a collection of international materials about certain problems, such as the mass movement around the world and the global petroleum situation. It was called the “white paper” by its editors, which meant it had no title. One of the earliest issues was about Khrushchev’s secret speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{The institution of internal bulletins}

Within the NCNA, the domestic internal bulletins were primarily edited by the Second Editing Office in the Domestic News Editing Department of the NCNA (新华社国内编辑部第二编辑室). This editing office’s job was to categorize the reports that it received according to their content and then deliver them to the different levels of leaders. The departments of the NCNA were not numbered—there was no “First Editing Office” or “Third Editing Office” within the Domestic News Editing Department.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, “the Second Editing Office was merely a cryptonym for the domestic internal bulletins editing office.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, pp. 96-99.
\textsuperscript{35} Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{36} Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, pp. 266-68.
\textsuperscript{38} He Chuan, Zhonggong xinwenzhidu pouxi (中共新闻制度剖析 An analysis of the CCP’s journalistic institution) (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1994), p. 182.
The international internal bulletins were edited by Reference Materials Editing Office (参考资料编辑部) starting in 1959. Before that, the international internal bulletins were edited by a special editing board that was first affiliated with the *Waiwen bianyi bu* (外文翻译部 Foreign Language Translation Department) and then with the *Guoji xinwen bianjibu* (国际新闻编辑部 International News Editing Department) after 1949.39

**The production of the internal bulletins**

The production of internal bulletins, as with newspapers, was completely controlled by the Party. Not only were all the editorial boards of newspapers and news agencies in Mainland China led by the CCP members, but also all the news institutions were considered under the Party. Consequently, the Party reporters’ topic selections, writing rules, and publications of their works were firmly controlled by the Party.

The production of the internal bulletin reports usually started from the Party’s leadership at the central and local levels. First, the propaganda sections of the governments would set propaganda guidelines and major subjects in a certain time period. Next, the editors of the NCNA and the press would set their propaganda direction and detail interview plans in light of the instructions from the government, and then assign reporters to do the specific work. After the reporters received their assignments, they were supposed to carry out an investigation. Then, according to what they learned, they could write either favorable or negative reports. Usually, the negative reports would be published in the internal bulletins. Of course, the editorial board would publish favorable news coverage in certain internal bulletins if they felt it necessary. Similarly,

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the editors had enough power to reject the reports based on their quality or political sensitivity. In practice, since the news institutions had never been truly independent from the government, the political powers could intervene in the news writing and publication at any time.

Compared to the production of the domestic internal bulletins, the international internal bulletins were less involved in the power struggles within the Party, either among the different factions or between the central and local governments. The international internal bulletins were mainly composed of the reports that the NCNA collected from foreign news agencies and newspapers but also included some articles by NCNA foreign reporters. This means that the main work of the Reference Materials Editing Office was to allot different news stories to different internal bulletins according to the sensitiveness, timeliness, and relevance.

Initially, the Reference Materials Editing Office would publish the news materials in different internal bulletins according to their confidentiality and relevance. The relevance was defined according to whether the news reports were related to China and to the recent policies of the Party. In practice, the news of higher sensitiveness and relevance would be published in the Cankao ziliao while those of lower sensitiveness and relevance would be put in the Cankao xiaoxi. The most sensitive or classified news contained provocative stories (挑拨性新闻) mainly about power struggles within the Party, and was only available in the Cankao qingyang. The latest international news was published in the Jinri yaowen that was established to keep the top leaders informed. The Reference Materials Editing Office endeavored to collect news materials about certain areas, such as the Soviet Union and the other communist countries, Africa, Western Europe, and North America. Then it edited special internal bulletins with these materials, including the Sulian baokan cailiao (News from the Press of Soviet Union), Xi’ou beimei
qingkuang (The Western European and North American Situation), and Feizhou qingkuang (The African Situation).

Besides the rules on the distribution of the foreign news materials, there were other specific rules for international internal bulletins. The foremost was to leave the content unedited. Even during the tumultuous days in the Cultural Revolution, the editors strictly held to this rule. It was not uncommon to find articles from outside China referring to the CCP as gongfei (共匪 Communist bandits) in the internal bulletins.40

Although the editors of the internal bulletins were not allowed to comment on the bulletins, they had to side with the Party by changing the original titles and adding comments before the news, especially the negative news about the Party. This was perhaps the most important work of the editors. Zhang Xinmin, the director of the international internal bulletin section, claims that in his first two years on the editorial board of the Cankao xiaoxi, he felt that the editing work of the reports in the internal bulletins was merely to add news titles to the international news. He recalled that in these two years, the most impressive thing he learned was to choose words that could express the editors’ opinions and evaluations of things and to put them in titles, especially negative terms such as “vilify” (污蔑), “clamor” (叫嚷), “slander” (造谣), “threaten” (扬言), and “bluster” (虚声恫赫). He said that “it seemed that to add terms like these in titles would display the editor’s political stand and party characteristics (党性). This was my only task and I did not need to worry about anything else.”41

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40 To give a random example, please see “Wangtu dizhi wo wenhua dageming yingxiang jiangbang jiajin shouhua "wenhua fuxing yundong" (妄图抵制我文化大革命影响, 蒋帮加紧筹划“文化复兴运动”) In order to counter the effects of our Great Cultural Revolution, the Chiang gang speeded up their Cultural Renaissance plan),” Cankaoxiaoxi, November 25, 1966.
41 Zhang Xinmin, Canhai jiushi, p. 88.
According to Chang Jiang, the editors adopted four approaches to rewriting the titles. The first was to select the words (选词), which explicitly indicated that the editors had taken a stand in the titles by using certain words, especially for negative reports. Chang gives the example of a report about Japanese reporters who managed to memorize the contents of some dazibao (大字报 big-character posters) on the street. The editors changed the title to “American Newspapers Say Japanese Reporters Secretly Recorded Our Cultural Revolution by ‘Reading Fast Collectively’” (美报透露: 日记者正用“集体快阅”办法偷录我文化大革命的情况). The second approach was to refer to the Party’s political opponents in pejorative terms in the revised titles in order to show the editors’ political stance. For example, the United States was called “meidi” (美帝 American imperialists); the Soviet Union, “Suxiu” (苏修 the Soviet Union revisionists); the KMT “jiangbang” (蒋帮 the Chiang [Kai-shek] gangsters); the Americans “meiguolao” (美国佬 Yankees); and the British, “yingguolao” (英国佬 limeys).” The third approach was exaggeration. The editors were sensitive to the criticism of the Party. If a report was critical of the Party, the editors would add words like “e du gongji” (恶毒攻击 vicious attacks) to the title. The last approach was hasty generalizations through which the editors titled the news according to a part of the news. Chang’s example was an article titled by the editors as “One Mexican University Holds Photo Exhibition on our Achievements in Construction” (墨西哥一大学展出我建设成就图片). However, most of the article was a criticism of the Cultural Revolution.42

42 Most of this part is based Chang Jiang, Wang Xiaopei and Yang Qiguang’s article, “Xinwen bianyi de zhuanyehua yu zhengzhihua,” pp. 26-27. I made a major change to the third approach. Chang called the approach “dingxing” (定性) meaning qualitative analysis. By contrast, I call this approach “the adoption of contemptuous
The contents of the internal bulletins

In this section I will argue that the internal bulletins consisted not only of negative news, as some may assume. Instead, positive news for the Party also made up a large portion of the internal bulletins. I also argue that the internal bulletins were actually a category of investigatory news reports on the implementation of Party policies. The nature of the work of the internal bulletins was a sort of investigation. The primary focus of the investigation was the state of the implementation of the Party’s policies.

Although the internal bulletins were generally considered the carriers of negative or “improper” (不适合的) information for the Party, this is not completely accurate. On the one hand, it is true that the improper information constituted a large portion of internal bulletins. The Party had long viewed these bulletins as the carriers of “improper” information. According to instructions that the Party’s central leadership sent to the NCNA in 1948, significant confidential information was one of the three types of news materials that the Party required from the reporters of the NCNA. In 1953, in other instructions that the Party gave to the NCNA, all six categories of materials for the internal bulletins that the Party asked for could be categorized as “improper” news. These included the negative problems existing in the implementation of Party policies, the ideological situation of all social classes, the problems existing in the united front work (统一战线工作), deficient or experimental work experience, the details of natural apppellations,” since while Chang’s term works for terms like suxiu (苏修) and meidi (美帝), it does not work for terms like jiangbang (蒋帮), meiguolao (美国佬), and yingguolao (英国佬) that also appear in the titles frequently. In addition, these appellations reflected the combative atmosphere during the Cultural Revolution and the Party’s idea of viewing party newspapers as the Party’s combat organ. The term of dingxing is too objective to show these meanings.

43 Xinhua tongxunshe, ed., Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian, volume 1, p. 148.
disasters, anti-revolutionary activities, and other significant undisclosed situations.\textsuperscript{44} In practice, the internal bulletins were largely the carriers of improper materials for the Party. To use the \textit{Neibu cankao} as an example, in the 1950s, it was full of a wide range of social problems caused by Party policies. According to the \textit{Neibu cankao}, the Party’s stress on industry and tight rein on agricultural policy led to a huge gap between the workers and peasants. After a peasant’s visit to a workers’ sanatorium, the peasant sighed, “The workers’ carpets there were better than our quilts.” The money that a peasant earned in a whole year was less than a worker’s monthly wages.\textsuperscript{45}

The editors of the internal bulletins endeavored to offer the latest, most comprehensive materials based on the Party’s demands. Zhang Xinmin states that the NCNA’s coverage in the internal bulletins was to provide the different levels of readers with reference materials while sticking to the guidelines in objectivity, comprehensiveness, and truthfulness, and the Party’s work demands.\textsuperscript{46} This indicated that the news materials in the internal bulletins were not necessarily negative for the Party. First, the chief task of the internal bulletins was to supply the Party leadership with the latest news, especially the international internal bulletins. In order to offer the latest news, the editors of international internal bulletins were obligated to publish the \textit{Cankao ziliao} for the senior leaders three times a day, which was nicknamed \textit{yiri sancan} [一日三餐(餐)].\textsuperscript{47} In addition, they routinely published the \textit{Meiri yaowen}, a collection of the latest news

\textsuperscript{44}“Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu the NCNA jizhe caixie neibu cankaoziliao de guiding (July 1953)” (中共中央关于新华社记者采写内部参考资料的规定), in \textit{XWHB, volume 2}, pp. 250-251.

\textsuperscript{45}Pei Yiran, \textit{Hongsheshi zhelide zhengxiang} (红色史册里的真相 The truth of red history), \textit{volume 2} (Taipei: Duli zuoija, 2016), p. 103-108.

\textsuperscript{46}Zhang Xinmin, \textit{Canhai jiushi}, p. 212.

\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Yirisancan} (一日三餐) is a Chinese idiom, meaning one needs to have three meals per day. \textit{Can} (参), short for \textit{Cankao ziliao} (参考资料), has the same pronunciation with \textit{can} (餐). Therefore, this idiom was used to refer to the fact that \textit{Cankao ziliao} was published three times a day.
from the foreign news agencies or newspapers, twice a day. In order to run the *Meiri yaowen*, the director of the Reference Materials Editing Office directly led the editing work of this journal and often worked until midnight.\(^\text{48}\) Furthermore, there was a special red telephone in Reference Materials Editing Office. Once the editors found some significant news, they would use this telephone to report this news to relevant authorities. Zhang Xinmin mentions an event in his memoir: During the Vietnam War, one editor learned that American airplanes were going bomb a port in North Vietnam and so the editor reported it to the People’s Liberation Army General Staff Department through the red telephone. The General Staff Department then swiftly gave this news to the Vietnamese, which helped them to cut their losses.\(^\text{49}\)

The internal bulletins provided the Party leadership with the comprehensive news. In instructions that Mao gave to the *Neibu cankao* editors in the late 1950s, he stressed that it was correct for the *Neibu cankao* to publish both negative and positive news, and that it was correct to adopt this editorial policy of reporting the overall situation (全面反映情况的编辑方针).\(^\text{50}\) This implied that it was already routine for the *Neibu cankao* to publish positive news for the Party. Furthermore, in the 1960s, the Party made it clear that the editorial guidelines for the internal bulletins were to “report the overall situation and highlight the problems with our work.”\(^\text{51}\)

As a result, many of the internal bulletins contained favorable news for the Party so many of the articles in the internal bulletins were later published in the Party’s unconcealed


\(^{49}\) Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, p. 99.

\(^{50}\) Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji, part 8,” p. 21.

\(^{51}\) Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji, part 8,” p. 23; Also see Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji, part 9,” p. 10.
publications. For example, in 1959, Du Daozheng, the head of the Guangdong Branch of the NCNA, wrote four articles about the flood relief work in Guangzhou that were published in the Neibu cankao. After Mao read these articles, he asked the Party news workers to publish these articles in the newspapers to mobilize the people to fight the flood together. Similarly, there was an article in the Neibu cankao issue 2528, talking about the successful practices of a communal kitchen in Hubei. The article claimed that all the local cadres and peasants were excited about the local communal kitchen. After Mao read this article, he asked Chen Boda (陈伯达) to publish it in the Hongqi (红旗 Red Flag), the foremost Party magazine during the Mao era. In addition, from 1966 to 1976, in the Cankao xiaoxi, only 107 reports about the Cultural Revolution, which made up 10.6% of the coverage on the subject, were negative.

In addition, the internal bulletins, both the domestic and international, were actually the carriers of investigatory reports. They strove to provide the Party leadership with a survey of the latest international news or the domestic news materials on the implementation of Party policies. This indicated several things. First, the internal bulletins were a type of investigatory report. Indeed, it was a consensus among the Party news workers that the reports in the internal bulletins were investigatory. Wu Lengxi, a former head of the NCNA and the Renmin ribao, suggested that the Second Editing Office (第二编辑室), which edited the Neibu cankao, “should become an investigatory and research department.” With regard to the international internal bulletins, the Reference Materials Editing Office was seen as an advanced editing organization with a

55 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji,” part 8, p. 22.
research feature. It provided the central leadership with reference suggestions based on the reporters’ research.\footnote{Zhang Xinmin, \textit{Canhai jiushi}, p. 93.} According to Zhang Xinmin, “The nature of reference reporting is investigation.”\footnote{Zhang Xinmin, \textit{Canhai jiushi}, p. 316.}

Second, the investigatory target of the internal bulletins was the state of the Party’s policy implementation. The Party made this clear in instructions it gave to the NCNA in 1953: the first category of materials that it asked the NCNA to provide was the state of and problems in the implementation of the Party’s policies around the country. Also, according to Huang Zhengkai, who focused on the \textit{Neibu cankao} in his master’s thesis, the reportage of the \textit{Neibu cankao} passively followed the implementation of the Party’s policies, showing the situation and drawbacks regarding the emphasis on the work in each phase. The \textit{Neibu cankao} only concentrated on the implementation of the Party’s policies.\footnote{Huang Zhengkai, “1950 niandai zhonggong the NCNA neibucankao de gongneng yu yanbian,” p47.}

In summary, the internal bulletins provided the leadership with investigatory materials on the latest news, especially those that were directly related to Party policy. Therefore, reports in the internal bulletins were not necessarily negative for the Party, even though the negative news constituted a large part of internal bulletins.

\textit{Pishi (leaders’ comments) on internal bulletins}

The significance of internal bulletins rested not only on the comprehensive information they contained and their direct connection with the leadership, but also on their high level of effectiveness within the Party’s administration system. First, it was primarily through the internal bulletins that Party leaders learned what was going on in China and the world, which made the
Chinese political elites eager to read them. The main reason was that, as with the situation in other Communist countries, in China it was “not a car or a weekend house, but the regular access to information which [was] the greatest privilege.”\(^{59}\) Of course, internal bulletins could also provide more timely and more comprehensive information than the newspapers. Zhang Xinmin remembers that “compared to the papers, internal bulletins were a must read for the central leaders.”\(^{60}\) In a similar manner, Mao said in 1959, “I only read a few articles in the present newspapers, but I read the *Cankao ziliao* and *Neibu cankao* every day.”\(^{61}\) In addition, in 1971, he claimed, “I read two volumes of the *Cankao ziliao* like a student every day which means that I have some knowledge of the international situation.”\(^{62}\)

Party leaders would often make *pishi* (批示 leaders’ comments) on the internal bulletins after they read them and then sent these as instructions to their subordinates. The comments would follow by their subordinates with highest priority. According to Yin Yungong’s study, in *The Writings of Mao Zedong Since 1949* (建国以来毛泽东文稿), there were approximately 240 comments by Mao on the internal bulletins.\(^{63}\) In most cases, these comments were sent to the relevant Party officials in order for them to address the problems. To cite some examples, in 1953, after reading an article in the internal bulletins about malfeasance among the rural leaders in Hebei province, Mao sent a letter to the NCNA asking it to distribute this internal bulletin to the leaders in the central bureaus, branch bureaus, provincial party committees, and municipal


\(^{60}\) Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, pp. 5-7.

\(^{61}\) Wei Guangyi, “Mao Zedong yu daxiao cankao,” p. 82.

\(^{62}\) Wei Guangyi, “Mao Zedong yu daxiao cankao,” p. 83; Also see Zhang Xinmin, *Canhai jiushi*, p. 5.

\(^{63}\) Yin Yungong, “Mao Zedong yu neican,” p. 142.
Party committees. On February 26, 1958, after reading a report in an internal bulletin about a famine in Shandong, Mao wrote a comment and delivered it to Deng Xiaoping (邓小平). The comment stated: “This article is about the natural disaster in Shandong. Please call Shu Tong [舒同 a provincial leader in Shandong] and ask him whether they has noticed this problem and what their relief plan is.”

**Corruption of the internal bulletin system**

This complicated internal bulletin system was designed to provide the top leaders with comprehensive, unbiased, and timely news materials. However, in practice, this system frequently lost its efficacy as the Party’s “eyes and ears.” First, most Party members, including the central and regional Party cadres, made every endeavor to exploit the internal bulletins in order to benefit themselves. Indeed, while some Party officials strove to control the internal bulletins to avoid being held responsible, others attempted to use them to carry out their initiatives. As a result, the internal bulletins became the focus of power struggles within the Party. Also, the Party news workers were under great stress to report what really happened. On the one hand, the targets of criticism in the articles in the internal bulletins would seek to take revenge against the reporters, if possible. On the other hand, the top leaders, especially Mao Zedong, were not willing to read information that was inconsistent with their own ideas. As a result, reporters who told the truth in their articles for the internal bulletins were frequently punished by the Party authorities. This phenomenon was especially prominent in late 1950s and

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64 Mao Zedong, “Yaozai baozhi shang jiefa huai ren huai shi, biaoyang hao ren hao shi” (要在报纸上揭发坏人坏事，表扬好人好事 The need to chastise bad people and bad deeds and praise good people and good deeds in the newspapers), in GZWX, p. 175
early 1960s, and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when the Party’s policies generated widespread discontent among the people.

The first reason for the corruption of the internal bulletin system was that the internal bulletins were a crucial information channel of the Party and anyone who was in charge of them wielded “a considerable amount of political power and influence in China.”66 Many within the Party sought to control the internal bulletins in order to lobby for their own initiatives. According to Huang Zhengkai, during the Great Leap Forward, Mao often sent articles from the *Cankao Ziliao* that were favorable to the movement to the officials to increase their confidence in his policies.67 Many Party officials also exploited the internal bulletins to promote their stand. For example, in order to persuade Mao to end the collective farms and to distribute land to the peasants, Tian Jiaying, one of Mao’s secretaries, asked Qi Benyu (戚本禹), his assistant, to edit an issue of the *Qunzhong fanying* (群众反映 Reflections of the Masses), so that it concentrated on the people’s support for land distribution.68 Notably, Tian and other people who strove to use internal bulletins to lobby for land distribution eventually failed because the favorable coverage of land distribution upset Mao who considered it a sign of capitalism. Thus, as Michael Schoenhals observes, afraid that the positive writings about land distribution in the internal bulletins including the *Qunzhong fanying* and *Cankao ziliao* “might eventually make a majority of the CCP leadership come out in support of the experimental system,” Mao “used his own political power and authority simply to forbid the further publication of reports on the responsibility system.”69 Of course, harnessing the bulletins to influence the Party Central

68 Qi Benyu, *Qi Benyu huiyilu*, pp. 251-254.
leaders could be perilous. Li Shenzhi, who edited Cankao ziliao for the central leaders, was labelled an ultra-rightist (极右分子) in the Anti-Rightist Movement with one of his crimes being his “attempt to use internal bulletins to influence the Central Committee.”

The regional Party officials consistently attempted to control reporters, especially those from the NCNA, in order to silence criticism from them. Because the top leaders read the internal bulletins by the NCNA every day, the NCNA reporters were regarded as qinchai dachen (钦差大臣 imperial commissioners) of the Party’s Central Committee and their reportage in the internal bulletins were called zouzhe (奏折 memorials to the throne). Thereby, it would cause great trouble for officials if they, their family members, or the sections which they controlled were to become targets of criticism in the NCNA’s internal bulletins. Consequently, the Party cadres would control or exercise influence over the NCNA reporters whenever possible.

In the beginning, as a compromise between the central and regional leaders, reporters were only allowed to send the reports for the internal bulletins about the grassroots level leadership (lower than the municipal level) to the headquarters of the NCNA. For articles about the municipal or provincial leadership, the reporters were obligated to let the municipal or provincial leaders review the manuscripts before they submitted them to the NCNA headquarters. However, the regional leaders were not satisfied with this arrangement.

According to Wu Lengxi, in a high-level Party conference in Wuchang in 1958, one of the

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70 Li Shenzhi, Fengyu canghuang wushinian, p. 113.
71 “A central reporter who comes to the borderland is like an imperial commissioner,” in Chen Pinghan, Dataogang, p. 213. Also see Feng Dongshu, Wenmang zaixiang Chen Yonggui (文盲宰相陈永贵  亡iterate prime minister Chen Yonggui), (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1998), p.252.
72 “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu xinhuashe jizhe caixie neibu cankaoziliao de guiding (July 1953)” (中共中央关于新华社记者采写内部参考资料的规定  The CC’s provisions on how the NCNA reporters should collect internal reference materials), in XWHB, volume 2, p. 251.
suggestions that the nine provincial governors attending the conference made to the *Renmin ribao* was to empower one of the provincial standing committee members to act as the head of the local reporter station or the branch of the NCNA. The reason was that these governors were becoming annoyed with the critical reportage on the local work. Consequently, in 1959, the management of the NCNA branches was assigned to the provincial governments, which completely confused the Party reporters. Apparently, this change made it impossible for the reporters to write critical reports. In 1960, many criticized this change at a conference held by the NCNA headquarters, which caused these people to be labeled as rightists. The NCNA took back the management rights of its branches until 1962, with the Party’s correction of its leftist policies.

The second reason for the corruption of the internal bulletin system was that it was constantly hard and even dangerous for the reporters to report negative news in the internal bulletins. This situation became increasingly evident after 1957, especially during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. At the local level, the NCNA reporters’ experience demonstrated this numerous times. Li Yuxiu (李玉秀), an NCNA reporter, visited Dazhai (大寨), an agriculture model village made by Mao Zedong, in 1964 in order to write a favorable report on the preparatory work for the local spring ploughing. However, after attending a lecture by the *siqing* (四清 Four Cleanups) work team, Li learned the Dazhai leaders probably concealed their true land size from the Central Committee and had falsified their grain production. While being completely aware of the potential danger in reporting this information,

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73 Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozuxi*, pp. 68-69.
74 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiamei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji, part 8,” pp. 21-23.
75 The *siqing* work teams were sent to the grassroots level in order to help the Party to cleanse the political, economic, organizational, and ideological problems in its basic-level organizations.
Li finally decided to write an article for the internal bulletins about it. As a result, he was persecuted in several mass meetings in Dazhai and was forced to work on the farm for ten days in 1966. Li later described how he was overcome with fear during those ten days in Dazhai. One of his colleagues was surprised that he successfully survived the persecution.\textsuperscript{76}

The leaders of the NCNA branches had clear insight into the tension between the reporters and local governments. Xia Gongran admitted that during his seven years of serving as the director of Gansu branch of the NCNA (1970-1977), “Although our branch reported some news in the internal bulletins that was inconsistent with the provincial leaders’ opinions, I tried to cooperate with the provincial leaders in most cases…. Overall, our praise [of the provincial leadership] was far more than criticism.”\textsuperscript{77} Feng Dongshu (冯东书), a senior reporter of the Shanxi branch of the NCNA, described the relationship between the Shanxi branch and the local leadership: “Other branches had two popo (婆婆 husband’s mothers)—the headquarters and the provincial Party committee.\textsuperscript{78} However, our Shanxi branch had three—the headquarters, the Shanxi Party committee, and Dazhai and Chen Yonggui (陈永贵 the Dazhai Party leader and deputy prime minister). These three popo had different opinions. Chen, as a Politburo member and deputy prime minister, was very powerful. If you were caught among these three powers, it was too difficult to deal with them. Even the smartest person would find himself in serious

\textsuperscript{76} Li Yuxiu, “Wo xie dazhai neican yinqi de fengbo” (我写《大寨内参》引起的风波 The disturbance brought by my reference news about Dazhai), Shijixing, 04(2000): 84-90.


\textsuperscript{78} Traditionally, in China, popo was in charge of the daughter-in-law and they usually had a bad relationship with each other. Here, popo is likened to the supervisors of the NCNA branches who held the leadership and were hard to deal with.
trouble.” Due to this, Feng managed to avoid being appointed as the vice director of the Shanxi branch. In contrast, the director of the Shanxi branch was later sent to prison for two years.

At the central level, the top leaders, especially Mao, became increasingly dissatisfied with the critical reports (or any coverage that might upset them) in the internal bulletins. In order not to irritate the top leaders, the editors were extremely careful about the words they used in the critical reports, which means they did their best to make the articles less sensitive or provocative. For example, similar to today’s news coverage on natural disasters, the articles about natural disasters were full of praise for the leaders’ wise commands and the civilians’ and soldiers’ bravery in relieving disasters. After an investigation into the catastrophic dam failure in Henan province in August 1975 that caused the deaths of 230,000 people, thus making it the most serious flood in the country after 1949, an NCNA reporter, Zhang Guangyou (张广友), wrote five articles for an internal bulletin for the central leadership titled “The Masses Keep up Their Spirits—the Situation in the Disaster Area Is Favorable” (群众斗志昂，灾区形势好), “The Disaster Relief Needs Focus” (救灾工作要有重点), “The Prefectural Party Committee Secretary of Zhumadian Talks about Production and the Disaster Relief” (驻马店地委书记谈生产救灾), “The Key to Quickly Changing the Situation in the Disaster Area Is the Work of Wheat Farming” (抓好种麦是迅速改变灾区面貌的关键), and “On the Flood Casualties” (关于水灾中死亡人数).

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81 Zhang Guangyou, “Yiqi meiyou gongkai baodao de dashijian—1975 nian huaihe dashuizai de huigu yu sikao” (一起没有公开报道的大事件——1975年淮河大水灾的回顾与思考 A significant event that has not been reported publicly—a review of and thoughts on the 1975 Huai River Flood), in Dangdai nongyeshi yanjiushi ed., Gongheguo nongye shiliao zhegji yu yanjiu baogao (共和国农业史料征集与研究报告 Collected materials and studies on the
In the Cankao xiaoxi, only 10.6% of the news reports about the Cultural Revolution were negative. To make these few negative reports more acceptable, the editors needed to show the Party’s political stance by changing the original titles. The revised titles said things like, “Edwin Reischauer the U.S. Ambassador to Japan Talks Nonsense and Maligns Our Cultural Revolution as Backward and Troubling (美国前驻日大使赖肖尔大放厥词:诬我文化大革命是“落后和多事”),” “American Newspapers Say Americans Cannot Ignore China’s Satellites—Limeys Encourage Yankees Not Panic” (美报惊呼对我卫星不能不闻不问——英国佬为美国佬打气, 要它不要惊慌失措).82

However, even though the editors were extremely careful about the articles in the internal bulletins, their work could still result in severe punishment. When the editors of the internal bulletins printed some articles supporting the baochan daohu (包产到户 Fixed farm output quotas for each household) policy and exposed the drawbacks of Dazhai in the early 1960s, Mao criticized them sharply: “Please do not transfer the internal bulletins into “rebuking novels” (谴责小说). History proves that people who write those novels come to no good.”83 For the articles in the internal bulletins about Dazhai, even Zhou Enlai who was well-known for his kindness to the intellectuals, reproached the editors, “Chairman Mao merely set the model, and your NCNA is picking bones from an egg.”84 Due to this criticism from Mao and the other central leaders, the

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83 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 11),” p. 19.
84 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 11),” p. 18.
editors of internal bulletins were frightened. From then on, they became extremely careful, and the number of critical writings in the internal bulletins dropped drastically.\(^85\)

When orders from the Central Committee conflicted with each other, the editors of the internal bulletins were also placed in a dangerous situation. Xia Gongran felt confused about these conflicting orders in the early 1950s:

> In the 1950s, various orders and opinions were mixed together. In other words, they all had a stake in each other. Also, the leaders were used to expressing their opinions with contradictory approaches. For instance, Liu Shaoqi and Hu Qiaomu often highlighted “the Party’s absolute leadership” of journalism. Mao, however, sometimes thought that it was necessary to make the newspapers more readable and for the NCNA to ‘control the earth.’ (把地球管起来).\(^86\)

In the late 1950s, the problem became increasingly serious. Xia recalled that Mao emphasized how the internal bulletins needed to be the carriers of negative news for the Party, which greatly encouraged Xia. However, anyone who had criticized the “Three Red Flags,”\(^87\) including people in high positions in the Party like Peng Dehuai (彭德怀), became the targets of the Party’s struggles. Consequently, he and his colleagues “had to stop their reflection [on their work of internal bulletins].” In such situations, they felt extremely apprehensive: “How could we report problems through internal bulletins? All of us felt perplexed.”\(^88\)

As a result, the editors had to predict what the leaders expected to read in the internal bulletins. In order to do so, the editors tried to make connections with those who were close to

\(^{85}\) Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 11),” p. 19.

\(^{86}\) Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 7),” p. 2.

\(^{87}\) Three red flag refers to the three most significant tasks of the Party in the late 1950s, namely the People’s communes, the Great Leap Forward, and the general line for the socialist construction.

\(^{88}\) Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 8),” p. 20.
the top leaders, like their secretaries and the staff in the General Office of the CCP. Xia Gongran recalled, “Chen Qizhang, the chief editor of the Qingkuang jianbao (Briefings) that was run by the General Office of the CCP, often wrote letters to me, providing me with the latest ideas of the top leaders, especially those of Liu Shaoqi. His purpose was to let the internal bulletins deliver information in light of these ideas.”89 This situation changed the task of the editors of internal bulletins from providing the leadership with reliable information to catering to the leadership.

Therefore, the internal bulletins, which were supposed to provide the leaders with timely, accurate, comprehensive information, gradually lost their effectiveness. It’s worth noting that palace memorials—the precursors to the internal bulletins—ended in a similar way. As Philip A. Kuhn suggests, Emperor Qianlong found that he was unable to get “reliable, undoctored information” through the palace memorial system.90 As a result, similar to what Paul Lendval observed in the Eastern European countries, “in the all-pervading atmosphere of a personality cult,” the Chinese political elites were largely isolated from real life and were “always faced with the danger that they would become the victims of their own lies.”91 It was not only the ordinary people, but also the reporters and leaders that not know what truly happening in the world.

According to his own account, before he visited in 1962, Lian Yunshan (连云山), a senior reporter from the Renmin ribao, thought the people of Hong Kong lived in abject misery. However, after he visited Hong Kong, he was surprised to find:

All [the Party’s propaganda] are lies. The beggars in Hong Kong lead a better life than we do. [In Hong Kong,] as long as you work, you will have enough to eat. I interviewed

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89 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaoping, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 12),” p. 13.
90 Kuhn, Soulstealers, pp. 201-203.
many smugglers [from the Mainland]. [When I interviewed them], they cried [since they felt sorry for their homeland] but they never regretted leaving the Mainland. 92

Xia Gongran was also shocked when he read Lian’s article about Hong Kong for the internal bulletins. 93

Moreover, during the Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine, affected by the articles he read that clearly included the internal bulletins, Mao, worried about “the problem of what to do with excess food” proposed the guidelines of “plant less, raise production, harvest more” (少种，高产，多收),” which left massive tracts of farmland uncultivated. 94 To alleviate Mao’s concern, the Ministry of Chemical Industry provided an article in an internal bulletin, titled “Dealing with Too Much Grain” (粮食多了怎么办). 95 In addition, due to the collapse of the internal bulletin system, Mao believed that “mass starvation from late 1958 to early 1960 was isolated and temporary and should pose no impediment to the onward leap of the national economy.” 96

Eventually, the supposedly most reliable channel of information became less effective than word of mouth, in many cases. The people who lived close to Hong Kong actually had a better understanding of the stark difference between the standard of living between Hong Kong and Mainland China, while the Party’s senior journalists still believed the Party’s propaganda. Also, to get access to the truth, even Mao and other top leaders had to go down to the local areas to carry out their own investigations in person. Without the investigation conducted by the top

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92 Luo Pinghan, Dataogang, p. 213.
93 Xia Gongran and Xia Xiaomei, “Jiqing suiyue zhongde qingbai moji (part 8),” p. 21.
95 Luo Pinghan, Daguofan, p. 70.
96 Yang Jisheng, Tombstone, p. 496.
leaders including Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, and Zhou Enlai, and Mao’s secretaries including Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木), Tian Jiaying (田家英), and Chen Boda (陈博达) in 1961, “no decision would have been taken to disband the communal kitchens.”

In sum, the operation of the internal bulletins revealed the intricate interaction between the journalists and politicians. From this chapter and the previous two, we can see that a new journalistic system that was closed supervised by the Party and had a complicate relationship with politics was established. What did this mean to traditional journalism in China? How did the Republican newspeople adapt to this new journalistic environment? Did they try to challenge the new journalistic norms? In the following three chapters, I will delve into these questions.

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97 Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone*, p. 497; Also see Luo, *Daguofan*, pp. 231-276.
PART III: The Transformation of Civilian-run Journalism

7. The Transformation of Civilian-Run Newspapers in Shanghai

While establishing its newspapers and journalistic norms, the CCP also attempted to transform civilian-run journalism. Chapters 7 to 9 explore how the civilian-run newspapers were transformed into Party-controlled newspapers and the non-Party newspeople’s experiences in this process. This exploration reveals the conflicts between the old and new journalistic systems, the civilian-run papers’ political role in the Communist regime, and the relationship between the non-Party newspeople and the Party. First, this chapter will examine the transformation of the civilian-run papers.

With few exceptions, the current literature about the transformation of the civilian-run newspapers mostly focuses on the process of socialist transformation of press ownership from private to joint state-private ownership (公私合营). This scholarship indicates that the new journalistic environment controlled by the Party, which restrained commercial competition and led to subsequent operating difficulties, contributed to the end of the civilian-run press in Mainland China.1 While acknowledging these scholarly contributions, I argue that the previous

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1 The few exceptions that I know of are He Bixiao’s two articles, “Xinwen fanshi gengti: cong minjian baoren dao dangde ganbu—yi shanghai siying baoye gaizao wei zhongxin de kaocha” (新闻范式更替: 从民间报人到党的干部——以上海私营报业改造为中心的考察 The transformation of a journalistic paradigm: From civilian newspeople to Party cadres—a study focusing on the transformation of private journalism in Shanghai), Ph.D. dissertation, Fudan University, 2011; and “Jianguo chunian Shanghai siying baoye de renyuan gengti yu sixiang gaizao” (建国初年上海私营报业的人员更替与思想改造 The personal changes and ideological remolding of private journalism in Shanghai at the beginning of the PRC), Henan daxue xuebao, Vol.53 No. 5(2013): 18-25. Other scholarship includes: Sun Xuei, “Jiefang chuqi dui jiuxinwen shiye de jieshou he gaizao” (解放初期对旧新闻事业的接收和改造 The reception and transformation of the old journalism at the beginning of the PRC), Xinwen yanjiu ziliao, 43 (1988):48-61; Shi Zhe, “Jianguo chuqi siying baoye de shehui zhuyi gaizao” (建国初期私营报业的社会主义改造 The socialist transformation of private journalism at the beginning of the PRC), Xinwen daxue, 1
studies neglected to highlight the process whereby the private papers accepted the Party’s journalistic norms. This was actually more crucial than the change of ownership, since this process had a long-lasting influence on the operations of the civilian-run papers in the new regime. Even before Liberation, the civilian-run newspapers had begun to learn the Party’s journalistic rules and tried to imitate the Party papers, either voluntarily or as required by the authorities. Before 1952 when the socialist transformation of the civilian-run press started, they had already been following the Party’s journalistic rules. Therefore, the socialist transformation of the civilian-run press did not have as great an influence on the journalistic practice in China as adopting the Party’s journalistic norms did.

The previous scholarship on this subject also lacks in-depth discussions about the long-lasting influence of the civilian-run papers on PRC politics, even after those papers were completely transformed into state-run papers by the late 1950s and early ‘60s. In fact, by that time, although politically and economically those papers had become Party papers, they were still wittingly or unwittingly regarded as non-Party newspapers by both Party leaders and the public and thus played a special role in the Party’s political system. They were utilized by the Party leadership, especially Mao, in a different way than the “genuine” Party papers, which had a great impact on the history of the PRC.

As one example, Yao Wenyuan’s well-known article, “On the New Historical Beijing Opera Hai Rui Dismissed from Office” (评新编历史剧《海瑞罢官》), that signaled the

start of the Cultural Revolution, was first published in the *Wenhuibao* in November 10, 1965. According to Zhang Chunqiao (张春桥), it was Mao who asked that newspaper to publish it. One possible reason for this was that “the *Wenhuibao* had a civilian-run tradition (民间色彩). It was less authoritative [than the Party ones]. By publishing this article in that paper, the backstage supporter of this article (Mao) would not be exposed and thus his opponents would not hold back. Ambushes were more damaging than open battles.”² To put it in another way, by publishing this article in the *Wenhuibao*, rather than in the “genuine” Party newspapers, Mao would be able to “draw the snakes out of their holes” (引蛇出洞) and thus wage a campaign against his opponents.

This chapter explores the transformation of the civilian-run papers as they implemented new journalistic norms. The papers examined in this chapter are mainly Shanghai’s *Dagongbao*, *Wenhuibao*, and *Xinminbao*. These papers were chosen due to their prominence among the civilian-run newspapers and the fact that all of them were based in Shanghai. The large body of scholarship on them, as well as on Shanghai journalism, provides a reliable foundation for this study. Besides these three papers, this chapter will also discuss the *Guangming ribao*, which was based in Beijing. At least nominally, the *Guangming ribao* was a paper run by minor political parties and groups in China from 1949 to 1982. Although not civilian-run, the *Guangming ribao*, as one of the few national non-Party papers, played a crucial political role in the PRC.³ Therefore, although this chapter focuses on the history of the civilian-run papers in Shanghai, I also examine the *Guangming ribao* when necessary.

² Shi Yun, *Zhang Chunqiao Yaowenyuan shizhuan—zizhuan, riji, gongci* (张春桥姚文元实传——自传、日记、供词) (Hong Kong: Salian shudian, 2012), p. 292;
³ In this dissertation, “non-Party papers” refers to the civilian-run papers and the papers run by the minor political parties and groups.
This chapter consists of five parts. The first covers a pre-Liberation discussion about whether non-Party papers should be allowed. The second reviews the Party’s takeover of the Shanghai press. In the third part, I examine the new journalistic environment confronting the non-Party papers after Liberation. The fourth part concentrates on the civilian-run papers’ efforts to adapt to the new journalistic rules. The last part provides an exploration of the political role of the non-Party papers in the PRC.

**Should the incoming Communist regime allow civilian-run newspapers?**

As the Party occupied an increasing number of cities after 1948, the question of how to deal with the newspapers in these cities became a problem. Within the Party, there were many arguments on this issue. These arguments were reflected in the debate in the *Huashangbao* (华商报 Chinese Business Daily), the Party’s mouthpiece in Hong Kong, in early 1949. Of the six articles in the *Huashangbao* that addressed this issue, three argued there was no need for the new China to have civilian-run newspapers or that civilian-run papers should be prohibited in the new China. Two maintained that the civilian-run papers should be permitted, but had to be gradually transformed first into collective papers (集体报纸) and finally into state-run ones. Only one article contended that civilian-run papers should be permitted based on the idea of freedom of the press. 4 Although it was not clear how the Party leadership responded to this debate, the Party finally took a moderate stance and permitted a certain number of civilian-run newspapers which would later be transformed.

This stance was continuously presented in the resolutions that the Party made on this problem. In late 1948, the Party issued its first resolution on this problem, “A Resolution on How

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to Deal with the Domestic and Foreign Press and News Agencies in the Newly Liberated Cities”
(关于新解放城市中中外报刊通讯社处理办法的决定). In this document, the Party decided
that the Party would help the “progressive” civilian-run papers that “had truly promoted the
masses’ revolutionary passions” in resuming publication. On May 9, 1949, in an instruction that
the Party leadership gave the Nanjing Party Municipal Committee, the Party contended that aside
from the Party newspapers, the Party would run one or two or even several non-Party papers in
the large cities in order to connect the Party with a broader social strata.

Besides, as Xia Yan (夏衍) recalled, in May 1949, Zhou Enlai claimed, “We had a
problem with the civilian-run papers, such as the Dagongbao, Shenbao, Xinwenbao, Xinminbao,
and the peripheral newspapers led by the Party. This was a very complicated, policy-oriented
problem and our preliminary decision was that we needed to keep several civilian-run
newspapers in cities like Beijing and Shanghai.” Given Zhou’s high status in the Party, what he
said represented the opinions of the top Party leaders.

In consideration of the fact that in Russia the Bolsheviks “shut down all the non-
Bolshevik daily publications” almost immediately after they seized power in 1917, it is worth
considering why the Party permitted the civilian-run papers in the new regime. I believe there are
two main reasons. First, as the instructions that the Party leadership gave the Nanjing Party
Municipal Committee suggested, the non-Party papers would help the Party connect with a

5 “Guanyu xin jiefang chegnshi zhong zhongwai baokan tongxunshe chuli banfa de jueding” (关于新解放城市中
中外报刊通讯社处理办法的决定 Resolution on how to handle the domestic and foreign newspapers and news
agencies in the newly liberated cities), in XWHB, volume 1, p. 189.
6 “Zhongyang guanyu dachegnshi baozhi wenti gei nanjing shiwei de zhishi” (中央关于大城市报纸问题给南京市
委的指示 The CC’s instructions to the Nanjing Municipal Party Committee on newspapers in the big cities), in
7 Xia Yan, Lanxun jiiumenglu, p. 395.
8 Lenoe, Closer to the Masses, p. 13.
broader social strata. (“Social strata” 社会阶层 refers to the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.) In the late 1940s and early ‘50s, the Party believed that before entering the socialist period, China needed to go through a transitional period—the new democratic period (新民主主义时期)—in which the national bourgeoisie, as well as the civilian-run enterprises, played a significant role in the country’s economy.  

Stalin also instructed the CCP to constitute a revolutionary coalition government with the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie. In light of this, civilian-run newspapers were allowed in the new regime.

The “social strata” referred to the “the third force” (第三势力) that was made up of many of celebrated liberal intellectuals, businessmen and politicians, such as Zhang Dongsun (张东荪), Zhang Junmai (张君劢), Shi Fuliang (施复亮), Yang Renpian (杨人楩), Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), Chu Anping, and Luo Longji (罗隆基), who had refused to cooperate with either the KMT and CCP. These individuals were members of several minor political parties and groups (MPGs) among which the China Democratic League (中国民主同盟) was the most influential.

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9 Yang Kuisiong, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu 1, p. 464; For more information about the new democracy, please see Pepper, Civil War in China, pp. 219-224.
10 Yang Kuisiong, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu 1, p. 472. For the Party’s policy, also see Teiwes, “The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime,” p. 77.
11 The MPG are known as democratic parties and groups (民主党派) in Mainland China. There are more than ten MPGs in the PRC today. Although they play a minor role in China, they are regarded as an integral part of the PRC’s political system and close friends and allies of the CCP since the 1940s. See Edmund S. K. Fung, “Recent Scholarship on the Minor Parties and Groups in Republican China,” Modern China, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1994): 482-484.
12 The third force was also known as middle power (中间势力). Reliable studies on the third force mainly include: Zhang Junmai, The Third Force in China (New York: Bookman Assoc., 1952); Roger Jeans, Roads Not Taken: The Struggle of Opposition Parties in Twentieth-Century China (Boulder: Westview, 1992); Deng Ye, Lianhe zhengfu yu yidang xunsheng: 1944-1946 nianjian guogong zhengzheng (联合政府与一党训政：1944–1946 年间国共政争: Coalition government and one-party tutelage: The political competition between the Nationalists and Communists
To achieve ultimate victory, the Party made a great effort to win over these political parties and groups, and to draw them into its united front (统一战线).\textsuperscript{13} Mao Zedong put forth the policy of a coalition government in 1945, planning to “set up a formally constituted democratic government, which will also be in the nature of a coalition and will have a still wider representation of people from all parties and groups or without any party affiliation.”\textsuperscript{14} Mao established a coalition government with these small parties and groups in 1949.\textsuperscript{15} Frederick C. Teiwes observes: “Not only did delegates from these parties vastly outnumber those formally assigned to the CCP, but more significantly, eleven of the twenty-four ministers appointed in the new government were minor party representatives or unaffiliated ‘democratic personages.’”\textsuperscript{16} To ban the civilian-run newspapers, a sign of free speech, would have undermined the Party’s relationship with them. Therefore, in view of the political influence that this move would yield, it was not advisable for the Party to do so.

The second reason the Party decided to keep the non-Party papers was that the non-Party papers could be more useful to the Party than the Party ones in many cases. Unlike the Party papers, the civilian-run papers, in people’s minds, took a neutral stance, which made them more popular than the Party papers among the ordinary people. Thus, in many cases, it was to the Party’s

\textsuperscript{13} In Frederick C. Teiwes’s phrase, the united front was “one of the characteristic features of Mao’s strategy.” It is a “principle of gathering a wide collection of allies by setting relatively limited goals and defining enemies as narrowly as possible.” In Teiwes, “The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime,” p. 76. For more information about the united front, please also see Lyman P. Van Slyke, \textit{Enemies and Friends: The United Front in Chinese Communist History} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967).


\textsuperscript{15} Yang Kuisong, \textit{Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu 1}, pp. 461, 466-467.

\textsuperscript{16} Teiwes, “The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime,” p. 77.
advantage to speak through the alleged civilian-run papers. The KMT government was a master of using these papers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the War of Resistance, the KMT often spoke through the *Dagongbao*. After the war, the KMT controlled the *Shenbao* (申报) and *Xinwenbao* (新闻报), but disguised them as civilian-run papers in order to achieve a better propaganda effect.\(^{17}\) Zeng Xubai (曾虚白) observed, “Although these newspapers [the *Shenbao* and *Xinwenbao*] were not formal party papers, … their stance was closer to that of the government. Thus, their social influence was stronger than the formal ones.”\(^{18}\)

Whether the Party was inspired by the KMT’s use of the so-called civilian-run papers or not, it did realize the advantage of the appearance of civilian-run papers. In 1945, Mao requested that the Party establish papers similar in appearance to mass papers (以群众面目出版的日报) in the major cities.\(^{19}\) In a similar vein, in 1949, when preparing for the takeover of Shanghai, Rao Shushi (饶漱石), the first chairman of the East China Bureau (华东局第一书记), claimed, “It is necessary to run a paper that resembles the mass papers in a complicated city like Shanghai.”\(^{20}\)

Moreover, in the future, the Party would need non-Party papers to appeal to the people who did not like reading the Party-affiliated ones. The Party had to yield to the tastes of the

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\(^{19}\) Mao Zedong, “Jinkuai qu Shanghai dengdi banbao” (尽快去上海等地办报 Run the newspapers in Shanghai as soon as possible), in *GZWX*, p. 131.

audience and the mass market, which explained why it even encouraged some of the non-Party newspeople to establish two new tabloids (小报) in Shanghai to educate the politically “backward” masses. This type of paper was closely related to yellow journalism which in the history of Chinese journalism was off-limits for the Party news workers. In the Party’s discourse, the purpose of establishing the two tabloids was “to utilize the urban petty bourgeois’s infatuation with tabloids,” and to use the tabloids as “auxiliary tools to teach the backward urban petty bourgeois.” In 1950, in another report, Party officials admitted that while the tabloids had many shortcomings, “they did enter into the citizens’ circles, providing papers for those who did not like to read the hard newspapers (硬性报纸) like the Jiefang ribao.”

To summarize, there were two major reasons why the Party chose to permit the civilian-run papers. The first was that allowing these papers to continue to publish was conducive to the Party’s relationship with “the third force.” The second was that keeping the civilian-run papers made the Party’s messages more accessible and brought them to more people.

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22 Yellow journalism refers to “highly emotional, exaggerated or inaccurate reporting that emphasizes crime, sex and violence.” See Biagi, Media/Impact, p. 57.

23 Q431-1-74, “Shanghai jingguan xinwen chubanchu guanyu chuli xiaobao de yijian” (上海市军管会新闻出版处关于处理小报的意见 Shanghai Military Control Commission’s suggestions on how to handle tabloids), 1949.

The Party’s takeover of the press and the establishment of a new newspaper system

When the Party took Shanghai in May 1949, it began to establish a new newspaper system. In November 1948, the Party issued a document titled “The Central Committee of the CCP on Addressing the Domestic and Foreign Press and News Agencies in the Newly Liberated Cities” about how to deal with the papers in the major cities like Shanghai. In this document, the Party divided the press into three categories: 1) the press that was governed by the KMT and other “anti-revolutionary” parties or groups, such as the Chinese Youth Party (青年党) and the Democratic Socialist Party (民主社会党); 2) papers run by the MPGs and that spoke against American imperialism and the KMT “reactionary” government; and 3) the privately-run press which was further divided into three sub-categories based on their ownership by a) reactionaries, b) centrists, or c) progressives. Based on these categories, the Party planned to shut down the papers run by the “reactionary” and “anti-revolutionary” parties, groups and individuals, and to keep those run by the centrists and progressives.25

When the Party entered Shanghai, publication of the domestic papers was forbidden unless they had successfully registered with the Shanghai Military Control Commission (上海市军管会).26 Through this requirement, the Party could get information about the papers and

regulate them. In fact, at the beginning when the Party took over the cities, it devoted itself to
gleaning information about all the industries. As Ezra F. Vogel’s study on Guangzhou suggests,
efforts were “made to register every school, every business firm, every voluntary organization,
every religious institution, every family and even dog…. The year following Liberation might
well be called the ‘year of the great registration.’”

Based on the information provided during the registration and the Party’s own
investigation, the Party categorized the press in Shanghai into four categories: papers that needed
to be taken over (接管), papers to be put under military control (军管), papers to be put under
surveillance (管制), and papers to be supported (支持扶植). The papers that needed to be taken
over were those run by the Nationalists, such as the Zhongyang ribao (中央日报 Central Daily),
Heping ribao (和平日报 Peace Daily), and Dongnan ribao (东南日报 Southeast Daily). The
papers that needed to be put under military control were the joint ventures financed by
bureaucratic capital and national bourgeoisie capital, such as the Shenbao and Xinwenbao.
Although nominally these two papers were private, they were actually controlled by the KMT
government. The papers that were put under surveillance were those run by the neutral national
capitalists, such as Tiewao (铁报 Iron New, Feibao (飞报 Flier), and Luobinhan (罗宾汉 Robin
Hood Daily). The papers that were supported by the Party were the “progressive,” ones, such as
the Xinminbao, Wenhuibao, and Dagongbao.

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27 Ezra F. Vogel, Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968
28 See Wang Zhong, “Shanghai jiefang chuqi jieguan xinwen jigou de qingkuang” (上海解放初期接管新闻机构的
情况 The situation of taking over media in Shanghai after Liberation), in Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi
yanjiushi, ed., Jieguan Shanghai xiajuan · zhuanti yu huiyi (接管上海 下卷 · 专题与回忆 Taking over Shanghai
volume 2: Special subjects and memoirs) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1993), pp. 220-222; Ma
As for the foreign newspapers in Shanghai, such as the *North China Daily News*, *The Shanghai Evening Post*, and *The China Weekly Review*, the Party allowed them to operate in order to reward their support for Chinese people during the War of Resistance. However, the *North China Daily News* and *Shanghai Evening Post* were soon banned by the Party on the pretext of spreading false rumors. In 1953, *The China Weekly Review* was banned by the American government due to its support of the PRC during the Korean War. Consequently, it lost most of its readers and shut down. Since then, no Western press has existed in Mainland China.29

Eventually, in Shanghai fourteen newspapers received their certificates of registration. Among these, seven had a close relationship with the Party: the *Jiefang ribao*, *Laodongbao*, *Qingnianbao*, and *Xinwen ribao*.30 With regard to the civilian-run papers, among 43 papers submitting registration materials, only three registered successfully: the *Dagongbao*, *Wenhuibao*, and *Xinminbao*. In addition, as mentioned above, with Party support, two tabloids, the *Dabao* (大报  Big Daily) and *Yibao* (亦报  Also the Daily), were established.31

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30 Notably, *Xinwen ribao* that was based on asset and equipment of *Xinwenbao* was somehow regarded as a civilian-run paper, since that the private shares and a large portion of the staff of *Xinwenbao* were kept. However, since this paper was established by the Party and all the leaders of the papers were nominated by the Party, it was considered a paper closely related to the Party. See Q431-1-21, “Shanghai shi junguanhui xinwen chubanchu guanyu jiefang qianhou baokan qingkuang” (上海市军管会新闻出版处关于解放前后报刊情况  The Press and Publication Department of Shanghai Municipal Military Control Commission’s reports on the situations of media before and after Liberation), 1949; Kang Kai, “Chengxu yu duanlie: Jianguo chuqi Shanghai Xinwen ribao de chuangban yu xiaosi (1949-1960)” (承续与断裂：建国初期上海新闻日报的创办与消失  Inheriting and break: The establishment and disappearance of the Shanghai *Xinwen ribao* in the early PRC), Master’s thesis, Fudan University, 2013.

To avoid “unhealthy” competition among these papers, the Party divided them into different categories. In principle, the *Jiefang ribao* was the dominant Party paper that individuals from all walks of life, especially the Party cadres, were expected to take seriously. The other papers were aimed at particular social groups. The *Laodongbao* targeted the workers, the *Qingnianbao* the youth, the *Xinwen ribao* the merchants, the *Dagongbao* the senior intellectuals, the *Wenhuibao* the young intellectuals, the *Xinminbao* the urban petty bourgeois, and the *Dabao* and *Yibao* the most “backward” citizens.  

The new journalistic environment

Following Liberation, the civilian-run newspapers, voluntarily or forced, attempted to learn from the Party newspapers. Previous scholarship, like He Bixiao’s doctoral dissertation, considers this process to be the old newspapers’ adjustment to the Party’s journalistic paradigm. However, the Party did not actually have a paradigm or a package of fixed journalistic rules in 1949. In fact, running papers in the new regime was challenging for both the Party news workers and the non-Party newpeople. For the Party news workers, publishing newspapers in an urban setting was a big problem. They were obligated not only to change their slow-paced work style of the rural areas but also to face new readers: the urban educated. Thus, they had to adjust both

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32 It is crucial to note that the targeted audience of some of these papers changed several times in the 1950s. To cite two examples, the *Wenhuibao* was targeted at youth intellectuals in 1949. However, its target audience was changed to the primary and secondary school teachers in 1952 and the paper was almost transformed into a teacher’s paper in the mid-1950s. Moreover, in 1956 it became a paper targeting intellectuals in general. In a similar vein, *Xinwen ribao* targeted the business community, sale clerks, freelancers, and housewives in 1949, the business community in 1955, and the cadres and individuals from economic departments and business community in 1959. See Cao Lixin, “Zailun xinzhongguo chengli hou saying baoye xiaowang de yuanyin—yi jiefang chuqi Wenhuibao de jingying weili” (再论新中国成立后私营报业消亡的原因——以解放初期的文汇报为例 Re-examination of the reasons for elimination of private newspapers—using Wenhuibao as an example), *Guoji xinwenjie* 4(2019): 112-116; Shanghai xinwenzhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Shanghai xinwenzhi* (上海新闻志 Journalism history of Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2000).
the editorial policies and content of their papers. In fact, the Party leadership was disappointed with the Party news workers at the beginning of the PRC and even encouraged them to learn from the non-Party newspeople. Qian Jiang, a reporter for the Renmin ribao, recalled:

The [Party] press entered metropolises and the national capitals from the rural base areas. It was not easy for us to adjust to this change…. The desultory, slow, sloppy, imprecise work style was brought to the cities. In October 1949, during the founding ceremony of the PRC, the Renmin ribao incorrectly wrote “Chairman of Central People’s Government” as “Chairman of Central People’s Government Committee.” It even incorrectly published illustrations of the national flag, and the national song lyrics and music score. Also, the most important article ‘The Announcement of the Central People’s Government’ was put in an insignificant place in the newspaper.’ These mistakes even bothered Mao Zedong…. Mao said, you should learn from the Dagongbao. I would be satisfied if you (the Party papers) looked a bit like the Dagongbao.

Therefore, the Party’s journalistic norms were created by learning from the Soviet journalistic experience, the Party’s traditions, and traditional Chinese journalism and the norms continuously evolved in the daily work. Therefore, the process of the establishment of the new journalistic norms also took place in the Party newspapers in many cases. The following paragraphs discuss the journalistic norms under the new regime.

Immediately after Shanghai was “liberated” in May 1949, the Shanghai Military Control Commission (上海市军事管制委员会) issued an order asking the civilian-run papers to stop publishing news stories provided by the Central News Agencies of the KMT and news agencies

33 See Ye Qingqing, “Cong nongcun banbao zouxiang chengshi banbao.”
from capitalist countries. They required the newspapers to adopt only news from the government or the Party’s official news agency. By doing so, the Party controlled the information sources of the civilian-run newspapers and they became the Party’s megaphones. Yang Kuisong rates this approach as “the most effective way for the Party to control the press.” Meanwhile, he lamented that this approach “greatly weakened the communication function of traditional papers.”

In addition, the civilian-run papers in Shanghai were not even allowed to explain the laws, decrees and policies issued by the Party and the Liberation Army to their readers, or to make changes to the articles from the NCNA. In June 1949, the Party Central Committee (CC) clarified this policy. It stressed that the civilian-run newspapers were obligated to use the articles of the NCNA in their entirety without changes, and that the papers were not allowed to interpret the policies of the central leadership or change the titles. The CC claimed this move would prevent its policies from being distorted or interpreted out of context. As a result, the civilian-run papers were incorporated into the information system of the NCNA and were deprived of the right to make comments on the government’s policies.

From the very beginning of the liberation, the civilian-run papers were put under the overall management of the Party together with the Party newspapers. As with the Party papers, the non-Party papers were supervised and regulated by the News and Publication Bureau of the Shanghai Military Commission (上海军管会新闻出版处, later renamed the Shanghai News

35 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhude guanhuai, p. 113.
37 “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu wei dengji baozhi shishi xinwen guanzhi gei huazhongju huadongju xibeiju de zhishi” (中共中央关于未登记报纸施行新闻管制给华中局、华东局、西北局的指示 The CC’s instructions on implementation of news control of the unregistered newspapers to Central China Bureau, East China Bureau, and Northwest Bureau), in XWHB, volume 1, pp. 281-282.
and Publication Bureau 上海新闻出版处). All the papers in Shanghai, both Party and non-Party, were censored after publication by this bureau. Almost all the non-Party papers were criticized by this bureau. Xu Zhucheng described his experience under the new regime:

On the day when Changsha was liberated, we received accurate news about it and printed the news the next day. For this, we were criticized for getting the scoop, a capitalist journalistic practice, because the NCNA had not yet released this news. In addition, when ‘On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship’ was released, Zheng Xinyong (郑心永), our news editor, added some subtitles to it according to the subjects in order to make it easier to read; this was denounced as deviance. For such a significant document, you can only typeset it solemnly. How could you treat it so freely?

The *Dagongbao* was also criticized by the Party. In 1951, the paper was criticized for leaking state secrets six times. Besides this, it was twice criticized for typographical errors. In 1952, it was even criticized publicly:

‘Unscrupulous Merchant Zhao Jinfeng Insanely Attacked the Liberation Army,’ which was published in the *Dagongbao* in February 22, was a serious leak of national confidential military information; ‘Big Tiger Zhu Jinnong of Dalai Company Was Arrested Legally Today,’ from February 9, and ‘Shanghai Branch of People’s Bank of China Held a Confession and Impeaching Meeting,’ of February 12, were published by the *Dagongbao* before it contacted the relevant departments; on February 20, the *Dagongbao* ran a news report claiming ‘Lu Zuofu Died of an Illness’ based on hearsay. Lu actually committed suicide out of fear of punishment for his violation of laws…. All

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38 See “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu siying baokan tongxunshe deng wenti de zhishi” (中共中央关于私营报刊通讯社等问题的指示) in *XWHB*, volume 1, p. 293.  
these mistakes are very serious, resulting in huge losses to our political and propaganda work so we have decided to give the Dagongbao a disciplinary warning and to inform the other papers about this.\textsuperscript{40}

It is crucial to note that not only were the non-Party papers criticized frequently, but also the Jiefang ribao,\textsuperscript{41} the primary Party newspaper in Shanghai, suffered. For example, on September 3, 1951, all the major papers in the country published the telegrams of congratulations between Mao and Stalin on the sixth anniversary of the victory of the Anti-Japanese War. However, the Jiefang ribao only printed Mao’s telegram to Stalin, and did not publish Stalin’s telegram to Mao until the next day. The Jiefang ribao was questioned for this mistake by Party leadership from the central to local levels. Yun Yiqun (恽逸群), the head of the Jiefang ribao, was asked to review this mistake in the paper. Moreover, for this mistake, the Party sent a commissioner to check the work of the Jiefang ribao, which later developed into a mass criticism movement. Yun was criticized by his colleagues in a series of meetings and was later removed from his position.\textsuperscript{42}

As mentioned in Chapter 6, although the Party mainly employed post-publication censorship, described as “the anaconda in the chandelier” by Perry Link,\textsuperscript{43} at times it also

\textsuperscript{40} B35-2-65, “Xinwen chubanchu tongbao” (新闻出版处通报 A circular from News and Publication Department), 19520305. Also see Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, pp. 122-123.

\textsuperscript{41} There are two Jiefang ribao in the Party’s history. The first one was established in Yan’an in 1941. This Jiefang ribao were closed down in 1947. Later, the name of Jiefang ribao was used to name the newly founded Party newspaper in Shanghai in 1949. The Jiefang ribao is still the Party’s primary newspaper in Shanghai now. All references to the Jiefang ribao in this chapter refer to the Shanghai Jiefang ribao.

\textsuperscript{42} Shi Yun, Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan shizhuan, pp. 112-113; Also see A73-1-55, “Jiefang ribao bianjibu 1951 nian gognzuo fangzhen ji jiaqiang sixiangxing qunzhongxing gongzuo jihua” (解放日报编辑部 1951 年工作方针及思想性群众性工作计划 The editorial department of Jiefang ribao’s working policies and plans of ideological and mass work), 19510327-195111015.

censored the press before publication. This pre-publication censorship indicated that like the Party papers, the civilian-run ones also needed to submit their reporting plans and the important articles, such as editorials, to the relevant governing body. It also meant that the press would have to discuss reports on certain departments with the relevant people in charge before publishing. The news censorship regulation of Shanghai stipulated the following: All the news about the municipal government had to be approved by the mayor, vice mayor, or secretary-general; all the news about the sectors affiliated with the municipal government needed to be approved by the mayor or secretary-general; all the news about the sectors affiliated with the municipal government or other operational units needed to be signed off by the people in charge.⁴⁴ For example, the Dagongbao was criticized for its two reports about the Dalai company (大来公司) and the Shanghai branch of the People’s Bank of China, respectively, in February 1952 since it had not contacted these two work units before publishing these articles.⁴⁵

Merle Goldman observes that soon after the establishment of the PRC, “each professional group and each discipline was organized into a Party-controlled association.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Perry Link observes, emulating the professional associations in the Soviet Union, the Party constituted writers’ associations and “smaller associations for dramatists, film makers, musicians, calligraphers, photographers, acrobats, popular performing artists, students of folk literature, and others.”⁴⁷ The press circles were no exception. In 1950, the Party instituted the Shanghai Press

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⁴⁴ B35-2-109-1, “Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu xinwenchu guanyu songshen gaojian zanxing banfa de guiding” (上海市人民政府新闻处关于送审稿件暂行办法的规定 The interim procedures for submitting manuscripts by the Press Office of Shanghai People’s government), 195002.
⁴⁷ Link, The Use of Literature, p. 119.
Association (上海新闻协会) in order to strengthen its control over the civilian-run and Party newspapers.

The Party committee of this association consisted of the Party members from the Shanghai newspapers and was directly affiliated with the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. This committee was designed to ensure that the Party’s propaganda principles and management policies were carried out by all the papers. It was obligated to closely monitor the operations and ideological state of the press, and to systematically report what they found to the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee.  

To cite an example, in 1952, in order to launch an ideological transformation movement in the press circle in Shanghai, the Shanghai News and Publication Bureau asked the Party members in the non-Party press bodies to submit a report on each newspaper’s ideological situation. In this report, the Party members discussed their colleagues’ ideological stances, outstanding examples, attitudes towards the municipal leaders, viewpoints on the Party papers, the relationship between the newspapers, comments on the editorial and operational policies, and so on.

The Party members not only worked to ensure that the Party’s policies were carried out by the editorial board, but also strove to recruit Party members among the staff of the newspapers, to establish the labor union, thus working together to enforce the Party’s policies.

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48 B36-1-2-6, “Shanghai xinwen xiehui dangwei guanyu songshang shanghaishi siying baozhi lianhe dangzu zuzhi banfa de han” (上海新闻协会关于送上海市私营报纸联合党组组织办法的函 Shanghai Press Association’s report on the organizational methods of united Party Committee of private newspapers in Shanghai), 19500701.

49 A22-2-1532, “Shanghai xinwen chubanchu dui gebao gongzuo renyuan sannianlai gongzuo qingkuang he wenti de baogao” (上海市新闻出版处对各报工作人员三年来工作情况和问题的报告 Shanghai Press and Publication Department’s report on the working conditions and problems of the staff members in press circles), 19520628.
The experience of the Party members working at the Guangming ribao provides some clues about their work. Luo Ying (骆瑛), a Party member at the paper recalled:

At the beginning of the paper, we had very few editors and reports. We resolutely implemented the Party’s united front policy, working with the non-Party members to develop the Guangming ribao. In order to push forward the Party’s work, Feng Ye (冯烨) and Sun Chengpei (孙承佩) decided to constitute a Party organization in the [printing] factory…. In 1950, the Guangming ribao established a labor union. Lang Wenxiang (郎文祥), a new Party member recruited by Luo Ying and her colleagues, served as the chairman of the labor union…. We carried out the Party’s work even further through the labor union. 50

Notably, at the beginning, these activities were conducted underground and on a small scale, because the paper was not a Party paper, at least in name, and the Party was still carrying out the United Front policy. The Party members needed to hide their Party membership from their colleagues. Yin Yi (殷毅), an editor of the Guangming ribao, argued, “The Party organization in the press was under wraps until September 1954.” 51 Luo Ying also maintained, “In January 1955, Chang Zhiqing (常芝清), the Party secretary, announced the Party branch of the Guangming ribao would no longer be restricted.” 52 At that time, these Party activities were conducted on a small scale. According to Long Hua’s study, from June 1950 to November 1952,

51 Shan Sanya, et al. eds., Women de guangming zhilu, p. 25.
the number of Party members in the three civilian-run papers, namely the *Dagongbao*, *Wenhuibao*, and *Xinminbao*, only increased from six to eight.\textsuperscript{53}

It was not until the socialist transformation (1953-1956) that the Party began to conduct its work publicly and on a larger scale. The reason for this change was that during the socialist transformation, the country was going through a transformation from new democracy to socialism. In this process, the Party was justifiably gaining control over any organization run by non-Party individuals or organizations, such as national bourgeoisie and the MPGs, that were considered tolerable and even reputable during the new democratic period. As historian Yang Kuisong states, “Since the transformation to socialism had started, for the Communists, it was perfectly justified to regard the national bourgeoisie as their main enemies.”\textsuperscript{54} Accordingly, the Party members who used to work undercover could work openly in the papers run by the national bourgeoisie or the MPGs.

Furthermore, from 1949 to 1951, a meeting titled “Symposia of the People in Charge of the Newspapers” (各报负责人座谈会) was held each week. All the affairs of newspapers, including the general editorial principles, management policies, newsprint, price of newspapers, the holiday arrangement, and so on, would be discussed and decided upon in this meeting, which left little time or space for the newspeople to run their papers.\textsuperscript{55} Government intervention prevented the efficient production of the press.


\textsuperscript{54} Yang Kuisong, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu* 1, p. 503.

\textsuperscript{55} B37-1-27, “Shanghai xinwenshe guanyu gebao fuzeren huiyi zuotanhui jilubu” (上海新闻社关于各报负责人座谈会记录簿  The record books of the Symposia of People in Charge of the Newspapers), part 1, 1949-1950; B37-1-26, “Shanghai xinwenshe guanyu gebao fuzeren huiyi zuotanhui jilubu” (上海新闻社关于各报负责人座谈会记录簿  The record books of the Symposia of People in Charge of the Newspapers), part 2, 1951.
To help the non-Party newspeople to learn the Party’s ideology and journalism, the Party established several journalism schools. Among these schools, the Beijing Journalism School (北京新闻学校) was the most important. The curriculum was divided into two parts: the first part was comprised of ideological and political courses for transforming the students’ ideology and teaching them the basic concepts of Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese revolution. The second part was made up of journalism courses. The purpose was to instruct the students on the “correct” ideas, attitude, work style, and basic professional knowledge. At the Wenhuibao, three journalists, Lü Wen (吕文), Zhou Xingmei (周兴美), and Cai Yiming (蔡益铭), attended the Beijing Journalism School and returned to the Wenhuibao after graduation in 1950. At the Dagongbao, Yao Zhongwen (姚仲文), the director of the reporters section (记者部), studied at the school in 1951. These education courses helped indoctrinate the journalists in the Party ideology.

In 1950, based on a resolution of the National Newspaper Manager Conference in December 1949, the Shanghai News and Publication Bureau began requiring papers in Shanghai to merge the newspapers’ distribution channels with the postal system. Meanwhile, the bureau required the newspapers to raise their distributor discount (批发折扣) to at least seventy percent,

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56 B92-2-6, “Xinwen gongzuo xiehui, xinwen zongshu guanyu quanguo xinwen gongzuo he huiyi de gexiang jueyi ji youguan guiding” (新闻工作会，新闻总署关于新闻工作和会议的决议及有关规定 Journalists’ Union’s and General Administration of Press’s resolutions and relevant provisions on journalism and conference), 19500301-19500401.

57 B35-2-101-135, “Shanghai wenhuibaoguan guanyu zengjian renyuan qingkuang de baogao” (上海文汇报馆关于增减人员情况的报告 Wenhuibao’s report on increased and decreased employees), 19500809.

which helped the Party to control the distribution of the newspapers.\textsuperscript{59} As a result of combining the newspapers’ distribution channels with the postal system, the distribution sectors of the papers were incorporated into the post office. For example, from April to June 1951, when the Dagongbao was handing over its distribution sectors to the post office, more than seventy staff of the Dagongbao left and joined the postal system.\textsuperscript{60} Meanwhile, the non-Party newspapers’ sales agencies were dismissed or transformed by the Party, which led to widespread discontent among the former newspaper salesman. A government report describes what happened, “The civilian-run sale agencies complained everywhere, calling for justice: ‘The post office is not allowing us to work on this;’ [and] ‘We will be crushed sooner or later.’ The newspaper salesmen in Suzhou protested to the [local] House of Representatives.”\textsuperscript{61}

The seventy percent distributor discount also undermined the non-Party newspapers’ business operations. Before Liberation, lowering the distributor discount was important for the press in conducting business and competing with the other papers. A fixed distributor discount would hurt the newspapers’ business. For example, the Yibao, one of the two tabloids in Shanghai after 1949, complained, “We cannot carry out this resolution immediately, because

\textsuperscript{59} See “Quanguo baozhi jingli huiyi de jueyi” (全国报纸经理会议的决议 National Press Managers’ conference’s resolution), in Du Qingyun, Zhongguo baokan faxing shiliao, issue 1, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{60} A22-2-114, “Chuli Mei Huanzao laixin yu zhongyang xuanchuanbu de wanglai wenshu” (处理梅焕藻来信与中央宣传部的往来文书 The paperwork between Mei Huanzao and Central Propaganda Department), 1953.

\textsuperscript{61} B35-2-31-8, “Huadong junzheng weiyuanhui xinwen chubanju guanyu huadong shixing youfaheyi ji jinhou gonggu youfaheyi yilai gaikuang ji jinhou gonggu youfaheyi dali kaizhan baozhi faxing gongzuqu jihua he yaoqiu de cailiao” (华东军政委员会新闻出版局关于华东实行邮发合一以来概况及今后巩固邮发合一大力开展报纸发行工作计划和要求的材料 The Bureau of Press and Publication of East China Military and Political Committee’s report on the implementation of the combination of the newspapers distribution channel with the postal system and working plans on further promoting the policy and required materials ), 1950.
during the period when we were ruled by the [KMT] reactionaries, the distributor discount of the tabloids was only fifty percent.”

Besides, a fixed trade discount would be detrimental to the newspaper distributors who used to enjoy a lower trade discount. Before the merging of the newspapers’ distribution channel with the postal system was completed, part of the distribution of newspapers in Shanghai was operated by the Newspaper Distribution Labor Union (派报会 LUND), which was formally titled the Shanghai Cultural News Unified Service (上海文化新闻统一服务社). This organization was developed through transforming the former civilian-run newspaper distribution companies. The improvement of the distributor discount caused many disputes between the press and this labor union. The Dagongbao reported in August 1950, “The LUND has more than 3,000 members. They think the improvement of the distributor discount will hurt their members. Therefore, among our four improvements to the distributor discount, three led to disturbances among the members.” Eventually, the members of the LUND were also incorporated into the postal system, which indicated that the press lost its traditional business partner. Hence, the combination of the newspapers’ distribution channel with the postal system and the fixed distributor discount deprived the press of their former partners and their right to distribute their papers, thus imposing strict restrictions on the newspapers’ business operations.

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62 B35-2-30-10, “Yibao guanyu tiaozheng baozhi zhekou budiyu qizhe qingkuang de baogao” (亦报关于报纸折扣不低于七折情况的报告 Yibao’s report that trade discount cannot be lower than 70%), 19500817.
63 For more information about this labor union, please see He, “Xinwen fanshi gengti: cong minjian baoren dao dangde ganbu,” pp. 65-67, and B35-2-31-8 “Huadong junzheng weiyuanhui xinwen chubanju guanyu huadong shixing youfaheiyi yilai gaikuang ji jinhou gonggu youfaheiyi dali kaizhan baozhi faxing gongzuo jihua he yaoqiu de cailiao,” 1950.
64 B35-2-30-8, “Dagongbao guanyu baozhi pifa zhekou qingkuang de baogao” (大公报关于报纸批发折扣情况的报告 The Dagongbao’s report on the newspaper trade discount), 19500811.
Another factor that led to the operational difficulties of the non-Party papers was that they were not in the list of subscriptions at public expense (公费订阅). The work units were required by the Party to subscribe to the relevant Party papers. According to Wang Fangzi (王仿子), this requirement was made to ensure that the Party cadres who received a small subsidy under the Provision of Goods (供给制) during the Yan’an years read the papers. However, when the Provision of Goods was abolished in 1955 and people got salaries, the subscriptions at public expense was not abolished. In the beginning of the PRC, it was not compulsory for the work units to subscribe to the non-Party papers, which meant those papers did not receive as much sales revenue as the Party ones.

This led to further operating difficulties for the non-Party papers who had lost the majority of their advertisement revenue and independent distribution rights. According to a letter that the Shanghai propaganda cadres sent to Hu Qiaomu, before 1952, the three civilian-run papers (the Wenhuibao, Dagongbao, and Xinminbao) had been in the red for a long time. Li Chunqing (李纯青), a Party member from the Dagongbao, admitted in 1952, “We are

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65 The Provision of Goods was an institution by which the government provided its staff with basic human necessities and small subsidies rather than with salary. The CCP implemented this institution between 1942 and 1955. Wang Fangzi, “Duiyu you yige gongfei weizhu de tushu xiaofei shichang de zhiyi” (对于有一个公费为主的图书消费市场的质疑 Doubts on a publishing market based on public expense), in Wang Fangzi, Wang Fangzi chuban wenji xuji (王仿子出版文集续集 The sequel of Wang Zifang’s works on publication) (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2005), p. 353. For the Provision of Goods, please see Yang Kuisong, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguoshi yanjiu 1, pp. 412-459.

66 See “Ziji chuqian dingyue baozhi” (自己出钱订阅报纸 Subscribing to newspapers at personal expense), Renminribao, August 15, 1956. Please note this article is an editorial.

experiencing difficulties in operation. We are losing around 300 million yuan each month.”

Under these conditions, the only option for the non-Party papers was to work with the Party to get subsidies from the government. However, this led to a further loss of independence.

Through the establishment of these rules and institutions, the commercial environment that the non-Party newspapers previously enjoyed was completely destroyed. Meanwhile, the Party-dominated journalistic environment in which commercial competition was discouraged or even forbidden was created. Under these circumstances, the non-Party papers could hardly survive unless they cooperated closely with the Party.

The adjustment of the non-Party newspapers

After Liberation, facing the new journalistic environment, the non-Party newspeople endeavored to learn from the Party newspapers in terms of the Party’s ideology, rhetoric, and work styles. One report from the Xinminbao stated, “Right after Shanghai was liberated, we were unfamiliar with the news situation and the government’s policies. The only principle we had at the time was to learn from the Party papers. We followed the Party papers in every way—commentary, editing, and interviews.”

In the interim, the non-Party newspeople quickly learned to use the Party’s rhetoric to write articles. For example, in order to persuade Party leaders not to take over the Dagongbao, Wang Yunsheng published an article, “My Visit to the Liberated Areas,” on April 10, 1949. In it, he used many of the Party’s neologisms like petty bourgeoisie, bureaucratic capitalists,

68 A22-2-1532-29, “Li Chunqing guanyu dagognbao gongzuo renyuan de sixiang qingkuang baogao” (李纯青关于大公报工作人员的思想情况报告 Li Chunqing’s report on the ideological situations of Dagonbao’s employees), 19520703.

69 G21-1-7, “Guanyu Xinminbao Shanghai xinwen chuban qingkuang de youguan cailiao” (关于新民报上海新闻出版情况的有关材料 The relevant materials about Shanghai news publication in the Xinminbao), 194905-195101.
proletariat, and new democracy. He even utilized the Party’s discourse to criticize the
*Dagongbao*; this paper “had bureaucratic capitalists. The administrators of the paper had a close
relationship with the reactionary ruling class, so the paper’s nature was reactionary.”

According to Yang Kuisong, because of the quality of this article, it was even selected for publication
abroad by the Party and was popular among overseas Chinese. The newspeople’s
transformation was so fast that Dai Qing, who studied Chu Anping’s career under the
Communist regime, argued surprisingly that Chu Anping, “as well as other gentlemen, changed
their hearts and minds almost completely when they put on Mao suits (*中山装*).”

Also, she felt confused as to why the *Guancha*, a magazine famous for its decency, used phrases like “Chiang
Kai-shek is such a big fascist gangster,” and “licking the ass of American imperialists” in the
introduction of its first issue under the new regime.

The non-Party papers also strove to remodel their organizational structure and work style.
In accordance with its report in 1950, the *Wenhuibao* had already established an editorial
committee (*编委会*), a typical Soviet-style journalistic institution, as mentioned in Chapter 3. In
order to achieve the mass characteristics of Party newspapers, the report indicated that in 1950
the press was planning to organize a group for letters from readers (*读者来信组*), a readers
service station (*读者服务站*), a network of worker-peasant correspondents, and newspaper-
reading groups. Even the tabloids frequently associated with yellow journalism before 1949

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70 Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), “Wodao jiefangqu lai” (I visited the liberated areas), in Zhou Yu,


had to establish the Party’s mass journalistic institutions. The 1950 Dabao work report states, “[In 1950 we will] establish a network of worker-peasant correspondents step by step… [We will] expand our ties with readers by organizing reader singing groups, harmonica teams, symposiums, tour groups, and other activities. In addition, [we will] push for a collective cafe for the readers (读者集体食堂). Serve the people whole-heartedly!”

It is worth noting that not all the non-Party newspeople were willing to follow the Party’s journalistic rules. For example, Huang Chang (黃裳), a journalist at the Wenhuibao who was known for his essays, quickly resigned from the press after he was dispatched to handle the letters from the readers.76

Moreover, in 1950, many non-Party newspapers, including the Wenhuibao, Xinminbao, and Guangming ribao, began to dismantle the boundary between editors and reporters, thus carrying out the rule of combining editing and news acquisition (采编合一).77 The Guangming ribao even dismissed their news acquisition group (采访组).78 In practice, this meant that both the editors and reporters needed to do the editing and acquisition work. Luo Ying, a reporter from the Guangming ribao, recalled: “Although I mainly worked as a reporter, I would have to deal daily with the manuscripts.” She had to learn to write editorials, comments, short comments, and editorial notes.79

76 Zheng Zhong, Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao, p. 41.
78 Shan Sanya, et al. eds., Women de guangming zhilu, p. 23.
This institution was introduced from the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{80} It was a suitable institution for the Party during the wartime, since the news workers of the day needed to cope with a shortage of staff and poor working conditions. Ma Da (马达), a Party news worker who served as the chief editor of the \textit{Jiefang ribao}, described the simple work conditions of the \textit{Binhaibao} (滨海报), a Party paper in the Suzhong (苏中) base area consisting of only nine staff members:

Our nine people worked like a fighting group… the chief editor also had to serve as an editor and a reporter. Editors also had to do the work of transcribing, mimeographing, and helping with telegraph translation. All of us needed to take part in the newspaper distribution. Our so-called press could fit into a small wheelbarrow. The newly established \textit{Binhaibao} needed to acclimatize to the wartime environment. We printed the newspapers during the marching breaks.\textsuperscript{81}

Under these conditions, the Party press could hardly divide the editing and acquisitioning work. Gradually, the combining of editing and news acquisition became an integral journalistic practice of the Party. Moreover, due to the Party’s promotion of collectivism and condemnation of individualism and professionalism, this combination [meant that] acquisitioning, which was seen as collectivistic and anti-professional, was an institution that the newspapers had to establish. To learn from the Party newspapers and to survive in the Communist regime, the non-Party papers needed to adopt this practice.

Last, advertising was considered a practice associated to some degree with capitalism, because the newspapers in the Soviet Union did not print advertisements. Hence, the Party newspapers drastically reduced their advertisements in the wave of learning from the Soviet

\textsuperscript{80} Shan Sanya, et al. eds., \textit{Women de guangming zhilu}, pp. 14, 23.

\textsuperscript{81} Ma Da, \textit{Ma Da zishu} (马达自述 Ma Da’s self-statement) (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 2004), p. 5.
Union. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the *Renmin ribao* greatly reduced the number of advertisements in the early 1950s. To emulate the Party papers, the non-Party papers also reduced their advertising. Before Liberation, advertising revenue constituted a large portion of their income. For example, in the first half of 1949, the *Dagongbao* used two pages to print advertisements. After its revisions in November 1949, only one page was left for advertisements. Moreover, after October 1952, only one fourth of a page on average was used for advertisements.\(^{82}\)

From the discussion above, it is plain to see that within the first two years, the civilian-run newspapers had, voluntarily or involuntarily, become Party papers in terms of their internal structure, editorial policies, and general management, although the ownership of these papers was not changed until the second half of 1952. As Li Chunqing, a Party member who served as the vice editor-in-chief of the *Dagongbao*, put it in 1952:

> The private owners [of the civilian-run papers] do not have the three powers of the capitalists [the power over personnel, power of operation, and ownership]. Also, they cannot promote the capitalist thoughts…. The private ownership is merely a form. The civilian-run newspapers have the same propaganda content as the public ones, and they are fighting against the same enemies. There is nothing private, so their nature is public.\(^{83}\)

Therefore, the socialist transformation of capitalist ownership in late 1952 did not have a significant influence on the journalistic practice of the civilian-run press. Paul G. Pickowicz’s comments on China’s film industry right after Liberation applies as well to the Party’s rapid control of the newspapers after Liberation: “Before the Chinese entry into the Korean War in the

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82 He Bixiao, “Cong minjian baoren dao dangde ganbu,” pp. 98, 126.

83 A22-1-1551, “Dui siying baozhi de xingzhi fangzhen wnti de yijian” (对私营报纸的性质方针问题的意见 Suggestions on the political nature of private newspapers), 19520807.
late half of 1950 and the launching of a destructive crackdown in the arts in early 1951, the state increased control of the cultural sphere.\textsuperscript{84}

**The Non-Party newspapers’ role in the newspaper system**

Although the few surviving civilian-run newspapers had been transformed into Party-controlled ones in the first few years of the PRC, they still had a lower position in the Party’s newspaper hierarchy. For example, when the Shanghai Locomotive Works (上海机车厂) finished its five-year plan ahead of schedule in the spring of 1956, the *Xinminbao* gathered the news. However, while the newspaper was being printed, the *Xinminbao* received a call from the Party committee of the factory, claiming the press was not qualified to report such significant news. In another case, in the spring of 1956, a cooperative group of street food peddlers was formed in Shanghai’s Huangpu District; a Party cadre did not allow the *Xinminbao* to report this news first.\textsuperscript{85}

So, to some degree, these previously non-Party papers were still not considered genuine Party newspapers. Yang Yongzhi, the head of the *Jiefang ribao*, claimed in 1957 that after the civilian-run papers were transformed into state-run papers, “Our [Party] newspapers have very high prestige…. Our newspaper is a Party newspaper and political one. Its primary task is to promote socialism, which is different from the *Xinwenbao* and *Wenhuibao*.\textsuperscript{86}


\textsuperscript{85} A22-1-26, “Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanchuanbu zhaokai baozhi gongzuo huiyi tongzhi jilu huiyiwenjian,” 195608.

\textsuperscript{86} A73-1-286, “Jiefang ribao fuze tongzhi zuo guanyu gaijin baozhi gongzuo baogao de jilu,” 19570416-19570728.
Furthermore, the Party even tried to make people think that they were a non-Party newspaper and thus to utilize their “non-Party” characteristic. The Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CCP issued instructions about the Dagongbao in 1954. It read, “The Dagongbao is already a public-private joint newspaper led by the Party. However, in order to accommodate the political situation at home and abroad, it should retain its civilian-run appearance on the outside. All the Party committees of relevant areas and departments should treat the Dagongbao according to this instructions and assist it if necessary.”

Influenced by this propaganda, it was not uncommon for the Party members to view the Dagongbao as a paper run by the MPGs, or a capitalist paper. As Liu Yajuan reveals, a county-level Party propaganda sector was criticized for distributing an article in the Dagongbao since the higher authorities considered it as a paper run by the MPGs. Likewise, Chang Zhiqing, who served as the chief of the Dagongbao in the late 1950s, admitted in 1958 that many Party branches in remote areas still regarded the paper as capitalist. Apparently, similar to the KMT’s skillful use of the Dagongbao during the War of Resistance, the CCP government also attempted to take advantage of its influence by disguising it as a non-Party paper, thus demonstrating continuity between the KMT and CCP governments.

Indeed, Party leaders, especially Mao, still treated these previous civilian-run newspapers as civilian-run and managed to make full use of that fact. According to Zheng Zhong, a specialist on the Wenhuibao, “Mao Zedong once said in 1956, ‘The two civilian-run newspapers, Xu

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88 Liu Yajuan, “Dangyuan baoren yu xinzhongguo chengli hou sying baoye de zhuanxing—yi Dagongbao weili” (党员报人与新中国成立后私营报业的转型——以大公报为例 Party newspeople and the transformation of private journalism after the establishment of the PRC with the Dagongbao as an example), Dashi yanjiu yu jiaoxue, 5(2016):16.
Zhucheng’s *Wenhuibao* and Chu Anping’s *Guangming ribao*, have been labelled as rightist. Let’s cut the *Dagongbao* some slack.’ Thus, we can infer that Mao still considered the *Wenhuibao* a civilian-run newspaper.”

Furthermore, Zheng argues: “Mao viewed the *Wenhuibao* as a window to the intellectuals’ tendencies.” In effect, Mao even took pride in this strategy. In 1957, Mao said to Wu Lengxi, the head of the NCNA and the *Renmin ribao*, “As a news worker, you need to read the newspapers all around the country, no matter how busy you are. You must read Shanghai’s *Wenhuibao* and *Xinminbao* and Beijing’s *Guangming ribao*. And you need to read them carefully, reading their discussions and checking their exclusive news and page design, from which you can discover their political ideological tendencies.” Obviously, this comment was not only advice for Wu, but was also the voice of Mao’s own experience.

There were mainly three reasons why the Party maintained the non-Party image of the old non-Party papers. First, keeping the non-Party appearance of these old civilian-run newspapers was conducive to the Party’s united front work, domestically and internationally. This was the Party’s way of showing that it was democratic on the domestic front to foreign countries. This approach would also help the Party persuade the non-Party personages to continue to work with it. In the same way that Chiang Kai-shek fostered the *Dagongbao* to promote his government’s ideas during the Anti-Japanese War, the Communists attempted to use the “non-Party” appearance of the previously civilian-run papers to disseminate their ideology. As a result, the

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91 Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi*, p. 33.
Party document about the *Dagongbao* mentioned above claimed that the reason for accepting the old non-Party newspapers’ appearance as civilian run was “to accommodate to the political situation at home and abroad.”

The second reason the Party kept the non-Party image of the previous non-Party papers was because this approach helped the Party spread its ideology to people who were not used to reading the Party newspapers. In other words, the Party had to yield to the readers’ taste. For example, the *Wenhuibao* was more accessible to the readers than the stiff, bombastic Party papers. By embedding its ideology into the text of the *Wenhuibao*, the Party could imbue teachers and students with its ideology. Moreover, even after 1957, there were still three evening newspapers in China, namely the *Xinminbao* [this newspaper changed its name to the *Xinmin wanbao* (新民晚报 New People’s Evening News) in 1958], the *Beijing wanbao* (北京晚报 Beijing Evening News), and the *Yangcheng wanbao* (羊城晚报 Yangcheng Evening News). These papers were designed for people to read after work and were allowed to publish the “softer” news. Their articles were generally considered not as “hard” as the Party newspapers, like the *Renmin ribao* and *Jiefang ribao*. As a result, they were popular among the ordinary people and even with the intellectuals and Party cadres. Through these evening papers, the Party could indoctrinate these people during their spare time.

The third reason the Party disguised the “non-Party” papers as papers that were not controlled by the Party was that the Party intended to use them to achieve certain propagandistic effects. Indeed, these “non-Party” newspapers played a special role for the Party. In the following paragraphs, I will use the *Wenhuibao* and *Dagongbao* to illustrate this point.

The *Wenhuibao*, although no longer a civilian-run newspaper after 1953, was viewed as a barometer (晴雨表) of politics, especially of the Party’s policies towards the intellectuals due to
its close relationship with the intellectuals and its heritage as a civilian-run newspaper. It was not uncommon for Mao to find the ideological tendencies of the intellectuals through the Wenhuibao. Zheng Zhong observes, “Mao Zedong felt defensive toward the intellectuals…. He could find [intellectuals’] tendencies in the Wenhuibao and dominated them by striking first, making intellectuals feel that they could not control their own destinies. In addition, when it was not fitting for Mao to print some of his thoughts in the Party newspaper, he would publish them in the Wenhuibao.”\(^{92}\)

Due to the fact that many of the political movements targeted the intellectuals in the Mao era, the Wenhuibao played a significant role. It was not surprising that the Anti-Rightist Movement started from Mao’s article, “The Bourgeois Orientation of the Wenhuibao During a Certain Period” (文汇报在一个时间内的资产阶级方向), that was published in the Renmin ribao on July 14, 1957. Moreover, the noted article, “On the New Historical Beijing Opera ‘Hai Rui Dismissed from Office,’” that marked the start of the Cultural Revolution, was first published in the Wenhuibao, a “non-Party newspaper,” to “draw the snakes, [the intellectuals], out of their holes” in order to attack them.

Likewise, the Dagongbao also played a special role for the Party. It was utilized by the Party to expand its influence in foreign countries, especially democratic ones. Historically, the Dagongbao was known for its “timely reports on international news” (国际问题报道快捷). Moreover, Hu Zhengzhi (胡政之), the former manager of the paper, and Zhang Jiluan (张季鸾), the former chief editor, had both studied in Japan, and Wang Yunsheng was a famous Japan specialist.\(^{93}\) His masterpiece, China and Japan in Sixty Years (六十年来中国与日本), is still a

\(^{92}\) Zheng Zhong, Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao, p. xiv.

must read for people who are interested in Japan’s history in China. In order to utilize this historic heritage, in 1952 the Party assigned the *Dagongbao* the task of international propaganda. In its editorial policy in 1957, the *Dagongbao* was explicitly defined as “a national political state-run newspaper focusing on finance, economy, and trade, while also reporting the international news.”

The Party’s propaganda workers had a good understanding of the international influence of *Dagongbao*. In his report to the Shanghai propaganda department in 1952, Chen Yusun (陈虞孙), the director of the Shanghai News and Publication Bureau, wrote, “We should make full use of the *Dagongbao*’s international function… Have it publish more international news.”

Similarly, Deng Tuo (邓拓), the head of the *Renmin ribao*, was succinct on this point. In his conversation with Xu Zhucheng in 1956, Deng contended, “In my opinion, the *Wenhui bao* should pay attention to international propaganda. Currently, the *Renmin ribao* can only establish its influence in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries. Due to historical factors, the *Wenhui bao* and *Dagongbao* could also affect Japan, Southeast Asia, and West Europe.”

To conclude, after the establishment of the PRC, the Party swiftly transformed the non-Party newspapers into papers that abided by its journalistic rules. This accords with Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz’s observation: Although the Party “postponed, ignored, or bungled less pressing tasks” in the first three years of the PRC, the “Central [Party] leaders worked tirelessly to ensure the success of [its top priorities], and in the process, the party looked

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95 A22-1-47, “Chen Yusun guanyu Shanghai siying baozhi tiaozheng banfa gei zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanchuanbu de baogao” (陈虞孙关于上海私营报纸调整办法给中共上海市委宣传部的报告 Chen Yusun’s report about the adjustment of Shanghai private newspapers to the Propaganda Department of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee), 19520529.
like a well-organized revolutionary force.” Undoubtedly, to transform the people’s mindset was one of the Party’s top priorities and necessitated the rapid transformation of the civilian-run newspapers. However, even if those papers were completely controlled by the Party in terms of editorial policy, content, and distribution, there were still certain differences between these “non-Party” and Party papers. These differences were utilized by Party leaders, especially Mao, to achieve their goals, thus demonstrating continuity between the KMT and CCP governance.

The transformation that the non-Party newspapers underwent was a dramatic one. What were the non-Party newspeople’s feelings during this transformation? Did the conflicts between the old and new journalistic norms prompt them to change their attitudes toward the CCP? The following two chapters will discuss the relationship between the Party and the newspapers in the early PRC.

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8. The Party’s Relationship with the Non-Party Newspeople before 1957

Although the non-Party newspeople’s adjustment to the new journalistic environment was distressing for them, their loyalty to the Communist regime persisted until the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957. Indeed, the experience of the non-Party newspeople examined in this chapter suggests that even though these newspeople felt repressed in the new sociopolitical and journalistic environment, they still believed in the Party, especially in Mao, and were willing to work with the government.

This chapter will explore the non-Party newspeople’s experiences under the Communist regime, especially their interaction with the Party, and thus determine their relationship with it through 1957. Furthermore, the chapter will explain the reasons for the relationship between the Party and the newspeople. The non-Party newspeople examined herein are mainly Xu Zhucheng, Wang Yunsheng, and Chu Anping. The choice of these individuals is based primarily on their prominent position among the non-Party newspeople and the symbolic significance of their experience. Meanwhile, numerous previous studies on these men provide more of a basis for this study, which is another reason I focus on them in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first three parts, the “First contact,” “Struggles in the new sociopolitical and journalistic environment,” and “Becoming establishment state cadres,” explore the interaction between the non-Party newspeople and the state in chronological order. I contend that, although the non-Party newspeople were repressed under the Communist regime, they were largely loyal to it. In the last part of this chapter, I will provide reasons for this.

First contact
The Shanghai newspeople’s first contact with the Party occurred before the city was “liberated” in May 1949. Indeed, when they saw that the fall of the Nationalist government on Mainland China was inevitable, they tried to get in touch with the Party. Meanwhile, in the first half of 1949, the Party continuously invited democratic personages (民主人士)\(^1\) to North China to meet with the Party leaders and visit the liberated areas, persuading them to accept its ideology. Of course, newspeople were a significant part of these democratic personages. Wang Yunsheng and Xu Zhucheng were both invited to visit the liberated areas in February 1949.\(^2\) Similarly, Chu Anping, who had fled to Beijing to evade capture by the KMT government, was also respectfully received by the Party and was invited to visit the liberated areas in Northeast China.\(^3\) In September, Xu, Wang, and Chu were all appointed representatives of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (政协会议 CPPCC).

As with many other intellectuals, who “welcomed the Party because of disgust with the Kuomintang and because of appreciation of the Party’s ability to unite the country and provide financial security after decades of disorder,”\(^4\) these newspeople felt excited about the new society. After visiting the courthouse in Harbin, Chu commented in an article that he published in the *Guancha* that the court in the past was a yamen (衙门 the administrative office in imperial China) for the rich and a tool that the ruling class used to exploit people. After the

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1 In the Party’s rhetoric, “democratic personages” refers to the non-Party individuals who supported the CCP, such as the members of the MPGs and the influential independents.
transformation, the working people genuinely had the chance to appeal and the procedures were largely been simplified. In talking about the new prison in Harbin, he said, “The prison there does not look like a prison, but a school…. Some prisoners are reading; some are playing chess; some are reading newspapers for others; even some are writing a play…. This is a good model that can be adopted nationwide.”

In a similar vein, after his visit, Wang Yunsheng published an article titled, “My Visit to the Liberated Areas” (我到解放区来), in the Jinbu ribao (进步日报 Progress Daily). In this article, Wang said, “I could not have imagined that the liberated areas were in such [good] condition. Seeing is believing. What we saw in the East China liberated area not only dispels all the rumors about and slander of the liberated areas that were made by KMT reactionaries, but also enables us to see new things that have never before happened in Chinese history.” He also praised the Communist officials, “They are austere, diligent, and accessible; they are not bureaucratic at all. China used to be a world of officials, but these in the liberated areas are such [good officials], and that makes a great revolution.”

Lastly, Xu Zhucheng wrote in his diary in October 1949 that he was moved to tears when he heard Mao’s words that the Chinese people have “stood up.”

Struggles in the new social and journalistic environment

Although the non-Party newspeople generally felt excited about the new regime, they soon found they were in a brand-new social context in which they needed to go through a series of political movements and face a new journalistic environment. In the new environment, they

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5 Chu Anping, “Zai Harbin suojian de xinde sifa gongzuo he jianyu gongzuoi” (在哈尔滨所见的新的司法工作和监狱工作 The new judicial and prison work that I saw in Harbin), in Zhang Xinying, eds., Chu Anping Wenji, volume 2, pp. 305-306.


7 Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng huiyilu, p. 204.
felt very repressed. In 1950, Chu Anping shut down his Guancha, which he had restarted in 1949. This magazine had only launched thirteen issues under Communist rule. One obvious reason was the low circulation. The circulation had dropped from 105,000, the highest circulation before 1949, to less than 3000, mainly because first, the magazine had no help from the Party organization to distribute its copies; and second, it was strictly controlled by the Party, and the magazine could not publish articles containing messages different from those in the Party papers, thus weakening its attraction for readers. The magazine was simply not profitable anymore. However, Chu’s dissatisfaction with the new journalism was probably the major reason why he closed the magazine. This explains why Chu continually refused to work for the Xinguancha (新观察 New observation), a magazine that was run by the Party to succeed Chu’s Guancha. Just as Dai Qing has observed, the new journalistic environment in which the newspeople needed to carry out the Party’s principles depressed Chu, who was accustomed to controlling everything. Dai continues, “For years Chu had run the entire show virtually as le chef and now under the new ‘regime,’ he had lost almost total control of daily operations which robbed him of any interest or inclination to work in an environment where someone else made all the important decisions.”

However, to some degree, Chu Anping was fortunate compared with his colleagues who still worked for the press. Due to the fact that he worked for the General Administration of Publications (出版总署 GAP) and the Xinhua Bookstore (New China Bookstore 新华书店)

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from 1950 to 1954, he was rarely affected by the endless political movements. As Han Shu contends, the [ideological] requirements of the administrative units were lower than those in literary and educational circles. Chu probably did self-criticism in front of a small group of people, but there was no public criticism of him.\textsuperscript{11}

Furthermore, from 1954 to 1956, Chu Anping was a journalist in Xinjiang, far from the political centers. Thus, Chu was fortunate enough to escape again from the political movements. Han Shu comments, “During his travels in Xinjiang, Chu Anping was in a good mood. Otherwise, he would not have stayed there for two years…. Most of all, he became a free man. He did not need to worry about the unpredictable political situation and did not need to attend the political education and criticism movements.”\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, the well-known Hu Feng Affair happened in those two years. Many intellectuals suffered greatly from that movement. Chu Anping was fortunate to avoid it.

Staying in the journalism circle, Xu Zhucheng and Wang Yunsheng were not as lucky as Chu Anping and had to face the new journalistic environment and the continual political movements. They began to feel thwarted from the very beginning. Both Xu and Wang wanted to keep or even expand their business in the new regime. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, to ensure the dominant position of the Party newspapers, these civilian-run newspapers were either be localized or vocationalized, if not shut down directly. Before his travel to the North, Wang Yunsheng was assured that the four editions of the \textit{Dagongbao} would be kept intact. However, he discovered when he left for the North that the Tianjin branch had already been taken over by

\textsuperscript{11} Han Shu, \textit{Chu Anping zhu\u2019an}, p. 317.
\textsuperscript{12} Han Shu, \textit{Chu Anping zhu\u2019an}, p. 326.
the Party. Moreover, in the North, Wang read the news in the *Renmin ribao* about the takeover and name change of the Tianjin branch of the *Dagongbao*. The news included lines such as, “In the past two decades, the general standpoint of the *Dagongbao* has been anti-democratic. Therefore, we, the staff of the Tianjin [edition], have decided to abandon the notorious name and use a new one.” This situation cast a pall over Wang. He later recalled that at the time he was angry and felt persecuted. He even said to a colleague that he wanted to end his life. In addition, the Hong Kong and Chongqing editions were taken over by the Party in 1949 and 1951, respectively. The only edition that was left under the charge of Wang Yunsheng was that in Shanghai.

In a similar vein, in 1949, when preparing for the resumption of the *Wenhuibao*, Xu Zhucheng had “planned to establish at least three branches of the *Wenhuibao* and thus to develop it into a media giant.” After the *Wenhuibao* resumed publication, Xu ambitiously “determined to replace the *Dagongbao* and make the *Wenhuibao* a major national newspaper.” After talking with the Party cadres, Xu found out his plan could hardly be achieved under the new regime.

Indeed, in the new journalistic environment, the non-Party newspeople had to acknowledge the leading position of the Party papers. The *Jiefang ribao*, the Party’s major

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14 “Paoqi qian Tianjin Dagongbao chou zhaopai,gaibao tongren gaichuang Jinbu ribao” (抛弃前天津大公报臭招牌 该报同人改创进步日报 Abandoning the stink signboard of Tianjin Dagongbao, the employees of the press established *Jinbu ribao*), *Renmin ribao*, March 4, 1949.


newspaper in Shanghai, enjoyed many privileges. For example, it was exclusively entitled to report the significant news in Shanghai, both before and after late 1952, when the transformation of ownership of the civilian-run newspapers started. This frustrated the newspeople greatly.

For example, on January 4, 1950, Wang Yunsheng complained in the Symposia for the People in Charge of the Newspapers (各报负责人座谈会), “It is difficult for journalists of the civilian-run newspapers to conduct interviews. For example, first, Li Wenzheng (a journalist from the Dagongbao) attended the confession meeting at Fudan [University]. However, the Jiefang ribao had the exclusive right to publish it. Second, when the underground Party organization at Tongji [University] was made public, all the journalists of the papers attended the meeting but the Jiefang ribao still got the exclusive right to the story.”

To give another example, in 1952 during the ideological transformation movement in the press circle, the staff of the Wenhuibao talked about the question of whether “the stress on organizational [disciplines/principles] would impose restrictions on the freedom of the press.” The answer at the time was certainly no. Thus, the dissatisfaction with the Jiefang ribao’s privileges was criticized in the meeting. However, when the staff found out that a piece of news that a Wenhuibao journalist had worked on for several days had been published first by the Jiefang ribao, they all felt angry and forgot what they just criticized.

In the new journalistic environment where collectivism and anti-professionalism were upheld, the newspeople’s sophisticated skills in editing and layout were labelled as fancy and capitalistic. As a result, they had to learn the rules from the Party news workers and learn the newly introduced Soviet rules, with which the newspeople felt awkward. (See Chapter 7 for a

18 A22-2-1551, “Xinwenjie sixiang gaizao qingkuang” (新闻界思想改造情况 The situations of ideological transformation in the press circles), 1952.
discussion of these rules). After all, these rules made the newspeople feel that they were very repressed. Xu Zhucheng complained, “The [journalistic] rules after Liberation frequently stunned us…. The only thing we could do was to learn the [journalistic] rules in the old [the Party’s] base areas and the Soviet routines scrupulously. We had no authority to think about the propaganda effect. This was a necessary transformation at the time.”19

Meanwhile, they were gradually transformed from newspeople to state cadres, and from the supervisors of the government to its agents. They were no longer allowed to write the critical reports that they had been accustomed to writing. By contrast, they could only make their voices heard in the “directed public sphere,” in which “the Party set the terms and selected the context of public discourse in order to educate and mobilize the public,” in Timothy Cheek’s words.20 In other words, they had to write in accordance with the Party’s ideas, which left them feeling empty and bored. This made these newspeople, who were accustomed to writing editorials every day before Liberation, realize the difficulty of writing editorials under the Communist regime. Xu recalls, “I felt it was hard to write editorials. I had worked as a journalist for several decades and I was not used to repeating others’ ideas. [We had to] praise [the Party’s policies] before understanding them, which frequently made me suffer.”21 Wang’s Dagongbao encountered the same problem. According to Li Chunqing’s report in 1952, “The Dagongbao’s editorials were appealing to the readers. After Liberation, Wang Yunsheng still insisted on writing editorials every day. However, the more he wrote, the emptier they became. Now, he no longer writes editorials daily.”22

19 Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng huji, 190.
20 Cheek, Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China, p. 308.
21 Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng huji, p. 190.
As time passed, this feeling became more intense. The continuous political movements made the two newspeople feel terrified and overwhelmed in life and work. In 1950, the *Wenhuibao* had to do self-criticism for the articles it had published about the well-known movie, *The Life of Wu Xun* (武训传). Xu Zhucheng remembered, “Although I had experienced several criticisms and self-criticisms, they only made me feel uncomfortable and frustrated with running the newspaper. Now, [the Party] has asked [people] to write self-criticisms and to publish them in the newspapers on a large scale. This was my first taste of this kind of thing. Running a newspaper under the Party’s leadership has made me feel like I am treading on thin ice (如履薄冰). I have to be obedient [to the Party].”

During the Anti-Hu Feng campaign (反胡风运动) in 1955, Mao Zedong wrote “In Refutation of Uniformity of Public Opinion” (驳舆论一律), and stated that “our system deprives all counter-revolutionaries of freedom of speech and allows this freedom only among the people.” Of course, the composition of “the people” was constantly changing. Mao had the power to determine who “the people” were. Non-Party members like these newspeople could be labelled counterrevolutionaries at any time. With a good understanding of this, Xu remembers, after reading this article, “I was at a loss at the time. We were unable to run the newspapers anymore.”

Similarly, although Wang Yunsheng had had many titles in the government, his life in the new regime was full of frustration. Like Xu, Wang first felt the Party’s wrath during the criticism of *The Life of Wu Xun*. Wang later recalled that during the campaign, the first instructions they

received from the central leadership said to make criticism and self-criticism as mild as a drizzle and as gentle as a breeze (和风细雨) and that the purpose was to take a bath and scrub off the “dirt.” However, he said it was his skin that was almost scrubbed off during the movement. He lost his self-esteem for the first time. Furthermore, owing to his articles criticizing the Party before 1949, he was labelled as an “obscene rumormonger” (下流的造谣家).26 During the ideological transformation movement in journalist circles in 1952, Wang Yunsheng was regarded as a central-right intellectual representing the big bourgeoisie. Among an influential non-Party newspeople in Shanghai, Wang was considered the most rightist, perhaps due to the Dagongbao’s cooperation with the KMT during the Republican era. As a result, Wang had to do two self-criticisms in front of his colleagues. During this period, he could not sleep for several days in a row, thinking about his historical problems all night long.27

Finally, although on the surface these non-Party newspeople still held important positions, they did not actually have the authority that went with their positions. The real power was held by their Party colleagues, who marginalized the newspeople. Another reason for their marginalization was that the papers were run in accord with the new journalistic norms that the Party set for them. The newspeople’s experience and skills were no longer important for the papers, making their marginalization almost inevitable. There were also many conflicts between the newspeople and Party members who were poorly educated and did not have a good understanding of journalism.28 Xu Zhucheng complained in 1957, “Nominally, I was the head

28 In order to find out the education level of the Party cadres in the propaganda department and cultural bureau of Shanghai, Xia Yan held an examination for them. To his disappointment, seventy percent of the cadres failed the test. Moreover, few could answer the question of which year the May Fourth movement took place. See Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiucenglu*, p. 415.
and chief editor [of the *Wenhuibao*]. Comrade Yan Baoli (阎宝礼) was the vice head and director of the management department. However, in fact, we were merely dispensable advisers at best…. The person who in charge of the editing work was the vice chief editor, a Party member. He had never worked as a journalist and was poorly educated.”

Similarly, Wang Yunsheng was the nominal head of the *Dagongbao*. A reporter from the paper observed that Wang Yunsheng “held the position but did not have the authority that goes with it. [He] needed to follow the Party-member leader’s idea on everything.” According to Yang Kuisong, Wang had, several times, subtly expressed his frustration with Meng Qiujiang (孟秋江), the secretary of the Party faction at the *Dagongbao* at the time. He dismissed Meng as ignorant and self-willed. Meanwhile, the Party cadres disdained the non-Party figures such as Wang. After Liberation, during his speech at a school, Wang was derided in front of the students by the dean of students who called him bourgeois. Also, in a journalistic meeting, when Wang attempted to correct a mistake in Zhang Chunqiao’s (张春桥) speech, Zhang retorted and satirized Wang directly. Wang did not dare answer back. It was noteworthy that the position of the dean of students and of Zhang were lower than Wang’s. However, facing these Party members’ criticism and sarcasm, Wang had to suffer in silence.

**Becoming State Cadres**

Although these newspeople suffered some setbacks in the Communist regime, they still felt satisfied with the government in general. Indeed, these newspeople not only became state

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29 Xu Zhucheng, “Qiang shi nenggou chaidiao de” (We are able to demolish the walls), *Wenhuibao*, May 19, 1957.


cadre and the people’s deputies, but also paid sincere tribute to the new state and leaders. Admittedly, they often held the positions without the authority that should have gone with them. However, these positions did demonstrate their willingness to work with the Party. Also, the positions provided the newspeople with opportunities to understand the government’s stance. While the newspeople’s viewpoints on the Party were not limited to praise, that praise also reflected their true feelings.

After Liberation, Wang became a state cadre. He had several official titles including member of the Huadong Military and Political Committee (华东军政委员会委员), member of Shanghai People’s Government Commission (上海市人民政府委员), vice-chair of the China National News Workers Association (中华全国新闻工作者协会副主席), and member of the First National Committee of the Political Consultative Conference (第一届政协委员, NCPCC). Admittedly, many of these titles were merely honorary. However, they showed that Wang did not reject working with the new government. They also provided a chance for Wang to view things from the perspective of the government rather than of the press. In other words, Wang’s status changed from zaiye (在野) to zaichao (在朝) and shifted from being a supervisor of the government to a state cadre. Wang’s speech at the Symposia of the People in Charge of the Newspapers, in which he served as one of the hosts, explicitly demonstrated his transformation. During a discussion of the distribution of government bonds, Wang proposed that the government should criticize Meng Xianzhang (孟宪章) who had highlighted the similarity between the government bonds of the new regime and those of the Nationalist government.34

33 Yang Kuisong, Renbuzhu de guanhuai, p. 111.
Moreover, Wang Yunsheng attended the various political movements launched by the Party. Yang Kuisong observes, in the first three years of the PRC, “Politically, Wang closely followed the Party’s policies and maintained a high level of enthusiasm about political participation.”\(^\text{35}\) He actively took part in the government’s criticism against the United States in 1949, the campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries in 1950, the Three-Anti Campaign in 1951, and the Five-Anti Campaign in 1952. In February 1952, Wang published an article titled “Have the Capitalists Attacked Us Madly? Have We Created Class Struggle?” In this article, Wang maintained, “[The capitalists] fought together for the huge, illegal profits which constituted a crazy nationwide attack.”\(^\text{36}\) Mao was impressed with Wang’s article so he required the Renmin ribao to reprint it.\(^\text{37}\) Therefore, according to Yang Kuisong, during the Five-Anti Movement, Wang performed like a Communist, rushing to the front lines, so the capitalists at the conference felt nervous whenever he delivered his speech.\(^\text{38}\)

Similarly, Chu Anping also actively participated in the various political activities of the new regime. Besides being a member of the First NCPCC, he served as one of the founders of the GAP and of the head office of the Xinhua Bookstore in 1950. According to Han Shu, Chu developed the reporting and statistical system for the Xinhua bookstore and took part in the planning and distribution work of most books in China, including the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* from 1950 to 1953.\(^\text{39}\) He also became an alternate member of the Central Committee and the Vice Minister of Propaganda Department of the Jiusan Society (九三学社 literally: The

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\(^{35}\) Yang Kuisong, *Renbuzhu de guanhuai*, p. 131.


\(^{38}\) Yang Kuisong, *Renbuzhu de guanhuai*, pp. 138-139.

\(^{39}\) Han Shu, *Chu Anping zhuans*, pp. 313-315.
September Third Society) in 1952. Some records show that Chu was in great spirits during these years. To cite two examples, Wang Huo recalled, “I met Professor Chu on Wangfujing Street. It seemed like he had just left the Xinhua Bookstore. In the popular simple cadre uniform, he looked pretty spiffy and had a smile on his face.” Another account maintains, “In the autumn of 1953, Chu Anping served as the director of the Publishing Bureau of the GAP…. Wearing the uniform, Chu looked handsome and talented. He was slightly overweight, no longer as gaunt as he had been in Chenxi (辰溪) [in 1945].”

From 1954 to 1956, as a journalist at the Xinguancha and a member of the China Writers Association, Chu Anping traveled around Xinjiang. To facilitate his work there, the Party provided him with a jeep, a driver, and a guard. In Xinjiang, Chu published many articles in newspapers like the Renmin ribao and Zhongguo qingnianbao. These articles lavished praise on the Party. For example, after his visit to Shihezi (石河子), a new city built under direction of the Party, Chu maintained the reason that it could be built within a mere four years was that “We have a great and correct Party. It has taught and organized people to fight against nature, to develop production, and to change history, while pushing forward the people’s lives and ideas, and social order and system.” Later, these articles were organized into two books, namely Xinjiang’s New Look (新疆新面貌) and The Reclamation Area along the Manasi River (玛纳斯

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40 Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuang, pp. 311-312.
42 Feng Yingzi, “Huiyi Chu Anping xiansheng” (回忆储安平先生), Xie Yong and Cheng Chaofu, Zhuixun Chu Anping, p. 11.
43 This was based on Han Shu’s account. Dai Qing’s account was slightly different from his. According to Dai Qing, the Party only provide Chu an assistant and a car. See Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuang, p. 323; Dai Qing, Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping, p. 188.
44 Dai Qing, Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping, 188.
According to Dai Qing, Hu Qiaomu was very happy with Chu’s articles. By contrast, Xie Yong, a specialist on Chu Anping, was disappointed in them. He states, “We cannot find the previous Chu Anping in these two books.” Although these reports did not talk about the bloody events in Xinjiang during the Land Reform and were perhaps censored by the Party, they did reflect Chu’s inner mind to a large extent. Just as Han Shu maintains, “Although these articles lavished praise… they still stemmed from an intellectual who was full of strong nationalism and a sense of great unity (大一统意识).” Therefore, Chu Anping seemed to be satisfied in general with his career in Xinjiang.

During the third session of the first National People's Congress (全国人民代表大会 NPC) in 1956, Chu, as a representative, extoled the Party’s achievements in Xinjiang. He claimed that under the Party, Xinjiang had realized the equality of nationalities. There was no one in Xinjiang who did not embrace Chairman Mao. In his article about this conference that was published in the Renmin ribao, Chu further complimented the Party and its policies. He attributed the democracy and solidarity in the conference to the Party and praised the Hundred Flowers Campaign as “completely rational and proper.” From this we can assume that Chu Anping was basically satisfied with the new government until 1956.

Last, Xu Zhucheng also enjoyed a high status in the Communist regime and was pleased with his position. As a representative of the first CPPCC and the NPC, Xu witnessed the

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46 Dai Qing, Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping, p. 188.
47 Xie Yong, Chu Anping, p. 53.
48 Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuan, p. 326.
49 Chu Anping, “Chu Anping daibiao de faya” (储安平代表的发言 Chu Anping’s speech), in Han, Chu Anping zhuan, p. 327.
50 Chu Anping, “Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui de chuantong” (全国人民代表大会的传统 The tradition of National People’s Congress), Renmin ribao, July 31, 1956.
establishment of the PRC and the constitution. In his diary in 1954, Xu wrote, “Cang’er’s [Xu’s son] letter reads that it is a great honor for me to attend the two historic conferences. I felt so, too… [During the NPC], we (the representatives) were so excited that we could not sleep during our naps.” In another diary entry that year, Xu discussed his experience of attending the first CPPCC: “Attending such a big happy event of our country made me feel more excited than celebrating the New Year when I was a child. Leading such a happy life, of course, made me feel like I was getting younger and younger” (越活越年轻). In 1957, Xu was appointed head of a delegation to the Soviet Union consisting of journalists, which was a high honor at the time. He recalled that when he heard the news, he felt extremely flattered.

Moreover, Xu became an admirer of Mao. During the first CPPCC, Xu Zhucheng wrote in his diary, “When comrade Liu Shaoqi announced that Chairman Mao had been elected president by a unanimous vote, the cheers and applause lasted for twenty minutes. My hands were swollen and my throat was dry.” In 1957, listening to Mao’s recorded speech about the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Xu felt so excited. He told Fu Lei (傅雷), one of his friends and a well-known scholar, “Listening to Chairman Mao’s recorded speech made my heart warm.” Fu replied, “Among all the many Communists, Chairman Mao is No. 1.” In the same year, when Xu heard Mao’s praise for the Wenhuibao, he recalled, “Mao’s words made me feel warm inside.” So, having the chance to serve in the Communist government made Xu feel content in the beginning years of the PRC and he almost worshiped Mao Zedong, the superior leader.

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51 Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huìyīlù*, p. 239.
52 Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huìyīlù*, p. 249.
54 Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huìyīlù*, p. 244.
55 Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huìyīlù*, 263.
Reasons

Why were these newspeople willing to work for the new government? The reason was not a desire to be officials, since Chu, Wang, and Xu had repeatedly refused to work within the Nationalist government. There are several major explanations for why the newspeople chose to work for the CCP government.

First, these newspeople were affected by traditional Chinese practice and ideas. They had been affected by the May Fourth Movement when they were teenagers, and the ongoing influence of Western learning. But these newspeople, born in the 1900s, were still influenced by the old Chinese way of doing things. Thus, like many of their counterparts during the Republican era, they still wanted to keep a close relationship with the government. This was certainly a continuity of Chinese journalism, while the journalistic norms were changing dramatically.

Meanwhile, they were influenced by traditional Confucian ideas, such as “When the Way prevails in the world, he appears; when the Way is lacking, he retires. When the state follows the Way, being poor and lowly is a cause for shame;” (天下有道则见，无道则隐。邦有道，贫且贱焉，耻也)，and “When the state followed the Way, he held office. When the state was without the Way, he knew how to fold up his hopes and put them away in the breast of his robe” (邦有道，则仕；邦无道，则可卷而怀之). These newspeople were willing to change their positions from zaiye to zaichao, thus working for the Communists in the beginning years, since the Party had restored social order and showed signs of a good government.

Second, like the KMT government, the Communist government also endeavored to attract the intellectuals into the government or at least to keep a good relationship with them. This was a continuity of Chinese history before and after 1949. In particular, the newspeople, as a group of intellectuals who actively participated in the cultural and political construction of the modern Chinese state and had great influence on public opinion, were individuals that any farsighted political leader would spare no effort to attract. Therefore, different from late Qing intellectuals who were politically estranged due to “their quest for intellectual autonomy,” as observed by Frederic Wakeman, it was hard for the newspeople to realize intellectual autonomy. Also, they were not politically estranged, but were constantly at the center of political storms, unless they gave up their expertise to make political comments.

The Nationalists had attempted to win the newspeople over to their side in a variety of ways. Likewise, the Communists strove to unite them, which was called the “united front work” (统战工作) by the Party. The Party began to implement the united front work on the newspeople even before Liberation. Before Shanghai was liberated, the Party members in the press started to urge the newspeople to support the Party. For example, it was Li Chunqing, an underground Party member at the Dagongbao, who convinced Wang Yunsheng to work with the Party. Xu Zhucheng had had a close relationship with the Party since 1948. In 1949, together

59 Li Chunqing, Bigeng wushinian, pp. 532-533.
with other significant subjects of the united front work including Liu Yazi (柳亚子), Ma Yinchu (马寅初), and Wang Yunsheng, Xu was invited to visit the liberated areas in the North.⁶⁰

After 1949, the Party still stressed the united front work. In Shanghai, the mayor, Chen Yi (陈毅), was well-known as a leader skilled at united front work. He once claimed, “It is best that all levels of our Party committees not talk about leadership every day. If there is [leadership], it is about service, helping, and not obstructing.”⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Party cultural cadres, like Xia Yan and Deng Tuo, also strove to help the newspeople and thus contributed to the united front work. This eased the newspeople’s pain of being under the Party’s rule. In his memoir, after his complaints about the new journalistic environment, Xu Zhucheng recalled, “I was lucky to meet Mr. Xia Yan, who was the Minister of the Propaganda Department of Municipal Party Committee, and Mr. Yao Zhen (姚溱), the Vice Minister. They understood the old intellectuals’ mind the best. Whenever we had problems, they would have heart-to-heart talks with us…. So, we were free from anxiety.”⁶²

The third reason the newspeople chose to work for the new regime was because they, as well as many other intellectuals, were more nationalists than liberalists. After going through the chaotic Republican Period, they wished that a strong, efficient government could save China from war. The integrity and efficiency that the Party demonstrated in the liberated areas made them feel unprecedentedly excited. Suzanne Pepper maintains that even before 1949, the liberal intellectuals had already realized “the relative competence and integrity with which those

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⁶¹ Zhang Chengzong, “Shanzuo tongzhan gongzuo de haoshizhang” (善做统战工作的好市长  A good mayor who is adept at united work), in Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi shanghaishi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, ed., Shanghai wenshi ziliao xuanji (上海文史资料选辑 Selected cultural and historical materials on Shanghai), issue 68 (Shanghai: Wenshi ziliao bianjibu, 1991), p. 60.
⁶² Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng huiyilu, p. 190.
policies [the CCP’s social and economic policies] were being implemented; and the discipline of the Communist armies.”63 To give a specific example, after he visited the liberated areas in Northeast China, Chu Anping wrote,

> What impressed us most was that the Chinese people, who in the eyes of others had been atomized, were actually organized and educated into a body as hard as steel…. Also, we witnessed the educational and legal reforms, as well as economic construction, in the Northeast. Especially, we saw the broad masses are now playing an unprecedented role [for the country] as the masters of the country, which is the guarantee that China will become prosperous and powerful and take the socialist road in the short term. Overall, there were so many exciting things in this journey.64

By contrast, liberty was viewed as something that could be sacrificed for the wealth and power of the nation. As a result, although they had more or less heard about the Yan’an Rectification Movement and the landlords’ miserable experience in the Land Reform conducted by the Party, those intellectuals still joined the government eagerly.

The fourth explanation for why the newspeople chose to work for the new regime was that the newspeople shared a fundamental agenda with the Party, namely educating the public. Although the newspeople tended to enlighten rather than to teach the masses, their elitism frequently urged them to impose their discourse on the ordinary people. As Joan Judge concludes in her study on the journalists of the Shibao in the early twentieth century, “Although they were would-be populists, their reformist ambitions never completely overwhelmed their elitist

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63 Pepper, Civil War in China, p. 201
64 “Minzhu dongbei canguantuan canguan guilai, zhishu maozhuxi chensu sixiang” (民主东北参观团参观归来，致书毛主席陈诉感想 Democratic Northeast Visiting Group came back and wrote to Chairman Mao about their feelings), Renmin ribao, June 27, 1949.
inclinations. Filtering the common people’s issues and grievances through their own lens and their own texts, the journalists were not creating the discourse of the common people but their own discourse on the common people.”

Similarly, the Party also emphasized imbuing the people with the “correct” ideas as determined by the Party. Indeed, we can conclude that both the non-Party newspeople and the Party’s propaganda cadres were less populists than elitists. They both strove to impose what they believed on the common people, which constituted the basis for their cooperation.

To conclude, although the newspeople examined in this chapter enjoyed a high social status in the Communist regime, they were not satisfied with the new social and journalistic environment. However, this does not indicate that the state failed to win their allegiance. Indeed, at least before 1957, the non-Party newspeople still largely believed in the Party. There were four reasons for this: 1) the newspeople were affected by the traditional Chinese practice and ideas; 2) the Communist regime endeavored to maintain a good relationship with the newspeople; 3) as nationalists, the newspeople appreciated the peace and order brought by the Party and thus regarded liberty as something that could be sacrificed for national stability; 4) as elites, the newspeople shared a fundamental agenda with the Party, namely teaching the public.

Then why did the Party launch the Anti-Rightist Campaign against the intellectuals including the newspeople, if they were largely loyal to the new regime? This problem is particularly related to the journalists, since as Roderick MarFarquhar suggests, “Probably the most important measures taken to reinforce the Hundred Flowers Campaign were those designed to liberalize journalism.”

In addition, two of Mao’s articles that marked the start of the Anti-

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65 Judge, *Print and Politics*, p. 121.
Rightist Movement were about the alleged bourgeois orientation of the *Wenhuibao* and *Guangming ribao*.67 The next chapter will address this problem.

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67 The titles of these two articles are, “The Bourgeois Orientation of *Wenhuibao* Should be criticized” (文汇报的资产阶级方向应当批判), and “The Bourgeois Orientation of *Wenhuibao* During a Certain Period” (文汇报在一个时间内的资产阶级方向).
9. The Newspeople and the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957

In general, there are two theories about why the intellectuals, including the newspeople, chose to express their frustration with or made suggestions to the new regime during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, which led to the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement. One theory views the intellectuals’ action as a rebellion against the Party. For example, in the Party’s official historical accounts, the cause of the Anti-Rightist campaign was that the bourgeois intellectuals took advantage of the rectification movement within the Party in 1956 to attack the Party and socialism.¹ The other argues that the intellectuals voiced their thoughts out of patriotism, a desire to reform the regime, support for the Party, and ignorance of politics. This theory was formulated by the scholars who studied intellectuals after the Cultural Revolution.²

In this chapter, through examining the newspeople’s activities in a historical context, I argue that this second theory is closer to the truth, although the newspeople made suggestions, many of which reflected their discontent with the Party. Also, I contend that the reason the newspeople voiced their opinions was not due to their ignorance of politics. Rather, they did this in accordance with their experience in the journalistic circles and the bureaucratic system under the new regime.

Indeed, they made comments according to their understanding of the leaders’ intentions and what the Party cadres told them, which was the fundamental journalistic rule in the new

¹ The main works include Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu*; Li Weihan, Huiyi yu yanjiu (回忆与研究, *Memory and Study*) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2013).
regime as discussed in Chapter 5. This was the normal practice for individuals who were familiar with the bureaucratic system. As state cadres who had dealt with and even worked in the new journalistic environment and bureaucratic system for years, the newspeople were careful with their words and knew how they were expected to perform in the system. Of course, they were not smart enough to know that these Party members had hid the truth from them and they thus made bad choices. At the time, few people were able to predict what would happen. Furthermore, even now, historians still do not agree with one another on whether Mao planned to “draw snakes out of their hole” (引蛇出洞) from the very beginning, which made it more difficult for the newspeople to make the right decisions.³

This next section focuses on Chu Anping’s and Xu Zhucheng’s experiences in 1957, when the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Anti-Rightist Movement were conducted by the Party. The reason that Chu and Xu were attacked is that the papers that they led were the most active ones during the Hundred Flowers Campaign and those papers were chastised by Mao as the two papers that “become the orientation of the bourgeois press.” Mao also claimed that they

“published a large number of articles that expressed, but failed to criticize, the bourgeois viewpoint, as well as news reports of an inflammatory nature.”

Chu Anping

During the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Chu Anping was the most active of the three newspeople. As the movement unfolded in 1956, the Party decided to loosen its control over the Guangming ribao, which was nominally the mouthpiece of the MPGs, by dismissing the Party organization there, and returning the press to the nine MPGs. Then, Chu Anping was recommended by Hu Qiaomu for the chief editorship of the Guangming ribao. Chu was familiar with the Guangming ribao, as he had served as a member of its press affairs committee since 1952.

However, Chu was reluctant to assume the position, probably because of his experience of running the Guancha during the first two years of the PRC. He had many concerns about the Hundred Flower Campaign. In his conversation with Zhang Bojun, the head of the Guangming ribao, he asked,

If the MPGs’ Guangming ribao conducts a ‘loosening’ editorial plan, to what degree would it be ‘loosened’? If the senior intellectuals have opinions, can they speak them? Do we let them tell the truth or lies? If the press embrace the slogans superficially such as

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5 Zhang Yihe, Wangshi bingburuyan, p. 34; Xie Yong, Chu Anping, pp. 46-47; Mu Xin, Shuxue tanwang—zhuiyi zai Guangming ribao shinian (述学谭往——追忆在《光明日报》十年 In memory of my ten years in Guangming ribao) (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2006), p. 22.
‘Let a hundred schools of thought contend and a hundred flowers bloom’ (百家争鸣 百花齐放) and ‘long-term coexistence, mutual supervision,’ who would want to read this sort of article?7

From these remarks, it can be inferred that Chu did not want to run a newspaper that was strictly controlled by the Party. If the degree of “loosening” was not enough, he was inclined to refuse the position.

Chu’s concerns were soon reported to the people in charge of the propaganda and united front work, like Hu Qiaomu, Zhou Yang (周扬), and Li Weihan (李维汉).8 It is unclear how these leaders responded to Chu’s concerns, however, from Chu’s words on April 1, 1957, when he took office as the chief editor of the Guangming ribao, “I have come to work here. Minister Li Weihan supports me. It is the Party that allows me work here. The Party is my behind-the-scenes backer,” we can see that Chu must have received satisfactory answers.9 In fact, even the top leaders, such as Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi, supported a more liberal journalistic environment at the time. In Roderick MacFarquhar’s words, “On one of the major issues—the publication of material unfavorable to the Chinese communists—we know that Mao was in agreement with Liu as late as February 1957 in that he was prepared to advocate the reprinting of Voice of America broadcasts and Chiang Kai-shek’s speeches.”10 Therefore, most of the policies, if not all, that Chu conducted in his mere sixty-seven days serving as the chief editor were approved by the relevant Party leaders.

7 Xie Yong, Chu Anping, pp. 46-47.
8 Zhang Yihe, Wangshi bingbu ruyan, p. 38; Xie Yong, Chu Anping, pp. 46-47.
9 Zheng Xiaofeng, “Yitiao neicailai de e’yun,” p. 36.
With the support of the Party, Chu, to a large degree, was granted the authority of his position, despite not being a Party member. Yin Yi (殷毅), a journalist at the *Guangming ribao*, even recalled that “As the person sent by the CCP, Chu had absolute power at the paper. Nobody dared to cast doubt on his decisions.”\(^1\)

Furthermore, Chu was fortunate that Zhang Bojun, the head of the *Guangming ribao*, shared similar ideas about journalism. Both men hoped to break the journalistic pattern developed in the PRC. Like Chu, Zhang disliked journalism under the Communist government. He complained about this to Chu Anping: “Before Liberation, newspapers centered on people, printing people’s activities. Nowadays, the reports focus on things, ignoring people. Furthermore, the things reported on focus on the few Party leaders. In this situation, how can we run a good newspaper? How can we establish a great country?” He even encouraged Chu to print more news from the news agencies of capitalist countries, such as United Press and Reuters.\(^2\) To support Chu’s work, Zhang, who was serving as Minister of Transportation at the same time, frequently worked at the *Guangming ribao*. Mu Xin, who later became the chief editor of the *Guangming ribao*, commented, “The head of the *Guangming ribao*, Zhang Bojun, who had hardly worked in the news, became very active. Within the two months that Chu served as chief editor, the number of times that Zhang worked at the paper was more than in the past eight years.”\(^3\) With the Party’s and Zhang’s support, Chu was able to conduct his reform agenda.

From late April, in accordance with the *Renmin ribao*, Chu dispatched reporters to nine major cities: Shanghai, Shenyang, Xi’an, Wuhan, Changchun, Nanjing, Lanzhou, Guangzhou,

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and Qingdao, to conduct symposia to push forward and report on the Hundred Flowers Campaign.\textsuperscript{14} Chu wrote the report plans for his journalists. In it, he required them to report the news about the symposia every day and he planned to print this news as headlines. Furthermore, Chu asked the reporters to get scoops and send the reports to the headquarters as soon as they could.\textsuperscript{15}

However, getting a scoop was viewed as a capitalist news practice after Liberation, and in the new environment journalists prioritized “correctness” over the speed of the news. Also, news about Party policies needed to be approved by the relevant Party leaders before it was published. Chu’s plan obviously violated these rules. However, this does not indicate Chu went too far. In fact, encouraged by the Hundred Flowers Campaign, journalists and people from all walks of life attempted to break the principles set by the Party after 1949.

Moreover, if Chu’s plan had conflicted with the ideas of the Party members in the press, few people would have carried them out, even though the Party had dismissed its organization at the paper when Chu formally started his work on April 19. Yin Yi recalled, “The tasks assigned by Chu Anping were in line with the spirit of the speech by Chang Zhiqing (常芝青). If they conflicted, I would have listened to Chang Zhiqing, since I am a Party member.”\textsuperscript{16} Chang Zhiqing was the former editor-in-chief and the secretary of the Party group at the \textit{Guangming ribao}. At the time, Chang had not yet left the paper and still had the authority to handle the Party

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\item Zhonghua quanguo xinwen gongzuozhe xiehui yanjiubu and Zhongguo renmin daxue xinwenxi, ed., \textit{Youpai fenzi Chu Anping de yanxing} (右派分子储安平的言行 Rightist Chu Anping’s words and deeds) (Beijing: Guangming ribaoshe, 1957), pp. 21-22.
\item Yin Yi, “Xianghua ducao renpingshuo” (香花毒草任凭说 No matter fragrant flowers or poisonous weeds), in Liang Gangjian and Yu Guoying, eds., \textit{Guangming ribao xinwen neiqing}, pp. 10-11.
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affairs in the press.¹⁷ People like Yin Yi would rather have followed him rather than Chu Anping, who was in charge of editorial affairs at that point. Thus, we can conclude that although Chu broke some journalistic rules developed after 1949, there was actually a consensus among the leaders of the Guangming ribao, both Party and non-Party members, to do so. As Han Shu maintains, “Sending reporters to report on the Hundred Flowers Campaign was Chu’s directorial action, but it was approved by all the Party and non-Party leaders of the paper.” Han continues to recount that before Chu took office, Chang Zhiqing and Gao Tian, the two Party leaders of the Guangming ribao, had already published many “rightist” articles in the paper.¹⁸

Moreover, it is highly likely that it was leaders such as Hu Qiaomu and Li Weihan who authorized Chu to print the news without the approval of the relevant Party committees. Although there is no direct evidence suggesting this, we can infer it based on the Wenhuibao stories. During the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Ke Qingshi (柯庆施), the mayor of Shanghai, told Qin Benli (钦本立), the vice chief editor of the Wenhuibao, that the Party would not censor the news articles or even editorials anymore.¹⁹

In early May, the Central Committee issued two instructions to promote the Hundred Flowers Campaign, namely ‘Instructions on the Rectification Movement’ (关于整顿运动的指示), and Mao’s ‘Instructions on Inviting non-Party Personages to Aid in Rectification’ (关于请党外人士帮助整风的指示). Intellectuals such as Chu were deeply inspired by these instructions. As a result, the Hundred Flowers Campaign reached its climax in May. Meanwhile, Chu’s hard work paid off. The reports on the campaign in the nine cities began to be published in

¹⁷ Yin Yi, “Xianghua ducao renpingshuo,” p. 10; Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuan, p. 342. Also see, Dai Qing, Liang Shuming, Wangshiwei, Chu Anping, pp. 200-201.
¹⁸ Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuan, p. 345.
the *Guangming ribao*. Zheng Xiaofeng (郑笑枫) remembers that Hu Qiaomu spoke highly of the paper at the time. Also, he states, “Suddenly, our *Guangming ribao* became the intellectuals’ tongue and throat. The page design and titles managed by Gao Tian and Xiong Jianying also broke the overcautious style by using the sharpest criticism as titles and putting them in notable positions.”

Zhang Bojun praised Chu on May 19, “The *Guangming ribao* improved dramatically. Other cadres in the Democratic League felt the same way.”

Inspired by the paper’s change, some readers wrote letters to the press in which they called this newspaper, “our own newspaper” (*我们自己的报纸*).

On May 7, Chu Anping convened a conference at the *Guangming ribao*, in which he introduced an editorial idea in detail:

The MPG’s function is a two-track bridge. The so-called two tracks are: 1) educating their members; 2) supervising the CCP and the people’s government in the name of the members of the MPG and the mass associations. The newspaper should follow the second track…. I heard that a vice minister of the United Front Work department said, “Chairman Mao said that the *Guangming ribao* is staging a rival show (*唱对台戏*) against the *Renmin ribao*.”

No doubt, these words displayed Chu’s pursuit of the supervisory function of the paper. Nevertheless, they did not indicate that Chu had gone off the track the Party had set for the

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22 “Guangming ribao fanyoupai douzheng shengli jieshu quanshe gongzuo renyuan tuanjie yizhi juexin banhao baozhi” (*光明日报反右派斗争胜利结束 全社工作人员团结一致决心办好报纸*)
Hundred Flowers Campaign. Chu’s words came directly from the Party leadership. He did hear Mao’s words from a minister, and they inspired him. Fei Xiaotong recalled that Chu told him on April 16, “Minister Li [Weihan] said, … [The *Guangming ribao*] needed to stage a rival show against the *Renmin ribao*. This was the principle.” Likewise, Dai Qing points out, Chu’s words were actually derived from Li Weihan’s talk at a conference held by the United Work Department in April 1957, in which Li precisely pointed out that the “releasing” policy would be implemented and they encouraged non-Party personages to stage a rival show against the Party.25

Chu also suggested that the *Guangming ribao* should 1) publish more news about the MPGs; 2) stress the organizational activities of the MPGs, especially those at the grassroots level; and 3) publish more news about people, featuring the members of the MPGs.26 After his speech, one of his colleagues asked, “Do we need to ask the Central Propaganda Department for instructions about the significant news?” Chu answered frankly, “This is the newspaper of the MPGs. It is not necessary for us to do so.”27 These words were considered Chu’s Anti-Party words. However, they actually originated from his understanding of the Party policies. At the conference, Chu told his colleagues, “Under the new political conditions, we need to develop the *Guangming ribao* into an authentic MPG newspaper. Last month, the Central United Front Department invited the leaders of the MPGs to a conference. They announced the following policy: from now on, the *Guangming ribao* would be run by the MPGs independently. The Party would not interfere anymore.”28

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24 Mu Xin, *Shuxue tanwang*, p. 23.
27 Mu Xin, *Shuxue tanwang*, p. 27.
Nevertheless, the attempt to get rid of the Party’s leadership resulted in problems for Chu. The most well-known was the report on the Party Committee at Fudan University in Shanghai. On June 2, the *Guangming ribao* published a short news article on the first page about Chen Wangdao (陈望道)’s talk at Fudan on the cancellation of the Party committee. Short as it was, it was important news, since it meant that the Party would loosen its control over the universities and allow the professors to run the schools themselves. According to the journalistic rules in Shanghai mentioned above, such significant nationwide news had to be approved by the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, if not by even higher-level authorities. However, Chu, as well as his Party colleagues, obviously did not obey this rule. Based solely on his understanding of Mao’s criticism of the Party committees in the universities, Chu printed this news.29

There are two theories about the reliability of this news. Almost all scholars claim it is fake news, since they argue that the exact phrase of Chen Wangdao was that Fudan had strengthened the role of the professors’ committee but had not cancelled the Party committee. By contrast, a biography of Chen Wangdao claimed this news was reliable because Chen had revoked the Party Committee according to the instructions from the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. Later, facing pressure from the Party, Chen had to retract what he had said.30 Whatever the truth, the Party was conspicuously not ready to withdraw its control of the universities. Hence, the *Renmin ribao* published an article berating the report in the *Guangming ribao* on June 4, in which it quoted Chen, “The report in *Guangming ribao* does not quote my exact words. In fact, Fudan University did not revoke its Party Committee. I just talked about the

29 Han Shu, *Chu Anping zhuan*, pp. 359-361; Chu Anping, “Xiangrenmin touxiang, Chu Anping de fayan.”
problem of strengthening the school affairs committee at the symposium held by the Ministry of Higher Education.”31 This story later become major evidence suggesting that Chu was against the Party.

In late May, the Democracy Wall movement started at Beijing University (Beida). Students posted big-character posters on the walls calling for “true socialism with democracy.”32 Student proposals included cancellation of political classes, eliminating the leadership of the Party committee in the university, free speech, freedom of association and the press, rehabilitation of those who were wrongly criticized in the political campaigns (especially the one against Hu Feng).33 Hearing the story, Chu visited Beida in person and read the posters. Aware of the news value, he had a reporter known for his diligence and intelligence conduct an interview at Beida and write the whole story immediately.34 According to Xu Ying (徐盈), a Party member and a reporter, Chu told him that the Guangming ribao would print as many lines from the students’ posters as possible.35 However, the Party members on the editorial board, like Gao Tian, felt the students’ opinions were too radical. Although Chu insisted on printing the story and asserted that he would take responsibility for it, the Guangming ribao eventually only

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31 “Chen Wangdao he Yang Guangxi shuo: Fudan daxue meiyou quxiao xiaowei fuzezhi” (陈望道和杨光西说：复旦大学没有取消党委责任制)，Chen Wangdao and Yang Guangxi said: Fudan University did not cancelled the Party committee accountability system), Renmin ribao, June 4, 1957.
34 Zhang, Wangshi bingbu ruyan, p. 46.
reported a small part of the story. Indeed, compared with the reports about Democracy Wall at Beida in the Wenhuibao published on May 22, the Guangming ribao’s report was much shorter and not published until May 26. Obviously, Chu met with resistance on the publication of this news.

What Chu did not know was that Mao was also watching the Democracy Walls at the universities in Beijing closely. He had people gather the posters for him every day. These posters made Mao very upset. He asked one of his staffers, “In your opinion, is the Communist government stable?” During that time, he was distressed and later recalled, “I often felt distressed, especially last May when the Rightists attacked...” He continued, “When the Rightists attacked [us] crazily, how could we not be worried?” Eventually, the student movement made Mao more determined to launch the Anti-Rightist Movement. In Shen Zhihua’s words, “The student movement at Beida attracted Mao Zedong’s attention and played an important role in his making the decision to counterattack the rightists.”

What made Chu one of the most prominent rightists in 1957 was not what he did in the press, but his well-known speech of June 1, 1957 at a non-Party personages symposium (党外人士座谈会) held by the United Front Work Department (统战部). He started out, “Allow me to offer some opinions to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou” (向毛主席和周总理提些意见). As Han Shu points out, “Mao Zedong asked [people] to air their views freely. Chu Anping, the non-Party chief editor, Chang Zhiqing and Gao Tian, the individuals in charge of the Party affairs,

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36 Han Shu, Chu Anping zhuang, p. 364; Guangming ribao, May 26, 1957; Zheng zhong, Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao, 175-177.
38 Shen Zhihua, Sikao yu xuanze, p. 584.
were carefully carrying out his supreme instructions. Sadly, because Chu issued the rebellious statement, he became someone everyone hated. Chang and Gao attributed all the crimes to Chu Anping in order to protect themselves.”

In his rebellious statement, Chu proposed the famous idea of a Party Empire (党天下). Chu contended:

Isn’t it too much that within the scope of the nation, there must be a Party man as leader in every unit… or that nothing, big or small, can be done without a nod from a Party man? … For years, the talents or capabilities of many Party men have not matched their duties…. I think the idea of “Party empire” is at the bottom of all sectarianism and the root of all contradictions between the Party and non-Party people.

Differing from most criticism at the time that targeted petty things, Chu’s speech directly targeted Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou. Meanwhile, by suggesting that the Party controlled everything and that many in the Party were unqualified for their jobs, Chu, unintentionally or not, challenged the Party’s rule. This talk suggested that as the Hundred Flowers Campaign unfolded, Chu was completely inspired by the animated atmosphere. With his belief in Mao Zedong’s words that encouraged the free airing of views, Chu fearlessly aired his opinion. This brave speech was greeted by cheers and applause upon its delivery by the attendees of the symposium, who were reputable non-Party intellectuals and politicians. It was said that “huge rounds of applause accompanied his delivery, and particularly animated individuals, such as Ma Yinchu (马寅初), responded by pounding on the back of his seat, and, as no one will ever forget, shouting out in English: Very good, very good!”

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41 Dai Qing, “Chu Anping and the ‘Party Empire,’” p. 35.
However, this soon presented Chu with a huge problem. On June 8, the *Renmin ribao* printed an earth-shattering editorial, “What Is This For?” (这是为什么), that marked the start of the Anti-Rightist Movement. One line in this article reads, “In the name of helping the Communist Party carry out the Rectification Campaign, a few rightists are challenging the leadership of the Party and the working class. Some of them even blatantly ask the Party to resign (下台).”\(^42\) Dai Qing suggests that with this line, “Chu’s fate was sealed.”\(^43\) After reading this article, Chu immediately resigned from his position.\(^44\) Next, the MPGs, such as the Democratic League and September Third Society, held a series of grand criticism campaigns against Chu. Meanwhile, the *Renmin ribao* printed many articles criticizing Chu’s “Party Empire.”\(^45\) Facing numerous criticisms, Chu had to conduct a full self-criticism, titled “Surrendering Myself to the People,” in which he claimed he committed serious anti-revolutionary and anti-Party mistakes in his speech on June 1 and his work at the *Guangming ribao*.\(^46\) Chu lost his high status in the country and was labelled as a major rightist. His son published a statement in a newspaper cutting off his relationship with his father. After leading a miserable life for years and failing to commit suicide, Chu mysteriously disappeared in 1966. Even now, his body has not been found and no one knows exactly what happened to him. Also, at this point, he is one of five central-level rightists who has not been rehabilitated.

**Xu Zhucheng**

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\(^42\) “Zheshi weishenm,” *Renmin ribao*, June 8, 1957.
\(^43\) Dai Qing, “Chu Anping and the Party Empire,” p. 40.
\(^44\) Mu Xin, *Shuxue tanwang*, p. 41.
\(^45\) Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan*, pp. 59-61, See *Renmin ribao*, June 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 1957.
\(^46\) “Xiang renmin touxiang, Chu Anping de fayan,” *Renmin ribao*, July 15.
Like Chu Anping, Xu Zhucheng was also labelled a Rightist. However, unlike Chu, who was active in the “airing and blossoming,” Xu did not take charge of his newspaper—the *Wenhuibao*—during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Indeed, during the “airing and blossoming,” Xu was visiting the Soviet Union as the head of a Chinese journalists delegation. In his own phrase,

I stayed in the Soviet Union for 44 days. When I came back to Beijing in the middle of May, the so-called free airing of views had ended. Between late May, when I returned to Shanghai, and early June, when [the Party] urged people to express their opinions, I was writing my travel notes on the Soviet Union. I had not formally started my work yet. So, I thought what responsibility did I bear? How could I make a self-criticism?47 Apparently, Xu felt overwhelmed by the task of making self-criticism for something that he had never done.

Similarly, like at the *Guangming ribao*, Xu Zhucheng’s editorial plan for the *Wenhuibao* was also approved by the Party. In 1956, the *Wenhuibao* was briefly transformed into a nationwide newspaper for teachers. Xu was excited to hear the news that the Central Committee would allow the paper to resume publication. Having no idea how to run the revived paper, Xu turned to Deng Tuo for advice. Deng told him, “The *Wenhuibao* has enjoyed the intellectuals’ trust for a long time. First, you should persuade them to put aside their concerns and say whatever they want to say…. From my perspective, this should be the foremost editorial policy of the reborn *Wenhuibao.*” Xu totally agreed with Deng. Thus, based on his suggestions, Xu

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wrote the editorial plan. No doubt, due to this plan, the \textit{Wenhuibao} actively took part in the airing and blossoming and encouraged people to express themselves freely. This would be denounced as lighting a fire (放火) during the Anti-Rightist Movement.

At the time, not only Deng Tuo, but also other Party propaganda cadres, believed that it was proper for the press to do this. According to Xu, after reading the editorial plan, Zhang Jichun (张际春), the Vice Minister of Propaganda Department, praised it saying, “Very good, very good. You do not need to wait for the Central Committee’s written instructions anymore. Now, you can prepare for the resumption in light of this plan.” Before long, Xu received the Central Committee’s written instructions. Besides the approval, it also read, “Please give Comrade Xu Zhucheng the authority designated with his position.” Xu recalled, “After reading this, I felt extremely grateful for the Party’s trust in me.”

The \textit{Wenhuibao} even satisfied Mao Zedong. On March 10, 1957, when Xu got a chance to meet Mao, Mao told him, “Your \textit{Wenhuibao} is really good! When I get up in the afternoons, I always read your newspaper first.” Undoubtedly, Xu was deeply moved by Mao’s words. In that meeting, Xu also asked Mao how they should promote the Hundred Flowers Campaign: “From my understanding, the Hundred Flowers Campaign intends to pay good money to solicit

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48 Xu Zhucheng, \textit{Qinli yijiu wuqi}, pp. 9-12; For the conversation, also see Cheek, \textit{Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China}, pp. 173-174.

49 However, some articles suggest that Deng knew the Anti-Rightist Movement was coming and thus blocked the publication of some critical articles in order to protect their authors. Moreover, Deng’s \textit{Renmin ribao} also “restrained itself during the heyday of public criticism of the Party.” Why Deng did not stop Xu’s \textit{Wenhuibao} from taking part in the airing and blossoming was not clear. It was likely that Deng did not know the Anti-Rightist Movement was on its way in the beginning and thus he encouraged Xu to participate in the movement. It was under political pressure that Deng suppressed the articles and restrained his paper. By the time he realized the movement was coming, it was already too late for him to save the \textit{Wenhuibao}. See Cheek, \textit{Propaganda and Cultural in Mao’s China}, pp. 184-185.

50 Xu Zhucheng, \textit{Qinli yijiu wuqi}, p. 12.

51 Xu Zhucheng, \textit{Qinli yijiu wuqi}, p. 20.
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critiques (高价征求批评) and to let people speak freely. They can articulate their ideas gradually. [The Party] will not suppress them in one stroke.” Mao replied, “Your understanding is exactly right and very good.”52 Mao’s words made Xu more determined to participate in the Hundred Flowers Campaign. So, there was a consensus among Party leaders at the time that the newspapers should make changes and actively encourage people to express their opinions. Xu’s paper merely carried out what the Party told him to do, though that was also what he wanted to do.

Xu Zhucheng’s main “reactionary” statements were about the barrier between the Party and non-Party members, which he facetiously called the “wall” (墙). In his talk during the Shanghai Propaganda Work Conference (上海宣传工作会议) on May 19, 1957, Xu complained:

For a long time, there have not only been conflicts between the Party and non-Party people, but also conflicts within the Party. Thus, there have been walls within walls, and moats outside walls.... Some cadres leading the specific journalistic work discriminated and cut our [civilian-run] newspapers…. Especially, when Peng Boshan (彭柏山) served as propaganda minister [of Shanghai], our Wenhuibao and Xinminbao were completely overwhelmed.53

However, in the same talk, Xu also praised the Party’s efforts to remove the wall: “When the Wenhuibao resumed publication, the Central Committee and Municipal Party Committee helped us solve some internal conflicts, demolishing the high wall inside us.”54 It is easy to see that Xu’s talk was not a sharp critique of the Party.

52 Xu Zhucheng, Xu Zhucheng huiyilu, pp. 400-401.
53 Xu Zhucheng, “Qiang shi nenngou chaidiao de.”
54 Xu Zhucheng, “Qiang shi nenngou chaidiao de.”
Furthermore, like Chu Anping, Xu was actually reluctant to express his ideas. Xu recalled:

At that time, Bai Yan (白彦), the Vice Minister of the Propaganda Department of Shanghai Municipal Committee, visited my home, inviting me to attend the Shanghai propaganda works meeting that would soon end…. I told him I was writing my travel notes about the Soviet Union. In addition, now, the Party and non-Party members of the Wenhuibao were getting along with each other very well. The next day, he came again…. I found it was hard to turn down his warm-hearted offer and thus attended the meeting.55

Additionally, Qin Liben (钦立本), the Party chief and vice chief editor of the Wenhuibao, remembered, “It was us who encouraged him (Xu) to talk about his experience of demolishing the walls in the prefectural-level meeting after he came back from the Soviet Union.”56

In addition, during the airing and blossoming, the Wenhuibao was under the charge of Qin Liben.57 Like many other Party members, Qin actively implemented Mao’s Hundred Flowers Campaign. Hence, the Wenhuibao worked hard to encourage intellectuals around the country to express their ideas freely, especially those who had not done so. Also, as mentioned above, the paper reported on the Democracy Wall movement in Beijing. Finally, Qin organized a series of reports on the barriers between the Party and non-Party individuals. According to Zheng Zhong, there were sixteen articles about the barriers in the May issues of the Wenhuibao. In those articles, intellectuals expressed their complaints about the walls between the Party and non-

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55 Xu Zhucheng, Qinli yijiuwuqi, pp. 31-32.
Party individuals. To cite an example, Zhou Xuliang, a professor of East China Normal University, complained,

The Party did not understand the intellectuals and categorized people into two groups, the advanced and the backward, which caused many conflicts. … [The Party] did not respect the intellectuals’ traditional lifestyle… which led to the conflicts between the Party and non-Party people. Thus, those intellectuals who should have played an important role in the country were either at a loss or put aside. 58

To some extent, it was because of these articles that Xu Zhucheng expressed his opinion on the barrier, which became major evidence for his rightist label. To make the articles more readable, Qin and his colleagues carefully edited them and added subtitles. Zheng Zhong contends that the more carefully they edited these articles, the more impressed Mao became. 59 But, these well-edited reports, like the big-character posters in Beijing University made Mao, who read the Wenhuibao every day, extremely worried.

Nevertheless, this did not indicate that Qin was a traitor to the Party. On the contrary, Qin, in effect, was encouraged by Party leaders to deliver his “rightist” talks. On April 27, after the Central Committee’s instructions on the rectification movement were issued, Ke Qingshi, the mayor of Shanghai found Qin, and told him, “From now on, the Municipal Party committee will not censor important articles anymore. You can make decisions by yourselves.” 60 Furthermore, Lu Dingyi, the Minister of Propaganda Department, visited the Wenhuibao in late April and spoke highly of the reports in the paper. He asked that they keep promoting the Hundred Flowers Campaign, saying, “The releasing policies have not been carried out fully. [The critical writings

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60 Zheng Zhong, Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao, p. 185.
in the paper] need to be much sharper.”61 Lu’s words made the workers at the paper work even harder to promote the airing and blossoming. Xu Zhucheng, who was in Russia at the time, felt disconcerted by the provocative titles in the Wenhuibao. Xu remembered,

Reading the Wenhuibao in Moscow, I thought some of the titles were too sharp and too provocative. Based on my journalistic experience, for provocative subjects, we need to make more insipid titles…. This is basic common sense for editors. Why have the titles in the Wenhuibao been so provocative recently?... After the [Cultural] Revolution, a Wenhuibao editor told me, during that period, the chief editor received instructions from the Municipal Party Committee continuously, asking the Wenhuibao to be more provocative.62

It is plain that without encouragement from Party leaders, the editors of the Wenhuibao would not have run the provocative articles in the paper.

Consequently, these activities made the paper one of the most rightist papers in the country. On June 14, the Renmin ribao printed an editorial by Mao Zedong, “The Bourgeois Orientation of the Wenhuibao During a Certain Period” (文汇报在一个时间内的资产阶级方向). It claimed, “Within a short period, the fundamental political orientation of these two papers [the Wenhuibao and Guangming ribao] has become the orientation of the bourgeois press. During a certain period of time, these two papers took advantage of the slogan, ‘Let a hundred schools of thought contend,’ and the rectification campaign of the Communist Party to publish a large number of articles that expressed, but failed to criticize, the bourgeois viewpoint, as well as

62 Xu Zhucheng, Qinli yijiuwuqi, p. 30.
news reports of an inflammatory nature.”

Although the Wenhuibao quickly responded to this critique and conducted a self-criticism, it failed to satisfy Mao.

On July 1, Mao published another editorial in the Renmin ribao, entitled “The Bourgeois Orientation of Wenhuibao Should Be Criticized” (文汇报的资产阶级方向应当批判). Mao maintained,

The Wenhuibao has written articles of self-criticism and seems to have changed its orientation…. But we still feel this is not enough. It is similar to performing a play: some actors portray bad characters with great realism, but when it comes to playing good characters, they just can’t seem to do it well—their manners and gestures are forced, and are not very natural.

Furthermore, Mao tied the Wenhuibao to the Zhang-Luo alliance, “an alleged political conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of the CCP itself” that was led by two prominent democratic personages, Zhang Bojun and Luo Longji (罗隆基).

During the spring, the Wenhuibao carried out the anti-Communist, antipeople, antisocialist policies of the Central Committee of the Democratic League, launched reckless attacks on the proletariat, and ran policies counter to those of the Communist Party. Its policy was to topple the Communist Party and send the country into chaos so as to unseat [the Communist Party] and take its place.

As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, from the Yan’an years on, the articles in the Party papers were generally regarded as the Party’s orders, not to mention that the articles were written by

Mao in the *Renmin ribao*, the dominant Party paper in the country. Undoubtedly, Mao’s articles put enormous stress on the staff of the *Wenhuibao*.

Indeed, Mao’s accusations terrified the staff at the paper and brought disaster on them. Zheng Zhong’s description best captures the situation at the time:

Those editors and reporters who participated in the Anti-Rightist Movement at the *Wenhuibao*, recalled the conditions at that time: Everyone was in a nervous, confused, and perplexed mood. Today, you criticized me, tomorrow, I will criticize you; today, someone is an Anti-Rightist hero, tomorrow, the hero becomes a rightist. Under Mao’s supreme prestige and pressure, everyone felt in danger; everyone needed to show Mao their loyalty, doing everything possible to prove that every word in Mao’s editorial was correct. Therefore, when charging and criticizing others, some would tell lies, fake stories, and throw disastrous insults. On the surface, some looked impassioned but inside they were bleeding.67

Eventually, twenty-one journalists at the *Wenhuibao* were labelled as rightists. Among them, as Mao designated, Xu Zhucheng and Pu Xixiu (浦熙修) were denounced as key members of the alleged Zhang-Luo alliance. Two reporters, Mei Huanzao (梅焕藻) and Jiang Xianliang (江显良), committed suicide.68

To conclude, the conflicts between the Party and the newspeople reflected the newspeople’s discontent with the journalistic environment developed under the Communist regime. However, at least before the Anti-Rightist Movement, these newspeople stayed loyal to the Party. Based on the basic journalistic rules of the Communist regime, namely “writing the

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news in light of the leaders’ intentions,” and the fundamental rule in the bureaucratic system, “doing what the Party dictated to them,” these journalists took part in the airing and blossoming movement launched by the Party. What they suffered in the Anti-Rightist Movement proved that “bourgeois” journalism practice or any practice that could be considered rightist was untenable in the PRC.

Although 1957 was not a turning point in Chinese journalism history, it was in that year that the Party’s journalism norms were thoroughly established. Many of these norms led to the theatricality of the news and exerted a profound influence on Chinese society. For example, the tendency of the newspapers to present the world view of the Party rather than facts, which had already existed before 1957, developed further. The newspaper articles increasingly diverged from reality. Eventually, during the Cultural Revolution, newspapers became arenas where news dramas, rather than genuine news, were staged. The PRC became a news-theater in which people were expected to lead their lives according to the norms embedded in the news. Even though the news was not realistic, reading newspapers and responding to them served as an important ritual to practice and maintain the Party’s ideology among its people, thus consolidating its regime.
PART IV: News-Theater

10. News-Theater: Ritual, Exhibition, and Performance of the News During High Socialism

In the past several decades, an increasing number of scholars, such as Elizabeth J. Perry, Chang-tai Hung, James Z. Gao, and Brian James DeMare, have examined how the CCP adroitly manipulated cultural resources and institutions, including dramas, films, paintings, exhibitions, speaking bitterness, and mass rallies, to disseminate its ideals among the people and consolidate its rule. However, only a handful of scholars have paid attention to the role played by the Party’s journalistic institutions. The few exceptions include Zhou Haiyan’s study of newspaper-reading groups and Li Le’s study of blackboard newspapers.

However, these studies merely focus on a single journalistic institution and thus fail to draw a complete picture of the Party’s journalistic institutions and their role in disseminating the

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1 Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson define high socialism as “the time between agricultural collectivization and nationalization of industry in the mid-1950s through the end of the 1970s. High socialism was characterized by state ownership of property, Party-state fusion, the politicization of everyday lives, and a planned economy that privileged heavy urban industry by extracting grain from the country-side and restricting internal migration. These broad aspects of high socialism came to life at the grassroots in the form of class status labels, grain rationing booklets, propaganda written on neighborhood blackboards, loudspeaker broadcasts, mandatory evening meetings, and anxious interactions with local officials who wielded arbitrary authority.” in Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson, eds., Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China’s Era of High Socialism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 6.

2 The scholarship includes: Perry, Anyuan; Hung, Mao’s New World; Gao, The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou; DeMare, Mao’s Cultural Army, and others.

Party’s doctrines and consolidating its regime. In addition, the previous scholarship does not pay enough attention to how the Party’s journalistic institutions operation in practice. Using newspaper-reading groups as an example, this paper tries to fill in this void.

In this chapter, I coin the term, “news-theater,” to stress the “theatricality” of the content and editing and layout (编排) of the newspapers under the Communist Regime, and the influence of the newspapers on people. There are three reasons why I characterize the newspapers and their influence as news-theater. First, the theatrical nature of news made newspapers like stages in theaters, which mainly resulted from the disjunction between the news and objective reality. The Party constantly emphasized the political effects of its publicity, rather than its accuracy, especially during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. As Daniel Leese observes: “The character of the Chinese broadcasting apparatus during the Mao period thus can be characterized as a device to provide an integrated, ‘correct’ worldview with a ritualized meaning.” The Party news workers constantly needed to select or fabricate facts to make their news align with the Party’s rhetoric, which transformed the newspapers into arenas for displaying the models that the Party set for the people. The news increasingly shared a similarity with dramas, neither of which was necessarily based on real events.

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4 “Theater” in the term “news-theater” refers to specific areas where dramas were performed, rather than performing arts. Therefore, as demonstrated below, “news-theater” refers to both the newspapers where the ritualized and theatricalized news was presented, and the whole country where the individuals were expected to behave themselves according to the norms embedded in the papers.


7 See Gao Hua, Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqi de, p. 376.
The second reason is that the editing and layout of the newspapers were ritualized, as they were expected to epitomize the real political order and worldview of the regime, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Certain texts had to be decorated with obligatory typeface, font size, and typesetting, and put in precise positions. For example, beginning in the early 1960s, Mao Zedong’s words were to be printed in bold. Also, the papers strictly arranged the name lists of Party leaders according to their political rankings. As a result, the newspapers under the CCP were transformed into news-theater with the expressive nature and ritualized editing and layout in order to facilitate the establishment of the “correct” world view among the people.

The third reason is that the theatrical “stage” extended from the newspapers to the whole of society through the Party’s mass journalistic institutions such as wall newspapers, blackboard newspapers, newspaper-reading groups, and political learning meetings. Affected by these institutions, reading newspapers was no longer a “mass ceremony” performed “in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull,” as Benedict Anderson notes, but one that also took place in mass meetings in which people would soon find themselves: in Gustave Le Bon’s words, “in a special

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8 According to Zhao Peng and Wang Yongkui’s study, the practice of treating bold type as special typeface for the supreme Communist leaders, including Mao Zedong, Stalin, Lenin, started in January 1967 and ended in March 1978. Nevertheless, they note that in 1961, the Party press organizations had begun to use special typeface, such as bold characters and regular script (楷体), to highlight the lines that they considered important, of course including quotations from Mao. Also, Ross Terrill, Mao Zedong’s biographer, notes, “The Liberation Army Daily, the PLA paper, as early as 1962 began to publish Mao’s quotes boxed and in bold type on page one.” See Zhao Peng and Wang Yongkui, “Wenhua dagemi shiqi lingxiu yulu zhuanyong ziti de yanbian” (文化大革命时期领袖语录专用字体的演变: The Evolution of Special Typeface for Quotations from Mao During the Cultural Revolution), Bainianchao, 06(2014): 63-67; Ross Terrill, Mao: A Biography (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 306.

9 The work units organized political study during and after working hours. During the Cultural Revolution, people even spent more time on political study than on their own work. The main materials of political study were Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, newspapers (especially the editorials), and various official documents. See Walder, China Under Mao, p. 79; Yi Lei, “Tuchu zhengzhi de guannianshi.”

state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotized individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotizer.”¹¹ Here, the hypnotizer refers to the Party.

In addition, in the newspaper-reading groups, people were expected to behave according to the norms embedded in newspapers. From this everyday performance, people learned “the very political culture that was needed to navigate life under Communist rule,” to use Brian James DeMare’s description of the influence of land reform operas on the people.¹² Indeed, reading the news, discussing the news in the Party’s rhetoric, and then performing it in prescribed ways became a ritual in people’s everyday lives.¹³ Through words and actions, people participated in the construction of news-theater. Everyone was an actor on the stage, and simultaneously the audience. As mentioned in the introduction, James W. Carey’s theory of the ritual view of communication perfectly fits into this context.¹⁴ In the news-theater, reading news was less about “sending or gaining information” and more about “attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new [was] learned” but in which the Party’s “view of the world [was] portrayed and confirmed.”¹⁵ Subsequently, the Party’s “ordered, meaningful cultural world” were constructed

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¹² DeMare, Mao’s Cultural Army, p. 8.
¹³ I define ritual as formalistic activities involving actions and words full of symbolic meanings. The journalistic ritual discussed in this chapter is a type of political ritual. According to Clifford Geertz’s observation of the Balinese state, political rituals contributed to establishing and maintaining political powers. As Geertz demonstrates, the political rituals containing the rulers’ cosmology helped the social order dominated by the king to be considered holy and natural. Thus, the ability to create political rituals was crucial to pollical actors in Bali. See Clifford Geertz, Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth- Century Bali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.13-17.
¹⁴ James W. Carey views communication as a ritual in which individuals participate and in which ideas, rather than information, are distributed. Distinet from the traditional transmission view of communication that highlights communication’s role in distributing information, the ritual view of communication puts an emphasis on communication’s effect in establishing or maintaining the worldview of a society. See James W. Carey, Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 11-28.
¹⁵ Carey, Communication as Culture, p. 16.
and served “as a control and container for human action.”\textsuperscript{16} The people gradually internalized the Party’s notions and rhetoric.

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part is about the theatricality of the content and the editing and layout of the newspapers. The second part examines the journalistic institutions through which the Party changed the newspaper reading mode and ritualized the newspaper-reading meetings. In the last part, I explore how these institutions operated in practice.

**Newspapers as theater**

During the Mao years, especially during the Cultural Revolution, the Party prioritized the political function of the news over accuracy. Sidney Rittenberg, the first American CCP member and someone who enjoyed the status of a high-ranking Party propaganda official of the time, lamented, “Everything was done according to party policy. We weren’t reporting news. We were propagating policy.”\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, in the waves of political movements, in the face of political pressure, impassioned speeches, and crazed crowds, the news workers could hardly stick to the truth and stay calm and rational. Li Kelin, a reporter for the *Renmin ribao*, described his feelings during the Great Leap Forward: “The propaganda in newspapers at the time, people’s thoughts at the time, truth and imagination, and reality and illusion were interwoven with one another. We were running newspapers but felt like we were writing poems. We were reporting reality, but [our reports] diverged from reality.”\textsuperscript{18} As a result, reliability was increasingly considered

\textsuperscript{16} Carey, *Communication as Culture*, p.15.
\textsuperscript{17} Rittenberg and Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, p. 194.
\textsuperscript{18} Li Kelin, “Jiyi zuishen de sannian” (记忆最深的三年 Three years deepest in my memory) in Renmin ribao baoshi bianjizu, *Renmin ribao huiyilu*, p. 149.
something that could be sacrificed for politics. The political function became the foremost function of newspapers.

Furthermore, not only were newspapers’ contents politicized, but also their styles. Newspapers were expected to exhibit the real political situation through different typefaces, font sizes, photos, and positions. In other words, newspapers were transformed into theaters in which political figures were represented according to their status in the political world.

Although the Party news workers had already begun to present political figures according to their status before 1957, it was in that year that this practice became an ironclad rule that every journalist had to observe. On June 10, 1957, Yao Wenyuan (姚文元) published “Recorded for Reference” (录以备考) in the Wenhuibao. In this article, Yao explored the subtleties of the “editing and layout” (编排) of the newspapers: “The same news item, handled by different comrade editors, can be as different as night and day.” Next, Yao moved to criticize the Wenhuibao’s report on Mao Zedong’s short speech at a reception for delegates from the Communist Youth League on May 25. Yao contended that in comparison to the corresponding reports in the Jiefang ribao and Renmin ribao, the report on Mao’s talk in the Wenhuibao was so sloppy that careless readers simply would not find the report on Mao’s talk, and the total space the report occupied was “probably as big as two of the lead characters used for the headline of the Liberation Daily.” Thus, Yao accused the Wenhuibao of being bored with the Party’s rhetoric, such as “socialism,” and “leadership of the Party,” which was a serious charge even if it happened during the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

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19 Yao Wenhui, “Luyi beikao” (录以备考 Record for Reference), in Wenhuibao, June 14, 1957. For the translation of this article, please see Volland, “The Control of the Media in the People’s Republic of China,” p. 361.
Sharp though Yao’s article was, it did not attract people’s notice immediately. Indeed, the editors of the *Wenhuibao* treated it as an ordinary critique in the Hundred Flowers Campaign and even first printed it in their own newspapers to show their tolerance.\(^{20}\) Unfortunately, it was probably this very thing that made Mao notice Yao’s article since Mao read the *Wenhuibao* regularly. Mao, at the time, was planning his counterattack against the “rightists.” This article offered him an opportunity. On June 14, Mao had the *People’s Daily* print this article and wrote an editorial—the well-known “The Bourgeois Orientation of the *Wenhuibao* during a Certain Period”—to introduce it. Mao commended Yao’s article, for it “simply points subtly to the bourgeois orientation of the *Wenhuibao*.\(^{21}\) Four days later, Mao brought forward the concepts of “the technical aspects of editing and layout” (编排的技巧性) and “the political aspects of editing and layout” (编排的政治性) in another well-known article, “The Bourgeois Orientation of the *Wenhuibao* Should Be Criticized.” Mao argued, “Problems of technique are totally capable of being corrected.”\(^{22}\) By contrast, problems of the political aspects of editing and layout need to be criticized and the people who committed this sort of mistake would be labelled rightists. Consequently, more than twenty editors at the *Wenhuibao* were labelled Rightists in 1957.

This event taught the journalists an impressive lesson. Few of them dared to put news about the Supreme Leader in an inconspicuous position. Nevertheless, as a result of Mao and the other Communist leaders resisting the personality cult of Mao before the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese papers did not bombastically highlight Mao’s images and words. As Chen Lidan

\(^{20}\) According to Shi Yun, the reason why the *Wenhuibao* print this article was that Qin Benli wanted to make up for mistakes such as “not politically sensitive enough,” and “neglect of politics.” See Zheng Zhong, *Mao Zedong yu Wenhuibao*, p. 199; Shi Yun, *Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan shizhuan*, p. 236.


observes, “[Before the Cultural Revolution], although the headlines would sometimes feature the leaders, the practice was not mainstream.”

With the rise of the cult of Mao in the Cultural Revolution, the Party newspapers did their best to highlight the news about him. To use the *Renmin ribao* as an example, all news about Mao would be printed on the front page. Furthermore, whenever the newspaper printed news about Mao, it would take up at least half of the front page, even though the news itself might be very short. In many cases, Mao’s photos would take up half of the page. In addition, it was not infrequent for the editors to use banner titles for news about Mao. During the national holidays, such as the New Year and National Day, the *Renmin ribao* would use almost the whole page to print Mao’s photo. Even the masthead of this newspaper, *Renmin ribao*, was put under Mao’s photo.

Indeed, editors all around the country had to use big photos of Mao and large font sizes to print news about the Great Helmsman. If they refused or neglected to do so, they could be charged with being anti-revolutionary. Ma Da (马达), the chief editor of the *Jiefang ribao*, recalled that at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, he was almost labelled a conspirator by the Red Guards from all around the country because “a headline containing ‘Chairman Mao’ in the *Jiefang ribao* was smaller than that in the *Renmin ribao*.”

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25 See *Renmin ribao*, October 1, 1966; October 1, 1967; January 1, 1968; October 1, 1968.

26 Ma Da, *Ma Da zishu*, p. 45.
Additionally, the writings became increasingly formulaic. In the news about Mao, the editors were expected to use grandiloquent rhetoric to describe the “Supreme Leader.” It is easy to find this practice in newspapers at the time. To illustrate this point, the headline of the Renmin ribao on September 30, 1967 was: “The Very, Very Good Health and Very, Very Vigorous Spirit of Our Great Leader and Great Commander, Chairman Mao, Maximizes the Happiness of the People throughout the Country and the World and Before the National Day the Soldiers and People Ecstatically Celebrate This Extraordinarily Good News” (全国人民的最大幸福全世界人民的最大幸福——我们伟大的领袖伟大的统帅毛主席身体非常非常健康精神非常非常充沛——国庆前夕广大军民无比幸福地欢庆这个喜上加喜的特大喜讯). On January 26, 1967, an article on page two of the Renmin ribao reads: “The most, most, most, most beloved Chairman Mao: all the revolutionary rebels in the Shanxi Revolutionary Rebellious General
Command give you, the most red, most red, red sun in our hearts, our highest esteem to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.”

Even news not pertaining to Chairman Mao became expressive political writings rather than writing based on facts. This phenomenon reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution. At the time, news developed into fabled, expressive, political stories. Newspapers were harnessed to deliver political ideas rather than information, especially the front page. Li Zhuang, who was one of the leading officials of the *Renmin ribao*, suggested: “Few articles on the front page were news.”

In practice, it was no longer necessary for journalists to do on-the-spot investigations before writing this type of article, since no facts or details of the news stories were indispensable. All they needed to do was to write down the names of people and places and fill in political phrases such as Mao’s words or the Party’s instructions, and adjectives or adverbs describing the greatness of Mao or the instructions. Li Zhuang once described how such news was made during the Cultural Revolution:

[One day at the end of the Cultural Revolution,] an editor was ordered to write an article to criticize Deng [Xiaoping]. He prepared several pages of the manuscript, while opening a *Hongqi* (红旗 Red Flag) magazine. After a brief discussion of the situation in which one work unit carefully studied the ‘highest instructions’ (最高指示) and their storm of...

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27 Also see Li Zhuang, “Wenge zhong bangwenfeng liugei wo daixue de jiyi” (文革中帮文风留给我带血的记忆 My bloody memory brought by gangster style of writing during the Cultural Revolution), *Yanhuang chunqiu*, 3(1998): 28
29 *Hongqi* was the most significant Party magazine during the Cultural Revolution. Generally, it contains more theoretical articles than *Renmin ribao* and was regarded as a publication in which one could find the most authoritative explanation of the Party’s policies.
criticism of Deng Xiaoping, he got right to the point: “Through study and criticism, they realized,” followed by a line he copied from the *Hongqi*; “they further realized,” followed by another paragraph [from the *Hongqi*]; “they also realized,” followed by another paragraph [from the *Hongqi*.]

Likewise, Ma Da, who had served as the chief editor of the *Jiefang ribao*, recalled:

There was an old editor at the *Jiefang ribao*. He did not know how to gather news and told his superior: I can make up the news if you give me some names of individuals and places. Anyway, there are only a few phrases [in the papers], such as “someone said he or she was inspired,” or “someone said he or she was very excited.” There is no difference between papers.

As a result, as Chen Lidan notes: “Politics completely became the news. The way to do news reports became a political activity, rather than a professional practice. The news on media almost completely consisted of political terms.” The news turned into highly expressive political articles.

Furthermore, the boldface gradually became the special typeface for the words of the supreme Communist figures, such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Of course, Mao’s words were cited the most often. As mentioned above, since the early 1960s, whenever Mao’s words appeared in the “Two Newspapers and One Magazine (两报一刊),” namely the *Renmin ribao*, the *Jiefangjun bao* (解放军报 People’s Liberation Army Daily), and the *Hongqi*

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31 Zhang Zhi’an and Bai Hongyi, “Baoye tizhi he yunxing jizhi jidai gaige——Laobaoren Ma Da fangtanlu” (报业体制和运行机制亟待改革——老报人马达访谈录 Journalism system and operation mode needed reforms——an interview with old newspaperman Ma Da), part 1, *Xinwenjizhe*, 10(2010): 16.
magazine, they would be printed in boldface in order to show the people’s respect for him. Quotation marks, therefore, were no longer necessary. Moreover, as the cult of Mao reached its climax, Party leaders like Lin Biao publicly asked people to collect and quote Mao’s words. Li Zhuang claimed, “Lin Biao allegedly said, ‘Writing articles is mainly for the purpose of quoting Mao’s words. One of Mao’s sentences is worth ten thousand others. Please collect and quote more of Mao’s words.’” Newspapers at the time were full of boldface characters. Mu Hui (牧惠), an editor of the Hongqi magazine and a well-known essayist, recalled, “At the time, quotations from Chairman Mao were the most important thing for articles. The crucial articles consisted almost entirely of boldface characters.” Li Zhuang, an editor at the Renmin ribao, remembered, “In 1971... I saw an editorial in which quotations from Mao made up one third of it.”

33 Fang Hanqi and Chen Yeshao, eds., Zhongguo dangdai xinwen shiyeshi, p. 182.
34 Please note that Li did not provide the reference for Lin Biao’s phrase. Also, I cannot find Lin’s words from any other source. However, Lin Biao did contribute to the crazy wave of quoting Mao’s words. As Feng Jianhui contends, “After Lin Biao rose to power, ‘Hold high the great banner of Mao Zedong Thought’ became his catch phrase. Under his initiative, newspapers printed Mao’s phrases every day; each article cited Mao’s words; [people] read Mao’s words in meetings, no matter whether they were large or small.” Also, it was Lin who promoted the great mass fervor of creatively learning and applying Maoist ideas. Thus, I still cite this phrase. See Li Zhuang, “Wenge zhong bangwenfeng liugei wo daixue de jiyi, p. 28; Feng Jianhui, Zouchu Geren chongbai (走出个人崇拜 Out of Personality Cult) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2001), pp. 18-19, 22.
36 Li Zhuang, Renmin ribao fengyu sishinian, p. 303.
Besides the extensive presentation of Mao in the newspapers, the Party papers would subtly exhibit the real political situation through their editing and typesetting. From the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the political figures with higher status would be presented with a larger space, larger font size, and in more eye-catching positions in the Party papers. The name lists in the *Renmin ribao* and its clones were strictly arranged according to their political status. Consequently, newspapers became a microcosm of the world in which the order of names, the size of the titles, and so on all reflected the political order of the real world.

Thus, although the news was not necessarily based on facts, the Party newspapers were ironically able to demonstrate the real political conditions. Chen Lidan observes, “People were able to conjecture about the political situation based on the information about the leaders’ activities, the position of news about them in the newspapers, the order of the leaders’ names, and their titles.” To give an example, Wang Jinfeng (王金凤), a senior journalist for the *Renmin ribao*, had guessed at the fall of Lin Biao in 1971. She remembered when she was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution: “On National Day of 1971, [news about] Lin Biao, "

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38 Chen Lidan, “Cong lishi dao xianshi,” p. 17.
strangely, did not appear [in the _Renmin ribao_]. Before long, the _Renmin ribao_ began to criticize ‘the biggest aspirant’ who ‘died without a burial place’ (死无葬身之地). Based on this information, I realized that Lin Biao was finished.”⁴⁰ Indeed, in the _Renmin ribao_ of October 1, 1975, a photo of Lin Biao and Mao Zedong was put on the front page, symbolizing Lin’s political position as Mao’s successor. By contrast, on the front page of the _Renmin ribao_ exactly one year later, Lin did not appear, even though there were several name lists of the political figures in it. It is no wonder that Wang could predict Lin’s fall from power through the _Renmin ribao_. Notably, the subtle representation of real political orders was not confined to newspapers in Communist China. For example, Western Kremlinologists were constantly looking for “nuggets of information that would help to reveal what was happening [in] the Soviet Union” in piles of newspapers during the Cold War and they called the ability to read between lines a “dark art.”⁴¹

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Moreover, the photos in the Party papers were elaborately selected and arranged by the editors. Through careful observation of the photos and their positioning, it was possible to perceive the political conditions. Geremie R. Barme remembers, in the Party papers:

The hieratic significance of who stood where, near or in front of whom, required a trained eye and a mind attuned to the twists and turns of Central Committee politics. It was significant, for example, that Mao's wife Jiang Qing appeared in news photographs with her head covered at the state-organized leave-taking of the corpse of the recently-deceased Premier Zhou Enlai in January 1976. To readers it indicated that she regarded the widely-mourned leader with contempt, and it was further proof that she was plotting to overturn his policies. But sometimes you literally had to see through the paper to get the point.42

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From Barme’s observations, it is plain to see how political meanings were implicitly conveyed through photos.

These practices were strictly followed by the papers in China, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, at the time, the regional Party papers did whatever they could to imitate the “Two Newspapers and One Magazine.” There was a popular practice called duibao (对 报 comparing newspapers) at the time, which meant that the editors from regional papers would edit their papers according to the sample papers made for them by the Renmin ribao and Hongqi, and call the central papers to ask how to arrange the significant news, which typeface should be used, and how many columns the title should occupy. Yao Yuanfang (姚远方), an editor from the Jiefangjun bao remembers that they would receive one or two dozen of these calls each night. As a result, the other Party newspapers became clones of the Renmin ribao and papers all around the country become news-theater like the Renmin ribao.

In short, the editors of the Party newspapers transformed the papers into news-theater through their elaborate arrangement of typefaces, front sizes, and photos during the Mao years. Through these news-theaters, the Party was able to continuously and repeatedly imbue the people with its values. Although the news was not reality, the continuous and repeated inculcation still had a huge impact on the masses. As Oswald Spengler maintains, “What the Press wills is true. Its commanders evoke, transform, interchange truths. Three weeks of press-work, and the ‘truth’ is acknowledged by everybody.”

43 Fang Hanqi and Chen Yeshao, eds., Zhongguo dangdai xinwen shiyeshi, p. 182.
44 Yao Yuanfang, “Tianshang diaoxia yige maoguniang” (天上掉下一个毛姑娘 Miss Mao from heaven), in Zhe Yongping, ed., Nage niandai zhongde women (那个年代中的我们 We in the old days), volume 1 (Hohhot: Yuanfang chubanshe, 1998), p. 3.
Infrastructure: exhibition and performance of the news

For the “news-theaters” to better serve the Party, the Party established a series of institutions to expand the influence of its papers, such as wall newspapers, blackboard newspapers, and newspaper-reading groups, thus bringing its ideas to the grassroots level. As essential parts of the Party’s nationwide propaganda network, these institutions of mass journalism enabled the newspapers, or at least key articles (especially the editorials), to enter people’s daily lives, including those of the illiterate population, which accounted for the majority of China at the time. As a result, “despite high rates of illiteracy nationwide, newspapers were the most important tools for implementing theoretical [Marxism] education work,” in Anne-Marie Brady’s words. In the following paragraphs, I will review how blackboard newspapers and newspaper-reading groups, two chief instruments of propaganda, facilitated the dissemination of ideas in the Party newspapers to the grassroots level, thus transforming the country into a news-theater. At the end of this part, I will briefly talk about living newspaper dramas (活报剧) that literally transformed the country into a huge theater, since these dramas were generally considered a form of performance art, rather than an institution of journalism.

First, the blackboard newspapers became a significant social spectacle in the new society soon after Liberation. People could find blackboard newspapers on every corner in the new society, including schools, factories, commercial streets, and traffic arteries. Indeed, because of their low cost and ease of deployment, blackboard newspapers prevailed in most places in China.

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46 Zhou Haiyan argues, the Party’s propaganda network was established in the beginning of the PRC. It consisted of the propaganda network (in a narrow sense), newspaper-reading groups, broadcast network, and tongxunyuan (worker-peasant correspondents) network, as well as Winter schools, literacy classes, blackboard newspapers, and worker-peasant opera troupes. In Zhou Haiyan, “Yiyi shengchan de quanceng gongzhen,” p. 27.
Wang Baokang, the author of a book on editing blackboard newspapers, claimed that in 1952, within the first three years of the PRC, wall and blackboard newspapers had already spread across major cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Jinan, Shanghai, and became the hallmark of the “new society.” In addition, blackboard newspapers were popular in the countryside. In Hu County, Shanxi Province, for example, each village had twenty or thirty blackboard newspapers.

Subsequently, blackboard newspapers became an essential propaganda instrument of the Party. Running the blackboard newspapers was a significant job for the Party’s propagandists. To give an example, among the 22 propagandists in the Shanghai No.1 Engineers Workshop, 11 were assigned to work on the blackboard newspapers. In some rural areas, blackboard newspapers were the only instrument of propaganda. Xie Zhi’an, who served as the curator of the Cultural Center of Hu County from 1951-1980, claimed,

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50 In 1951, the Party stipulated every Party branch must have a full-time propagandist whose duty was to introduce and explain the domestic and international current affairs, the Party’s and people’s government’s policies, the task of the people, and so on, to the people in a straightforward and plain way. See “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai quandang jianli dui renmin qunzhong de xuanchuanwang de jueding” (The CC’s decision on establishment of propaganda network targeting people by the whole Party), in Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (Selected significant documents after the establishment of the PRC), volume 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992), pp. 1-2. Also see, Matthew D. Johnson, “Beneath the Propaganda State: Official and Unofficial Cultural Landscapes in Shanghai, 1949-1965,” in Brown and Johnson, eds., *Maoism at the Grassroots*, p. 207; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*, p. 37.
51 A47-1-151, “Diyi jigong dangzhibu dang xuanchuanwang huibaobiao” (第一机工党支部党宣传网汇报表 Reports on propaganda network by the No. 1 Engineers Workshop Party Committee), Shanghai Municipal Archives.
After the establishment of the PRC, our Party’s only channel of propaganda [in Hu County] was blackboard newspapers. [We] propagandized production works and central tasks. During the Land Reform, the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, and the War to resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, [we] used [blackboard newspapers] to bolster the propaganda…. [Our] entire propaganda work was to run good blackboard newspapers.52

Hence, through this institution, the news in the Party newspapers was presented in the streets and lanes across China and was thus physically ubiquitous in the people’s daily lives.

In comparison with the newspapers, the text of the blackboard newspapers was shorter and plainer. As well, the blackboard newspapers had a smaller target audience and the content could be made more appropriate for their audience than could the newspapers. Wang Baokang observed of the blackboard papers in Shanghai:

The blackboard newspapers of high quality are not only simple and accessible, but also clear, concise, fresh, and lively. Therefore, they are more attractive than the newspapers posted on the corners of the lilong (里弄 neighborhoods) for the masses. For example, the students in the literacy class, maids, apprentices, peddlers, and common housewives are not very literate; they cannot understand newspapers well…. In this case, if there is a blackboard newspaper, … [we] can use the simplest words to explicitly express [the ideas in newspapers], impressing them.53

From the quotation above, it is plain to see that in blackboard newspapers, the messages in newspapers were translated into lines that were more accessible to the masses and were modified

52 “Xie Zhian fangtanlu,” p. 173.
according to the local situations. Consequently, blackboard papers amplified the influence of the messages in the formal newspapers.

Besides publishing or rewriting the news in newspapers, blackboard newspapers contained reports written by their editors, who were appointed by the local Party committees. As with newspapers, the blackboard newspapers were especially utilized by the local Party branches to report the local models in order to promote their core work. As a result, blackboard newspapers, to some degree, became the official newspapers of the Party branches at the grassroots level.54 In the words of a township head of Feng’ao in Ningbo: “The blackboard newspaper is the official newspaper of the Party branch and one of the instruments that the Party committee uses to teach the 3,000 people in Feng’ao every day.55

Furthermore, in some cases, the local Party branches required their own worker-peasant reporters (工农通讯员) to write reports for their blackboard papers. Many of these reports were about the central tasks of the local government. For example, in 1961, in the Jimingshan Production Brigade of the Hudi Commune in Ningbo, the editors of the blackboard paper published some typical reports encouraging the peasants to raise cows to ensure the success of an agricultural campaign.56 Similarly, during the Great Leap Forward, in Yunnan, the local Party branches utilized their blackboard papers to introduce the advanced experience of transplanting rice seedlings during the farming season.57

54 See Li Le, “Heibanbao chengle dangzuzhi de jiguanbao,” pp. 43-52.
55 Li Le, “Heibanbao chengle dangzuzhi de jiguanbao,” p. 46.
56 Li Le, “Heibanbao chengle dangzuzhi de jiguanbao,” p. 46.
57 Yunnansheng wenjiao xitong, ed., Duoduo shancha yingrihong—Yunnan wenjiao zhanxian shang de jimi hognqi (朵朵山茶映日红——云南文教战线上的几面红旗 Several red flags in the Yunnan literary and education circles) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1960), p. 111.
In short, the big characters and straightforward text on the blackboard newspapers exerted a significant and ongoing impact on their readers, actively or passively. With the help of the omnipresent blackboard newspapers, the ideas in the newspapers reached the grassroots and those who were not accustomed to reading the longer, more obscure formal papers.

Moreover, as “an informal educational practice,” as described by Mao Zedong in 1944, the establishment of newspaper-reading groups was required in every corner of the country. Indeed, the numerous newspaper-reading groups across the country greatly promoted the spread of the Party’s ideas and rhetoric. First, these groups effectively converted illiterate individuals who constituted a large proportion of China’s population into “readers” of the newspapers. Ma Fen ( 马奋), the author of a booklet introducing the experience of running newspaper-reading groups, stated in 1953, “Currently, in the countryside, there is a large number of illiterate people. They cannot read newspapers. In order to enable the papers to meet them and thus play the papers’ role of educating the masses, the only good way is to organize newspaper-reading groups.”

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58 By calling newspaper-reading groups “an informal educational practice,” Mao highlighted groups’ role in helping the Party to educate the people, rather than their characteristic as an “informal educational practice” In other words, newspaper-reading groups were a formal journalistic institution with a strong educational function that qualified them as an informal educational institution (in comparison to the formal educational institutions such as schools). See Mao Zedong, “The United Front in Cultural Work,” Marxists, accessed September 15, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_21.htm.

Furthermore, the newspaper-reading groups served to transform newspaper reading from a private behavior into a mass one. With this transformation, the Party was able to imbue the people with its ideas more effectively. Seeing the newspaper-reading groups as an important way to indoctrinate the people, the Party would choose the group leaders and newspaper readers (读报员) with great care. The foremost standard for group leaders and newspaper readers was political reliability. Moreover, the Party constituted newspaper-reading advisory committees (读报委员会) to manage these groups. In Shijiazhuang, these advisory committees consisted of “cadres of the Party, the Communist Youth League, the labor unions, and the active group leaders and newspaper readers.”  

One significant duty of these advisory committees was to select the texts that would be read in the groups. Generally, the selected texts were the editorials 

60 This photo is from Wang Xiangling, “Liaoliao dubaozu de naxieshi” (聊聊读报组的那些事 Some anecdotes about newspaper-reading groups), Quanguo dangmei, accessed September 17, 2019, https://www.hubpd.com/c/2018-03-02/701634.shtml.  
61 Ma Fen, Zheyang gaohao dubaozu, p. 10.
and texts about the central tasks of the Party or what was relevant to the specific local situations.62

During the process of reading the papers, the readers were expected to not merely read the selected texts but to read vividly, to act, to explain, and even to adapt them into different art forms such as jingles, comic dialogue, drum playing, and clapper talk (快板), in order to impress the audience. Ma Fen argued, “Although we cannot judge newspaper reading by the standard of *pingshu* (评书 storytelling), we need to read with heart and soul.” He used a newspaper reader named Yao Jinhai as an example to illustrate this point:

There is a newspaper reader in Shijiazhuang named Yao Jinhai. He has four ways to read newspapers—clapper talk, comic monologue talk, drum playing, and singing. He uses different ways to read newspapers depending on the nature of the texts. Whenever he reads the newspapers, he is full of energy; when he speaks bitterness, he talks in a broken voice; when he talks about shooting, he raises his arms, tilts his head, and closes his left eye, which are the three points in one line (三点成一线 a standard Chinese shooting pose). So, people love his newspaper-reading. One person said, “Yao Jinhai reads newspapers with spirit” (把报读活了).63

In addition, in Shanghai, the editors of the *Jiefang ribao* also asked the paper readers to present newspapers “like storytellers on the streets,” and “like telling the stories in the Water Margin and Romance of the Three Kingdoms.”64

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64 C25-2-5-37, “Dubaoyuan yao dude yousheng youse” (读报员要读得有声有色 Newspaper readers should read in a lively fashion), Jiefangribaoshie bianjibu, ed., *Jiefang ribao, Qingnianbao tongxun yu dubao* (解放日报、青年报 通讯与读报 Correspondents and newspaper reading co-edited by *Liberation Daily* and *Youth Daily*), 19 (1951),
This dramatic presentation of news in mass meetings shaped people’s understanding of the information in newspapers. Indeed, newspaper-reading groups transformed the medium of news from paper to oral language, thus exerting a greater influence on their audience. According to Marshall McLuhan’s theory of “the medium is the message,” it was the medium, rather than the content that it transferred, that shaped “the scale and form of human association and action.” Hence, a change of medium can create different communication effects. In light of Neil Bozeman’s book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, the idea of “being rooted in the bias of the printed word, was serious, inclined toward rational argument and presentation, and therefore, made up meaningful content.” By comparison, oral language will “undermine rational discourse,” and has stronger “emotional power.” Thus, when one receives the news through spoken language rather than written (in papers), it is hard to stay rational and to be critical of the messages in the papers.

After listening to the newspaper readers, the audience was required to voice their own opinions. However, the vast majority of the opinions were pro-Party, since anti-Party positions were attacked and the people who dared to voice such opinions were seriously punished. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the newspaper readers were obligated to report the opinions of their audience to the higher authorities. Those people who voiced anti-Party opinions were seriously punished. Thus, few people dared to voice their real thoughts. Moreover, in front of the

Shanghai Municipal Archives 19510815; C25-2-5-64, “Zenyang zuo yige youxiu de dubaoyuan—gei gechang dubaoyuan de yifengxin” (怎样做一个优秀的读报员——给各厂读报员的一封信  How to become an excellent newspaper reader—a letter to newspaper readers in factories), Jiefangribaoshe bianjibu, ed., *Jiefang ribao, Qingnianbao tongxun yu dubao*, 20 (1951), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 19510910.


overwhelming pro-Party opinions, few people could maintain the ability to think independently; they became like “automatons who have ceased to be guided by their own will,” in Le Bon’s words, describing individuals who immersed themselves in crowds, and were susceptible to the Party cadres’ rhetoric.68

As a result, newspaper-reading increasingly became a series of displays of ritualistic performances—showing loyalty to the Party and Chairman Mao and denouncing traditional ideas. In these shows, the Party’s norms were established, and the alleged feudal and bourgeoisie thoughts were continuously denounced. The shows became an integral part of everyday lives during the Mao era. Zhang Letian described the everyday rituals such as the newspaper-reading groups held in the People’s communes (人民公社) as revolutionary rituals: “Continuously eliminate all the old ideas, culture, customs, habits, and anything at odds with charismatic authority.” Thus, it was used as “a strategy to consolidate” society and became an ingrained part of the “new” society.69

Seeing the newspaper-reading groups as an important approach to consolidate its rule, the Party worked hard to promote this institution all around the country. In Shanghai, there were 42,473 newspaper-reading groups and 61,694 newspaper readers.70 In the urban area of Shijiazhuang, it is said that there were more than 1,700 groups. There were a dozen newspaper-reading groups in some factories and communities.71

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70 A47-1-16, “1953 nian dangde xuanchuan wang gongzuo jihua” (1953 年党的宣传网工作计划 The Party’s working plan for the propaganda network), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 1953.
71 Ma Fen, *Zenyang gaozhao dubaozu*, p. 10.
In rural areas, newspaper-reading groups were also popular and sometimes combined with the production organizations, such as local agricultural mutual aid teams (互助组) and production teams (生产队). For example, in the early 1950s, the newspaper-reading groups combined with local mutual aid teams. The Party claimed that this practice would consolidate the newspaper-reading groups and help them survive during the busy farming season. Also, it reconciled the conflicts between agricultural production and newspaper-reading: “(With this practice) the current affairs education of team members was reinforced… production technologies were improved.”

The newspaper-reading groups were still popular in the 1960s. According to the *Renmin ribao*, in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, there were 2,092 groups. The local dancers adapted this experience into a dance titled, “The Elderly in a Newspaper-reading Group” (读报组老人们), which depicted four old men who were inspired by the stories of Dazhai (大寨) while reading newspapers during their work. In many cases, the local Party committees would force people to attend the groups. Those who did not attend were sometimes labelled “backward elements” (落后分子). To give an example, a newspaper-reading group stipulated, “Those who miss once will be lambasted; those who miss twice will get a demerit; those who miss three times will be sentenced to sweep the streets.”

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72 Ma Fen, *Zenyang gaohao dubaozu*, pp. 11-12.
75 Ma Fen, *Zenyang gaohao dubaozu*, p. 7.
Finally, it is worth mentioning that living newspaper dramas that were staged in the streets and squares further transformed the country into a theater. Living newspaper dramas were caricatured dramas based on the news. Since these dramas were produced to promote the Party ideas, they often sounded like lectures. In Brian James DeMare’s words, the newspaper dramas were “essentially lectures that combined elements of dance, song, or impromptu acting in the Western dramatic style.” During the Mao years, the major news was frequently made into living newspaper dramas. For example, during the Korean War, popular living newspaper dramas included *Taking Captives* (抓舌头), *Lady O’moni* (娥嬷尼), and *The Collapse of Dollar Imperialism* (金元帝国的溃败). During the Great Leap Forward, living newspapers dramas such as *Free Food* (吃饭不要钱), *Assisting General Steel* (支援钢铁元帅), and *The East Wind Prevails over the West Wind* (东风压倒西风), were staged across the country. Undoubtedly, these dramas speeded up the spread of the news and literally made the country a huge theater.

**How well did the institutions of mass journalism work?**

Past scholarship has failed to pay enough attention to how the journalistic institutions worked in practice. This section will use newspaper-reading groups as an example to answer the question. In the previous literature, scholars have briefly discussed this question and do not agree with one another. One camp argues that newspaper-reading groups faded into history in the late

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78 DeMare, *Mao’s Cultural Army*, p. 29.
1950s, as there were far fewer news reports on the groups. By comparison, analyses from the other camp assert that newspaper-reading groups became a routine institution, which is why this institution failed to catch the reporters’ attention.

Both theories have their own problems. First, admittedly, there were far more reports on newspaper-reading groups in the papers before 1953 than after. However, this does not prove that the Party ignored the newspaper-reading groups after that. In fact, extensive reports on this institution resulted from the campaign to establish a propaganda network in the early 1950s. As one of the Party’s central tasks at the time, news about the newspaper-reading groups naturally received far more coverage than after that period. The scant media coverage after 1953 did not indicate a dramatic decrease of this institution or the Party’s neglect of it. Actually, there were still many mass newspaper-reading groups held after 1953. For example, Robert Loh, a designated model national capitalist who lived in Communist China between 1949 and 1957, recalled that until 1956, “Official press items were used as discussion topics in our regular mass organization meetings.”

Another reason for the reduction of media coverage was that the newspaper-reading groups were incorporated into various institutions including mutual aid teams, countryside clubs (乡村俱乐部), group meetings (组会), and study sessions/meetings/groups/classes (学习会/组/
Sha Yao argues that the countryside clubs were a regular cultural institution designed by the Party to entertain and indoctrinate the peasants in the 1950s. In 1956, newspaper-reading groups were incorporated into the countryside clubs in Shaanxi Province and formally became part of the country’s cultural system. Moreover, Sha suggests that through the rural clubs, newspaper-reading groups entered people’s daily life, becoming a ritual.82

In a similar vein, group meetings were held in work units during the era of high socialism. Reading newspapers as a way to learn about current affairs, from the Party’s perspective, was a significant part of the meetings. Dong Naibin (董乃斌), who worked in the Literature Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in the 1960s, recalled: “Before the Cultural Revolution, the Ancient [Literature] Group of the Literature Research Institute (文学所古代组) held a meeting each week. In many cases, we read newspapers and studied [political] documents during our meetings.”83

Last, during the Cultural Revolution, study sessions (学习组) were organized across the country in order to answer Mao’s call—“Running study classes is a good approach. Many problems can be solved in study classes.”84 As Andrew J. Nathan observes, “The members of all units in China are divided into these [study] groups, which meet one to six times a week for an hour or so to assimilate party policies.”85 Individuals, especially the “bad elements,” were

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82 Sha Yao, “Xin zhongguo chengli zhichu nongcun dubaozu de lishi kaocha,” p. 55.
83 Dong Naibin, Zhongguo wenxue xushi chuantong luntao  (中国文学叙事传统论稿 A manuscript on Chinese traditional literary narration) (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanzhongxin, 2017), p. 501.
84 “Dali banhao Mao Zedong sixiang xuexiban” (大力办好毛泽东思想学习班 Working hard run a good study class on Maoism), Renmin ribao, December 22, 1967.
85 Nathan, Chinese Democracy, p. 162.
compelled to read Mao’s works, political documents, and newspapers at the meeting. Among the most well-known study meetings/groups was the one attached to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (政治协商会议). Eminent intellectuals, including Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), Zhao Puchu (赵朴初), Cheng Siyuan (程思远), and Wang Yunsheng (王芸生), were all members. A significant part of the meeting was devoted to reading newspapers. In the meetings, people were expected to read aloud attentively. As Nathan’s respondents told him, “If you don’t read every issue of the Hongqi during a movement, you can get into trouble;” and “The People’s Daily would be read aloud at the front of the room where the study meeting was held.” Furthermore, after reading, the members had to show their support for the Party.

However, at the same time, I argue that many, if not most, of the newspaper-reading activities did not persist for long. The primary reason was that for local cadres reading the newspapers was a burden that frequently conflicted with their everyday work. Hence, even during the early 1950s, when the Party was making every effort to establish newspaper-reading groups, many groups failed to last long. There is a phrase to describe the situation of the day: the newspaper-reading groups were “established when people were free, and [were] dismissed when people were busy.” A report on the newspaper-reading groups in three factories in Shanghai in

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88 Nathan, Chinese Democracy, p. 162.
90 Ma Fen, Zenyang gaohao dubaozu, p.12-14.
1955 indicated that only one factory’s reading group lasted longer than one year.\footnote{91 A22-2-342-85, “Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanxian bu guanyu hezuo guoying erji Shanghai dianxianchang de dubao qingkuang de baogao,” Shanghai Municipal Archives, 1955.} In June 1952, 26 groups in the Xinshi District of Shanghai collapsed due to the hot weather and time conflicts.\footnote{92 A71-2-896-25, “Zhonggong Shanghai shi xinshi quwei xuanxian bu guanyu dubaizu qingkuang de diaocha baogao” (中共上海市委宣传部关于读报组情况的调查报告 Investigation report by CCP Shanghai New City District on newspaper reading conditions), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 19520610.}

Nevertheless, the newspaper-reading group was still a regular tool of the Party, although many did not treat it seriously unless their superiors required them to do so. In many cases, the newspaper-reading groups rose with the endless political campaigns during the Mao era, and fell when they ended. Andrew J. Nathan recorded two perfect examples in his book on Chinese democracy. First, one of his respondents from East China told him, “The leaders set up a reading room, but the peasants started to store potatoes and tools there. When a political movement started the leaders cleared out the room again.”\footnote{93 Nathan, \textit{Chinese Democracy}, p. 161.} Second, another of Nathan’s respondents who had worked as a laborer said that he read the press most intensively when there was a political movement in progress.\footnote{94 Nathan, \textit{Chinese Democracy}, p. 162.} Thus, in the massive political movements, such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), the Socialist Education Movement (1963-1966), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the newspaper-reading groups reached their peak.

During the Socialist Education Movement, students were required to go down to the countryside to read papers to the peasants. Liu Zuping (刘祖平), who was a college student at the time, claimed, “During the Socialist Education Movement, the Campaign to Learn from Jiao Yulu (焦裕禄), ‘the good secretary of the county Party committee,’ was conducted across the

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\footnote{91 A22-2-342-85, “Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanxian bu guanyu hezuo guoying erji Shanghai dianxianchang de dubao qingkuang de baogao,” Shanghai Municipal Archives, 1955.}
\footnote{92 A71-2-896-25, “Zhonggong Shanghai shi xinshi quwei xuanxian bu guanyu dubaizu qingkuang de diaocha baogao” (中共上海市委宣传部关于读报组情况的调查报告 Investigation report by CCP Shanghai New City District on newspaper reading conditions), Shanghai Municipal Archives, 19520610.}
\footnote{93 Nathan, \textit{Chinese Democracy}, p. 161.}
\footnote{94 Nathan, \textit{Chinese Democracy}, p. 162.}
country; we were ordered to read papers for the peasants and lead their study.”  

In the rural area of Fengyang of Anhui Province, newspaper-reading groups were a routine propaganda institution. Mei Sangyu remembers: “At the time, from the production teams to communes, [the leaders] emphasized political study. The peasants needed to get together at intervals and listen to newspaper reading.”  

From the discussion above, we can see that although newspaper-reading groups became a regular instrument for the Party’s use, they were not always effective. Instead, the newspaper-reading groups ebbed and flowed along with the political movements. While this section only explores the newspaper-reading groups, this rise-and-fall mode was not uncommon for most of the Party’s journalistic institutions and even the Party’s cultural institutions. The underlying cause of the inconsistent attention to the Party’s undertakings rested with the bloated, corrupt Party bureaucracy, in which the Party cadres would carry out their work without being required to do so by their superiors.

Conclusion

To conclude, with the rise in the newspapers’ untruths and expressive features, especially during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, newspapers in Mainland China increasingly resembled theaters. In parallel, through the mass journalistic institutions including newspaper-reading groups and blackboard newspapers, the Party’s messages in the newspapers

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96 Mei Sangyu, “Wenge shiqi xiangcun kepade gaomi feng” (文革时期乡村可怕的告密风 Whistleblowing wave in rural areas during the Cultural Revolution), Botanwang, accessed October 8, 2019, https://botanwang.com/articles/201503/%E2%80%9C%E6%96%87%E9%9D%A9%E2%80%9D%E6%97%B6%E6%9C%9F%E4%B9%A1%E6%9D%91%E5%8F%AF%E6%80%95%E7%9A%84%E5%91%8A%E5%AF%86%E9%A3%8E.html.
were presented in the people’s everyday lives. In neighborhoods, streets, and lanes, the
newspaper-reading groups and study meetings read, sang, and acted out the Party’s messages,
which transformed the whole society into a theater.

Although these institutions did not last long, they not only brought the Party’s message to
the masses with great effectiveness, but also contributed to consolidating the Party’s power and
its regime. A survey conducted by Andrew J. Nathan confirms that the Party’s news workers
were able to deliver the Party’s political messages to the people effectively. He contends that
Chinese’s familiarity with political subjects was like Americans’ acquaintance with commercial
advertisements, even though the majority did not enjoy political topics.97

Furthermore, in the waves and waves of propaganda campaigns, China was transformed
into a daily news-theater. In this theater, the messages in the papers were continuously displayed,
read, sung, and performed. Correspondingly, people were required to express their agreement on
the news and how they were inspired and excited by it. In fact, for the Party, what mattered most
was not whether people believed in its propaganda, but whether people would behave according
to the norms embedded in the propaganda, although these two were not oppositional but
complementary. As Robert Loh grumbled, “I knew that the Communists were indifferent to our
feelings; they were concerned only with how we acted.”98 In other words, the messages in the
papers provided the people with the norms that they needed to obey in their everyday lives, thus
spanning the “webs of significance” in which the people were suspended.99

As the Chinese people continuously behaved according to the norms of the Party,
voluntarily or involuntarily, they became actors in their daily lives, whose performance had a

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97 Nathan, Chinese Democracy, pp. 166-171.
98 Loh, Escape from Red China, p. 13.
great influence on people around them. The term of “actors,” herein, did not indicate their performance was false. Instead, it emphasizes the performance and its influence on people. The whole country, therefore, became a news-theater. Zhang Letian describes this society as full of performances, which he called “theater society (剧场社会),” and he states, “the symbols of revolution served as a powerful cultural drive to push peasants to perform and take part in shows actively. The central task of each period constituted the subject of the peasants’ behavior. In this process, rituals entered everyday lives and everyday lives were full of rituals.”

Moreover, in this theater society, people were both actors and audience. They influenced others and at the same time were influenced by them. Although the performance was only ritual and many individuals might be strongly suspicious of the Party’s rhetoric, this recurrent news ritual, as with the huiyi (会议 meeting) rituals in James Z. Gao’s study of the Party’s takeover of Hangzhou, was an effective “means of symbolic communication” that contributed to “establish[ing] and display[ing] the social principles embodied in myth” and therefore “helped the CCP make its power sacred and last longer.” In short, in the day after day performance, the ideas in newspapers became increasingly influential.

100 Zhang Letian considers the agrarian society under Mao Zedong a “theater society.” He argues that theater society is one in which revolutionary representations concealed (or even replaced) the real lives, and in which ritualized performance prevailed over real words and deed. Inspired by revolutionary representations, the peasants participated in performance, and competed to show their revolutionary side and abandon their traditional features. With the peasants’ performance, the Party not only stepped into power and consolidated its regime in a short time, but also was able to organize millions of peasants and achieve agricultural collectivization. Notably, Zhang’s idea was inspired by Clifford Geertz’s observation of royal rituals in the nineteenth-century Balinese state. See Zhang Letian, Gaobie lixiang, pp. 4-5; Geertz, Negara, p.13.

Therefore, together with other methods of cultural patronage (Elizabeth J. Perry’s term), such as slogans, broadcasts, movies, political exhibitions, songs, dramas, posters, and big-character posters, and the growing number of political rituals, such as Red Guard dances and “morning requests, evening reports,” newspapers enabled the Party to imbue people with its ideology, to establish its own political culture, and to shape the ways that people behaved. With the operation of the Party’s propaganda apparatus, people throughout the country were kept in lockstep; they were called on and organized to lead their lives and to do their work to an unprecedented degree. Of course, the strong influence of the Party’s propaganda apparatus on its people was by no means a phenomenon unique to China. Indeed, the Communist states in Russia and Eastern Europe that were also considered propaganda states exerted a great influence on people’s lives, including their interior lives. For example, Orlando Figes’ study of private life in Stalin’s Russia suggests, “It was practically impossible for the individual to think or feel outside the terms defined by the public discourse of Soviet politics.” Peter Kenez maintains, “Soviet propaganda taught people a political language and a pattern of behavior.”

Finally, while acknowledging the power of the Party’s propaganda apparatus, it is important to also acknowledge its limitations and not to overestimate its impact on the masses. In fact, although it effectively shaped the ideas of the vast majority, the Party’s propaganda machine was also repeatedly producing the “spiral of silence,” a term coined by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Facing the overwhelming pro-Party opinions, individuals who were able to keep their political beliefs had to voice similar opinions or keep silent if possible, due to the “fear

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102 Elizabeth J. Perry views cultural patronage as the control and interpretation of cultural sources including rhetoric, symbols, and signs in order to consolidate and sanctify political power. See Perry, Anyuan, pp. 11-13.
103 See Kenez, The Birth of the Propaganda State.
105 Kenez, The Birth of the Propaganda State, p. 255.
of isolation” and “fear of authority.” In other words, at least a part of the population just remained “in the background where their communication was restrained” and fell silent rather than change their mind. This explains why Mao’s ideas highlighting class struggles were abandoned only two years after his death. The current literature also demonstrates the limitations of the Party’s propaganda programs. For example, Matthew D. Johnson’s study on the cultural landscape of Shanghai, 1949-1965, suggests, “The state-sponsored cultural production was by no means uniform or uncontested at the grassroots.” Likewise, the scholarship on different areas of the PRC, such as studies by Ezra F. Vogel, Dorothy J. Solinger, William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, Mobo Gao, and others, indicates that the CCP had not “demolished and replaced the traditional networks of authority,” or the preexisting “regional identities and family allegiances.”


Conclusion

In the 1950s, the CCP established a hierarchical, dual-track system of journalism that employed newspapers, on the one hand, and internal bulletins, on the other hand. In combination with the Party organization, this system was able to deliver the Party’s messages to the grassroots effectively and contributed to the completion of the central tasks of the Party. At the same time, this system of journalism was part of the Party’s intelligence network.

While Party journalism played a significant political role, the overall emphasis on the political function of newspapers resulted in the dramatization and ritualization of the newspapers’ content and layout. Moreover, through the Party’s mass journalistic institutions, including newspaper-reading groups and blackboard newspapers, the Party news workers converted the country into what I call a news-theater. Within the news-theater, the news was performed and demonstrated. Individuals had to show their support for the Party publicly, so everyone became an actor and simultaneously an audience member. In the daily performance, the Party’s ideology was repeatedly confirmed. Eventually, newspapers as well as the Party’s other cultural institutions, including dramas, films, paintings, speaking bitterness rallies, and mass rallies, contributed to the establishment and maintenance of Communist rule in China.

While the Party’s journalism was able to bring its messages to every corner of the country, the internal bulletin system, established to bring what was happening in the country to the leadership, was unable to perform the tasks it was intended to. Because the leaders, especially Mao Zedong, frequently used the internal bulletins to lobby for their own ideas and were unwilling to read news that was unfavorable to them, the bulletins were frequently caught in power struggles and were soon dysfunctional. This dysfunctional internal bulletin system broke
the central-local connection and blocked the central leadership from accessing reliable information, thus leading to the formulation of poor policies and adding to the political turbulence during the Mao years.

In the process of establishing Soviet-style journalism, the civilian-run newspapers came under the control of the Party and were forced to adopt the Party’s journalistic norms. Nevertheless, they were not eradicated by the Party. Instead, as the Nationalist Party had done, the Communist Party strategically kept the non-Party appearance of those papers and utilized them to achieve its goals. Therefore, the “non-Party” newspapers became a significant complement to the Party newspapers and a necessary part of the Party’s journalism.

Currently, the Communist Party still uses non-Party media strategically. Luwei Rose Luqiu, who worked for Phoenix TV (凤凰卫视), a nominally civilian-run TV station, observes that Phoenix TV “was part of the Chinese government’s overseas propaganda machine which the government intended to use to inform and influence Chinese people overseas.”¹ The Party’s use of the non-Party media, on the one hand, exposed the Party media’s weaknesses (unpopularity and the sense among the ordinary readers of unreliability), and on the other hand, exhibited the Party’s flexibility in the employment of different cultural resources or “adaptive capacity” to borrow Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J. Perry’s term, all of which helps us to understand why the CCP has been able to maintain its rule despite the fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Russia.²

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¹ Luwei Rose Luqiu, Propaganda, Media, and Nationalism in Mainland China and Hong Kong (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), p. ix.
Although journalism in China underwent dramatic changes after the establishment of the Communist regime in 1949, this dissertation shows there were many aspects that lasted and adds to the recent scholarship on the continuity-discontinuity issue pre- and post-1949. The foremost thing that did not change was the relationship between the journalists and political powers. Both the Nationalists and Communists endeavored to draw newspeople over to their side and utilize them to pursue their agenda. Meanwhile, the newspeople, as a group of intellectuals who actively took part in the political and cultural construction of China, also tended to identify with certain political powers and cooperate with them. Therefore, the relationship between the newspeople and political powers were intertwined rather than antagonistic. Zaichao (in active service at the court) and zaiye (in the “wilderness,” out of office) two Chinese traditional concepts, are a better framework for analysis than Habermas’ public sphere or its many variants. Moreover, when the Soviet journalistic norms were introduced to China on a large scale, many traditional features of Chinese journalism, such as multi-line titles and supplements, persisted. As the readers’ tastes could not be changed overnight, in Shanghai the Party had to establish two tabloids—a special newspaper form that went against the Party’s values, to cater to the “backward” readers.

Among the continuities, I focus on the relationship between the newspeople and authorities. Unfortunately, this continuity reflected the continuation of dictatorship in China. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was possible for journalists to remain independent. However, that period was an exceptional time in Chinese history. Indeed, the twentieth century witnessed the reinforcement of the power of China’s central government and bureaucratic system. As Philip Kuhn observes about modern Chinese history, “Viewed over a century [the twentieth century], it is a story about the relentless march of the central state. The monarchy’s immediate successors did their best to replace the ‘self-government’ bodies of the 1910s with centers of bureaucratic
administration.”3 In the process by which the authority of the central government was re-established, the traditional relationship between the government and intellectuals was also rebuilt. Indeed, with the rise of the strong political powers, the intellectuals had no choice but to work with those powers or give up their status as cultural and social leaders. This was particularly true for the newspeople, who were the leaders of public opinion. Any far-sighted political leader would strive to control them or remove them from their platforms.

List of Newspapers and People

The Dagongbao (大公报 The Impartial): The Dagongbao was founded in 1902 by Ying Lianzhi (英敛之). Its golden era in Mainland China was from 1926 to 1949. During this period, the newspaper was the most influential and respected civilian-run paper. It was noted for its “Four-No-isms” (四不主义) slogan that highlighted the autonomy and objectivity of the press. It was awarded the Missouri Honor Medal in 1941 for its distinguished service in journalism. The chief editors of this paper were Zhang Jiluan (张季鸾) from 1926 to 1941, and Wang Yunsheng (王芸生) from 1941 to 1949. After 1949, only the Shanghai branch of the press remained so whenever the post-1949 Dagongbao is mentioned, it means the Shanghai Dagongbao. In 1953, it was transformed into a public-private partnership and in 1958, it became a state-run paper.

Guancha (观察 Observation): This magazine was instituted in 1946 and stopped publication in 1950. It was considered an exemplary liberal magazine and was one of the most influential periodical publications at the time, especially among intellectuals.

Guangming ribao (光明日报 Enlightenment Daily): Nominally, beginning in 1949, the Guangming ribao was the official newspaper of the Minor Parties and Groups (MPGs 民主党派). This status did not change until 1982 when the Party announced that it would be run by the Party Central Committee. The targeted audience of this paper were intellectuals.
Jiefang ribao (解放日报 Liberation Daily): There were two Jiefang ribao in the Party’s history. The first was the Jiefang ribao in Yan’an. It was the mouthpiece of the Party Central Committee from 1941-1947. The second was the Shanghai Jiefang ribao. It has been the mouthpiece of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee since 1949.

Renmin ribao (人民报 People’s Daily): This paper has been the mouthpiece of the Party Central Committee since 1949.

Wenhuibao (文汇报 Shanghai Mercury): The Wenhuibao was founded in January 1938 by a group of railroad workers headed by Yan Baoli (严宝礼). The chief editor of this paper was Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成), who had worked at the Dagongbao for years. In 1953, it was transformed into a public-private partnership and in the early 1960s it became a state-run paper.

Chu Anping (储安平 1909-1966): Chu was the chief editor of Guangcha magazine from 1946 to 1950. After 1950, he served as a high-ranking cadre in two propaganda institutions, namely the Xinhua Bookstore and the General Administration of Publication. In 1957, Chu served as the chief editor of the Guangming ribao for sixty-seven days. During this period, he gave his famous speech about “the Party empire” (党天下). After that, he became one of the most well-known rightists in China. In 1966, Chu mysteriously disappeared. Up until now, his body has not been found and nobody knows for sure what happened to him. Also, to date, he is one of the five central-level rightists who has not been rehabilitated.
Deng Tuo (邓拓 1912-1966): From 1937 to 1948, Deng worked in the Jinchaji Border Area (晋察冀边区), a base area of the Party in North China, serving as the chief editor of the Jinchaji ribao (晋察冀日报 Jinchaji Daily). Deng was the director and editor-in-chief of the Renmin ribao from 1949 to 1957. In 1966, he was labeled a member of the sanjiacun (三家村 The Village of Three Households), an anti-Party group, because of his satirical essays in the Beijing wanbao (北京晚报 Beijing Evening News).

Hu Jiwei (胡绩伟 1916-2012): Hu went to Yan’an in 1939 and became the chief editor of the Bianqu qunzhongbao (边区群众报 Border Masses News), a significant, popular Party paper in Yan’an. Hu began to work for the Renmin ribao in 1952. In 1977, he became a major leader of the Renmin ribao and served as the director and chief editor of this paper.

Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木 1912-1992): Hu became Mao’s secretary in 1941 and was one of the two major writers of the Party’s journalism rules (the other being Lu Dingyi 陆定一 1906-1996). Hu held several significant positions in the Party’s propaganda system such as director of the NCNA, director of the General Administration of Press (新闻总署), and vice-propaganda minister.

Li Chunqing (李纯青): Li joined the Party in 1934 and worked for the Dagongbao from the late 1930s to 1954. After 1949, he served as vice director and vice chief editor of the Dagongbao.
Li Zhuang (李庄 1918-2006): Li began working for the Party in 1940 as a reporter for the *Jinchaji ribao*. He took part in the establishment of the *Renmin ribao* in 1948 and worked for this paper from that time. In the press, he served as the director of the office of editor, director of the rural work section, a member of the editorial committee, and vice chief editor.

Wang Yunsheng (王芸生 1901-1980): Wang succeeded Zhang Jiluan as chief editor of the *Dagongbao*. After 1949, the *Dagongbao* was gradually transformed into a state-run paper. At the same time, Wang became a state cadre.

Xia Gongran (夏公然 b. 1920): Xia began to work as a Party journalist in the Party’s base areas in Jiangsu province in 1940. He served as a war correspondent for the NCNA during the civil war (1946-1949) and the Korean War (1950-1953). From 1959 to 1966, he was one of the major editors of the domestic internal bulletins (*内参 neican*).

Xia Yan (夏衍 1900-1995): Xia joined the Party in 1927. With the outbreak of the War of Resistance, he worked at several Party papers such as the *Jiuwang ribao* (*救亡日报 Salvation Daily*), the *Huashangbao* (*华商报 China Business Daily*), and the *Xinhua ribao* (*新华日报 New China Daily*). After 1949, Xia became one of the most significant propaganda cadres in Shanghai and frequently dealt with the previously civilian-run papers.

Xu Zhucheng (徐铸成 1907-1991): Xu served as the chief editor of the *Wenhuiibao* from 1938, when the paper was established, to 1957, when he was labelled a Rightist.
Zhang Jiluan (张季鸾 1888-1941): Zhang was the chief editor of the *Dagongbao* from 1926 to 1941. He was noted for his Four-No-ism (四不主义) slogan—no party affiliation, no political endorsement, no self-promotion, no ignorance (不党，不卖，不私，不盲), and exemplified the Republican newspeople.

Zhang Xinmin (张辛民 b. 1924): Zhang joined the Party in 1948. From 1950 to 1954, he was a reporter and editor for the *Yunnan ribao* (云南日报 Yunan Daily). Between 1954 and 1958, he worked as editor and director of the martial section of the *Cankao xiaoxi* (参考消息 Reference News), a significant internal bulletin. In the 1960s, he became a leading editor of the *neican* section of the NCNA.
This part is divided into two sections. The first section contains the published materials, including secondary materials, newspaper articles, published archives, memoirs, relevant individuals’ collected works, and so on. The second section lists the unpublished archives that I found in the Shanghai Municipal Archives.

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