

Post June 4th Chinese Journalism: Telling the Truth in a Round About Way

Anthony S.K. Lam

Translated by Peter Barry, MM

Traditionally speaking, the Chinese journalist combined the mentality of the intellectuals, who devoted themselves to saving their country, and the Marxist social mission to change the world. Under Marxism's sovereign political power, they also cooperated fully with the ruling authority. However, in spite of these difficulties, they try to find a way to express from the heart an accurate picture of events. This is truly admirable.

Although the Chinese Communists obtained their political power from the barrel of a gun, whether before or after taking power, up to the present, they have absolutely not abandoned their propaganda work. They emphasized that journalism must serve the people's "revolutionary enterprise." Official publications, whether large or small, must be consistent with the central government's stance. Therefore, during April and May, 1989, the *People's Daily*, after speaking the truth for a few weeks, could not avoid the suppression that followed afterwards. After "June 4th," the *People's Daily* experienced a great reshuffle of personnel.

However, there is a saying in Chinese: "Honesty abides in the peoples' hearts." Maybe those who are involved in newspaper work are truly "accursed." The spirit of being unafraid of death in carrying out their work was always there. Although after the suppression the Chinese media was desolate, yet in the midst of the dark and stormy times, one could not keep a few streams of light from shining through. From viewing post-June 4th issues of the *People's Daily* (《人民日報》) and the *Guangming Daily* (《光明日報》), this writer can see some clever examples of fearless

opposition to the political authority of the times. Of course, being under the gun as the media organizations were, how could they freely express their own beliefs? It depends on the skill of the media workers.

Criticizing Liu Binyan

After June 4th, many essays in the two papers, under the pretext of criticizing activists for democracy, made use of that theme to point out the faults of the reigning authorities, thus boosting the positions of the activists. An essay in the November 4, 1989 issue of the *Guangming Daily*, with the title "An Exposure of Liu Binyan's Reactionary Face," while on the surface is a criticism of Liu, in reality it is an attack on the suppression of freedom and human rights among the upper echelons of the Communist Party. The article says:

Liu Binyan has been so stubborn for many years, insisting on his liberal capitalist point of view. In foreign countries, he is more uncontrolled. In April last year (1988), he published an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, promoting capitalist 'Press Freedom,' asking to run 'civil newspapers' in China, opposing the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party over journalism, opposing the socialist journalistic system and guidance, and striving to hold a forum on capitalist liberation. In June he participated in a forum and spoke on 'the Problems of the Chinese Intellectual.' *Bai Shing Magazine* (*People Magazine* 《百姓雜誌》) in Hong Kong published the whole speech. Some points which attracted peoples' attention were: he declared 'the failure of Chinese socialism's democratic model and system,' the promotion of Western capitalism's political system of 'the three powers working separately' (the three branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial – trans.) to take its place, and also said that 'In 1949 and afterward, we have made a serious strategic mistake, namely that the country did away with capitalism.'

Speaking candidly, after Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour of 1992, China desired to follow a purely capitalist path. And it would be an early stage of capitalism, such as was described in the novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. Whether capitalism is good or bad can be discussed in another essay. However, in this essay the author secretly boosted Liu Binyan's position. Let us read another section:

In September last year, Liu Binyan gave a speech at Harvard University, asserting that Chinese economic reform 'cannot be successful,' and wrongly commenting that 'Chinese bureaucracy' is the fundamental reason for China's failure to make progress...

In November last year, Liu agreed to be interviewed by the West German newspaper *Die Welt (The World)* in Bonn. When answering a question about freedom in creation, he made use of that opportunity to libel China, saying that 'up to now there is no freedom of speech at all.' He claimed that, by means of a 'reform' of the current system, he hoped that 'a second political party' would appear. In December, he gave a talk at Maryland University in the USA for students from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, commenting on the so-called 'rise and fall of the Chinese Communist Party and the future of China.' He ignored the great results of the ten years of reform in our country, and said that the reform was 'doomed to failure from the very beginning.' The reason was the so-called 'unreasonable political system' in China. He called for canceling the Four Basic Principles, which are the foundation of our country. He dared to say that 'the Four Basic Principles only appear in the prologue of the Constitution of the Communist Party. They have no legal force. Everything which appears on paper is amendable.'

Twenty years later, recalling the two times that the Chinese government has amended the Constitution, it has tried to phase out "the four basic principles." Obviously Liu Binyan has made a contribution to the discussion. Guo Fan, who was suavely

transmitting Liu Binyan's words, also deserves a word of praise. In the article, Guo mentioned other "crimes" of Liu Binyan.

In an interview with the *New York Times* on the same day, Liu Binyan criticized US government's stance regarding 'political prisoners' in China, saying that they failed to protest against this as they did in the case of the USSR. He also said that if the US 'thought that the human rights issue in China was not important, it is a kind of insult.'

What is more amazing is that, in the latter half of the article Liu Binyan is quoted as saying: "Over 100 upper level cadres opposed 'martial law,' calling it a wrong decision. ... They do not recognize Li Peng's political authority, and they even called it a false government."

There are many other colorful excerpts in this essay. Since this article is limited in space, we cannot mention them here. The reader is invited to look for the November 3, 1989 issue of *People's Daily* to savor the complete essay. The whole essay was reproduced in the November 4, 1989 issue of *Guangming Daily*. I think many people must have read it then. It was quite remarkable for the editors of both newspapers to have worked closely together on the essay.

Criticizing Yan Jiaqi

Five days before, the *Guangming Daily* also published an article entitled "Wan Runnan Picked up a 'Stone' to Throw at Whom?" The content was about the same as that of the two previous articles. Actually during the second half of 1989, many of this type of article appeared, which are too numerous to count. The authorities could not come out and deny them. Only they knew the suffering they underwent. Amongst these articles, the most colorful to appear was in the August 3, 1989 issue of the *People's Daily*. The title of the article was "Yan Jiaqi, the 'Genius' Behind the Turmoil." (Referred to below as "Criticizing Yan").

The "Criticizing Yan" article begins by saying: "An important representative among those who consider themselves 'geniuses'

among the intellectuals (but who are really scum) is Yan Jiaqi.” After making some reluctant slight “criticisms” of Yan Jiaqi, most of the rest of the article is free publicity on Yan’s behalf. The first part of the article is an introduction to the principle thought of Yan Jiaqi.

The whole article is divided into four parts. The first part spells out Yan Jiaqi’s relationship with the “Renaissance Society,” the “Reconstruction Society,” and the “May 4th Newspaper.” The second part introduces Yan Jiaqi’s writings and theories. The author gives a thorough presentation of these, which would leave a Hong Kong legislator on the campaign trail in the dust.

After ‘Xi Dan Wall’ and other illegal organizations were dissolved, Yan Jiaqi started ‘studying’ political science. The main ‘result’ of his study is published in three books. One is a compilation of all kinds of posters, hearsay, and rumors published in a book entitled, *The Ten Year History of the Cultural Revolution*. Another book is entitled *On Leadership*, which is propaganda for capitalist political points of view. The last one is a self-promoting and self-praising book, entitled *A Biography of My Thinking*. His basic political idea is that China should have a system of ‘three independent powers,’ (the three branches of government, executive, legislative and judicial, of the American system – trans.), which would be subject to ‘the checks and balances’ of each other, without the leadership of the Communist Party. He thinks that Marxism is a kind of ‘enclosure of the thought system.’ To protect the purity of Marxism is to ‘protect the Chinese feudalistic culture.’ In a word, he called for the cancellation of the Four Basic Principles, and for the promotion of American democracy and the establishment of a capitalist class in China.

The “Criticizing Yan” article further lists Yan Jiaqi’s many honors, regarding them as spectacular. “He has established contact with some people who stubbornly maintain capitalism and freedom; he exchanges ideas with them and is an important representative of their point of view. Because of this, he has been called by persons at home and abroad ‘a new type of political scholar,’ ‘a political

genius,' 'an authority on the reformation of political systems,' and 'a fighter for democracy,' 'a representative of the liberal faction of intellectuals,' and 'a famous person in the modern world.'" Honestly speaking, Yan Jiaqi should have sent a word of thanks to the *People's Daily*.

The second part of the article speaks about the role Yan Jiaqi played since April 1989 in the student movement. This section is the longest of the whole article. It is written according to the facts, but in a balanced manner. Amazingly in the last two paragraphs, when describing Yan Jiaqi's speeches, while on the surface strictly placing blame, the article once again boosts Yan's position. The author writes in the following manner:

On April 19, the two magazines *World Economic Journal* and *New Observation* called some people to Beijing for a forum. Quite a number of them aimed their spears at the central government. Yan Jiaqi said, 'If one takes a look at Tiananmen Square, one would know that what people were doing was nothing more than giving a fair appraisal of Hu Yaobang, and asking for fair judgments of the people in the 1986 movements.' 'In Tiananmen Square, we can see the future and the hope of China.' He was not only precisely pointing out two substantial slogans, and making them a framework for action, but he also directly applauded the demonstrations, adding fuel to the unrest....

On May 14, Yan and another 12 people promulgated 'Our urgent appeal regarding the current situation,' which requested the central government to declare openly that the whole student movement 'is a patriotic democratic movement.' It also called for recognizing the 'Bei Gao Lian' (「北高聯」 Association of Higher Educational Institutions in Beijing) as a 'legitimate organization.' The appeal warned the Party and the government not to take strong measures against the students on hunger strike, otherwise they 'will become criminals of history.'

Criticizing in a colorful manner, the author uses Yan Jiaqi's own words, once more pointing out that the oppressive authorities

could become “criminals throughout history.” One can say that it treats Yan Jiaqi in a just manner, pointing out that Yan had an almost prophetic sense that martial law in Beijing, and its oppressive aftermath, would not turn out well. Most interesting is that the author reminded the Chinese media that they should not forget the enthusiasm of that day:

After being finally approved by Yan Jiaqi, this ‘appeal’ was first announced in Tiananmen Square, then broadcast through CCTV (China Central Television), before finally being published in the May 15 edition of *Guangming Daily*. The requests carried in the ‘appeal’ instantly became the political requests of the students....

On May 16, he took part in a procession of people from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to give moral support to the students on hunger strike. He also joined with other people to issue the ‘May 16 Statement,’ which again asked the Party and the government to recognize ‘the legitimacy of the self-governing student organization’ and to admit that the April 26 Editorial was ‘a mistake.’...

On May 17, he led and drafted the ‘May 17 Declaration,’ virulently attacking comrade Deng Xiaoping personally. He said, ‘As the dictator has unlimited power, the government has lost her responsibility and her humanity.’ ‘The Qing Monarchy has passed away for seventy-six years, but now in China there is still an emperor without the title of emperor, he is an aging and muddle-headed dictator.’ ‘Yesterday afternoon, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang publicly announced that in China all decisions have to be made by this aging dictator.’ He also called for ‘Old peoples politics to come to an end! Dictators should resign.’

Reading up to this point, while saying the essay criticizes Yan Jiaqi, it might be better to say that it borrows Yan Jiaqi’s words to criticize Deng Xiaoping. Then, the writer, in the following paragraphs, turns his pen on Li Peng.

On May 23, the 'Beijing Intellectual Association' (「北京知識界聯合會」) was officially established and was headed by Bao Zunxin. Somebody said that Yan Jiaqi should head the National Intellectual Association, should it be established. On the same day, the full text of the 'Declaration of the Establishment of the Beijing Intellectual Association' was published in the *United Daily News* (《聯合報》) in Taiwan. The Declaration attacked the central government's policy and the State Council's order of Martial Law as a 'perverse measure.' They called for convening a National People's Congress meeting immediately, to 'examine a bill dismissing Li Peng.' The Association called for all its members to participate in a silent protest in Tiananmen Square that very night, and they distributed their own publication *News Express* (《新聞快訊》) there. They condemned comrade Li Peng, claiming 'to put him on the guillotine of history.'

On May 26, Yan Jiaqi and Bao Zunxin published 'An Open Letter to Li Peng' in Hong Kong newspapers, once again asking for the cancellation of Martial Law and the 'Dismissal of Li Peng.'

At this point, the reader realizes that the one being criticized in the article "Yan Jiaqi, the 'Genius' Behind the Turmoil" is not Yan Jiaqi, but Li Peng. How unfortunate it must have been for the Premier to see himself being criticized right in his own newspaper. But so deep was the anger of the masses, that there was no other way to release their anger except through this method.

On September 2, 1989, the *Guangming Daily*, on its first and second pages carried another "denunciation" article. The title was "A Vain Attempt to Establish a Framework for a Capitalist Republic — A Criticism of Yan Jiaqi's *On Leadership*." One would expect that this article, as usual, would put black labels on Yan Jiaqi and his writings, such as "reckless false science," "the world vision of an ambitious person," "a reactionary framework," "negative teaching material and a negative teacher," and so on.

However, putting aside such mudslinging, in the context of post-June 4th social reality when all of Yan Jiaqi's works were being

blacklisted, it is remarkable to see that the editors of *Guangming Daily* devoted over 11,000 words of valuable space to precisely introducing Yan Jiaqi's thought and ideas. It was both a rare and a practical presentation of Yan Jiaqi's thought and a mark of respect for a patriotic and loyal scholar, who had sacrificed everything to the "June 4th" movement. I should mention, for the sake of balance, that I do not particularly like Yan Jiaqi's *On Leadership*. But for the *Guangming Daily* to give such a high-class analysis should make Yan Jiaqi feel very satisfied.

Criticizing Wan Runnan

The August 17, 1989 issue of *Guangming Daily* carried an article criticizing Wan Runnan. The title was "Wan Runnan Picked Up a Stone to Crush Whom?" But the "denunciation" was just a response to the methods of the authorities. It amounted merely to a professional historical account of the participation of the enterprise in the June 4th Incident.

Wan Runnan's important assistant and vice-president of the company Cui Mingshan told the heads of the trouble-making students: 'We go to Tiananmen Square almost everyday.' 'The contribution STONE as a company gives can be considered number one in Beijing city. We are doing so at the risk of the whole company being crushed by the government!' ...

A vice-president of STONE told the heads of the student movements that STONE has supplied some Rmb 200,000. Besides a great volume of food, drink, and medicines being sent directly to illegal organizations such as 'Gao Zi Lian' (「高自聯」 the Higher Education Self-Management Association), they also supplied a large number of devices, such as mobile phones, powerful microphones, walkie-talkies and so on, for counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement. The rumor-manufacturing-machine, which had such a great effect at the Gao Zi Lian Command Centre in Tiananmen, was also supplied by STONE.

Of course, some “crimes” can be considered real and unmistakable. The way of writing of the official media should not go beyond certain boundaries. For instance, the media mentioned several times the “STONE” Company’s policies behind the stage.

‘Subsidizing’ was not without its conditions. Under STONE there is a ‘Ludao Company,’ and under Ludao there is a ‘Huacheng Logistics Company’. The head of the Huacheng Company directly contacted an exco-member of the ‘Gong Zi Lian’ (「工自聯」Workers Self-Management Association) and some trouble-making student leaders at Tiananmen Square, and paid them 18,000 Rmb cash on the site. He also gave them a mobile phone and a ‘Liberation’ lorry. He also promised to print flyers for them. There was only one condition: Support the ‘Reformists’ in the party and oppose the ‘Conservatives,’ overthrow Li (Peng) and protect Zhao (Ziyang). He never hid his intentions, ‘I really want to influence the mass of students with my own point of view.’ ...

What arouses one’s interest is the phrase “Overthrow Li and Protect Zhao,” which was a common consensus among democratic movement members. The author of the essay uses much space to again discuss this matter in a detailed way. It was not purely to query the position of “Wan Runnan” or “STONE,” but to express his own opinion. If such an expression is not clear enough, let the reader read again the following two paragraphs, and see if he does not come to same opinion.

On May 22 at 4:00 pm, Wan Runnan sent cars to Tiananmen Square to pick up some one hundred student leaders of the silent protest, from some 80 higher education institutes in Beijing and in other places. When they arrived at the Rainbow Chinese Restaurant in the International Hotel, Wan rejected any service of the attendants, closed the door, and acted as a commander. He first affirmed the actions of the students, saying ‘you have achieved a great victory, and have made a great contribution.’ Then he said, ‘If we compare your action with a novel, then it would be a

great novel. The opening chapter and the middle chapters of the novel have been written. Now if you can write a good final chapter and a good conclusion, it would be even more grand.'...

How can one 'write a good final chapter'? Wan Runnan put forth an idea and said, 'You should take this right opportunity to withdraw from the Square, actively draw back to your university campuses and maintain a campus protest.' He strongly emphasized, 'Such actions will be praised by the whole of society, and will be more beneficial to the next step of the protest.' What is 'the next step'? He said with deep feeling, 'Do you know what the troops' approaching Beijing means? If students withdraw to campuses, then the outside troops lose their reason for approaching Beijing. ... At the same time, as the troops are approaching Beijing, the people can ask them 'what do you want?' He then showed them his hidden agenda. He said, 'Withdrawal is not without pre-conditions, it comes with requests.' 'The first pre-condition is: the troops should return to their barracks, and you go back to your campuses; the second is: cancel martial law, and restore normal order; the third: Li Peng should step down, and Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun and other senior people should honorably retire one by one; and the fourth and final condition is: support Comrade Zhao Ziyang.' Wan Runnan put special stress on the last pre-condition, saying that this one was 'very important.'

This was really treating the students of the democratic movement justly. As for the struggle for power within the Party and within the government before and after the declaration of martial law, the author deviates to write pure history.

On May 20 and afterwards, the promoters and organizers of the demonstrations felt deeply that it was unlikely that the Party could solve its internal problems by itself. So they placed their hope on the calling of an urgent meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Yan Jiaqi, Bao Zunxin and others made phone calls to the leaders of the Standing Committee, attacking the State

Council for implementing martial law in certain parts of Beijing, and nonsensically saying, 'Currently a small group of people is abusing the Constitution,' therefore they 'proposed calling for an urgent meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to solve the current serious problem.' Then they immediately published in the *Ming Pao Daily* (《明報》日報) of Hong Kong a statement about 'Solving China's current problems along the line of democracy and legislation,' and cried out that 'every member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and of the National People's Congress, with your sacred vote dismiss Li Peng from his office as premier.'

In the final part of the article, two paragraphs make an important exposition. On the surface, they seem to blame Wan Runnan for violating socialism's public ownership. But in reality, they expound Wan Runnan's political ideals.

STONE at the very beginning aimed at exploring higher technology. Wan Runnan had gained special honor from this. Wan himself, however, stated in the past that, he established STONE not for technological and economic reasons, but for politics. On May 30, at the peak of the unrest, Wan in an interview with the ATV (Asia Television) of Hong Kong, stated clearly, 'Political democracy needs a strong economic basis. Social stability needs a middle class.' What he means in his heart by 'middle class' is actually a capitalist class. How to make a 'middle class' emerge? After Wan Runnan was exiled to a foreign country, he made his meaning clearer. The main point depends on 'the matter of the ownership of property, which must be clearly defined.' To make it clear, Wan disapproves of the socialist communal system, and calls for a capitalist private ownership system.

To solve the question of ownership, according to Wan, 'is beyond the domain of economic reform, and becomes a question of political reform.' Meanwhile, 'the active economic forces will necessarily seek to have their political representatives.' Wan not only acted as a kind of 'political representative,' but he also organized a special team to

study and promote his political ideas. Cao Xiyuan now heads the 'Stone Social Development Research Institute' (四通社會發展研究所). This Institute, from the very beginning, made the introduction of Western capitalist parliamentary democracy and the amendment of the Constitution their main topics of research....

On March 26 this year, this institute hosted a 'Symposium on the Study of Theories on the Amendment of the Constitution,' co-sponsored by the *World Economic Journal* (《世界經濟導報》) and *New Observation* magazine (《新觀察》). Cao gave the opening speech and clearly asked to eliminate such names as Mao Zedong and Sun Yatsen from the Constitution, otherwise he will 'feel ashamed.'

Somebody joked that the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' was nothing but 'deciding everything by the authority of one class, one party, one gang, and one person.' The meeting was not open to the public, but a correspondent for the English newspaper *The Guardian* managed to make a report: 'During this four hour long meeting the participants asked to eliminate everything about the thought of Mao Zedong and the four basic principles from the Constitution.'

The blueprint for a capitalist republic, which Wan Runnan always dreams of, includes an implementation of private property, a trial experiment to let the so-called 'middle class' occupy the positions of authority, and a cancellation of the four basic principles. This will lead to a realization of so-called 'parliamentary democracy.' Of course, this is only an empty dream.

Except for the last line, the whole essay can be considered as Wan Runnan's Reform Constitution. Later, when the government amended the Constitution twice to meet the reality of the country's development and needs, perhaps Wan Runnan's ideas had an influence. One cannot but admit that Wan Runnan made a great contribution to the process of the modernization of the country. He also sacrificed his whole fortune. The *Guangming Daily* felt duty-bound to lend him a helping hand.

Using Deng Xiaoping to Criticize Deng Xiaoping

Moreover, on August 21, 1989, the *People's Daily* announced, with a flourish, that the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* had been published (Look at the headlines on the first page). The editors did not lose this good opportunity to express the dissatisfaction in their hearts. The headline on the second page was "An Introduction to the Important Essays from *The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (1938–1965)." The accompanying article gave an outline of over 20 essays. The most interesting was an April 8, 1957 speech of Deng Xiaoping in Xi'an, entitled "The Communist Party Should Accept Supervision." The article introduced this speech in the following way:

'The Communist Party should accept supervision' is part of a report given on April 8, 1957, at a Xi'an Cadres Meeting. The essay says, 'Our party is the governing party with high privileges. A great number of cadres are holding leading positions. In China, who can commit great mistakes? It is only the Communist Party, which can do so. The effect of committing mistakes is also enormous.' Therefore, if the party would like to perform its leadership duties well, it should constantly overcome subjectivism, bureaucracy and denominationalism. That means they should accept supervision, and expand democratic life in the party and in the country.

As if this were not enough to express the editors' intention, the key essay in the next day's issue of the *People's Daily* was a re-print of the whole "The Communist Party Should Accept Supervision" speech, and a clear expression of the editors' dissatisfaction with the handling of that year's June 4th Incident:

Supervision comes from three areas. The first is supervision by the Party. For Party members, supervision by the Party is the most direct one. It is to ask that the Party's supervision of its members should be stricter, and the (Chinese Communist) Youth League's supervision of its members should also be stricter. The second is supervision

by the masses. We should expand the masses' supervision over the Party and over Party members. The third is supervision by the democratic parties and by non-party persons. We should enlarge their supervision over the Party and over Party members.

For the *People's Daily* to especially select that essay for discussion, when the Party, after June 4th, was monitoring the atmosphere throughout the whole country, was especially interesting.

At the same time, the editors of the *People's Daily* purposely used that essay to explain the unfortunate conflict that took place on June 4th. In the original speech Deng Xiaoping had said:

Are not arguments being held in some places now? Some people are asking for Grand Democracy (Footnote 4), aren't they? Some youth also believe that Grand Democracy can solve many problems. We do not agree with Grand Democracy. Grand Democracy can be avoided. Here we only want mini-democracy. If there is no mini-democracy, Grand Democracy will definitely emerge. People must be able to give voice to their anger. Our way is to give them a place to release their anger, a place to speak, a place to complain. The opinions of the masses do not go beyond the following situations. Some are reasonable. We should accept them if they are reasonable. We should implement them. If we do not implement them, it is our mistake. If we do not implement them, it is bureaucracy. Some are partly reasonable. The reasonable parts, we should implement. For those we failed to implement, we should give a clear explanation. We should do something about the unreasonable ones; we should carry out persuasion. In a word, we should always let the people express their opinions.

If we only read this paragraph separately, we will get the impression that it is nothing but Deng Xiaoping making an elaboration of "Democracy-Dictatorship" idea. The editor cited Mao Zedong's words through footnote 4 to promote idea of democracy. Let us read what is written there:

(Footnote 4) Grand Democracy and Mini-Democracy are ironical jargon. Mao Zedong in his speech at the second Plenum of the eighth National Congress of CPC in November 1956 had cited them, and had elaborated on them. He criticized some people who upheld Grand Democracy and condemned Mini-Democracy as not being exciting enough, and who would like to implement Western capitalist democracy in China. That is wrong. In the speech he also referred to Grand Democracy as large-scale unrest and disorder. The ‘desire for Mini-Democracy’ referred to the serious implementation of the democratic system contained in the Constitution of our country, which gives the people the right to freely express their opinions, and that guarantees that other democratic rights will be respected and protected.

After what the Party determined as “agitation” happened, the editors of the *People’s Daily* did not forget to remind the authorities that they have the responsibility to ensure that “the people’s right to freedom of expression and to other democratic rights should be respected and protected.” These are words that the editors really mean to emphasize.

Conclusion

Of course, after June 4th, there was no room for any workers in the official media to openly raise the banner of rehabilitating the “democratic thinkers” and “social reformers.” The official media were full of things sounding like denunciations of the democratic movement persons. But behind such noises, there were colorful essays. Under the banner of criticizing the democratic thinker, they would boost him up, and give a full introduction to his thought and ideals. It was a wonderful “synthesis of thesis and antithesis” in complete conformity to the law of dialectics.

Reading through this series of articles, the reader can arrive at a deeper understanding of the journalistic profession in the PRC. They are absolutely not purely mouthpieces for certain Party

organizations. Regarding these few articles, this writer believes that attention should be paid to the following points:

1. Maybe some readers will think that what those authors wrote was a fluke, that is, that they did not intend to make a statement on behalf of the democratic movement people. I have to admit that there is no insider giving me any insider information about this. The deduction I have made is only the reaction of someone who is involved in editorial work. However, no matter what the subjective intention of the journalist was, the objective result was: their writings were not the least help to the authorities who suppressed the democratic movement, but rather were of great use for preserving and promoting the thought of the movement's intellectuals.
2. In the four articles cited above, the demand for "Dismissing Li Peng" is a unifying thread. This is mentioned over ten times. The writers of the articles have hopes for the Party and for Deng Xiaoping, but they possess a great hate for Li Peng. Considering later developments, this feeling had a great influence on Chinese politics. As an evaluation of "Li Peng," it was an apparent consensus.
3. Another theme was "the abolition of the four basic principles." This theme has been having an influence on the Communist Party's reform of the national Constitution and of its own constitution. Both the national Constitution and the Party's constitution are in need of reform, but who would dare to risk mentioning this? But to borrow what has already been mentioned by the democratic movement people, and to turn this in the direction of instigating a discussion, is one means of acting when it is impossible to act.

Finally, how did those articles smoothly get by the censors? The reasons are complex. And after twenty years, we will most likely never get to the bottom of the riddle. One of the possibilities

is that perhaps the “thinking of the elders” was playing a trick. It is not difficult to imagine that in their hearts the old revolutionaries realized the need for reform, but they could not say it with their mouths. Whereas if the young people mentioned it, it seemed they wanted to rebel. Therefore, for those “elders” reform can be carried out, but don’t talk about it.

It is not worthwhile to encourage such a mentality of the elders. Under the principle of human equality, how can the leadership classes consider themselves to be elders, and everyone else to be grandchildren? However, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the existence of this kind of mentality. Thus the deviation statements received silent consent, and this was greatly related to the above mentality.

I have always had great sympathy for the older generation of journalists in China. They were full of fervor for protecting the country. But because they are not in complete agreement with the present political system, they almost all agree that in the present system, there is still a little space to try to do something for the sake of the country.

Understanding their concerns, it is also easier for Hong Kong people to understand how 20 years ago, on the eve of June 4th, the pro-China veteran newspaper workers in Hong Kong could leave the editorial column vacant, writing only the words: “With bitter hatred” to condemn the authorities. So, it was not by accident.

One last word: I am always filled with confidence and hope for journalism in China!

July 21, 2009