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**THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF CHINESE REGIONAL TELEVISION
JOURNALISTS**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at The Nottingham Trent University

July, 2001

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THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF CHINESE REGIONAL TELEVISION JOURNALISTS

abstract

This study examines the beliefs and practices of Chinese television journalists in order to understand whether there is a distinct way of being a Chinese journalist. It is based on 39 interviews, carried out between April 1998 and December 2000, of which 25 were with television journalists.

The issues considered include the inchoate professionalism of journalists at a time of weakening state control over certain aspects of the media, and of vast expansion; the greater responsiveness of journalists to the market; the debate as to whether they should be tribunes of the citizenry rather than messengers of authority; whether the changes in hand indicate 'westernisation' or the adaptation of traditional ideas to new conditions.

The study found that there is a contradiction between the practices of news production, which select themes and reconstruct events in a conservative and formulaic manner, and the beliefs of journalists about their social roles. By and large journalists see themselves as representing the interests of the people, although some also still adhere to the Maoist view of the media as mouthpiece of the Party, without necessarily perceiving any contradiction. Journalists are immensely proud of the investigative journalism that has developed over the past few years; although asked to restrict their comments to news they rarely managed to do so, much preferring to draw attention to investigative journalism and interpreting it as reflecting a responsible scrutiny of public affairs.

Pride at the way in which journalism is now able to respond to the citizenry rather than simply reflect the Party indicates that journalists see their principal role as that of tribune. However, ideas about journalism appear to draw more upon Chinese traditional myths of the 'hero official' than upon imported ideas. There is no sense that journalists see themselves as fighting to realise a foreign model.

Acknowledgments

In memory

J.W. WILLIAMSON

of Pennywell Road, Pilton, 1929 to 1981. He was one with Spender's *Truly Great*, who 'left the vivid air signed with their honour'.

The writing of a doctoral thesis, no matter how late in life, nor how humble in ambition, is a rite of passage which evokes memories of those who helped the student to arrive. I have been blessed in encountering many fine teachers who both loved learning and loved to impart learning. I want to record my thanks to them even as I apologise for the inadequacy of my pupillage.

Among them is the primary teacher with whom I first read Shakespeare, the late Miss R. Thompson. With Malcolm Ross and James Ramage, at my secondary school, no child could fail to have his world enlarged and his sensibilities developed. I remember with gratitude all those who, over 1968-72, were members of the Far East Department of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

It would not have been possible for me to undertake this study without the encouragement of my employer from 1995 to 2000, Professor Sandra Harris, Head of English and Media at Nottingham Trent University. For me, as for many others, she has been both inspiring and enabling.

I appreciate all that I have learned, and the many kindnesses received, at Nottingham Trent, in particular from my Director of Studies, Professor John Tomlinson. I have benefited from the supervision of Professors Roger Bromley and Stephen Chan. My External Adviser, Professor Stephan Feuchtwang of the London School of Economics, has given me his time and his valued comments. Cao Qing, then at Nottingham Trent, now at SOAS, helped me with my spoken Chinese and was always a thoughtful consultant and guide. Mary Dawson and her colleagues in the Library did not merely respond to requests but proposed avenues. Frances Banks, of the Department of English and Media, has in all my time at NTU been the most efficient and kindest of consultants. During fieldwork I was fortunate in being welcomed at Central Television by a most reflective practitioner, John Boileau. Academics at Fudan University (Shanghai), Renmin University (Peking), The Broadcasting Academy (Peking), Zhejiang University (Hangzhou) and Sichuan University (Chengdu) have been generous with help and advice. I also want to thank again all those who agreed to be interviewed. For the failings and limitations of this study, none of them is responsible.

My greatest debt, willingly and gratefully acknowledged, is to my mother who gave up so much for my sake. The last five years of study and travel have been possible thanks to the forbearance, encouragement and companionship of my wife, Carolina Sciplino.

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PRESENTATION

Chinese names and expressions have been rendered as is conventional, even when this gives the appearance of inconsistency because of the originals being variously known by their English translation, Pinyin or Cantonese transcription. On their first appearance only, they are also given in written Chinese. PRC ideographs (简体字) are used even in names or expressions from before Language Reform.

Quotations from interviews are printed in bold. The names following them are given in full and a brief description of each interviewee will be found in Appendix A. Those rendered in Wade-Giles romanisation are pseudonyms, provided by request; the remainder are in Pinyin. Where romanised full names are mentioned elsewhere in the text without the accompanying date required for the Harvard referencing method, they are those of interviewees.

Four interviews took place in England, mainly in English, and there was email correspondence. In these cases the English has been corrected, where necessary.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED ELEMENTS

The pilot study for this thesis was presented in a paper 'Audience, Journalist and Text in Television News', delivered at the Annual Conference of the International Association for Media and Communications Research, Glasgow, 29/7/1998. Some of the conclusions from it were incorporated into an article '英语国家新闻观念中的真实性与客观性问题' (Factuality and Objectivity in the Outlook of the Anglophone Journalist) 新闻大学 (Academic Journalism) 上海: 复旦大学 Shanghai: Fudan University, Winter 1999.

The study of Hangzhou television reporters was discussed in a paper 'Television News Stories and Cultural Myths' presented at the Biannual Congress of the International Cultural Research Network, Xian, 30/6/2000.

Comments about Investigative journalism are based on and are therefore similar to those made in chapter 2 of de Burgh, H (ed) (2000) Investigative journalism, Context and Practice London: Routledge; findings on Chinese journalism education described in chapter 2 of this thesis were incorporated into a conference paper 'Market forces and Media Options' given at the joint Jagiellonian-Napier Conference on the Journalism: East-West Perspectives, Edinburgh 15/9/98 and two articles 'China: New Public Sphere, New Journalists?' in Media Development, vXLV / 4 / 1998 pp64-66 and 'Chinese Journalism in the academy: the politics and pedagogy of media study in China' in a special edition of Journalism Studies, n1 v4, November 2000, pp549-558.

1: INTRODUCTION

The thesis

This study examines the beliefs and practices of Chinese television journalists in order to understand whether there is a distinct way of being a Chinese journalist. The thesis is that, when examined in the light of Anglophone assumptions about journalism, there is indeed such a distinct way. Chinese journalists may describe their roles in terms which are often either Maoist or Anglophone[†], but their practices reflect an approach rooted rather in the culture of Chinese political and social life than in either ideology.

This can help explain why Chinese journalists' practices appear contradictory to those who are accustomed to thinking of journalism in essentialist, and Anglophone, terms. Thus they produce news which, often, reflects little of that which they declare to be true about society or important about their profession; accept donations from interests they can promote and yet try to work on investigative projects which mimic the Watergate tradition. They claim to represent 'the people' yet are conscious of being members of an élite with rights to impose and duties to educate.

The context of the study

In the Western world informed opinion sees the media as 'a central force in shaping everyday social and psychological life, the organisation of economic and political activity, the construction of public culture, and the creation of new expressive forms' (QAA 2001). In their relationship to culture they are both the mediators and the agents of globalisation (see Tomlinson 1999 chapter 5). Whether benign or malign, the power

[†] The word Anglophone is used to mean those areas of the world which are generally seen as deriving culturally, as well as linguistically, from England. It excludes therefore places where English may be the main media language, for example Malta, Singapore, India or some African countries.

ascribed to the mass media has been derived from their *massness*, the fact that they can command the attention of many people.

Political parties, business interests, pressure groups and issue campaigners have long sought to use this power to their own ends through advertising or through manipulating editorial content. It is widely believed that their efforts to do so have recently reached new heights of sophistication to the extent that some believe our media to be mere extensions of the promotional arms of commercial interests (Barnett 2000, Franklin 2001). This contravenes the claims which the media workers themselves have for their profession, that it assures the free flow of ideas which is considered essential to democracy and to social progress. Whereas in the 1930s many saw the media as acting as the soporific of the masses and the ally of ruthless power-mongers wanting to dupe them, for the last few decades it has been widely agreed in the West that the media in general and the news and current affairs media in particular perform functions essential to the efficient operation of society in the general interest¹: they provide factual information and impartial reports; they question and analyse the claims of those in authority or with power in the community and they investigate problems and conflicts of interest. Leading journalists themselves now argue that the need for such media has never been greater as the state in many countries gives up its powers to private initiatives locally or multinationals globally and power is more and more difficult to pin down and hold responsible (Monbiot 2000).

Journalists

The journalist profession presents itself as that which mediates events and information and, in doing so, to some extent creates the common experience. Doing that is only one of its roles; the selection and representation of information is the key role which journalists usually ascribe to themselves (Weaver 1998); gatekeeping and agenda setting, the creation of popular enthusiasms or panics; the analysis of evidence and the investigation of behaviour are among the more controversial ones. However, today some doubt whether journalism has a future, as information processors provide self-select information along the internet and cut out the mediators (Bardoel 1996). Others

see them as already merely functioning as copywriters and dumbers down for those with the real power to produce information and define truth.

It can be argued though that it is the role of selector, which may be of continuing if not increasing usefulness in the predicted multimedia world. Far from being rendered irrelevant by the explosion of information and the ease of its access, the journalist may be needed, albeit less as originator, as the expert who will help us to navigate through the mass of information now at our disposal; evaluate the data; analyse what interest groups - whether supermarkets or politicians or lobbyists - are claiming; provide us with the wherewithal to make informed decisions and interrogate the rich and powerful. Only journalists, perhaps allied with academics, can perform these functions; however flawed, journalists are often the only guarantors of truth telling and human rights. The loss of purpose identified by researchers questioning journalists (Merritt 1995) may be a healthy response to their own failures, but it should be a temporary one. The skilled and honest journalist has never been more needed for the provision of information, the scrutiny of public affairs and the investigation of cases of dereliction of duty. Such journalists need media channels which allow them to perform these functions and there are many questions raised about the present Anglophone media as public interest regulation is relaxed and they are incorporated into global business empires (Philo 2000).

Chinese journalists

Such considerations frame this study. But why, when the Anglophone media are not only the most advanced organisationally, but are also claimed to be the least repressed politically, should we wish to study the Chinese media? Even more, why should we study what a colleague referred to as 'that oxymoron, the Chinese journalist'?

For the student of Asian affairs, the question is already answered. For the world of business, the China media are exciting because they provide the opportunity to communicate with what may be the world's largest population; because of the efforts governments have made since 1911 to stamp out difference, the Peoples' Republic of

China (PRC) is, linguistically, increasingly homogenous. It is often said that Chinese is the native tongue of more people than any other language² and this excites not only those who advertise but those who sell every variety of product and service.

It is for a different set of reasons that Chinese journalists, as opposed to the Chinese media, are worth attention. First, if the contention that journalists are becoming more, not less, critical to the good ordering of our world has merit, then it could be useful to explore whether Chinese journalists have characteristics that are likely to influence the good ordering of the world of over a fifth of the world's population. This thought is itself predicated upon another which has been the subject of intense debate in recent years: that culture is that which most clearly distinguishes societies, as significant as economics or political institutions, and that every issue and in particular those of the media should be examined in that light. Although the most notorious interventions in the debate have been made by Huntington (1996) who suggested that cultural rivalry was our future, and Fukayama (1993) who, in what Gray calls his 'innocent parochialism', by contrast believes that Anglophone liberalism will gobble up all other cultures, this study has been more influenced by John Gray. Gray has grappled with the implications of 'value pluralism' and advocated mutual respect for and comprehension of different cultures (1995:140; 2000).

Second, can we learn anything about our own journalists from looking at those with different assumptions and traditions? Recent studies of Chinese social psychology (Bond 1999) suggest that an examination of that field will be fruitful and enriching for its Anglophone equivalent, overturning assumptions which have been widely held in the academy for generations that psychology has no cultural differences (Goldberger 1995). Indeed it is Chinese psychologists rather than, say, Mediterranean ones, who have started to question the homogenising assumptions of the discipline.³

Third, does an examination of Chinese journalists tell us anything more generally about the society in which they operate? How have journalists come through the years in which China sought to take a very different route to wealth and power from that of the rest of the world, before it too embraced free market philosophies deriving from Hayek and Mises? China may now be changing more rapidly than any nation on earth, so what

are the roles of the mediators in all this? How do they relate to their complicity in the failures of Maoist China and how are they adapting to the changed environment?

Journalism in China has undergone three broad phases. First, from the late 19th century to 1949, a modern type of journalism developed in response to the perceptions of Chinese intellectuals of their nation's plight and in response to western models of media organisation. From 1949 to around 1979 journalists were obliged to conform to a narrow (though not always as narrow as assumed) definition of their role, but from time to time they were able to break free from the limitations of that role. From 1979 to 1989 they sought to claim a professional status for journalism and to talk the discourse of impartiality; since then journalism has become engulfed by the preoccupations of a very different kind of society in which, it can be argued, it reflects that political nihilism and commercialism of today's China which has struck informed observers such as Gittings (1996), Barmé (1999) and Becker (2000).

What is being studied and why

Confucianism after Mencius 孟子 held to the doctrine of the Rectification of Names, 正名, by which it is posited that all phenomena have their true essences, essences reflected in their names and that it is the task of the sage ruler to work towards the congruence of name and reality, ie to return the phenomena to their true essences. Anglophone journalists tend to take up a similarly essentialist position as to their calling. Thus David Randall:

There is no such thing as Western journalism.there is only good and bad journalism. Each culture may have its own traditions, each language a different voice. But among good journalists the world over, what joins them is more significant than what separates them.....Good journalists, universally, agree on their role.
(Randall 1996: 1-3)

The governing idea of the universal journalist is widely accepted (Weaver 1995)⁴. Journalists from cultures which lack some of the underpinnings of Anglophone

journalism - journalists from Third World countries, for example, where the legal, cultural and political assumptions can be different - often agree that they are underdeveloped, and make efforts to conform to Anglophone norms. (Golding 1977, Mancini 2000). Journalists in countries as diverse from each other and from the Anglophone world as Germany, Turkey and Italy have waged heroic struggles to have this vision of journalism normalised, as organisations campaigning on their behalf, such as Amnesty International, The Freedom Forum and Reporters Sans Frontières bear witness.

In Fang (1991) it is argued that there is a growing recognition in China and abroad that the doctrine of 'China's unique characteristics' in world affairs is mistaken. Principles applicable elsewhere should be so in China.

Because of its geographical conditions, because of the racial and linguistic gulf that separates it from both the West and South, and because of its long isolation, there are indeed many differences between China and other parts of the world.....But these obvious empirical facts have been oversimplified and extrapolated into a theory which proclaims that everything about China - its culture, its society, its politics - is absolutely unique. (Schell in Fang 1991: xli)

Schell and Fang argue that this is mistaken, and harmful. However, it is possible both to agree that journalists the world over have something in common, or that China's uniqueness has been exaggerated and made an excuse for discrimination, and yet to find some differences in Chinese journalism which do not simply provide evidence of China's backwardness along a route pioneered by the USA. Mancini (2000) has pointed out that, notwithstanding all that Italy and other European societies have in common, including parliamentary procedures and democratic avowals, the so-called free market and independent judiciary, nevertheless the journalist functions in a very different way there from the Anglophone equivalents. So may it be with China.

The material used to support the thesis

In this study the history and social functions of Chinese journalists are explored and evaluated. What is journalism for? What part does a journalist play in public affairs? What is the relationship between journalists' beliefs about their profession and their practices? Do they hold to a system of tenets such as appear to be identifiable for Anglophones? And are their practices a reflection of those or do they appear to diverge? Implicit will be a comparison with Anglophone concepts of journalism of which the Chinese equivalents have become increasingly aware over the last ten years.

In answering these questions there is no attempt at finding causal explanations for journalists' activities or identities but to draw upon the literature of media studies and of the recent cultural and intellectual history of China in order to *illuminate and explain their own words*. The words are derived from interviews which cover, in the main, six themes: *Becoming a journalist; What is journalism about? The media environment; The product; The idea of the journalist; Current trends*. The chapters follow the logic of the interviews (with additional chapters to provide context) and will cite, and attempt to explain and offer perspective on, the answers of journalists under those themes.

In a distinct chapter (9) and as a Case Study, there is an examination of the product of 10 regional television reporters for the nightly news programmes. This is a basis for a discussion on the discrepancies between ostensible beliefs about journalism and daily practice.

The interviews

Chinese of the 19th century, holding a fairly rigid, internally consistent and easily identifiable belief system which has often been described as 'the Chinese world order' found themselves in grave difficulties when encountering westerners who did not share those beliefs. They attempted to accommodate to them at least in their practices while

trying not to disturb their underlying beliefs, or by living divided lives. Today, Chinese journalists are possibly in an analogous situation.

Beliefs are groups of interlocking tenets that are interdependent and which influence the way holders look at the world. They determine the selection of information and the impact it will have upon us. Some argue that they influence our behaviour although it is agreed that the circumstances of specific actions compromise that influence, ie the journalist may be more conditioned by the facts of an event, the attitude of a boss, the traditions of the institution, a consensus decision-making process or the costs of its production than by his or her own beliefs in any particular case. However the complex that we call 'culture' is increasingly seen by social researchers as a fair proxy for the various and varied forces that weave what Geertz has famously called their 'webs of significance' around us and it is the 'culture' of journalism that we are here aiming to identify. Recent interpretations of Chinese public affairs and political history since 1949 have stressed the cultural factors such that Chinese communism comes to be seen not so much as the adoption of a filtered foreign creed as the modern expression of enduring Chinese characteristics.

How do we identify the 'culture' of television journalists? Aware of the potential drawbacks of the traditional ethnographic method, it was considered whether quantitative methods could be applied in order to provide information that is less subjectively and more systematically gathered and which would encourage replication.

Quantitative methods however, tend to apply in well-mapped territory where agreed categories of questions and fine definitions are possible. There are few substantial studies of journalists (Tuchman 1978, Schlesinger 1987, Gans 1989) and, although there are smaller-scale studies of journalists in this or that situation (starting with White 1950) there is nothing like the body of focussed research upon which, for example, Crank (1993) was able to draw for background to his study of the relationship between police belief systems and practices. This is especially the case with my precise target, Chinese journalists, of whom two empirical studies, both with quantitative approach and large focus (Chen 1998 and Pan 2000⁵), were published only after the present study commenced.

Moreover, it is not obvious that a correlation between belief and behaviour proved in quantitative terms or an attempt at quantification will offer insights more useful or reliable than those of a predominantly qualitative study. In Chapter 8 the findings of the quantitative studies are examined; they offers insights but might be questioned on the grounds that questionnaires are unreliable, those questioned in authoritarian societies are not likely to feel free to state their views and that many of the subtleties of opinion are lost by them. A qualitative study has other limitations, particularly those of subjectivity and possible problems around the interrelationship of questioner to respondent, but is at least not so prone to circumscribe responses and allows for more in-depth exploration of issues.

Ethnographic fieldwork is the anthropological technique used for the study, by (sometimes participant) observation, of culture groups small enough for the comprehension of one observer, in order to find out what modes of behaviour and of communication are necessary to enable a person to operate within that group.

[Ethnography] is a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms, the irreducibility of human experience.....(Willis 2000: 5)

The 'what is important' has often been referred to as *communicative competence*. More poetically, it has been described by Geertz, adapting Weber, as 'a web of meaning' or 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1973).

Instead of trying to produce 'deductive causal explanations' (Popper) or sets of law-like propositions, [ethnographers] aim to produce descriptions. These descriptions concern the methods members use to accomplish the world for what it is..... the 'sort of apparatus', the 'sense assembly equipment' that human beings use to construct and sustain their everyday lives. (Cuff & Payne (1979) quoted in Silverman (1985))

In his introduction to his study of the south Cantonese extended family, Baker asserts that 'When I went into the field, it was with no fixed idea of studying a lineage village, my intention being to study a small village community' (Baker 1968: vii) but through chance and good contacts Baker found himself at Sheung Shui. He goes on

My field-work methods were dictated by circumstances, but took as their basis Informality. I did not hold 'interviews' (except on one occasion towards the end of my stay), I had 'conversations'. Furthermore, I quickly found that direct questioning brought very unreliable answers, and that the only way to discover a required fact was to wait until conversation had swung round to the topic, when I could ask my question in context with some chance of a valuable reply.....My days were spent walking round the village talking to people, and the evenings were almost invariably spent in my house, with the doors open, holding court....(Baker 1968: viii)

This is exemplary of the classic ethnographic mode. Notwithstanding Rosaldo's critique of the objectivism he finds inherent in it (Rosaldo 1993: 48), it is difficult to see how any other research method could provide the opportunity for the exercise of informed sensitivity that produced what Geertz might call 'thick description' (Munns 1995: 238-9), inviting us to understand each small gesture and place it within the context of the culture under study. Baker's is in the classic school of 'total' ethnography; fieldwork by an individual attempting to enter a discrete cultural entity and to understand it in its own terms with a minimum of outside judgement, but with the application of scholarly perspective.

The core attributes of ethnographic fieldwork, the practical manifestations of the inductivism which gives these benefits, are openness and lack of structure (not lack of preparation). These have particularly appealed to researchers of the Birmingham School of cultural studies who reacted against both the media effects and political economy approaches, and have sought to understand the production of meanings as a function of interaction between medium, message and receiver, as well as the relationship between sub-cultures and mainstream culture. Aside from such developments, Drotner (1994) argues that there has been another reason for the adoption of the ethnographic approach:

.....ethnographic perspectives offer an alternative to two paradigms dominating the arts and social sciences, namely the structural and action paradigms' (of 'structuralism vs culturalism, positivism vs Marxism, semiology vs critical theory, micro vs macro analysis, quantitative vs qualitative approaches etc'). The contradictory and multifaceted social and cultural developments made such theoretical dichotomies increasingly untenable, and the turn towards ethnography may be regarded as an attempt to

overcome this intellectual impasse while retaining micro-perspective. (Drotner 1994: 342)

While having a basically ethnographic orientation the study is not limited by the conventions of ethnography. As Atkinson writes in his manifesto for Qualitative Research:

‘Orthodoxy’ in ethnographic research is not a stable category. On the contrary, the lasting vigour of ethnographic research owes much to its diversity of methodological and representational standpoints. The postmodern turn in ethnography, and in the social sciences more generally, has inspired many commentators to identify and to explore a varied range of ways to report and represent the social of the cultural.’ (Atkinson 2001: 11)

This study has been undertaken in a manner associated with Cultural Studies, in that the interest is ‘to witness, giving voice to the meanings that are made in the here and now’. (Barker 1992: 9) but it diverges from mainstream Cultural Studies in that the focus is not upon the text, but on the makers - or organisers, or mediators - of the text; not upon the consumers, whether young unemployed, schoolgirls or watchers of Nationwide, but in those who are producers, who re-present reality and circumscribe the options of the consumers who interpret. Furthermore, although political economy is by no means the main lens, the study attempts to contextualise the subjects through chapters on history and environment as hailed by Paul Willis:

...the best ethnography also recognises and records how experience is entrained in the flow of contemporary history, large and small, partly caught up in its movement, partly itself creatively helping to maintain it, enacting the uncertainty of the eddies and gathering flows dryly recorded from the outside as ‘structures’ and ‘trends’ (Willis 2000: 6).

Schlesinger (1987), continuing a line of enquiry pioneered by others such as Tunstall (1971), Tyrrell (1972) and Elliot (1972), applied such approaches to the media, asking: But how is it that news is actually put together in the BBC's newsrooms? And how does the way in which it is assembled result in a specific version of reality? (1987: 11)

He achieved two things in particular. First he demonstrated the importance of the practitioners, and in particular their professional ethic, in shaping the text, in setting agendas, in gatekeeping and so forth, and secondly in demonstrating the profound

influence of work practices, partly dictated by professional ethic and ideology, partly a function of the technology, in influencing the production of news.

The facilities available to Schlesinger in London were not available for this study for reasons which should become clear. After the first, exploratory, field visit it became evident that it would be fortunate, given the sensitivity of the targets, if any interviews were granted at all. Although there were hopes of observation of the newsroom, it transpired that while one might visit a newsroom no foreigner could sit in it and observe it for a week⁶.

Nevertheless it was considered that sufficient could be gleaned from a combination of interviews with the reporters plus analysis of their programmes. When a pilot (see Appendix C), involving whole working days in the newsroom, was undertaken in Birmingham it was felt that its success owed little to those long days; the main understandings were gained through interview and analysis. This would probably not be the case for someone who had not previously worked in a newsroom but as the interviewer was familiar with the routines, then the 'work experience' aspect was otiose.

Initial preparation took its cue from Bourdieu (1988), i.e. through absorption of secondary sources in order to understand the social position, professional structure, educational preparation, professional codes, jargon and economic situation of the subjects. The study then undertaken combines interview and analysis, with the semi structured interviews seen as providing the best means of opening up the themes.

Denzin describes the interview thus:

The interview functions as a narrative device which allows persons who are so inclined to tell stories about themselves.....the interviews meanings are contextual, improvised and performative..... (Denzin 2001: 24)

The themes and probes were tested in a pilot. Subjects' categories and ages were recorded.

The population was selected with the following considerations in view. Most studies to date have dealt with journalists of a metropolitan élite (Tuchman 1973, Gans 1979,

Schlesinger 1987, Tunstall 1993). An equivalent in China might be the newsroom of China Central Television 中国中央电视台 in Peking or the writers of The Peoples' Daily 人民日报. Although these journalists are influential, and possibly trend-setting, they are not typical⁷. Most Chinese journalists, like most UK journalists and perhaps journalists in all countries, work in regional and local TV stations and are subject to commercial and local pressures which mark them out from the journalists of the metropolitan élite. It was therefore decided to try to study a range of journalists, with the accent upon regional television reporters. Only in the case of the latter group was the *product* analysed (in Chapter 9). This work was preceded by over fifteen years experience of employment in British TV news and current affairs; six years involvement with China, first as a student (1968-72) then working in Peking (1972-3) and finally teaching Chinese history; refreshment in Chinese language plus a preparatory visit; a pilot for this study.

Of the 39 interviewees, 30 were journalists, and 9 'para-journalists', comprising 7 academics in media departments and 2 media managers. Of the 30 journalists, 8 were from the Hangzhou TV station, the news programmes of which are analysed in chapter 9. Of the remaining journalists, 17 were from television which was the main focus of the study, 2 from radio and 3 from print journalism. All were located in Peking, Shanghai, Hangzhou or Chengdu. After the considerations sketched above, it was decided to interview in the semi-structured manner deployed by the classical ethnographers, inhabit the world of Chinese television journalists as far as was possible and in the manner of, among others, Gillespie (1994) and Bourdieu (1988), and examine the product, as proxy for their professional practices, using the approach pioneered by Rutherford Smith (1979) and adapted by Langer (1999).

The outcome has several aspects and is perhaps original in 3 ways. There is no mapping of Chinese journalism of this kind in existence so that the study attempts to set out information for the first time. Although studies exist of Chinese journalists, no empirical study of the kind presented in chapter 8 has previously been undertaken⁸. Journalists are a focus of academic attention, yet Chinese journalists hardly feature in the mainstream literature of media studies or journalism studies as these are understood the world over.

Arrangement

Chapter 2 deals with *BECOMING A JOURNALIST* and attempts to understand the motivations for becoming a journalist and how they interact with beliefs about journalism. What goes through the mind of a young man or woman who is thinking of trying to become a journalist? What is the image of the job that they have? The chapter examines their explanations; looks at the CVs of older journalists to see whether these expectations are justified; compares formal and informal discourses of journalism.

Formal discourses of journalism are evident from the department of the journalism establishment, the self presentation of the educational institutions dealing in journalism and the arrangement of the courses students of journalism undertake. As elsewhere, there are different types of journalist (élite, regional, stringers) but the dominant image is created by the minority, élite, establishment.

The establishment institutions project images of being connected with power and this appears to influence the choices of many applicants to journalism courses. So what idea of the job and its power do journalists have? How does this compare to the, official, Maoist position on journalism and the roles ascribed to the mass media under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These roles are looked at in the light of Anglophone scholarship since 1949 and its debates about effects and reception as well as in light of the contradictions which became apparent in the CCP approach to the media in the early years of the régime (the Liu/Mao disagreement).

It is concluded that journalists have a mixed bag of motivations which are similar to those of their Anglophone equivalents' but that, at least in the case of élite journalists, they enter a system which will channel them towards a structured, formal sense of their roles in society. To some extent these complement their early perceptions and to some extent contradict them.

In Chapter 3, *THE BURDEN OF THE PAST*, we try to understand why, in talking about their work Chinese journalists (especially but not exclusively the older ones) hark back to past debates and past personalities. We look at the significance, in this lore, of the Yenan experience, the Hundred Flowers, the role of journalists in the Great Leap Forward and the effect of the experience of the Cultural Revolution. Belief about journalism is coloured by memories of persecution and, increasingly, realisation that the persecution was not aberrant but systemic. In such a situation there appears to be a contradiction between idealistic views of what journalists can do and realistic appraisals of the fate they are likely to meet if they do not conform.

Chapter 4, *THE PATRIOT JOURNALISTS*, deals with the pre-Communist journalist and is an excursion into territory which is only just looming into view for journalists, and even then only the more educated and aware ones. Well before the CCP ruled China, journalism had developed in a different context from that of the Anglophone countries. The emergence of modern journalism out of the reform struggle and the particularities of early journalists are analysed, as is the career of Liang Qichao 梁启超. The Missouri cadre learned American values and then returned to implement Leninist rules. The Soviet model influenced journalists towards a sense of public responsibility paternally exercised. Traces of these pasts can be detected today as various manifestations of the overarching May Fourth discourse of journalism, which we interrogate (and to which reference will again be made in chapter 8), concluding that it remains the dominant public discourse even if it may be becoming purged of its Maoist accretions.

Chapter 5 is called *THE JOURNALIST AS TRIBUNE* because in it are discussed the types of roles that journalists have attempted to arrogate to themselves, usually justifying them in terms of their service to something called 'the Chinese people'. In the 1980s there was a vigorous debate about professionalism which echoed debates of the early years of the century and those of the Anglophone countries where (perhaps with the exception of the USA) journalism has failed to clarify its professional status. Developing ideas of 'professionalism', the growth of 'civil society' and aspects of social psychology all give rise to issues impinging upon the Chinese journalists today as they seek to expand the boundaries of what they can examine independently as well as of media law and ethics.

We review some of the conflicts between politicians and journalists which have taken place over the last decade or so. The encouragement and then repression of the World Economic Herald 世界经济报 is looked at as an indication of how important journalism content is in Chinese politics; the issue of the Yangtze Gorges illustrates how factions can freeze controversy out of the media no matter how much leading journalists want to report them. The public and private functions of journalism; its role in the transmission of state orthodoxy; its circumscription by factionalism and by imperatives of social relationships in Chinese society are considered as factors which condition the concept of professionalism.

The chapter concludes that while the Maoist and Soviet characterisations of journalism are no longer accepted, Chinese journalists are not necessarily on the road to establishing the kind of social space which élite Anglophone journalists increasingly arrogate to themselves. They do however have a concept of professionalism which may be more clearly articulated than that of English journalists. But, as with English journalists, the impact of new technology and commercialisation is placing the audience at the centre of concern such that journalistic professionalism is under pressure.

One of the world's most populous countries is being transformed from a command economy to a market economy; simultaneously diverse cultural expression is being permitted and a legal system being devised in order both to integrate China with world institutions and to fulfil citizens' expectations of their government. This is the most obvious setting for the people and issues with which this study deals, and we examine it in Chapter 6, *THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF CHINESE JOURNALISM TODAY*.

Much has changed since the Democracy Movement of 1989. At first there was a check in the relaxation of political controls which had been the main feature of Chinese life since 1978 and China was in a kind of no-man's land until Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 undertook his 'Southern Progress' - or at least until the media managed to publicise it. The role of journalists in this period illustrates their role in earlier crises, and perhaps in crises to come, as sometimes subject to, and sometimes negotiating with, powerful factions in government. However, whereas in the past they had to be very circumspect about the roles they were playing in Chinese politics, Jiang Zemin's 江泽民 approaches

to the media have sometimes given them greater profile: he involves them in a partnership of spin, he deploys Maoist techniques in mounting campaigns and he fights with the military over media space and support.

There are controversies in Chinese society which involve many people, sometimes below the surface and sometimes well in evidence. What part are journalists playing in their resolution? Jiang Zemin is trying to use the media by deploying new techniques yet wanting them to play by the old rules; journalists push forward the boundaries of change as far as they dare. What they cannot do yet, even if they wished to, is represent the manifold interests attempting to influence them. Political power still comes from the barrel of a gun.

Chapter 7, *THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT* engages with the day to day reality of the Chinese journalist, first reviewing the scale and significance of the broadcast, print and online media before trying to assess the influence of the work environment on journalists. It examines the institutional and economic reforms of the Chinese media in the 1990s and content changes in television current affairs and news which include the re-emergence of investigative journalism.

We conclude that the rapid increase in number and autonomy of media channels has both benefits and disadvantages for the journalist. S/he is richer, has a more varied life and is not subject to the comprehensive political controls of the past. It is exciting to be able to be entrepreneurial, or at least enterprising, in journalism and to aspire to making the kind of investigative work epitomised by Focal Point 焦点访谈 and Southern Weekend 南方周末. However those with such possibilities, or desires, are few.

Chapter 8 *WHO DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?* reveals how journalists characterise their role in society and polity. There is much confusion as to where the journalists stand in relation to the powerful and the powerless, a confusion which illustrates the breakdown of the assumptions of a decade before, that the media should merely be the mouthpiece of the Party.

There are ideals for the journalist, ideals based upon traditional archetypes of the good official or the dissenting intellectual. There are local heroes, the citing of whom raises issues: where do we place Deng Tuo, hounded to death by Mao yet paragon of virtue according to Mao's successors in power? Why do journalists evince little respect for investigative journalist Liu Binyan, because he is exiled in the US or because he believed too long in the Party's capacity for reform?

Another angle on self identity can be taken from their views of their own work. The products they cite with pride (described in this chapter) tend to be investigative reports. This raises the issue of what function they ascribe to investigative journalism both in their own careers and in society. Compared to their English equivalents, interviewed in Birmingham at Central Television, they are highly altruistic in the way they envision journalism and idealise investigation. Yet more reflective respondents question just how questioning this journalism is, as do some academic observers.

In Chapter 9, *THE NEWS THEY MAKE*, a case study points up the contradiction between what news journalists say and what they produce. What is an event which is deemed fit to be news, to be reconstituted into a 'story'? Reporters in Birmingham and Hangzhou 杭州 give their views on what constitutes news and we examine their product both in the light of the institutional and economic changes described above and of the the declarations about themselves and their profession made by the journalists interviewed. Although the output is very different, the process is very similar. We try to account for the similarities and the differences, as well as understanding why and how certain types of event are hailed as potential news stories, and others not.

There appears to be no discrepancy in the minds of the Hangzhou reporters between declaring that they aim to be investigative journalists and actually producing news which bears no relationship whatsoever to investigative journalism. There are some interesting contrasts here with the Birmingham position.

The *CONCLUSION* seeks to identify the significant trends in the situations described and comment upon them. Journalists are still integrated with political power but in ways which are slightly different, although these slight differences may be of great long term significance. Journalists have an image of themselves which is at variance with reality,

but the image is by no means static and journalists are likely influenced by the changes taking place in the self-image of the intelligentsia as a whole, becoming more detached from the state. Furthermore journalists are also to some extent reflecting social changes and new expectations although this should not be assumed to be a move towards democracy, still less towards 'westernisation'.

It has been argued that the relaxation of state controls over the media leads to 'inevitable liberalisation'. However, the Chinese case demonstrates that de-regulation and an increasingly 'free' media market do not necessarily guarantee diversity and modify political power but may result in the media colluding in limiting the range of opinions and interpretations. The presence of some investigative journalism, of open discussion of some subjects previously taboo, and widespread cynicism and irony are not sufficient conditions for a media environment called 'free'. In such circumstances journalists may claim a socially responsible role as information professionals and supervisors of authority but it is one which is circumscribed by traditional culture and commercial power.

2. BECOMING A JOURNALIST

Conceiving of Being a Journalist

Why does anyone become a journalist? The motivations of individuals need not necessarily have any bearing upon the social significance of their chosen professions, but it is at least possible that the motivations claimed reflect social perceptions of those professions, or perhaps myths which, inhaled from the ether, condition the decision to aim for journalism. So the question is worth putting; it is striking how similar are the replies. This one is representative:

I'd always wanted this career from very young. I reckoned it was a good life, meeting loads of people, getting around in society..... There is unlimited potential to make contacts.....I'm not very studious but...I really like ferreting around for information, finding out secrets. I'm fascinated by everything in the social world around me.....Ever since I started have I loved my work. (Jiang Lan)⁹

This statement by Jiang Lan is striking in two senses. Firstly, because it makes no reference whatsoever to the heavyweight reasons for being a journalist which are part of the customary discourse of journalism in a society in which politics is highly overt; secondly it is so similar to the kind of reasons for wanting to be a journalist advanced by Jiang's contemporaries in England. Moreover, the assumptions underlying it tell us much about him, about what he thinks of himself about what he thinks of journalism and the nature of journalistic work. This examination of the Chinese journalist starts by looking at his statement.

Although academic observers of journalism are very exercised by the powers and responsibilities of the profession, it is not these heavyweight aspects of their work that occur to Anglophone journalists when they are asked to reflect upon their reason for choosing the profession. According to interviews conducted with 726 British journalists by John Henningham and Anthony Delano (1998: 146) they were attracted by the excitement that the occupation seemed to offer; very few indeed had any intrinsic interest in news or current affairs.

A study of English regional television reporters, a narrower group than Henningham and Delano's, found the same (deBurgh 1998). Only 3 out of 18 interviewees had 'always' wanted to be journalists. Overwhelmingly they took up journalism because it was more 'fun' than whatever else might be available; in teens or early twenties they had noticed that journalists got around, met lots of different types of people, were paid to observe and enjoyed constant variety. Only one, older, journalist said that he came into journalism in part because he wanted to defend 'those who need us'¹⁰. As to what they liked about the job today, all identified similar aspects of the job that they like, formulated in slightly different ways:

'its immensely glamorous'
'every day is different'
'its exciting, a fun way to earn a living'
'I like the pace, the deadlines, the adrenalin coursing through'
'the competitiveness - trying to be first' (de Burgh 1998).

Jiang Lan's colleagues were very similar. A younger one, a law graduate, is seemingly less interested in the contacts, more in the sheer variety:

Law seemed very restrictive to me as a career because I wanted to get around. It was the freedom of journalism that attracted me.....I can see a lot of what's going on; one day I'm among the peasants, the next in a factory or a university. Most people can't please themselves in looking at this or that thing. My work lets me interview interesting people....excuse me [mobile phone rings]. (Shi Zhengmao)

If we look at the Curriculum Vitae (CV) of journalists we can see that what started as the reason for wanting to become a journalist – the love of novelty and 'ferreting things out' – becomes the source of self respect once you have done so. You claim that your efforts influence the wider world through the impact they have on your audience. The CV of a mature English journalist declares:

I have made a large number of current affairs films and documentaries these range from an investigation into far-right political group Combat 18 to a film about the killing of a Devon farmer by an élite police firearms squad.....my programme about the Louise Woodward case included the first

interview with her. My programme on the paedophile Sidney Cooke led to further charges being brought against him in January 1999 and my latest programme, transmitted in March, uncovered sharp practice on the part of surveyors and pulled in an abnormally high audience against tough opposition.

I was responsible for Stir Fry, a half-hour programme in which a celebrity chef tries to cook for 200 prisoners on a tiny budget of £1.37 per prisoner per day and several editions of Clear My Name, broadcast live from Oxford Prison. Clear My Name set out to highlight cases of potential victims of miscarriages of justice and to appeal to the public to help them demonstrate their innocence. The Whitechapel Murders, an investigation for Channel 4's Secret History strand revealed the original police suspect for the Jack the Ripper murders. The Hay Poisoner a personal re-assessment of the evidence against Herbert Rowse Armstrong, the only solicitor ever to be hanged in Britain, is another popular history programme. It was transmitted as part of the Short Stories strand on Channel 4. (Steve Haywood CV)

Similarly, 28 year old Gu Xuebin has gone far with his nose for news:

Since I was promoted to work for economic news, I have published nearly 200 articles in a year, a dozen of which have enhanced awareness of the local authorities in their environmental efforts, especially in the field of garbage recycling.....two of my reports were commended and selected as a case in policy making by Vice-Premiers Qing Lilan and Guo Wubang, among which, those dealing with the reduction of spindles in textile investment and the reformed taxation of gasoline for automobiles effectively influenced the related policies.... (Gu Xuebin CV)

However, having a nose, or wanting to have a nose, is not enough to get you the chance to use it. Today in England 49% of journalists have a degree and a further 20% have attended or are attending a tertiary educational institution (Henningham 1998). The proportion in other Anglophone countries is rather higher. In China the young aspirant aims for a degree too¹¹. 86% pass through some kind of higher education, of whom 44% attend a university (Chen 1998: 21). In a country in which a tiny minority of the population goes to university and the competition is so strong that special allocations have to be made for applicants from universities' home cities lest they be swamped by the peasant youngsters with their perpetually higher marks¹², you cannot get to read journalism without good grades in the school leaving certificate. Although Jiang (who has a journalism degree from Fudan) says he's 'not very studious', he surely drew heavily upon his claimed liking for 'ferreting out' in fighting his way into his chosen

career: determination and academic ability are necessary if you are to get into the kind of university which will provide you, not only with the appropriate qualification, but also with those introductions to the profession which will make your career possible.

Jiang mentions 'contact making', a reference which might be passed over in an English context even today when networking is acknowledged as a useful skill for a careerist. However in China it is likely enough one of the most valuable aspects of the job where the wherewithal to please, or displease, powerful potential patrons in business, politics or any other field is a commodity of value. Yang (1994), among others, has written extensively on the functions of networks of connections in Chinese society where formal structures of recruitment, lobbying and decision-making of every kind are much weaker than the informal personalised groupings behind them. We will return to the topic. For the moment it is sufficient to note that journalists in China, as elsewhere, are society's ultimate networkers, but that in a society which is particularly suspicious and closed¹³, having the professional right and kudos to open doors otherwise closed is a mighty power.

Where did Jiang Lan get the idea that journalism is like that? Certainly not from his formal courses at university which emphasise the responsibilities of the profession ad nauseam. Yet everything he knows about journalism predisposes him to know that being a journalist is being a butterfly! There is a discrepancy between the 'function in society' and what he sees himself actually doing. For what do journalists actually do all day? As he said in reply to a different question '**talk to people, find stories, pull them into shape**'.

There are at least two discourses around journalistic activity. If you glance through university textbooks such as Yuan's Guide to Journalism Practice (1997) 袁军著新闻事业导论 or commentaries like Sang's The Study of News Reports (1996) 桑义麟著新闻报道学 you find the formal discourse which frames journalism as an institution of society and journalists as functionaries with highly prescribed roles to perform. With the use of these texts aspirant or tyro journalists internalise the framing and learn what they have to achieve for their organisations or at least what they must say they will achieve for them.

What we see Jiang enunciating is the informal discourse of journalism which frames – but does not determine – the predisposition which recruits to journalism are likely to take into that activity. They won't refer to it in their essays, but it will surely be the subtext of their job applications and as such is one, perhaps rather significant, contributor to the discursive framing which plays a part in the creation of the journalist. If all the talk and writing about journalism can be treated more or less as a broad text then this informal discourse of journalism is at least as relevant to the explanation of journalism as are the formal discourses to which we will be referring at length later.

Hay (1996) says that texts

effectively construct an empty storyboard which recruits readers as dramatis personae upon an expansive stage created within the text itself. [This storyboard comprises] a basic set of characters, plot relationships, minimal relevant aspects of context and a variety of interdiscursive cues, intended associations and connotations

We are invited, as 'active decoders' to identify with a particular 'preferred' subject position. He goes on: 'we actively position ourselves as subjects within the narrative.....we are constituted as subjects through the text, as we are simultaneously subjected to it' (Hay 1996: 262).

In this way we might say that Jiang chose an occupation which allowed him to express his own personality because he recognised its correlation with the informal discourse of journalism around him. It is a discourse of journalism which, in England, does not contrast as radically with the formal discourse as in China. For example in England advertisements for journalists often reflect that informal sense of what a journalist is:

'Must be hungry, ambitious senior. Stunning news patch. Great place to live. Good opportunities for promotion....we're looking for a whizz kid....must be enthusiastic and hardworking...Experience in layout and Quark Xpress an advantage.' (UK Press Gazette 2/10/95)

'You will be a top class motivator and know how to spot a top class story' (UK Press Gazette 2/10/95)

‘We need someone who can keep their finger on Poole’s pulse and cover everything from page one to parish pump’ (UK Press Gazette 11/3/96)

‘Young thrusters can apply. Prove you can handle the words and we might let you look at the pictures’ (UK Press Gazette 15/1/96)

As well as the more formal position:

‘You will need to demonstrate.....wide familiarity with the relevant target areas and in-depth current understanding of their news and current affairs, history, politics, social issues and culture, as well as the changing needs of the audience; an extensive knowledge of the media situation.....a very good knowledge of international current affairs....the ability to generate original ideas and to turn these ideas into lively output.....a good broadcasting voice.....’
(Guardian 6/6/00: 15)

‘You will have a thorough understanding of business matters as they effect our viewers and a range of contacts. You will be full of ideas about how to translate difficult but important stories into compelling television’ (Guardian 6/6/00: 11)

In China it is still rare to advertise for journalists, most positions are filled by recommendation as in Mediterranean Europe. Ostensibly, only qualifications can get you a job as a journalist. Whatever the teenage Jiang recognised about the informal discourse of journalism, he knew he had to find the (formally) correct educational programme which would equip him for it. His motivations were however congruent with dimensions of being a journalist other than those publicly acknowledged, i.e. the social and the personal. As another colleague says:

With this job there’s continuous self-discovery, you are forever changing and developing your skills and getting new experiences. (Hsia Yi)

Approaching Journalism Work

The journalism establishment

In England the gatekeepers of the profession of journalism have until recently been the National Council for the Training of Journalists and the National Council for the

Training of Broadcast Journalists¹⁴. These organisations have validated courses which may or may not be within universities. University departments of journalism however do not have close relationships with the media at a senior level, in fact senior journalists have often expressed contempt for university courses in media and journalism. In both China and England there are bodies bringing together the senior people from the media and media education but in England the function of these appears more to confirm individuals' membership of the establishment than to confer it. The significance of any journalist derives from the medium for which s/he works rather than from these institutions.

In the role of the universities that we see real distinction between England and China.

Of course I know the people [who teach journalism] there. We are all one big family. My Chinese literature teacher [lecturer] still gives me advice.
(T'ung Hsien-nian)

In China it is appropriate to lump together media school academics, media managers and journalists as 'media people' and to regard the accounts of academics as being at one with practitioners in a way that would not be the case in England. This is because they work together in rather closer relationships than their English equivalents. Many¹⁵ practising journalists now have graduated¹⁶ from Media schools where they have undergone a rigorous curriculum which will usually include a grounding in Chinese literature.

Many people now in important government positions studied at Fudan School of Journalism. This is why so many people apply to study there. (Liu Ch'ao)

The young reporter's laconic remark shows us that it is not the content of the courses that people think about as much as the network an institution provides. It also shows us that the relationship between politics and the media world is different from that in the UK and is probably itself a subject worth studying. It is well-known that senior journalists in the national media such as The Peoples' Daily 人民日报 and New China News Agency 新华新闻社 obtain executive positions in party and government in

Peking. Something similar seems to pertain in the provinces. The Deputy Mayor of Shanghai - a national political figure - was formerly of the Journalism Department of Fudan University 复旦大学; the present Dean's last job was as a senior government official in Anwei.

The way in which media personnel are reminded of their position was clear at the Seventieth Anniversary Celebration Meeting of Fudan University School of Journalism 复旦大学新闻系七十周年庆典 and the 6th National Conference of Communications Research 第六次全国传播学研讨会 which followed it. Present were, as might be expected, the cream of journalism academics concerned with the electronic media, including internet. In addition there was a large number of media personnel including the Chief Executives of, inter alia, Liberation Daily 解放日报, Shanghai Television and Wenhui Daily 文汇报, senior executives of the New China News Agency 新华新闻社, The Peoples' Daily 人民日报, Guangming Daily 光明日报 and many others; as the celebratory meeting went on the announcer read out the names of the 'top leaders' who kept arriving plus messages of solidarity from those who sent their apologies.

Aside from the obvious point that the Fudan School and its Dean wished to emphasise the importance of the School and its excellent political connections to all those present, the immediate significance of all this only came home during the speeches, especially the final one by Gong Xueping 龚学平, Deputy Mayor of Shanghai. Gong's speech was preceded by that of Professor Chen Guilan, Dean, Fudan School of Journalism, and those of senior leaders from the National Journalists Association, Propaganda Department, Peking Committee of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP], Canton Daily 广州日报 (the CEO of which presented an enormous cheque, of 1bn RMB, for bursaries), Peking Daily 北京日报, the CCP's Peking Committee, the CCP Branch of Liberation Daily, Shanghai CCP Propaganda Department, the Wenhui-Xinming Press Group 文汇新明, Shanghai Television, the Fudan University CCP Branch, Alumni, the Fudan staff and the Fudan students, and the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai CCP.

Finally came Gong Xueping, 'Honorary Dean of the Journalism School of Fudan University 新闻学院名誉院长 and Vice General Secretary of the Shanghai CCP 中共上海市委副书记', Shanghai's Deputy Mayor. While the speakers preceding limited themselves to platitudes he departed from his set text often; he presented himself as someone who well understood the aspirations and frustrations of journalists and academic journalists and was on their side, yet in the process probably left many rather bemused. He declared that the task of the reporters was to report anything, to respond to the needs and demands of ordinary people and cover matters they care about from poor housing to corruption to pollution. However, he argued that there was not much point in making general accusations against a government which was struggling to cope with huge problems and he gave the example of water:

Don't tell people that only 40% of the water of this city is fit to drink [he did not make clear if this was off the cuff or an official statistic!] but go out and find the factories, the individuals, the communities who are polluting the water and expose them.

In other words, get at the manifestations but not the system, a skeptic might interpret. From an administrator's point of view, the reporter who does this is a help rather than a pain; they are on the same side, all for better water. Mr Gong also discoursed at length upon the nature of truth, suggesting that the vaunted impartiality of, for example, the BBC, was not so impartial when you considered some particular examples. Truth, he opined, can be subjective; it depends from what angle you look at it. 'Truth serves purposes so do not be taken in' summarises his message.

While appearing to be unambiguous and forthright and indeed being tailored to please his audience by its advocacy of journalism as a key mechanism by which China might modernise, the speech was in fact quite contradictory. It was noticeable less for any clear guidelines than for the sight of a politician courting the constituency both with gifts - he called upon the media executives present to emulate Canton Daily and give money to Fudan - and with flattery; and the whole event and his presence at it was loaded with political innuendo. For example the today almost unheard word 'comrade' was used every moment; references to Marxism, Mao Thought and Deng Theory were

plentiful and the intimate relationship between the media and politics was the common premise. Finally, the hectoring tone of the political speeches was not only curious to the foreigners present but considered rather out of order by at least some visiting Chinese academics who thought it most inappropriate for a university, a throwback to the 'bad old days' when politics dominated everything. The students seemed less sceptical; at least they applauded Gong enthusiastically, by contrast with their teachers.

Journalism teachers mix with academics and intellectuals and may well have a different approach to life from students who are attracted by the 'action-man' idea of journalism. Teachers are at least as likely to be researchers into journalism studies as they are teachers of skills, giving them a perspective rooted in culture and history. Moreover, they are established, senior or junior, in jobs which give even today total security and prestige, whereas the aspirants have yet to get in and establish themselves. Since one of the reasons the interviewees gave for wanting to be a journalist was related to 'action, doing' and another to 'public affairs, proximity to power' it is not surprising that young journalism students do not share the scepticism of their teachers.

Going to study journalism today

Lee (2000a:14) has characterised Chinese journalists from official statistics and studies. Excluding the most junior and contract workers there are about 87,000 full time journalists employed by 3,600 news channels. Half are employed in print and half in broadcast media, 2/3 are male and most in their mid-thirties. 8 out of 10 have university education of whom 1/3 have studied journalism.

Although by no means all Chinese journalists go through university departments of journalism, the higher reaches of journalism, the principal state media and the professional associations which were until recently the exclusive arbiters of standards and still have all the prestige and much of the power, are dominated by their graduates (He 1998).

'If you really want to succeed, you ought to study in a journalism department' (T'ung Hsien-nian)

'I want people with imagination, zest and courage. These kind of people are more likely to come from literature or arts departments than from the social sciences. However, those from journalism studies departments do have the basic knowledge'. (Ding Junjie)

Journalism Education is an important but neglected topic. The knowledge and skills with which journalists start their working lives may influence the way they construct and reproduce events for their audiences for the rest of their careers. How they see their social role may be determined not only by their economic and technological environment but also by their education.

Although there are individual courses in Europe that are held in high regard, in general journalism education is regarded with suspicion in both the profession and the academy¹⁷. There is confusion over the difference between media studies and the study of journalism. There is no agreed approach, let alone body of knowledge or skills that are common; for example, the curricula of Spanish and UK courses could hardly be more different (Stephenson 1990). The lack of even common principles may help to account for the confusion over the rights and duties of journalists that characterises much discussion of issues such as privacy, freedom of information and investigative journalism. This is the case in an environment of hugely increasing numbers of channels, changes in the skills and knowledge required of journalists, institutional globalisation and new challenges to journalists' ingenuity. Such changes affect Chinese journalists, but the formation which they have undergone has been different.

Compared to Europe, journalism education has a long history in China, influenced by the importance ascribed to the mass media by the early reformers, by the example of the universities in the USA and by the Bolshevik origins of both Nationalist and Communist parties. The Peking University Journalism Society was founded in 1918; one of the initiators was a graduate in journalism of Michigan. It held classes, organised visits to newsrooms and gave students opportunities for practical training through work on a weekly publication (Chong 1989: 232). Although it closed in 1920, the same year saw a journalism department established at St John's University in Shanghai; in 1924 at Yenching University in Peking and in 1929 at Fudan University, Shanghai. There were close connections with US departments of journalism.

The Department of Journalism of Chengchih University 政治大学, originally the Nationalist Party Academy, was founded in 1935. It transferred to Taiwan in 1949. The pre-eminent schools of journalism in the PRC today are those of Fudan University 复旦大学 in Shanghai and Renmin University 人民大学. Renmin, in Peking, was founded in 1955 but from 1958 incorporated within it Yenching's department of journalism, founded 1924. In 1959, independent of the university system, the Peking School of Journalism was set up; in 1996 this was incorporated within the (National) Peking Broadcasting Institute 广播学院 which had been established in 1959 to train technical, managerial and presentation staff. These organisations, and their achievements, were virtually obliterated during the Cultural Revolution and, when English journalists worked at New China News Agency 新华新闻社 in 1979, they reported that skills and motivations were abysmal (Porter 1992: 11-12).

The Academy of Social Sciences has a Journalism Graduate School, founded 1982, which is the principal producer of Master and Doctoral theses. New China News Agency has its own training college. Under the Ministry of Education there are altogether some 120 specialist institutions teaching journalism, including radio and TV, although as development is very rapid and journalism extremely popular at present this figure may soon be out of date. (He, 1998). Of these there are 51 higher education institutions with journalism departments, excluding subdepartments. Not under the Ministry of Education, there are also lower level, employer and Chinese Association of Journalists' courses.

In the last year for which figures are available, there were 6186 regular graduates 本科生 of university journalism departments with 4 year first degrees and 274 with 'double degrees' ie doing two years of journalism with two years of say law or economics. There were 2358 zhuanke sheng 专科生 who take a three year degree only and usually do so by correspondence or through evening classes and 340 zhuanjie ben 专节本 or technical college graduates. There were 332 master degrees awarded and 30 doctoral completions. Academic staff total 1303, although this may include some staff who are effectively retired.

This, in broad outline, is the system of institutions. He Cihua, until recently Dean of Journalism at Renmin University 人民大学, says that the expansion of journalism education is a high priority for the government. **'We cannot move fast enough'** he says, **'so many youngsters want to study with us'** (He Cihua). Certainly his students were extremely enthusiastic and intensely interested in the media; at sessions with a visiting foreign journalist¹⁸, among the topics which they raised were the issue of journalists and privacy (with particular relationship to the Princess Diana story), freedom of information, cultural imperialism (with reference to French attitudes to US cultural product), the social responsibility of journalism, the independence of producers in news/current affairs, biased reporting of China, reporting of human rights matters and the effects of digitalisation on the work of reporters.

There are many more applicants to places in journalism departments. They are selected on the basis of grades scored at the final secondary school examinations that take place in July each year in one of three strands of examination, the science specialists, humanities specialists and social science specialists. Of the latter, a very high proportion want to study journalism. Each university department sets the lowest mark below which they will not consider applicants and journalism departments have been able regularly to raise their level such that it is almost always higher than other humanities and social science departments. Moreover popular city destinations such as Peking and Shanghai can set higher entry criteria. At Renmin in 1998 the minimum level was 400 points (He 1998) and at Fudan 380 points (Huang 1998).

There are not enough places even for many of those who have achieved high marks in their secondary exams, so that the competition is fierce. **'We are an important minority'** laughed a group of Fudan girls seeking information about studying for their MA in the UK. There tend to be many more girls than boys attempting to enter journalism school, although there is a reluctance on the part of the broadcasting organisations to recruit females (Chen 1998, Zhou Xiaopu).

Fifty percent of the students are supported by the Ministry of Education and fifty percent by the provincial governments such that Renmin has one or two from each province. Students in China are a privileged class. They all live on campus supplied with shops, laundries, restaurants, libraries and other facilities to make study as easy as

possible. Thus, rather as English undergraduates before the great expansion of higher education, students in China know and are reminded daily that they comprise a privileged minority. When later a journalist refers to his or her responsibilities and to the fact that s/he is perceived as an official it is clear that these identities have their roots in the early inculcation of student journalists: they are a minority of a minority and moreover, those who have, in some manner, a voice.

As to the curriculum, regular undergraduate students 本科生 study for four years, in seven semesters, with approximately thirty hours classwork per week. The eighth semester is a placement in a media organisation which takes place in the third year. The placements are chosen in consultation with the student and often will offer him or her a first job upon graduating.

Theory and practice are combined more than in the very vocational Anglophone Departments of Journalism. Aside from a common grounding which will usually include philosophy, history and literature and other modules more immediately related to current media, they go on in the third year to select one of usually two or three pathways, typically broadcast journalism, print journalism or commercial journalism (advertising/PR) yet these distinctions do not appear to diminish the sense of solidarity among students, graduates and teachers¹⁹.

At Renmin courses specific to Master students include Political Theory, Research Methodology, Public Opinion, Current Affairs Reports 深度报道 and Comparative Studies of Socialist and Capitalist News. Research fields from within which MA students tend to select dissertation topics include the reporting of China by foreign journalists, history of the early Chinese press, the Portuguese media in China, the careers and impact of the 'Three S's' [Snow, Smedley and Strong²⁰] and Pravda's early years. These topics are very conservative in the sense of restricting scholarship to ancient or politically safe themes. However, as the variety of academic papers given at the 6th National Communications Conference in 1999 demonstrated, academics are increasingly in touch with the themes of research which have interested western scholars over the past 40 years, and are tentatively applying this knowledge within the parameters of what is acceptable in China.

Journalists are prepared for work within an ideologically orthodox, perhaps doctrinaire, institution. They receive an academic basis which will often extend to western history, literature and philosophy as well as classics, foreign languages and a broad knowledge of the world outside China. However by the very nature of their work and their mixing with other humanities and social science students they are exposed to the most radical ideas and intellectual currents available. These are not always helpful:

Our teachers would tell us in our final year: ‘now you must work at forgetting everything you have learned at journalism school’! (Zhang Lifen)

From the outset of their careers, therefore, they have to cope with dissonance. Consciousness of their privileged position may make this easier to bear.

The job and its power

When you decide that you are aiming to be a journalist and set yourself the task of meeting the academic standards of the gatekeepers in the academy, it may well be that you are motivated by the feeling that your own particular qualities will be nourished by and valued in this occupation of ‘ferreting around’ as Jiang Lan called it. However, as we have seen, you are surely also aware that the competition is great because Journalists have power, or at least that power is ascribed to journalism.

In the eyes of ordinary people I am powerful, I can speak for them. Thus when I am interviewing a politician I represent the audience. But I must be careful, I am not representing myself. When I speak to the general public I represent power. (Liu Ch’ao)

The official discourse of journalism emphasises this power and the fact that it is exercised on behalf of the Party, and the conventional phrase to describe it crops up again and again:

Journalism is a high status occupation. We are the throat and tongue of the Party 党的喉舌. (Xu Xun)

A former teacher explained why he had decided to change occupation in mid-career:

Journalism was not a popular choice in 1988, but at about that time the social status of teachers had begun to plummet after the 1985 reforms. I felt that journalism would regain its past high status because they are regarded as representatives of the government (T'ang Mu-san)

As Pool (1973) observes, totalitarian states have been intensely concerned about mass communications. Totalitarian regimes in Germany, Russia, Italy and China have all put enormous efforts not only into controlling the media but into using them as a means to change minds and to create 'new people'. What has distinguished modern totalitarian movements from traditional authoritarianism is that they have desired to extend their power everywhere and to mobilise people through the use of mass communication and the manipulation of information. They may well have been deluded about the capacity of the media to have those effects; recent studies (Morley 1986, Gunter 1987, Kitzinger 1999, Philo 1999) suggest a much more complex situation in which the recipients and the situation condition the reception. However, the myth that propaganda works as the propagandists intend was very potent in the 1930s-1950s; it was not only politicians who believed it, writers such as Koestler and Orwell were also convinced by it.

In traditional societies 'the Emperor's writ stopped at the village gate'. Communist and fascist governments were not content with that. They desired to bring the majority of the population into the political process.

'We can attribute to Lenin the formulation of the totalitarian approach to politics. He did not think he was the inventor of it, for in his mind he was implementing efficiently and on a national scale an approach to mass-mobilisation that had been emerging throughout the 19th century' (Pool 1973: 464)

The Nationalist Party (KMT) 国民党 initially modelled itself on the Bolsheviks. The CCP grew up within the KMT and learned its Bolshevism in the 1920s and 1930s when the Russian régime was committed to creating a 'new Soviet man' through mass persuasion. By the time the CCP had come to power it had taken this vision to itself as well as the Bolshevik approach to communications as a tool in the power struggle. The CCP also inherited a concept of Chineseness, with its strong racist overtones, from the

dreamy intellectuals of the generation before (Dikotter 1992: 131) who had discovered western nationalism and regretted their own land's lack of national cohesion. They seized upon Bolshevik tools to integrate a country which had no common language, communications, civil service, means of transportation or any kind of sense of common purpose. This is what K'ang means when he describes what is to him an important function of journalists:

Journalists make the people aware of what they have in common, for example when foreigners threaten or insult China as in the Belgrade bombings. (K'ang Wei)

In addition to the ideas of mass mobilization and of using mass persuasion to change peoples' thinking, the Bolshevik approach to communications had a clear line on truth. The main consideration is not whether statements are true or false but the consequences they might have and their 'class nature'. No statement or fact is without its class nature and is to be judged by that rather than by any supposed 'objective criteria' which can determine its truth impartially. This is reflected in what Chinese textbooks tell their journalists about truth in reporting (eg Li's Essentials of Journalism Theory (1997) 李卓钧编著 新闻理论纲要). It accounts for the slogans, or, more accurately, acceptable formulations which are repeated unendingly in the media to the bewilderment of those starting to learn Chinese.

In the 1940s, disgust at the perceived incompetence of the KMT government and frustration at the failure of China to defeat the Japanese had many idealistic people, particularly intellectuals, turning to the ideal represented by the Communists, hidden away in the Shanxi mountains at Yen'an. The frugality of the CCP leaders and their rhetoric of equality were as attractive as their being untainted by defeat at the hands of the Japanese. Tens of thousands trekked up the mountains to CCP headquarters, without first having properly ascertained what they would be required to believe. In 1942 heterodox views and the exigencies of internal power struggles caused the CCP to introduce ideological rectification. Those who had doubts were criticised in mass meetings, forced to sign confessions, demoted or sent to reform through labour. By 'making an example of such people through the rectification campaign, Mao strongly affirmed the role of the CCP in defining the limits of intellectual expression and enquiry' (Spence 1992 : 473). A categorical line on journalism was laid down:

The role and power of the newspapers consists in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party's general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the masses in the quickest and most extensive way (Mao 1961: 241 [1940?])

With such expectations, communication is not about providing information upon which judgments can be made. Nor are media campaigns intended to deploy reason to persuade the recipients of the desirability of a particular course of action. The media become vehicles of mobilization and distributors of preset formulae in which people can frame their words, if not their thoughts. Xu Xun is a senior journalist who formulates her role in words which hark back to the Yenan past: **'The most important responsibility of the journalist is to keep the masses informed of the Party's decisions so that they can carry them out** (Xu Xun). A younger journalist puts it thus:

First, we are endowed with the sacred task rapidly to disseminate and propagate the policies of the government 我们是赋有传达政府政策的这么一个任务, 我们的使命..... **for we work in the service of the masses of society; we have to enable them to grasp policies such that they can know and apply them. Second, once the policies which we have disseminated have been implemented, it may be that there are sometimes distortions in the process, that the benefits are not apparent and that there are complaints. In these situations it is our duty to reflect and explain these. In general, the authorities take this seriously such that those implementing the policies, after watching the programmes, will try to rectify their ways.** (Yu Min)

In the propaganda campaigns of an earlier period

Instructions go out to local Party authorities.....secretly to prepare for the campaign. The local organisers in the school, office, factory, or committee decide in advance who will be the victims, who will be forced to confess sins, and whether each will be forgiven or punished and in what way. Thus the secret scenario is secretly settled before the campaign even begins. At the start of the campaign the mass media proclaim the slogans to be featured, generally by describing how some group of workers or persons somewhere 'spontaneously' began raising these slogans and acting in accordance with them. Suddenly, from all over the country, as if by magic, response and imitation begin. (Pool 1973: 495)

This is well illustrated in Bare Earth 赤地之爱, a (1954) novel by Eileen Chang 张爱玲 about the intelligentsia in 1950s China which opens with scenes of young enthusiasts of

a propaganda work team in the countryside becoming disillusioned as they seek to apply instructions from on high, based upon the analysis of a theoretical situation, to the conditions of poverty and ignorance, corruption and violence, in which they find themselves. The novel contains some of the most painful scenes of suffering of any literature.

To summarise the origins of these phenomena: the Maoist conception of the media originated in, and has barely developed from, the ideas of Lenin who himself was formed intellectually in the 19th century; their premises are more akin to those of Mathew Arnold²¹ than to those of our contemporaries, and journalism students in China learn them as truth even while they are increasingly aware of other interpretations. Today the relationship of the CCP to the media has become much more complex, as Yu Min's comment, above, makes clear.

Perception, proclivities and profession

Chinese academics are today joining in these discussions. According to Lee Chin-chuan (Lee 2000) after Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木 provided the framework by backing academic study of the subject just after the Cultural Revolution, the greatest impetus for developing media studies came from the translation of Siebert's 1956 classic The Four Theories of the Press. This book was first translated into Chinese in the heady days of the mid 1980s and had an immediate impact²², doubtless because its analysis of what journalism was about contrasted so sharply with what Chinese journalists had been taught in the preceding decades.

Although *popular* opinion in England sometimes appears to lean towards the hypodermic characterisation of the media, such that wicked powers are ascribed to journalists who are held responsible for decadence by the right and for supporting oppression by the left, as we have seen academic views of their agency are much less clear cut and these have trickled down to journalists themselves. They are careful about attributing effects to themselves and often prefer it to be believed that they merely reflect. However, there is a seriousness in discussion of the media which derives from a sense that what the media do is important, if only in creating 'climates of consent'

rather than changing opinion. This, it can be argued, accounts for the often expressed revulsion against journalistic sensationalism and for the insistence that the freedom of journalists to report is an important social freedom (exactly how that is argued we will come to later).

In China, on the other hand, the fact that the hypodermic model of the media is the official one has discredited it such that there appears to be widespread nonchalance about their effects. Beneath the statements of the journalists interviewed there is indeed a sense that the media perform important functions in opening peoples' eyes to new ideas but also the view that people are sufficiently inoculated against indoctrination as to render the media not dangerous. Thus, while the convention in England is to be concerned about the potential the media have for harm (either by perverting us or by representing the exploiters²³) the convention in China is to assume that there is nothing to fear.

Journalists in China have a very important part to play in the development of our country. They have to modernise peoples' thinking and introduce them to new businesses and products. (Wu Haimin)

This is redolent of approaches to the media, which see them as performing a function in economic, rather than political or cultural, development. That journalists can be in the business of expanding moral boundaries as well as mere knowledge does not seem to have occurred to Wu and is reflected in the instrumental approach to the kind of formation journalists need²⁴. They believe that the most important qualities for such a journalist are energy, enthusiasm, quick thinking, an ability to grasp the here and now. Asked what are the characteristics and abilities required of modern journalists, reporters typically listed qualities 素质 such as:

very sharp
disciplined 收纪录的
creative

(Li Xiaoping)

Those that they need to cultivate include

logical thinking

adaptability 应变能力

high level of theoretical knowledge

specialist competencies, in economics, science, education for example

analytical skills

(Yu Min)

Although Du Yen expressed respect for academic knowledge, he rated other qualities highest:

To be a good journalist you need a solid knowledge base, especially sociology, history and economics. That is a key condition. There must be a good academic base. You also need to have other strings to your bow; I myself like sport, radio, film. Even that is not enough. To be a successful TV reporter you also need a certain ingenuity, resourcefulness, what we in Peking dialect call inspiration 灵气儿 to make things popular. It is the kind of mind that, given one idea can find three ways of realising itthat kind of initiative is very much in demand.

T'ang Musan regretted that there were not Chinese role models available (implicitly from a pre Communist period):

Young journalists are not to follow the old tradition of arranging news according to political priorities but to focus upon what people need..... Little importance is given to journalism history in the curricula, people are ignorant of pre 1949 journalists so there is no possibility of them being emulated.

Liu Ch'ao wanted to see certain attitudes in place. Graduates should come equipped with

impartial approach

spirited ambition

sense of duty 责任感

work experience

A young reporter appeared ambivalent as to whether academic study was worthwhile

The basis you get at university is of no practical use - its a basis which helps you to put everything in context and to be analytical [but] the essence of journalism is to be active, to cover a great deal rather shallowly, not to ponder deeply.

(K'ang Wei)

An older reporter said that, from his perspective

Young reporters have an urge to express their personal views, to take part in society and to be in the thick of things. That is why they became journalists. (Ch'ien Lung)

In sum, those who enter journalism do so because their individual proclivities lead them towards a profession seen as providing fun and constant stimulation; they undergo a very serious formation which may or may not influence their attitudes; they assimilate the idea that they will be part of the establishment; they obtain good contacts by having fought their way into educational institutions which provide such contacts and, if they succeed in getting on they find themselves in a profession offering a freedom unknown to their compatriots in other fields as well as a status for which others might work many years to achieve. That is only part of the picture though. The Maoist vision of their chosen profession imposes upon them the need to conform to the norms of the profession, to speak the formal discourse as well as to adhere to the informal.

3: THE BURDEN OF THE PAST

Young men and women, eager for what they see as a journalist's life of stimulation and variety, struggle to enter a system which will turn them out qualified for that life. Once there they take on board the discourse of journalism as it is lived by the journalism establishment, a discourse which harks back to the mentors of the past – Lenin, Stalin and Mao. The past is cited as having been 'good before the Cultural Revolution'. There is a number of possible responses to the past. There are those who remain loyal to the, essentially Maoist, idea of journalism even while rejecting the extremes of the Cultural Revolution and those who hope for total commercialization of the media as a way of escaping from it. Either way, the past influences.

Contradictions

Although journalism was for so long isolated from new ideas, contradictions between the Leninist conception and the practicalities of journalism, contradictions which were to dominate the discourse of journalism for the next forty years, became apparent as soon as the victory of the CCP was in sight.

In 1948 (future President of China) Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 cited Lenin to justify his view of the tasks of journalism as a bridge between Party and people:

Lenin said that the Party should maintain its ties with the masses through a thousand channels. That's right, that's what we should do. And your task, your occupation, constitutes one of the very important channels. The newspapers appear before the masses every day and acquaint them with the Party's policies. Likewise, the army, the peoples' representative conferences and the co-operatives serve as bridges linking the Party with the masses. Without these bridges, the contact between the Party and the masses would be severed, leaving a wide gap. Hence, these bridges cannot be dispensed with. And among the thousands of bridges or channels, the newspaper is an essential one. (Liu 1984 : 395 [1948])

On establishing the PRC in October 1949 the CCP in effect nationalised the media, thus making all journalists state employees²⁵. Perhaps more significant, journalists became subject to a number of institutions which limited their ability to withstand Party pressure: the life dossier²⁶, the work unit and the Party committee in particular (Ogden 1992 ch4). Although the CCP had driven the KMT onto Taiwan, it was not clear then that the Civil War really was over, or that the KMT might not stage a comeback with US help, so that the wartime conditions could be justified. In the series of campaigns intended to destroy class enemies, mobilise behind the Party a large enough constituency of support, terrorise the opposition and carry out reforms deemed necessary for China's economic development, the journalist was to be propagandist and motivator and not to quibble. Liu Shaoqi's bridge had become a one-way route. In simply becoming the mouthpiece of authority it also became so uninteresting, so lacking in diversity as to be unreadable. As interviewee Wu Haimin put it:

In the past politics dominated the newspapers but the Party began to realize that no one was reading them. (Wu Haimin)

The 'past' to which he referred was the 1970s. What he did not say is that this was a problem which had first been identified as early as the 1950s and indeed had been observed in Russia, soon after the Revolution, too. By the mid-fifties, as the CCP felt more confident, leaders began to admit out loud, what had soon been evident, that the newspapers were failing to attract readers. In 1955 Liu Shaoqi asked why it should be that, while bourgeois newspapers contained interesting reports, 'our own newspapers' were so uninteresting.

Because such a senior leader opened up the topic, it became possible for discussion to take place about the evident contradictions between producing what people would read, and producing propaganda journalism - in the sense of black and white, strongly biased towards ideological politics and with little to relieve the seriousness. For a period there was a lively debate as to how journalism might serve the cause and how the fact of journalists being state employees, and so inhibited and restricted, could be improved upon. Liu expressed a wish to see journalists develop independence and a sense of personal responsibility.

Foreign journalists have this as their watchword: news reports are to be objective, truthful, and impartial. If we merely stress the political stand but dare not stress objectivity and truthfulness in our news reports, then our news reports would be subjective and partial indeed.
(quoted in MacFarquhar 1974 : 76)

Moreover, Liu specifically held up for emulation US newspapers which would, he said, report criticisms of the US by China, whereas the reverse was not the case in China (ibid: 76). What the discussants of the period appear to have hoped for was to establish the kind of consensus within which debate could take place and variety would be possible, a situation which was believed to have obtained before the KMT-CCP split, though this time within a new consensus.

The difficulty lay in the fact that not only had the CCP concentrated ownership of the media in its own hands, but it had imposed a much more rigid ideology, introduced intervention by the state into the lives of the citizenry of a ferocity which some argue had not been seen in China for at least a thousand years (Jenner 1994), allowed to mushroom an enormous state bureaucracy impervious to criticism or moral suasion, and forced mass mobilisation for ideological campaigns which crushed all rights and rejected all questioning.

Some contemporary fiction provides a flavour of this period. For example, in Zhang Ailing's (1956) novel The Rice Sprout Song 秧歌, set in 1950s rural China, there is a witty description of a writer, Gu Gang, sent to the countryside to gather material for a script about rural issues. He ignores totally the dramatic and tragic events around him because they do not fit his required format and, while setting his story in the village in which he lodges, transforms it to accord with his audience's expectations. It becomes the vehicle for a stereotypical tale of revolutionary heroism in a flood, though there had never been a flood in the real village. Listening to the District Officer describe the trials and efforts of the local peasants with studied disinterest as he searches for a topic that will fit the current fashions,

He waited until Comrade Wang had stopped.....
'Comrade Wang, has there been a flood in this area?'
'Flood?' Comrade Wang was startled. 'No. What, you want to visit a flood?'
He suddenly became stimulated, gave a great smile and looked with a great

light in his eyes. Gu Gang saw he suspected him.

'Oh no I was just wondering whether in summer the stream overflowed....'

There was still a hint of suspicion in Wang's face. 'The water increases but it's never overflowed'

'But for example if it were to overflow' Gu explained ' I was just thinking one could base a story on the possibility'

'But' Comrade Wang looked at him with surprise 'I don't understand, when we've got so many significant things going on, why'd you want to write a fake story?'

(Zhang 1960 : 98-99 *paraphrase*)

From a later period, News from Inside the Paper 本报内部消息 by Liu Binyan 刘宾雁 (1960), deals with a journalist who uncovers a case which appears to be just what the authorities should want, yet finds that her report is suppressed and her career blocked. Liu's reporter had a conception of what she ought to be doing – exposing malfeasance – rather different to that of Zhang's. The difference though can probably be explained by reference to the different outlooks of the two authors. Zhang was deeply cynical about the attempt to build socialism, with most of the activists in her most powerful novel, Bare Earth 赤地, being characterised as corrupt or flawed in some other way, whereas Liu continued to believe that if only the good activists (and journalists like himself) could come to the fore, the Party would redeem itself. However, the lack of any alternative channels of opinion than Party-dominated media and the concentration of power into factions made this unlikely. Rowe suggests that the Party could not close down the public sphere and then hope to resurrect it (Rowe 1995 : 326)²⁷.

As the memoirs of reporter Liu Binyan demonstrate, leaders might call for more interesting, even critical, journalism one day, but destroy those who dared to oblige, the next (Liu 1990a : 16). The vagaries of the relationship between journalists and the political process are burned into the consciousness of succeeding generations.

Milestones in the development of journalism

In talking about their work Chinese journalists use phrases and formulate their views in ways which, to the informed listener, hark back to debates which may have taken place

long before their births. We all do this, although it is possible that, in China, it is more the case than in the Anglophone world. Chinese is replete with stock expressions and a cultural predilection has become a political obsession as the Party has sought to add to the already vast national arsenal of cliché and set expression such that it is difficult to make any kind of communication without bringing into play a multitude of allusions. This is absolutely intentional and, in politics and journalism at least, is indicative of the need to express oneself only in a manner already approved by precedent authority. Some of the stock expressions used in the following response are in italics:

Our task is to identify the *latest news facts* 最新的新闻事件 and social phenomena and to reflect them in our recording of them. Of course, we have our own objectives, one of which is to be *close to the citizenry* 贴近群众 贴近老百姓. If there is a topic in which the citizenry have shown no interest, yet you cover it, then you will create a *social effect* 社会的效果, 社会的意义. There are some matters that are known to the audience but not thought out by them.....we go into depth on these topics and demonstrate our view, perhaps providing revelation. (Du Yan)

Aside from this orthodoxy of expression, there is a stock of references to past events which are brought up regularly in conversation. There are the names of Wang Shiwei 王市委 and Hu Feng 胡峰; the periods called the 'Hundred Flowers 白花', the 'Great Leap Forward 大跃进' and the 'Cultural Revolution 文革'. These terms are used as short hand to explain the failings of journalism or to demonstrate the problematic inheritance:

One of my colleagues said to me I should study the life of Wang Shiwei..... a journalist who was persecuted back in the 1940s. My teacher wanted me to understand that the Party is no good, has always been no good. But my family are fishing people and we have done rather well since 1949²⁸ so my thoughts are rather confused. (Ts'ao Hsin)

Ts'ao's confusion is not surprising. His parents' economic life had improved under the CCP as had their childrens' prospects. Of the three children of a poor fisherman and his uneducated housewife, one was a doctor, one an academic and one, 'the stupid one', a rich entrepreneur. Yet, intellectually, Ts'ao rejected the CCP, and this appeared to have started with his learning the story of Wang Shiwei.

Wang Shiwei 王实味

The name Wang Shiwei is surely quite forgotten by all but students of Chinese Communism - and Chinese journalists. By them, his case is still cited, 60 years after. One of the best known of today's Chinese reporters has written a monograph on Wang Shiwei, itself a telling point about the perceived relevance of history to current debates (Dai 1994). Wang was a journalist in Yanan, the fastness in which the CCP and its forces were holed up in the 1940s, who criticised the leadership for living sybaritically. He charged that, not only did they eat better and enjoy better accommodation than the hoi polloi, but they also obliged the young women to be sexually available. He was imprisoned, held up as a negative model, insulted and humiliated. Eventually he was beheaded. The preface to Dai Qing's book on him argues that not only 'the abuses of the Cultural Revolution', the 'mass criticism' the fabricated 'anti-party cliques' and 'the witchhunts' but also the ludicrous but tragic purges of writers and journalists in the 1980s are

'not examples of the violation of the Yanan Way; they are the expression of Yanan's dark side, as authentic a part of Yanan's inner 'symbolic capital' as the outer manifestations of frugality, self sacrifice and national salvation. Thus, with the insight Dai Qing provides, the narrative of Chinese communism's decline is less a story of betrayal or lost idealism than tragedy playing out its initial flaws' (Dai 1994: xxv)

Others could have told her this long before, for example Simon Leys in his series of books from the 1970s onwards. The point is that today it is the very Chinese who were the mainstays of the regime in the past, families such as Ts'ao Hsin's, who are opening their eyes.

Hu Feng 胡峰

Hu Feng was a hero for the intellectuals of the Hundred Flowers 百花时代 period. They identified with his sufferings at the hands of those in the Party who were determined to impose the most rigid conformity even if it meant destroying the careers and even imprisoning people who were, by any yardstick, loyal to the ideals of the Communist

Revolution. Hu Feng, one of the few leading Communists from a poor background, developed as a writer of distinction during the 1920s and also became a committed Marxist. However his approach to literature was different to that expounded by Mao Zedong in his Yanan talks, aimed at achieving orthodoxy, as he believed that a consensus on general aims should not lead to forcing writers into producing only narrow, stereotypical works. To Hu, literary value was not subordinate to politics (Goldman 1962). He founded and ran a popular magazine Hope 希望 in the late 1940s and, despite arguments with the conformist Zhou Yang 周扬, believed that his approach would win out, or continue to be tolerated, particularly as, even after 1949 he retained or gained leading posts in the new cultural hierarchies. As always, in Chinese affairs, he was surrounded by an admiring faction which was hostile to Zhou's faction so that rivalry became as important as differences on issues. Convinced of the rightness of his case and of the evidence that the literature he advocated could be shown to serve the cause better, he presented a proposal along these lines to the Central Committee in 1954. However, he had misjudged the moment since the policy of collectivization, being deeply unpopular and fraught with dangers for the CCP, required in the minds of its defenders complete unanimity. He was unjustly accused of being anti-Marxist, pilloried as a traitor and used as a warning in a nationwide campaign against heterodoxy.

The Hundred Flowers

**Today I can talk to you, like yesterday. Tomorrow –who knows?
You know about the 100 Flowers? Oh well you know all about us!**
(Chiang Hsiaolong)

While the cases of Wang Shiwei and Hu Feng are less well known outside the profession of journalism, the expression 'Hundred Flowers' is shorthand now even in the West among people who otherwise know virtually nothing about Chinese politics. The phrase was used by Mao Zedong in a speech of 1956, when he called for freedom of expression; when he was taken at his word, he found the results unpalatable. Journalists revealed the failures of the new government, the muddle and waste and, though they invariably put the blame on well-meaning but incompetent lower level

cadres who prevented the carrying out of the leadership's full wishes or stood between the people and the beneficent leaders (Liu 1990a), even this proved intolerable. In speaking of their own profession, the journalists' aims were not for anything as extreme as abstract rights, but they argued for the professional autonomy that would enable them better to do their job of serving the state and acting as interface between people and that state. Nevertheless, the newspapers that had allowed such views to be voiced, initially the Guangming Daily 光明日报 and Wenhui Bao 文汇报 of Shanghai, were subject to an Anti-Rightist Campaign. As always in Chinese politics, whole groups of people fell, dragged down with their patrons (Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 and Liu Binyan among the journalists, for example). One writer sees the Hundred Flowers as presaging the horrors that were to come:

'The 'Hundred Flowers' left permanent scars. For Mao, the experiment finally confirmed the prejudices he had built up towards the intellectuals and led him from then on to consider the modern mind as the natural and unmanageable enemy of his power. For historians studying the rise, decay and final collapse of maoism, the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign will remain a crucial date - the turning point in an evolution and the first seeds of disintegration. This first, apparently feeble tremor was to be followed by the violent earthquake of the 'Great Leap Forward' and finally by the fatal shock of the 'Cultural Revolution'. (Leys 1981: 19)

In 1987 journalists Liu Binyan and Xu Liangyang 许良英 joined with academic Fang Lizhi 方励之 to plan a scholarly conference to look back at the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 30 years earlier:

Even though the movement had brought suffering to half a million people (the number persecuted to death was far greater than the number killed in the June 4 massacre), still we looked in vain for any openly published materials on the history of the movement. The only records of the movement were inside the memories of those fortunate enough to have survived it. With the passage of time, those fortunate survivors were themselves becoming fewer and fewer, and for the younger generation, the impression of the Anti-Rightist Movement was growing fainter and fainter. We wished to create a record of the movement before those who could supply oral accounts disappeared. (Fang 1990: 271)

When journalists employ the expression 'Hundred Flowers' they appear to be using it as a shorthand for 'the bad old days' and as a way of reminding their interlocutors and themselves of the dangers of believing leaders assurances of freedom of speech.

The Great Leap Forward

That Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 was to have unfortunate consequences, for when the Great Leap Forward was implemented in 1959 there was no journalist with the courage, confidence or authority to question it, no matter that they were in the best position to know the real situation as they toured from county to county, a notable privilege in a country where movement was restricted according to official rank²⁹. The Great Leap Forward was a campaign to reject the laws of measured development led by experts and to seek dramatic, indeed unheard of, economic successes simply through immense hard work, enthusiasm and by eschewing advanced technology in favour of whatever ordinary people could themselves harness. Peasants were taken off their normal tasks to work on small-scale local steel plants or to undertake building projects; food production and distribution were communalised and people discouraged from taking responsibility for their own feeding and supply. The result was almost total chaos and, while millions starved, journalists were writing tales of massive grain harvests and other production victories achieved by sheer heroism; they were without foundation (Becker 1996):

After the Great Leap Forward journalists of the older generation knew that journalists should have more right to scrutinise the government so that disasters like that could be reported and so that the leaders could put them right. Some of the old journalists are very sad they did not succeed in grasping this opportunity. (Ts'ao Hsin)

The revelation of this contradiction between the duties of the journalist and the intolerance of the Party was to cause journalists to reformulate their view of themselves and to claim the rights of tribunes of the people. At the Party's Lushan Conference 庐山会谈 of 1959 Mao suffered a political setback when the Party concluded that reporting on the Great Leap Forward had been falsified and that, in effect, the experiment had been a total disaster. The institutions created for it were, in

reality if not in name, dismantled (Leys 1981: 31). The battle over the interpretation of the Leap became highly charged as it reflected not only matters of executive behaviour, but of ideology and personality. Mao's line was that, as in the USSR, a new ruling class was being created whose relationship to the majority did not really differ from that between capitalists and proletarians. This was the 'top down' approach which, though it might make China rich and strong would not revolutionise society but entrench the inequalities, the injustices and the subjection of the poor. This was the ideological reason why China had to try a kind of development which involved all the people, did not allow a new ruling class to develop, and showed the world that there really was a socialist way forward.

To Mao's keenest supporters this was obvious, but many senior cadres had been more attracted to the CCP as the vehicle for national revival than for its social programme, and they were not as committed as Mao to equality; some were convinced that the Stalinist model was the only one. Others simply had no time for popular participation in decision-making; indeed, in accordance with what Jenner argues are virtually ineradicable tendencies within Chinese society and polity, they probably actually considered such ideas to be morally wrong (Jenner 1994 : 180). In the debates at the Lushan Conference there were undertones of a much older controversy, a controversy over two approaches which, sometimes clearly defined, sometimes overlapping, had dominated Chinese attitudes to their country's predicament since the 19th century. On the one hand were those who sought the evolutionary solution by which the best of things Chinese might be incorporated into a new synthesis between West and East, and this was an approach which most appealed to the cultured, educated élite. In the other corner were the millenarians who wanted dramatic and radical change which might mean destroying all vestiges of old China but might equally mean driving out all taints of the foreign; in either case they were equalitarian. To the latter, the journalists were suspect as much for their relationship to the old literati as for their collusion with the technocracy:

Journalists in China are officials 干部 so far as the people are concerned. So left wing people don't like them. Of course Yao Wenyan 耀文元 and Chang Chunqiao 长春桥 [leading lights of the Cultural Revolution] were

journalists but really they were anti-journalists because they were against all those people who wrote erudite essays 散文. (Ts'ao Hsin)

Towards the Cultural Revolution

By 1962 it was generally known among the élite that the Great Leap Forward had been a failure in almost all aspects; its sceptics were rehabilitated and the press made criticisms unprecedented since the KMT-CCP split³⁰. Typical of journalists before the Leap had been the attitude of veteran communist and founder -editor of the Peoples' Daily Deng Tuo 邓拓. A firm believer in the subordination of the rights of the individual to those of the group (Cheek 1986 : 113), when he had doubts he expressed 'loyal criticism' in private to his comrades on the Central Committee while producing the requisite leading articles promoting the centrally-dictated line regardless of his own views. However, many journalists feared that they had forfeited trust. In Schudson's words

If they fail to attend to their own integrity and their own credibility with audiences, they may in fact simply become ineffective ideological institutions (Schudson 1991 : 147)

That was not their only concern; convinced that the Leap had been a débâcle, they feared Mao persisting in such 'extremism'. President Liu encouraged oblique criticism of Mao and of voluntarism, criticism written by journalists under the protection of Hu Yaobang. When the attacks were not countered, journalists believed that Mao was on the run and pressed home their criticisms in the traditional way - by historical analogy, in this case the story of Hai Rui.

Jonathon Spence (1992) tells us that Hai Rui 海瑞 was a Ming Dynasty 明朝(1368-1644) official who had a place in the history books for having stood up for the rights of the common people against blinkered and incompetent officials. Shortly before launching the Leap in 1956, Party Chairman Mao Zedong 毛泽东 had invited the erudite journalist Wu Han 武汉, celebrated during the 1930s for his use of analogies to criticise Chiang Kaishek 蒋介石, to write about Hai Rui. Presumably what Mao had

in mind was using the example of Hai Rui to berate conservative or indolent cadres. Two factors contributed to making Wu Han's endeavours into a major political issue. First, those who were later to become the principal begetters of the Cultural Revolution were at that time mobilising against 'elitists' who, by virtue of their cultural capital, dominated cultural life to the detriment (thought Jiang Qing 将青 - Mao's wife - and her circle) of the truly revolutionary and the masses. For this group, Wu Han would be a suitable target. Second, Wu Han himself chose to write not upon Hai Rui's championing of the people against bureaucracy but upon his taking to task the emperor of the day for failure to keep in touch with the people and their plight and for his failure to control abuses. Wu Han had other axes to grind, equally unpalatable to Jiang Qing's circle. Pusey (1969: chIV) emphasises that one of Wu's principle concerns was with the dumbing down of education, which cut young people off from their culture's past.

This first article, published in 1959, was followed over the next three years by others in The Peoples' Daily, just at the time that the Leap was being interpreted as a failure of Mao's. At the time the articles were not subject to criticism and Wu went on (Spence 1992 : 600) to investigate directives issued during the Leap which he and his associates, including Deng Tuo, turned into hard critiques of policy and published in Peoples' Daily, Peking Daily and Frontline under the byline Three Family Village 三家村, harking back to the exile in a village of that name of a dismissed Sung Dynasty (960-1280) official. In action as in their analogies, the writers had taken upon themselves the tribune role. However it was, perhaps, a somewhat compromised role for the journalists may have been being manipulated by people at court for their own purpose of weakening Mao's power.

This was a time when scientists, technologists, economists and experts in general were back in authority (Brugger 1994 : 234) after their relegation to a status below the masses during the Leap; equally, journalists were regaining status. There was a small minority of 'left' journalists in Shanghai who opposed the policy of upgrading the experts and still hit out from time to time, alleging that the policy of trusting experts rather than the masses risked putting the revolution in the hands of the bourgeoisie; they believed that, in Peking, the very notion of class struggle was being buried.

It is instructive to compare the kind of critical journalism that was being published now with that of the Hundred Flowers period. Then, Liu Binyan and his emulators wrote denunciations of the obstructionism of stupid, or narrow or dishonest officials hindering the masses from carrying out the line of the Leadership, and preventing the Leadership from being advised by the masses (Liu 1990: ch5). During the 1960s the criticism, still dealing with practice rather than principle, was aimed at the top, 'beating tigers' rather than 'swatting flies'. Because of the danger they posed to some in the Leadership, such writings were to be the catalyst for the Cultural Revolution, which would crush journalism for ten or more years:

When Mao and his gang read these articles in the newspapers, they got scared. They said to themselves that very soon they'd be finished, they'd got to act fast. (Ts'ao Hsin)

In September 1965 Mao got no response in the Party to his call for a campaign against 'reactionary bourgeois ideology', an attempt to rally his following against press criticism of the Leap, and left for Shanghai to plot with his supporters in the media. Two journalists epitomised the sides at that point. Deng Tuo believed there was no further call for class struggle; Zhang Chunqiao 张春桥 claimed that the system was making good communists into class enemies. In November 1965 Shanghai reporter and associate of Zhang's, Yao Wenyuan 姚文元³¹, attacked Wu Han for advancing the idea that journalists should obey individual morality rather than the will of the masses. Led by the Liberation Army Daily 解放军报 several thousand articles echoing Yao's followed in a few weeks. This widened into a general attack by the provincial press on the capital's. However, it soon became apparent that the press was not really being used as a site for discussion but as the means by which leaders demonstrated their influence or by which the politically aware in China might see who was prevailing over whom (MacFarquhar 1990 : 192-4). As it fell under the influence of the 'mass line' the press failed to reflect the arguments but copied the exhortations of The Peoples' Daily; journalism disappeared (Chen 1975 : 190-1). So did many journalists:

In those times China was involved in class struggle, [during the Cultural Revolution] people's relationships with each other were very confused. I was dubbed a black element and sent to do hard labour. At the smashing of the Gang of Four and after the reform period began, I was to return to my work. When that happened I recognised that to understand China's media you must comprehend China's history, since they cannot be extracted one from the other. The media is formed by the historical environment. In the past we could not imagine publishing anything of what we publish now.
(Wang Qianghua)

In July 1966, in order to demonstrate his vigour, Mao swam in the Yangtze River 扬子江 and such was the coverage in the press that it was clear that there had been a change of power at the top, for the journalism establishment failed to block the kind of reporting that would have been inconceivable shortly before and which for English readers is probably reminiscent of nothing as much as the apotheosis of Diana Spencer³².

Chairman Mao is the red sun in our hearts and is with us forever. Just as the competition started, a fast launch cut through the waves and sailed towards the swimmers from the east, where the sun was rising. ...Radiant with vigour and in buoyant spirits, Chairman Mao stood on the deck and reviewed the large number of swimmers battling the waves...Now walking to the starboard and now to the port side, he waved to the swimmers amid enthusiastic cheers and called out to them in a loud voice: 'Greetings comrades! Long Life to you comrades!' One swimmer got so excited that he forgot he was in the water. He raised up both hands and shouted, 'Long live Chairman Mao!' He leapt into the air but soon sank into the water again. He gulped several mouthfuls, but the water tasted especially sweet to him. It was at this moment that Chairman Mao's launch arrived near the mouth of the Wuchang dyke. With steady steps, Chairman Mao walked down the gangway and dipped himself in the water for a while before stretching out his arms and beginning to swim. It was exactly 11 o'clock.(quoted in Chen 1975 : 220)

What had happened to journalism? As newspapers simply regurgitated the panegyrics printed by those under 'mass line' control, it seems they were paralysed. The struggles for power in the offices and the bitter quarrels bearing little relation to any of the original ideas of the Cultural Revolution which burst out in violence, the expulsion to the countryside of professional journalists, the fear of saying anything except, in effect, 'long-live Chairman Mao' lest you be subjected to persecution by one or other of the multitude of Red Guard factions, all contributed to a

sclerosis of the press.³³ So did the inability of Mao's faction to mobilise more than a few writers on whom they could rely from among their relatives and friends (described in detail in Chang 1961: 63-68).

Insofar as a line on journalism was articulated it was as is revealed in the editorial of the People's Daily of 19 January 1967 entitled 'Let Mao Zedong Thought dominate the newspapers' (literally 'occupy the emplacements of the newspapers'). The first part is an encomium of the two papers, Wenhui Daily and Liberation Army Daily 解放军报 (the army paper), which were already solidly Maoist. Some newspapers were still backward, presumably, else this editorial would have served no purpose. The editorial went on:

From the viewpoint of the proletariat, the Party's leadership (that is the leadership of the Party Central Committee with Chairman Mao at its head), is indeed the leadership of Mao Zedong Thought which means taking Chairman Mao as the representative of the proletarian revolutionary line. There is a little clique of the capitalist class which has viciously made its way into the Party, overturning the Party, contradicting Mao Thought, opposing the proletarian revolutionary line. We must rise up against these capitalist gentry! Once we have risen against them, the newspapers will get back onto the road of Mao Thought and once they are back on the revolutionary road of Chairman Mao the broad revolutionary masses will be able to hear correctly the voice of the Party, Chairman Mao's voice! (The Peoples' Daily [19.1.67])

Over the next few years, the expulsion or cowing of the establishment journalists resulted not in a throwing open of the media to the initiative and imagination of the masses, but in a sterile uniformity of Mao-worship and political formulae. The justification for this comes over best in the depiction by one western enthusiast in 1971 of how television in the Cultural Revolution was supposed to differ from the earlier, decadent period:

Television is a tool to help the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers maintain dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. The Liu Shao-ch'i line in television had four characteristics: it advocated programmes that had aesthetic appeal, general interest, general knowledge and entertainment value. So they had 'laughing parties' (comedy shows, pure and simple), films on archaeological relics that lauded the past, and programmes on how to grow potted plants, or girls on how to make pretty dresses. They had cartoons about monkeys that were

wise and bears that were loyal. These ghosts have been laid.' (Howard 1971 : 992)³⁴

Howard also gives a concise description of the different news values under the mass line:

We have no interest in 'hot' news or so called actuality.....We show a consolidated view of events when they've completed the process of their formation, not the events as they happen. The loss in so-called actuality is a gain in clarity of conclusions. We give the end result, the positive resolution of contradictions: and so we show the way forward. (Howard 1971: 992)

The disdain for timeliness remains a feature of Chinese public affairs journalism today but as the media become more competitive may diminish as a particular characteristic of professional practice. During the Cultural Revolution, which in effect lasted from 1965 to 1975, journalism was denied any role other than as conduit for the views of those Revolutionary Committees, which claimed to be expressing the voice of the masses. The memory of this period is still strong in the minds of journalists over 45 and lessons from it burnt into younger ones; it is surely for this reason that they so heartily advocate privatisation as a safeguard - and cartoons about bears.

4: THE PATRIOT JOURNALISTS

So different does today's China appear when compared with the China of before 1990 that the foreign observer might be forgiven for imagining that the experiences of those times are as remote from the world of today's young journalists as times medieval. Yet no interviewee thought in this way. There were two reactions to probing about the past. One was that of the relatively unengaged, the sceptic who saw his or her future abroad, preferably in the USA, before which journalism could be used as a way of having an interesting time and making some money. These were few. Most were stimulated by questions about journalism and its rôles to refer immediately to possible models and approaches. Knowledge of pre communist models of Chinese journalism was skimpy, but as engaged journalists are becoming more aware of the limitations of the CCP's discourse of journalism so they are taking an interest in an alternative history':

It is good for journalists to know about great journalists before Liberation. The models we have are all communists, or they are foreigners. (K'ang Ming)

When I was studying journalism and had a chance to look through all the pre 1949 newspapers from the areas under KMT control, I found that China had experienced every kind of journalism: plenty of 'tabloid', doorstep journalism as in England; crimes, celebrities and social problems on the front page....(when I went to work) in Shanghai at the World Economic Herald we were very conscious that we were reviving pre 1949 practisesvery few had direct contact with the western media so we looked to our own past. (Zhang Lifan)

In other words knowledge of pre-1949 journalism may offer a different perspective on the Maoist period, even role models more appropriate to the Chinese situation than the Anglophone ones. This matters because in every area of life in China history is important: as justification, lesson, cautionary tale. The composition of, and rewriting of, history has long been regarded as an important function of the state. History possibly matters for another reason, too. In the words of a Sinologist:

[In China] history plays a role comparable to that of religious texts in other cultures.... the religion of the Chinese ruling classes is the Chinese state, and it is through history that the object of devotion is to be understood (Jenner 1994 : 11)

What may be happening in China is that history is gradually being rewritten as scholars come into contact with interpretations other than that of the CCP. In terms of the grand narratives a reformulation of Chinese history may take a long time, but the history of journalism does not fall into this category and so may change more rapidly.

In 1999 a group of Chinese journalists, members of a National Peoples' Congress working party on media law, came to England for a intensive course in English media, media law and regulation. They came hoping to learn something they could apply in China. At the end, their feelings were very mixed:

We are Chinese, you are English, naturally our journalism is different. Since coming to Nottingham I realise that our cultures and histories are very different. The same things do not apply in both countries. Anyway, I have learned this! (Gong Li)

Another said

Chinese and Western journalists want the same things, but the conditions in which they work are quite different. Our history accounts for this. (Wang Qianghua)

What Gong and Wang probably meant was that it is in the recent history of the Peoples' Republic that you can find an explanation for just how different Chinese journalism is. She said with pride that China is a socialist country and thereby implied that the differences were in China's favour; other Chinese journalists interviewed have suggested that the differences are not flattering to China because China is a backward country. Both points of view occur. What is less common is any consideration of Chinese journalism pre 1949. This has tended to be written off as a period in which, after a period of chaos in which it was possible for some left journalists to emerge, the press were tools of the capitalist class, represented by the KMT. The reality is different and it is important for the development of our argument that the early years of journalism are taken into account: it will be argued in the conclusion that, as the patina

of Maoism wears off, the Chinese journalist of today is revealed to have similarities with his pre-communist forbears.

Early modern journalism

During the latter part of the Qing Dynasty five developments affected the literati³⁵ and began to condition the environment in which modern communications would develop. An intellectual movement aimed at subjecting Confucian orthodoxy to rational scrutiny began to undermine complacency about the Chinese world as the epitome of civilisation; large numbers of Chinese went abroad to live in countries outside that world and a trickle returned wealthy and knowledgeable about lands which it was increasingly difficult to accept were barbarian as tradition would have it; European military strength shook Chinese confidence; the need to counter the overwhelming power of the Europeans gave rise to a reform movement of intellectuals who rapidly moved from criticising military shortcomings to identifying political and social weaknesses; European missionaries, forcing their way into China behind the traders and soldiers, learned Chinese and began to publish.

Many missionaries were committed to helping Chinese reformers and there were close and productive relationships between them and the Chinese publishing community for nearly 100 years (Lee 1985: 365). The first daily, Chong Ngoi Sam Bo 中外新报, came out in 1854 and the first mass circulation daily Wahji Yatbo 花子日报, in 1864. Many early papers, much like their equivalents in 18th century Europe, were directed at merchants in the treaty ports. According to the founding issue of the Hsin Pao 新报 in 1861:

‘In general what is valuable for the conduct of commerce and trade is the circulation of reliable information. In printing this new paper we will not fail to carry all national government or military intelligence, (news of) market place advantage or disadvantage, business prices, and the coming and going of ships and cargo..... By glancing at this new paper, you can learn that a certain cargo is to be sold on a certain day, and on the day you can personally inspect the cargo and negotiate the price. Thus you can avoid endless delay and procrastination by agents or making a bad purchase on speculation.’ (Lee 1985: 362)

During the 1860s to 1880s many scholarly study and discussion ('self-strengthening') groups sprang up, often publishing collections of essays or reviews. There had always been study associations, but whereas in the past they talked of poetry, calligraphy, painting and philosophy, increasingly they addressed themselves to the fact of western encroachment and the weakness of the Qing government in the face of it. It was in this period too that scholars started to learn western languages - previously only uneducated (in a Chinese sense) servants of foreigners had done so - and to translate western books into Chinese. Such changes broadened the traditional public sphere in China into something more akin to what Habermas identified in Europe, according to Rowe (1990 : 310).

As the scholar-gentry and the merchants became more politicised many felt an urgent need to save China lest she be dismembered by the imperialist powers. Most young men might continue to enter for the traditional examinations, but a growing minority took part in enterprises of one kind or another which sought to come to terms with the Europeans, whether learning engineering, medicine or military skills or working among missionaries and traders. In so doing they were learning to cope with the idea that China was not the centre of the world, the cynosure and the source of all culture. It was to be from among these men that the first journalists would come.

In 1895 China was defeated in war by Japan. This was a shock as few Chinese had yet appreciated the degree to which the Meiji Restoration had modernised and strengthened their neighbours. It galvanised ever-larger numbers into getting involved in public affairs, at least by reading the newspapers and discussing issues. When the young emperor's attempts to emulate his Japanese counterpart's radical overhauling of the state was thwarted by the Empress' coup d'état of 1898, his advisers and supporters fled abroad. Although it did not appear so at the time, this was a further impetus to the emergence of Chinese journalism.

Before they became associated with the patriotic struggle, journalists were despised. Reporters who retailed the gossip of the capital to the treaty ports and dealt as much in salacious sensation as in business information were referred to as 'scum' 无赖文人 (Cheng 1998 : 180). When the reformer Kang Youwei 康有为, who could not be denied

to be a traditional scholar, began to use the press as vehicle for his ideas, the image of the journalist began to change. As the image changed, so did the reality: More and more did newspaper writers come from families which had supplied officials to the imperial service for generations. While the imperial examination system continued to exist they typically passed the early stages yet deployed their literary skills in the new profession. They referred to themselves as the Middle Layer in Society 中等社会, i.e. between ignorant masses and conservative élites, and were both more traditionally educated than the treaty-port journalists and more exposed to western ideas than the ruling classes. Many had studied in Japan where they learned how newspapers could be designed to be attractive to a more diverse and less erudite readership, in layout as in content (Judge 1996 : 39).

Journalism became the ideal career for the patriot (perhaps the only one available for the full-time activist) and the only political journalism was patriotic, change-orientated journalism (Britton 1933 chVIII). It is instructive to compare such a development with the standard accounts of the origins of English bourgeois journalism where codes of objectivity and a professional ethic grew up as functions both of the need of the business classes for factual information and of the requirement not to antagonise sections of a diverse, numerous and politically argumentative public. In this account, the 'Fourth Estate function' developed as a means of reconciling different interests to the electoral system, being only possible thanks to a wide enough consensus on general principles which the press itself had an important hand in creating (Altschull 1998: 1).

By contrast, most Chinese journalists and publishers papers were, from the start, committed; a paradigm was the Pure Criticism Newspaper 清议报), named after a Han Dynasty student movement and founded by exiles in Japan. This was an important moment, for the new paper and Liang Qichao's equally famous Current Affairs 时务报) became models, in terms of content and intellectual approach, to which others would aspire. Liang was disparaging of existing ones and stated his view of the purpose of the press:

To report in detail the new government measures in the several provinces, so that readers may know that modern innovations actually do yield benefits;

and also to realise the difficulties of those in authority, and their aims..... To delve into and fully expose details of important Sino-foreign problems, so that readers may understand that China is not established internationally, that because of internal disorganisation China is humiliated by other nations, and that because of our ignorance of international law we are duped by other nations; and thus to stimulate the new learning, and cause readers to give thought to purging the nation of its humiliations. (Britton 1933: 89)

Something of the effect of the changing newspapers can be gathered from the memoir of a certain Pao, a youth at the time of the Sino-Japanese War:

Our country and Japan were warring over Korea, and the Shanghai newspapers carried news about it every day. Previously young Chinese readers paid no attention to current events, but now we were shaken. I often went out and got Shanghai newspapers to read, and I began to understand bits and pieces about current events. I began to discuss them, and I accounted myself pro-reform.....(after the loss of the war and the establishment of a Japanese concession in Soochow) most educated people, who had never before discussed national affairs, wanted to discuss them: why are others stronger than we are, and why are we weaker? (Pao T'ien-hsiao, qu in Lee 1985 : 364)

The discourse of Chinese journalism already had a marked 'social responsibility' bias. The Times 时报, started by Liang Qichao in 1904, declared in its prospectus that it would be impartial, would eschew trivia, be impersonal, have its own foreign correspondents and contain synopses of the views of other papers, including foreign ones. (Lin 1936: 136)

By the 1911 Revolution there were over 500 newspapers and probably many thousands of magazines of various kinds, and in the chaos of the period it was sometimes possible to produce some very iconoclastic and revelatory journalism:

The [Peking] Gazette quickly made a name for itself and was itself constantly in the news. It specialised in exposes of Peking's backstage politics. It always seemed to be on the inside track of the various deals being negotiated by corrupt officials and warlords contending for power and money, and the intrigues being plotted in the Legation Quarter. (The editor) was getting information from his friends in high places. He was a sort of Jack Anderson or I.F. Stone of his day. But Peking 1913 was not Washington 1975. To play such a role in the Chinese press in those days needed foolhardy courage. (Chen 1975 : 19)

The student demonstrations of 4 May 1919 which forced the government not to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty were the catalyst for a further radicalisation of the Chinese media. At the same time very many more joined the KMT. Not only students, but schoolchildren joined patriotic clubs and began to read newspapers, the readership of which was vastly increased by the rapid replacement of the literary language by the vernacular. Marxism, Anarchism, Syndicalism and other new ideas were under consideration. At least four hundred more periodicals were established in the months following and intellectual journalists Hu Shi 胡师 and Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, co-editors of New Youth 新青年, became cynosures. Chen Duxiu was in the Liang mould:

He preached 'science and democracy' as the basis for renewed national strength. He launched a head-on attack on Confucianism, dismissing it as irrelevant to the modern world. Above all, he brusquely dismissed the central dilemma which faced China, the choice between preserving her culture and preserving her existence as a nation. 'Where are the Babylonians today?' asked Chen. 'What good is their culture to them now?' (Gray 1990: 198)

Among the many other magazines launched at the time was the Xiang River Review 湘江评论, whose founder-editor was Mao Zedong 毛泽东.

The excitement of the educated young of the 1920s for new ideas and for journalism is well conveyed in Ba Jin's 巴金 novel The Family 家, originally published in 1933. In it, the young protagonists are constantly referring to political theories and western literature and are more wrapped up in the newspapers they are trying to publish³⁶, modelled on those of the May 4 exemplars, both as writers and as organisers, than in anything else (Ba 1956: ch29). In fact they are so taken by the thrill of imported ideas and new theories that they tend to be quite out of touch with the majority of their fellow Chinese. Both those features of Ba's novel are prescient. Although the impact of the May 4 journalists was great – great numbers of Chinese had an idea of what was going on – it is likely that their ideas failed to be influential beyond their own social class. It can be seen as an acknowledgement of just how little influence beyond a restricted class those May 4 proselytisers had had, when, in the 1960s, Jiang Qing would seek to fashion a mass, revolutionary culture to replace the 'feudal' one which apparently still

existed (even after Land Reform and Class Struggle). Escapist literature and 'fun' papers of very traditional genres were the majority taste - and probably still were in the early 1960s (Lee 1985).

Liang Qichao

Liang Qichao 梁启超, mentioned above as a newspaper publisher, was himself the foremost of the early journalists and because of his journalism 'regarded as one of the intellectual leaders of modern China' (Bloom 1970: 347). He made himself a disciple of Kang Youwei 康有为 in the 1890s and was active in the early reform movement and as a writer on international history and politics (see Liu 1983). Between 1902 and 1904 he visited Europe where he was particularly influenced by the example of the Risorgimento, to the effect that he soon after published two books, one a study of Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi and the other a play, The New Rome 新罗马. From these works we can see that he was inspired by the example of an ancient civilisation renewing itself and he identified with the romantics and scribbler-activists of the Risorgimento (Bertuccioli 1981). By 1904 he was publishing newspapers and had a very clear idea of what journalism was for. Newspapers were to perform nine duties: 'remonstrance, guidance, encouragement, repetition, taking the large view, concentrating on main themes, propagating knowledge and penetrating society' (Nathan 1985 : 133). He was the first Chinese to express views on what roles journalism might play in society. He believed that one of China's great weaknesses was that it did not have channels for communication and for the dissemination of new ideas. Further, he saw the press as performing a supervisory or scrutinising function in society and as mobilising public opinion to try to influence government, an idea which has regained currency today.

The influence of Liang's Times was diffused in ways more active than those associated with newspapers today. Exactly as in England in the days of Cobbett, Chinese periodicals were shipped off down the canals and read aloud in the teahouses of small towns to enthralled audiences. Some were posted on walls so that all might have the chance to see. They were used as materials by schoolteachers and as foci for discussion in the debating societies that had grown up, very similar to those in 18th Century

Europe, such as the Speculative Society of Edinburgh or the History Club of Dublin. Liang's Times had provincial correspondents and they, as with their colleagues at head office, usually doubled as teachers in every rank and category of institution, so that dissemination was assured as they and many other teachers used the very articles as study material. Many were novelists. Early on Liang Qichao had identified fiction as a medium of enlightenment with great potential for the vast readership of traditional Chinese novels and many young intellectuals, of whom the cynosure has become Lu Xun 鲁迅, became writers of fiction out of patriotism - and a didactic inclination - rather than individual inspiration³⁷. Here again there is a European parallel, although it is with the later 19th century rather than with the world of Cobbett: Dickens, Zola and Dostoevsky are only the best-known of Europe's journalists who became novelists with missions to right wrong. And as with Zola 50 years earlier Liang fought newspaper campaigns. The Times mobilized people against the government's railways policy and published articles defending the revolutionary Qiu Jin 丘金 and condemning her execution by the government (Judge 1996 : 53).

Liang's passionate concern suffused all he wrote; this inspired his readers. He employed a writing style that was lucid and direct; he sought to clarify complex events and issues beyond the ken of his fellow-countrymen; he explained those western concepts, inventions and habits that were a cause of wonder and the source of power. For these reasons, his influence was great.

The press and society

The critical press, of which Liang was the principal begetter, brought about changes in attitude. According to Judge (1996 : 7) it weakened the political belief that above and below are of necessity in harmony (上下一体) and made reform conceivable. Those in power were argued to be accountable to the ideal they served, if not actually to the citizenry, and implicitly to those who interpreted that ideal. It also confirmed the position of journalists, who began to see the modern media as replacing traditional scholars and teachers in the reproduction of cultural values. Journalists saw their

writings not merely as 'relaying messages and imparting information' but as helping to 'create, represent and celebrate shared beliefs'. Moreover it was in this period that they recast the notion of 'the people' as something which they were in the business of mobilising and educating. 'The people' needed to know about the need for reform if China were to survive.

Even the most casual perusal of their work shows that these journalists were gripped by a vision of a global struggle for survival informed by Darwinism. With his limpid classical cadence, Yen Fu had translated into the language of scholars the dragons' teeth of revolution. Darwin, Huxley and Ellis convinced Yen's readers, none more susceptible than Liang Qichao, that they were engaged in a frantic battle, with race pitted against race and nation against nation. What China needed was a shared sense of the common danger, a sublimation of personal interests in the cause, a great unity of purpose. The objective was 'wealth and power' for China³⁸. Every western idea was accepted or rejected according to whether it might serve this objective, democracy included. Thus when Liang considered the use of journalism to society it was as an instrument in the cause of creating the required unity of purpose; so was it with democracy. This system of government was not to be an end in itself but an institution for political participation which would be more conducive to consensus and more competent at controlling that corruption of individual officials which ruptures unity. Characterised in terms which are, in hindsight, redolent of the rhetoric of the 1960s, there was an intermediate class of crooks which spoilt the natural solidarity of rulers and ruled. The sweat of the journalists was to the end of bringing rulers and ruled back together again and squeezing out the crooks!

As Nathan has pointed out (1985: 57) Liang did not deal with the problem which has exercised Anglophone political philosophers, that of conflicts of interest and how they may be reconciled, and in this he is no different from either Mao Zedong or Wei Jingshen 魏京生. They followed a traditional Chinese train of thought:

When western thinkers were trying to design political systems as vessels to contain irrepressible conflict, Chinese philosophers aimed to design systems where no such conflict would be engendered. (Nathan 1985 : 58)

Anglophone journalism came about in a very different set of circumstances although the relationship newspapers had to the English state at the start of the 19th century would have been familiar to Chinese journalists at the start of the 20th.

England contrasted

In the first years of the nineteenth century newspapers in England could still be bullied by the authorities through taxation, threats of prosecution, offers of help and exclusive information and the subsidy of government advertising. But by 1860 this had changed. Newspapers became relatively independent of politicians. The radical press survived attempts to stifle it, at least for a time. It has often been remarked that The Times and a few other papers became the modern equivalents of the ancient Greek agora or places where opinion-formers and decision-makers met to make public opinion. How had this come about?

Different historians give differing weight to the various factors at play. Traditional English histories saw the easing of government restrictions on the press as the result of the struggles of progressives (Williams 1957); others have preferred to emphasise the burgeoning power of the new business classes who resisted attempts by the political elite to dominate information (Harris 1996: 106). To Franklin 'undoubtedly the most necessary change was the removal of what opponents dubbed 'the taxes on knowledge'', by which he means advertising, newspaper stamp duty and duties on paper all repealed between 1853 and 1861 (Franklin 1997: 78). Technological change made it possible to print and distribute more and larger newspapers, and thus to satisfy the growing demand. In today's parlance, moreover, the stakeholders in newspapers were many: first, the capital required was large and distributed, such that there were many ready to defend their interest; the revenue from advertisements rendered other sources of funds such as political subvention unnecessary; the readers were influential in guiding the policy of the paper; the inland transport revolution provided a much more extensive market and wide distribution gave to the opinions of the writers an influence which politicians began to fear to contravene.

The pre-eminence of The Times was clear. Between 1800 and 1860, Britain's position in the world consolidated and a large class of internationally-aware, information hungry and influential bourgeois emerged. The Times became their debating chamber. Thomas Barnes, (Editor of The Times 1817-41) was their spokesman and informant and he earned new readers by championing causes such as Parliamentary Reform and the victims of the Peterloo Massacre. Rising revenue meant he could spend more on finding things out and he and his successors prided themselves on their access to information and their independence from pressure.

Whereas in the eighteenth century much of the political conflict had been about personalities, cliques and corruption, now with economic development at home and an empire to exploit abroad, and new classes depending upon both, government policies were of intense interest, both those which touched upon business affairs (foreign treaties, trade policy) or which had a wider constituency (social conditions and taxation). One 1832 paper gave as its aims:

The abolition of tithes, the repeal of the Corn Laws; a more equitable system of taxation; the abolition of the hereditary peerage; an equitable reduction of the national debt;...a reform in the expenditure of the crown; and the abolition of all unmerited pensions and sinecures; the doing away with an expensive state of religion, and causing society to maintain its own ministers; remodelling the laws, and making the same law for rich and poor; a still more extensive franchise, Etc. (Cranfield 1978: 134)

Editors welcomed journalists who could identify the issues of the day, analyse them and communicate their relevance to a critical public. These abilities and the new power of the media are illustrated well in the career of the well-known war correspondent, William Howard Russell, generally celebrated for his influence over the agenda of politics; his impartial reporting; his demotic point of view and his fearless criticism of those in authority (Knightley 1975; Wilkinson-Latham 1979).

By contrast with journalists contemporary to Barnes their Chinese equivalents had to struggle against political power which was not only hostile (so were British governments) but whose power was not tempered by any institutional controls, only by either the countervailing power of the foreigners whose extraterritorial enclaves gave

sanctuary to journalists, or by the limited protection afforded by faction. According to Lau (1949: chV)³⁹, the first Chinese graduate of journalism was Hin Wong, who graduated from Missouri in 1912. He was sentenced to death in 1913 but this was commuted. He was to become a leading Editor and narrowly survive before becoming a teacher of journalism at Yenching in 1928. Of this period, James D. White, a distinguished American journalist and teacher of journalism in China wrote:

‘The unsung martyrs of Chinese journalistic history are so numerous that the history of western journalism does not bear comparison, for in China the political barometer was subject to sudden and catastrophic changes’
(Lau 1949: 102)

Nevertheless they did begin to create and to respond to a public sphere recognisable in the terms Habermas uses to describe the English public sphere of the 19th century. The fall of the Qing lubricated this process.

The ‘Golden Period’ 黄金时期

One interviewee suggested that, ‘**before Liberation the media were merely tools of the capitalist classes**’; another that only now was Chinese journalism raising itself to the standards of the 1920s. The former is a view associated with CCP loyalists and the latter with Nationalists, for the expression ‘Golden Period’ appears in a History of Journalism (Ceng 1989) and other works published on Taiwan. It is possible to recognise the vigour of the 1920s without ignoring the limitations then upon journalists.

The overthrow of the monarchy in the Xinghai 辛亥革命, or 1911, Revolution came at a time when there was already a communicating public which drew in a greater number and variety of people than China had ever before known, a public opinion which was a creation of journalists and a widely-held but inchoately developed belief that democracy and science together would somehow return China to her rightful place among the greatest of the earth. In the chaos following the 1911 Revolution, with China effectively partitioned up into spheres of influence of, on the one hand officers (‘warlords’) whose political leanings varied from restorationism through sympathy

for democracy to sheer banditry, and on the other hand foreign powers, the press was sufficiently free in enough places further to incite the public opinion which, in the years following May 4 1919, had internalised as its deep structure the May 4th approach to questions domestic and international and which had also become the bedrock of both KMT and CCP.

The vigour of the Chinese press can be attested to by its direct and immediate influence on politics. Not only was the May 4 Incident itself in a sense the result of a journalistic scoop, but revelations by investigative reporters of the Nishihara Loans scandal and later of Russia's secret Karakhan Declaration both had immediate and profound consequences for China. Chinese and Western observers agree:

In this decade the level of debate was high. Nanjing's fitful and inconsistent censorship and its erratic attacks on journalists did not prevent the growth of an intelligent, responsible, courageous, and critical press. Indeed, in spite of all the restrictions imposed (or half imposed) by Nanjing^z, China possibly enjoyed more intellectual freedom than ever before or since. (Gray 1990 : 245)

Ceng reserves his approval for a slightly later period than Gray:

From the time of the Northern Expedition onwards, the Chinese mass media normalised its development and strode into its golden period (Ceng 1989: 317)

That Northern Expedition (1925-7) was backed up by an alliance of business, industrial labourers and intellectuals enthusiastic for unifying the country. The impetus for it can be attributed at least in part to the press, and in part to the propaganda and organisation of both KMT and CCP working through the media. Nevertheless some Chinese journalists today look back to this period as one of 'freedom' compared to post 1949 Chinese journalism⁴⁰:

Many people realise now that journalism in China was very free before 1949 and that our own tradition of journalism does exist. (Zhang Lifan)

^z Nanjing (Nanking) was capital of China under the KMT.

Over the 1920s and 1930s there were political newspapers with fixed subscription incomes arranged through the Party but it was the private ones, or Yinglixing 營力性, that 'stood in the market place' and demonstrated the vigour of which the Chinese press was capable. Commercialisation gave them the means, the Japanese invasion the motivation and technical developments in production and distribution the opportunity to develop to 'serve society and business and earn the trust and support of readers' (Ceng 1989: 351). They also won concessions from the government: in 1930 Regulations for the Protection of Press Freedom were enacted.

By 1935 there were 910 newspapers and by 1947, 1,781 (Chang 1968 : 18), yet in the mid 1930s the earlier relative tolerance of the KMT faded. The ebbing of the power of the warlords allowed the KMT to turn its attention to the rival CCP; it became paranoid, afraid of any questioning of its own creed of anti-imperialist, 'national socialism' or of its practical failures⁴¹. Chinese politics polarised those who had once been allies in a national cause.

During the Anti-Japanese War, Editors in the KMT controlled cities of Chengdu 成都, Chunking 重庆 and Kunming 昆明 continually resisted censorship (Lee-hsia 1974 : 151-155) and were generally able to exercise some freedom within the parameters of the patriotic consensus; under the CCP this would end.

A comparison

We might say that the aims of Barnes (1785-1841) and Liang (1873 - 1929), to take two of the most exalted editor-journalists in the Anglophone and Chinese worlds, were similar, allowing for the very different circumstances of their two empires. Both wanted journalism which was rational and responsible, which promoted their respective countries in the world and promoted reform within them . However, their relationships to politics were quite different. Liang was often a fugitive, dependent on the vagaries of the power struggles at court and among the régimes succeeding the Qing Dynasty. Barnes was a respected exponent of public opinion, listened to, however grudgingly, by

power holders. In England, by the mid nineteenth century, the conditions had been created for the appearance of a concept of journalism which has been a model ever since and whose relationship to the polity has been often both aspiration and archetype⁴². Journalism rapidly developed some professional norms, its own techniques and a variety of genres. Moreover it fed upon the increasing rationalism of intellectual discourse in the period and upon that scientific approach of finding truth from facts which was the Enlightenment's greatest gift; in doing so it advanced the idea of objectivity, or at least political detachment. As with the great popular novelists, the investigative journalists married rational observation with moral empathy and made exploitation and abuse an ever more likely topic of analysis, discussion and inquiry.

As to China, there is an indigenous tradition of observation of and comment upon current affairs; this tradition combined with the circumstances of western encroachment to give a particular status and role to journalism; the manner in which the literati apprehended the West nourished an extreme sense of mission among Chinese journalists. From an Anglophone perspective, however, what they failed to do was to provide a justification for the profession of journalism independent of the great patriotic enterprise, the kind of legitimating of its role in polity and society which journalism developed in the Anglophone countries. This was impossible, firstly, on account of the philosophical assumptions from which the creators and justifiers of the Chinese journalistic tradition worked. The idea that conflict is valuable and opposition necessary; the notion of compromises in which all lose that all may gain something better; these were foreign to them. The task of life was to return to the Great Harmony⁴³ which is the natural state of affairs, in which all differences are subsumed into the Great Unity 大同⁴⁴; this was their strength in that it gave them confidence but also their weakness in that it made it difficult for them to see deficiencies in the Chinese social system and to the need for institutional development⁴⁵.

Secondly it was impossible on account of the political conditions in which the media worked. These were conditions of armed factionalism and intimidation, violence and savage conflict. These conditions no longer pertain today and, moreover, ideology has to an extent been superseded by profit as the criterion of truth. Whether Chinese journalism is returning to old traditions or constructing new ones is one of the issues of our time.

5: THE JOURNALIST AS TRIBUNE

Discourses of professionalism

A British journalist who worked in the Foreign Affairs Department 对外部 of the New China News Agency 新华社 in 1979 has described its publications with wit. The Agency, he writes

reported almost exclusively good news, to the extent that many outsiders would consider a significant proportion of its material not to be news at all. There was a tendency to be didactic and to deliver homilies, even in news coverage intended for external release.the general preference was for a pedestrian observation over one that might have some insight. On some occasions the facts of the matter at hand were quite plainly misrepresented. Political considerations were responsible for important lacunae in the coverage of events, and fundamental shifts in policy over the years meant that what was painted white at one stage must be represented as black at another.

Theoretical articles based on contributions by senior party officials to Peoples' Daily or Red Flag were reproduced verbatim and usually without comment, leaving the foreign journalist to interpret terms like 'social imperialism' and 'hegemonism' or to work out for readers overseas the implications of the doctrine of historical materialism. (Porter 1992: 7-8)

During the 1980s there was much enthusiasm among Chinese journalists for the idea that journalists have an essential role in society independent of the executive and that they need professional status if they are to carry out the functions of this role. They were trying to distance themselves from the kind of situation Porter describes. That these are not dead issues is reflected in such comments as these:

We need laws to protect journalists, so that they can serve the people according to professional standards and not be interfered with by officials.
(Zhang Ximin)

Journalists of all ages and types are concerned about their professional status, in that they want protection so that they may work to norms and in ways they and their fellow-

professionals deem appropriate. They have declared for wanting to be relieved of political interference rather as many Anglophone journalists may want to reduce the commercial pressures upon them:

China's journalists should be a real profession, not dominated by the government or the Party. Then they can serve the country and the masses better. (Hsieh Yichih)

What is this 'profession'? Professionalism can be looked at in a number of different ways and it is not clear, from talking to Chinese journalists, what they mean by the term 专业 although it is likely that they are influenced by the generous characterisation of journalists made by Weber in Politics as a Vocation⁴⁶, or by assumptions about journalists culled from an acquaintance with American myths, and from 'May 4' idea of the patriot journalist.

In the Anglophone countries, before the 1980s, it was assumed that professions were distinguished from other occupations by a number of traits, set out in Millerson (1984). Although nobody agreed with any precision as to what these might be, the most commonly cited such traits were the possession of skills based on theory, agreed educational qualifications, mutual competence testing, adherence to codes of conduct and social responsibility. By 'social responsibility' it was meant that professionals are not entirely self interested but perform some tasks out of social altruism. Later analysts have seen professions as being interest groups effecting a monopoly in the market (Larson 1977), groups trying to define and control their own work (Friedson 1986) and groups at a particular stage of Anglophone development trying to wrest control of their own work from external determination (Johnson 1972). Recent scholarship has tended to see professionalisation as the business of establishing dominance over the resolution of socially constructed problems. Membership is controlled through entrance competition and knowledge tests (Abbott 1988).

In the 19th century, elite journalists in Britain took on certain characteristics which implied that they were on the way to establishing professional status in the loose sense in which this is understood to refer, for example, to teachers and academics. They claimed to be objective, they showed that they had the professional skill to identify

evidence and the knowledge to investigate as well as the skills of exposition upon which their employment was based. Moreover they claimed altruism⁴⁷ or social responsibility, and impartiality. Between the early years of the century and 1852 The Times developed such independence of political influence that it could claim to be reporting impartially, or at least without conscious deference to the interests of the powerful⁴⁸.

There are various explanations for the emergence of the discourse of impartiality: the political, economic, technological and institutional, and they are complementary. Habermas holds that objective information, by contrast with the heavily political and partial news of earlier times, became a requirement with the rise of an informed public opinion in Anglo-America, demanding impartial news. This 'public opinion' comprised competing groups debating the issues of the day, and these groups wished to be supplied with the same information on which to base their often differing analyses of their interests and the interests of their polities. This public sphere itself was fed and helped to grow, and to grow better informed, by the media. The media thus enabled a process of political development which culminated in modern democracy (Dahlgren 1991).

Schiller (1981) argues that objectivity developed in response to commercial imperatives, ie the need to sell to as many people as possible and therefore to offend as few as possible; he also emphasises the scientific attitude of empiricism which gradually took hold throughout the nineteenth century and influenced communication as it did intellectual enquiry. Desmond argues that it was the requirements of the telegraph that forced journalists to concentrate on bare facts and resulted in much greater accuracy and in better reader comprehension. The next major change was the introduction of news agencies⁴⁹. As Desmond says 'while a reporter might write a report that would be acceptable to his own newspaper, a news agency report on the same subject, going to scores of newspapers, might be wholly unacceptable to some' (Desmond 1978: 217).

Agencies had therefore to produce copy that consisted of little more than commonly accepted facts. Their work provided a check on what newspapers' own correspondents were doing, and a source of comparison. This further accentuated the emphasis upon accuracy and unembroidered fact in news and the distinction between such news and those parts of newspapers and broadcast schedules where subjectivity was permitted. It also encouraged the idea of the eyewitness as the key to knowledge, which launched the

careers of many more special correspondents and added the testimonial interview to their skills⁵⁰. Realistic photography, appearing at the same time as the above developments in the 1850s, probably encouraged the belief that there was a reality that journalists could capture.

In the 1990s objectivity - its possibility, its desirability - was much debated among British journalists as a result of a critique of the BBC's claims to detachment launched by one of its foremost foreign correspondents, Martin Bell (1995, 1998) who proposed a 'journalism of attachment' to take its place and was fiercely attacked for it (Hume 1997, Simpson 1997). The view articulated by Feargal Keane, however, remains the orthodox one: 'The art of the reporter should, more than anything else, be a celebration of truth. And if that truth offends the dictators, the gunmen, the secret policemen, if it offends lobby groups, vested interests or governments, so be it'. (Keane 1997) Those words were spoken by BBC reporter Keane⁵¹ in his 1997 Huw Wheldon lecture, in which he went on to nominate those things which distinguish the journalist as 'the attachment to the provable', 'intellectual rigour' and 'forensic accuracy'.

Conditions of professionalism

Objectivity was the base; various techniques and behaviours followed from its adoption. Reporters were like social scientists in that they observed events, enquired of sources and boasted of their accuracy because this guaranteed them respect as experts. From being seen as mercenary and unreliable polemicists, journalists who claimed these attributes were consulted and courted by politicians, not only because of their ability to influence opinion but because they were often more knowledgeable than the supposed authorities. Such knowledge was also valued by the argumentative Victorian business and intellectual circles whose members increasingly championed the evidential approach, the rational dissecting of outdated institutions and ideas (some of them) and the concept of a public interest.

When journalists themselves set the agenda, deciding what issues and events required investigation they were going a step further. Pioneers of this approach were Stead in

England and Tarbell in the USA. Today, investigation is a well established right of journalists and has extended from corrupt businesses to political gerrymandering, miscarriages of justice, the research bases of social policy and foreign affairs, to name just a few of the target areas. Prominent journalists arrogate to themselves the duty to scrutinise all aspects of government; to be a 'better opposition' (de Burgh 1999: 69-70), 'to search out the weaknesses in the highest levels of government, to expose and to destroy the guilty' (Leppard 1998), to be active in 'Ruining the Sunday Breakfasts of the Rich and Powerful' (Neil 1996).

Simultaneously there is quite a different trend in Anglophone journalism towards describing professionalism as the ability to catch and please the audience. Rather than holding on to some abstract notion of duty to the public sphere, 'socially responsible' journalism may be being subtly redefined as that which the audience wants. When criticised for surrendering to populist taste, some editors defend themselves as being responsive to the audience, the citizenry. This is the report of an interview with the Editor of an important regional television news programme, John Boileau, part of the pilot for this study:

(The Editor) believes that the pre-eminent function of the programme is to entertain. He will keep viewers if he can achieve three things: First, interest them sufficiently such that at least one story each night is a talking point in home or pub or at work; provide variety such that they do not switch off in the search for something more entertaining; have the chemistry between the presenters concocted in such a way that viewers feel involved by them and attracted to them and their 'story'.....

It is the Editor who has the most developed conception of his, very different, responsibility to the audience. He does not draw attention to any moral dimension that this approach may have, yet it is implicit in his manner of speaking of it; he believes that his kind of news is democratic, reflects what people want and is appropriate to their needs and that this is not patronising but right. This vision is a kind of radicalism - it is absolutely against the old public service ethos and contrasts with the idea of the journalist as serving the peoples' 'interests rather than their desires'.

The Editor's vision holds that the task is to 'give people what they want'; help them relax and accept, don't bother them with 'big' things that they 'ought' to know about or which might depress them. There is no false consciousness to be wrestled with in his vision, quite the reverse, it is the elitists who got it wrong.⁵²

Perhaps the public sphere of the 'responsible' journalists was not as *heimlich* a place for most English viewers, mused Morley (2000); what has been celebrated as the best kind of public service media has not been a service for those to whom imported US culture is more appealing than the British product. Referring to the classic Scannell study (1996)⁵³ Morley suggests that in the construction of British identity the media has marginalised the mainstream and emphasised the values of the minority. Boileau, it could be argued, is putting this situation to rights.

The development of professional norms in England and China took place in different contexts. Detachment was not celebrated by Chinese journalists even though the commercial environment of the 1920s Shanghai may not have been very different from that of 1860s London. The political environment most definitely was.

That Chinese journalists did not consider impartiality as an overriding good does not mean that they did not wish to develop a concept of professionalism appropriate to their perception of Chinese circumstances. Nor was the idea of social responsibility abandoned in 1949, notwithstanding political homogenization. A different idea of professionalism came about.

It can be argued that Chinese journalism has some of the conditions of professionalism as identified in the West, but lacks key ones. In place of those missing it performs certain functions that replace them and which clearly demonstrate the particularity of its role in the Chinese polity. It carries out comparable functions in a different way and it represents authority in a manner which is out of keeping with Anglophone assumptions about professionalism.

The public and the private functions of journalism in China

Most journalists mention as their prime responsibility that of connecting government and citizenry, although exactly how individual journalists formulate the relationship varies. Their practices in the achievement of this task are different from those of western journalists, particularly in the fact that they have a separation of public and

private duties, most clearly demonstrated in the existence of the Restricted Circulation Publications:

In China, except during the Cultural Revolution, the masses have always written their criticisms to the newspapers. This shows how important the media are, because they are the interface between people and government.

According to westerners' outlook criticism is only criticism if you get at the president or prime minister. That's not our way. In the exceptional case that the highest authority has erred, then there are conditions under which the media will report; in general they will use [the RCP system; see page 91] to resolve the matter.

(Wang Qianghua)

In Chapter 3 we noted that the idea of the journalist as wielding power is coloured by Mao's interpretation of Lenin's understanding of the functions of the media in his day. Mao's ideas were crystallised in Yanan and have determined the discourse of journalism in China ever since, as can be seen by reading the statements even of relatively open senior media policy makers in the 1980s and 1990s.

This conception of journalism had some peculiar effects upon practice. The functions of journalists came to be divided into public and private, or the external and the internal. In their public functions they provided such information as was deemed useful and necessary by the party, to the readership. At many periods, readership was compulsory for large numbers of people who were to read the papers in order to discover what was expected of them and as an earnest of their seriousness about their work. Editors were enjoined to ensure that 80% of that reported would be positive (Hu 1985). After all, the newspapers promoted public policy. The Mass Line however was defined as 'from the leaders to the masses from the masses to the leaders' and this meant that the media should also perform as a mechanism for understanding these masses. Except during the Cultural Revolution and in particular since the early 1980s, they therefore evaluated readers' feedback expressed through letters to the newsroom and acted upon it where it was deemed appropriate⁵⁴.

The importance attached to readers' letters was inherited from the USSR. In the 1980s a newspaper such as Pravda (the institutional equivalent of The Peoples' Daily) received thousands of letters a week and maintained a special department to process

them. Many would be referred to the 'appropriate authorities'. McNair reports a Soviet commentator as saying that 'the Soviet media receive 60-70 million letters each year, and [that] about 12 million people (6 percent of the population) have contributed to the press in one form or another' (McNair 1991: 25)

Until recently in China the media provided the only possible avenue to redress of grievances for many people and they made use of it by writing to the newspaper or, increasingly, broadcast programmes, hoping that even if it were not published, their complaint would receive attention from the army of staff responsible for taking note of, checking and attempting to get action on their complaints. Unfortunately the work unit to which the journalists would refer the complaint was often that which was being complained about; it would be asked to prepare a response. If the journalists were not satisfied then they would refer the matter to a higher level (Chu 1983: 56), but whether this resolved the matter depended on the inter-relationships of the various officials involved as much as the matter itself.

There is another private function of journalism, Restricted Circulation Publications (RCPs)⁵⁵. In 1992, a Taiwan delegate to the National Peoples' Congress, Huang Shunxing, complained that the legislature refused permission to journalists to conduct interviews. When one did approach him for an interview, he found that the reporter was from a genre of publication of which he had never heard, Internal Reference 内部参考. When he learned that the journalist was reporting from a publication with a closed, VIP, circulation, he refused an interview, with fury, on the principle that such publications were undemocratic and that what he had to say was for everyone or no one. (Dai 1994 : 112).

Internal Reference 内部参考 or Internal Situation 内部情况 are published by all the top media, especially New China News Agency and The Peoples Daily, and usually marked with warnings such as 'confidential' or 'secret' although much of it is easily available to quite minor officials, university teachers and the like so that to imagine that it is all very secret is wrong⁵⁶. There are categories restricted to, for example, the Politburo or to officials of various ranks, these are like the briefing sheets issued by the Information Officers of western governments' ministries, except that in the West they tend to be written by specialist information officials or contracted academics, whereas in China

they may be from élite media journalists. Some are distributed at the point of production, others (such as that produced by Liberation Daily 解放日报) go to the central government for distribution by special couriers (Hsiao 1995: 82).

Restricted Circulation Publications such as Internal Reference have been important in China since before 1949. There are those, such as Reference News 参考消息, which convey to the recipients the views of the foreign media on current issues, and upon China (Rudolph 1984) and those which publish investigations of possible abuses or crises and publish them in the appropriate category such that action may be taken by the authorities. Many journalists, and certainly government officials, consider this task to be more important than the public role of the journalist since government policy may be made or modified in response to the investigative reports.

Reporters are said to spend around 30% of their time on RCPs and 70% on their public work. The content of the domestic RCPs consists of relatively unmediated accounts of events and trends which strike the reporters or their leaders as being of concern or requiring investigation. Investigation is a task assigned to journalists in regulations published in the 1980s:

‘The state of thinking of cadres and masses, every change in social direction, and reflections and proposals from every quarter on the Party’s line and general and specific policies - which has value as reference but is not suitable for public reporting - must be supplied to the leadership organs and related departments through the active and responsible writing up of internal reference materials’ (Grant 1988: 55).

Journalists might well find this work more satisfying than the public tasks. Their efforts are to be put into checking the implementation of policies; whether there are situations of which policies do not take account; and whether there are questions which have not yet arisen in the minds of policy makers which can be brought to their attention by journalists because of their special access and different approaches (Grant 1988:57).

The reporter’s responsibility is not restricted to the writing up of his or her investigation. It is expected that it will be drawn to the attention of the level higher than that at which the phenomena under investigation are identified. At that level it is

decided whether to further the investigation. In some cases the journalist does not submit his report to the RCP until the forewarned authorities have been able at least to propose how they will deal with the questions he has raised (Grant 1988: 60). There is an excellent example of this in the Po Hai Incident of 1979.

On November 25, 1979, an offshore oil rig in Po Hai Bay was dashed [sic] while it was being towed during a storm. The incident resulted in the deaths of 72 people and loss or damage to considerable property. In our judgement, this would be news. Something went wrong and the responsible cadres should be criticised. However, it took more than eight months for the Chinese press to report and criticise this incident. The delay had nothing to do with the Chinese journalists' competence. Nor did it have to do with cover-up by the news source. In fact, reporters had been dispatched to the scene. Still, nothing had been reported until July 22, 1980, when the Peoples' Daily and the Workers Daily broke the ice. The incident, involving deaths, damages, and the petroleum ministry, was simply too important for the journalists to decide upon. Without specific instructions from the Party Central, the journalists were immobilized. (Chu 1983: 55)

An interviewee who had worked for several years as a reporter on Focal Point 焦点访谈 referred to a programme Behind Official Openness 政务公开之后, the synopsis of which is to be found in one of CCTV's publications (CCTV 1998a: pp136-144). She then described what really happened in the making of the programme:

Through my own contacts I found that officials had been cheating peasants in the North East by manipulating the price of grain to the disadvantage of the peasant farmers. We got together all the evidence and my boss was very supportive. We thought we would be able to screen it but the Party authorities in the North East got wind of it and used their contacts at the top level to lean on Sun Yushang [the head of CCTV at the time] who stopped the programme being transmitted. We complained bitterly and there were many meetings about this subject, with our boss fighting for the right to transmit. The Party authorities then did their own investigation, agreed with us and applied disciplinary procedures to the officials in the North East who had been corrupt. It was then agreed between CCTV, Party Centre and the Provincial authorities that the programme would be transmitted but that it would show that the situation had been put right and the corrupt officials punished. (Wang Lili)⁵⁷

Thus the journalist performs an essential function in a society in which corruption or bureaucrats' incompetence or fear may prevent the exposure of issues. In the course

of doing this the journalist gets satisfaction from being an intelligence gatherer and from knowing that s/he contributes to public policy, a satisfaction surely not dissimilar to that which may be felt by the national journalist in England when s/he learns that the issues s/he identified will be taken up by the politicians.

Various examples are available of the application of RCPs. At the highest level, it appears that, for example, Chairman Mao was well aware of the mass starvation caused by his Great Leap policies even as the public media ignored their ill effects (Hsiao 1995: 82). In 1989 the leaders had available to them reports on the demoralization of students and their alienation from the Party because of corruption which they could have acted upon (Hsiao 1995: 85). Lan Hongwen notes that problems of the Hai River construction projects were first called to the attention of the Prime Minister by the report of a NCNA journalist and that it was the RCP contribution of a Peking Daily 北京日报 reporter on housing problems in two districts of Peking that was the catalyst of instructions from the Central Committee to the Peking City Committee that they should deal with the problem and involve the journalist in the appreciation of the situation. (Grant 1988: 58).

A former senior Chinese official now in the West gives examples of how some leaders were misled by partial or exaggerated RCP reports in 1986. He believes that Deng Xiaoping was led to expel 3 prominent intellectuals from the Party thanks to a biased RCP and that he made his momentous decisions to sack Hu Yaobang in 1987 and then to condemn mourning for Hu as counter revolutionary because he was swayed by partial RCPs (Yan 1995: 13).

Thus what many Anglophone journalists, and indeed Chinese journalists, would regard as the most interesting and valuable material is kept private and only released, if at all, when it has been reflected upon. While the exact mechanisms may have changed in recent years the concept remains the same, based as it is on the idea that the main objective of the journalist is to help the government make and implement successful policies, and helps to explain the relative disinterest in timeliness. It may be that it is commercial, rather than cultural, pressures that make for this difference between Anglophone and Chinese journalists, in which case we may expect Chinese journalism

to change as commercial imperatives become sharper. It may also be the case that the Chinese reluctance to air conflicts until resolution has been attempted will be given up in the process of making the media ever more sensational.

The transmission of orthodoxy

It has often been remarked that Chinese officials, and the Chinese media, use what are clearly standardised expressions to describe people, countries and circumstances. These expressions change from time to time (for example, refugees around the Dalai Llama of Tibet will one day be the 'renegade Dalai clique' and another day something more polite) and when they change they change in the mouths of every official and in every media outlet. On the subject of Tibet, one study reveals that the language of colonialist media is similar no matter whether it be in Chinese or English. The Tibetans are represented as backward and needing 'massa's guidance' for their own good, as well as, sometimes, his knout. (Kolas 1998). Other instances have been examined (see Fang 1994).

In China this is not a consummation achieved by osmosis⁵⁸ but the result of directives by Party offices, in particular the CCP Central Propaganda Department 中宣部, the New China News Agency (NCNA) and the Propaganda Department of the PLA General Political Department 解放军总政部中宣部. One of their principal jobs is to supply the appropriate formulations in regular circulars or in the newsletters for journalists, such as Newspaper Trends. The detail matters. In one example, it is forbidden, in describing socialist society, to use the expression 'class society' 阶级社会. This must be replaced with 'a society with classes' 有阶级的社会. (Schoenhals 1992: 7).

Governments and media organisations everywhere issue guidance as to the preferred expressions to be used, either in avoiding offence or to make policy points. However, while in the UK a rival media outlet can ignore what the BBC considers suitable or avoid following the government recommendations, in China this is not so⁵⁹. In the

1950s the CCP considered it necessary to exercise very close supervision over the main organs, in particular The Peoples' Daily, from which the rest of the media took their lead. A particular official, Hu Qiaomu, acted as the link between the Party Central Committee and the Editors and Senior Journalists of The Peoples' Daily and provided very detailed comments on individual articles.

Individual members of the Politburo also read and approve editorials. Members of the Politburo can be intervened against, too, if they attempted to express themselves in formulations which are an iota different from that of the main powerholder. In the past, if individual journalists used formulations which could be attributed to fallen leaders they were in deep trouble unless they could prove that they had been used by Mao Zedong first (Schoenhals 1992: 23-25).

The theory behind the attention to formulations is that there is a 'scientific' explanation of everything. When the CCP says that something is 'scientific' it does not mean that it is empirically verifiable but that it accords with the policies of the moment and will contribute to their realisation - 'efficacious' might be a more suitable word. The theory underlying this is that 'scientific' explanation has a 'class character' but the selection of who or what is of any particular class is arbitrary. Today this seems to all Westerners and many Chinese just so much religious mumbo-jumbo, yet this mumbo-jumbo has ruined the lives of many and distorted the thinking of millions of Chinese, not only through the media but because all academic research and pedagogy has been subject to rules which supposedly reflect this 'scientific approach'. Thus Chinese historians have been forced to describe past societies in terms which are, to modern historians elsewhere (and to many Chinese, privately), laughably simplistic. Chinese cultural life generally has been deadened by the requirement to see everything in politically correct formulae. However, the Central Committee itself has moved away from this position, declaring that it is not possible to see the Cultural Revolution in such class terms although it still remains mandatory to formulate the Cultural Revolution in a certain way that is restrictive of analysis and interpretation (Schoenhals 1992: 107-8).

What is the relevance of this today? Can it be relegated to the dustbin of history along with Nazi and Soviet versions of what Orwell called 'newspeak'? Not necessarily. In 1978 the CCP reissued Hu Qiaomu's record of his comments and corrections with

the evident intention of providing guidance for the future (Hu 1978) and it is an important text for aspirant journalists in universities today. His strictures as to how and which foreign countries were to be cited in articles, as to the way in which the naughty children of cadres were to be portrayed or whether certain facts were to be attributed to a few cities or all cities, these and many other issues are dealt with .

Thus when a Chinese journalist characterises himself or colleagues as professional, undertaking those tasks that are considered appropriate in a manner that is respected by their peers, s/he is likely as not thinking of the journalist as mediator between people and government in a different sense than would spring to mind to an Anglophone, and moreover as the proud transmitter of orthodoxy in a way with which few Western journalists would empathise.

Social conformity as a barrier to professionalism

Political diktat is not the only means by which topics are put on society's agenda or excluded from discussion, or by which the terms for discussion are set. Arguably more powerful and constitutive of the political criteria is the wider cultural framing. It frames the development of institutions and journalism is no exception. Without over-essentialising we can agree that there are distinctive features of how Chinese behave which can be attributed to early socialisation and educational style (Wilson 1974, Bond 1996, Bond 1999) and these condition the activities of journalists as they may other members of the same society. These reflections were stimulated by the claims of two interviewees:

Mr Chen [Managing Editor of Liberation Daily 解放日报] was very angry with me when I said I was leaving; he told me he had treated me like a son but I had not treated him like a father. I felt very ashamed of myself. If I had wanted to return to China I would have also been afraid of making Mr Chen angry, but I wanted to make a future for myself in the West.
(Gu Xuebin)⁶⁰

When I said I wanted to leave the Journalism Department [of Fudan University] and study here for my PhD, Professor [Z] would not give me permission. He said that I belong to the Department and I must come back. So when I heard he was coming to England and even coming to my

university [Cardiff] I was afraid. I ask you please not to tell him where I am. (Ts'ao Hsiang)

Approaches to authority and to relations with others are very different from those encountered in Anglophone societies and condition work in many different ways. Authority is expected to be paternal in style, mirroring family relationships. Moreover, obligation to authority is 'an absolute requirement and exists without regard to the quality of parental behavior' (Pye 1968:93) which can help explain the willingness of innumerable Chinese officials to accept what can be, by onlookers' standards, atrocious treatment by leaders whom they continue to serve loyally. As a saying goes, often repeated by Chinese in this connection 'does a child find its mother too ugly?' 做孩子的不嫌娘丑.

Psychologists argue that products of the typical Chinese family form are particularly dependent and, when family or community lacks respected and established leadership, may feel deeply insecure. They 'feel a need for idealised authority yet can never find one that satisfies' (Pye 1968: 6) and often this leads them to try to create situations of total predictability and control. This approach is reinforced at different stages and in different institutions throughout life. In higher education, as in other societies, Chinese students learn the skills appropriate to their society. In China this includes deference to authority to the extent of reproducing the teacher's ideas. You do not step out of line without risk (Bond 1991: 31).

The Anglophone tolerance of complementary or even competing authorities within the same society, and of situations by which individuals can have different roles according to circumstances, is very foreign to the 'totalist' conception of authority and how this is manifested in the environment of the Chinese newsroom is noted in Porter (1992: 16). Wang Gongwu remarks in an essay on Chinese politics that, in the 1940s, competition between KMT and CCP was for the establishment of the new orthodoxy; nobody doubted but that absolutism must come, only who would win the power to impose it (Wang 1991).

Relationships

It has often been noted that Chinese find it difficult to handle relationships outside the family (eg Bond 1996). They have after all had it drummed into them from their earliest moments not to make emotional commitments outside the family and therefore, where the blood family is not available, attempt to create pseudo families with the same hierarchical structures and absolute loyalties, for example in workplace or college.

Senior people tend to have built up networks or pseudo families over many years. These give them not only influence but also prestige in a society in which the capacity to create ties of obligation and interdependence is highly valued (Yang 1994). Recent psychological research has indicated that Chinese do not merely strive for connections as a way of countering the insecurity of Chinese politics or lack of impartial institutions but they see themselves as necessarily interconnected and in relations of inferiority and superiority with others in ways that are quite foreign to Anglophones (Bond 1999). In such a situation it is not surprising that skills valued in Anglophone *métiers*, particularly by journalists, such as creativity and argument, are not particularly respected in China. 'Learning by nellie' is regarded not merely as prudent but as ethical and responsible.

When I first came to Zhejiang Television station I simply followed around my mentor. So I learned how to do everything and now we have a very good relationship. Whenever he asks me to do something he knows I'll do it just as he does. (K'ang Wei)

These general tendencies have implications. In many senses the relationship is more important than the business for which the relationship is the ostensible reason, to the extent that relationships matter more than truth or efficacy; indeed, hierarchy is truth (Bond 1991: 55). The need for dogma as establishing absolute authority is a further implication. Another is the failure fully to comprehend the need for change beyond personal rectification, so evident in President Jiang's 江泽民 approach to institutionalised corruption. He, as with other Chinese leaders before him, has sought a solution for ills such as speculation, nepotism, factionalism, officials' fear of enterprise,

administrative negligence or high-handedness in calls for moral cleansing, repentance, 'back to basics' and so forth rather than in attempting to establish systems which will help people behave in the approved manner⁶¹. When Qiao Shi 乔石, a senior leader, or Zhang Ximin, a policy adviser, and other reformers argue for systems rather than homilies they are pitting themselves against a heavy weight of tradition.

Government

The spectacular failures of the Cultural Revolution and the public rejection of its tenets by high leaders weakened the legitimacy of the Party as much as the Revolution itself. The leadership hoped to restore that legitimacy by representing the Cultural Revolution as a deviation, by attracting support for itself by attending to many of the grievances and by being realistic about economic development, in particular seeking to build relationships with the more advanced countries regardless of ideology. On the collapse of Communism in the West the strategy perhaps appeared justified but the credibility of the ideology was further put in doubt as far as the more western-orientated intellectuals were concerned, since China was left to be the isolated champion of communism.

Among the unintended consequences has been that the moral authority of the Party was damaged and, while the centre kept ultimate power, it achieved its aims by negotiating or bargaining with other interests such as the provinces, the big institutions 系统 and its own factions⁶². The reduced prestige of the leaders was demonstrated publicly and spectacularly on television in May 1989 when Dawlut Orhasa⁶³, one of the leading dissident students, treated the Prime Minister with contempt.

More prosaically, observers of Chinese politics today commonly agree (Hamrin 1995, Gilley 1998) that the extreme centralism of before 1980 has evolved into a system in which authority is much more widely diffused. According to Hamrin:

If we apply corporatist theory, the evident retreat of the state under Deng may be understood as a totalitarian state evolving towards a corporate state by granting material concessions to induce compliance from lower-level units in order to

overcome the inefficiencies of a command economy.....Economic imperatives drive this change, resulting in irreversible segmentation of public power. (Hamrin 1995: xxviii)

These developments need to be understood within the framework of Chinese social psychology; within a different social psychological framework they might have different implications. The emergence of media conglomerates, for example, is a function of the ways economic development is being permitted to manifest itself; it is a function not only of the political developments noted by Hamrin but also of these wider cultural conditions:

Today we are developing media conglomerates. This gives the newspapers and television more independence and more power in the market compared to other industries. (Ding Junjie)

The bigger the unit to which you can attach yourself, the better, as it can bargain for you, protect you and enhance your life in many ways. Chinese workers, to succeed in their careers or in having any influence over their own work, must follow their patron and the patron's faction: Loyalty is the ultimate value, not truth or efficacy. Journalists therefore are placed in a dilemma particular to the Chinese context here described: they have notions of professional competence but are tied out of gratitude and tradition to their units and patrons within them. It goes so far (in a highly politicised sphere such as élite journalism) that policy is in fact made when the remarks of high leaders, the product presumably of their reflections and bargaining, are filled out by their respectful followers, always staying within the 'speech space' of the high leaders (Yan 1995).

It is not the case that those below cannot influence those above, but that they can only do so by first being part of the target's faction and even then using suitably deferential techniques and attributing success to the superior. What they need to do is to get the superior on their wavelength and then the whole faction, with myriad ramifications, follows. The implications of these various observations taken together are that journalists will continue to work in factions but the factions will increasingly be localised in provinces and institutions. Thus when opposition or counter-orthodoxy does take place it may manifest itself in factional guise.

The case of the Three Gorges

On February 28, 1989, the journalist Dai Qing, well connected to the ruling factions⁶⁴, along with associated journalists and academic experts held a press conference to release a book called Yangtze! Yangtze! It was a compilation of articles and reports that they had been unable to get published by their employers and amounted to an indictment of the manner in which decision-making over the largest ever Chinese construction project (the Three Gorges Dam) had proceeded as well as posing questions as to the validity of the project and its potential influence on the environment. It has been cited regularly by journalists as illustrating why China needs a freer media.

The gestation of the book was as follows: In 1986 a report on the Yangtze Dam Project by qualified scientists and engineers was submitted to the Central Committee after exhaustive empirical inquiries . It recommended that the project be put on hold. However 'no widely circulated, non specialist newspapers had objectively reported the findings of their study' (Dai 1989: 6). Dai Qing attended a meeting of the Chinese Peoples' Consultative Conference at which the report was being released, at the personal request of its Chairman, and found that the story she then wrote was spiked. When she took this up with the Chief Editor's office she was told that there was a 'spirit' abroad which permitted only positive reporting of the project. She tried various magazines to get publication but failed at every attempt; after trawling many potential publishers, she eventually found one who was prepared to publish the report as a book, in Guizhou 贵州 (Dai 1989: 9-10).

In the months following the publication of the book, government agencies retracted their commitment to the project. However in June 1989 the Peking Tiananmen Square massacre took place and a different climate prevailed in the High Leaders' Compound 中南海. In October the book was banned, paving the way for the revival of the project in 1990. Between then and the April 1992 resolution of the National Peoples' Congress (NPC) approving the construction of the project, much manoeuvring and public relations were undertaken to exclude doubters from the decision-making process, spin

the story of the project, exclude the views of opponents from the media and to ensure that members of the NPC could not hear the case against.

After initial interest in supporting the Yangtze project, the Canadian and US governments withdrew. A spokesman for the US Bureau of Reclamation, explaining in December 1993 why it had terminated its agreements to provide services for the project, stated that 'It is now generally known that large-scale water retention dam projects are not environmentally or economically feasible.... We wouldn't support such a project in the US now, so it would be incongruous for us to support a project like this in another country.' (Dai 1989: 274)

What is the connection of this issue to our theme of journalism? It is that it is an example of the dysfunctional rôles played by the mass media when factions are able to choke off debate on an important and, at least ostensibly, unpolitical issue with manifold ramifications for its society in general and several million people in particular.

Although the dam, an old ambition dating back to the foundation of the Republic in 1911, had been shelved as unrealistic for many years and was thus not a sensitive issue, once it had been taken up by powerful people in the hierarchy they were able to deploy a wide panoply of weapons to stifle opposition, not least of which was the prejudice in favour of grand and therefore 'patriotic' projects. The project appears to symbolise China's uniqueness and sense of destiny as they are imagined by the remaining Stalinist visionaries in the leadership⁶⁵.

To impose this vision the process of consensus building was hijacked; those whose consent was looked for were kept ignorant or fed with partial information using techniques familiar to western public relations practitioners; engineers were protected from exposure to questions (Dai 1989 : xvi); procedural rules of the NPC were used to prevent the distribution of information and the manipulation of data in the manner which UK citizens have become accustomed⁶⁶ while other procedures were flouted in a contempt for due process. Notwithstanding all this a third of NPC delegates either opposed or abstained on the issue, an unprecedented opposition, perhaps related to the fact that a dozen newspapers, including The Peoples' Daily and The Guangming Daily had managed to carry reports of the book's publication.

Wu Guoguang, former staff reporter of The Peoples' Daily, contributed the preface to the Chinese edition, remarking when so doing

'In China, the major official newspapers never carry a second opinion. But today, many journalists have initiated their own dialogues with scientists, expressing their own personal perspectivesthey are trying to bring about, however feebly, the separation of politics from other aspects of social life.' (Dai 1989: xxii)

The Wall Street Journal regarded Yangtze! Yangtze! as 'a watershed event in post 1949 Chinese politics as it represented the first use of large-scale public lobbying by intellectuals and public figures to influence the government decision-making process' (Jin 1989: xxiii). After the 'Tiananmen incident' the book was banned on the grounds that it contributed to the disruptions and Dai Qing was imprisoned for 10 months. Today, from time to time, small reports appear in the media on aspects of the Yangtze project such as population relocation and corruption in the management of component contracts, but reconsideration of the project in general is taboo.

The case of the World Economic Herald (WEH)

Every journalist who wants to spread new ideas remembers the story of the World Economic Herald. Qin [Benli] did not understand the limits.
(Ts'ao Hsin)

The case of the WEH 世界经济 is often cited as an example of journalists going too far beyond the politically acceptable. Its Editor refused to listen to warnings and the magazine was closed even in the quite permissive late 1980s and before the 'Tiananmen incident'.

Editor Qin Benli 钦本立 was a well established party member and executive editor of Shanghai's Wenhui Daily. In 1980 he founded a new newspaper using the correct

procedures but managing to achieve relative autonomy in how he organised, staffed and financed the new venture. Having done this he and the team he had collected around him published articles promoting reform and further opening to the world and infuriating those who wanted to circumscribe political liberalisation as much as it thrilled those who wanted faster change.

In 1983 attempts were made to close the paper down by accusing it of financial mismanagement but Qin's protectors proved the stronger. However the student demonstrations of 1986 were followed by the fall of Hu Yaobang and a campaign against 'bourgeois liberalism', of which WEH fell foul, only being saved by another protector, this time the then Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳 who would himself fall as a consequence of the Tiananmen student demonstrations 3 years later. WEH was confident that its approach was winning and that it was supported by the most powerful factions in the leadership, especially in 1988 when, after further infuriating the Central Propaganda Department, Deng Xiaoping himself saved it with his intervention (Yang 1995: 186-7).

In April 1989, as the tension rose not only in Peking but all over the country where student demonstrations were being mounted, WEH published articles decidedly sympathetic to the students. It had gone too far. In particular it published the proceedings of a meeting held to honour Hu Yaobang, along with articles demanding political reform and refuting proposed intervention by Jiang Zemin (then Mayor of Shanghai). The Shanghai Committee of the Propaganda Department dismissed Editor Qin Benli and took over the paper. The lesson that journalists appear to have taken from this is that it is never the time to throw caution to the winds, even when the leadership appears at its most enthusiastic for new ideas.

He Baogang has argued (1997: 32) that the case demonstrated clearly the limits of the kind of autonomy available in the developing Chinese civil society, since although WEH had argued that it was independent of state finance or hierarchies, the state nevertheless closed it down.

The issue of 'corruption'

A friend of mine was having problems owing to the re-zoning of land. He had paid the price suitable to the building of poor peoples' housing for the local government and now he needed the land re-zoned so that he could build luxury apartments for sale. This meant an increase in the land value of about 1000%. He came to me and asked me to help him meet the local mayor. I was able to help him. I did this by arranging to do a profile of the mayor for my newspaper [Liberation Daily, one of China's leading newspapers]. On the day I went to see the Mayor^丙 he was very welcoming so it was easy for me to say 'By the way, I have a friend who needs to ask your advice on a zoning matter'. The mayor said 'Of course I'd like to help any friend of yours, just tell him to come and see me'. 'Oh he's waiting outside in his car right now' I said 'so it might be convenient if he came in right away'. 'No problem' said the Mayor, so the developer comes up and we fix everything there and then. I got about two years' salary out of that. (Gu Xuebin)

The pressures of family or pseudofamily obligation in Chinese society are so great as to make nepotism, favouritism and what in the Anglophone countries would be termed 'corruption' hard to resist. The early communists, such as the parents of Rong Chang, author of Wild Swans, were thought incorruptible and this was part of their popular appeal; however as a substitute for institutional checks and balances revolutionaries with mission were to prove inadequate. The CCP destroyed many means of communication and transaction, public spirited organizations and institutions and these were given the final death blow by the Cultural Revolution (1965-75)⁶⁷. This period also saw destroyed the channel put in place by the CCP as the alternative, that missionary cadre; in its aftermath the ideology was discredited such that it was impossible to reconstruct the cadre and there has been a general reversion to culturally more typical behaviour, albeit given a new intensity by the lack of traditional alternative modes of mediation (Yang 1994). In 1993, 6740 cases of embezzlement and bribery by CCP functionaries, each exceeding 10,000 Yuan, were prosecuted. There were also 1,748 identified cases of the illegal use of public funds of over 50,000 Yuan. (Hao 1997: 184) Both revelations are of very much greater extent than any previous publicising of corruption and represent both the increase in the phenomenon and the desire of the government to deal with it.

^丙 Gu is here NOT referring to the Mayor of Shanghai but of a much smaller unit.

As to journalists, both Wu Haimin (Wu 1996) and Zhao Yuezhi (Zhao 1998) have drawn attention to corruption, which they see as bedevilling the Chinese media. Favouritism is rife, and in new forms. Not only are the claims of business published almost unchecked in the vast amount of media that now covers enterprise and economic development of one sort or another, but in virtually all the media business can buy itself editorial by one of a number of methods which they detail. Journalists are easily frightened or corrupted by business and as a result few sceptical stories are ever seen, and topics of great public interest such as the despoliation of the environment are hardly touched upon. Chary at any time of offending the influential and perhaps frustrated by their inability to play the watchdog role that they have learned at university is theirs, journalists turn their energies to exploiting the willingness of business to pay them and invent new ways of lining their pockets. Not surprisingly, poor areas of China or difficult subjects do not get covered and the emphasis is on promoting products, from filmstars to forklift trucks to cosmetics.

Today's would-be reformers, their sights fixed on reducing the power of politicians over the media, pin their hopes on getting the government to allow privately-owned media, just at a time when in the West observers are becoming convinced that private ownership of the media can be no less totalitarian than state ownership (Philo 2000). Few argue for a public service solution which would probably be the first option of those who believe that the Chinese media have gone from being the mouthpieces of party propaganda to being the mouthpieces of business propaganda without any intermediate stage of professional journalism.

Attempts to devise a regulatory framework

An important condition of the emergence of a professional status is the ability to procure legislation which then helps define and establish the rights and duties of the profession. Proponents of journalistic independence are aware of this and regret the fact that 'there are no primary laws in China that govern the telecommunications, Internet,

broadcasting, press or publishing industries' (Perry 2001: 26). However, journalists have exploited opportunities provided by the (1987) Civil Code to try to establish their rights and responsibilities (Zhang 1998: 26) and have tried to go further:

In order to establish the rule of law in journalism, Chinese journalists, lawyers, judges, deputies from the Peoples Congress, academic researchers and educators have been making efforts since the early eighties in two areas: (1) to explore the possibility of having national press laws to protect the news media from abuse from the executive and the Party, and (2) to enact a civil law to protect citizens, businesses, and organisations from libel by individuals in organisations, including the press. (Zhang 1999)

In the 1980s a press law was mooted which, its advocates claimed, would distinguish legality from professional ethics. It has never come to anything and we can surmise that at least one reason is that the very idea contradicts the Party's assumptions as to what journalism is about in China. Like many other changes which could be seen to be introducing western concepts, it surely is opposed by those forces leery of market economics and cultural liberalisation. They have tradition on their side; for thousands of years authority has had accepted its right to stipulate truth and its right to educate. Nevertheless a Media Law is still talked of as if it were an essential (Ding 1998, Li 1998, Lee 1998, Zhang 1999).

There has however been a rapid increase in the number of libel cases brought under the Civil Code in which broadcasters and journalists have been defendants. There are also recent cases of journalists being punished and their publications suppressed, cases which highlight the precarious nature of tolerance even today; topics which are acceptable one minute are not the next. For example, Canton's New Weekly 新周报 was given a four month suspension for mentioning the 1989 'Tiananmen incident' in December 1998, while Shenzhen Pictorial Journal 深圳画报 was banned indefinitely for similar sins in January 1999; Peking monthly Fangfa 方法 was suspended abruptly on 12 March 1999 for no obvious reason except that it had established a reputation as a frank medium of discussion about political and economic reform. On January 1 2001 there were at least twelve journalists in prison. They included an art critic and reporter for unofficial media as well as an NCNA reporter punished for publishing his investigation of the failure of an irrigation project. Furthermore, the Editor of Weekend

South 南方周末 was dismissed that month when he wrote a defence of persecuted journalists (Prisma 2001: 201-2)

In this climate it is not surprising that journalists would like to have a framework of legality within which to operate. It may indicate that the leadership comprises factions at odds on these fundamental questions that the Chairman of the National Media Legislation Working Group is also Editor of the (self-supporting) magazine Law and Democracy 民主与法治 one of China's more important vehicles for investigative journalism.

Concluding remarks

Journalism has nowhere, even in the USA, managed to establish itself as a profession with the same success as medicine or law - yet. In Anglophone countries, this is probably for a number of easily imagined reasons: there is no readily identifiable 'core activity' (Tunstall 1971); journalists work for a multitude of utterly different types of organisations and with very different job descriptions. They use skills specific to particular market segments and technological environments and tend to identify with them rather than with the profession as a whole, for example the Yorkshire Post rugby correspondent and Gay News editor, the Tablet feature-writer and the Trent FM reporter. Employers have more power over journalists than the equivalent employers of other professionals; within the organisations in which they work journalists are separated according to speciality and have little in common although they are increasingly similar in educational and social background.

However, some elements of professionalism are acknowledged. The right to protect sources seems now entrenched in Anglophone countries. Splichal and Sparks (1994) consider that journalists generally are becoming more professionalised because of the increasingly specialised nature of their education and professional knowledge plus greater assertion of their professional autonomy and ethics.

When accountancy was attempting to establish itself as a profession the move was widely derided since accountancy was not seen as being able to satisfy the conditions deemed essential. Macdonald states as essential the ability to: control admission to, and training for, practice; demarcate jurisdiction within which they alone may practice; impose own rules of ethics or practice on one another; defend and enhance their status. (quoted in Macdonald 1995: 228 drawing upon Burrage)

However if, as Everett C Hughes argued, the interesting matter is not the definition of a profession but the posing of the question 'what are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people?' (quoted in Macdonald 1995: 6), then it can be argued that journalists can be seen to be gaining ground. Indeed it may be that those circumstances are now appearing in China.

In recent years there has been much discussion, both in China and abroad, as to whether China is developing the kind of civil society that is often regarded as a prerequisite not only for democracy but also for stable economic development; the hope is that such a development will condition the power of the state and make possible the growth of democratic institutions (Gold 1990; Nathan 1990). Sociologists are keen to identify the emergence of 'semi-autonomous bodies' as evidence of burgeoning diversity; the lack of them is held to hinder the emergence of democratic politics (He 1997: 1).

This is not a new debate, but was suspended during the long totalitarian period and has been resumed since the 1980s. Historians of modern China have blamed the failure of Nationalist China upon its inability to develop civil institutions and in turn blamed that failure upon the kind of social psychological or cultural factors discussed above⁶⁸.

Accused is the 'authority dependency pattern' by which an individual acquires a sense of personal worth or individual attainments from a realization of his relative position, or status in a tiered society (Eastman 1975: 288). Hsu argues that Chinese are characteristically reliant upon others, not self reliant or able easily to take independent initiative or show insight/knowledge lest this be interpreted as slighting the paternal authority figure. There is a preference for clinging to what is strong rather than setting up independently (Hsu 1963) and the inability to stomach criticism⁶⁹, seeing it as not 'legitimate difference of opinion' but 'a rejection of authority', makes it very difficult

for institutions to grow up which might be construed as wanting to share power. Recent political developments in Taiwan suggest however that these aspects of Chinese society are by no means immutable. Nevertheless, our expectations for journalists must be tempered to accord with these considerations, even if their own are not.

Professionalisation is understood in different ways by journalists in China and in England. Whereas in England there may be an assumption that professionalism equals independence from outsiders deciding your criteria, there is admission that professionals are hemmed in by innumerable restrictions placed upon them by pressures from employers.

Chinese journalists do have a strong sense of professionalism and they share characteristics of professionalism identified by sociologists; for example, they satisfy Macdonald's conditions as they do those of Millerson and Larson. Johnson sees professions as groups at a particular stage of development trying to wrest control of their work from external domination and it may well be that this is what Chinese journalists are doing as Chinese society changes. Where they absolutely fit the bill is in their sense of social responsibility or altruism.

6: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR JOURNALISM TODAY

In the preceding chapter we noticed that Everett C Hughes had suggested, in discussing professionalisation, that the interesting matter is not the definition of a profession but the posing of the question 'what are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people?' (quoted in Macdonald 1995: 6). In this chapter we attempt to understand the political circumstances within which journalists now operate; immediately afterwards we examine the industrial or institutional context.

Journalism in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution

In the late nineties, if those interviewed are representative, Chinese journalists fell into several categories according to how they evaluated their job and its functions. All, though, concurred with the view that the Cultural Revolution had been another disaster, and the worst one. The recent past informs both hopes for, and cynicism about, the future:

Today it is possible to be real journalist. This is because Deng Xiaoping came to power. The Falsehood, Exaggeration and Empty Words 假大空 of the past went out when he came in. (Zhang Ximing)

Oh yes, things have improved since [ironical] Comrade Xiaoping stepped up to the podium. Chinese journalists yesterday shouted Falsehood, Exaggeration and Empty Words for communism. Now they do it for capitalism. (Ts'ao Hsin)

The reality may be less dramatic, since there have been many twists and turns since Deng came back. However, since Zhang and Ts'ao were born at the end of the Cultural Revolution 文化大革命 they may not be as conscious of those twists as the older generations.

By 1978 Deng Xiaoping had started to return to authority those experts, where still alive, who had been sacked during the Cultural Revolution and to attempt, with the Four Modernisations 四个现代化, a decisive break. Guilt for the recent past was assigned to the Gang of Four 四人帮, which journalists rushed to demonise. The journalistic style of the Cultural Revolution period, now characterised as 'Falsehood, Exaggeration and Empty Words' 假大空 was condemned; in tune with Deng's slogan 'seek truth from facts!' 实事求是 or 'It doesn't matter if it's a black cat or a white cat as long as it gets the mouse!' 不管白猫黑猫只要抓住老鼠就是好猫 there was a great expansion of economic news and news about business ventures and agricultural production in place of domestic political coverage. Wang Qianghua explains how this came about (this statement has been cited in a different context, above, to make a different point):

After China had got through the Cultural Revolution and smashed the Gang of Four we had the *Two Whatevers* line [两凡是 of Mao's successor Hua Guofeng 华国锋]. Whatever Mao said must be respected, whatever Mao decided must be done. Yet Mao had been wrong during the Cultural Revolution. In that period China was in a very bad way [.....]. If you want to understand why we in the media are as we are today, you must understand that period. I was at the Guangming Daily and I published an article, or rather I organised its publication. [It argued that] the sole criterion of truth should be practice. We shouldn't care who had an idea, only whether it works. Now I was General Editor and I had not had Chairman Hua's endorsement for this article criticising the *Two Whatevers* and proposing the empirical criterion. A great debate opened up as to whether the criterion of truth should be practise or authority. The situation got complex; Hua criticised Guangming Daily, didn't want to allow the debate but Deng Xiaoping was very supportive. He wasn't in power, he'd been sacked by Mao, but the upshot of the whole affair was that Hua fell. (Wang Qianghua)

With the success of Deng Xiaoping, the CCP promised that, modernisation not class struggle now being the state's goal, effectiveness would be the sole criterion of value and that differences in viewpoint would not result in political persecution. As Wang Meng 王盟, former 'dissident' journalist later to become Minister of Culture, put it, on the understanding that the Party's supreme position was not challenged, they would be 'criticised for their views and not for their natures' (Lin 1994 : 79). There were limits to what could be said and these were seen in the sentencing of Wei Jingsheng

whose advocacy, on Democracy Wall, of a fifth modernisation, bourgeois democracy, proved unacceptable.

Nevertheless during the 1980s critical coverage and journalism of a quantity and breadth that had never before been seen in communist China could be found in the newspapers. Articles suggested that alienation was a feature of Chinese society, proposed humanism and even questioned Party dictatorship. This openness was closely connected to Deng Xiaoping's attempts to reform the institutions of government, attempts which were centred on the September 1980 National Peoples' Congress (NPC) and were known collectively as the Gengshen 更深 reforms. The initiatives were a response both to millions of appeals against miscarriages of justice and to a welter of complaints about the rigidities of the system in dealing with planning and development. Popular 'public scrutiny' of decision-making, a wider franchise for elections and recruitment reforms were all mooted. Democratic institutions were seen as better instruments of development; at the NPC delegates cross-examined government ministers more energetically than had been known before. The media were seen as playing an important part, according to one of Deng Xiaoping's advisers:

In order for the media to play the role of quickly and effectively propagating the policies and decrees of the Party and the government, opportunely inform the people of all important events aside from a minority of secrets concerning national defense and diplomacy, and opportunely reflect the peoples' criticisms of and suggestions to the Party and state organs, we should permit, require and encourage the media, the journalists, and commentators independently to assume responsibility of reporting and publishing news, letters from the masses, and comments. I think that such broad freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of publication carried out under the leadership of the Party's line, principles and policies, is of prime importance in democratizing the Party and the state.

(Quoted in Nathan 1985: 82)

Nevertheless there was much opposition to this conception of the media, or to liberalisation of any kind. It was a turbulent period as Deng consolidated his economic pragmatism, overcoming his rivals within the media as elsewhere in the establishment.

As Lee writes, they were

.....caught up in rounds of factional warfare. The media were reviled by Party ideologues during the short-lived Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign (1983), the

Anti-Bourgeois Liberalisation Campaign (1987) and the Tiananmen Crackdown (1989). Each time some of the best journalists-writers were listed on account of their investigative exposés or theoretical arguments.....' (Lee 2000)

Despite the rectification campaigns of '83 and '87 referred to by Lee, there was no return to pre1978 days. In a famous case of journalistic scrutiny - the critique of negligence which had caused the sinking of an oil platform - the minister responsible was sacked; encouraged by this thousands of people wrote in with information to reporters who investigated stories of corruption and malfeasance. Before long the failures of government were so freely aired as to be described in the government public relations information produced for foreign consumption (see for example Beijing Review 10/4/89 : 5-8).

Journalism itself was widely discussed. Formerly ignored exemplars of the profession such as Shao Piaoping 少粟平, a reporter and editor between 1911 and his murder in 1926 who had been famous for his revelations of bribery and corruption, were claimed, not very credibly, for the CCP (China Daily 13/11/84). Editors published articles on the position of journalists in other countries, in 1984 a national forum was held on truthfulness in news reporting and The Peoples' Daily called for a Press Law to prevent the persecution of journalists such as had occurred during the Cultural Revolution. The problem, though, as foreign observers have noted, is less the absence of laws than the failure of the courts to remember what they are. It is internalisation of the concept of legality that has been needed (Ogden 1992 : 173).

Those in leading positions, which by 1985 would include Hu Jiwei 胡绩伟 as first President of the National Association of Journalists 中国记协, sought a formulation for journalism which would permit it to take on the censorial tasks and yet to maintain its role as articulator of the Party's line. They also tried to differentiate the Chinese journalist from his/her opposite number in the west. At the time, thanks to much freer intercourse between Chinese and westerners and the re-commencement of journalism education in China with much western input from both practitioners and academics, younger journalists were inclined to embrace western norms wholeheartedly in reaction to the recent past (Porter 1992 ch1). This is how Chen

Lung, Director of the Department of Domestic News for Foreign Services at New China News Agency put it in April 1983:

The starting point for the press is different in China. The mass media have a grave responsibility to people and society in China. Formerly China was controlled by foreign countries and by feudalism. If we want to overthrow these two yokes, we have to rely on people. So our primary task is to awaken the people so that they will understand the overthrow of imperialism and feudalism, that it is of common interest, so that they will fight for it. The primary role of the news is to educate and awaken the people. And you see the same thing now. We want to modernise China. It is a very gigantic task. And you have to waken the whole people to work hard for it. (qu in Chang 1989 : 100)

Though this strict sense of mission might be binding on the professional journalist, it was not to preclude a press which would have popular appeal. By the late 1980s newspapers had changed out of all recognition, with much less politics, with investigative reports, soft and entertaining features and coverage which acknowledged the existence of widely diverse interests, hobbies, and social identities. Some saw this as the harbinger of a very different role for journalism.

Rethinking journalism

A new line was given in a major article by Hu Yaobang, now CP Secretary General, in the Peoples' Daily in April 1985:

In China...the basic requirements for journalism are truth, timeliness and information and interest in addition to a clear-cut class character, Party spirit and a scientific attitude of seeking truth from facts. (China Daily 16.4.85: 1)

In making a break with previous journalistic practice, Hu was both trying not to discourage those who wanted to get as far from the Cultural Revolution as possible - into the western 'pluralist' camp in some cases - yet also to hold the dyke. For the myth of the Gang of Four's seizure of the state had provided an argument for the press

to put itself forward as adjudicator of the politicians and champion of public morality. Some political leaders could not but be uneasy.

However, by the time of Hu's speech the atmosphere was so permissive that hundreds of protestors, representing rusticated youths (400,000 had been sent to Shanxi alone during the Cultural Revolution), plucked up courage to demonstrate in Peking. Freedoms, despite regular statements attempting to dampen enthusiasm for them, seemed continually expanding such that the press by 1986 was carrying articles extolling 'democratic liberties', discussing the need for a new state agency to control the press and, in the World Economic Herald, declaring the view that barriers to economic advance were political. The same year the National Forum of Chief News Editors made clear their desire for autonomy from Party Committees, that they might themselves alone be arbiters of news value. In October 1987 Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang pleased journalists in his report to the 13th Party Congress when he advanced three principles for journalism: Journalism is the agent for the 'public scrutiny' of public officials by public opinion; for keeping the public informed of important matters; that it should enable public debate on major issues⁷⁰. In not mentioning the traditional propaganda role, these principles broke radically with the past. Yet when another National Forum on Journalism took place in autumn 1988 there was no progress on exactly how journalism could be reformed or reform be made safe. (Polumbaum 1990 : 44)

Concrete changes nevertheless continued to take place. Previously taboo subjects or subjects which would only have appeared as news long after the event such as natural disasters, riots or resistance to Chinese rule by the Turks⁷¹ or Tibetans were reported. In 1989 it was Zhao Ziyang who was, by all accounts, responsible for allowing foreign journalists into the (7th) National Peoples' Congress for the first time and it was at this conference that, also a first, there was a choice of candidate for whom to vote (a change forced upon the congress organisers by delegates from Hong Kong) and that plans to separate the Party from the civil service were first considered. A draft press law was under discussion at the very moment of the Tiananmen Incident 六四, after which it was shelved⁷².

The Democracy Movement and Modern Memory

The year preceding The 'Tiananmen incident' was one of widespread discontent. Pei (2000) records over 5000 collective protests that year, though few received media coverage. The demonstrations which led up to the massacre and in which journalists were closely involved began in April 1989 with a memorial meeting for the recently deceased Hu Yaobang, initiated by students who lived in the high leaders' compound and were therefore closely related to the ruling cliques, who saw a split developing and wanted to encourage the pro-Hu faction. Although there were calls for democracy, as observers (eg Mark 1991 : 274) perceived, there was no very clear idea of how this democracy was to be arrived at or in what exactly it was to consist. As the world media gave more attention to the students, so the assertions that they were fighting for democracy became more fervent; they used the foreign media to bolster their importance, but they also told the Americans and British what they hoped to hear (e.g. Smith 1992).

Journalists gradually came to identify themselves with the students. On May 4 as hundreds of thousands commemorated the May 4 of seventy years before, editors and reporters held a rally outside New China News Agency to protest against the sacking of the editor of the World Economic Herald on the grounds that he was advocating bourgeois values, and called for 'press freedom'. Outside the offices of The Peoples Daily they chanted, to the music of Frère Jacques (familiar as the tune of a nursery song about tigers and tails)

Peoples Daily Peoples Daily 人民日报人民日报
Oh how odd Oh how odd 真奇怪真奇怪
Always printing lies, always printing lies 全是谎话全是谎话
Oh how odd Oh how odd 真奇怪真奇怪

And carried on their banners the slogan 'Our pens cannot write the articles we want to write, our mouths cannot say the words we want to say' (Black 1989: 164).

In time their demonstrations merged with those of the students. In retrospect and given forty years of experience of seesawing media policy, the journalists made a mistake in

joining so wholeheartedly with what became a massive demonstration of the discontented of every type from well-connected élite students to industrial workers seeking trades union representation to many seekers of redress from injustice who hailed from all over the country. The journalists' profession had some very specific, and perhaps realisable, demands encapsulated in the phrase of Hu Jiwei 胡绩伟 that 'journalism has its own objective laws' (Lee 1990 : 12) whereas that wider circle with which they allowed their profession to become identified had objectives too ambitious for those times.

As a study by Polumbaum has shown the journalists argued that trying to serve both Party and people is contradictory, for Party officials want self-promotion and the publication of government PR but journalists are the best judge of what should go into a paper to please readers. Their solution was diversity of ownership. Party and state functionaries were not be allowed to meddle and to stifle initiative and autonomy and journalists should be trusted to know their jobs and protected from any adverse consequences of honest investigative work (Polumbaum 1990).

One of the many journalism polemics at the time revolved around a statement signed on 16 May 1989 by several well-known journalists including TV reporter and author of the controversial television documentary River Elegy 河殇⁷³, Su Xiaokang 苏晓康:

During the student movement, the news media, as represented by the Peoples' Daily and the Xinhua News Agency, for a time withheld the true facts about the student movement and stripped the citizens of their right to know (of it). The Shanghai Municipal Party Committee has fired Qin Benli, editor in chief of the World Economic Herald. These totally illegal acts are a gross violation of the Constitution. Freedom of the press is an effective means to uproot corruption, maintain national stability, and promote social development. Absolute power unchecked and unsupervised will definitely lead to absolute corruption. Without freedom of the Press, without independent newspapers, all hopes and aspirations about reform and the open policy will remain empty talk. (Li 1991: 92)

Many of the demonstrators had a less temperate and reasoned agenda yet the reporters and editors increasingly allowed their own objectives to be confused with those of the radical students. After the massacre the first task to be undertaken would be the

rectification⁷⁴ of the journalists, some of whom died, many of whom lost their livelihoods and their future and the bulk of whom would conform.

In retrospect it would seem that, given the political system in China, the Party was left with very little choice but to end the demonstrations violently. Sympathy for the aspirations of the demonstrators was present in the hierarchy, as was clear from the behaviour of both the hierarchs themselves and their media. Indeed it was this very sympathy which had allowed to emerge a dangerously explosive situation which could not be contained by, for example, elections or some other mechanism for social compromise because none exists. A tense situation was made much worse by the offensive and immature way in which some student representatives behaved towards the Prime Minister, losing them support (Faison 1990).

What does all this mean, ten years later, to journalists? Pei (2000) has pointed out that the dissidents of the 1980s were theoretical and political, whereas in the 1990s causes were more populist. At least they were down-to-earth, concentrating on corruption, the environment and criticism of Japan for its failure to acknowledge its crimes in WW2. In 1998 (Pei 2000: 309) prominent intellectuals signed a letter blaming floods in Central China on government policies. However, in that year the magazine Human Rights Observer 人权观察 was suppressed as was the China Democratic Party 中国民主党.

One professor of journalism was asked whether he thought that what happened in June 1989 had made life more difficult for journalists. This was his reply:

Just now [September 1999] everyone is rather cagey because of the two problems of falungong [法轮功] and the Taiwan crisis. Also we are coming up to the 50th Anniversary [of the PRC] so everything is a bit tense. But things will get better if there is no war with Taiwan. Situations like this recur all the time and things were certainly like this after June 1989. Then they got better. You just have to be prepared for the difficult situations because you know they will pass.

What has changed for always is that journalists are not just mouthpieces. Now they are the mediators between people and government. (Chiang Hsiaolung)

Similar phrases cropped up in the conversations of others:

Journalists are the mediators 中介人 between people and government. Their tasks are the communication of news and ‘public scrutiny’ of the administration. (T’ang Musan)

Although some journalists have the idea that journalists should be social activists in what appears to be a traditional, (i.e. pre-Cultural Revolution), manner, others are forthright that things are different now:

Certainly not. They are very different from journalists. A reporter should try to report impartially whereas a social activist has some aims. We report opinions and facts (T’ang Musan).

It is worth reminding ourselves of the situation of the media during the Cultural Revolution since, although it is now history, many of the developments in the media that contrast with that period - the loss of share by Party papers, the depoliticisation of content, the responsiveness to the audience - can be interpreted less as the result of the ‘opening’ (开放) than as backlash, a continuing rejection, sometimes passionate, against the days of Mao. In what is probably an eccentric view, one interviewee attributed the collapse of communism in the West to the leadership of the Chinese people who, he believed, had shown the way in standing up to their oppressors and would do so again once ‘the objective conditions are right’ by which he presumably mean the CCP’s power has collapsed. However, that consummation, no matter how devoutly wished by that interviewee, does not seem imminent.

As the day of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the PRC approached (1st October 1999), the Party brought together media leaders and exhorted them not to allow journalists merely to extol the greatness of Deng Xiaoping and of the achievements after 1978 but to call attention to China’s progress under Mao Zedong⁷⁵. For want of anything else, the nuclear programme and its personnel, who researched away untroubled by the Cultural Revolution, were held up to glorification by President Jiang⁷⁶ as demonstrating that progress had indeed taken place in those times. Yet it would appear that the period between 1955 and 1978 was still largely ignored in the

celebratory reports and features. Perhaps the people in the Hangzhou street market where tourists can buy Red Guard armbands from a peddler selling red books, Mao badges and the like expressed it best when they said 'that was China's worst period.....only foreigners buy those things.....we don't want to remember'.

As we noted earlier, memory plays an important part in the discourses of journalism in China. It frames them. Many journalists appear to believe that it was only by a fluke that China, after the 'Tiananmen incident', did not revert to the closed society it was under Mao and Hua; that it was the fluke of Deng just being fit enough to revive reform that saved them. Western commentators might scoff at this, seeing it as a manifestation of the Cleopatra's nose theory of history, ignoring the powerful economic and political forces driving China towards reform. Yet, 'ideas have consequences'.

The Vice Chairman's Progress⁷⁷

Before the 'Progress' there was a feeling of despair. Then all the reporters, as soon as they heard about it, wanted to report it, but they could not. When it came out they considered that there could be no turning back again. After the 'Progress' everything changed.
(Jiang Hong)

Journalists looking back to understand what has been happening in their society refer to 'after the 'Progress'' 南巡以后 or tour by Deng Xiaoping in late 1991, early 1992. As with Mao Zedong in 1958 and 1965, Deng was obliged by the party politics of Peking to circumvent the capital and appeal directly to those in the provinces he believed thought as did he and in particular to constituencies of forward thinking officials who considered that the conservative economic policies of the past two and a half years had been damaging.

After the 'Tiananmen incident', although the leftists had not succeeded in completely stopping the existing initiatives towards opening to the West, the move towards a market economy in China had faltered. This was most of all a manifestation of the hostility to western meddling in China's affairs, hostility which could now be allowed free expression and was anyway exacerbated by the Incident. It also reflected opposition

to the dilution of socialism and fear of the disintegration which was perceived to be the lot of Russia. Deng Xiaoping was not impressed by the relevance of the Russian example:

Apparently Deng felt by the end of 1991 that the conservative-minded readjustment of 1989 had lasted too long. With the 14th Congress of the CCP scheduled for later in 1992 there was a need for some immediate action, though clearly not in perfect health and variable both in his strength and clarity of speech - he was 88 at this stage - Deng took a much publicised 'Journey of Inspection' to the south of China and the areas of rapid economic development and close foreign economic relations: notably Shanghai, Wuhan, Zhuhai and Shenzhen. (Goodman 1994 : 113)

Shortly after the 'progress' was publicized change took place in ways that were so dramatic and so extreme as to suggest that the left was completely vanquished, at least in the coastal and southern provinces. The number of Special Economic Zones leapt from 117 to 1951 in a year (Schell 1995: 391); the privatization of land, commercialization of housing, introduction of stock exchanges and the possibility of a 'free' labour market all presaged a return to the kind of unregulated capitalism that the CCP had come to power to abolish forever.

However, the release of information about the 'Progress' was not achieved without delays and difficulties and illustrates both how the media operate in China and of the workings of the political process.

In late 1991 Deng visited Shanghai and spoke to closed meeting of cadres to encourage more initiative in releasing the economy; he followed this up in January 1992 with a tour of the economically developed areas of the south in order to exhort them to great changes and to demonstrate to the country at large his support for them. He stopped his train in selected areas, summoned provincial governors and officials and harangued them to be more courageous about freeing up economic controls, taking advantage of foreign investment and setting up stock markets. By choosing the Special Economic Zones to call in on, he showed that he considered these boom towns to be models. He asserted everywhere that he considered a much faster pace of economic development to be essential if the CCP were to remain in power and if China were to survive internationally. None of these activities were reported in the media.

Although Jiang Zemin is believed to have been fully in the know (Gilley 1998: 186) nevertheless he too was unable to persuade leftists in the Propaganda Department⁷⁸ to report the 'Progress' in the media such that while the Hong Kong, and later, world, media were reporting it as significant news, not for nearly 2 months did New China News Agency carry the story.

Journalists remember as notable moments in their lives the days their own channels decided to run it. Jiang Hong of CCTV put it this way

When CCTV decided to publicise the Progress, we were all very excited. We had been thinking about this for a long time. After it happened, everything began to change. (Jiang 1998)

Gu Xuebin, then of Liberation Daily, said:

The Liberation Daily has always been in the forefront of developments in China, from the Great Leap to the Cultural Revolution. It was we at Liberation Daily who recognized that what Comrade Deng Xiaoping had done had the support of the whole nation. We were the first. (Gu 2000)

The political context at the turn of the century

Deng's 'Progress' appeared to seal the direction China would take, a headlong rush towards market capitalism by Chinese standards, a jerky ride from the point of view of western observers. The very particular political and economic conditions of China today, informed by or reflected in the political personality of President Jiang Zemin, condition the new journalism. This is partly because Jiang has managed the system he inherited in such a manner as to give himself enormous power; partly because he has used the media in a very new way; and partly because journalists and culture workers have had to toe the line of his strong views on culture.

Typically the Chinese polity has been thought of by non-Chinese as an example of a totalitarian system. However in academic eyes, already by the Cultural Revolution it

appeared that China was less totalitarian and that its leaders 'far from radiating totally penetrating power and exerting total control, seemed to lurch from crisis to crisis trying to contain or to redirect the various forces.....that sought to challenge and erode even the semblance of unified authority in China' (Shue 1988: 16). Not only had aspects typical of precommunist Chinese society survived, such as factionalism, regionalism and personalised politics, but China's affairs appeared dominated by the competitions of rival organisations, each with their own interests and bureaucracies.

Our studies had taught us that the state under Mao contained numerous shifting, cross-cutting, competitive (even hostile) centres of power. We had seen that the state almost never spoke to the people with one voice. We had learned that China's gargantuan and Byzantine bureaucratic apparatus acted by no means as a mechanical transmission belt for central directives, but delayed, distorted, deflected and destroyed central intentions as often as it faithfully implemented them. (Shue 1988: 17)

If that was true then, it would certainly prove to be the case in the 1990s, although some observers have held that the 1980s offered opportunities to escape from the predicaments of the past, thanks to the consensus in repudiation of the previous decades, opportunities that were lost in the gunfire at Tiananmen in June 1989.

Jiang Zemin was elected to the Politburo in 1987 and not rated highly by the sophisticated and highly technocratic faction then in control under Zhao Ziyang. However, he gradually accumulated the offices needed to give him the maximum power, manipulated his relationship with the patriarch Deng Xiaoping and benefited from the weaknesses of the then leaders as revealed in their handling of the 'Tiananmen incident' of June 1989 and from the reaction against the 'westernisers'. Much of the Chinese establishment found it convenient to blame the 'Tiananmen incident' upon western influences which the open door policies had allowed to grow, and there were many sarcastic comments about the young advisers of Zhao along the lines of their 'having doctorates from Harvard but not knowing the geography of Hunan'. While direct criticism of Deng Xiaoping was not possible, his reformist coterie, personified by Zhao Ziyang, was toppled and although 'open door' itself was not abandoned, the economic liberalising policies launched by Deng Xiaoping were placed in question, and checked.

Immediately thereafter, conscious of the need to placate the conservatives after Tiananmen, Jiang managed to consolidate himself as Deng's obvious heir while avoiding antagonising Deng's enemies. This was no mean feat. He also built up his own power base - the 'Shanghai Faction' in such a manner that he was rarely challenged until he was strong enough to see off his enemies in government (Lam 1998: 18-31). He did all this happy in the knowledge that, unlike some of his predecessors, he would likely soon be free of the old guard and their testy interferences, simply because they were dying off. How has he used this power?

Right or wrong, it is common ground among many Chinese and most Western observers that China has some fundamental reforms to implement if it is to feed and employ its people, raise the general standard of education and provide the kind of health care and consumption that are considered essential in the west (Christiansen 1998: ptII). Among these the principal one is the releasing of the economy from the restrictions of central planning and political management, which have led to extreme inefficiency, obsolescence and false employment. Deng Xiaoping and his followers appear to have assumed that the Western, especially American, model, was the epitome upon which China should model itself. Nevertheless within the CCP and among those classes of Chinese society which valued the security afforded those in the socialist system who had jobs for life, there were many who were suspicious of the new ideology and fearful of its effects on their prospects.

Jiang appears very conscious of these fears and, compared to Deng Xiaoping's, his economic policy has been conservative in the sense that he has been very reluctant to advance wholesale into liberating the market; he is already faced with centrifugal pressures from the provinces and areas of the country which are culturally distinct or economically self assertive (Friedman 1995: chapter 17) so it is perhaps not surprising that he is characterised as cautious and as valuing above all, in politics as in economics, stability.

The experience of Russia since Gorbachov is held up in China as a negative example of political chaos, justifying resistance to all but the most modest political changes. Before 1989 there had been many plans for developing the National Peoples' Congress and the

Peoples' Consultative Congress into parliamentary organs which would be representative and provide scrutiny of government; under Jiang there has been little or no progress in this area. Village level elections were introduced but there appear to be no likelihood of elections to the various assemblies and executives at higher levels and while some play has been made of involving the few remaining non-CCP political parties (relics of the pre 1949 parliamentary system allowed formal life), it would appear that they have not been able to recruit since 1949 so that most of the members are probably older than Jiang himself.

Village level elections mattered not only as experiments in democracy but also as safety valves for the frustrations of rural people which were more and more exploding into demonstrations and riots. As with city dwellers, peasants could be hit hard by the crookedness of officials re-zoning their land, cheating them out of its worth, forcing them to grow some crops at the expense of others, charging exorbitant school fees for their children's education and other subjections. Journalists have often found themselves caught between the hopes of the oppressed and the conventions of the officials.

The military

One group of institutions which has extended its powers under Jiang has been the military, both the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) and Peoples' Armed Police (PAP). After the Tiananmen Massacre Deng Xiaoping dropped the ideas with which he had been playing, of the need to subject the army to institutional 'public scrutiny', reduce its involvement in civilian affairs and generally push it to the margins of public affairs where armies habitually reside in advanced countries. His successors in power found themselves obliged to the army for their survival and Jiang has been in a consistently weak position in relation to the military to the extent that observers have talked of the subjection of the state to the generals (Lam 1998). The power of the PLA has augmented as a result of various uncoordinated developments which, taken together, illustrate not only the problems of China's policy making systems but also the inability

of the media to draw attention to a very significant and very far-reaching development in the Chinese polity.

After the shock of Tiananmen and the anti-western backlash, the army was promoted as a bastion of correct values, the defender of spiritual civilisation and a model of good behaviour for the populace at large. Indoctrination campaigns were also held within the military in conditions of total separation from the outside world and the PLA's own media registered strong disapproval of 'western' decadence and parliamentary democracy while its members pledged fealty not only to the Party Central Committee but to Jiang Zemin himself. The armed forces were characterised as not merely the defenders of China against foreign aggression ('the Washington anti-China alliance') but also as responsible for upholding real Chinese values at home and resisting western corruption.

In return for protestations of purity and loyalty and for taking the leading responsibility, at least in rhetoric, for the defence of the motherland from cultural contamination, army generals took upon themselves an increasingly active role in economic policy-making. Although there were sporadic attempts to limit the PLA's involvement in economic development, especially when the scale of corruption being practised by army units became evident, nothing serious was done, arguably because Jiang had allowed himself increasingly to become hostage to the military in the faction-fighting at the top. In fact, by 1997 the PLA was able to get its privileged position enshrined in the National Defence Law 國防法 which gave priority to PLA requirements in economic policy and gave carte blanche for open ended expansion of military budgets. It also declared that the army had the domestic duty of keeping order and imposing stability.

Far from political institutions imposing restraints upon the PLA, the PLA was able to ensure that neither the NPC nor the media had access to information about its activities even though it appeared to be taking China to the brink of war against Taiwan while the NPC was sitting in 1997. Infuriated by Jiang's relatively accommodating approach to the Taiwan question, the PLA usurped his foreign policy making functions on numerous occasions and threatened Taiwan with war (Lam 1998).

The military appeared to be out of the control of the politicians. Journalists dared not report the doings of even quite minor examples of corruption or intimidation or dereliction of duty by military units (T'ao 2000), let alone keep the people informed of the generals' challenges to Jiang and the Foreign Ministry's supposed policy prerogatives. Moreover the PLA used its own media to publicise its own line (Lam 1998).

The law

Foreign observers have been loud in their calls for China to establish a reliable legal system if they are to be able to do business with her; human rights activists have long fulminated against the limitations of China's justice system. As much to assuage this criticism and to encourage trade as in response to moral exhortation, China has made many innovations, even extending to devising civilian costumes for lawyers who used to wear military uniform. It is often observed though that there is very little sense of equality before the law in Chinese society and that powerful individuals or institutions are able to ignore the law at whim. One corollary of a political and economic system in which there are neither commonly accepted legal standards nor democratic checks is corruption, or the avoidance of rules and formal procedures and the achievement of objectives by use of bribery, threats or through mutual support networks.

Jiang Zemin has shown himself aware of the problem of corruption and encouraged numerous campaigns (almost annual) as well as calling upon the media to help in the fight, authorising journalists' delving. However it is not only journalists who have become cynical as their researches have been pigeon holed or as they have realised that their investigations are used as weapons in factional fighting. When ordinary citizens see that, on the one hand thousands of petty criminals can be summarily executed after minimal trials, while on the other hand big time mafiosi such as Chen Xitong 陈希同, Party boss of Peking Ouyang Da 欧阳达 (Vice Governor of Canton) or gangster sons of revolutionary leaders are given moderate treatment and allowed to protect their gangs, it is hardly surprising if they believe that anti graft campaigns are conveniences for the

bosses. It may be that Jiang and many of his government are quite sincere in wanting to get rid of graft but neither do they have the ability to escape from the factionalism which stymies their efforts, nor can they envisage a system which controls it.

One who did envisage such a system was Jiang's rival Qiao Shi 乔石, a far sighted official who has consistently argued since the 1980s that China needs legally based institutionalised systems if it is to progress in providing the framework for an orderly society and economy. Among the changes he and his sympathisers would like to see (and many of which were widely aired thanks to the encouragement of Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s) are: separation of Party and executive; the possibility of other parties developing; subjection of the executive to the legislature; challenged elections; subjection of the armed forces to the civil; a legislature which functions as an appraising and accounting body; civil service reform to provide impartial and meritocratically selected functionaries. Although the last reform has been partly effected and a number of minor changes in these areas have come about, nothing has been done which changes the absolute domination of the CCP or the rule by personal whim and factional regimentation (Christiansen 1998: 83).

Instead, Jiang Zemin has attempted to attack the problems of disintegrating authority and corruption through exhortation in the media. Since appeal to communist values has little resonance, he has appealed to people to uphold 'Chinese traditional values' 中国传统何值, a gallimaufry of Confucian and Communist precepts, and to functionaries to model themselves on legendary heroes of yore. His technique in other words is Maoist, though his content is neo-Confucian. In this he is very different from Deng Xiaoping, who wanted everyone to concentrate on economics as the determining factor; Jiang emphasises politics. For Jiang, while it is necessary that China learn techniques from the west, she must resist cultural pollution. By implication, all bad things come from the west; if the Chinese but heighten their national consciousness under the wise leadership of he who defends 'the spirit of the nation' 国魂, then the problems will go away. His clearest exposition of this belief was published in The Peoples' Daily of 12 May 1995.

There are practical repercussions of his philosophy. One is the failure to address institutional reform which means that the only means at his disposal for dealing with the

growing discontent is repression, since people are not permitted legal channels of expression. There have been campaigns to improve the quality of lower-level government by re-educating cadres and prohibiting unjust corvées and taxes; there have been campaigns calling upon citizens to expose extravagance and mismanagement by officials; campaigns to emulate Zhangjiagang 涨价港, a model area of honest administration and economic probity. Journalists are the main mediators of these campaigns.

Another manifestation of the Jiang approach is a paternal, rather patronising style of solving the problems, such as the Helping the Poor 扶贫 Campaign of 1997 or his own many flying visits to impoverished or remote communities where he brings gifts, promises of solidarity and television crews who may report his firefighting to a grateful nation.

The Spiritual Civilisation 精神文明 campaigns have given opportunities to the media to emphasise patriotic topics and, on at least one occasion, to be xenophobic; at the height of such campaigns journalists have been nervous of being seen to be doing negative reporting, even of relatively innocuous subjects such as natural calamities. Direct action has been taken by the authorities against publishers of undesirable materials from pornography to politics and newspapers; intellectuals' magazines and TV stations have been closed.

A number of scholars have sought to demonstrate that a civil society is developing in China and that this, to a greater or lesser extent (and they disagree here) will condition the power of the state and enable the growth of democratic institutions (Gold 1990; Nathan 1990). In the words of He Baogang:

The emergence of democratic politics is hindered less by a presence in the peasant population than by an absence: the absence of something compatible to the ecological concept of bio-diversity, a kind of social trellis of autonomous, self organizing associations and networks willing and able to dissociate from the policies and values of the state. This social diversity is one of the important connotations of civil society. Without this political diversity, all opposing forces tend to be penetrated or reproduced by the state.(He 1997: 1)

As far as this touches upon journalists, He Baogang has shown that by 1989 there were many semi-autonomous study groups and periodicals which contributed to the debate about civil society. Of practical value to those looking for ways of enlarging free speech in China, there were enough non-state employers in existence to absorb those intellectuals – including journalists - involved in the democracy movement who would have been denied state employment after the ‘Tiananmen incident’ had they had the temerity to hope for it.

The political context in which journalists now operate is thus full of contradictions. At the 15th Party Congress in 1997 the leading role of the state sector in the economy was effectively abandoned and the risks inherent in this, of mass unemployment and destabilisation, were accepted as necessary. While palliative measures are being introduced and the country is still swept by enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, the institutions which can check the powerful and the rapacious and assuage the fears of the exploited are not being built. Discontent is everywhere, as is fear of the future evidenced in the desperation with which all who can appear to be trying to leave China, with the sons and daughters of the hierarchs in the van. Journalists can be as greedy and short-term as any – and why not? They have every reason to be at least as cynical as their public, since they know most clearly how information is controlled by individuals and factions in their own interests. Yet they also know that they perform functions vital to society. How they know that, and what they do about it, is the subject of the next chapter.

7: THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The scope of the media and their characteristics

The first great change has been one of quantity.....secondly, the media are growing in self determination. As Chief Editor [today] I must work out the function of my newspaper and respond to readers myself. Thirdly, there is the new economic independence. Fourth the media have become powerful in their scrutiny of public affairs; they express this by revelation and by intervention in policy matters. Finally the media now serve the people as consumers, providing every kind of advice and entertainment⁷⁹. (Wu Haimin)

The scale of the Chinese media is now vast and China is written of as 'the largest television market in the world' with '80 million multi-channel; cable TV homes, 330 million terrestrial TV hmes and 2000 or more television stations' (Gordon 2000: 14).

Below are the latest figures obtainable, for 1998; the shaded row contains the equivalent for 1979.

<i>Unit</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1979</i>
Newspapers	2163	185 (some cite less)
Ditan publications 地摊读物 ⁸⁰	8000	not known
Radio stations	1416	93
Terrestrial tv stations	943	32
Cable stations	1270	not known

[sources: Lin 1994, Li 1998, Prisma 2001]

Any visitor to China over the past few years will have been struck by the changes in the mass media: the sheer quantity of channels; the variety of distribution outlets and the shift towards entertainment and consumer journalism as well as manifestations of less deferential and more inquiring programmes. These are some of the concomitants of the development known as media commercialisation 媒体商业化.

Since 1949 the media have been organised like any series of government institutions, according to rank. Thus they are ranked according to whether they are at central

government level, provincial level (省), district level (局), county (县) or township (镇) level. Every media channel has a rank one level below its sponsor such that the Peoples' Daily holds the rank of a ministry whereas provincial papers have district rank and so forth. This ranking, along with their characteristics and functions determines relationships with other institutions, privileges and pull. At the top of the hierarchy 阿热 the Party organs controlled by the Central Committee, The Peoples Daily and Red Flag 红旗. At the provincial or regional level there is at least one organ of the provincial Party committee, e.g. Xinjiang Daily 新疆日报 (in this case with Turkish and Chinese editions). Below the Party organs are special interest publications such as the Communist Youth Daily 共产青年报 of the Young Communist League and so forth. A full description of the system is given in Chen Huailin (1998). Technically all these publications are non profit making (事业) as opposed to profit making (企业).

Media commercialisation took place without any clear plan, in response to the demand by domestic and foreign businesses for advertising channels; the inability of the state to continue to subsidise the media; the public demand for more media and the advent of new technology requiring extensive investment. However, it has never been the intention of the government to relinquish supervisory powers.

As described in the preceding chapter, Deng Xiaoping's 'Progress' gave his imprimatur to the developments taking place in the south and to their social implications. This, once and perhaps for all, calmed the fears of the enterprising that the economic reforms might be set back or that the events of 1989 presaged another dark age; economic endeavour took off. According to one well-placed executive in CCTV, it was above all the television transmission - the visual proof - of the southern tour that had impact and confirmed its implications (Jiang H 1995: 104). According to others, the diffusion of information about the event was thanks to the Liberation Daily (Gu Xuebin).

The implications for Television would be great. Advertising had been introduced on Chinese TV in 1979. Initially the reason was not financial but informational. The State Council circular that authorised commercials listed the functions of advertising as disseminating information, improving production, expanding circulation, providing guidance to consumers, invigorating the economy, offering conveniences to people in

their daily life and developing international economy and trade (various sources cited in Jiang 1995: 53). Revenues went to the state, which continued to allocate budgets as heretofore.

The system of central allocation of TV funding was abandoned in 1983 at the same time as other acts of decentralisation of the economy were being undertaken; in the future the regions and localities would be responsible for their own media development, although central help continued to be available from the State Administration for Radio Film and Television 国家广播电影电视局 for poorer areas. This was very successful and between 1983 and 1993 the number of TV stations increased from 52 to 700 (Gordon 1995: 24). The government continued to fund CCTV.

However the government was finding the costs of the burgeoning media system increasingly onerous and from the mid 1980s pushed the television institutions to generate as much revenue as possible from their own business ventures, in particular but not exclusively, advertising. Launching state institutions into the market is known, graphically, as jumping into the ocean 下海.

The government also experimented, in a 1984 contract between CCTV and the Ministry of Finance 财政部, with a new financing system. The Self-Sufficiency System 自营制度 as it came to be called provided a fixed budget for CCTV from the government while permitting CCTV to keep all its earnings. Certain requirements as to the provision of news, educational programmes, local production and quality were stipulated.

In 1991 this system was further refined with CCTV and, in the year of Deng Xiaoping's Progress, was generalised to the TV system as a whole; advertising boomed. By 1998 the fixed budget from the state to CCTV had remained unchanged for three years, and was becoming marginal to CCTV finances which, from 1 channel in 1992 had expanded to 9 channels. (Jiang H 1998)

Economic independence

‘Media commercialisation’ 媒体商业化 or the permitting (later forcing) of media to raise their own revenue and the adoption of variations on the CCTV reform of personnel employment policies, has had some dramatic effects as those authorities with permission to publish have realised that publications can be ‘licenses to print money’ in Lord Thomson’s famous phrase and as media workers have seen opportunities for themselves. Advertising revenue whetted the appetite of media organisations for making money and, finding themselves sitting on underused assets of buildings, machinery, distribution systems and people, they set about diversifying in order to provide themselves with varied income streams. The nation’s number one news agency, New China News Agency, and the national daily, both run over twenty businesses and their efforts are emulated by many if not most other newspapers. One can speculate that this gives a strength and confidence to these institutions that is useful in dealings with government. Many raise their own advertising and sponsorship revenue without the use of any intermediary and some TV companies do barter deals with foreign production houses for programming in exchange for advertising slots.

Media concerns have expanded into conglomerates of businesses earning money in many different spheres, buying other media channels, hotels, car-hire companies and restaurants. Their investments are controlled; print media can usually not cross-invest in broadcasting and vice-versa, nor can they invest outwith their province, or possibly outwith their own market area (Pan 1999). Conglomeration⁸¹, while often desired by executives of successful media companies wanting to find ways of spending their immense profits other than on their already magnificent office buildings, equipment, salaries and employee benefits, is not always voluntary. In August 1999 Shanghai’s distinguished but dull and loss-making elite daily the Wenhui Bao was conglomerated with the popular and financially very profitable Xinmin Wanbao 新民晚报, a move making obvious sense to officials of the Shanghai Media Bureau but less so to the reporters of Xinmin who found their salary average reduced from 6000 yuan to 4000 yuan while the average on Wenhui went up from 2000 yuan to 4000⁸² (Pan 1999). Chen Huailin explains conglomeration thus: ‘...the formation of press conglomeration in

China is strictly engineered by the state, revolving around a group of 'core' party organs, which serve as umbrella organisations to incorporate a multitude of auxiliary newspapers and magazines designed for various specialized areas of interest' (Chen Huailin 1998: 26). He goes on to illustrate with the case of The Peoples Daily which at the time of writing published five newspapers and six magazines. He notes that there is a potential for a social cost which 'the Chinese authorities do not seem to have thought through because the policy change was declared by fiat, devoid of transparency, and probably masking a series of behind-the-scene bargaining with emergent financial forces' (Chen Huailin 1998: 28). There were reported to be 15 major press groups based in Peking, Canton and Chengdu in 2001; 'they have was is known as a "red hat" meaning that they work under the supervision of someone connected with the government, (Prisma 2001: 201).

Self determination

In the race to seize the markets, those bodies permitted to publish are licensing entrepreneurs to produce magazines and newspapers that they cannot produce themselves; cable is expanding rapidly to meet the need for local, entertainment orientated programming; editorial departments are assigned revenue quotas. There is expansion in the number of titles of limited circulation or specialist publications of every conceivable type.

What Peter Berger calls 'the marketization of political management' (Lee 1999) has not yet extended to allowing private ownership of the media although the Chengdu Business News 成都商报, a heretofore ailing Sichuan paper, has stretched the rules. Chengdu Business News is widely regarded as a premonition of future developments in that it is the first newspaper to be allowed to have private investors. The effect on journalists has been interesting. It is reported that while journalists are subject to some more commercial disciplines than they would have been subject to under the old, state, management, their professional status is acknowledged and indeed underlined by the management's evaluation of their high educational standards and respect for their

professional integrity (there is a system in place to protect journalists from bribery propositions) and celebration of professional excellence (Huang 2000: 24).

Serving the consumer

The traditional model of Chinese journalism was authoritarian and hierarchical with audience involvement restricted to letters to the editor, an equivalent to what was common in the early days of BBC television. Topics thought appropriate were limited.

Since the Progress, and little by little, formal, official information has been confined to certain specific slots and publications while the media in general have sought to develop what is most attractive to the consumer - entertainment journalism, soft features, human interest and the like. In some cases this started from the necessity of competing with more exciting foreign product. Competing with Hong Kong transmission, Pearl River Economic Radio introduced (in the early 1990s) an informal, live, talk-show centred style in a remarkable break with the past which, according to Zhao (1998: 96) has shown how lessons could be learned from HK/western media to better promote party ideology and create social cohesion. It was copied by Shanghai's East Radio 东方广播电台 and later Central Peoples Radio 中央广播电台 which brought officials onto programmes not merely to propound but to discuss issues of concern to listeners.

Similarly, evening and weekend newspapers have been able to develop a much more informal and responsive style which rapidly developed into sensationalism. The paradigm here is Weekend South 南方周末, regularly cited as 'the best' by fellow journalists on account of its courage in publishing investigations and its calls for reform. In at least one case, that of Qianjiang Wanbao 钱江晚报 in Hangzhou, undercover reporting has been used to expose abuses (Zhao 1998: 131). So far only one mainstream newspaper has managed successfully the transition to being a popular newspaper while maintaining its reputation for being educative and (usually) politically correct, Peking Youth News 北京青年报. It rapidly reformed its organisation to hire and reward the most suitable staff and uses readers as stringers, paying for news. It contains material that is both consumerist and anti-consumerist, evading neat categorisation, exposes

corruption yet successfully relates news to the greater purpose of national development espoused by the Party. Its success is demonstrated by the large and appreciative readership, but also by the fact that it is 'still an official organ but makes its readers feel that it is not' (Zhao 1998 : 150)

It is argued that Chinese journalists have taken on board the concept of 'audience' to complement, and perhaps replace that of the 'the people' 'the masses' and that this process of hailing or identifying people in a new way is changing politics and society (Lee 2000, Zhang 2000). Zhang makes substantial claims for this conceptual change:

This change eroded Mao's 'Party-masses model' of propaganda and its prescribed political and ideological relationship between press and readers.....It also extends the basis of legitimacy for journalistic work, making way for the possibility of pluralistic news reporting and diversified media management' (Zhang 2000 : 2)

He also suggests that once this conceptual change took place, it made possible the deployment of new techniques such as audience research and journalism of greater relevance to the audience. It might be added, from the evidence of the present interviews, that it also further helps detach the journalists from the Party's categories and enables them to distinguish between the interests of the state and the citizens. In interviews the older journalists spoke about the people (renmin) or, occasionally, the masses (群众) but the younger ones seemed to refer more frequently to audience, receiving masses (受众) or viewers (观众) .

Variety and criticism in the printed media

Formerly the media were merely tools of class struggle. Now there are many types of newspaper, such as economic newspapers promoting economic development and others which are rather detached from politics such as those specialising in investment, or technology or environmental protection or computers. Equally serving the masses are those types concentrating on leisure, culture, entertainment and sport. Radio and television has just as great a variety. (Wu Haimin)

A much larger number of topics is now not controversial or at least of no interest to the Party. Even those that are sensitive can be aired, although treatment has to be carefully managed. Editors' sources are much wider, more akin to those of an Anglophone editor.

In the recent past, s/he was obliged to depend upon New China News Agency (Porter 1992), the national organs or direct instructions from officials. Enterprise in news gathering is now esteemed and there is more use of stringers or barefoot correspondents or the public. Peking Youth News, for example, has run columns which examine the effectiveness of the NPC (Parliament) and criticised the higher education system as making it virtually impossible for poor students to compete; China Women's Daily 中国女工日报 dealt with the sensitive issue of mass redundancies due to the market reforms (Li 1998: 319). Investigative journalism, though risky, is possible. Many editions of Law and Democracy Monthly 民主与法制 contain criticisms of official policies in the guise of exposing maladministration. This interesting magazine, whose editor, Wang Qianhua, was interviewed for this study, reveals that there are many local protests up and down the country against highhanded officials or corrupt deals which infringe ordinary peoples' rights, or debilitate their environment.

The enormous expansion of print publishing often extends to material which the Party would prefer banned (Pei 2000: 155) but presumably not enough for it to be heavy-handed, unless it is simply the case that monitoring would require resources that they are not prepared to spare. Great effort and administration would be needed to monitor the ditan publications which consist both of proper newspapers, often evening ones, and magazines which range from professional journals to gossip or lifestyle magazines. Intellectuals' magazines which are often critical, such as Reading 读书, an equivalent of The Times Literary Supplement, are probably tolerated as a safety valve for dissidents. It is difficult, though, to distinguish any consistent policy; in April 2000 an English language weekly was closed down and the Editor of another magazine sacked for what appear to be quite trivial reasons (Prisma 2001: 207). There is every variety of *ad hoc* production; in Shanghai, a few yards from the main gate of the Airforce Officers' Academy of Politics, there is often a hawker selling not only salacious books about Chairman Mao's private life, but also scurrilous biographies of Jiang Zemin and Deng

Xiaoping. Many films that are not transmitted on TV are available as VCDs or Tapes. Faxes and the Internet are widely available in the big cities.

The media have come to serve the needs of the masses for pleasure, entertainment, leisure, sport and shopping. There are many non political papers 街头报纸, many of which have no other purpose than to introduce people to shops, buying opportunities, price reductions, employment advice, skills exchange etc - the masses love that kind of stuff, there's everything for everyone, from consumers of books and followers of football to those who want to know how to breed fish or plant trees. (Wu Haimin)

Equally central to the modern Chinese media is the large number of programmes, newspapers, magazines, programme segments and news stories dealing with business in every sense, perhaps most usefully called enterprise media since their aim is, in general, to encourage enterprise and advance product development.

The enterprise medium first to hit the headlines for itself, and then to become a cynosure, was CCTV's Economics Half Hour 经济半小时 because Deng Xiaoping allowed himself to be cited as watching it everyday and recommending it to his political colleagues:

The content of Economics Half Hour covers our country's incoming investment, business matters, market construction including ethical and regulatory systems; developments in law; environmental protection, privatisation and rural developments. The idea is to ensure that people understand and are connected into the framework. (Shi Zhengmao)

Business is also heavily involved in the media in other ways : infomercials and advertorials (paid business info) are common, as is sponsorship and even the selling of editorial rights to businesses; it is claimed that this has led to widespread 'corruption' and fabrication of news. Reportedly current is an adage which appears to celebrate business in the media, 'newspaper sets the stage, businesses sing the opera' (Zhao 1998:71).

Chinese television at the turn of the century

Television is probably the most influential medium, if influence be judged by penetration and by the ability to introduce, if only in a superficial manner, previously unthought thoughts. (Lull 1991). Virtually everyone in China watches television. At the end of 1996, there were 280 million sets in private homes and 900 million people had acquired regular access to TV programs. In terms of household penetration of television and the number of TV sets counted on a per capita basis, China is well ahead of all other developing countries and high above the average level for the world and Asia (Li 1998). There are 360 channels that cover 90% of the country (Prisma 2001: 202).

Political factors rather than technological or economic or commercial ones have decided the development of television in China. It must be remembered that the old revolutionaries, of whom Deng Xiaoping, who returned to power in 1978, was the leading survivor, were very aware of the power of media to harness the energies of the population and had been mass media pioneers since the 1930s or earlier. In the 1980s they gave broadcasting high priority. A series of national broadcasting conferences in the early 1980s set it as an important part of the economic development to establish a TV infrastructure covering the whole nation and to enable the population throughout the country to watch quality TV programming (Selected 1988; Anonymous 1987: 14). Following the meetings, the country saw more government investment in the field of television, with state expenditure on television quintupling between 1980 and 1989 (Lee, PS, 1994).

Internal management reforms in CCTV

Two important reforms took place in the 1990s, referred to as the Producer System Reform 制片人制度改革 and the Human Resources Reform 人力资源改革. Under the Producer System Reform non-news producers may generate their own advertising and

sponsorship, although this does not hold for news producers. News Producers are all now professionals rather than (as often in the past) generic state officials and they have responsibility for specific programmes and programme segments rather than being generically assigned to departments (Cai 1996, Zhou 1997, Huang Hu). Human Resources Reform in theory permits managers in TV to hire and fire as they wish although it is by no means normal for them to exercise the right to fire owing to the powerful sense of obligation felt towards employees (Jiang Hung). On the other hand managers who previously received their allocation of graduates from the various education institutions - journalism, drama, engineering and so forth - may now select whomsoever they wish, a change which is causing the education sector to rethink its curricula (He Cihua). Managers are no longer required to pay according to civil service pay scales but can provide bonuses related to achievement (Li Xiaoping).

According to the Executive Producer (Foreign Reports) of Focal Point 焦点访谈 there are three systems currently in operation (Li Xiaoping), the iron rice bowl (permanent, secure posts) 铁饭碗 for people employed before the reforms and top level staff; iron rice bowl plus productivity bonuses for those on a very low wage which is intentionally not raised (you can see the bonuses published on noticeboards outside the newsroom); the new system in place within the News Criticism Department 新闻评论部.

Focal Point is the (often) investigative segment of the CCTV national current affairs show Oriental Horizon 东方时空 (see below). In Focal Point this works specifically as follows: The First Level Producer, responsible for the entire operation of Oriental Horizon, the various elements of which he farms out to teams each under a Second Level Executive Producer, receives advertisement income generated by the programme less taxes, overhead and facility fee all of which amount to about two thirds of receipts. Li as Second Level Producer receives a sum for each programme out of which she pays her 13 employees, all overhead plus herself. She is free to advertise for staff in China TV News 中国电视报.

With these reforms CCTV has been able to become virtually independent of state financing; Peking Television became self-sufficient in 1993 (Jia YX 1995). Institutional reforms have therefore been substantial and have resulted in a hybrid and possibly sui

generis system by which some features of the public service model have been fused with modes of income generation that liberate TV from the supposed weaknesses of that model.

Even when new TV stations have been founded that are totally financed from commercials, as with Oriental Television 东方电视台 (OTV), set up over 1992-3 specifically to provide market competition for the established Shanghai TV, they remain subject to public service guidelines, there is no question of them being free of general political leadership(Jiang Lan).

Content changes

The development in content over every genre of television has been so vast that it is beyond the scope of this study to say more than that it is probable that - excepting the pornographic and extremely violent - every possible format and genre of television programme is available in China. The number of channels to which viewers have access depends upon the region but in large cities there is a minimum of ten channels (Li Xiaoping) and it is claimed that over 360 channels now cover 90% of the country (Prisma 2001: 202).

China now receives many foreign programmes which have opened the eyes of millions who knew next to nothing about life elsewhere (Lull 1994). In accepting foreign TV programming, the government has discriminated between journalistic programmes and other kinds of programmes; Rupert Murdoch of Star TV and other media entrepreneurs in East Asia have fitted in with China's policy by excluding 'journalistic' material from their transmissions (Chan 1994). Nevertheless, according to one observer, the proportion of international news is higher than in most countries of the world (Hou 1993).

Television since 1978 has increasingly shown its vast audiences how foreigners live; advertisements are now very similar to those in the west and presumably create the same expectations as in the more established consumer societies. The vast modern

shopping complexes of Shanghai are bigger, and perhaps almost as diversely stocked, as those of New York or London, and the prices show that there is at least a minority which has the wealth with which to buy the most expensive luxury goods⁸³. Gallup's 1995 Lifestyle and Consumer Attitudes Survey found that both rural and urban residents have a 'distinctly materialist outlook' (Gallup 1995, quoted in Gordon 1995) and this is unlikely to have lessened.

Consumer culture is not the only ideological development which has come about as a result of the changes. It is possible openly to be Christian, Muslim or disciple of heavy rock. One interviewee claimed to be an active Buddhist. Traditional cultural life, smothered and believed destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (deBurgh, 1975), has returned. It is the new media which have, according to at least one observer, 'opened the eyes of the people to alternatives' (Chu, L 1994 : 17), an interesting contrast to the view commonly held in the West that the media destroy traditional culture⁸⁴.

What has the supposedly totalitarian Party said about these alternatives? The main concern expressed has been the moral one. As early as 1980 Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang 'expressed concern about the sexually permissive content in foreign films' (Gordon 1995 : 21) and in 1982 regulations were issued banning the import of pornographic and anti-Party foreign products and seeking to ensure that foreign products did not dominate any TV stations' broadcast schedule (Gordon 1995: 21). CCTV's first US tele-drama caused concern on account of the violence in it and was axed after twelve episodes (Jiang H 1995 : 169). With the probability of China joining the World Trade Organisation in late 2001, concern about 'decadent' media content has not receded (Prisma 2001: 202).

News and current affairs today

News and current affairs are not distinguished in the same manner as in the UK. All factual programmes are 'news', but some are in-depth reports 深度报道, sometimes confusingly translated as investigative journalism but closer in conception to UK's Current Affairs. The same people work in news and in-depth work, often moving

between programmes, and the Shanghai TV organisation, itself modelled on that of CCTV, appears increasingly to be being copied everywhere. With this model the News Department of a TV station will have three sub-departments: General News, Economic or Business News and Critique Department 评论部. The latter will produce both news features with a special, in-depth or investigative aspect, or 20-minute features of the same approach.

The national Network News, from CCTV, is transmitted daily at 19.00 and relayed throughout the nation via satellite or microwave links and has an average audience of 400 millions. It is then followed by the Provincial or Local News. Famously, Chinese news programmes in the past eschewed negative reports and concentrated upon the kind of stories of interest to the hierarchy or intended to inspire or awe the masses, such as reports of achievements in economic production or the doings of high leaders and their foreign counterparts. This was typical not only of Soviet Bloc countries but also of Third World dictatorships (McNair 1991). The duty of the media, as we have seen above, was not to indulge people with frivolity but to exhort or at least to help them concentrate their minds on socialist construction. Journalists were aware that this policy neither reflected their best abilities nor attracted the customers.

Core political news may no longer have pride of place on every single medium, but on those media where there is such news it has remained much the same in the topics of which it consists or the fact that it reports not debates but results, not policy formulation but decision. There is no evaluation. Outside of this, of course, the range of topic available for reporting has widened greatly but Zhao argues that this reflects not a competition in ideas but conformity to the 'new ideology of national and personal development' that the government is happy to see promoted by communicators more skilled than its own official propagandists (Zhao 2000).

In 1979 the Chinese Association of Journalists introduced a national award for good journalism and the first prize that year went to Liberation Daily for a little story about a bus accident. **'Before Liberation Daily published 2-300 ideographs about the number 26 bus in Shanghai, there had never been an accident in China. So this was a simple, dramatic moment – when the culture of journalism changed'** (Zhang Lifan).

Today, although official, positive, stories remain a staple of the Chinese media, already in 1979 it became possible not only to report difficulties but also to criticise aspects of official behaviour and to expose official malpractice in certain types of programmes (Yu, 1990: 78). Programmes giving space for ordinary people to voice their opinions and human interest stories appeared (Chu 1981) and, with a hiatus in 1989-90, there has been a continuous development along these lines. Radio has often been a trend-setter in this respect with its phone-in shows, opinionated chat hosts and airing of every kind of grouse or enquiry of the public authorities (Crook 1997). By 1990 most households had a radio (Lull 1991: 20). According to Polumbaum it was radio journalism that recreated journalism in China, by showing a new model which was audience led rather than elite led. (1994) or, as some put it 'from we speak you listen to you speak we listen'.

Accidents, disasters, crime, price rises, inflation and environmental problems have become routine. There are probably many reasons for this change, but one is surely the awareness by managers - journalists knew this all along - that much of their previous output was simply not credible. The audience was now to be taken into account. A principle of 'Three Proximities' has been widely adopted, meaning proximity to the public, proximity to reality and proximity to day to day life (Wang 1992). The new formats, with less hierarchical presentation of subject matter and more informal styles, most obviously with talk shows and phone-ins where people participate as themselves rather as representing an institution, can be interpreted as being modernisation of technique in accordance with the old rule, so well articulated by Liu Shaoqi in the 1950s, that to be effective propagandists the media must always be close to the peoples' concerns. By seemingly allowing people to articulate their problems themselves and by allowing the mediators to counsel and sympathise, it can be argued that the Party reduces pressure upon itself.

The Oriental Horizon TV magazine mentioned above was launched on CCTV in 1993 It is an hour long programme started very tentatively, only mornings and with only an audience of 1-2% , in 1993. It was to contain several segments, of which the most famous segment is now the feature or documentary Focal Point, started in 1994. While ratings for network news are around 40% of maximum audience of 900 millions, for investigative and critical features on Focal Point they can be as high as 70%. As at

April 1998 80% of CCTV's mail comes to Focal Point, 3-4000 a week, along with many thousands of calls all dealt with by a full-time staff. (Li Xiaoping) It is widely believed that ministers watch the programme before making policy. President Jiang Zemin has been known to call in, and Premier Zhu 朱榕基 is believed to have instructed ministers to watch it (Jiang H 1998); in late 1997 Li Peng visited the offices of Focal Point and expressed his appreciation of the teams' work (Li Xiaoping). Other principal current affairs ⁸⁵ programmes available in Shanghai and Peking are listed in Appendix D, along with descriptions of some of the stories, to indicate the range of subject matter.

Soon regional TV stations started to copy the Focal Point format. Peking TV was the first, and by some accounts the best, but Shanghai TV, Zhejiang TV and Sichuan TV and many other provincial broadcasters all have current affairs reports of this type, lasting between 10 and 25 minutes after the provincial news which itself follows the national news. For example, Shanghai Television's News Tale also appears to do some challenging reporting exposing social issues and bad officials in a populist way (Hao 1997: 193-4); on 10/4/98 it documented the story of a young criminal with reconstruction of his criminality and his imprisonment, parole and rehabilitation. Peking TV is in reality national rather than local, as it is received in most provinces (Zhou Xiapu); in fact in many provinces it is possible to receive the channels of other provinces and localities (see also Perry 2001: 26).

In Chengdu in June 2000 journalists of Sichuan TV considered that there are wide differences in the quality of this kind of output. In Sichuan, for example, both production standards and journalistic courage were more highly developed on the Chengdu Television version and sometimes on the cable channel CDCTV. Informants Lee and Hsieh were very scathing of their own work on news and longed for the privileged position of working in current affairs, preferably with a more daring channel.

During the week beginning 19 June 2000 Sichuan TV's current affairs stories included features on education reform, with the reporter representing the case of the students on teaching and learning methods; forestry problems and the loss of soil due to deforestation (a staple topic), and rice purchasing. In the rice story the villagers had

complained about both methods and price and, thanks to the intervention of TV the problems were resolved to the satisfaction of both sides.

Reporter Fang Ch'ih was particularly proud of a report on the pollution of the Dadu 大渡河 River. Fishermen were called in and took the journalist to see quantities of dead fish. The report was shot on location and featured interviews with 'peasants of the area'⁸⁶ and the local housewives. The reporter was seen going to get scientific analysis organised and thence to the Provincial Fisheries Office to lodge a complaint. Part 2 was to contain the resolution of the story. Fang also drew attention to the fact that he had managed to get righted an injustice involving overpayments. He had discovered the cost of installation of telephone lines in a certain area of the province was nearly double that elsewhere. In his film he is seen questioning officials and putting them on the spot. 'Who authorised the rise and why?' The officials respond that it was all a great mistake (!) and are obliged by the reporter to attend a confrontation with the consumers. At the filmed meeting the officials are contrite and a solution is found in the form of a rebate to all concerned and we see the cash payout to the happy victors. We are told that the telephone office was fined 5000rmb, indicating that the story was all put to bed a long time before transmission.

Chengdu TV's equivalent transmitted similar types of story, for example that of dangerous gas escapes from domestic housing, a situation to which the safety authorities had failed to respond until those affected alerted the TV station which then undertook its own investigation, confronted the authorities and had them shamefacedly putting the situation right. The programme then broadened out into a wider look at gas appliances in general and the monitoring procedures that supposedly exist.

Chengdu TV also transmitted an up to the minute⁸⁷ report on the Orbis Flying Eye Surgery. This was remarkable to anyone who had been in China 10 or 15 years ago in its unembarrassed and frank acknowledgment of the help being given to Chinese doctors by non Chinese. The Chinese were depicted quite clearly as learning from the Anglophone and German surgeons, represented as being at a much more advanced stage. It was well planned and shot and gave a rounded picture of the processes involved in eye surgery, the training techniques, the organisation of the missions and the motivations of the visitors.

The cable operator CDCTV, which broadcasts 4 channels in Chengdu and area, is held up by the young journalists interviewed as the most 'advanced'. The most striking current affairs story seen in the course of this research dealt with the sale of a baby by its father. The baby was identified at the purchasers' end as having been bought and the reporter, with the help of the police, then traced it with difficulty back to a village in another province where he eventually located the child's grandparents by showing photographs to people in the village (the grandparents at first denied knowledge of the child) and through them the mother and then the culprit, the father who was seen confessing and contrite.

Some of these topics equate to what are common on Anglophone consumer magazines, others have more in common with World in Action or Dispatches in that they deal with topics of wider implication. Reporters with whom these programmes were discussed agreed with the suggestion that, ten years ago, much of what is now being screened might well have been researched but only published in RCPs. The main differences between the similar genre in Anglophone countries are, firstly, that there is so much more of it and secondly that there is a clear emphasis upon the solution of the problem rather than the joy of revelation. This is further indication of how journalists see themselves – not simply as providers of information, or investigators, but as brokers.

The Media and Power

Except in Hong Kong the mass media are owned by the State and dominated by the Party. They are de jure, though not de facto, answerable to the administrations at national, regional and local levels. However the regional and local media are not branches of the centre and neither need to consult with the centre in managerial or technical matters nor are subject to any financial or managerial control from the centre as their points of reference are regional. Policy control is exercised through the Party propaganda departments⁸⁸ at the different administrative levels. (Jiang H 1995: 39, Huang 1994, Bishop 1989) under the rule known as the Party Principle 党性原则, by

which the media must adhere ideologically, propagate the Party message and obey its policies.

The institutional system 系统⁸⁹ under which the media are controlled comprises several distinct organisations, all nominally under the State Council. These include the Ministry of Culture 文化部, New China News Agency and the State Office 国家新闻出版署, *inter alia*. The key representatives of these organisations form a Leadership Small Group 领导小组, in this case the Central Propaganda and Ideological Work Group 中央宣传和意识形态工作组, which answers for the system to the most powerful decision-making body in China, the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CC of the CCP 中共中央政治局常委会. 'Actually, it is the Central Propaganda Department 中宣部 of the CCP that really manages these elements of the ideology and propaganda system in China....[it] is the key implementer of instructions from the leading group' (Hsiao 1995: 78-9).

Perry has given the current (2001) position as he sees it, and it does not appear to have changed, at least in formal terms:

The Central Propaganda Department 中宣部 guides and supervises the work of several state bodies within the central government, including the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television 广播电影电视总局, the State Administration of Press and Publication 新闻出版署, the State Council Information Office 国务院新闻办公室. In Chinese administrative terms, these bodies are within the network, or *xitong* 系统, of the Propaganda Department. (Perry 2001: 27-8)

Control in the field is exercised by lower level Propaganda Departments of all significant administrative units at every level of administration. Every medium has to have a party organization of some kind through which the local propaganda department, answerable to the Central Propaganda Department in Peking, will control it. Thus the Editor of Shanghai's Liberation Daily, a very important medium, attends fortnightly meetings with the Shanghai City Propaganda Department, meetings which cause him intense nervousness because the newspaper's adherence to known or unknown lines will be judged (Gu 2000).

The Editor goes to a meeting with the Propaganda Department every two weeks. There the officials tell him what they think has gone bad in the recent coverage, but usually place more emphasis upon the kind of topics they want to see covered in the weeks ahead. They also discuss the work of particular reporters. (Gu 2000)

Small 'work units' have party cells, party branches or general party branches depending upon their size. A media 'work unit' with more than 50 party members has a party committee. The same formula applies except that the Propaganda Department will delegate lower level emissaries to liaise. The system of meetings does not appear to have changed from that which Porter found during his experience of New China News Agency in 1979 (Porter 1992: 6).

Until the 1980s the line imposed by the propaganda system was adhered to as much out of a sense of mission as from gullibility or fear. This is no longer the case:

In a period when the Party has great prestige, this conformity is a form of discipline based on trust; when the Party does not have prestige, as is the case now, it is a form of intimidation that, while still working most of the time, generates a reservoir of resentment and alienation from officialdom. (Hsiao 1995: 80)

Since the rules are no longer clear cut there are often muddles and clashes. Magazines have continued to be proscribed, either indefinitely or for short periods, because they offended the government (IFEX 1999, Prisma 2001). The slightest favorable reference to Taiwan or to the liberation movements in Tibet 西藏 or East Turkestan 新疆 are quite outside the permissible.

In June 1999 journalists associated with the banned China Democracy Party were imprisoned for producing an unauthorized magazine and distributing articles on the internet and the following month three journalists who tried to publish an independent magazine for workers were also imprisoned (Attacks1999: 241). President Jiang Zemin complained that there were too many publications in circulation and greater vigilance and 'public scrutiny' by the Party was promised. 1999 was a particularly bad year for journalists, which may account for why those interviewed asked that their names be withheld that year, but not in 1998. There were at least eleven journalists arrested, bringing the total number of journalists in prison to nineteen (Attacks 1999: 240) To a

great extent this can be explained by the Taiwan crisis, sensitivity over the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the CCP and the nationwide demonstrations by the Falun Gong which rattled the authorities. Such control is overt in times of crisis when the Party will instruct the media to deploy the New China News Agency texts:

‘The Party sets the overall tone and direction for the press implicitly through general policy statements, and more directly by specifying instructions and priorities for the press via documents and bulletins transmitted from propaganda authorities to new organisations and their Party administrators, editors and reporters’ (Polumbaum 1990: 53)

The leadership and the media

Senior media personnel are usually Party members and membership is a common-sense career move for aspiring managers, but journalists are not all Party members, nor is membership taken into account in daily work routines (Jiang H 1995: 42). However, there has always been a close relationship between media personnel and Party (and therefore) State leadership. Journalism is a recognised road to the higher reaches of Party and State and the Editor of The Peoples Daily and the Director of the New China News Agency, for example, are officials of ministerial rank rather than simply public figures as they might be in western countries. The current President of CCTV was, until his age required his retirement from the government post in 1997, concurrently a government Deputy Minister. The current (Sept 1999) Deputy Mayor of Shanghai, a significant national politician, is a former journalist and Dean of Fudan University’s School of Journalism. However this kind of integration should not be assumed to result in a total identification between ministerial and media interests or opinions, or heavy-handed censorship. It is through self-censorship rather than the correcting or eliminating of texts that orthodoxy is maintained (Jernow 1993: 22, Lent, 1978: 19, Polumbaum 1990: 55). Jenner, with his historical perspective, puts it this way:

One thinks of autocratic regimes as imposing a harsh discipline that has everyone obeying orders, but life in China is not like that. The negative resistance to authority to which the unfree have to resort is just as far removed from the political culture of democracy as is the dictatorship that rules them.’ (Jenner 1994 : 186)

In an example which has been cited elsewhere, Polunin (1990) tells how the editor of an evening paper killed the report of a stabbing at a railway station by two drunks of another race because he was afraid that such a report would feed prejudice. This conformed to official policy. Interviewees have several times discussed arguments over, for example, the coverage of demonstrations. Usually caution wins, sometimes reporters.

From time to time senior leaders make statements about the role of the media, designed to encourage and identify what they regard as the positive. In 1994 President Jiang required the media to perform four major tasks: arming the people with science, guiding the people with correct opinion, educating the people in high moral standards and inspiring the people with outstanding works (Li 1998:325).

In 1996, perhaps concerned at the steady reduction in political content of the media, President Jiang visited both the Liberation Army Daily and The Peoples Daily and emphasised the need to maintain political loyalty, a call simultaneously underscored by a Party Plenum resolution calling on journalists to maintain party discipline and political loyalty (Hazelbarth 1997: 15). CCTV had an interesting visitor in 1997. Not only did Li Peng compliment the team of investigative journalists working on Focal Point, but he left them a motto in his own calligraphy, which read, according to an interviewee

Praise the vanguard 表扬先进
Criticize that which is backward 批评落后
Bring Justice to society 生藏争议
(Yu Min).

The interviewees who first described this took it as an endorsement of their own view of journalists as being themselves a vanguard; later interviewees were more cynical. Political leaders, they felt, only encouraged journalism of this kind because they could see that it helped give the appearance of greater freedom and openness. But then, the appearance might whet the appetite for the reality.

Models of journalism today

When, on 18 August 1989, New China News Agency issued its analysis of the reasons for the closure of the World Economic Herald, it explained that the particular offending edition, focusing on the life and work of Hu Yaobang, had gone beyond appropriate bounds by featuring opinions which were permissible expressed in private, in communications to the Central Committee or in limited circulation publications, but which the Central Committee had expressly forbidden to be aired in public. Thus was set the tenor of the post-massacre media; notwithstanding the anger of those journalists who fled abroad (Hsiao 1990, Liu 1990), this explanation of events was by no means a return to the situation before 1978. Some observers saw it as an attempt to compromise between 'conservatives' and 'liberals' (Jernow 1994 *passim*).

Even if it can be agreed that 'conservatives' are indeed those who, for a variety of different reasons, wish to limit the free expression of ideas, how far is it justifiable to refer to 'liberals'? While the Herald had survived as an economic policy critic for several years thanks to the support it received from Zhao Ziyang (Hsiao 1990: 118), it should not necessarily be concluded that this support was for the sake of a liberal ideal; many of the articles were doubtless useful to Zhao in the internal Party debates and it is likely that many of the advocates of more liberal economic reforms saw, however inchoately, media debate as a necessary concomitant. However, the relative openness which developed is, according to the critics, compromised by the relationship between the media and political power. How can there be debate if the Party can, at one go, close down thirty or forty periodicals as it did after the Tiananmen Massacre?

Chinese officials struggle to theorise the position of journalism in the PRC today:

Journalism work certainly has objective laws of its own. Considering this a weird question, some hold that under the Party's leadership journalistic work is no more than the propagation of the Party's guiding principles and policies..... It should be recognised that journalism is subordinate to politics. It is an opinion tool of a given class, always serving a given class. This is the very fundamental law of journalism. Whether or not you recognise this, journalism the world over cannot escape the dictation of this law. But there are

more aspects to this. Journalism transmits the various developments of the objective world to its audience as well as publicises [sic] the audience's feedback to the world. In this process an opinion environment is formed, creating a kind of spiritual moving force. In other words, journalism builds a bridge between the objective world and the audience, and serves an important function between the two.

What ought to be noted are as follows: News reporting must be objective and true, reflecting the reality as is [sic]. News reporting must be speedy and timely. Journalism must reduce its distance from the audience, making itself easy for the audience to accept. The audience's feedback or evaluation determines the survival of journalism. (Gan 1994: 44)

Chinese policy makers also attempt to differentiate Chinese journalism from that of the West:

Most journalists agree that we must not one-sidedly repudiate 'objectivity' or 'fairness'. Instead, we must differentiate its substantive meaning from its use by bourgeois newspapers. Under the banner of objectivity and fairness, a few bourgeois newspapers are in reality attempting to inculcate in their readers their worldviews and biases. Their objectivity and fairness are limited, even pretentious.' (Gan 1994: 46)

Does such a differentiation hold water, does it allow us to formulate a distinct discourse of Chinese journalism?

The media environment provides for today's journalists much more scope for a satisfying job in the senses articulated in chapter 1. They can work hard at their chosen career and know that there is some chance of reward relevant to merit; the one dimensional journalism of politics has become just one of many forms in which they can work. The leadership declares respect for what they do. Journalists are confident that the 'current affairs' which is the most marked indicator of change between past and present do represent an important step forward in journalists' contribution to their society. It can however be argued that they are merely sensational, that, because they eschew really difficult problems or topics the powerful want to keep under wraps, they are no more socially significant than thrillers. Hua (1999) claims that we can identify typical story lines which are repackaged again and again, such as that of the corrupt official who steals public funds; the local cadre who bullies villagers; the wicked merchant who cheats customers; the devoted daughter supporting sick parents and the

abused wife rescued. However, his argument that this undermines the claim that investigative journalism is truly revelatory and reforming is itself open to question. Investigative journalism elsewhere also follows predictable paths and searches for fashionable or 'politically correct' targets and yet can simultaneously extend the boundaries of our concerns and draw attention to problems which otherwise would be left to fester. This has been argued, at least, in the case of English investigative journalism (deBurgh 2000). All journalists, notwithstanding differences on other matters, expressed pride in this advance and contrasted it with the journalism of the past. Some younger ones expressed scepticism about 'most' journalism and made comments about their relationship to power and the Party best summarised in a ditty quoted by Zhao:

I am the dog of the Party, sit in front of the Party's house;
I bite whomsoever the Party bites, when it bites me I don't grouse (Zhao 1999)

From the government's point of view – hence the congratulations – critical journalism is very useful, provided it does not get above itself. It can both alert the government to areas of controversy which other channels do not see and it can be used to give the appearance that 'authority' is concerned, that people are not ignored and that 'something is being done'

8. WHO DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?

What is a journalist?

According to Ding Junjie, there have been five great changes in the Chinese media in the last five years: quantity, economic independence, autonomy, serving the audience and relationship to the polity. By 'autonomy' Ding means that the media have taken upon themselves the task of scrutinising society (观察社会), '**to decide themselves what kind of news is the most important, what is most attractive to viewers, what can contribute most to social development**'. This is echoed by the Deputy Editor of a current affairs programme:

Our task is to identify the *latest news facts* 最新发生的新闻事件 and social phenomena and to reflect them in our recording of them. Of course, we have our own objectives, one of which is to be *close to the citizenry* 贴近老百姓. If there is a topic in which the citizenry have shown no interest, yet you cover it, then you will create a *social effect* 社会的效果. There are some matters that are known to the audience but not reflected upon / thought out by them.....we go into depth on these topics and demonstrate our view, perhaps providing revelation. (Du Yan)

All journalists talk of their relationship with the audience. According to Jiang Lan:

Chinese and western audiences approach TV in a different way, because China is a country 'in development'. The Chinese audience wants, first, truth (真话); second, responsiveness to their interests. It is political reports (政治报道) and social reports that interest me most, because I believe our job is to serve the public weal (我们是为公众提供服务) and help the public understand [public] matters and their contexts and background.

An idealistic tone was given to the same basic idea by the younger regional TV journalists:

You are reporter because you have a sense of justice. Because you want to 1. expose evil 2. give information. (K'ang Wei)

Journalists tell people those things they don't know and provide a deeper understanding of those things they do (Hsia Yi)

Similar ideas can also be expressed in different ways, and given a different emphasis:

the job of a journalist is to process the news 采制信息, for the people and to supervise the government, yes, the government must be supervised. (Ch'en Muli)

What Ch'en meant by that was slightly less challenging than it sounds:

residents in an area cannot get their gas supplies properly attended to, so they come to TV, it's that simple

The question of where they stood, between people and government was a vexing one:

Journalists are the mediators between people and government. Their tasks are the communication of news and 'public scrutiny' (舆论监督). The responsibilities of the journalists are to making a news programme that keeps the interest of the people - but not all stations are the same. Impartiality is very necessary but the absolute is impossible, we do our best. If something is controversial we get it said by others, we don't say it. (T'ang Musan)

When Wu Haimin's idea that journalists should be social activists was put to him he was very forthright:

Certainly not. They are very different from journalists. A reporter should try to report impartially whereas a social activist has some aims. We report opinions and facts.

Emphasising the active aspect of journalism, the older reporter said about his profession

When you teach in a school, you teach few. As a reporter you teach many and at all levels.

A reporter works because he has a sense of justice, because he wants to do justice and to cry out about it

There are many qualifications on the work of a reporter: for example if an ordinary person asks for a reporter's help, he has to judge 'is this just helping an individual, or is it a wider issue of significance to many?'; and then he has to argue it with his colleagues.

The reporter has a special role as the throat and mouth of the Party, yes, but should serve the people first. Since you represent the party in their eyes you are not free to speak as you might wish. (Liu Ch'ao)

He added an interesting further twist:

In the eyes of ordinary people I am powerful, I can speak for them. Thus when I am interviewing a politician I represent the audience. But I must be careful, I am not representing myself. When I speak to the general public I represent power. (Liu Ch'ao)

Did he see the journalist as a 'social activist'?

There's not really a contradiction between the social activist and the impartial journalist; your job is to work on behalf of the citizenry (老百姓), in that way you are a social activist, your aims are activist. But in the way you deal with topics you must be impartial. (Liu Ch'ao)

All appeared to agree, explicitly or implicitly, that people have high expectations of journalists. As one put it:

Journalists have a high social position; at least people attribute to us a high status, although to ourselves we don't seem to have that. (Hsia Yi)

In sum, the interviewees appear strongly to incline to a social responsibility, even paternal, view of their role.

The Global Journalist Study

From 1995-7 Chen Chongshan and colleagues (Chen 1998) undertook a postal survey of Chinese journalists. From their questionnaires to 5,800 Chinese journalists, they found that they saw their work as follows:

Our respondents chose the dissemination of news quickly and accurately ('information role') as the most important [task], with 79% of the sample naming it as 'very important'. The next most important role, endorsed by 72% of the sample, requires the media to provide analysis and interpretation of major social issues, which may be called the 'correlation role' according to Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948). The 'mouthpiece role' came in third, with 64% considering the dissemination and explanation of governmental regulations and CCP policies to be very important. A slightly smaller number of respondents supported the 'watchdog role' by looking over either the government (61%) or the negative sectors of society (60%).

The least popular role among the Chinese journalists surveyed is entertainment, endorsed by 19% of the sample. The 'public forum role' offering a free marketplace of ideas to ordinary citizens, also lacks widespread support, as less than a quarter (24%) viewed it as very important. Contrary to the strong support for the mouthpiece role, only one out of three respondents supported the 'indoctrination role' in promoting communist role models. The journalists preference of mouthpiece over indoctrination role is consistent with our previous studies (eg Xhu 1990) in which Chinese audiences were found to be responsive to media messages about governmental policies but resistant to campaigns promoting Communist ideology. (Chen 1998: 26)

Chen and his team concluded that 'Future Research needs to compare the perceived and the practised journalistic professionalism by Chinese journalists' (Chen 1998: :29), something which the present study attempts. Few of the studies which have worked in the same area have provided 'thick description', including quotations from interviews which flesh out the information and give it that personal dimension that reminds us that these ideas are not merely parrot statements or institutional impositions but are felt and lived by Chinese journalists with names, love lives and different personalities.

Lee Chinchuan has examined Chen's study in the light of a contemporary one carried out from within China (Yu 1998) and makes the following comment:

A scrutiny of both national surveys [] discloses the emergence of a mixed and ambiguous normative conception about the role of journalism in the 1990s. First, most journalists continue to view news as propaganda. The media should act as Party mouthpieces to help people understand government policies, but they should refrain from using old tactics of 'indoctrination'. Second, journalists are no longer pure 'Party folks'. They recognize that the media should provide news and information 'to reflect the objective worlds'. But what is 'the objective world'? Since they rebuff Western norms of separating facts from values or presenting balanced views on controversial issues, they vow to find out right and wrong before they report. But, then, 'right and wrong' from what or whose vantage points? Their answers are vague. Third, they remain highly paternalistic toward 'the people', failing to endorse the media as a 'public forum' or a provider of popular entertainment. They perceive their own role as going far beyond informing people to 'lead public opinion' and to 'exercise public opinion 'public scrutiny' on the government'. These goals – as stated in the surveys and other writings – remain highly abstract without articulating the modus operandi for realising them or for resolving possible role conflicts (for example, the Party versus the people). Finally, most journalists surveyed resolutely disapprove acts of corruption and the practice of 'paid journalism' [] contrary to what seems to be ample evidence of widespread corruption []. (Lee 2000a)

The key point made by Lee and which helps explain the interviewees' attitudes is that their expressed goals 'remain highly abstract'. He is referring to the watchdog or supervisory role believed in by 60% of Chen's respondents but 100% of the interviewees in the present study. To try to understand these ideals, it is now appropriate to examine the references made to two historical figures, Qu Yuan 屈原 and Hai Rui 海瑞.

The journalist as the good official

We don't know any heroes! Well, its just my opinion, but I think that journalists very much admire Qu Yuan 屈原. Maybe they think they are Qu Yuan! Do you know Qu Yuan? He was an official who told the truth to the Emperor. (T'ang Musan)

It sometimes appears as if foreign ignorance and CCP propaganda have conspired to present imperial China as a totalitarian society without light and shade. In fact CCP rule, as is now increasingly recognised, constitutes a despotic departure from a system much more benign than usually credited, even when it lacked some of the institutions and liberties now thought essential elements of a civilised polity (see Leys 1983).

In traditional society, in place of representative options, the petition was an institutionalised channel for the expression of dissent and by the time of the Sung (960-1280) petitioning by students in particular had become traditional. There was a unit of government concerned to investigate and take action over abuses, often inspired by petitions, called the Censorate. It was the Censor's task to make administration conform to moral precept without fear or favour and, in the stories and saws that were the common currency of all Chinese, there are many cases of upright scholars, who were not necessarily designated censors, acting in this role.

No less than other countries China has mythical figures who in some manner express certain values of the culture and that of the 'Thomas More' figure who stands for service to absolute values at the risk of his own self interest is a particularly emotive one. Since there was no guaranteed immunity for this role, the critic's success or even survival depended upon the whim of those in power who might, or might not, honour the code which justified criticism on the grounds of respect for and obedience to the real interests of the hierarchy, as described in the canons:

If a man has a good friend to resist him in doing bad actions, he will have his reputation preserved; so if a father has a son to resist his wrong commands, he will be saved from committing serious faults. When the command is wrong, a son should resist his father, and a minister should resist his august master. The maxim is: 'resist when wrongly commanded'. Hence how can he be called filial who obeys his father when he is commanded to do wrong? (The Canon of Filial Piety 孝经, Section XV)

Such sentiments were part of the warp and woof of the life of most Chinese until very recent times. The historical Qun Yuan 屈原, the figure mentioned by Liu Ch'ao, employed his poetry for remonstrance. He lived in the Kingdom of Chu 楚国 338-278bc. His example has been cited from as early as the Han Dynasty 汉朝 (206BC-

220AD) to the CCP-KMT polemics of the 1930s (Wagner 1987: 186). In the Sung Dynasty 宋朝

Officials frequently criticised the Emperor for issuing orders bypassing the Prime Office, which had the authority to check all imperial orders for improprieties and impracticalities. In one protest against this irregular practice, a memorial written by Liu Fu around 1270, the emperor was sternly told that 'The affairs of the Empire ought to be carried out together with the empire; the ruler cannot regard them as his private concern. (Metzger 1977 : 182-4)

It was a 1960s controversy over the correct interpretation of how the Ming Dynasty 明朝 (1368-1644) official Hai Rui had related to his Emperor that would spark off the Cultural Revolution (see Chapter 4). During the early Qing 清朝 (1644-1911) many literati proved their loyalty to a moral authority higher than that of those who composed the government by rejecting office under the new dynasty and remaining constant to the overthrown Ming. This was not withstanding the fact that the Qing adopted all Confucian roles, rituals and examinations, which might be thought to placate the orthodox. As a young man Mao Zedong was to join a study group devoted to eulogising a Ming loyalist scholar who had lived a life of resistance to imperial authority out of fealty to the Ming.

In other words, the impartial official who speaks, without fear or favour, for the moral order is a stock figure in the Chinese world order. There is Judge Bao Qingtian 包青天 of the Sung Dynasty, legendary for his even-handedness and Judge Di 狄公 (upon whom Robert van Gulik based his Judge Dee mysteries) noted for the scrupulousness of his investigations. The memory of Shang Yang (c361-338BC) moved Prime Minister Zhu Rongji 朱容基 to tears in 1996 when he attended a play about him. Shang Yang was a great administrator of the Warring States period. Not in the same mould as the popular hero-officials, he is more of a model for Prime Ministers than for journalists. He served the Qin 秦 by centralising power and eliminating the privileges of the nobility and is attributed with the desire to establish the rule of law over that of faction or favourite. He fell foul of the ruler on account of that very impartial strictness which had first been his attraction and symbolises the statesman who serves China rather than the fleeting interests of leaders.

China also has its equivalents to the Andreas Hofer/Salvatore Giuliano/Robin Hood popular hero of the European tradition. Popular storytellers in China have always liked tales of brave and virtuous men who are forced to step outside of the established order to fight unjust officials. Romantic tales of this kind are the core of some of the most famous Chinese historical novels and operas, such as The Water Margin 水浒传 and The Romance of the Three Kingdoms 三国演义. It has often been noticed that Mao Zedong was inspired by these two sagas.

Of all the dissidents made heroes the most popular is Qu Yuan, particularly Chinese in his yearnings to be part of the establishment. His myth is suffused throughout popular as well as high culture. From the Dragon Boat races to foodstuffs throughout China, references to him in popular culture can hardly be escaped. What does he represent?

The historical information is limited. During the Warring States period 战国时代(403-221 BC) Qu Yuan (338-278 BC) was an official who fell foul of court intrigues, was forced to retire from public life despite and because of his high sense of duty and, passionately committed to the mission he was prevented from carrying out, eventually killed himself in despair. Chinese have empathised with him ever since.

Notwithstanding the dearth of historical facts, there are countless books, poems, paintings and theatrical works in the high culture tradition dealing with Qu Yuan as well as innumerable manifestations of his story in popular culture. By those who felt their own predicaments most expressed by the myth, literati of later periods, it has been reinterpreted with emphases differing according to the age and the need although the constant themes of the myth are that misfortunes are bound to attend the conscientious public servant (Schneider 1980: 5) and that regret is the lot of the man debarred from serving his chosen master. According to Schneider, in the first thousand years of the myth, it was usually the 'loyal minister' which was the most prominent characteristic. By the Ming period it was the 'mad ardour' or enthusiasm of the man which was inspiring; he was being seen as an uncompromising spirit dedicated to absolute values regardless of mere mundane success. He can be distinguished from other kinds of resisters. There are the poets who refused office lest they compromise their principles,

such as Li Po 李伯; there is Yueh Fei 岳飞 who died in 1141 because he opposed a policy he thought would harm his state; there are those who would have no truck with the Manchus out of loyalty to the Ming. Qu Yuan shares with them a steadfastness to values and he is the most universally seen as symbolic of principled public service.

Early in the 20th century, while other semi-mythic figures were rejected in the effort to modernise thinking, Qu Yuan was not. Thanks to the influence of European romanticism he came to be seen more and more as the moral individual struggling within the immoral society, a kind of Young Werther or Childe Harold. Empathy for this Qu Yuan was expressed by the great journalist Liang Qichao 梁启超, by the founders of the CCP Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 and Li Dachao 李大潮 and by the foremost fiction writer Lu Xun 鲁迅 (Schneider 1980 Ch3). He became interpreted as iconoclast and revolutionary, particularly after another of the leading writers and scholars of the period, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, staged his play 'Ch'u Yuan' (Guo 1942). Guo made him an associate of the common people, a moral leader excluded from power and even (in later formulations) a saviour such as Socrates or Christ. The 'loyal minister' interpretation was overlooked.

When journalists say or suggest that they are standing up for principles, for the people, this is the cynosure they may have in mind. The implication is that they do see their vocation as a mandarin one rather than as the outsider professed by the Anglophone equivalent. In the Anglophone myth, exemplified by Gray Grantham in The Pelican Brief (Grisham 1998), the journalist is among others a lone wolf, fighting evil with his conscience alone. The Chinese equivalent is re-establishing authority and orthodoxy. The difference is great.

The journalists the journalists admire

When journalists today are asked which journalists they admire, the replies are distinguished according to the generation of the respondent and/or the circumstances of the conversation. Aside from mentioning some names on which no information is

available, presumably 'local heroes', those journalists spoken to in more formal settings, who also chanced to be older, mentioned modern names such as Hu Jiwei, or, asked to cast back into history, Shao Piaoping and Tsou Taofen 邹韬奋 (as well as early journalist-radicals such as Liang Qichao and the founders of New Youth 新青年, discussed in chapter 3).

Shao and Tsou have this in common, that they were persecuted journalists of the Nationalist period who founded influential newspapers and have been incorporated posthumously into the Communist pantheon. Tsou appears to have been a proponent of civil rights who denounced abuses by the KMT and called for press freedoms well before he associated with the CCP (Wang 1997). Shao was a courageous investigative journalist who also worked hard to promote professionalism through his lectures at Peking University and textbooks. According to Li (1984)

He believed in a free and independent press, with a public interest as its highest consideration. He argued that reporters should act as 'a king without a crown' or a 'fair minded judge' who took no sides. 'Truthfulness is the backbone of news, while human interest serves as flesh and blood' he wrote.

Gu Xuebin also extolled him in the same terms, also using the expression 'King without a crown' (无冕之王)⁹⁰. These names have all in recent years reappeared in journalism journals as models to emulate, so that it is not surprising that they are called to mind. Whether these men are admired because they stood up to government or because they stood up to the KMT's government is a significant distinction. While it was rather unclear, it appears that it was the style of journalism, together with the fact that they were among the few names of past journalists of which the interviewees knew, which made them suitable for citing!

A figure which is more controversial today and not obviously attractive to western-orientated journalists (in fact he was mentioned only by Wu Haimin) is that of Deng Tuo 邓拓. Deng's is nevertheless an interesting case which illustrates various points about Chinese journalism and which has also been extensively researched.

Deng Tuo was the first Editor of The Peoples Daily after the CCP victory of 1949 and a founder of the All China Association of Journalists. After losing his Editorship in 1966 he became Secretary for Culture and Education in the Peking Municipal Party Committee, which, among its other responsibilities, controlled the Peking-based universities. He was thus both journalist and administrator although he probably considered himself first and foremost a scholar and published original literary and historical researches as well as essays and, of course, innumerable press articles and speeches. While one commentator has characterized Deng Tuo as a fighter who dared criticise Mao Zedong's capricious leadership (Leys 1971), his biographer Cheek (1997) sees him as a conventional, if inspired and singularly able, literatus. To him, Deng was a servant of the state in the Chinese tradition, adapting himself to a modern medium of service, journalism.

Such a journalist had four related functions. He was a culture bearer, transmitting and mediating knowledge and values; he provided a framework within which and with which the issues of the moment could be discussed and problems solved; he worked to raise the cultural level 教化 of the citizenry and he propagated the current orthodoxy. The function which seems most particularly uncongenial to modern Anglophone journalists is the latter, but it may well be that journalists in other cultures have more sympathy with it; it may be that being 'critical' and 'independent' have only rather recently been regarded as appropriate attributes of journalists. In recent years in Britain both leading politics scholars (Kedourie 1988) and senior Editors (Page 1998: 46) have questioned whether critical or investigative journalism is indeed what journalists should be about.

Deng was an integral part of the system which in time he was to criticise. He always advocated 'public scrutiny' of the executive by 'the masses' and saw one of the important roles of the media as the vehicle by which this 'public scrutiny' should be affected. He also believed that journalists themselves must speak truth to power and did so in 'veiled criticisms' in The Peoples' Daily in 1957 after the disaster of the (early stages of the) Great Leap Forward (GLF) (Cheek 1997: 172). Mao took offence and insulted and humiliated him, a precursor of the kind of treatment that would be the lot of all Mao's opponents in the mid 60s. Another indication of the trend was the fate of

Marshal Peng Dehuai 彭德怀. When the Marshal blamed the GLF for the sufferings of the peasantry at the Lushan Conference 庐山代会 of 1959 he was dismissed and his supporters purged at every level, as we noted in Chapter 3; many observers have pointed out that after Lushan there was no more real discussion or acceptable dissent in the CCP⁹¹.

Nevertheless in March 1961 Deng began to publish a series of essays in the Peking Evening News called Evening Chats at Yanshan 燕山夜话, followed in October by Notes from a Three Family Village 三家村. These grew out of investigation into local conditions and revealed that the policy of 'Peoples Communes' was causing the most appalling dislocation and misery in the countryside. Deng and his supporters were asserting their right to be more than cogs in the Great Helmsman's machinery (Cheek 1997: 267).

Retribution was so savage during the Cultural Revolution that Deng took his own life in May 1966 rather than suffer the abuses being vented on others, and perhaps in the hope of saving his family and associates⁹². In 1979 he was rehabilitated and all his works were thereafter republished as well as many hagiographic articles. He has been held up for emulation by journals aimed at young journalists⁹³. Yet whether Deng is a plausible model for today's journalists is open to question. His was probably the last generation to have a high level of traditional culture; his successors received a Soviet style education and the generation below may have only a hazy notion of the cultural foundation of the traditional literatus-official and his values.

Hu Jiwei 胡绩伟, of The Peoples' Daily and holder of prominent posts in the national professional bodies for journalists, emerged in the 1980s as a champion of press freedoms, only to be purged in the summer of 1989 and held responsible for the involvement of those many of his colleagues in the protests which led to the 'Tiananmen incident'. He has since been rehabilitated and perhaps serves as a icon to those still hopeful of the success of his ideas although he himself has, reportedly, despaired utterly⁹⁴.

Younger journalists were if anything even more hesitant to name fellow professionals as admirable. Only one gave a historical name and, since it was that of Zhou Zuoren 周作人, it was assumed that the reference was ironical. Zhou, a writer not immediately associated with journalism, was editor of Tatler 语丝 (Pollard 1973: 333) until 1927 but is remembered more as a writer of erudite essays, as the scholarly brother of China's 'greatest modern writer' Lu Xun and as someone who became more and more aloof from the concerns of the activists of his generation and, eventually, a collaborator in the loathed Japanese occupation. Lu Xun probably had his brother in mind when he wrote

Though Yu Ssu may be said to have often displayed the spirit of resistance, yet too it was frequently tinged with weariness, probably because it saw the underlying reality of China too clearly, so inevitably tended to lose hope. This shows that too discerning a view of things leads to failure of nerve in action. Chuang-tzu's saying that 'the lot of the man who can make out the fish in the deep is not a happy one' one would think not only means that other people fight shy of him but also that his own prospects will be seriously impaired. (quoted by Pollard 1973 : 353)

What can we make of a journalist in his twenties citing this man, whose very name was anathema in the PRC until recently and whose works have only just been republished, as an admired journalist? (It may be not unconnected with the fact that not long before there had been a big article about Zhou in one of the main literary magazines). In contrast to the urge to modernity, rejection of Chinese tradition and abstractionism of the May Fourth radicals, he proposed that China should look within itself for sources of change and development. He rejected what he regarded as the assumptions of many of his contemporaries, that Chinese civilisation was inferior.

His alternative to the dominant discourse was not a different kind of nationalism such as may be today adduced from some of the 'neo-conservative' intellectuals. Zhou rejected the totalising, nationalistic ideologies of the KMT and CCP which he probably regarded as almost interchangeable. Daruvala (2000 : 219-220) states that Zhou is associated with 'a criticism of the notion that there is a homogenous definition of what it is to be Chinese and a rejection of the demand that self cultivation must benefit the state'. He opposed 'education on national humiliation' which became a staple of KMT and CCP schooling and can be argued to have had a poisonous effect upon China's relations with other peoples. His construction of Chinese civilisation was one made up of diverse

localities, traditions and individuals, welcoming to outside influences, with its own resources for self criticism and rejecting the assumption that the present is always superior to the past, the western to the Chinese.

In this connection it is relevant that the interviewee who cited Zhou also made the remark that journalists from his area (Zhejiang) were limited in their range of expression by being obliged to voice reports and write articles in Mandarin, in effect their second language. Although he drew the line at agreeing that other Chinese languages ('dialects') should be made official he nevertheless implicitly drew attention to the injustice of the totalising tendency⁹⁵ and demonstrated that his localist views of culture coincided with those of Zhou. He might not go as far as Friedman who suggest (1995) that the homogenising thrust of the CCP has disintegrated and that many, if not most, people outside the CCP now reject the centralising cultural tendencies just as they do the 'northern narrative'. Be that as it may, the initial assumption of the writer when confronted by the name of Zhou Zuoren as a 'model journalist' that the interviewee was being ironical was almost certainly wrong. He was cited because he stands for an alternative, and a very radical one too.

Two other names were also mentioned, and without irony. Citation of Dai Qing 戴晴, associated particularly with the Yangzi River Project and what had been learned about her activities from the Internet, was not qualified; Liu Binyan 刘宾雁 however seemed to be disparaged⁹⁶.

Liu Binyan (1927-), who, with other exiled journalists, is involved in a New York based organisation for promoting press freedom and human rights in China, is usually referred to in the west as a heroic investigative journalist. Under the patronage of his Editor Hu Yaobang⁹⁷ 胡耀邦, he first published exposures of bureaucratic incompetence in 1956 as well as a now famous story about RCPs and how the life of a young journalist is blighted by the fact that though she investigates honestly she finds always that her work is only used in RCPs and ends up ignored in some obscure filing cabinet. In The Inside Story 本报内部消息 reporter Huang wants to reveal the reality of a coal mine but is pressurised to depict it in a manner approved by the Party but far from the reality she observes. Huang's application to join the CCP is judged according to her

willingness to conform. At the end no decision has been taken but we are given to understand that a desire to report the truth stands in the way of party membership. Another typical, tale is Sound is better than silence 毕竟有声胜无声. It tells of a man who fakes being deaf and dumb so that he does not have to participate in any meetings or worry about any official work. The moral of the story is that only those who close themselves off from all around them can survive in such a society.

Criticised by the left, Liu was expelled from the Party in 1957 and sent to labour reform in the countryside, returned to his original employer, China Youth Daily, only to be arrested in 1969 as an established rightist (Goldfein 1989). Rehabilitated in 1979 and given a post on Peoples' Daily he wrote his most arresting work, Between Men and Monsters 人妖之间, which exposed in detail a case in which an enterprising woman had come to involve in corruption a vast network of managers, businesses and officials right up to national level. These are scandals comparable to those unearthed by Lincoln Steffens in the USA at the turn of the century (Ekirch 1974: 92) and by Ray Fitzwalter in the UK of the 1970s (FitzWalter 1981) and it is interesting to compare the treatments. Whereas the Anglophone journalists are factual in the approved social science manner of their times, Liu resorts to fiction, or at least faction, to point to abuses.

In 1985 Liu appears to have gone too far when he published A Second Kind of Loyalty 第二种忠诚, the story of a minor official who, moved by his allegiance to the Party, unceasingly denounced corruption in its ranks, a clear contrast with the Party's model of blind obedience, Lei Feng. This story infuriated influential people and Liu was forbidden to write for The Peoples' Daily for a period. Discussion polarised behind him and his appearances became controversial, with the intellectuals on the whole admiring him. Liu was only associated with dissidents in March 1989 when he signed the petition for the release of Wei Jingshen, who had been imprisoned by direct personal command of Deng Xiaoping. Out of the country at the time of the Tiananmen Massacre, he was placed on a wanted list by the government, did not return and later joined the dissidents abroad in denouncing the government. His experience provokes some reflections, first on his oeuvre and its methods, secondly on what he represents.

Journalists are not often judged by their 'oeuvre' in Anglophone countries since the components of their achievement are quickly forgotten, with a few exceptions. They tend to be remembered for the books they later wrote or as the Editors they became. Anglophone journalists comparable to Liu in this sense might be Phillip Knightley, John Pilger and Seymour Hersch. Although Knightley is associated with his recent books he is also known for his oeuvre in the sense that the stories he worked on were so important and still tell us so much about the societies he worked in that they have remained topical - Thalidomide and Vestey in particular.

Liu Binyan could not write his investigations in the evidential mode allowed the Anglophone. He wrote them as fictionalised reports, or, as Liu would have them 'social realism' or 'reportage literature' not too far from what Wolfe, Mailer and Capote aimed for in the 1960s (Wolfe 1973). His stories demonstrate the failure of idealism, the ease with which the systems can be subverted, how the high-minded are sidelined or persecuted and the perverting influence of ideology.

On the face of it we might imagine that Liu would be the nearest to a hero that modern journalists exercised by freedom and rights could have. When questioned on their attitude to him, respondents referred to him as 'old fashioned' or 'a Party member'. They assign to him a belief in the Party which they consider he has never outgrown (although perhaps he now has) and which they, feeling superior in doing so, have rejected. Duke has suggested that his limitation has been that he never criticised the system as a whole or drew the conclusion which seems implicit in his work, that the main obstacle to progress is the CCP itself (Duke 1985: 122). Perhaps it is this, possibly unfair and outdated judgment, which diminishes Liu in the eyes of a type of journalist who is sceptical of authority's good intentions or competence.

Reports of which they are proud

At the time of interviewing the regional television station at which he worked did not have its own current affairs programmes but Jiang Lan was particularly proud of the investigative reports on the news and gave these examples

(1) Last night we did a programme about a lawyer and university professor who had been charged with accepting bribes but, after 100 days of investigation was found not guilty Our report also discussed the repercussions of the case in law circles.

(2) A while ago we did a story about a Primary School in Shandong where a class had been given a nutritious drink and had been taken ill with vomiting and other symptoms of poisoning. The drink was found to contain iodine. The authorities have been extremely concerned about this. We did an investigation of the kind of drinks promoted similarly in this area, and the regulatory controls.

Regional reporter K'ang Wei concentrates on social news (社会新闻). For example, reports she has done recently include fairly banal ones such as on the issue of new banknotes and the opening of a new park. As you would expect, these leads tend to come from the organisations responsible for them, they get sent in. However, she says, 'now most of our news probably derives from viewers calling in'.

I like to do critical reports because they get the highest ratings as people like them best; my best ever story I did last year. From one of the letters that came into the newsroom I heard that a woman, incorrectly diagnosed by a fraudulent doctor as having a sexual disease, committed suicide. This brought out into the open that there were many unlicensed doctors being prosecuted in various parts of the province and this became an important running story.

I was able to spin this out for ten more days and to be given nearly 15 minutes each day as the top running story. For example - first day introduction, 2nd day I went to the hospital to interview patients, 3rd day to the prosecution office, 4th day to the accused to get them to tell me about their organisation etc (K'ang Wei).

Not all reporters could be pinned down as to what particular report they were proud of, preferring to talk in generalities; some responded better when asked what makes a successful report.

What makes a successful report?

In answer to this question various criteria were cited in a rather mechanistic way: **'it attracts interest'** (人人都是关注他); **'ratings and/or audience share'**; **'appreciation/feedback'** (反馈) [the hotline is used extensively to give feedback] **'because we analyse the use of our hotline in quite a scientific way in order to understand what our audience thinks of us'**. (Du Yan)

When journalists consider the content, and the professional added value of the content, they become more impassioned: **'It must be clear in its description of the matter in hand, deal with it in depth, provide context and express it effectively'**. Shi Zhengmao takes as her role models the investigative programmes News Probe 新闻调查 and Focal Point 焦点访谈 (see chapter 7) and gives her reasons that

They are realistic and concrete; the topics covered are things we all care about such as government policy, corruption, the reform process; the level of the reporters is exceptionally high; the programmes express ideas with competence and authority and even with a simple topic they help us to penetrate the background.

Shi cannot cite an example from her own programme, simply says that it is **'a very successful programme series which is a leading element in our country's economic development'**. Li Xiaoping, however, clearly recalls one from News Probe that she thought very successful:

On teenage children who ran away from home because of family troubles.....how the local authorities tried to deal with them - we opened this up as a national, rather than a personal issue. We showed that it was not just a Peking or a Shanghai or a Hunan issue but something much larger which all could address together. The whole society got a shock, discussion programmes, newspapers, everywhere people talked about that.

Yu Min wants to make it clear that sensationalism is not an end in itself:

I used to think that any report that made a sensation was a good one. I have come to think differently - I want a good result. I want the viewer to have a thorough explanation of the topic in hand.

and Jiang Lan

I admire programmes which meet a public need well. A programme about house-buying can do this as much as one on a weightier topic. What matters is that the report is specialist enough to be good of its type.

Speed matters today in a way that it appears not to have done a few years ago:

The good report is that which reports a problem first (there's much competition) and that which provides information of immediate use (eg - road construction in a vicinity and when it will start and finish) (Ch'en Muli)

T'ang Musan provides a startling example of what he would consider good revelation:

Actions contrary to ethics should be dealt with and make good programmes. For example, a family in which the parents do not treat the children/old person in accordance with ethics.....in accordance with the precepts of the Confucian Canon of Filial Piety 孝经. That is an important topic.

Although interesting for its citation of Confucian norms, it is not typical. In general everyone would agree that what are needed are **'attractive pictures, audience interest, informative, thought provoking and explanatory of the essence and the processes of society'** (T'ang Musan) .

Hsia Yi gives two examples of programmes she'd consider most successful which appear to fill most of the criteria:

1. elephants in Yunnan were killed by peasants because they had invaded their crops.....the programme investigated and found that the peasants were desperately poor and therefore one could feel sympathy for them, even if they had killed an endangered species; the programme went further though and found that the original feeding grounds of the elephants had been polluted. The programme examined the situation carefully, showing how difficult it was to fix responsibility and to settle the problem.

2 The Henan Bribery case. Although the programme was made after the police arrests it minutely researched the social factors surrounding it and the mistakes of the government and social institutions. It interviewed the accused after sentence. It analysed and discussed the systemic problems that had given rise to the criminality.

As to what the viewers think, people apparently like what they like in England, namely 'programmes on what concern themselves; few are concerned about wider politics' (Ch'en Muli).

This was widely agreed, with some additions:

(1) Oh things that touch them.....like interest rates and whether they are going up or down.

(2) The story inside the news. For example, the Qianzheng Bridge was badly constructed. I reported on this and found that people wanted to know the whole saga of the investigation and court proceedings and the sequel, what punishment was meted out. There was also the story of illegally prepared pork. People not only wanted to know the event itself, but what the government was going to do about it (Liu Ch'ao).

And there is a definite yen for the underbelly of society:

Corruption. Unhealthy social phenomena, disasters. Catastrophes. They like to see corruption dealt with, very much. They like things told in story form (T'ang Musan).

Do reports influence the authorities?

Asked whether journalism has any influence upon government and government policies the answers, taken overall, were ambiguous. However there was in one or two cases a desire to deny any clear influence, in exactly the manner of two journalists from BBC Radio's File on Four, Heggie and Ross, interviewed elsewhere (deBurgh 2000 pp200-202):

Journalism should not have a direct influence upon government. We are not a law enforcement agency, an executive. We are merely providing

public scrutiny; we find the appeal in a topic. Its possible that as a result of our alighting upon that topic a good solution will result such as a new regulation or law. This may occur, but its not our responsibility to make it so. After a report with which we have created awareness of some improper phenomenon this may attract attention from both audience and government such that the matter is dealt with.

It is not our function to solve problems but to cast an impartial eye over problems. Nor is it our function to get you to go and solve the problem, there are appropriate agencies for that (Du Yan).

Jiang Lan is more concrete

We do not have specific programmes on, say, housing policy, but if after a government policy comes into effect, people have doubts or an interest in exploring aspects, then we do it. We cover every area of interest or relevance to ordinary people. We have the responsibility of looking at all matters touching ordinary people.

Here's an example. Military affairs are not relevant to everybody, yet very many youngsters in Shanghai have to do military service. We have done reports on how they, accustomed to a soft life 娇生惯养 cope with the toughness of army living. That's rather controversial.

Policy implementation can be compared across the country:

we have done programmes comparing different regional authorities' different approaches to unemployment and training, housing and education (Li Xiaoping)

This relationship to the polity is theorised with much reference to a phrase of Zhao Ziyang's which now has common currency, 'yulun jiandu' 舆论监督. Although usually translated as 'supervision' this loses some of the meaning. Before attempting to do so, here is a Chinese journalist's explanation of the concept:

'Yulun jiandu' has spurred on (推动) the economic reform, the political reform, the development of culture and science. There are three aspects to 'yulun jiandu'. They are

- **'Keep functionaries 干部 in order by exposing wrongdoing and corruption. Many cadres have been criticised by the media'.**
- **'Proposing ideas which improve government policies. There are successful examples in law, especially law of bankruptcy and law of**

copyright (版权), all of which came about as a result of media opening up of the subject leading to discussions among parliamentary representatives'

- **'Reflecting and interpreting social phenomena and social problems such as women problems, the black market, gambling, drugs, peasant travails 农民负担问题, unemployment'.**

In other words, 'yulun jiandu' means acting like a watchdog, keeping an eye upon society and drawing attention to what the authorities may have missed. It is loosely translatable as 'public scrutiny', yet without connotations of hierarchy. This expression is the core of their professional self image which is bound up absolutely with dedication to the ideal of responsible journalism, journalism reactive to peoples' needs, to the improvement of conditions and the punishment of wrongdoers.

There was no sense that there might be any disagreement in how to tackle problems. It was quite clear what was good and what was bad. How does the journalist decide what is good or bad? In the past by reference to Party and State; today by reference to moral laws, personally or professionally construed.

From these interviews it would appear that Chinese journalists really are watchdogs, but watchdogs whose watching is circumscribed by an attachment to – or scepticism about – the state as definer of truth.

A comparison with Birmingham

The English reporters have, by contrast, a self-effacing idea of their function. They want to 'be other peoples' eyes and ears', 'make them feel they are part of a family and we're the family members telling what's gone on in our neck of the woods' and, most of all, 'entertain'. They are not reflective about their social function. The one who had begun his career on a radical left periodical, was very proud of some investigations into gangsterism he had done seven years earlier on a local paper but he accepted that there wasn't much opportunity for that kind of thing on TV; an older reporter had won some awards for his environmental investigations but was not sure that there was a market for

that kind of journalism today. Generally, nobody expected that they would ever have the resources to campaign or take a line or investigate but suggested that their role was to present all the various points of view, to be scrupulous in providing the kind of information appropriate to their audience, to resist public relations and not to preach.

Only one reporter admitted to idealism - he wanted to expand ordinary peoples' horizons, so that they would less likely be exploited by the rich and powerful. None felt any needed to search out contrary or marginalised views but one said that he had deliberately set out to do a homelessness story that made homeless people out like the rest of us but less fortunate, and to make a feature that let fox-hunting enthusiasts explain their point of view, 'although I myself am probably against hunting'.

They have a very clear idea of what constitutes success - a story that gets people talking in the pub; they know what professionalism is - its making the unpromising very entertaining. In talking to the journalists the interviewer was very struck by the lack of any sense of perspective. The interviewees' inability to recollect good or bad examples of their work is remarkable. Furthermore, almost nobody could remember the name of a journalist they had admired or whose work impressed them. One suggested the name of a colleague, another the name of a writer whose style had once been a model. Of the debates that have swirled around the media, their roles and responsibilities, the take-over battles and the issues of freedom of information, sources, privacy, rights and wrongs of investigative journalism and so forth, there was hardly a flicker of interest or knowledge. This may be a reflection of the personality type attracted to news journalism. It may also be a reflection of the state of journalism education in the UK. Chinese journalists, by contrast, behaved as if they felt they had to cite someone.

As to a sense of professional responsibility, the contrast with the interviewer's own experience of Scottish Television's (STV) newsroom in the late 1970s and early eighties, is apposite. At Central Television journalists do not feel political ('though I suppose we are more left than right'), do not have a sense of mission such as may have been more common among journalists twenty years ago and take no interest in investigative journalism of the Woodward & Bernstein model. Their responsibility is to technique, and perhaps to the audience, whereas journalists at STV twenty years ago were committed, usually to left politics and always to a sense of the duties of the

journalist to fight for the voiceless and to tell them about the world. The Editor, quoted in chapter 8, defends this position most staunchly.

Here there is a marked contrast to the Chinese counterparts. How can we account for this difference? The CCP has long trumpeted heroism, idealism and the duty of service, whereas this discourse has been out of fashion in England at least since the 1960s. It may be that the Chinese simply feel the need to claim a moral position for themselves, or something deeper.

Investigative journalism, a global concept

Since the Chinese respondents were so proud of their in-depth news, there were several conversations about Investigative journalism 调查新闻, about which those familiar with the concept were enthusiastic,

I was at the Guangming Daily 光明日报 and I published an article, or rather I organised its publication. [It argued that] the sole criterion of truth should be practice. We shouldn't care who had an idea, only whether it works. Now I was General Editor and I had not had Chairman Hua's 花国峰主席 endorsement for this article criticising the *Two Whatevers* and proposing the empirical criterion. A great debate opened up as to whether the criterion of truth should be practise or authority. The situation got complex; Hua criticised Guangming Daly, didn't want to allow the debate but Deng Xiaoping was very supportive. He wasn't in power, he'd been sacked by Mao, but the upshot of the whole affair was that Hua fell. Now this case is not exactly like Nixon's Watergate and yet [the fall of Chairman Hua] was precipitated by the Guangming Daily which aroused Hua's opposition and stimulated Deng's support. (Wang Qianghua)

In August 1974 US President Richard Nixon resigned when it was clear that he would be impeached by Congress both for trying to obstruct the official investigation of a burglary, using government resources for party political purposes and dishonestly denying his involvement in other illegal or unacceptable activities. The event which

symbolised all the misdemeanours was the burglary at Democratic Party headquarters, based in a Washington office block called The Watergate.

It has often been described how tenacious and courageous reporting of this by The Washington Post led to the exposure of the links which proved the President's implication in this and other offences. The full story is told, and the professional techniques and attitudes well demonstrated, in the two reporters' own account, All the President's Men, (Woodward and Bernstein 1974) and in a film of the same name. The two reporters became icons and have been extensively eulogised. All journalism in the US since then has been affected, if not dominated, by this feat which is interpreted either as the beginning of a new relationship between journalism and politics or as a demonstration, less of the corruption of US politics than of the efficacy of the system and proof of the important role of journalists in it⁹⁸. This interpretation can be interrogated on a several grounds.

However, as its protagonists acknowledge, and as Wang's comment shows, Watergate has become a myth, an icon. The reality is that it was the continuation of a long tradition of investigative journalism, that it may have contributed little to the unmasking of Nixon in comparison with other institutions and that it can also be argued to demonstrate the failings of the US media. In the minds of many though, its protagonists stand for the best journalism in the manner perhaps that tales of Wyatt Earp and Davy Crockett in the past stood for the myth of the free frontiersman.

What the journalists think about Investigative journalism

Investigative journalism, though a somewhat nebulous concept to sophisticated and mature journalists, *is a clear ideal* to younger ones, whether in China or Anglophone countries. It means journalism of revelation, in-depth research, exposure of wrongdoing and moral righteousness. It is the ultimate in journalistic professionalism. Reporters invariably refer to investigative journalism with admiration; believe that it represents the best of their profession; claim they want to undertake it and sometimes believe they do it when they quite likely do not. For these reasons it is useful to ask the question

what does the idolatry of the investigative journalist tell us about the idolaters? What relevance does it have to their beliefs?

On the face of it, investigative journalism in the Anglophone and Chinese worlds should have little in common since the societies are so different. However a slightly deeper look at its origins in the Anglophone world does offer some insights into why investigative journalism may be emerging in China. In 19th century England, as journalists⁹⁹ began to appreciate the extent of their power over public opinion, so they went further than to exercise it merely as informant and broker; they chose to set the agenda. Agenda setting can be accomplished in various ways; Investigative Journalists can be interpreted as trying to change the agenda by identifying certain events and issues as priorities regardless of what the authorities think. When in Britain in the early 1990s Prime Minister Major wanted to concentrate upon family values, The Guardian and News of the World sleaze agendas were very firmly forced upon him and PM Blair has suffered the same fate over scandals. The social responsibility then, is extended from a monitoring function to that of hailing the truth. No wonder people have referred to journalists as a priesthood and that politicians and their spin doctors seek to fill the media slots such that there is no room for agenda setting by others! (Jones N 1999).

Looked at in this way, Investigative journalism can be interpreted as simply a weapon in the battles between two competing powers, media and authority, to set the public agenda. However, to emphasise that alone would be to forget the perceived need for scrutiny. From the mid 19th century the responsibilities of public administration in the UK grew enormously as the newly industrialised society became more complex as the population and the infrastructure required for it grew. The ability of existing administrative organs to manage the public domain was limited, and new institutions were established, often in response to attacks in the press on corruption and exploitation; from a different angle the government began to appreciate that it needed effectively to audit its own activities. From the 1830s onwards, in attempts to keep track of public funds and their deployment, central boards of control were set up, as were auditors (Fennell 1983: 16) whose enquiries revealed the problems. The late nineteenth century witnessed many administrative reforms, in particular the introduction of a system of entry into public office through competitive entrance examination. This in turn helped to earn greater respect for the public service such that expectations of

honesty were raised. These were codified not only in the codes of conduct adopted by the various services but in laws¹⁰⁰. When English investigative journalists got to work they criticised public services in relation to these laws.

In the USA Investigative journalism developed in response to the rapid growth of American cities and the inability of the administrative system to control corruption. Watergate was neither the beginning of it, nor of a new relationship between journalism and politics. Investigative journalism already had a long history in the USA, and a long history of calling politicians to account. This has been well described in Mowry (1958) and Protes (1992) among others who claim that, as early as the 1900s, investigative journalism resulted in many legislative developments of the period, including the Sherman Anti-Trust Laws, the Pure Food and Drug Act, legislation on Child Labour and pensions for mothers. Another consequence was the awareness created of the social significance of journalism. No way is this better exemplified than by quoting from President Theodore Roosevelt's speech in 1906, when he criticised investigative journalists by likening them to the muckraker in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, who is so intent on his job he can see only muck and none of the good things. However he also admitted their importance to society by saying:

there are in the body politic, economic and social, many and grave evils, and there is urgent necessity for the sternest war upon them. There should be relentless exposure of and attack upon every evil man, whether politician or businessman, every evil in practice, whether in politics, in business or in social life. (Protes 1992: 6)

Although the great growth in publishing slackened such that there were less outlets for investigative journalism in the 1920s and 1930s, a tradition had been established, a tradition which was to be carried on in more recent times by such reporters as Ed Murrow, Jessica Mitford, I.F. Stone and Seymour Hersh.

In Britain in the 1960s and 1970s there was a spate of inquiries into maladministration and corruption that shocked Britons who had come to assume that corruption was something that happened only in foreign parts. It justified journalism by demonstrating that the public service could not be trusted to police itself. Since that time systems of

audit and inspection have become much more rigorous, but so has the extent of public administration (Dynes 1995: 335ff).

The sleaze stories of 1990s Britain brought home to many the extent of the problem and inspired some appreciation of the need for Investigative journalism. Public figures have not been enthusiastic to praise journalists in British public life, so it was a landmark when, just as Premier Li Peng was praising Focal Point in Peking, the Chairman of the Committee for Standards in Public Life wrote:

a free press using fair techniques of investigative journalism is an indispensable asset to our democracy....they have a duty to inquire - coupled with a duty to do so responsibly - and in that way contribute to the preservation of standards in public life (Nolan 1995)

By the 1990s there was therefore a widespread, though sometimes grudging, acceptance of the idea of the journalist as investigator as much as rapporteur and informant, analyst and commentator. Its most extreme manifestation has been realised in journalism which challenges both the exercise of authority and authority's attempts to define the issues, doing so in the name of the people and of the self evident need for scrutiny by the people of those individuals and institutions with power. At its most bold and most impertinent, this journalism is investigative because it applies forensic skills to what we have been told.

When the history of Anglophone investigative journalist is narrated in this way, the parallels with China of the last decade appear striking. China too may have suddenly woken up to the fact that a centralised and unrepresentative system of government works poorly in today's world; public services and private activities compete with each other and require regulation; new institutions are established daily and new rights and responsibilities are created; the opportunities for corruption are manifold and the competence of the regulators limited and uncertain. In such a situation the investigative journalist may be the only resort, the agent for the exposure of wrongdoing and of legislative reform. In response, Chinese current affairs have become, as we have discussed in relation to journalism generally, much more sensitive to audience interest and adept in using modern techniques which were pioneered

abroad.

The reporters interviewed in Hangzhou all eulogised investigative programmes when asked what journalism they most admired:

My favourite programme is Talking Point 今日话题 because it is so vivid and active (Ch'en Muli)

My favourite programme is News Probe 新闻调查 because it is a concise yet precise examination of controversial issues. More like this needed. And I like Southern Weekend 南方周末 [the newspaper with the best reputation for irreverence and investigative journalism]. (T'ang Musan)

Focal Point 焦点访谈 because it reflects what people really think and care about. (Liu Ch'ao)

I believe in social journalism 社会新闻. For example, reports that put things right [gives examples from local programmes]. (K'ang Wei)

The best journalism in China comes from Southern Weekend, Tell it like it is 实话实说 and Focal Point. Every journalist wants to work with them, every journalist wants to be like their journalists. (Hsia Yi)

News Probe because of its highly logical approach, the reliability of the information. It's the kind of programme that tells people what they don't know and provides a deeper understanding of what they do. (Ch'ien Lung)

The existence and success of critical investigative journalism in such national programmes as Oriental Horizon¹⁰¹ (of which the section Focal Point is the most admired as 'radical'), Talking Point, Tell it like it is, can be interpreted in various ways. For Gu (1999) the stories of Focal Point are indicative of the enlightenment of the leadership.

In informal conversation, Lee Ch'un dismissed the claims of various fellow journalists that they are investigative as 'rubbish'; the only courageous medium in the whole country was the Canton weekly, Weekend South, she said; she dismissed the claims of Focal Point as those of an operation which makes a big noise but is only swatting a fly 大炮大蚊子. She believes that a careful analysis of topics covered by the programme will bear her out. Talking of a matter which had been topical the previous year, the

exposure of the CCP chief in Ningpo for corruption (see China Daily w/b 19/9/99), she pointed out that the case was never investigated by the media despite the fact that local journalists certainly knew about it (transfers of media assets were involved) many months before the corruption came to light.

In another discussion the interesting point was made that the current affairs programmes publish collections of their transcripts in book form. It is easy to take this as a symptom of the Chinese respect for the printed word, but interviewees claimed that such publication signified much more. **'They consider themselves much more than just journalists; this is the record of their works'**. It was advised that **'If you analyse these publications over time you will find a pattern conforming to the government's interests of the moment'** (Hsieh Yichih) with the implication that journalists are functioning like state press officers.

Another journalist was contemptuous of my suggestion that Chinese journalists were rediscovering the professionalism of the 1930s and were motivated by idealism:

What you term idealism I call oppression. Some do regard themselves as resurrecting the suppressed professionalism of the 1930s, but they are quite wrong to do so, they do not deserve that 'mantle' as they are state servants. (Lee Ch'un)

Another pointed out the limits within which would-be investigators work:

There are many subjects you cannot touch no matter where you work. But every journalist is also restricted to his/her level. We have our levels [national, provincial, county etc] at which, and below which, we can investigate. (Fang Ch'ih)

Informal discussions suggest that journalists will risk offending authority where popular demand and cultural pride coincide, for example, over historic buildings preservation. Where powerful interests are at stake and there is no groundswell of public concern, they may not, even if the public interest is clearly involved. To illustrate this there is the case of the contaminated milk of some areas of Zhejiang, the true situation of which was well known to journalists, according to the informant, six months before it came out. For six months people were drinking contaminated milk,

there was widespread suspicion but journalists who knew the reality did nothing because they had not been given the 'all-clear' by the authorities.

In another case, from Shandong Province, a case of corrupt supply of less fertilisers than the quantity paid for and consequent serious effects on several rural areas of the Province, CCTV spiked the programme at the urgent request of the Provincial authorities; however, upon receiving representations from the journalists who had undertaken the investigation, the Head of the Station re-scheduled it, although only after fierce battles which went right up to the Central Committee. It was finally shown after the abuses had been dealt with and the culprits punished and reference was made to this fact at transmission.

Academic authorities are also sceptical. Zhao (2000), in reflections on watchdog journalism, argues in essence that it is not at all incompatible with the Party's ultimate control of the media.

To the extent that it exposes safe targets and investigates violations of existing laws and policies, it fulfils the media's role of being the mouthpiece of both the Party and the people. While individual officials and businesses have everything to lose, both the Party and the people have something to gain from this practice. (Zhao 2000: 31-33)

Hua (2000) is less sure. In an empirical study, Hua examines these examples of current affairs TV as discourse. He provides examples to support his claim that their products have 'taken on the characteristics of tabloid journalism' identified by Briller (1993). He concludes that the magazine programmes he analyses demonstrate 'the transition of Chinese television from a centralised official organ to a more pluralized ground of contested messages and cultural elements'.

Thus we see many magazine shows model themselves after the morality play, in which the characters, presented as embodiment of good or evil, serve as tools of moral lessons. In many of these programs, there is a corrupted official devouring public funds; a local cadre bullying villagers; a wicked merchant cheating customers; or a devoted daughter supporting sick parents; or an abused wife getting rescued.....it seem that television, as an embodiment of justice, has acquired the power of watching over the indecent and assuming a standard of right and wrong, thus to a certain extent manages to provide the masses with a means of accountability in an age of disillusion and ideological

crisis in China. (Hua 2000 : 19)

In considering the Anglophone tradition of investigative journalism it is arguable (deBurgh 2000) that the inspiring myth of the investigative journalist as intrepid seeker after truth obscures the fact that most investigative journalism is well within the cultural expectations of the society in which s/he operates. What the investigative journalist is doing is drawing our attention to infringements of the moral law that is generally accepted in the society. However, it can also attempt to extend the limits of the citizens' concern and to remind them of the extent of their moral framework.

Dickens did that. Charles Dickens' literary antecedents lie in the novels of social life that had grown up in England in the 18th century and in the novel that spoke of ordinary people rather than just the upper classes, more or less a creation of Walter Scott . What he added to the observation and social comprehensiveness of his predecessors was an awareness of the domestic and working conditions in which the poor lived. He shared this with his continental equivalents, Manzoni, Balzac and Zola among them. Emile Zola (1840-1902) was to go better, he fused Dickens' awareness and compassion with techniques of observation that are now associated with good journalists – or social scientists¹⁰². Like Dostoevsky in Russia he went into the slums and made careful observation of conditions which he then revealed in his writings. The movement born from this was Documentary Realism (Keating 1991). If method defines the Investigative Journalist then arguably the Documentary Realists were the first Investigative Journalists; they also shared an obsession with the condition of the poor,¹⁰³ an intense awareness of the miseries caused by the industrial revolution. Old communities had been uprooted, but, much more immediately evident, people had piled into cities in which there was neither the knowledge nor the skill to make their lives bearable by providing decent water, sanitation or food retailing, let alone education, a ready supply of work and protection from exploitation and criminality.

The Times' reporter Russell's activities in the Crimean War are iconic. His reports, independent minded and critical of the authorities, were significant for the development of journalism in that they showed that the profession was earning respect and that the occupation of reporter, as someone who goes out and finds out what is happening, was established (Knightley 1975; Snoddy 1992). The journalist who best exemplifies the

fusion of Russell's impartial reporting with Dickens' social conscience is WT Stead. The scoop for which he is most famed concerned underage prostitution, his revelations of which caused an outcry. His undercover, investigative style was premonitory. The treatment of the story increased the sensationalism. Investigative journalism had been invented¹⁰⁴.

Similarly in China today reporters see themselves as finding aspects of society that had remained hidden; exposing them to earn the surprise and sympathy of the audience; using their findings to extend the moral horizons of that audience. It could be guessed that many of the reporters are as much the heirs of novelists such as Lu Xun 鲁迅, Ba Jin 巴金 and Sheng Congwen 沈从文 as are John Pilger or Paul Foot of Dickens and Zola. Society at a certain stage in its development produces a need for new institutions, of which this kind of journalism is one.

The Chinese journalist's image of the journalist appears to be made up of a mixture of ideas and myths. There is the Anglophone discourse of the journalist as Tintin, intrepid investigator of rights and wrongs. Then there is the ideal of the good public servant who risks his all in his duty to the Chinese state and thereby joins the pantheon of the righteous, with Qu Yuan at the pinnacle. Many of the expressions used by interviewees no matter of what gender, age or seniority, reflect the power of this ideal. Between humdrum daily life and these archetypes are some human size models, journalists who clearly tried to be faithful in accordance with their ideals and suffered for them – Deng Tuo, Liu Binyan, Dai Qing. As in England, though, most journalists live in the world as it is constructed for them by their political masters, and probably jog along as best they can, accepting the perks of the job, fitting in with the spin doctors and propagandists, ducking the risky opportunities to anger the bosses but still imagining themselves to belong to the congregation of the faithful. This is the only interpretation that seems to fit for a group of people who clearly believe that they are doing what in only quite rare cases they are in fact doing. In their practices they may not differ from their English contemporaries, though in their beliefs they differ greatly.

CH 9 THE NEWS THEY MAKE: A CASE STUDY

On the one hand, we have a media environment that is freewheeling, highly commercial and always on the look out for anything that will make money out of information and entertainment; on the other we have a political hierarchy which is determined to maintain control over the media insofar as they are deemed to connect with political power, and to seek justifications for this either from the Maoist canon or from 'Confucian' tradition, as seems most expedient. What can a closer look at the news programmes made by our interviewees¹⁰⁵ tell us about this apparent contradiction, and how it is resolved in the day to day practices of reporters?

The objective of the case study is to find out what congruence there is between the declared beliefs of the reporters about their profession and its roles in society, and the reports they produce each day. Do the reports reflect their concerns? If not, why not? What do they reflect? What can the analysis of them tell us about television journalism in China today? What can it add to the messages being received from the interviews cited throughout this study? What follows is an examination of a month of regional television news, seen in the light of a pilot study of English regional television news.

Background literature

Rival to the economic determinist interpretation of the media is the assumption, commonplace in capitalist countries, that the media reflect 'reality' and that Anglophone journalists can be impartial, have some discretion and operate according to their profession's ethic (e.g. Randall 1996). This is held to be so because they operate in liberal democracies with competing parties and competing media. It is a view that has been questioned in the light of the realization that even in societies where neither state ownership nor a Propaganda Department dominate them, journalists are heavily circumscribed by a range of influences and practices.

In looking at news content, sociologists have established that news programmes are dependent upon established authority (Sigal 1973, Dickson 1992, Daley & O'Neill 1991), are ethnocentric (Gans 1979), create norms of deviance (Cohen 1990 Hertog and McLeod 1988), give undue prominence to violence and criminality (Roshier 1981) and stereotype people (GMG 1980, Tuchman 1978). Furthermore Phillips (1995), Bell (1998) and other working journalists have accused the media of sanitising content as has at least one academic study (Shepard 1993, cit. in Shoemaker P 1996).

The influences upon content that cause these slants may be identified as the producers' social and economic position; personal makeup including gender, cultural background, attitudes; the norms of the profession to which s/he belongs; corporate policies or proprietor influence; the current market situation and the regulatory environment; working practices. Working practices include the tendency to accept information from a limited range of official sources as 'reality' and to see certain limited types of people as experts or testimony. Journalists in their working practices also make assumptions about the audience and about news values and follow conventions of story construction. McQuail (1994) and Shoemaker (1996) are among the scholars who have analysed these aspects of the news production process.

The *culturalist* approach is an attempt to get further beyond these circumscriptions identified by sociologists and to understand the cultural framing within which they happen and from which news criteria emerge, an orientation which sees media as ritual rather than transmission (Carey 1975). Thus from this angle it is now argued¹⁰⁶ that journalists select events and reconstruct those they select as newsworthy into 'stories' and that neither the selection nor the reconstruction are value free. News is less a reflection of reality, thoughtfully and responsibly reported by a journalist, than of the assumptions, longings and prejudices of the society from which that journalist comes. If that is so, then by looking at the news we can learn something about the culture from which it springs - just as we can from its festivals, novels or bylaws.

As Stephens has shown in his *A History of News* (1997 chapters 2 and 8), news stories have enduring characteristics, regardless of the media within which they are formatted, from the times of orature to those of digital TV. Zelizer (1993) described news as stories 'told and retold' because they have cultural meaning that transcend the particular

events of which they are reports. In her formulation, the skill of the journalist lies in representing an old story with new dates. Rutherford Smith has gone further. Through literary criticism techniques, he 'identifies common themes, institutions and actors and creates a chart called a mythograph that highlights structural elements of the most common narratives he identified' (1979: 321).

Seeing news in this way also helps us to understand how stereotypes are so hard to eradicate. As Lule (1995) explains 'stereotyping is not necessarily a conscious act.....but the result of schema that journalists apply to categorize and store information, recall it, and then cast their news reports in an ideologically resonant form' (Berkowitz 1997 : 323)

Story classification

Tuchman (1973) found that journalists, in order to meet deadlines and to manage the vast quantity of input, categorise their raw materials - occurrences - and then apply formula work routines. She found the distinct categories of 'hard news', 'soft news', 'spot news' and 'what a story!'. The news journalist's skill lies in his/her ability to recreate the formula with new content, content that is accurate and appropriate to the target audience.

It was the increasing preponderance of soft stories (also called 'human interest') that drew more and more attention to the cultural conditions of journalism. Such stories had been *identified* by Mead in 1926, by Hughes in 1968 and by Barthes in 1977; Fiske and Hartley (1978) noted that they had increased as a proportion of stories, but they had tended to be marginalized by researchers. The main focus of research interest was still hard news although the idea that the 'other news' or 'tabloid television' was equally worthy of examination gained ground. Researchers studied both individual story classification and structuration, or else the relationships between form and content.

Brundson and Morley (1978) classified story types. They found four: the especially remarkable; victims; community at risk and ritual, tradition and the past (Brundson and Morley 1978 : 40).

According to Poecke (1988) journalists take an event, decontextualize it and recontextualize it. Sometimes they recontextualize using the interpretative structures of official sources (1988: 36) and sometimes they just fit events into pre-existing cultural categories, as in the Charles Stuart case, in which a murder was packaged by reporters neatly to fit conventional stereotypes (young black male, car thieving, white woman, traffic) bearing no relation to reality but every relation to expectation (Berkowitz 1997: 498). Bennett (1988) confirmed the use of the formulaic script which Tuchman had referred to in 1976; Zelizer (1993) saw journalists as interpretive communities, like Ivan Illich's doctors, doing their best to cut us off from any but their own reality. In line with Carey (1976), Zelizer saw news as the product of this community's conventions and rituals rather than bearing much relation to an objective reality.

Relationship of form with content

News is a genre of journalism; every genre has an identity recognised by producers and consumers both of whom require obedience to conventions of structure, grammar and vocabulary as well as adherence to the repertoire of themes deemed appropriate to the genre (McQuail 1994). According to Mazzolini (1987: 265) genre itself influences content, applying media logic, although there is as yet little understanding of how the components of genre, or even the applications of language specific to the genre, might themselves create meaning or influence content. In particular, although aspects of the audio-visual grammar have been identified (Arijon 1976) and are clear to practitioners (deBurgh 1986: 32ff), there appears to have been little study of their implications for content.

How is the design of the stories significant? Useful here are the comments of Bird (1988) on the shape of news stories. She is another scholar to question the dichotomy of 'hard' and 'soft' news, considering that it prevents us seeing the qualities shared by

'hard' and 'soft' stories. She argues that the false dichotomy makes us imagine that classification results from content, whereas classification is more usefully understood according to different kinds of narrative device. She also notes that the traditional news story is made to take the form of an inverted pyramid; the human interest story has applied to it, in order to work, fiction's techniques of plot, dialogue, point of view and personalisation (or personification).

Bell (1995) is concerned about the specificity of the news story genre and how that specificity affects our conceptions of reality. He argues that modern news discourse has developed a particular time structure because of its values of recency and novelty [in practice: deadline, scoop]. One result is that news neglects the why and how because of its urge to when. Moreover the 'corkscrew time structure' makes for narratives that overturn chronology and make comprehension difficult, indeed militate against it. In other words journalists take events and fit them into patterns created by commercial demand for predictability, competition and prefabrication.

In 1998 Langer published an Australian study in which he had applied the classifications nominated by Brundson and Morley and decided that they were equally appropriate to his own experience, with one addition, a classification called 'foolish victims'. Langer looks at the construction of the stories and finds that, in addition to the application of basic formulae, particular techniques are used according to the requirements of each category. These techniques may include the report's framing or cueing, its positioning, the use of hackneyed representational images, visual techniques from cinematography (framing, composition, lighting, focus, angle, proximity), verbal techniques from acting and so forth. Thus Langer brings together the foci on classification and structuration, or, as he puts it 'narrative construction can bind together certain patterned thematic preoccupation which occur in specific story types (Langer 1998 : 40).

His objective is to account for the 'patterns and recurrent themes' and to connect them to 'ideological domains' (Langer 1998 : 36) and in this he is less successful. He identifies common themes and finds that these have been identified as themes in traditional myth, namely, fate, deference, success (making something of yourself) and aversion to risk taking ('there but for the Grace of God'). He sees these themes as being

closely related to popular wisdom or what Gramsci called 'spontaneous philosophy'. Ettema and Glasser (1988) in a series of stimulating reflections upon journalism in the USA, have argued that Investigative Journalists in particular are telling stories to fit moral types. They write

The task is accomplished by cueing the audience's response to these characters through the emplotting of events as recognizably moralistic stories and, more specifically, through the skilful use of such story elements as point of view, ironic detail and ritual denial. (Ettema and Glasser 1988).

Ettema and Glasser, like Langer, teeter on the edge of describing television news stories as myth, a question also raised in a very interesting article by Elizabeth Bird. Bird (1988) takes the classification of stories further and argues that, in news, that which informs is the 'symbolic system' it reflects. She continues:

One of the most productive ways to see news is to consider it as myth, a standpoint that dissolves the distinction between entertainment and information. By this we do not mean to say that individual news stories are like myth and folklore. ...Bascom (1954) in a classic statement on the functions of folklore, writes that it serves as education, as a validation of culture, as wish fulfillment, and as a force for conformity, while Malinowski (1974) considered myth to be a 'charter' for human culture. Through myth and folklore, members of a culture learn values, definitions of right and wrong, and sometimes can experience vicarious thrills - not all through individual tales, but through a body of lore. (Bird 1988)

Silverstone (1987) asked the key question: 'What was the relationship, if any, between television's stories and the stories told in the myths and folklore of other cultures? And what would the consequences be for an understanding of contemporary culture if any such relationship could be established?' (1987: 22) Drawing upon Levi-Strauss he describes myths as 'the product of society as ruminator, masticating the essential categories and contradictions in its way of life through a system of stories that preserve and legitimate its identity' (ibid p29) and suggests, along with Ang (1985) that

Television is the contemporary expression of myth. Its forms - news, documentary, serial drama - each and together are daily at work on politics, science, the private, the strange, the challenging, offering accounts with one aim in view: to give pleasure, to provide reassurance.

Later he goes further and, drawing upon Cassirer, identifies myth with the transitional object of developmental psychology, providing the interface between man and reality and calling upon us to consider the 'psychodynamics of the medium as a primary cultural force that puts us, the viewers, literally in touch with the basic concerns of life in basically simple and effective ways' (ibid: 43) The scope of this study does not include following down these interesting tracks. More narrowly, it is to understand how television news reporters classify stories and to identify what kinds of general social myths these classifications might represent.

Method

Unit of study

What distinguishes news from other media production has been studied by, in particular, Lippman (1922), Park (1940), Breed (1956), Galtung & Ruge (1965) and Hall (1973). McQuail (1994: 269) provides an abstracted list of qualities that a text will have if it is to comprise 'news': timeliness and recency, unexpectedness, predictability of type, factualness. It is also likely to be fragmentary, perishable and 'shaped by values'. Any one news programme contains a selection of stories which in their whole, and sometimes as individual units, will have these aspects. The news programme may be defined as including all information, verbal or visual, contained within a segment given that title and this will usually encompass the structuring (ordering, time distribution), packaging (idents, stings, studio design, presenters), individual stories (form, length, angles) and commercial breaks, if any.

The present study has concentrated exclusively on those components of the news programme which journalists refer to as packages, though on camera they are called reports. This is an almost universal subgenre which in the UK takes the form of a personally authored report of between one and six minutes long, most usually one minute thirty. As a way of examining television journalists and their work, alighting upon the package as a discrete unit of study is suitable because the text is individually

authored (the reporter's name is announced in the England, as in China); it forms a very important element of the whole news programme; it is a recognised construction, success at which is a touchstone of a reporters' ability; it is of manageable size and has its own identifiable grammar.

Approach

In identifying the topics it might be appropriate to attempt a structural analysis along the lines first conceived by Vladimir Propp (1968). However, as Dundes writes,

Clearly structural analysis is not an end in itself! Rather it is a beginning, not an end. It is a powerful technique of descriptive ethnography inasmuch as it lays bare the essential form of the folkloristic text. But the form must ultimately be related to the culture or cultures in which it is found.

(Alan Dundes, Introduction to the Second Edition, xiii of Propp, V (1968))

In Barthes famous, now classic, examinations of (1) a bunch of Roses and (2) the black soldier on the front of Paris Match, he finds various orders of signification (Barthes 1983). In our present study, a Birmingham package on a local motorway accident can be interpreted, following his lead, thus:

Signifier: the accident report

Signified: the efficiency of the emergency services

Signification: the myth of public spirit

A Hangzhou news report about a provincial party leader visiting a farm can be interpreted thus:

Signifier: the report

Signified: the power of the leader

Signification: the myth of hierarchy and leadership.

How are we justified in referring to 'myths'? Myths are texts (stories, images, icons) which symbolise, wrap in digestible form, ideas about human life of widespread applicability, which can be of a number of different orders of significance. For example, myths of initiation may deal with the transition of the child to adulthood and thus have a general applicability whereas myths of authority may be relevant to particular societies and times. Myths are represented by a diversity of forms, eg that of arrogance might be represented by the 'unsinkable titanic' or 'Icarus' (Henderson 1964: 142).

According to Barthes, myths are like ideographs,

Myth is a pure ideographic system, where the forms are still motivated by the concept which they represent while not yet, by a long way, covering the sum of its possibilities for representation. And just as, historically, ideographs have gradually left the concept and have become associated with the sound, thus growing less and less motivated, the worn out state of a myth can be recognised by the arbitrariness of its signification (Barthes 1983: 127)

Lévi-Strauss does not see myth as an epiphenomenon of material reality but as a precondition of that reality. It is the technique by which we classify events and attribute meaning to them. These things must be here before anything else, 'myth is the foundation of culture'.

Time and place

Central Broadcasting's franchise covers a quarter of England with a population of nearly 9 million¹⁰⁷. The conditions of the franchise require that Central supply certain types of programmes, in particular regional programmes and news, although the core schedule, as with other ITV regions, is provided by the Network Centre to which Central is a substantial contributor of programmes. Central competes locally with the West Midlands BBC, limited cable penetration and those satellite subscription channels which can be received locally.

In China Hangzhou¹⁰⁸ was selected. With a population of 1.72m, Hangzhou is capital to a province of over 44 million¹⁰⁹. It is one of China's richest agricultural provinces and

the media of Hangzhou are wealthy and various. At least forty television channels can be received and there are ten transmitting stations in the City, many of which are received throughout the province. The two principal television stations are Zhejiang TV 浙江电视台 and Qianjiang TV 钱江电视台, housed in a large complex in the centre of the city. They are both funded by commercial advertisements and sponsorship. They are extremely well equipped with the latest digital technology and are transferring within the next six months to a modern, purpose-built palace, not far off.

Birmingham[†]

Interviews

Among the questions asked of journalists in Birmingham study was ‘what makes a good story?’ and ‘for what kind of story are you looking?’ It was soon clear that it was not the subject for which they were looking – politics, economics, sport, local affairs, consumer – as much as the type of story. They were then asked to recall the best stories.

The best stories

When asked, journalists remembered very few triumphs and almost no failures. Its as if they lived only for the day - a parody of the news journalist which is almost too much of a stereotype! Those stories they remember as good have certain characteristics (apart from memorability), which are

- visually exciting
- unusual
- ‘makes em sit up’
- plenty of action.

[†] This is an abbreviated version of the full pilot report, included in the appendices to this study.

Examples

When asked for examples of 'really good' stories only one interviewee - the Controller - answered instantly. Except the Features Editor, who suggested some of his own recent ones, the others had to think quite hard; most found it difficult to remember any before the current week (indeed three of the nine stories cited - out of all the thousand odd stories a year - were from that week); three offered none after much humming and hawing. Nobody suggested that any distinction need be made between hard and soft in assessing a story's 'goodness'. Those that were mentioned were:

1. Rebuilding a family after tragedy

'A couple which lost all 4 children in house fire.....3/4 years later it emerged *via* (reporter) Sandy Barton who gained mum's trust having got to know them well that mum now couldn't have children.....she adopted a baby.....we told the story and then viewers sent in money for ivf treatment.....we broke the story today that they'd had twins. The story had everything: hard news; overcoming tragedy; warmhearted viewers; struggle against all odds.'

2. Second Handsworth riots - it was very exciting

3. The Rackhams slasher attack

'It was terrific - why is it a good story? It was just before xmas; random attack; amok with knife; attacking blonde women; good eyewitnesses; pix of arrest; human drama and we've captured it!'

4. M40 children minibus accident

'Whole programme devoted to it, we handled it really well - school praised us for not intruding'.

5. 'A story about a shark being moved - the pictures were very good'.

6. 'The cat on crutches - a wonderful story'.

7. 'When the police started using Rotweilers.....we got a sweet blonde girl to come in and stroke the police Rotweiler' (this was one of this week's stories)

8. 'What's an example of a good story? Now take the [girl accused of murdering her boyfriend, now on trial] story, that's good because she's such a fucking slapper.....she looks the part so everybody makes prejudicial assumptions about herthey'll say its obvious she's guiltyshe's the one in the corner of the pub having a fag and a gin at 11.30 in the morning, she just looks the part, guilty as

fuck.....so its obviously a picture storygood fun, strip off the voice and you just know what's going on died blonde hair, dazed by drugs.....she's in real trouble whether she's found guilty or innocent she's going to sell her story.....its got crime dokko-drama written all over it.....'

9. The Controller of News was the only interviewee who instantly supplied an example - the Bullimore story of the rescue of a lost yachtsman. He said 'it had everything: man alone; search; fading hopes; joyous resolution'.

Story classifications emerging from the interviews

On the whole the journalists interviewed found it difficult to classify stories, or to accept the probe that they might subconsciously look for certain elements in an event that might lend themselves to a particular kind of story. However, after initial resistance they did, almost all, propose a number of story types. Here they are in crude form:

- aah! factor stories
- fun
- wow!
- little man battling v odds
- tug at heart
- heartstrings
- human sympathy story
- the people vs the big boys
- all is well
- health 'everyone thinks they might get ill'
- disaster - authorities tackling
- progress/new inventions/developments
- aren't those foreigners quaint
- enterprising unfortunates
- revisiting scene of tragedy
- wickedness come to judgment
- quirky
- untoward event

These categories fit reasonably well with those identified by other researchers. I have refined them down into a smaller number of types as it seemed there is overlap, and here they are, along with a rough explanation drawn from all the conversations:

'Wow! stories' (aka 'Aha! Stories' or 'skateboarding ducks')

This deals with something you couldn't dream up if you tried, it's so weird. It is definitely a 'down at the pub' story .

'heartstrings'

This makes you feel empathy - sometimes with animals as well as people.

'what fun people we are'

Reminds us that we are good at enjoying life, that life is full of jolly characters Despite all the heartache.

'Our kind of folk'

Reminds us of our own identity, characteristics. May also include 'heritage' stories for even if the galleries and the National Trust palaces are only distantly relevant to the audience they are nevertheless among those things which define us as English or Midlanders or Brummies.

'adversity overcome'

An escape from danger: the boy wrongly imprisoned; the woman who fought to have a child.....finally they have made it. Shows how pluck, determination and love win through in the end.

'fight for rights'

The big people are always trying to put us down - but we get off our butts and fight back, don't we? Community action fits here.

'all is well; mankind advances'

Terrible things happen, but thanks to the public spirit of those in authority, the ingenuity of our technical people and boffins and the heroism of our (young) guardians, we need not fear. Our belief in progress is reaffirmed.

'wrongdoers cannot escape; the law is our trusty shield'

Court stories are there to reassure us that good, the community, will triumph and that (despite the Birmingham 6 or the Bridgwater 3) there is justice. Bent coppers will always be found out in the end. Crime stories, where the crimes are not solved, are used in the same way because authority is invariably seen handling the matter methodically and reassuringly.

Many, perhaps most, stories fall into more than one category. Moreover, while the initial event, the raw material, is seen to promise desired elements (eg ‘heartstrings’) the treatment of the story will influence exactly which elements are to be most emphasised. Thus a story about a roughed-up dog could have been angled on catching the culprits who abused pets and would have therefore been predominantly a ‘Wrongdoers cannot escape’ kind of story; in the event it was a ‘heartstrings’ because it was useful as such.

In sum, the stories can be classified and the classifications derived from the journalists themselves. The impetus at Central is to put human interest stories first because they are ‘what people want’ and ‘more memorable’. The journalists believe that this is their function and that the criteria by which they must be judged are simply those of ‘good practice’ and ‘bad practice’ in carrying out these professional tasks.

The journalists having themselves classified the types of story for which they were looking, with the help of the interviewer, the next task was to look at the news they produced to see whether the classifications could be applied, without undue distortion. They could. Of a week’s product, a total of 45 packages, the biggest single category was ‘All is well’ with 11 incidences. Thereafter:

Categorising the classifications by type (the signified)

<i>Type [signified]</i>	<i>Number of incidences</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
All is well	11	1
Our kind of folk	7	2
Wow!	6	3=
Fight for Rights	6	3=
Heartstrings	5	4
Adversity Overcome	4	5=
What fun	4	5=
Wrongdoers/Law	3	6

(nb some stories fit into more than one category; some fit into none)

Governing themes or myths [‘signification’]

- myth of progress

The most prominent myth, despite the fact that the English are often thought of as harking backwards to past glories, is the myth of progress. It can be explained in this way: Although there are accidents and although there is dark in society, thanks to the public spiritedness of those in authority we need not fear. Moreover the scientific and technical people are solving everything and making everything better.

- myth of distinction

The second myth might be called the myth of distinction. Every society defines itself by certain, doubtless changeable, characteristics, and has a myth about being distinct from other societies. There is a kind of television story, just as there are kinds of behaviour and conversation, which mark out that identity, reminds us who 'our kind of folk' are. Thus a story about a great Chinese artist reminds Chinese viewers of their identity and one about the Birmingham art gallery does the same for English people (from Birmingham). This role is even more clear in Chinese thanks to the use of expressions such as 'our country', 'we Chinese' and 'foreigners' repeatedly through such reports. However, although the English do not use such expressions very often, there appear to be more of these kinds of packages in the English sample.

- myth of individualism

The myth of individualism seems to pervade the stories which have been classified as Fight for Rights and Adversity Overcome. This myth tells us that we live in a society where we can achieve a lot if we struggle. Entrepreneurs are not much in evidence, but individuals who have struggled against all odds to have their plight recognised or to overcome a disadvantage are.

- myth of common humanity

'Heartstrings' and 'what fun' are categories which serve to remind us of our common humanity - which reflect a myth that what we share is more than what divides us. We are all alike really, rubbing along despite life's difficulties, and we can take pleasure in bits of fun to bring us together.

- myth of benign authority

Finally we have the myth of benign authority or public spirit. Crimes happen, even crimes by people in authority. But in the end we can take comfort from the fact that the system works. Authorities handle these matters reassuringly. The implication seems to be: aren't we lucky we are not like foreigners?

Hangzhou

Interviews

In China examination of news reports was also preceded by interviews which, among other things, attempted to establish what journalists were looking for in a story. However, the Chinese TV reporters interviewed consider that they have very little discretion in the selection of stories. They all veered away from discussing the news almost immediately and talked about the kind of stories which (it became clear) were only rarely included in the news, although they might well be included in current affairs. Had the researcher simply reported what the journalists told him they looked for and produced, without actually viewing their product, he would have had a completely wrong understanding of the daily work of television news reporters.

At this point it is necessary to note that the Chinese word 'xinwen' 新闻 has a broader sense than the English word 'news', although it encompasses it. It is better translated as 'journalism'. There are two main types of work undertaken by TV journalists in China today, the news programmes and 'shendu baodao' 深度报道 which can be translated as 'current affairs' in the English sense or 'indepth reports' more literally. Journalists, it appeared, veered away from acknowledging their input into straight news because they felt that the work with which they wished to be associated was better represented by current affairs. As we have noted in Chapter 8, many stations now have current affairs programmes which offer documentary features and investigative stories.

The best stories

When pinned down to discussing the content of straight news, the journalist talked of the following story types

- Revealing difficulties such as corruption, unhealthy social phenomena, disasters, catastrophes. They like to see corruption dealt with, very much.
- How problems are solved
- Information of immediate use (eg - road construction in a vicinity and when it will start and finish)

- Attractive pictures, audience interest
- Informative, thought provoking and explanatory of the essence and the processes of society
- Showing how economic development is working
- Help from one community to another

These categories are expressed differently from the English journalists, who appear to be seeking more explicitly for a certain impact rather than for coverage of particular topics. No English journalist said, for example, that he was looking to cover economic development. This might have been the case 20 years ago, though that is another question.

Examples

[Paraphrases from the interviews; some have been cited elsewhere]

1. Residents in an area cannot get their gas supplies properly attended to, so they come to us, we make a report and the problem is solved.
2. Things that people care about.....like interest rates and whether they are going up or down.
3. The story inside the news. For example, the Qianzheng Bridge was badly constructed. I reported on this and found that people wanted to know the whole saga of the investigation and court proceedings and the sequel, what punishment was meted out.
4. The story of illegally prepared pork. People not only wanted to know of the event itself, but what the government was going to do about it.
5. Issue of new banknotes; opening of a new park - these kind of items tend to come from the organisations responsible for them, they get sent in. But more and more most of our news probably derives from punters calling in.
6. My best ever story I did last year. From one of the letters that came into the newsroom I heard that a woman, incorrectly diagnosed by a fraudulent doctor as having a sexual disease, committed suicide. This brought out into the open that there were many unlicensed doctors being prosecuted in various parts of the province and this became an important running story. I was able to spin this out for ten more days and to be given nearly 15 minutes each day as the top running story. For example - first day introduction, 2nd day I went to the hospital to interview patients, 3rd day to the prosecution office, 4th day to the accused to get them to tell me about their organisation etc.
7. Elephants in Yunnan were killed by peasants because they had invaded their crops.....I investigated and found that the peasants were desperately poor and

therefore one could feel sympathy for them, even if they had killed an endangered species; the programme went further though and found that the original feeding grounds of the elephants had been polluted. The programme examined the situation carefully, showing how difficult it was to fix responsibility and to settle the problem.

8. The Provincial Governor goes to visit big new company making an investment in our province. When we film this we show that the Governor is supporting this business and that he is working hard.
9. It is necessary to show that we are progressing in economic development because otherwise people will lose heart. When new figures are available to show that our cotton goods production is higher than a certain advanced country, then we tell the people.
10. Recently there were terrible floods in Wenzhou so many students from Hangzhou went to help.
11. You have seen that there are many announcements about the Falungong on our news programme. Well this is an example of a government announcement.
12. I like doing documentaries. I presented every one of a 160-part series on the History of Zhejiang.
13. The Henan bribery case. Although the programme was made after the police arrests it minutely researched the social factors surrounding it and the mistakes of the government and social institutions. It interviewed the accused after sentence. It analysed and discussed the systemic problems that had given rise to the criminality.

Story Classifications emerging from the programmes

The journalists having themselves classified the types of story which they tended to cover, the next task was to look at the news they produced to see whether the classifications could be applied, without undue distortion. In this case a much longer period of time was covered, 25 days in 1999¹¹⁰.

The difficulty here was that, by contrast with Birmingham, it was very much less simple to apply the classifications made by the journalists to their product. It was necessary to create new classifications to cover the variety. For example, reports of economic advances took up the most time on Chinese TV yet this was the last of the topics mentioned by the reporters; other major classifications are 'what senior leaders do' and

'meetings' yet reporters did not mention them (except in one case, and disparagingly). Thus the classification drawn from the reporters' own declarations would have been along these lines:

1. Revealing difficulties such as corruption
2. How problems are solved
3. Information of immediate use
4. Inside stories of problems : that's what really happened!
5. Revelation of malfeasance : got the rotters!
6. Disasters : life's a tragedy but we'll sort it
7. Help from one community to another
8. Economic development : ever upwards for the Chinese!

There are distortions of the period to be taken into account, distortions which qualify any comments which may be made: There was heavy reporting of the Wenzhou floods, accounting for over one third of the items in the category 'problem solving'; although the CCP and its history was reported on only 11 times, these totalled 54 minutes, or about 15 minutes per week, comprising features on the CCP's achievement in occupying Zhejiang in 1949, presented as a prelude to the October 1st national day celebrations; English packages vary much less in length than Chinese; there were 36 packages making government announcements, but over 75% of these dealt with one topic, the Falungong.

Now the actual news programmes are examined in order to see the incidence, and value put upon, the packages which can be classified according to the reporters' statements.

Table A: Did the programmes reflect reporters' values?

<i>Reporter Value</i>	<i>Topic (the shaded topics did not register in the reporter interviews)</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Editorial Value</i>
1.	Revealing difficulties such as corruption	1 ^{III}	14
2.	How problems are solved	29	3
3.	Information of immediate use		0
4.	Inside stories of problems : that's what really happened!		0
5.	Revelation of malfeasance : got the rotters		?
6.	Disasters : life's a tragedy but we'll sort it		?
7.	Help from one community to another	5	13=
8.	Economic development: ever upward for the Chinese!	66	1
0.	Government announcements	36	2
0.	Meetings showing policy being agreed	27	4
0.	What the senior leaders do	22	5
0.	Arts, Culture	17	6
0.	Conservation/Environment	15	7
0.	Education	14	8
0.	Others	14	9
0.	The CCP and its history	11	10
0.	Sports	10	11
0.	Military	7	12
0.	Good officials	5	13=

Table B: The actual value given to topics by the programmes in terms of incidence (number of packages) of type (the signified)

<i>Editorial Value</i>	<i>Topic (the shaded topics did not register in the reporter interviews)</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Reporter Value</i>
1.	Economic development: ever upward for the Chinese!	66	8.
2.	Government announcements	36	0.
3.	How problems are solved	29	2.
4.	Meetings showing policy being agreed	27	0.
5.	What the senior leaders do	22	0
6.	Arts, Culture	17	0
7.	Conservation/Environment	15	0
8.	Education	14	0
9.	Others	14	0
10.	The CCP and it history	11	0
11.	Sports	10	0
12.	Military	7	0
13.	Good officials	5	0
14.	Revealing difficulties such as corruption	1 ¹¹²	1.
0.	Information of immediate use	?	3.
0.	Inside stories of problems : that's what really happened!		4.
0.	Revelation of malfeasance : got the rotters	?	5.
0.	Disasters : life's a tragedy but we'll sort it	?	6.
0.	Help from one community to another	5	7.

Governing themes or myths [signification]

Bearing this in mind, it is not unfair to make the following comment.

On the face of it the news programme is primarily a communication about economic development since the greatest incidence of packages deal with that topic. For 66 packages the viewers are informed of successful economic advances. Occasionally entrepreneurs are themselves featured, but this is rare, and fleeting. It is as if everything happened simply according to a plan.

27 of the packages in which leaders appear are also records of meetings. They show unity and co-operation, or at least the face of unanimity. 22 show what senior leaders do. Thus 49 packages show decision-makers in action. However, if you consider that categories 2, 4 and 5 all consist of instructions from, or doings of, high leaders, screened for 85 out of the 278 packages in the news, and that each news programme can contain more than 3 packages in these categories, then the communication appears to be at least as equally about leadership as about economic development.

Official after official is shown in 'important' activities, usually meetings; high leaders inspect developments and greet foreigners who bring trade and investment. They congratulate low level leaders from time to time. In general there is a narrative in which authority figures are unremitting slaves to public duty. When they are not seen in action, their instructions are received through presenters or captions, instructions which are introduced as the decisions of this or that high leaders' council.

Problem solving is shown in 29 packages, although this may be distorted by the period in question (see above).

The CCP is presented as saviour of the nation in 11 major features, over 3 in each week.

Conservation and the environment, now a matter of deep concern in China, is covered in 15 packages. The treatment generally emphasises respect for the heritage and need to protect it, as do those 17 packages dealing with culture and the arts.

Of the remaining stories, those on education either focus on thorny questions of examinations or are special features in preparation for Teachers' Day; 5 good officials are praised and 1 naughty one exposed; there are 7 packages on the military in preparation for Army Day.

It might well be argued that the news is simply a function of a political system and the way the Propaganda Department operates, considering news simply as the provision of information appropriate to the audience. This could account for the relatively small amount of negative news, its uncompromising seriousness and the emphasis upon the benign activities of the leadership and the successes in economic development. Some observers consider (eg Friedman 1995) that Chinese viewers are completely cynical about this news, proving that it has no cultural resonance whatsoever.

However, there does emerge a limited number of themes which resonate with cultural myths identified by other scholars in other areas.

- the myth of hierarchy and leadership

Scholars of Chinese social psychology (Bond 1999), of management (Redding 1990), of bureaucracy (Weber) and of family life (Ho 1989) have all noted that Chinese are more inclined than Anglophones to accept hierarchy as natural, to expect paternalism and to attribute competence to leaders. It should therefore not be surprising that journalism devotes a very large amount of its time to the doings and pronouncements of these leaders.

- the myth of the CCP as saviour

Friedman and other scholars have defined the story of how the CCP saved China from both foreign imperialism and internal traitors, and how it remains the only possible salvation for all Chinese people everywhere as the 'northern narrative' suggesting that it is only one of the possible ways of interpreting modern Chinese history and predicting the Chinese future. It is not surprising that this particular myth is prominent.

- the myths of cooperation, unanimity and absence of conflict

The same scholars who have described the propensity to hierarchy in Chinese Society have also pointed to the belief that unanimity is possible, desirable and to be presented as if true in a society which values inter-personal and inter-unit harmony and does not value open confrontation.

Thus we can say that the importance given to the coverage of meetings - which are 'not televisual',¹¹³ and regarded by Anglophone reporters as to be avoided at all costs (actually Chinese reporters say they don't like covering them either) - chimes with the myth of unity. For at these meetings, unanimity is invariably one of the main messages, presumably along with the presentation of the topic itself and of the leaders in place. The viewer is never told of any differences of opinion.

Moreover the solution of problems comes into the same category. Hardly an accident or problem is seen without its solution; this is not completely unlike England, except that the emphasis seems slightly different. We do not see the solution in England, but we are usually promised them, so that we can relax. While this is also the case in Chinese stories, their appears to be a greater propensity to transmit stories only once the solutions have been worked out and are in operation.

- the myth of salvation through wealth

It appears to be an unspoken belief underpinning the vast amount of programming covering different aspects of economic development - and on the whole in a dull way, supplying statistics over mediocre footage, without any attempt at human interest - that economic development is the most important thing in the world. Since the content of many of the other stories, of meetings and high leader activity for example, is also connected to economic development, we can see that this myth suffuses most of the news. That it is an important myth in today's China will not be a surprise.

This is also an important myth in England, but English news is not pervaded by it. One possible reason for this, is that it is eclipsed by the stronger myth, that of the individual, which has every issue and every event presented in human interest terms, diluting other messages.

Discussion

News reports were selected as proxies for professional practices because of the significance they have for journalists as proof of their competence within the profession and as the evidence of their skill to the audience. The Hangzhou news reports examined are not as varied or as complex structurally as many of the Birmingham ones. The Birmingham reporters are straining to create the kind of news story of which NBC boss Frank Reuven would approve:

Every news story should, without sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and dénouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama, they are the essentials of narrative.

Frank, Reuven, President of NBC News Division, in Stam 1983 : 31

whereas many of the Chinese reports are still one dimensional , 'flat' description over 'moving wallpaper'. Nevertheless, these topics have been chosen, consciously or unreflectingly, in preference to others and have been retold in a particular manner which has resonance for those conceived as the audience. Silverstone writes:

When we watch television we are watching a series of messages that both order our experience and define its categories, but which do so in ways that transcend the historical conditions of that experience.

(Silverstone 1981: 17)

which is a way of saying that there is more to a news report than the report.

To return to our comparison of TV news stories and any relationship they may have to cultural myths: Of 500 minutes of Chinese packages, 108 minutes told us that economic development mattered most in the world; 90 minutes instructed us on obedience to the government; 76 minutes showed our leaders in unanimous worthy activity; 54 minutes showed how history justified the present government and that there was no possible alternative; 32 minutes showed problems being solved by authority. The remaining 140 minutes dealt with a range of topics, rarely covering a topic for more than one minute.

Another distinctive feature of the Hangzhou news is that those who spoke were almost exclusively males over 40. Interviews of people without official position were few and there were hardly any women asked to comment, although many of the reporters are themselves young women.

Overall therefore, the narrative is one in which older males manage the world authoritatively, ensuring ever-improving economic development in a world where every problem is already being solved by the leadership.

The English are also progressing, but, if the programmes are a guide, they do not think very much about the economy. England has some bright technical people who are making sure that she is staying in the forefront of technology. From the programmes we get the impression that that's one of the things which makes England distinct, another is the warm good nature of so many of them.

Unlike the Chinese, the Birmingham journalists certainly don't bother to put on screen many pictures of their city or regional politicians greeting visitors. But they see a lot of people - ordinary 'people like us' - being asked their opinion about this or that. It is as if the reporters were assuring us that 'it's people who rule, after all, with a little help from those bright scientists and the police and fire services'!

Above all the Birmingham journalists consider that what their viewers like news to tell them is what successful individualists 'we' are. 'If there is a problem, then an Englishman or woman can solve it, especially if it's to do with a disabled child or a lost cat. Honesty and hard work will get one there in the end!'; these are the predominant sentiments.

As to the extraordinary dissonance between what the Chinese reporters say and what they do, the Chinese reporters are so proud of their social role as investigators of social problems and supervisors of authority that they forget that in their everyday work they reflect that which authority wants them to reflect, whether out of confusion or conformity. Chinese regional television news rarely challenges or investigates, but, in the interviews, the reporters appear to believe that they are doing just that whereas instead they beat the drum for economic progress, passing on the statistics provided by government departments and large companies, promote the image of the leadership and the myth of the Party as the essential dynamo of China. Indeed the range of news content is not substantially different from that identified by other researchers 20 years previously, notably by Porter in his report of NCNA news selection and operation (1992 Appendices A & B). One of the most distinct features is the absence of strategic rituals of detachment and evidence.

In both Hangzhou and Birmingham, it could be argued that the news is not just about news. It's about dressing up new events so that they fit old beliefs. It's about reminding us who we are and what we believe in. The parliamentary system and the Party monopoly do influence the news, but they are only part of the story themselves, part of the cultural construction in which we live.

The Chinese journalists are ambivalent. On the one hand, they see themselves as scrutinising government, representing the people to the government and vice-versa. On the other hand they are mere transmitters of the political line of the government and the cultural prejudices of their masters. In being so ambivalent they appear to reflect the deep contradictions in Chinese society as a whole, where market individualism appears to conflict with political authoritarianism. Here journalists believe they have social responsibilities but, to an outside observer, rarely fulfil them; they uphold moral standards with their words but accept red envelopes with their hands; declare themselves for the people one minute and unreflectingly promote authority the next.

The examination of product points up the great gulf which separates their aspirations from their practices.

10. CONCLUSION. BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, MYTHS AND REALITIES

One of the most startling sights to greet any Anglophone visitor to China must surely be the Petition. You are about to enter the high, guarded, portals of the provincial television station. Either on the opposite side of the street, or cluttered around the gate columns or both, you see dark skinned creatures, old and young, sometimes with families, women suckling babies or crippled grandmothers beside scared urchins and defeated-looking and hungry men with sores; they are kneeling on the pavement and kowtowing, abasing themselves in the manner which so revolted 18th century English emissaries to the Manchu court. The petitioners bow often, holding out clasped hands sometimes or spreading their arms. Their eyes gaze up at the great marble fronted palace before them, ignoring the armed police and the TV announcers in tight skirts and Gucci handbags who trip in and out. If they see a big limousine they rise, like a gaggle of disturbed geese, and rush towards it arms outstretched and crying out in Chinese, in Tibetan, in Lolo.....the limousine sweeps past.

The image of the petition is one which we must hold in our minds as we attempt to understand the Chinese journalist. In the course of this study a number of ideas have featured. One is the idea that journalists have social roles which correspond to the requirements of the societies in which they live, in that although there may be comparable aspects of being a journalist - just as there are comparable aspects of being a bureaucrat, an army officer or a fire-fighter - it is more illuminating to examine the differences in cultural context than it is to celebrate the universals. Thus the image of the petition is so startlingly at variance with anything which might be seen in an Anglophone country that it may serve as symbolic of the gulf which separates the two journalisms, notwithstanding all claims by Chinese liberalisers or Anglophone exponents of globalisation.

The historical antecedents of the petition have been sketched in chapter 8. Today it reminds us that journalists are seen as being people of power, in the state if not of it, notwithstanding the commercialisation of the media and all the other developments which have been described in the preceding chapters. It brings to mind some words of Stuart Hall's, who wrote that there is:

a fundamental a-symmetry...between those who shape events, participate actively in them, those who have skilled and expert knowledge about events, and those who have 'privileged access' to events and participants in order to report on and communicate about them: and, on the other hand, the great majorities and minorities of the 'mass audience', who do not directly participate in events (even when they are directly affected by them), who have no expert knowledge about them, and who have no privileged right of access to information and personnel. (Hall 1973: 11)

He was writing about England. For Chinese journalists the key relationship, that with the state, manifests itself as a sharing of identity rather than mere interdependence. And it is of a different order to the relationship with 'the people', no matter how often they are nominated. If it is agreed that the idolising of 'the people' under Maoism was merely the cover for the powerful to do what they liked with the country and all in it, why should we imagine that this new usage of the term should be any more reflective of reality, i.e. demonstrate any intention to listen to, or represent the interests of, ordinary people, than that of the predecessors? Still less is it to do with their own conscience, or even with an ethical ideal.

The key relationship is with politics, not necessarily for the reasons usually advanced by political scientists, namely that the Party imposes orthodoxy and that ideological factions vie to be the exponents and interpreters of that orthodoxy, but because that is the way Chinese society operates.

Journalists and political factions

In 1967 Mao Zedong recalled that after the Great Leap Forward he 'could not even publish articles defending his own position' (Leys 1981 : 32). In order to launch his 'Cultural Revolution' he was in the end obliged to ally himself with marginalised radicals in the Shanghai media who were prepared to put forward his proposal for a radical shake-up which would bring him back into power¹¹⁴.

The commonplace assumption that the media are always necessarily the creatures of the Propaganda Department¹¹⁵ and the central government in Peking is often enough not the case so that we can allow that they do sometimes appear to be expressing independence, or at least reflecting factionalism within the leadership. In 1979 when Deng Xiaoping, with cultural functionary Zhou Yang and journalist and novelist Bai Hua in supporting roles, launched his campaign against ideology and the harm it does to culture and thought (Garside 1981 397-408), the media extrapolated the theme. However,

one publication was absent in this discussion. It was none other than China's most important ideological journal, Red Flag. Why?Red Flag was under the control of a faction differing in ideology and policy from Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping]. The discussion campaign on 'practice as the sole criterion for the verification of truth' was nothing but part of an overall plot to discredit and de-power this faction. Only after the leader of this faction was purged and the journal editor-in-chief replaced, did Red Flag confess its mistakes and join the discussion. (Chu 1983: 54)

The reverse was to happen a few years later¹¹⁶. During the months leading up to the 'Tiananmen incident' in 1989 the media reflected the confusion in the centre until by May, as if they believed that the battle had been won by the modernisers, most journalists appear to have come out in favour of the Democracy Movement. Immediately after the massacre central control was imposed by force and the stock of the left rose as the reformers were totally discredited, nowhere more so than in the media. So much was this the case that even Deng Xiaoping could not get his ideas publicised for, although he could hardly be accused of having been soft on the demonstrators, as the minutes of leadership discussions have subsequently revealed (Nathan 2001), it was held that his policies had inspired them. Moreover, when Deng Xiaoping determined to strike out against the fear of reform which he felt to be damaging China's prospects, and went on his 'Progress', he could get no publicity for it. For nearly 2 months the media did not report his activities, with the one exception of a report in the Peking Daily which was authorised by Jiang Zemin's political enemy (later indicted for corruption), Peking Mayor Chen Xitong, possibly to undermine Jiang.

The media, in other words, do have some choice, or at least leeway, at certain times and within the circumscriptions of the faction system which determines, in the absence of other modes of expressing dissent, Chinese politics. Journalists can reflect and perhaps

even influence these 'opposition' factions if the factions themselves can muster enough power, which power must also include power among journalists and institutions such as the Propaganda Department which have power over them.

Since the death of Deng Xiaoping and the consolidation of Jiang Zemin's authority, the media have been an area of particular interest to Jiang. It has been virtually impossible for those espousing the political or institutional reforms associated with Zhao Ziyang to get them aired, for example. However, some pressure groups are more influential. During the 1995 military exercises aimed at frightening Taiwan the PLA attempted to exclude the civilian media from any involvement in covering the exercises; after protest from Ding Guang'gen 丁光根, Head of the Propaganda Department, they allowed CCTV to cover the midOctober exercise (Lam 1999: 178) but then complained that the angle was wrong and refused access to the following month's exercises. The extraordinary power of the Peoples' Liberation Army 中国人民解放军(PLA) over information was illustrated again during the National Peoples' Congress (NPC) meeting in March of the following year when it ensured that such little information about its hubristic brinkmanship in the Taiwan Straights as it permitted in the open was only of the kind that would ensure positive response from the delegates. Nothing came into the public domain of the potential dangers, the huge costs or the failure of the army to get agreement from the civilian leadership.

It can hardly have been attractive to Jiang Zemin and his government that the PLA decided for itself what it would allow published on an issue as vital as a potential war; also he found himself under media attack from an antagonistic critique of his book¹¹⁷ in the February 1997 issue of the left journal Mainstream 主流. The edition was banned, yet the offending review, which attacked Jiang's writings as contrary to party policy, was republished in China Youth 中国青年 and other magazines (Gilley 1998: 285) indicating just how difficult it was to impose monolithic control, even after the all-out attempt to do so which had been launched by Jiang the previous year.

For in January 1996 Jiang had paid a visit to Armed Forces News 解放军报, the army newspaper, and in his speech called for the media to be run by politicians, pointedly contradicting the journalists' own hopes for greater professionalisation and the Dengist

line on letting business factors have the main weight. Later in the year he went even further on a visit to The Peoples' Daily where he declared that 'just one article, one erroneous remark, or one mistake in the press may lead to political instability'¹¹⁸ and called upon journalists closely to follow the party line (Gilley 1998 : 270) .

This they did so energetically when the Central Committee Plenum of October 1996 passed its Resolution on the Construction of Spiritual Civilisation 情深文明建设决议 aimed at culture in general and the media in particular¹¹⁹. A campaign was launched against spiritual pollution (all things western) which turned quickly into attacks on the USA, occasioned not only by the Taiwan crisis but also by the bitterness against the USA felt on account of China's failure to host the Olympics. The tone began to concern western observers and investors, just when China was negotiating entry to the World Trade Organisation. Thus blatant an exposition of Jiang Zemin's views on the superiority of things Chinese and the decadence of things 'western' became inexpedient and Ding Guan'gen called upon the media to downplay calls for protectionism and to avoid xenophobic expressions. Similarly, although the Party has publicised, when it suited, the failings of cadres whom they wish to punish for corruption or incompetence, as in the case of Yu Zuomin in 1993, it has equally been possible for it to impose a news blackout when even very dramatic and public events take place, such as the abduction of one prominent businessman and princling¹²⁰ 王子 by another (Lam 1999: 90).

Journalists have been employed by Jiang in new ways, too. Although self-promotion is hardly new to Chinese politics, Jiang has provided many more photo-opportunities and ensured that they get taken up. He has created an image of himself as the benign, all-caring father of his people with his many visits to poor communities and model townships where he sympathises and exhorts. Lower level officials have followed his lead. Spin-doctoring and image creation has been taken very seriously by him and his aides in this department are at least as skilful as their Anglophone counterparts, and benefit from lack of any principled scepticism. In sum, it is in response to changes within the political elite that changes in the behaviour of journalists take place.

¹²⁰ Conventional epithet for the son of a member of the CCP leadership.

Image and reality in journalistic identity

Of the ideas which have developed in chapters 8 and 9 of this study, the second is that journalists tend to have an image of themselves which is at variance with other observers' perceptions of the reality. It is true that the Birmingham interviewees piloted for this study were self effacing in their claims to social value, although the Editor expressed in (idealistic) terms the common belief that the kind of journalism he and his team were undertaking was a kind of 'service to the people' and indeed a more praiseworthy service than that claimed by the élitists, as he described them. However, in a study of 726 British journalists, over half rated the role of adversary of public officials as very or extremely important and 88% thought the same of the role of investigating claims and statements made by the government (Hemmingham 1998). This is a belief common to journalists worldwide, insofar as information is available (see Weaver 1998). The case can be made that, if journalists believe these things important for their profession, they themselves believe they have a hand in realising them, much as it is argued in this study that Chinese journalists believe in a myth of their own profession even when the myth is not realised by them themselves in their daily work. At first sight this confusion over identity seems to be a ridiculous contradiction, but is it? Surely many teachers believe that teaching is about doing what the protagonist of Dead Poets Society did, yet recognise their own inability to be so inspirational. Why should it not be so with journalists? There is an ideal identity, which is not negated by the real. Most journalists in Britain probably never investigate anything.

The higher calling

As seen in Chapter 2, there is a cast of mind which is attracted to journalism, particularly broadcast journalism, on account of the variety of experiences it offers, the shallow nature of those experiences and of the amusement which can be derived from

the processes of transforming them into popular communication. This contrasts with the weight given to their activities, as constructors of reality, by academics and pundits.

In China, although journalists may become journalists for the fun of it, they soon come to believe themselves to have a high calling, perhaps even analogous to the Good Official of yore; yet what they produce is usually just what the Party wants. So are they deluded? Or cowards? Or simply hedged around by the cultural boundaries which do not permit them to see the contradiction? Or is the contradiction in the eye of the beholder? After all, every journalist may need to perform the functions both of information provider and, in other spaces, of sceptic and guardian of public virtue.

CC Lee, following an international study of journalists' coverage of the same issues (Lee 2000) has concluded that, no matter how varied may be their approaches and agendas in domestic affairs, journalists from a particular country tend to have homogeneous interpretations when it comes to international affairs. One explanation of this phenomenon is that, just as someone can have multiple 'territorial' identities (the Kurd who is Turkish and British, the Frenchman who is Jewish and North African) so the professional can have situational versions of his or her profession such that when dealing with domestic matters the reporter may be a Robin Hood whereas when in the wider world s/he may be a Jingo. Insulation within the 'Chinese world view' has finished. Chinese are equally exposed to the forces which confuse identity and feed that hybridity which is expressed particularly in literary culture (Bromley 2000: Introduction).

In a talk on cultural and territorial identities Robbins (2000) has argued that single identity is possibly unusual and certainly 'immobilising'. Essentialising identity is unhelpful and unrealistic, for just as people have a physical migratory capacity so they can be mentally migratory. Picking up Robbins' idea, why should we demand consistency of the Chinese journalist? Should he not be permitted both to believe that he represents the people and that he serves the state? Moreover, the Chinese journalist may not consider it illogical to hold principles in his/her mind which s/he has little chance of practising in daily work. After all, s/he has the safety valve of current affairs when the frustrations of conventional news are too much.

Other explanations for the apparent contradiction in the Chinese journalist's espousal of values which s/he does not practice might include: the ability to implement has not developed as fast as the recognition that certain courses of action are desirable; news is not taken seriously by journalists, in comparison with other manifestations of journalism, because of the political controls exerted; public spirit is more a conventional nostrum than a passion-driven motivation; job security and the emoluments of a rather privileged life are enough to stifle principles in a society in which still the alternative means of earning a living are few and where the power of politics to ruin careers and blight lives is well understood; factionalism; commercialism.

Nevertheless the mere fact that we can identify what appears to us as a contradiction may show that great changes have occurred in journalists' perceptions of their roles, changes which both reflect changes in attitude and identity in Chinese society and which will impact upon them. We noted in Chapter 3 how journalists had in the first decades of the Peoples' Republic tried to advance their right to be tribunes of the people but did so from the standpoint always that democratic centralism, or the right of the Party to have the last word, was correct. Today journalists have shifted, which accounts for the disparagement of Liu Binyan, seen not as a loyal communist but as temporiser no matter how good his exposés. Some of the, apparently contradictory, currents are illustrated in the way a 51 year old reporter, met in Chapter 8, described himself:

When you teach in a school, you teach few. As a reporter you teach many and at all levels. A reporter works because he has a sense of justice, because he wants to do justice and to cry out about it

Of course the reporter cannot always do what he wants. There are many qualifications on the work of a reporter: for example if an ordinary person asks for a reporter's help, he has to judge 'is this just helping an individual, or is it a wider issue of significance to many?'; and then he has to argue it with his colleagues.

Yes, the reporter has a special role as the throat and tongue of the Party, yes, but he should serve the people first.
(Liu Ch'ao)

On the one hand, Liu sees himself in that didactic role we associate with Deng Tuo (Chapter 8); on the other hand he is helping the petitioners like the good officials of yore; he is interpreting the meaning of the petition in the manner of a social novelist and

although he claims to serve the Party he (in public, before witnesses in this case!) believes he puts people before Party.

This may be indicative of the change in perceptions that are taking place, changes which are affecting all those loosely called 'the intelligentsia'. One young television reporter mentioned Fang Lizhi 方励之 as someone she thought represented new attitudes (K'ang Wei), likening him to Galileo, a reference Fang himself has employed.

The intellectuals' new relationships with the state

Astrophysicist Fang Lizhi came to prominence in the late 1980s. Although he had earlier crossed swords occasionally with authority, he had been protected both by his patrons and by his own allegiance to the system. This loyalty, as with so many of his contemporaries, was evaporating as they took stock of the Cultural Revolution. In 1986 The Peoples' Daily carried a series of articles about Fang's reforms at the university of which he was Deputy President, the University of Science and Technology or Keda 科大 for short, extolling the 'air of democracy' which Fang's commitment to academic freedom had brought. Late in the year the World Economic Herald (see that section) quoted Fang as criticising Chinese intellectuals for being insufficiently independent.

He called upon them to stand up to power, implicitly Party power. Coincidentally or not, twenty of China's largest cities erupted with student demonstrations demanding reform. Faced with what it regarded as turmoil incited by the intelligentsia, the authorities sacked Fang and his patron, the President of Keda, and reassigned them to research institutes in Peking. The media attacked Fang's views as reflecting 'bourgeois liberalisation' and their attacks, once Deng Xiaoping had lambasted Fang by name, were generally regarded as representing the leadership.

However, as Schell has argued (Schell 1991), the Party did not want to be seen to be returning to the bad old days in which it polarised itself against the intellectuals, so that its punishment of Fang was mainly rhetorical. After all, it had declared that what to Mao

had been 'the stinking ninth' category of citizen, the educated people, was necessary to modernisation; it did not want to go back on that. It simply wanted to do a deal by which they forbore from challenging the supremacy of the Party, in return for relative freedom. Fang continued to be insulted in the media and was not allowed to meet foreign journalists, yet by February 1987 was back in public giving scientific papers and thereafter permitted to travel abroad.

In January 1989 Fang wrote a letter to Chairman Deng Xiaoping proposing the release of those held during the 1978 Democracy Wall protests. When the leadership showed its displeasure by having him excluded from the banquet in honour of US Vice-President George Bush he held an international press conference at which he condemned human rights abuses by his country's government in a manner that no-one had dared do since the Communist take-over. Although he took no part in the demonstrations which began in Peking in April 1989, the moment the massacre took place Fang fled to the US embassy for protection, where he remained until a deal was done between the Chinese and US governments by which he be allowed to leave the country on health grounds. Abroad he continued to articulate what are probably now the views of many of his contemporaries, that Marxism 'no longer has any worth' and must be discarded 'like a worn-out dress'. The Marxism which they call to mind is not so much the original of the philosopher as the interpretation and application by Lenin and Mao.

Although phrases of Marxist, or at least CCP origin, are still sprinkled throughout the conversation of journalists, this may be more by habit than by conviction. When you speak to journalists about their work, the constant reiteration of the expression 'public scrutiny' 舆论监督 and the admiration evinced for investigative journalism appear to be the symptoms of an unspoken premise. The premise is that CCP orthodoxy is rejected and that the responsibilities of journalism derive from a new relationship between the people and authority. Fang's odyssey is therefore iconic and its message is reflected in the more humdrum phrases of unknown journalists:

You become a reporter because you have a sense of justice. The tasks of a reporter are to 1. expose evil 2. give information.
(K'ang Wei)

**Impartiality is very necessary but the absolute is impossible, we do our best.
If something is controversial we get it said by others, we don't say it.**
(T'ang Mu-san)

Here are two revelations. One is that K'ang believes that the first responsibility of the reporter is to expose evil, a view much more radical than that, for example, of the Editor of The Daily Telegraph (Page 1998: 46) and one which would not have been expressed, if thought, in China a few years ago. It is also at variance with the views expressed in Ch'en's 1998 survey. Secondly her colleague not only champions impartiality – this could be explained by the fact that he is talking to a foreign journalist, after all - but shows that he will try to get controversial views on screen even if he has to be manipulative in the way he does it. Again, this is a very different approach to that of more conservative reporters.

These and the earlier quotation seem to suggest that journalists can now distinguish service to the country from service to the state. The traditional Chinese view is that individual interests are inseparable from those of society and society's from those of the state, something which both underpinned CCP ideology and was given enriched meaning by that ideology. This can account for the - to outsiders - astonishing loyalty to the state even when it persecuted ones family and friends and destroyed one's own career. Officials, as in Zhang Ailing's novel Love in a Bare Land, did not rail against the Party but asked themselves why they themselves had done wrong.

However, this did not work after the 'Tiananmen incident'. After 1989 the government attempted to return to socialist symbolism but this has been rejected. There has emerged, Kim (19.. : 269) suggests, thanks to the failures and betrayals of the past 50 years, a sense that it is possible to be a proper Chinese without identifying with the state, an idea inconceivable to Chinese before 1911.

In similar vein, Goldman points out that in 1989 there appeared for the first time a slogan which reflected this new idea, 'We love our country but we hate our government' (Goldman 1994). Goldman argues that the Cultural Revolution was influential in undermining the relationship, but what finally destroyed the bonds which Deng had attempted to retie in 1978 were his own anti-democracy and anti-spiritual pollution movements of the early 1980s: '...by 1989 the intelligentsia saw itself less

party of the state and more as outsiders fighting it' Goldman 1994:153). The eminent journalist and novelist Bai Hua asked the question in his novel Bitter Love 苦爱 'you love this nation, but does it love you?' (Bai 1986).

In such a climate it is perhaps not surprising that journalists distinguish, as did the interviewees in chapter 8, between the Party and the people. When we remind ourselves as to how Chinese journalists have taken on board the concept of 'audience' to complement and perhaps replace that of the 'the people' and 'the masses' (see Chapter 6) we see not only that it 'extends the basis of legitimacy for journalistic work' (Zhang 2000 : 2) but also that it reflects a new view of society and the polity.

Are journalists reflecting social change and new expectations?

As noted in Chapter 7 there are many reasons for discontent in Chinese society and discontent is no longer muzzled by a system of comprehensive repression. One writer on 'Rights and Resistance' in China today quotes the well-known dictum of Toqueville that as repression relaxes, so demands grow (Pei 2000). In China they have and, although persecution of dissidents takes place it is admissible now to protest about local issues of corruption, maladministration, poverty or environmental blight (see also Lee Ching Kwan 2000). From the President downwards, officials have wished to be seen as sincere in their condemnation of abuses and their example is taken by lower officials who tolerate complaint which only a few years ago would have been repressed. Institutional changes mentioned in Chapter 7 from village elections to the Administrative Litigation Law have probably allowed people to be more courageous in commenting upon local affairs and in identifying perceived injustices or maladministration. And people are learning to use the media. In July 2000 a group of students in Dianbai 电白县, Canton Province, tipped off a local newspaper about a plan by examination candidates to cheat using pagers. Reporters investigated the story, garnered and published the details, sparking a nationwide spate of investigations into similar practices (Beijing 2000). It is not so much the fact of the reports themselves

which are a sign of the changes in Chinese journalism, but the fact that they were instigated by citizens.

Skills for democrats

In her book on the development of British identity, Colley draws our attention to the fact that in the Britain of the early 19th century, as in revolutionary France, more and more people were being drawn into politics. She quotes Lynn Hunt as writing that in France more and more people learned the micro techniques of politics from attending meetings to joining parades to wearing a badge, taking minutes or electing an official. Colley argues that such acts of 'individual initiative, commitment and participation' were equally learned in Britain. These activities had the potential to challenge the existing order even as they upheld it (Colley 1996: 242). The point stimulates some reflections on the social roles of Chinese journalists today.

Although we habitually slip into expressions which reveal our assumption that Communist China has been a totalitarian society, with all that that implies for the subjection of popular participation, in one respect at least this is unhelpful. For although most people have been denied the opportunity to find and voice views differing from those of the power-holders, the obsession of the CCP with having the appearance of participation and with forcing people to bear witness to their support may have had the effect of raising expectations. Surely you cannot talk unendingly about the peoples' rights and about it being 'right to rebel' without those receiving this advice eventually applying it to their own situation? Lessons learned about revolution and protest seem now to be being applied by consumer groups and environmental organizations, pensioners and peasants. So are the practical skills required for the organisation of meetings, the running of elections, lobbying and drumming up support, campaigning, public relations and media relations¹²⁰.

In opposition to this it might be argued that the Chinese rethinking of their relationship with the state will fall short of the demands made in Anglophone countries because of the absence of a similarly developed sense of rights. Wang Gongwu has argued (1991:

172) that the Confucian catalogue of duties also implies rights which flow therefrom and Pei (2000) asks why the pervasive Chinese sense of reciprocity should not be understood as one of mutual rights. Friedman (1995: 311), following des Forges and de Bary, argues that 'premodern China in fact had as wide an array of factors favourable to democracy as any society'. Whether the traditional Chinese conception of rights is attenuated and whether this has prevented the development of democratic institutions is a discussion which needs to take into account not only philosophy but also the philosophy of history since it draws upon ideas of how polities develop which originated in the West and upon the enlightenment discourse of rationality. These may or may not be helpful. In any event, that particular discussion may not be relevant since, philosophically indigenous or not, the concept of rights appears to have been caught onto by some groups anyway. It would be useful to have attitude research in this area, at the moment supported only anecdotally (e.g. Friedman 1995: 326). One simple explanation for this may be that, thanks to television and film and generally many more contacts with the world outside, Chinese are learning from other societies, even in circumstances where culture and social psychology (or fear of chaos) impede or circumscribe the conception of, or expression of, what Anglophones might consider full rights.

When journalists, as in the many cases cited in chapters 7 and 8, claim to be taking up cudgels on behalf of some group which is not part of the political establishment, this can be interpreted as an acknowledgment of rights. It should not necessarily be confused with a democratic spirit.

NeoConservatism

The emergence of a nascent discourse of rights does not necessarily mean that the Chinese are adopting Anglophone notions of democracy. Immediately after the Cultural Revolution democracy was talked about as an essential instrument for the development of the nation, much as it had been back in the early years of the century, and adopted almost as a religious belief by some at least of the 1989 protesters. However, democracy has now receded as an objective among many of the intelligentsia, and been replaced by

what Chen (1997) calls neoconservatism. There are various varieties of neoconservatives but they share a scepticism about the appropriateness of democracy for China. This scepticism derives from a disdain for the unrealistic élitism of the 1989 demonstrators; a fear that Chinese development would be weakened or halted by the chaos democratic systems would bring; revulsion from what is seen as the failures of political reform in Russia; a desire to find an authentically Chinese way of managing society; a feeling that the objective conditions for making democracy a success do not exist in China today. This is not to say that neoconservatives identify with the CCP; they have usually rejected communism as a failed ideology, but consider that the CCP is the only force available which can push on China's development and prevent China from becoming, in Sun Yatsen's evocative phrase 'a sheet of sand'. An outsider might imagine that the Nationalist Party, which has at least come to terms with power-sharing and accepted democracy as an aspiration, might be the alternative, but this is probably a thought too far, even for the neoconservative.

The neoconservatives counter what appears to be, for whatever reason, a developing sense of rights, by championing authoritarianism. This they justify on different grounds according to personal preference. On the one hand the Chinese citizenry can be characterised as too backward (the 'development discourse') to be able to benefit from democratic rights, not of course on racial grounds but on account of thousands of years of debilitating 'feudalism'. Since the May 4th Movement it has been conventional to denigrate traditional Chinese culture as enervating and to dismiss it as 'feudalism'. The Chinese people have been so hamstrung by this awful heritage, it is held, that democratic institutions and notions of rights would only impede the solution of the problems China faces and that the state's impetus to wealth and power must be allowed to override other considerations (the 'Lee Kwan-yew position'). It is likely that some journalists justify their patronising attitudes, and their privileges, thus; Liu appears to be doing so:

There's not really a contradiction between the social activist and the impartial journalist; your job is to work on behalf of the citizenry 老百姓, to interpret their needs for them. In that way you are a social activist, your aims are activist. But in the way you deal with topics you must be impartial. That is what gives you your high status.

(Liu Ch'ao)

Those of this persuasion did not, unlike those lauded in the west, oppose the crackdown of June 1989¹²¹. Several prominent ones supported it. They approve of certain aspects of modernization such as private property and the emergence of a middle class but want strong government (Hao 1997: 187). Some may fall in with Jiang Zemin's own arguments against democracy which rest upon xenophobia in that they posit a 'Chinese way' against a 'Western way' and oppose that which is claimed not to chime with Chinese traditional values 中国传统价值 which, conveniently, support the present order and tie in with the ugly anti-foreignism evident from publications, fashionable in the late 90s, such as China Can Say No 中国可以说不 and Behind the Demonisation of China 妖魔化中国的背后. Chinese exceptionalism seems particularly attractive to disappointed intellectuals (Zhang X 1998: 4). The 'Wei Jingshen argument', that China needs its Fifth Modernization, democracy, if it is to develop the health and power which all Chinese are told to want for their society, is little in public evidence except among some emigrés.

Intellectuals may debate these issues - and President Jiang may claim to be advancing a new ideology to contain them - but the society changes nonetheless and, at least in the views of some observers, ever more in a democratic direction. The political system has by no means remained 'frozen'. There have been major legal reforms and codes have been introduced in many areas 'from labour relations to intellectual property rights to environment and commerce' (Perry 2000: 5) which extend rights and people are taking advantage of them, as is evidenced by the ever increasing number of disputes and burgeoning business for lawyers.

Investigative journalism

In such a situation journalists are both responding to social developments and being manipulated by government. They champion victims and expose abuses and in so doing help defuse or resolve conflicts and show that the authorities care. Thus, although the news is still heavily controlled, as representing the 'bare facts', reporters are allowed

space, in current affairs slots, to undertake those tasks of 'scrutiny' they claim mark them out as professionals.

People want programmes on what concern themselves; few are concerned about wider politics. The best programmes are those which report a problem first (there's much competition) and those which provide information of immediate use to the people. People don't think much of you if you don't take their side. The job of a journalist is to process the news 采制信息 for the people and to supervise the government; yes, the government must be supervised

(Ch'en Mu-li)

So I think, above all, at this time, the main duty of the media in China should [be to] draw more attention to frustrations, not only in education, entertainment and information, but extinguishing the corruption, establishing public confidence in the government and turning democracy into reality. It is a revolution, and the motivation of this storm is the public. (Gu 2000a)

They can be allowed, even encouraged, to be enterprising in seeking out problems to highlight and for which to propose solutions; they are, in effect, agenda setting in the manner ascribed to Anglophone investigative journalists, even if their freedom of topic selection is circumscribed as Hua Xu interprets (referred to in chapter 7). From a media management point of view this policy not only allows journalists their conscience but also contains some of their energies; furthermore it not only performs a function of value to the Party in helping to root out problems and being seen to be doing so, but also garners large audiences and thus revenue. Kept within bounds, journalists can be allowed their vanity.

It has been argued elsewhere that the social role of the investigative journalist in Anglophone societies is to remind the society of its own values and of the way in which society as a whole or individuals and institutions in particular have betrayed those values (deBurgh 2000). This is a task often attributed to intellectuals in general, but it is also argued that in modern society where intellectuals have sold their birthright for comfortable billets and comforting metaphysics, the function of the gnat is performed only by journalists (Philo 2000). The role has other aspects, it is not limited to identifying derelictions of duty but also to expanding the concepts that we have of duty, or subjects worthy of empathy, or what is or is not reprehensible. There is no reason to suppose that Chinese journalists are not doing the same; they are both upholders of the

order and its critics; both limiting discourse to acceptable topics and extending mental boundaries. Again, the analogy with intellectuals as a whole is relevant. Barmé (2000) shows how the Chinese intellectual today is co-opted by the state because of his or her usefulness in pointing out problems, sketching possible futures and proving the ideas of which the ruling officials are so bereft. But the fact of co-option does not necessarily negate the subversive function. According to one TV producer, she sees the programme on which she works Tell it like it is¹²² as attacking conformism. She seeks to 'train people into thinking as individuals' to encourage people 'to speak out, tell the truth and express their opinions' (Gordon 2000: 17). Another journalist notes how officials can be manipulated in what journalists consider a 'progressive' direction:

In 1989 I made a series on exploitation of 'maids' in Shanghai households. After the first one it was taken off air as it was too daring. But I got onto the mayor and persuaded him to over-ride the detractors so that the series was put back on. (Zhang Lifen)

Does this amount to westernisation? The Anglophone journalist has what is now a highly developed reading of his role as opponent of those in authority, virtually an opposition (deBurgh 2000: 69-70). Are we seeing the beginnings of this in China? Recent research trying to establish whether American films affect the values of Chinese viewers suggest that certain themes such as the equation of freedom and wealth, responsibility and ambition predict a gradual internalisation of 'American values' (Heisey 1998: xxvi). Is this what is happening in the narrower sphere of journalism?

Westernisation?

Chinese journalists have been constructed by scholars in relation to Anglophone assumptions (see Curran and Park 2000), one might even say Cold War assumptions, in that the focus has been on the events and situations which can be interpreted as manifestations of battle between a totalitarian state and journalists hankering for press freedom. At least that is one interpretation of many of the comments on journalists made after the 1989 'Tiananmen incident'.

Chen (1998) conceived of Chinese media after the Cultural Revolution as falling into three periods, first that of 1979-82 when, in reaction against the Cultural Revolution, journalists rediscovered respect for the audience and emphasised facticity; second 1983-86 when the concept of information, as distinct from propaganda, caught on and third 1987-9 when the movement for press freedom and media law got under way. Journalists are constructed as attempting to get closer to an ideal of what 'real' journalism is all about, viz detached reporting of facts, the performance of a watchdog function and independence from powerful interests. Their slogans are interpreted, for instance in the writings of Polunbaum (1990), as showing Chinese journalists aiming for the roles associated with American reportage.

In a comparison of Chinese mainland journalists in Hong Kong and their Hong Kong colleagues, Nip (1998) appears to suggest that differences in approach were not great but that news judgment was informed by reporters' perceptions of their relationship to authority. In discussions among observers in the late 1990s it was assumed at one point that confrontation between government and the new breed of investigative journalists was inevitable, although later Gordon (1997) and Zhao (1999) were both able to show that an accommodation was being reached between the two 'sides' if that is what they were. This was a more realistic prediction, given the need (touched upon in Chapter 6) to take into account the importance of informal power groupings and personal charisma which eclipse other loyalties and stymie attempts to develop a professional ethic detached from faction. It is when we cast around for a third party, another tradition of journalism against which to measure the Chinese variety that the limitations of the Anglophone touchstone becomes apparent. In other societies, particularly Mediterranean and Hispanic, journalists do characterise themselves using the discourses of Anglophone journalism studies yet in practice are very distant from them. In Italy and Spain where tyro journalists assiduously study the Anglophone model, they nevertheless act in accordance with quite different sets of conventions.

Mancini (2000) argues that, in Italy, the 'professional model of journalism based on neutrality, autonomy and detachment from power' is widely accorded respect on account of the need, still forcefully felt, to demonstrate repudiation of fascist approaches to the media. Another factor is, quite simply, media imperialism. The need to reject imperialism obliges non-Anglophone media institutions to represent

themselves as the same kind of institution, whereas the true fact may be that they are simply performing roles which are determined by and in their own cultures.

Mancini observes that the press in Italy has always been 'more literary, comment and advocacy orientated' as does Chalaby (1996) of the French press. Moreover Mancini notes, as do Perez-Ayerra (2000) and Quesada (1997) for Spain and La Fuente (2000) for Venezuela, that news organizations are closely tied to organised interests and political parties. Journalism is expected to be a tool in struggles for commercial or political gain. Mancini argues that the objectives of the media channels are to 'transmit ideas, protect interests and organise people who already share the same point of view' and he accounts for this by saying that, whereas in a 2-party system such as those of the US and UK objectivity may be possible,

Objectivity is almost impossible within an intricate and fragmented panorama in which a greater number of political forces act and in which even the slightest shades of meaning in a story risk stepping on the positions of one of the forces in the political field (Mancini 2000: 273).

A common aspect of the journalisms described in these studies is that the journalist sees him or herself as a political actor in a way that is foreign to all but the tiny minority of committed partisans in the Anglophone media. Most are tied in some manner to a political party and owe greater allegiance to its political beliefs than to a conception of the impartial journalist. More studies need to be undertaken in this area before we can with confidence ascribe differences in journalistic practice to deep structure cultural traditions, but it is timely that scholars in media studies, as in other disciplines, are discovering that Anglophone assumptions about behaviour may have but limited applicability even as close to home as the European mainland. This should not surprise us. We have noted in Chapter 4 how different are the origins of Chinese and English journalism. Thus, the concept of westernisation is not helpful if it obscures the real differences between journalists' roles that persist even as certain practices converge.

Asked whether he thought "public scrutiny" was a concept derived from the west, one journalist insisted on its Chinese pedigree:

“public scrutiny” is a concept which goes back as far as the Qin Dynasty [221BC] in China. It is a way by which rulers boost political confidence without handing over control. When authority is pretty sure it’s in charge it allows rein. The trouble is when you relax control society often responds unpredictably and government [forces a turn back to] social stability. Look at the example of the Hundred Flowers. (Zhang Lifan)

For him, current developments fitted snugly within the Chinese order.

Free market and regulation

Journalism was not a popular choice in 1988, [and] at about that time the social status of teachers had begun to plummet after the 1985 reforms and I felt that journalism would regain its past high status because they are regarded as representatives of the government. I was wrong. They are not representatives of the government, more realistically they are representatives of big business. (T’ang Mu-san)

It was a widely held assumption of Anglophone journalists and observers of journalism until recently that the existence of the socially responsible press was due to the free market which enables such commodities to be traded; objective and good quality information is a commodity with a high value in capitalist society. The buyers of newspapers are operating like an electorate; they choose newspapers because of good journalism, thus good journalism is to the commercial advantage of proprietors; advertising, which supports good journalism, is thus the means by which the media are made independent of politicians. In the Cold War era, with the negative example of the media in the Soviet dominated countries, this seemed axiomatic.

Curran (1985) punctured the complacency of this argument with his research which showed that advertising was itself very partial; that as advertising developed it supported newspapers selectively according to the wealth of the readership rather than according to its extent; thus mass market newspapers had to survive on their cover price whereas elite ones were subsidised by advertising. Radical newspapers, for example, could not compete with those subsidised by advertising, or those which transformed themselves into mass market entertainment rather than organs of serious political

discussion. Furthermore, the commercial interests of advertisers, as of proprietors, impact upon content, privileging that which suits the paymasters.

According to critics of the argument that capitalism guarantees competing opinions, socially responsible journalism is not at all a function of the free market but of other factors. First and foremost is it a function of professional ethics shared among media managers/proprietors and journalists, ethics which enable them to resist commercial pressures and to stand up for what they believe to be in the best interests of society. Those, like Phillip Knightley, who have pointed to the work of Sunday Times Insight in the 1970s as the heyday of UK investigative journalism emphasise these factors (Knightley 1999). Secondly it is argued that it is government media regulation that makes possible socially responsible journalism; it is having an appropriate system that biases the media towards social responsibility; controlling the tendency to conglomeration of ownership; monitoring competition to curb its ill effects (Pilger 2001).

Concerns about the alleged irresponsibility of modern journalism have brought the question of regulation back to the forefront of debate. Regulation was seen by many journalists, until the 1990s, as a tool used by governments to stifle socially responsible (i.e. inquisitive, dissenting) journalism; now it is tending to be seen as a means by which socially responsible journalism may yet be saved. Chalaby (1998) goes so far as to suggest that special regulations during the Second World War improved the quality of the British media. Today it is argued that the relaxation of broadcasting regulations in the UK has caused a sharp decline in inquisitorial and public spirited journalism (Barnett 2000, Franklin 2000a, Gaber 2001) and cultural parochialism (Tomlinson 1999: 171) and that this is leading to newspapers following suit with more sensationalism and ephemera (Golding 1998).

This has happened just at the time that the party in power has attempted to sideline parliamentary institutions and use its strength to attempt to dominate the media with propaganda (Franklin 2000b; Osborne 1999). Although Britain still has the BBC as a public service broadcaster in some measure detached from government, commercial interests - as expressed in the White Paper 2000 - are attempting to de-legitimise it. The

change that has taken place in the UK over the last few years has been well summarised by Greg Philo and almost every word could apply to China:

....the post-war consensus had been founded in part on a critique of profiteering and exploitation. The state-owned industries specially were expected to have some sense of social priorities. By contrast, for the New Right material success and individual enterprises were the key values and in the 1980s were at the centre of promotional campaigns.But there is another important reason why the products of television began to change in this period. The opening of the market increased the pressure on television companies for ratings and signified a move away from the traditional concern with quality and 'good taste'. The priority that television should be seen to be popular and to be responding to the demands of its market erodes the original Reithian ideal that it should in some way set and lead standards. (Philo 2000: 11)

That these matters are not issues in China is a function of the recent history of Chinese journalism from which the lesson has been drawn that the more financially independent the media can be from the government the better for everyone: plutocrats are better than Party people. The throw away remark by T'ang, above, that journalists are more the representatives of business was not necessarily made in a negative sense. Yet as we have seen from revelations like that of Wu Haimin, above, and observations by others familiar with 'Red Lettering' and other modes by which Chinese journalists allow their copy to be dictated by moneyed interests, Chinese journalism may have gone much further than the Anglophone media in abandoning the public service values we identified earlier and to which journalists claim to subscribe. There is a common saying: 'The first rate reporter is in the stock market; the second rate sells ads; the third rate moonlights to make money and only the fourth rate works exclusively for their employers' (Gu 2000) As far as is known, only the Chengdu Business News has taken measures to make corruption less likely (see Chapter 7), and it is interesting that it has done this through establishing a system which is supposed to make corruption unnecessary and unprofitable.

Monetary bribery is but one form of corruption. In Anglophone countries today an increasing proportion of newspaper and screen space is given over to the productions of public relations offices and promotion agencies and less and less to the product of journalists' evidenced reflection (Franklin 2001). Proprietors use newspapers to propagandise (see Weymouth 2000; CPBF 2000) and investigative journalism survives

where it is acceptable to those proprietors' agendas and where it is sufficiently sensational to offer a good return. The difference from China can seem more one of degree than of nature.

Cultural change – the loss of naiveté

There is a contradiction at the heart of Chinese society which journalists, like their colleagues with other roles in the culture industries, have to live with and adapt to. A Marxist state with supposedly lofty ideal of creating a society based on service to others and the end of the cash nexus presides in reality over the world's biggest klondike: a greedy stampede for personal wealth which tramples underfoot all sense of social obligation, respect for others or consideration for the weak. Neither traditional ethics nor communist internationalism have any sway to impede this.

Thus it is not surprising that many observers of Chinese cultural life today have noted the abundance of irony and scepticism. Its manifestations are as various as the ironic use of political slogans in art, the proud adoption of the loafer 流氓 attitude¹²³ to some extent illustrated in the film Beijing Bastards, the pandering to western taste for art that is both sensational and 'dissident' and literature which celebrates meaninglessness and cynicism even while making its authors rich. These attitudes are not obviously shared by the interviewees for this study; journalists are neither fully of the cultural intelligentsia yet not quite functionaries or professionals either. Yet it is likely that they are affected by them and may help to explain the fact that three interviewees savaged their government's colonial and human rights policies in private conversation yet continued to take the government shilling for producing the kind of news described in chapter 9.

Barmé's interpretation of this kind of situation is convincing. Writing of cultural developments in the 1990s, he says:

Younger editors, writers, television production crews, and propagandists also played a more ambivalent role in the media. Many approached the task of making pro-Party TV specials or writing screeds in favour of some political line with a sophisticated cynicism: they greedily accepted official largesse (the pay for this sort of work increased in direct proportion to the decline in public interest) while sometimes sneaking subversive messages into their work. But when the bottom line was top dollar, subversion became little more than a piquant marketing ploy that also served to salve the conscience of the guilty toady. Others spared themselves such refinements and simply churned out the mind-numbing humbug, laughing all the way to the Peoples' Bank. It was not outside the realm of possibility that a few of them sincerely believed in what they were doing. (Barmé 1999: 116)

In sum there is no equivalent of public service media to counter either the state's propaganda or the imperatives of commercialism¹²⁴. The relevance of the present situation of the British media is illuminating. The lesson from China for the UK is that where there is neither public service obligation nor regulation then a dangerous collusion between the state - or the ruling Party - and business interests come to control the power to construct reality, unmediated by any concern for interests other than their own. There is some awareness of this. In conversation older journalists (He Cihua, Wang Qianghua) referred to dumbing down and the relaxing of controls and there was a very public controversy on just this topic (Barmé 1999: 62) But there is no concerted attempt to understand it, its dangers, causes and solutions.

Pan Zhongdan proposes the concept of improvisation to explain the situation in which Chinese journalists find themselves, adapting to the new commercial imperatives, without any declared intention by the political authorities to change their beliefs or practices or any 'conceptual framework for reform', referring to 'the way in which journalists design, implement, and justify their nonroutine journalistic practices that function to *weaken, circumvent, and erode the hegemony of the commandist system associated with Communist ideology*' (Pan 2000: 73). He believes that 'Journalists' improvised activities are changing the 'map of reality' in China's journalism institution [sic]. They are also changing the 'map of meaning' of journalism itself' (Pan 2000: 104).

From the preceding pages it would seem that the improvisation to which Pan draws our attention reflects less the step by step assimilation of a new world view, or, as the

Chinese leaders sometimes say, crossing the river by feeling stone by stone 摸着石头过河, than the dissonance between beliefs about roles and actual daily practices, a dissonance they will live with as long as there are ideas about journalism to live up to. This study confirms that there has been a marked shift from the idea of journalist as servant of party and state towards a professional, tribune position. The distinction between the two approaches cannot be perfectly clear cut, nor can we point to a particular date on which the change came about. As we have seen, Liu Shaoqi and others recognised the validity of aspects of the tribune position early in the life of the Peoples' Republic; the evidence of the Hangzhou news programmes, taken alone, would have us believe that there was little or no real change, regardless of the interviewees' aspirations. Yet there has been development: Maoist ideology is ever weaker and instead, journalists increasingly adhere to moral norms which appear to have their ancestry in the 'good official' myth. Taking the analogy further, Chinese journalists can see themselves as truer repositories of social values, confronting or at least chiding an authority which claims moral right yet is shot through with inconsistency and corruption.

Evidence for the change is two-fold. Today's talk shows and current affairs reports place on stage controversies, both social problems and public issues. A Shanghai talk show specialising in domestic violence is sponsored by a leading refrigerator manufacturer; these, as with the investigative journalism described on pages 147-9, have becoming excellent marketing tools, the more hard hitting the better as they attract many advertisers. **'Companies want their products associated with justice'** (Zhang Lifan). This phenomenon is symptomatic, not merely of commercial opportunism or even of popular scepticism about authority, but of journalists' change of attitude. No matter how circumscribed, it is sufficiently challenging and in contrast with what went on before (at any time since 1949) as to reflect a fundamental shift in values. Many of the topics dealt with publicly are quite new to the public arena; others would in the recent past only have been acknowledged in RCPs (p146).

The second piece of evidence is the language with which the journalists describe their functions: The preponderance of the 'public scrutiny' role over the 'throat and tongue of the Party' role is marked as is the preference for the non-political vocabulary

demonstrated in the way 'audience' replaces 'masses' as the target of media efforts (p215). They distinguish between interests of state and citizen (p135). These two changes demonstrate journalists' commitment to contribute to their society's development in a fundamentally different way from their predecessors and correlates with Chen's research (p160). They see themselves as important and the Party and Government to some extent acknowledge the moral claims for journalism; see how Gong Xueping encouraged the students at Fudan University (p35) and how Li Peng praised Focal Point. (p154).

In the 20s and 30s journalists saw themselves as replacing traditional scholars and teachers in the reproduction of cultural values (p74) and they appear to be re-appropriating and modernising that role. They no longer see the task of the journalists as bringing together again rulers and ruled into some harmony of repressed differences (p75) which may have been the aim of Liu Binyan and Deng Tuo's generation (p170); probably they are unwilling to accept those notions of absence of conflict touched upon on page 81; although confrontation avoidance remains a marked feature of Chinese society, yet people do confront and changes do take place, in proof of which we can cite both the (original) success of He Shang and the recent achievements of Taiwan's democratic opposition. As to the arguably enfeebling influence of personal bonds of faction and friend (p98), it can be countered that individuals may be increasingly willing to influence those bonds from below. After all, patrons can become reformers and reformers, patrons.

In our analysis of the news product of the Zhejiang reporters, we saw that those matters rated important by the reporters did not feature; those matters which did feature highly were not rated important by the reporters (p209). The contrast between what they believed and what their masters wanted was striking. The news, in other words, was what they had to do, and they do their best within the tight political constraints.

That news may not be significantly different in approach from that of 30 years before, yet the content of current affairs is, and more obviously reflects the aspirations expressed by the journalists, aspirations which are quite distinct from those of their predecessors (see pp215-6). In this field they test the boundaries of self censorship to the limit, fighting, as in the case of Wang Lili (p93) for their stories. The Party has lost

prestige, such that its demands are not perceived as exhortations but as bullying. The contradictions between how journalists believe and how they behave reflect the contradictions in the context within which they operate rather than their own confusion; their values seem increasingly clear-cut.

Of course Chinese journalists vary according to channel in which they work, generation and many other aspects. By and large, however, the younger they are the more detached they are from the 'throat and tongue' idea of journalism, to the extent that two of the youngest were prepared to challenge the most sacred of all cows in Chinese media management, Taiwan and the colonies. If we can generalise from this, journalists in the future are likely to be ever more iconoclastic.

What can we make of the contrast between the ideals of the Chinese and the cynicism of the English (excluding the Editor) in Birmingham? The Hangzhou journalists' ideals are much more akin to those of élite English journalists interviewed elsewhere (deBurgh 2000 chapters 1-3) than to their supposed equivalents in English Regional TV. Why? Is it that the Chinese are more politicised, more enthusiastically patriotic, more educated, more naive? CC Lee has pointed out the gulf between Chinese journalists' aspirations and the reality of their work. Perhaps English journalists tailor their aspirations to what they actually do, whereas Chinese journalists, with their heritage of the involvement of journalism with the patriotic cause (the Liang Qichao inheritance), and mental model of the hero official described in chapter 8, do not. Perhaps there is less division of attitudes in China between élite and provincial, a situation more easily recognised by Mediterranean European than by Anglophones, with their complex of class and locality distinctions.

Notwithstanding all that has been written in chapter 6 about the socio-cultural impediments to democratic ideas in Chinese society and the abstract nature of journalists' commitment to them, they have initiated their own dialogues with experts (p103) and ordinary people as in Dianbai (p229). Their ambitions can be on the side of the people, not authority (p205). In these initiatives, their courage can be remarkable. Just as the World Economic Herald, although independent of state finance or hierarchies, still got shut down in 1989 (p104) so the state today closes down channels

regardless of supposed independence (p107) and destroys the careers of journalists, or imprisons them (p108).

How do these facts relate to the motivations identified in Chapter 2? Few, if any, tyro journalists enter the profession on account of their ideals; these are developed during training for it and initiation into it. They are part of the professionalisation which is going on, in which a group ascribes to itself altruistic objectives and motives even while often failing to live up to them. As to the relationship between the myths of the good journalist and the national myths (chapter 9), it is not necessary to subscribe to the latter wholeheartedly in order to believe in the former.

Another confusion: The seeming belief in the hypodermic theory of effects appears to influence journalists' attitudes much as the authoritarian theory of teaching influences that of teachers. It may not be true, it may be flawed even to its believers, but it dignifies and gives point to the profession and the myth thereof. Unfortunately, if it also prevents recognition of the dangers of, for example, highly commercialised media, it may be dysfunctional. Journalists appear to believe that political propaganda is transmitted hypodermically, as in the Bolshevik model, but that commercial values are not propaganda, but freedom (pp48 & 65). The mental vestiges of the Bolshevik model ensure that, while journalists ascribe power and influence to the agents of political ideas (whether politicians or journalists) they discount the power of commercial pressures. These they equate with freedom and light to the extent that they fail to argue for a public service solution, and seem to have faith in privatisation (p104) and a hoped for media law as being the answers to the political troubles of the profession.

The Chinese have a model of professionalism that is different from the Anglophone and the Maoist experience is only partly accountable for that difference. Scepticism, cynicism about the CCP there may be; there certainly is irritation at official interference in professional work and an increasing tendency to distinguish between state and citizenry and to see themselves on the side of the latter. Chinese journalists may be embarrassed at their failure to live up to their own ideals but this hardly shakes their over-riding belief that they are serving the nation. Two of our interviewees may be cited to express this:

To be a journalist today is to do a much respected job so that journalism is a profession to which many aspire. What people like about it is the independence that it gives, the fact that you can become very knowledgeable about society and have many contacts; from the point of view of an individual's career, it helps you to get on, it is magnificent (宏好).
(Yu Min)

Journalists in China have an extremely important position. Not only are they the mouthpiece of the party but also its eyes and ears. We speak for the people and we speak for the government. We are the ears and eyes in the sense that we must understand what is going on; examine issues; translate issues; delve into matters of communication; analyse, explain. (Du Yan)

This study of Chinese journalists tells us that, notwithstanding many similarities in practise and apparent similarities in purpose, the roles of a journalist in a given society are inextricably bound up with that society's cultural expectations, opportunities and institutions.

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END NOTES

- ¹ Or at least that they should do. See Philo, Greg and Miller, David (2000) *Market Killing* London : Pearson
- ² This can only be claimed by relegating to dialect status the languages of some 300 million people.
- ³ Conversations with Professor Peter Smith, Head of the Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths College, October-December 2000. Anthropology has long seen great differences in social behaviour and attitudes between, for example, north and south Europeans yet the challenge to the north European dominance of psychology has not come from the Mediterranean, where scholars have gone along with the homogenising psychology, but from China.
- ⁴ In a recent review of my (edited) book *Investigative journalism*, (Routledge 2000), the (journalist) reviewer singled out for criticism my rather guarded suggestion that journalists should tread carefully in criticising other societies according to the lights of their own. See CJA Newsletter no42, August 2000.
- ⁵ Pan's chapter is a report of part of his substantial ongoing research study.
- ⁶ There was one way in which I could have done that, by getting a job as a language polisher. I met one in the newsroom at Shanghai TV and another at Wenhui Bao. However this option was unfortunately not open to me and even if I had wanted it I might not have been acceptable to the Government Bureau which vets such appointments.
- ⁷ Any more than are those of the newsrooms with which I am most familiar, Scottish Television [reflecting a dissenting and cultural minority within the UK], C4 News [an elite, small audience, opinion-former programme with slant and format very distinct from mainstream news] or BBC World Television News [angled to represent the UK to outsiders].
- ⁸ There exist, of course, analyses of particular media or media products. References will be found later in this study.
- ⁹ Some journalists were interviewed formally and publicly. I have left their names in the text. Others either specifically requested anonymity (all those interviewed in September 1999) or said such things that I thought it considerate not to attribute them (those interviewed in June 2000); the names of the latter 2 categories are therefore pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are distinguished from real ones by being romanised in Wade-Giles rather than Pinyin. Information on them is supplied in appendix A.
- ¹⁰ He said 'between the rich and powerful and the poor and weak there's often only journalists, and the only weapon we have is shame'. However, these declarations were qualified by admissions that he came into journalism for social advancement and by the fact that his reputation as a journalist rests not upon radical exposures but upon pleasant cultural features. The one journalist who had worked on a radical left periodical made no claims of idealism although he thought he had originally been pleased to work on a political paper because 'journalists are all leftist really' and 'it was the way students thought at the time'.
- ¹¹ There are still many Chinese journalists who are not graduates but this is not because of lingering reliance on the 'apprenticeship' approach as in Britain, but owing to the disruption of university courses during the Cultural Revolution 1965-1975.
- ¹² This aspect of Chinese society is the reverse of the Anglophone case where it is I believe generally assumed that applicants 'from the sticks' are disadvantaged. Chinese explain the phenomenon of the peasant children outperforming city children as being not because of economic desperation but (1) domestic security (2) relatively good nutrition (3) an educational system with few variations from place to place (4) respect for learning among people of all classes.
- ¹³ Jenner (1994) has a chapter on this
- ¹⁴ The roles of these bodies are changing as I write and so are their names.
- ¹⁵ As in the UK, the early years of television saw many people entering the profession without degrees (particularly in the technical side, from which they could progress to direction and production as easily as journalists). However, Shanghai TV has declared that its professionals will in future all be graduates. There is therefore a demand for night-school classes in Shanghai's schools of journalism.
- ¹⁶ Those who took their first degree in Chinese language and literature or Economics (the two main rivals to Journalism) appear mostly to have made up for it by taking the MA in journalism which all the top universities offer. The fact that the MA takes three years does not appear to be a disincentive since it would seem that virtually nobody can be employed as a reporter until the late 20s so that getting an MA is a good way to bide time.
- ¹⁷ Interview with Professor Ivor Gaber, University of London, 28 March 2000.
- ¹⁸ Two lectures given by Hugo de Burgh for the Department of Media, Renmin University, Peking on 14/4/98.
- ¹⁹ On a visit to one of China's biggest and most important TV stations, the lecturer accompanying me bumped into 24 people who had been her students or whom she knew as having graduated from her School of Journalism, one of whom was the Chief Executive (who asked her to lecture the following month on what she had learned from a recent overseas trip) and others in the senior management team.
- ²⁰ Three pro-CCP American journalists who reported from China during the Civil War and the early years of the PRC, Edgar Snow, Agnes Smedley and Anna-Louise Strong.
- ²¹ Early observers of the mass media, typified by Matthew Arnold, were concerned at the supplanting of traditional cultures, seen as organically developed, by commercially and/or politically manufactured knowledge. Adorno (1991) and Arendt (1951) were concerned that the mass media were so influential as to be able to erase all traditional social decencies and cultural knowledge and to remake us as political slaves or the dupes of commercial interests. The mass media were 'narcotic' in effect, 'lobotomised' the recipients, who became possessed of false consciousness which made them 'one-dimensional'. This power of the mass media seemed obvious to generations which had seen the eyes of people from confined communities being opened to thousands of new stimuli (Seymour-Ure 1974) or the way in which totalitarian regimes had sought to use them for 'brain-washing' (McQuail 1974: 58 and 1994). Their mistake was that they assumed that this power was exercised in a *hypodermic* manner. As suggested above, Mao and his colleagues inherited this idea through Lenin since when it became an article of faith in journalism education in China. Meanwhile in the West, by the 1950s empirical studies were showing that the mere fact of communication did not necessarily involve an effect, at least not the effect intended by the communicator; neither attitudes nor behaviour were easily susceptible to change; much depended upon the recipient, other influences upon that recipient as well as the message environment, mode of communication and so forth. Both media studies and psychology agreed upon that (deBurgh 1987: ch2). Messages, in other words, were mediated. This was taken further in the 'Uses and Gratifications' approach, which suggested that it was the recipient who determined the significance of the message, accepting or rejecting it according to various conditions and criteria quite at odds with the parameters within which the message-maker worked (Blumler 1974). By 1973 a more balanced way forward had been proposed by Stuart Hall in his 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse' (1973) in which he suggested that there was not necessarily a correspondence between the message encoded by the message-maker and that decoded at the other end and that the

communicative process had to be looked at as a whole. It was Hall's article that laid the ground for a new flowering of empirical work, concentrating upon the recipients' readings of the messages or texts, associated with the Birmingham School (Kitzinger 1999: 3). Morley's study of readings of the current affairs programme *Nationwide* confirmed that there were different possible readings of the text, that readings were related to class, gender, age and ethnicity (Morley 1980). Comparable studies were subsequently undertaken on readings of soap operas (Hobson 1985; Katz and Liebes 1985).

On a slightly different tack, various studies were undertaken in the early 1990s which suggested that the media did influence, but by no means always in the way which might have been predicted by the message makers, and pointing to a need to understand the construction of the messages themselves as much as the recipients (Jhally and Lewis 1992; Gamson 1992; Corner et al 1990). Soon after Morley's 1980 study Cohen and Young (1981) were arguing that effects were not amenable to analysis, for one result of this new understanding was that the very idea of effects was doubted. That the media professionals and the public both appeared to believe still in the hypodermic model is evident from the reaction to the Bulger case (in which it was suggested that the murderers had been stimulated by their media viewing; discussed in Kitzinger 1999). Academics reacted by publishing, *inter alia*, *III Effects* (Barker 1997), which broadly argued that the idea of effects was a myth and that the media were being made scapegoats for social behaviour in reality influenced by other factors.

However, the Glasgow University Media Group was, in the 1990s as in the 1980s, carrying out a series of studies into the television audience reception process which were suggesting that the dismissive attitude to effects was misguided. There was impact upon recipients, they concluded, since certain types of information were conveyed very effectively and could be used in daily life by the recipients just as associations were made between situations mediated and real life situations, causing fear of danger, for example. Moreover recipients could recall dialogue and used their recall of the situations 'as common reference points to explain or justify certain points of view' (Kitzinger 1999).

Impact was mediated by the environment, the personality of the recipients and many other factors and was linked to the message construction. Until recently these debates largely passed by Chinese journalists and even media academics. Xu Xun is worth quoting as he remains an exponent of what Anglophones might call the hypodermic approach. 'Once the masses understand what the Party wants then society is in order and the journalists have done their job. (Xu Xun)

²² Lee Chin-ch'uan, personal communication, 5 May 2000

²³ A glance through the reports of the Campaign for Quality Television or Media Watch will confirm this.

²⁴ This is by no means a Chinese speciality. Many British journalists and even some people teaching the subject in universities believe that all the tyros need are a few handy knacks. See my article 'Skills are not enough: the case for journalism as an academic discipline' submitted to *Journalism* Spring 2001.

²⁵ The process was not quite so clean-cut and some independent newspapers survived but so hamstrung by political dictates or lack of advertising funding that they did not last long.

²⁶ The most terrifying aspect of this, often overlooked by foreign observers, was that it was in effect hereditary. That the political actions or words (and 'political' had very broad meanings) of one member of a family could determine the life chances and perhaps survival of all relatives to several degrees of consanguinity and for generations to come was a feature of CCP terror particularly awful in a society in which the family has typically been the only support of individuals; its existence is one particularly dramatic example of how draconian was the CCP's terror.

²⁷ In Taiwan a resurrection along these lines was being attempted and is expressed in a document which would not have been out of place on the Mainland in relatively relaxed times. The 1950s Code of Ethics adopted by the (Taiwan) *Press Association*, *Newspaper Society* and *Reporters' Society*, appears intended to provide a framework acceptable to the political leadership which might yet allow some scope for journalistic responsibility to develop. It declares, *inter alia*

We deeply believe that national independence and world peace transcend all other interests. We pledge not to indulge in any expression of opinion or reporting which may be prejudicial to national reconstruction..... We pledge to work for the promotion of the people's knowledge, the promotion of the people's morals...We pledge to go deeply among the people to seek improvement in their livelihood, to propagate production and reconstruction and to organise social service. (Zhang 1968:21)

One of the problems that journalists on the Mainland had from which their counterparts in Taiwan suffered less, is that the splits in the CCP leadership were severe, often involved the media and had repercussions on the media.

²⁸ According to my informant, his father was a 'mere' fisherman around Shaoxing but was able to progress to being the manager of a fish farm. His mother's family benefited similarly from the CCP. His older brother and sister became doctors and he studied philosophy. The only brother who did not go to university, the youngest, became an entrepreneur whose fortune now subsidises other members of the family. The latter is quite likely to want faster change, the members of the family in state jobs are doubtless chary of it. He himself is ambivalent, as befits an 'intellectual' in the culture industries!

²⁹ Almost every journalist I have met in China I have asked to tell me the attractions of journalism to him/her. All of them cited the freedom to travel within China, something which until the mid eighties was very difficult for all but quite senior officials and journalists and is still expensive for most people. Thus travel is a great perk and privilege and journalists have probably always been very sensible of this.

³⁰ According to Zhao Yuezhi, min-ban newspapers were advocated in this period; they were not again to be advocated until the 1990s (Zhao 1998 ch2).

³¹ There is a political biography of Yao, by Lars Ragvald (1980)

³² I am indebted to Professor Roger Bromley for this analogy.

³³ Falsehood and exaggeration should not, however, be thought to have been merely a product of the GPCR. They were endemic to the Leninist conception of reportage. See Zhang Ailing's novel *Yang ge* (the Rice Sprout Song), cited in Chapter X (Yangge 1960 : 98-99)

Zhang Ailing (1960) *Yang Ge* Taipei : Huanggui CBS

³⁴ I am indebted to Prof David Morley for providing me with the Howard articles.

³⁵ 'Literatus' is the expression commonly used in Chinese studies to designate those conventionally regarded as 'educated' in traditional China, viz those who had, or had had, aspirations to take national examinations for the magistracy or persons from families typically so aiming. It is used here in preference to 'intellectual', which has implications of 'freethinking' or event 'iconoclastic'.

³⁶ There is an amusing series of scenes in Chapter 29 depicting the rather half-hearted attempts of the local warlord to close down the paper. With hindsight, it contrasts vividly with the savagery of CCP oppression that would follow.

³⁷ See Hsia (1971), still an excellent account of the interaction between politics and literature in the period.

³⁸ For my general background I am drawing upon past reading, particularly of the wonderful books on the period by Benjamin Schwarz, and also upon lectures at the LSE by Professors Stuart Schram and Jean Chesnaux 1970-72.

³⁹ See also Cheng, Jason (1963) p50

⁴⁰ Conversations at Zhejiang University School of Journalism, 17 Sept 99

⁴¹ Marxist terminology was eschewed; but the ideas of a vanguard party above the state and society, of imperialism, of class struggle, and of the power to deprive political opponents of their rights were all asserted. The ideology and organisation of the Guomindang were transformed by these decisions, many of which proved as useful in justifying Chiang Kaishek's later dictatorship as in justifying totalitarian socialism.' (Gray 1990 : 212)

⁴² Although much interrogated. In a 2001 lecture, James Curran argued

⁴³ The ideal of great unity and harmony is traced back by Chinese traditionalists to the Shang Dynasty of the Golden Age (which historically may have ruled parts of Heibei and Henan). As FitzGerald writes 'The sense of unity, of belonging to a civilisation rather than to a state or nation, was thus very ancient...It formed, in later times, the foundation for the acceptance by the Chinese peoples as a whole of the firm, strong and enduring central government which first united the country in the third century BC. It was an ideal which could be transmitted....' (FitzGerald 1969: pp6-7). Always a powerful concept in Chinese thinking, it was further developed by the 19th century reformer Kang Youwei who wrote a book devoted to how the great unity would once again be realised, the Datong Shu. Gernet summarises his idea thus: '...humanity must experience in the course of its evolution three stages, the last of which will see the disappearance of frontiers and social classes, the formation of a universal civilisation, and the inauguration of a definitive peace.' (Gernet 1996: 596). Unity is thus the state to come and Confucians await it as they seek social harmony.

⁴⁴ Joseph Levenson has argued that communism suited Chinese intellectuals because it enabled them to feel superior to the hated west and more advanced. They could 'reject Confucianism from a superior position, while rejecting capitalism too' (Levenson 1958 : 134). I would add that another appeal of communism was surely that it offered that great unity which the messy compromises of Anglophone democracy did not. While not wishing to assume that Levenson would agree with that, I will quote from him to back up my point:

To suggest, therefore, that Chinese communism has a role to play as a device for an intelligentsia in its efforts to escape an intellectual dilemma is not to deny but to confirm the fact that Chinese communism has come to the fore because of awesome social pressures. Alienation from Chinese tradition is inseparable from restlessness in Chinese society; and a revolutionary effort to cure the malaise which alienation engenders is the inescapable counterpart, in intellectual history, of the effort, by revolution, to pass through social restlessness to a social equilibrium. (Levenson 1958: 145)

⁴⁵ This limitation, it can be argued, helps to account for China's tortured, even disastrous, relationship to the modern world. Where its origins lie is outside the scope of this study, but anthropology and developmental psychology will doubtless eventually throw light upon them. That journalists shared this blindness is not surprising, after all, they are of their culture. However, they have made attempts to overcome it, to establish themselves as professionals with a clearly demarcated role in Chinese society.

⁴⁶ Several academics in journalism departments mentioned this essay as influential. Weber tried to develop an idea of a responsible political leader, above interests of family or class to replace the partial leaders who lacked awareness of common underlying interests. See Beetham 1974 pp240-245.

⁴⁷ 'Altruism' is used in this particular sense by sociologists of the professions.

⁴⁸ The date 1852 is significant, because it is then that the Crimean reports of W.H. Russell were printed in The Times, reports whose iconographic or mythical status are discussed in chapter 9.

⁴⁹ Desmond (1978) largely attributes impartiality to a technical development which had an instant influence upon writing, the telegraph, and a commercial one, the news agency. Before the telegraph writing was, by modern standards, long-winded and full of subjective comment and detail. After all, much writing by foreign correspondents was done while waiting several days for a ship. The American Civil War (1862 to 1865) attracted more journalists than any previous war and they were the first to employ the telegraph. Transmission charges were high⁴⁹, every word had to be paid for. Thus the more concise the report, the less it cost to transmit. Correspondents were urged to chop down their material to the minimum of facts and to clarify so that the main points could be identified instantly. When the report was received the recipient editor could expand it, and add illustrative or subjective material. This new way of reporting very soon led to other changes, in particular the introduction of 'the inverted pyramid'. Copy had to start with the key fact or facts, without preliminaries. Enlargements, filling out, followed sequentially and in the reverse order of importance such that the sub-editor might chop off the lower paragraphs without detriment to the meaning, hence 'the inverted pyramid'. Storytelling, by contrast, leads up to the climax from detail whose relevance is not always clear at the outset. As to the content of that pyramid, they are 'the Five Ws and an H', a codification of essential facts for a story that every news journalism student learns: What happened; Where it happened; When it happened; Who was involved; Why it happened; How it happened? These requirements, forced upon journalists by the telegraph, resulted in much greater accuracy and in better reader comprehension; it became a given of journalism that this kind of objective information, news, was different from more discursive, subjective material.

⁵⁰ According to Desmond, Gordon Bennett is 'the inventor of the interview'.

⁵¹ Curiously, Keane is often thought of (as JT reminded me) as an unusually personal and emotional reporter; perhaps, in his capacity as sage of journalism, he does not recognise his own particular gifts.

⁵² When John Boileau became aware of my interpretation of his work, he asked me to take into account his reaction, a reaction which he wrote to me. Since he expresses it very clearly, I reproduce what appear to me to be his key points: 'I hold these opinions and beliefs only in the context of my job as the Editor of a commercial television regional 6.30 news programme.....in the context that there is such competition from other channels, and such a variety of other types of news, documentary and current affairs programming, that my job is to decide which part of the target to aim at.....It is absolutely not the case that I despise or would even knowingly disparage other, more intensive, more morally-driven kinds of journalism: but absolutely and clearly that I have decided that such journalism is not appropriate to a pre-watershed, 55% housewife, significantly largely C2, D, E audience at 6.30pm on commercial television'.

⁵³ Scannell's 1996 study reinterpreted the media's influence and celebrated their bringing about a common world, overcoming alienation and reification. It was in marked contrast to earlier orthodoxies.

⁵⁴ During the Cultural Revolution Red Guards published files 'liberated' from government and CCP files.

⁵⁵ The expression RCP is my own, there is a variety of ways in which the various Chinese terms are rendered into English.

⁵⁶ Jiang Xinyi, Lecturer in Journalism at Fudan, said that she or her colleagues could get their hands on any such RCPs if they wanted to.

⁵⁷ The synopsis of this programme, though not Wang Lili's description of its gestation, appears in the collected treatments of Focal Point 焦点访谈 which are cited in the bibliography.

⁵⁸ Although in a sense it is that too. Note how people change their vocabulary in accordance with fashion in Anglophone society ('chair' for 'chairman', 'Beijing' for 'Peking', 'operative' for worker) and you get a flavour of what happens with dramatic rapidity and thoroughness in China.

⁵⁹ In the case of the use of the traditional English name for the Chinese capital, Peking, some media outlets bowed to Chinese government request that the substitute 'Beijing' be used; imagine what they would have said if the Italian government had requested we say Napoli or Roma! But then, perhaps no government other than the Chinese could have suggested changing other peoples' vocabulary!

⁶⁰ Gu did in fact return to Shanghai in December 2000.

⁶¹ Zhang Ximin is Director of the Centre for Media and Mass Communications Law Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and author of many articles, of which 2 are cited in the bibliography.

⁶² Extensively discussed in Lam (1999), Christiansen (2000).

⁶³ The name of the Turkic student leader, originally from East Turkestan, is often transliterated as Wu-er-kai-xi. It could be interesting to speculate on how it was that someone from a very different cultural background became the most obstreperous of the demonstrator leaders.

⁶⁴ Adopted daughter of Ye Jianying. Missile engineer. Guangming Daily. Sacked from GD. Now freelance journalist.

⁶⁵ As Sullivan puts it: 'In a political and cultural milieu that values socialism, democracy and just about everything else with 'Chinese characteristics', dam opponents are fighting an uphill battle in citing 'international standards' to back their opposition to this massive project. Proponents of the dam are identified with the power and glory of the Chinese state; opponents with the views and professional judgements of the easily maligned 'foreigner'. (Dai 1994: xviii)

⁶⁶ The difference is of course that UK journalists do from time to time draw our attention to such manipulation and falsification. See the C4 Dispatches 'Cooking the Books' 1989 and more recently, BBC Panorama 'Politics of Spin' 2000.

⁶⁷ Stephan Feuchtwang argues that these are returning. See Perry (2000).

⁶⁸ In Eastman's words, 'some of the dominant traits of Chinese social behaviour proved to be particularly inimical to the development of effective government administration' (Eastman 1975: 309).

⁶⁹ Blaming others for China's problems has been a distinguishing feature of Chinese political life and relations with other countries for at least a century. While it is understandable, in the light of the humiliations visited upon China in the 19th century, that Chinese should be critical of imperialism and the west, the refusal to acknowledge the immense help given to China by often disinterested and dedicated educationalists, officials and philanthropists is quite extraordinarily mean-minded. Truly, communism provided a good excuse for despising the west as Levinson noted in his great early study of Chinese intellectuals (Levenson 1956). Considering the troublesome relationships that other societies have had with imperialism, or with competitors, China has little to complain about compared to much of colonised Africa or European countries exploited by their neighbours. However, the inability to empathise with others or to relativise things Chinese is familiar to students of modern Chinese history.

⁷⁰ This has been widely discussed. See, for eg, Zhao (1998: 35). She also reminds us that Hu Jiwei had suggested that the press ensured that people had the right to be kept informed, to be consulted, to involvement and to supervise government. Wang Ruoshi and others moreover argued that a free press is essential to a stable and prosperous country (Zhao 1998: 37).

⁷¹ The majority Turkic people of Eastern Turkestan are referred to by the Chinese government as the 'national minority' of the 'Uighurs'. They are ethnically and culturally virtually Uzbek and speak Uzbek Turkish with a local accent.

⁷² And still is. In theory the subject is very much alive, with experts gathering information and, in the case of the CASS parliamentary advisory group at least, visiting the UK for extensive briefings (at Nottingham Trent University 1-28 February 1999).

⁷³ This documentary provoked lengthy and virulent controversy as it lambasted Chinese traditional society and appeared to advocate sweeping westernisation and rejection of much of Chinese culture.

⁷⁴ The term is used here in its technical, CCP, sense as meaning the thought reform (through study and/or punishment) of the deviationist.

⁷⁵ Conversations at Zhejiang University, September 1999

⁷⁶ Reported throughout the media, w/b 20 September 1999

⁷⁷ Nanxun means 'southern tour' but has implications of the journey of inspection by an Emperor to his provinces, or even a royal progress. Hence my use of the term Progress which seem to me to give the right flavour while not being any less accurate than the other translations in use.

⁷⁸ Subsequently renamed Information Department in the English version

⁷⁹ Abridged from a very long reply full of instances.

⁸⁰ Ditan publications are semi-official ones, both proper newspapers, often evening ones, and magazines which range from professional journals to gossip or lifestyle magazines.

⁸¹ The justification for Conglomeration appears to be that the Japanese zaibatsu are a model which China should attempt to emulate, not only for their function in national development but also for their believed efficiency.

⁸² Mr Pan refused to further comment on this matter, about which I had heard from several other sources

⁸³ In Chengdu in June 2000 I was struck at finding a Burberry jacket for sale at a price which was the equivalent of a year's salary for a senior Chinese television reporter.

⁸⁴ I am indebted to Prof Roger Bromley for this observation.

⁸⁵ There is no exact equivalent to the UK term, but the nearest is probably Shendu Xinwen, literally News Indepth.

⁸⁶ Curiously, simple people interviewed are often not captioned by name but as 'local peasant', 'villager', 'local woman' etc.

⁸⁷ I had flown in with some of the Orbis team.

⁸⁸ Perry has given the current (2001) position as he sees it, and it does not appear to have changed, at least in formal terms: 'The Central Propaganda Department guides and supervises the work of several state bodies within the central government, including the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television 广播电影电视总局, the State Administration of Press and Publication 新闻出版局 the State Council Information Office 国务院新闻办公室. In Chinese administrative terms, these bodies are within the network, or xitong 系统, of the Propaganda Department 中宣部.

⁸⁹ For an explanation of the Xitongs see Christiansen (1998).

⁹⁰ Why is the journalist called 'the king without a crown' in China? Because it is that the media has been part of the political system. In the past, the number of newspapers served as an important barometer of the changing political and economic climate. Chinese leaders regularly manipulated the media to bolster their own positions, used the media to oppress anyone or vilify their rivals.....the promotion system depends on the propaganda of media, for example, if the media always sing high praise for someone, then this lucky guy will be promoted soon. On the contrary if the media thinks that officials have been involved in some scandals, such an investigation would not be promoted. Many officials are thrilled to be in front of the camera and that and their close relationship with the Party are the reasons why in China the journalist is called 'king without a crown'. (Gu 2000)

⁹¹ Peng Dehuai was rehabilitated in 1979, presumably to symbolise the return of open discussion.

⁹² They however were maltreated, his house was taken and his possessions stolen by the Chief of Police (Cheek 1997: 281)

⁹³ See, eg. *The Journalist* 新闻记者 Aug 1984-Feb 1985.

⁹⁴ CC Lee, 1/11/00 London, personal communication following his interview with Hu Jiwei. Lee considered that Hu's call to young journalists to 'make money' and 'work for yourself' was the symptom of a broken heart.

⁹⁵ When I lived in Hong Kong for short periods in the 1970s and 1980s I enjoyed reading newspapers and magazines using Cantonese vocabulary. This was a delight not available to 100 million odd Cantonese in the PRC. Although programmes in the other Chinese languages are available on radio and to a lesser extent on cable TV, I understand that no mainstream media reflect spoken languages other than PTH.

⁹⁶ Liu can be disparaged because he lives as a refugee in the USA as much as for the reasons I propose below. However, from the context of the conversation I believe my reading to be correct.

⁹⁷ Hu Yaobang was a protégé of Deng Xiaoping, expected to succeed him until 1987 when he was dismissed from his post of CCP General Secretary on account of his failure to suppress the student democracy movement. It was his death in April 1989 that precipitated massive demonstrations culminating in the 'Tiananmen incident'. He was respected for his frugality, openness and passion.

⁹⁸ The Editor of *Sunday Times Insight* has described to student journalists how Watergate is his inspiration and his model (Leppard 1998).

⁹⁹ I am using the word 'journalist' here as shorthand for media owners, managers and scribblers.

¹⁰⁰ The Public Bodies (Corrupt Practices) Act 1889; The Prevention of Corruption Act 1906; The Prevention of Corruption Act 1916.

¹⁰² Professor Roger Bromley has pointed out to me that an English equivalent and contemporary was Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), journalist, novelist and philanthropist.

¹⁰³ For much on Zola see Keating (1991) pp115-6 and p306

¹⁰⁴ There were other examples of investigation but more research needs to be done. One that something is known about is the exposure by The Manchester Guardian of Kitchener's concentration camps for Boer civilians during the Boer War. See Ayerst, D (1971) *The Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* London: Collins p285

¹⁰⁵ Of the 30 journalists interviewed in the course of this research, 8 were from Zhejiang DST, which makes and transmits the news programmes now analysed.

¹⁰⁶ For the views of an academic from political science rather than Media Studies, see Parsons (1995)

¹⁰⁷ In the UK, the researcher spent one week (after initial exploratory visits) in the Birmingham newsroom of Central Television¹⁰⁷, attending all news conferences and noting the discussion of stories and running orders; he taped each evening's news programme for analysis; he interviewed 16 journalists, covering all roles, in 18 interviews. Following the research he had further discussions with the Editor of Central News; analysed the recorded interviews and texts recorded; and also invited two groups of students to examine the texts.

¹⁰⁸ Hangzhou is not an ancient city, having developed as recently as the 7th century AD, but has been home to several of China's greatest poets who are commemorated everywhere. It was the imperial capital in the 12th century and this spurred on its urban development and industrial progress. The population grew from less than half a million to a million in that period. Under the Mongols Hangzhou developed as an international trading centre and was visited by French, Arab and Italian traders, some of whom left reports of the splendour and advanced state of the city with its large temples and palaces. Unfortunately many of these were destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion. The city has an extraordinarily beautiful setting of hills and water, and, conscious of this, the city authorities have in recent years done up or rebuilt large numbers of traditional teahouses, temples and famous cultural sites. They have been rewarded by more tourism than any Chinese city bar Peking, 21 million visitors a year. It is one of the richest agricultural provinces and a major producer also of tea, fruit and silkworm cocoons and their derivatives. The textile, foods and chemical industries were well established before the Communist government came to power and have regained and surpassed their former importance since the economic liberalisation of the early 80s. The province has been successful in attracting foreign investment, most recently Italian clothing and leather goods producers. The city authorities are conscious of the examples of high tech enclaves in California and parts of Europe (Silicon Valley, Silicon Glen etc) and have set up equivalents.

¹⁰⁹ Figures from the Municipal Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Commission, November 1999.

¹¹⁰ The reason for the discrepancy is that, while the researcher, having worked in several English newsrooms and lived for many years in England, felt confident that the English week was representative, he could not feel so confident about one week in China.

¹¹¹ I have not classified as corruption the several packages dealing with traders flouting laws on health or environmental protection.

¹¹² I have not classified as corruption the several packages dealing with traders flouting laws on health or environmental protection.

¹¹³ There is a clear idea in UK professional lore as to what is and is not 'televisual'.

¹¹⁴ Alone, of course, the scribblers could not do this, but Mao had manoeuvred his supporters into leading positions in the army around the capital so that he was able to back his media attack with the threat of a coup d'état.

¹¹⁵ Recently its English name was changed to Information Department but I have continued to use that by which it has been known for the past 50 years.

¹¹⁶ Liu Binyan writes 'The degree of boldness at *The Peoples' Daily* is (determined by) the presence or absence of support by a politically important individual....During the 1981 Bai Hua incident, for example, although newspapers of the Peoples' Liberation Army published one critical article after another, *The Peoples' Daily* remained on the sidelines, without publishing a single criticism of Bai Hua' (Liu 1990:88).

¹¹⁷ The book was *Talking Heart to Heart with the General Secretary* 与总书记谈心.

¹¹⁸ 'We must let politician run newspapers' RMRB 16/10/96 and NCNA 26/9/96

¹¹⁹ On the spiritual civilisation campaign and its philosophy, see NCNA 26/12/95 'the renaissance of the entire Chinese race'; Xingtiao Ribao 16/6/97; such campaigns were not new of course. There had been one in 1983, followed by the campaign against bourgeois liberalisation in 1986-7.

¹²⁰ He Baogang (1997: 81) makes the interesting point that the disaster of the 'Tiananmen incident' in Peking, when compared to the compromise solution achieved in Shanghai, has taught Chinese intellectuals the necessity for bargaining and compromise. He writes: 'The transition to democracy is a transition in modes of conflict resolution. The first stage is characterised by a switch from command and imposition to intense bargaining and compromise....thus the civility of political opposition may come to mature' (He 1997: 81)

¹²¹ This is not a reference to Liu, whose views on the crackdown I do not know

¹²² Translated by Gordon (2000) as *Candid Talk*.

¹²³ This term and its associations are discussed in Barmé 1999: 62

¹²⁴ The problems being brought about by commercialism gradually dawned on some of the intellectuals in the 1990s, when Culture Minister Wang Meng's championship of the novelist Wang Shuo was held by some to be a sell out to commercial values.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were undertaken on 5 separate visits to China and on occasion in England, between April 1998 and December 2000.

Of the 39 interviewees, 30 were journalists (J), 9 others (P) comprised 7 academics in media departments, and 2 media managers. Of the 30 journalists, 8 were from the Hangzhou TV station, the news programmes of which are analysed in chapter 8. Of the remaining journalists, 17 were from television which was the main focus of the study, 2 from radio and 3 from print journalism. All were located in Peking, Shanghai, Hangzhou or Chengdu.

Names in italics (also in Wade-Giles romanization rather than Pinyin) are pseudonyms.

<i>Name/Pseudonym</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Title/approx age</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Jiang Lan M	Oriental TV	Deputy Head of News	98/4/9	J
2. Ding Junjie M	Broadcasting Academy	Deputy Director	98/4/17	J
3. He Cihua M	Renmin U	President. Chinese Journ Ed Assn	98/4/13	J
4. Yu Min M	Peking TV	Senior Reporter, Current Affairs	98/4/17	J
5. Du Yen M	Peking TV	Dep Director, News Department	98/4/17	J
6. Chen Huo M	TVBS (Taiwan)	Head of News	98/4/22	Not used
7. Deng Dinghua M	Central TV (Taiwan)	Head of News (Domestic)	98/4/22	Not used
8. Lu Ye F	Shanghai TV and Fudan U	TV Producer (Independent)	98/4/9	J
9. Huang Hu M	Fudan U	A/Dean, Journalism	98/4/8	P
10. Shi Zheng-mao F	CCTV	Editor, Economic Programmes	98/4/16	J
11. Jiang Hong F	CCTV	Dep Head, Internat. Office	98/4/15	P
12. Dai Hua M	Shanghai TV	Producer,	98/4/10	J
13. Lei Yuejie M	Broadcasting Academy	Vice Dean	98/4/17	P
14. Zhou Xiaopu F	Renmin U	A/Prof	98/4/18	P

<i>Name/Pseudonym</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Title/approx age</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comments</i>
15. Li Xiaoping, F	CCTV	Exec Producer, Current Affairs,	98/4/16	J
16. Wang Qianhua, M	Law & Democracy	Editor , (and former Reporter, Guangming Daily)	99/2/27	J
17. Wu Haimin, M	China International Times	Editor in Chief	99/2/27	J
18. Xu Xun F	Central Peoples Radio	Senior Reporter	99/2/26	J
19. Gong Li, F	Chinese Encyc Press	Dep Editor in Chief	99/2/25	P
20. Zhang Ximing, M	Centre for Media & Communication Law Studies, CASS	Director	99/2/26	P
21. Zhang Lifen, M	BBC World China	Producer (ex Chinese J)		J
22. Pan Yuping	Wenhui Xinmin United News Group	Chief of Staff	15/9/99	J
23. Ch'ien Lung, M	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/17	J
24. Lee-Hsia Lung, M	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/17	J
25. Ma T'ing, M	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/17	J
26. Hsia Yi, F	ZJDST	Director and Presenter	99/9/18	J
27. K'ang Wei, F	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/18	J
28. Ch'en Muli, M	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/18	J
29. Liu Ch'ao, M	ZJDST	Reporter	99/9/18	J
30. T'ang Musan, M	ZJDST	Senior Reporter	99/9/18	J
31. Wang Lili, F	CCTV	Reporter	00/3/12	J
32. Ts'ao Hsin, M	Zhejiang University	Lecturer, Media Studies	99/9/20 and other occasions	P

<i>Name/Pseudonym</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Title/approx age</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comments</i>
33. <i>Chiang Hsiaolung, M</i>	Hangzhou University	A/Professor of Journalism	99/9/16 and other occasions	P
34. <i>Gu Xuebin, M</i>	Nottingham Trent University	MA Student, reporter, Jiefang Ribao	00/3/12 and subsequently	J
35. <i>Lee Ch'un, F</i>	Sichuan TV	Reporter	00/6/21 and subsequently	J
36. <i>Hsieh Yichih, F</i>	Chengdu TV	Reporter	00/6/23 and subsequently	J
37. <i>Fang Ch'ih M</i>	Sichuan TV	Reporter-director	00/6/23	J
38. <i>T'ung Hsien-nian, F</i>	University of Wales	Postgraduate, ex reporter	00/10/6 and subsequently	J
39. <i>Ts'ao Hsin, F</i>	Nottingham Trent University	Postgraduate, ex lecturer in journalism	99/11/01 and subsequently	P

APPENDIX B

LIST OF QUESTIONS ASKED AT INITIAL INTERVIEWS

感谢您抽时间见面. 我的问题没有甚么敏感. 研究目的是在几个文化界分析记者的社会地位.

被采访者

您的姓名和工作职称

您是那年开始当记者的?

您那个时候为什么想做记者?

现在您以为当记者有什么好处?

社会用处?

请比较现在的情况跟十年以前.....

请您描写(某)电视台

新闻生产: 譬如说每天多少新闻节目?

(某)电视台和别的电视台有甚么不同的, 观众怎么区别?

您自己制造的节目

您喜欢报道那方面的消息

节目

这个节目的摄制组

他们是怎么样安排的？

在英国记者是分成几类的，譬如说‘严肃新闻’‘趣味新闻’等。你们怎么样分类？

制片人制度是怎么样？

节目的内容(题目)

有没有调查报告或者深度报道？

谈社会问题的节目？

观众最喜欢看的节目是那种？

新闻与社会

您的节目在社会里什么地位，什么用处？

听说这几年来中国电视有很大的变化，请您描写一下这些变化

这样的节目有没有关于政府的政策有影响？您怎么知道？

报道的内容和组织

什么报道是成功的报道?

您怎么把您的报道做得对观众特别有兴趣?

从职业的观点看,您以为中国电视甚么节目您最赞赏?

教育

您以为记者应具备甚么样的素质?

现在和将来的年轻记者必须有甚么样的教育,需要学甚么样的课?

附加问题

‘舆论监督’有甚么意义?

记者应该纯客观看么?

‘自主性’有甚么意义?(记者自己决定新闻的题目和优先权?)

在现行中国那个问题是记者最应该公布的问题?(如:环境)

‘记者必当社会活动者’您同意吗?法动者有甚么意义?

中国的观众和西方的观众有甚么区别?

APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY

Audience, journalist and text in television news : an account of values and practices in an English regional newsroom

"What's an example of a good story? Now take the [girl accused of murdering her boyfriend, now on trial] story, that's good because she's such a fucking slapper, she looks the part so everybody makes prejudicial assumptions about her, they'll say its obvious she's guilty, she's the one in the corner of the pub having a fag and a gin at 11.30 in the morning, she just looks the part, guilty as fuck, so its obviously a picture story, good fun, strip off the voice and you just know what's going on, died blonde hair, dazed by drugs. She's in real trouble. Whether she's found guilty or innocent she's going to sell her story. Its got crime dokko-drama written all over it"

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an account of research undertaken in an English regional television newsroom. The objectives were twofold. First, to see what were the characteristics of the incidents selected to become news stories in this UK newsroom and, second, to identify the news values applied in the selection and treatment of stories.

In television news journalism specialist routines and assumptions are used to classify and format events in a manner characteristic of the profession and with parallels to other professions. In the present study this process is seen to be taking place first in the identification of a particular incident as newsworthy and then its reconstruction (or formatting) as a story appropriate to the medium and to the target audience. Formatting takes place according to invisible rules which are both culturally and commercially guided, and results in product.

The article concludes that the most significant overarching belief held in common by the journalists studied is a belief in professionalism, defined as making a successful product. The practices in which the journalists engage in order to achieve this are techniques of profession and of genre. As to the product, it appears to conform to classifications which carry cultural connotations similar to those of myths identified by other scholars working in other media. There is scope for further qualitative work in this area, on a larger scale, which might attempt to find how far connotation or "deeper meaning", reflects journalists' semi-conscious plotting.

INTRODUCTION

News programmes are an important feature of many television channels and are widely agreed to be influential in the construction of reality, although there are many different ideas as to how that influence is exercised.

The news programme¹ includes all information, verbal or visual, contained within a segment of television programming which is given that title and this will usually encompass the structuring (ordering, time distribution), packaging (idents, stings, studio design, presenters), individual stories (form, length, angles) and commercial breaks, if any. This study is concentrated exclusively on those components of the news programme which UK journalists refer to as packages, though on camera they are called reports. This is an almost universal subgenre which in the UK takes the form of a personally authored report of between one and six minutes long, most commonly one minute thirty. As a way of examining television journalists and their work, taking the package as a discrete unit of study is suitable because it is individually authored (success at it is a touchstone of a reporter's ability) and forms a very important part of the whole known as a news.

Journalists have tended to argue that, notwithstanding deficiencies, news reflects reality (eg Randall 1996). Academics are more sceptical. In looking at news content, they have established that news programmes are dependent upon established authority (Sigal 1973, Dickson 1992, Daley & O'Neill 1991), are ethnocentric (Gans 1979), create norms of deviance (Cohen 1990, Hertog and McLeod 1988), give undue prominence to violence and criminality (Roshier 1981) and stereotype people (GMG 1980, Tuchman 1978). Furthermore Phillips (1995), Bell (1998) and other working journalists have accused the media of sanitising content as has at least one academic study (Shepard 1993, cit. in Shoemaker P 1996).²

According to Poecke (1988) journalists take an event, decontextualize it and recontextualize it. Sometimes they recontextualize using the interpretative structures of official sources (p36) and sometimes they just fit events into pre-existing cultural categories, as in the Charles Stuart case³.

Bell (1995) is concerned about the specificity of the news story genre and how that specificity affects our conceptions of reality. He argues that modern news discourse has developed a specific time structure because of its values of recency and novelty ("deadline", "scoop"). One result is that news neglects the why and how because of its urge to when. Moreover the "corkscrew time structure" makes for narratives that overturn chronology and make comprehension difficult, indeed militate against it. Journalists, it is argued, take events and fit them into patterns created by commercial demand for predictability, competition and prefabrication.

In this study we look at how, in a regional television newsroom, journalists' specialist routines and assumptions are used to classify and format incidents in a manner characteristic of the profession. The objectives of this study were twofold. First, to see what were the characteristics of the incidents selected to become news stories in this UK newsroom and, second, to identify the news values applied in the selection and treatment of stories.

THE BIRMINGHAM NEWSROOM : ENVIRONMENT

Central Broadcasting

Central Broadcasting is one of the fifteen regional ITV (commercial television) companies in the UK. It is part of Carlton Communications⁴ which has several ITV licenses, including that for the Midlands, Central Broadcasting, which covers a quarter of England with a population of nearly 9 million. The conditions of the franchise require that Central supply certain types of programmes, in particular regional programmes and news, although the core schedule, as with other ITV regions, is provided by the Network Centre to which Central is a substantial contributor of programmes.

Central produces several regional current affairs programmes, both studio based and location or documentary, and "ethnic" programmes. Its network output is large and famous; perhaps the most famous are The Cook Report (popular investigative journalism), Sharpe (period drama) and Inspector Morse (detection). Central perceives competition as fierce and coming from BBC Midlands, national terrestrial channels, satellite and cable channels.

Central News

Central provides separate news programming for the West, East and South Midlands, with three newsrooms and there are satellite studios and regional reporters elsewhere. The three separate editions of Central News produce more than 700 hours of news a year. Each newsroom produces ten bulletins per weekday from 06.15 through to 22.40. Central claims the highest audience for regional news in Britain.

200 persons are employed by Central News, of whom 90 are journalists. There are 17 camera crews at work each day. The Birmingham newsroom handles stories from the industrial West Midlands conurbation, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, South Cheshire and parts of Derbyshire and Leicestershire. The flagship programme is Central News (the others are referred to as bulletins), transmitting at 18.25. It is work on this programme that forms the subject of this study.

Responsibilities

The Controller of News and Operations (Laurie Upshon) is responsible for all news output from all areas. Control of the news service is the responsibility of the three Editors. In Birmingham the Editor is John Boileau who delegates Input to the News Editor to whom answer the Reporters, Forward Planners and Crews. Output is the responsibility of the Producer who constructs the running orders and manages facilities. The Bulletin Editor answers to the Producer.

The support team is headed by the Directors who realise the programme through studio and who are backed up by News Assistants and specialist technical and design staff. Engineering comprises a further category of staff.

New technology

A very substantial investment has been made by Central in the most up-to-date version of News-Star and in the new Edit-Star, arguably making it Europe's most advanced newsroom. These require brief explanation. Whereas in recent years reporters have typed or word processed stories and then worked with an editor to put these together with shot material, the introduction of new technology gives the journalist a workstation, the size of any desktop computer, which will enable her/him to view her/his shot material (and any archive s/he wishes to access through it), edit it, mix music, graphics and archive into it, dub commentary on and transmit the story directly onto the programme. Fully deployed, this cuts out several production stages, enormous amounts of equipment and several employees.

There is one requirement of journalists by the new systems which may change journalism recruitment: they for the first time must become directorially creative. In the past creativity was provided for them by cameramen, artists and editors. Journalists supplied news. Since crews now stay on the road shooting story after story in a conveyer-belt system rather than working together with the reporter in a creative team planning and constructing a piece a day, the reporter has to plan his shots carefully, instruct the operator and then return and play the movie editor.

It is foreseen that quite soon journalists may be expected to plan, shoot, dub and edit their packages on location, then themselves transmit them to the newsroom by satellite ready for transmission, something that has so far only been demanded of the most experienced foreign, usually war, correspondents. At present at Central, the journalists are just beginning to come to terms with this technological revolution.

At the morning meeting on 10 July the Editor announced greater use of Edit Star. "From now on all rushes will be downloaded onto EditStar for viewing; editing will be serviced as before but those who are confident enough to use EditStar should cut down on it or at least mark and post some shots out into the system".

Policy

According to the Controller of News and Operations, Laurie Upshon, the last franchise round resulted in a greater commitment to regional news. His establishment was doubled and subregions were created with newsrooms in order both to reflect local life and to frighten off franchise bidders. Below is a paraphrase of what he told me.

“The area is large and diverse, stretching as it does from “north of Stoke to south of Stratford, from Derby across to the Welsh border”; it is an area of 17 local newspapers, each one of which prints 150 stories each edition of which 100 are local. In half an hour - given the slow pace of TV news - we publish only a fraction of that, and yet surveys demonstrate that it is CTV and not the local press that is the prime source of local news for 50% of the population.

Thus we are very biased to our region and subregions yet have to be very selective in our news. Hard news means things that affect many of our people - such as major traffic problems. As to public affairs, what we think affects our viewers' pockets will be covered. And “what we think” is the key principle. In the past newsrooms were deferential to other peoples' - particularly politicians' - ideas of what was newsworthy. That was possible in the days when there was no competition to speak of, but now market share matters very much so we no longer allow our agenda to be tampered with by outsiders. We know our audience and we'll give them what will attract them to our programme”. What follows shows us how this policy is reflected in work practices.

THE JOURNALISTS' IDEA OF THE JOURNALIST

those interviewed

16 people were interviewed, two of them twice. Aside from the Editor, I interviewed the Controller (his superior) and 14 journalists of whom two were almost exclusively presenters. I asked them basic facts - age, education, training, how they entered TV news, previous work experience - in case there should prove to be a correlation between these factors and responses to questions as to what constitutes a story and what journalism is all about. There was none.

The two overarching questions were supplemented by probes such as “what story do you remember as a good example?”; “whose work do you admire and why?”; “how would you treat such and such an event?”.

I classify the interviewees below according to managerial responsibility although the classification may be meaningless⁵.

Senior management (the Controller) - 1
 Middle management (the Editor) - 1
 Line management (producers, news editors) - 4
 Journalists - 10

education, training or general formation

There were no noticeable differences in approach that might be linked to education, training, age, method into the profession or period of time in it with the possible exception of the Editor. Of those 16 interviewed, 7 had degrees from social science departments, 1 in Sports Cience and 1 in English, all from (non-élite) universities; 8 had undertaken courses as they worked as journalists. 12 had started off in local newspapers, 2 in local radio and 1 on a "leftist" periodical.

The Editor stood out in two aspects of his background. First he had studied management sciences at a top university and secondly he had worked in business before realising he wanted to be a journalist and starting out on a local evening paper. He is not confident, for reasons that will become apparent, of the value of a newspaper background today for the TV journalist.

It was remarked by Breed (1955) that journalists in newsrooms learn their functions by osmosis rather than overt training. This seemed to be born out at Central, where there is no formal training by which news values might be transmitted yet, regardless of the number of years in the business (from 1 to 26) or age (from 28 to 55), values and internalisation of the message were very homogenous. [c.f. Soloski et al 1989]

the Editor

Shortly before my arrival at Central, the (previous) Editor had been dismissed, ostensibly because he thought something he was ordered to do to be unethical.⁶ His replacement, John Boileau, had taken up his post two weeks previously, having been the Editor at Central News Abingdon for 8 years. I interviewed him twice, both at the start and at the end of my placement. I shall summarise his views in general before looking at the responses of his staff.

He believes that he has been appointed in order to change radically the style of news and that he is to do this for three reasons. First, because the hard news orientation of the previous editor, in which the news was "a catalogue of muggings and rapings" is "out of date" and "tasteless"; second, because the losses in market share must be stopped and, third, because the programme should increase the number of viewers.

Boileau has a vision of his audience and his respect for that audience is evident, in contrast to some of the other journalists who referred to them as "thick" or suggested that the audience would not have elementary cultural awareness "for them a Canaletto's a sticky thing with cheese sauce" and "a Rembrant's a cigar". Boileau sees his audience as a family consisting of father, aged 40-55, who if not unemployed does precarious factory work; his wife who works part-time and their two children, one of whom is a teenager. The family watches - or glances at - the news during its evening meal together. The choice of news is made against a choice of soaps or a popular drama series.

In view of this, Boileau believes that the function of the programme is to entertain. He will keep viewers if he can achieve three things: First, interest them sufficiently such that at least one story each night is a talking point in home or pub or at work; provide

variety such that they do not switch off in the search for something more entertaining; have the chemistry between the presenters concocted in such a way that viewers feel involved by them and attracted to them and their "story".

He believes that the use of pictures is the key to making TV attractive enough to hold attention. He remarked that "in my first eight years in television I learned nothing about the medium, because we were always making daily newspapers on screen" words that expressed better the more inchoate comments of other journalists when they criticised the previous Editor's bias towards a "newspaper view of news". Perhaps appropriately for someone trained as a manager, the Editor felt that he first started learning when he himself took charge of the Abingdon newsroom and had to think about how to select, realise and mix stories himself.

the Journalists

why journalism?

Only three interviewees had "always" wanted to be journalists; three others had discovered their career thanks to vocational counselling. Overwhelmingly they took up journalism because it was more "fun" than whatever else might be available; in teens or early twenties they had noticed that journalists got around, met lots of different types of people, were paid to observe and enjoyed constant variety. The only exception to this was the Editor (see above).

Only one, older, journalist said that he came into journalism in part because he wanted to defend "those who need us". He said "between the rich and powerful and the poor and weak there's often only journalists, and the only weapon we have is shame". However, these declarations were qualified by admissions that he came into journalism for social advancement and by the fact that his reputation as a journalists rests not upon radical exposures but upon pleasant cultural features. The one journalist who had worked on a radical left periodical made no claims of idealism although he thought he had originally been pleased to work on a political paper because "journalists are all leftish really" and "it was the way students thought at the time".

As to what they liked about the job today, all identified similar aspects of the job that they like, formulated in slightly different ways: "its immensely glamorous"; "every day is different"; "its exciting, a fun way to earn a living"; "I like the pace, the deadlines, the adrenaline coursing through"; "the competitiveness - trying to be first".

what are journalists for?

The reporters have a self-effacing idea of their function. They want to "be other peoples' eyes and ears", "make them feel they are part of a family and we're the family members telling what's gone on in our neck of the woods" and, most of all, "entertain". They are not reflective about their social function. The one who had begun his career on a radical left periodical, was very proud of some investigations into gangsterism he had done seven years earlier on a local paper but he accepted that there wasn't much opportunity for that kind of thing on TV; an older reporter had won some awards for his environmental investigations but was not sure that there was a

market for that kind of journalism today. Generally, nobody expected that they would ever have the resources to campaign or take a line or investigate but suggested that their role was to present all the various points of view, to be scrupulous in providing the kind of information appropriate to their audience, to resist public relations and not to preach.

Only one reporter (the one mentioned above) admitted to idealism - he wanted to expand ordinary peoples' horizons, so that they would less likely be exploited by the rich and powerful. None felt any needed to search out contrary or marginalised views but one said that he had deliberately set out to do a homelessness story that made homeless people out like the rest of us but less fortunate, and to make a feature that let fox-hunting enthusiasts explain their point of view, "although I myself am probably against hunting".

They have a very clear idea of what constitutes success - a story that gets people talking in the pub; they know what professionalism is - its making the unpromising very entertaining.

the move to entertainment

To a greater or lesser degree all journalists believe this is the right way for the Programme to go. This view may be partly self-serving; it is certainly also the product of relief at the ending of a regime in which they felt uncomfortable, both personally and professionally. The previous Editor is characterised as having overemphasised hard news such that the programme became "a catalogue of rapes", "unending crimes" and allegedly allowed little individuality to his reporters. It would appear that the newsroom felt the programme was "going wrong" and was therefore delighted when a new broom, with the support of the Senior Management and, although focused, with an approachable management style, took over.

These circumstances have resulted in cheerful acceptance of the new norms although it did appear that the Presenters - more detached from the programme than the other journalists - were, at the time of asking, less aware of them.

the best stories

It was intriguing to me that, when asked, journalists remembered very few triumphs and almost no failures, as if they lived only for the day. Those stories they remember as good have certain characteristics (apart from memorability!), they are

- visually exciting
- unusual
- "makes em sit up"
- plenty of action.

When asked for examples of "really good" stories only one interviewee - the Controller - answered instantly. Except the Features Editor, who suggested some of his own recent ones, the others had to think quite hard; most found it difficult to remember any before the current week (indeed three of the nine stories cited - out of

all the thousand odd stories a year - were from that week); three offered none after much humming and hawing. Nobody suggested that any distinction need be made between hard and soft in assessing a story's "goodness". Those that were mentioned were:

1. Rebuilding a family after tragedy

"A couple which lost all 4 children in house fire.....3/4 years later it emerged *via* (reporter) Sandy Barton who gained mum's trust having got to know them well that mum now couldn't have children.....she adopted a baby.....we told the story and then viewers sent in money for IVF treatment.....we broke the story today that they'd had twins. The story had everything: hard news; overcoming tragedy; warmhearted viewers; struggle against all odds."

2. "Second Handsworth riots - it was very exciting"

Riots in an ethnic minority area of Birmingham.

3. The Rackhams slasher attack

(man goes crazy with weapon in well-known shop)

"It was terrific - why is it a good story? It was just before xmas; random attack; amok with knife; attacking blonde women; good eyewitnesses; pix of arrest; human drama and we've captured it!"

4. school class killed in minibus accident

"Whole programme devoted to it, we handled it really well - school praised us for not intruding".

5. "A story about a shark being moved - the pictures were very good".

6. "The cat on crutches - a wonderful story".

7. "When the police started using Rotweilers

(vicious dogs often found attacking children)

....we got a sweet blonde girl to come in and stroke the police Rotweiler" (this was one of this week's stories)

8. the murdering slapper [liar]

"What's an example of a good story? Now take the [girl accused of murdering her boyfriend, now on trial] story, that's good because she's such a fucking slapper, she looks the part so everybody makes prejudicial assumptions about her, they'll say its obvious she's guilty, she's the one in the corner of the pub having a fag and a gin at 11.30 in the morning, she just looks the part, guilty as fuck, so its obviously a picture story, good fun, strip off the voice and you just know what's going on, died blonde hair, dazed by drugs. She's in real trouble. Whether she's found guilty or innocent she's going to sell her story. Its got crime dokko-drama written all over it"

9. Bullimore

The Controller of News was the only interviewee who instantly supplied an example - the story of yachtsman Bullimore who had survived shipwreck, been rescued. He said "it had everything: man alone; search; fading hopes; joyous resolution".

HOW EVENTS BECOME STORIES BECOME NEWS

the Forward Planning System

The Forward Planning desk consists of a journalist and two trainees whose job it is to have a list of more or less checked out stories for everyday of the following week. At the start of the week Forward Planning produces this prospects list and supplies briefs on those stories the Editor agrees to go with, passing onto the Newsdesk. Those for the following day become the responsibility of the Deputy News Editor, those of the day in question that of the News Editor.

Forward Planning's stories originate from the local press, news releases and other submitted information, the various wire services, the forward diary of established events and, occasionally, personal contact. The Newsdesk supplements what Forward Planning supplies with material telephoned in by viewers and stringers; with ideas provided by individual reporters from their personal contacts and specialisms, and with their own gleanings.

All ideas that have got through the Forward Planning gate and the Newsdesk gate are submitted to the morning conference at which the Editor makes his decisions, often laconically, occasionally almost monosyllabically, eg: "No pix"; "Beautiful"; "Only if there's music"; "Out of date".

the morning meeting - arguments about values

In the meetings, which appeared to be the main means by which he gets over his ideas to the journalists, the secondary one being the evening debrief, Boileau repeated some of the nostrums that he had already mentioned to me in interview. Here they are.

He wanted the first consideration to be:

- “what are the pictures?”

He wanted to get rid of:

- “nonsensical” use of statistics
- reporting of “random” facts on, eg, rape or murder, that “neither inform nor help”

He wanted more of:

- stories with people
- stories which are tales
- fast cutting - he had shown the team some TV commercials to remind them what they were up against. “Not 6 seconds a shot but 6 shots a second”.

Here are some of the stories that were rejected and why.

some rejections from the prospects' list

<i>story</i>	<i>reason for rejection</i>
National Marathon Canoe championships	No family available for "practising, setting out, doing it..."
1000 Teddy Bear fanatics @ Open Day	Done before but ok for bulletin
Local boy returns after 1000 mile canoe trip	No pix of him en route; didn't bring back his canoe, so NG (no good)
Birmingham's Irish Dancing School return from USA	No pix of setting out, so NG
Walsall police crackdown on prostitution	"I've seen too many night cops leering at girls in short skirts; this is turning over a stone to look at horrors without any useful purpose"
Police inspector on indecent assault charges	"if its just a tacky case then no"
MPs meet Environment Lobby about Birmingham North Relief Road	"just grey men talking to grey men; sticking in a few airials won't do it any good"
Florida Gospel Singers visit	"you'll never get them to sing on the top of a bus when they're shagged out after a concert" (ie if they can't be shot in a whacky way, its not do-able)

story classifications emerging from the interviews

On the whole the journalists interviewed found it difficult to classify stories, or to accept my probe that they might subconsciously look for certain elements in an event that might lend themselves to a particular kind of story. However, after initial resistance they did, almost all, propose a number of story types. Here they are in crude form:

- aah! factor stories
- fun
- wow!
- little man battling v odds
- tug at heart
- heartstrings
- human sympathy story
- the people vs the big boys
- all is well
- health “everyone thinks they might get ill”
- disaster - authorities tackling
- progress/new inventions/developments
- aren't those foreigners quaint
- enterprising unfortunates
- revisiting scene of tragedy
- wickedness come to judgment
- quirky
- untoward event

These categories fit reasonably well with those identified by other researchers. I have refined them down into a smaller number of types as it seemed there is overlap, and here they are, along with a rough explanation drawn from all the conversations:

1. “Wow! stories” (aka “Aha! Stories” or “skateboarding ducks”)

This deals with something you couldn't dream up if you tried, its so weird. It is definitely a “down at the pub” story .

2. “heartstrings”

This makes you feel empathy - sometimes with animals as well as people.

3. “what fun people we are”

Reminds us that we are good at enjoying life, that life is full of jolly characters Despite all the heartache.

4. “Our kind of folk”

Reminds us of our own identity, characteristics. May also include “heritage” stories for even if the galleries and the National Trust palaces are only distantly relevant to the audience they are nevertheless among those things which define us as English or Midlanders or Brummies (people from Birmingham).

5. “adversity overcome”

An escape from danger: the boy wrongly imprisoned; the woman who fought to have a child.....finally they have made it. Shows how pluck, determination and love win through in the end.

6. "fight for rights"

The big people are always trying to put us down - but we get off our butts and fight back, don't we? Community action fits here.

7. "all is well; mankind advances"

Terrible things happen, but thanks to the public spirit of those in authority, the ingenuity of our technical people and boffins and the heroism of our (young) guardians, we need not fear. Our belief in progress is reaffirmed.

8. "wrongdoers cannot escape: the law is our trusty shield"

Court stories are there to reassure us that good, the community, will triumph and that (despite the well-known cases of miscarriages of justice) there is justice. Bent coppers will always be found out in the end.

Crime stories, where the crimes are not solved, are used in the same way because authority is invariably seen handling the matter methodically and reassuringly.

Many, perhaps most, stories fall into more than one category. Moreover, while the initial event, the raw material, is seen to promise desired elements (eg "heartstrings") the treatment of the story will influence exactly which elements are to be most emphasised. Thus a story about a roughed-up dog could have been angled on catching the culprits who abused pets and would have therefore been predominantly a "Wrongdoers cannot escape" kind of story; in the event it was a "heartstrings" because it was useful as such.

the lead stories of the week

day	story	classification	comment
7/7	Hedges	Wow!	
8/7	Adoption of children from abroad	Adversity overcome / heartstrings	
9/7	The Second-hand goods that could kill	Wrongdoers cannot escape	
10/7	Exclusion orders	Wrongdoers cannot escape	
11/7	Landing plane causes damage	Wow!	

Applying Boileau's categories Wednesday and Thursday were not good starts since neither were the pictures very grabbing nor were the emotions much engaged.

Incidence of the different classification of story through the week

Excluding most sport reports and all newswraps⁷ there were 44 packages in the week. Of them 2 seemed not amenable to classification in the terms advanced. Some others fell into more than one classification.

1. "Wow! stories" (aka "Aha! Stories" or "skateboarding ducks") : 5
2. "heartstrings" : 5
3. "what fun people we are": 4
4. "Our kind of folk" : 7
5. "adversity overcome" : 4
6. "fight for rights": 6
7. "all is well; mankind advances": 10
8. "wrongdoers cannot escape; the law is our trusty shield": 4

It is not likely that any significance can be read into the incidence; the story for which every reporter appears to be searching is the "Wow!" variety, yet of the two of those that made lead during the week, arguably only one of those was top quality; they are difficult to get.

DISCUSSION

The values and the explanations for them

In talking to the journalists the interviewer was very forcibly struck by the lack of any sense of perspective. The interviewees' inability to recollect good or bad examples of their work is referred to above. Furthermore, almost nobody could remember the name of a journalist they had admired or whose work impressed them. One suggested the name of a colleague, another the name of a writer whose style had once been a model. Of the debates that have swirled around the media, their roles and responsibilities, the take-over battles and the issues of freedom of information, sources, privacy, rights and wrongs of investigative journalism and so forth, there was hardly a flicker of interest or knowledge. This may be a reflection of the personality type attracted to news journalism. It may also be a reflection of the state of journalism education in the UK.

As to a sense of professional responsibility, the contrast with the interviewer's own experience of Scottish Television's (STV) newsroom in the late 1970s and early eighties, is apposite. At CTV journalists do not feel political ("though I suppose we are more left than right"), do not have a sense of mission such as may have been more common among journalists twenty years ago and take no interest in investigative journalism of the Woodward & Bernstein model. Their responsibility is to technique, and perhaps to the audience, whereas journalists at STV twenty years ago were committed, usually to left politics and always to a sense of the duties of the journalist to fight for the voiceless and to tell them about the world.

It is the Editor who has the most developed conception of his, very different, responsibility to the audience. He does not draw attention to any moral dimension that this approach may have, yet it is implicit in his manner of speaking of it; he believes that his kind of news is democratic, reflects what people want and is appropriate to their needs and that this is not patronising but right. This vision is a kind of radicalism - it is absolutely against the old public service ethos and contrasts with the idea of the journalist as serving the peoples' "interests rather than their desires".

Boileau's vision holds that the task is to "give people what they want"; help them relax and accept, don't bother them with "big" things that they "ought" to know about or which might depress them. There is no false consciousness to be wrestled with in his vision, quite the reverse, it is the elitists who got it wrong.⁸

In a sense we have been here before. In the 1920s-30s British newspaper Editors Bartholomew and Christiansen rejected absolutely the principles upon which *The Times* had become the talking shop of the thinking and ruling classes, a kind of journalism that they despised and which despised them.

The classification of stories by content

It seems that the stories can be classified and that the classifications derive from the words of the journalists themselves. How do we understand these classifications?

Bird (1988) argues that, in news, that which informs is the "symbolic system" it reflects. She continues:

"One of the most productive ways to see news is to consider it as myth, a standpoint that dissolves the distinction between entertainment and information. By this we do not mean to say that individual news stories are like myth and folklore (Bird, 1987). Bascom (1954) in a classic statement on the functions of folklore, writes that it serves as education, as a validation of culture, as wish fulfilment, and as a force for conformity, while Malinowski (1974) considered myth to be a "charter" for human culture. Through myth and folklore, members of a culture learn values, definitions of right and wrong, and sometimes can experience vicarious thrills - not all through individual tales, but through a body of lore.

Silverstone (1987) asked the key question: "What was the relationship, if any, between television's stories and the stories told in the myths and folklore of other cultures? And what would the consequences be for an understanding of contemporary culture if any such relationship could be established?" (1987 : 22) Drawing upon Levi-Strauss he describes myths as "the product of society as ruminator, masticating the essential categories and contradictions in its way of life through a system of stories that preserve and legitimate its identity" (ibid : 29) and suggests, along with Ang (1985) that "television is the contemporary expression of myth. Its forms - news, documentary, serial drama - each and together are daily at work on politics, science, the private, the strange, the challenging, offering accounts with one aim in view: to give pleasure, to provide reassurance". Later he goes further and, drawing upon Cassirer, identifies myth with the transitional object of developmental psychology, providing the interface between man and reality and calling upon us to consider the "psychodynamics of the medium as a primary cultural force that puts us, the viewers, literally in touch with the basic concerns of life in basically simple and effective ways" (ibid : 43)

Thus we can say that we have arrived at the point where claims are being made that news stories are more usefully discussed as myths than as reflections of reality. What is said about myths that may be relevant?

Characteristics of myth

According to Bolle (1982) the characteristics of myths are that they are claimed to be factual; represent models for human behaviour; offer the knowledge needed for solving the crucial human problems and that no rule or reason is given as to why we should accept myths, nor is evidence provided to justify them.

Bolle (1965 & 1982) and Warner (1994) (drawing upon Dumezil) agree more or less the categories of myth that exist or the areas of life addressed by myth. They are:

- origin
- eschatology and destruction
- culture heroes and soteriological myths
- messianic and millenarian
- time and eternity
- providence and destiny
- rebirth and renewal
- memory and forgetting
- high beings and celestial gods
- concerning founders
- of kings and ascetics
- transformation

Bolle says,

To recognize the myths that are dominant in one's own society is always difficult.... This is not surprising, because a myth has its authority not by proving itself but by presenting itself. In this sense the authority of a myth indeed "goes without saying" and the myth can be outlined in detail only when its authority is no longer unquestioned but has been rejected or overcome in some manner by another, more comprehensive myth. (1982 P802b)

Despite Bolle's warning, it seems to me that some writers, perhaps the best known are Barthes (1973), Brunel (1986) and Dorfman (1983) have indeed identified modern myths of great power. Warner (1994) locates some in a variety of media from films to computer games to periodicals as: dangerous women; aggression as the defining feature of maleness; the difference of the child from the adult; innocent nature versus evil progress; home and workplace are utterly separate - and so on. here are assuredly plenty of other myths in orbit; I have briefly introduced these in order to demonstrate what others have regarded as modern myths in case they bear any similarity to the subjects of this study.

This study and myths

In this brief study at Central Television I have necessarily only seen a small sample of stories from which to find themes, nevertheless it is worth trying to assess whether they can be identified as similar in type to the myths discussed above. I am encouraged in my belief that this is on the right track by a modest experience of verification. In two separate teaching sessions with second and third year journalism students, I showed them the stories without revealing my own classifications and asked them to identify themes and common elements. Their conclusions were little different from mine.

Here therefore is my tentative matching; it should not be taken too seriously, nor should it be assumed that the entertainment or reassurance function is not in fact more significant than any supposed meaning:

classification of CTV story

Bolte's *category* (see list) / my explanation

"Wow! Stories" (aka "Aha! Stories" or "skateboarding ducks")	<i>providence and destiny</i> life is unaccountable
"heartstrings"	<i>rebirth and renewal</i> myth of feelings mattering above all
"what fun people we are"	<i>time and eternity</i> myth of community
"Our kind of folk"	<i>time and eternity</i> myth of community
"adversity overcome"	<i>culture heroes and soteriological myths</i> voluntarist myth
"fight for rights"	<i>culture heroes and soteriological myths</i> myth of democracy
"all is well; mankind advances"	<i>messianic and millenarian</i> myth of progress
"wrongdoers cannot escape; the law is our trusty shield"	<i>high beings and celestial gods</i> myth of leadership

CONCLUSION

There is scope for further qualitative work in this area, on a larger scale, which might attempt to find how far connotation or "deeper meaning", reflects journalists' semi-conscious plotting, or the conventions of genre or technological/resource constraints. I have only touched upon package construction, narrative technique, and, there may be much to explore here as well. There is also scope for quantitative studies such as the observation of the incidence of certain words items, people, situations or types or to see how much time is given to, or what prominence is given to, specific themes over time. It could be rewarding to test the hypothesis that the more that technical professionalism is privileged, the more are cultural values influential. And so forth.

The objective of this study was to obtain some view as to the relationship, if any, between the beliefs and practices of television news journalists. The most significant overarching belief held in common is a belief in professionalism, defined as making a successful product. The practices in which the journalists engage in order to achieve this are techniques of profession and of genre. As to the product, it appears to conform to classifications which carry cultural connotations similar to those of myths identified by other scholars working in other media.

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¹ What distinguishes news from other media production has been studied by, in particular, Lippman (1922), Park (1940), Breed (1956), Galtung & Ruge (1965) and Hall (1973). McQuail (1994, p269) provides an abstracted list of qualities that a text will have if it is to comprise "news".

² The influences upon content and the work practises that cause these slants are dealt with thoroughly in Shoemaker (1996). This study joins other studies of work practices but broadly, comes from within the culturalist orientation in media research which sees media as ritual rather than transmission (Carey 1975). It does not attempt to identify the full gamut of journalists' values as in Gans' (1979) or Schlesinger's (1978) very substantial studies. Tuchman (1973) found that journalists, in order to meet deadlines and to manage the vast quantity of input, categorise their raw materials - occurrences - and then apply formula work routines. Rutherford Smith (1979) examined television news stories in twenty thirty-minute newscasts. He found that all stories fell into four basic categories. He concluded that TV news is "one of the media used for the transmission and reinforcement of the myths of our time".

³ Berkowitz (1997) p498 describes how, in the "Charles Stuart case" a murder was packaged neatly to fit conventional stereotypes (young black male, car thieving, white woman, traffic) bearing no relation to reality but every relation to expectation.

⁴ The following information is taken from briefing notes provided by Laurie Upshon, Controller of news and Operations, my interview with him, the Carlton Communications Annual Report and the listed periodical articles.

⁵ The Features Editor is not counted as management; it is likely that the Presenters earn more than the Controller and Editor yet they may have least authority of anyone in the newsroom, trainees included.

⁶ Nobody at CTV told me this, I found out from associates with CTV connections. Interviewees at CTV only went so far as to say that the Editor was sacked "for the wrong reasons". Allegedly he had been asked to promote a CTV programme on the news.

⁷ Rounds-up of short news items interspersed during the programme.

⁸ When John Boileau became aware of my interpretation of his work, he asked me to take into account his reaction, a reaction which he wrote to me. Since he expresses it very clearly, I reproduce what appear to me to be his key points: "I hold these opinions and beliefs only in the context of my job as the Editor of a commercial television regional 6.30 news programme.....in the context that there is such competition from other channels, and such a variety of other types of news, documentary and current affairs programming, that my job is to decide which part of the target to aim at.....It is absolutely not the case that I despise or would even knowingly disparage other, more intensive, more morally-driven kinds of journalism: but absolutely and clearly that I have decided that such journalism is not appropriate to a pre-watershed, 55% housewife, significantly largely C2, D, E audience at 6.30pm on commercial television".

APPENDIX D

THE PRINCIPAL CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES IN SHANGHAI AND PEKING IN 1998-9

The principal current affairs ¹ programmes available in Shanghai and Peking, with descriptions of some of the stories, to indicate the range of subject matter.

Eastern Time 东方时空 (CCTV) [is a big magazine which contains:]

Time for life 生活空间

Report 时空报道

Face to Face 面对面

Focal Point = World in Action 焦点访谈

Talking Facts 实话实说 CCTV = Question Time

The Investigative Programme 新闻调查 CCTV = Panorama

Peking Express 北京特快 BTV

Indepth News 新闻透视 BTV

News Topic 新闻话题 BTV

News Story 新闻故事 STV

There are also local equivalents, the tone for which is set by CCTV.

Some of the stories transmitted by Focal Point in 1998 indicate the range of subject matter (sources: Li XP; own viewing; Jiang H; Zhou XP):

domestic

- An investigation of poor or false diagnoses and muddle in the Loyang 洛阳 Health Service. We saw the reporter marching to and fro to get embarrassed excuses from doctors and administrators - we saw several victims and heard their stories. Finally the reporter got to the top man and gave him a raking over.
- Senior industrial manager killed bicyclists with car - work unit 单位 bribed witnesses and police for cover up - Focal Point exposed
- Public land developed illegally by developers - told through story of old man who had lovingly planted and tended the trees there
- Analysis of milk price fluctuations in Shanghai
- environmental pollution and the responsibility for it
- local government corruption

¹There is no exact equivalent to the UK term, but the nearest is probably Shendu Xinwen, literally News Indepth .

- police abuse of power
- construction safety
- problems in buying homes caused by official malpractice.
- the study of Marxism Leninism in universities

News Probe, like BBC Panorama, usually covers one issue at a time, in depth.

This was the 1998 range (sources : copied from the board in the office / viewed by self)

- education system's performance in Shanghai
- poor students - not enough money
- domestic violence
- "made in China" label unattractive to Chinese, who prefer imports, why?
- oil exploration in the Tarim (seen). Made as the human interest story of two workers setting out for the deserts of Turkestan, one just as his wife is to give birth and the other just as he has been diagnosed ill; these stories juxtaposed with interviews with the planners and technicians responsible for the development programme
- wreck of a state factory by free-spending manager
- fate of Chinese who went abroad to study and then returned to China. Took two examples, one who went to teach in countryside, one who set up a business in city.
- Chinese trademarks not bought in the west; Chinese goods sell better with other countries' trademarks - why?
- environmental pollution of the Huangpu River and whether anything has been achieved in cleaning it up
- buying a house - is it just a dream or can it work for real? (SEEN) Took various individuals' stories and extrapolated general issues from their problems and experiences in saving for, funding, finding and attempting to buy a home
- prog on education policy in Shanghai
- on poor youngsters who pass entrance exams but don't have enough money to study - recourses

The Economy Channel 经济频道 specialises in stories concerned with the economy, business, investment, agricultural methods, trade matters, industrial production, consumption and savings (Shi). Every year the Channel's flagship programme, Economics Half Hour 经济半小时, (normal take 10%) every March 15th does a six hour programme that critiques Chinese produced goods. - tears them apart and gives an independent audit. This programme gets 41% of the available audience.



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Chinese Journalism and the Academy: the politics and pedagogy of the media

HUGO DE BURGH

Nottingham Trent University, UK

In the mid-1980s it appeared, to idealists at least, as if Chinese journalism might achieve recognition as a profession, might manage to slough off the strict controls of the Communist Party. Then came the participation of journalists in the 1989 protests, the crushing of the Democracy Movement and the reimposition of orthodoxy.

In the decade since then the Chinese media have changed in ways which appear to give more freedom to journalists. There are thousands of media channels, where there were hundreds; the norm is economic independence, not state subsidy; typically reporters are employed under free market rules rather than as civil servants; much more is permissible as content than ever before. Where this leaves journalists and journalism is the subject of this themed issue. Is the professional autonomy which the 1980s demonstrators hankered after being achieved? Does the emergence of investigative journalism signal a watchdog role? Is the fact that journalists may no longer be officials indicative of the Party's willingness to give up its view of journalists as propagandists? These are some of the questions raised in the following pages; the variety of answers provided makes for a lively debate.

The Road to 1989

Although claims may be made for an

indigenous ancestry for Chinese journalism, the examples cited bear little more relationship to modern journalism than do those produced to demonstrate that the Romans or even the Ancient Egyptians had their equivalents to modern media.¹ Modern journalism developed in China largely as it did in Europe, during the nineteenth century, although it lagged behind until the 1920s when the exigencies of the business classes, the success of the vernacular language movement and the enthusiasms of nationalism conjoined to produce a thriving and varied press. In the 1930s Chinese intellectual and cultural life, despite haphazard repression from the Nationalist government, was of a richness that the People's Republic has never emulated.² Nevertheless, frustration at the failure of that government to achieve modernization more quickly and to resist the Japanese threat more staunchly sent many intellectuals into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The position of the CCP on journalists and the media was established during the Rectification Campaign of 1942-44 in Yanan. The objective of that campaign was to absorb the heterogeneous intellectuals into the Leninist party being consolidated under Mao Zedong. In his then writings, in particular "On Literature and the Arts", Mao clarified that the media were to serve propaganda purposes

and that journalists were to be the propagandists. In theory ideas coming from the masses would inspire the leadership who would brief the journalists who would clarify their own ideas back to the masses. By means of this metaphysic the mass media were to be used to shape public opinion.

At the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 the media were nationalized or abolished and the Xinhua News Agency, *Red Flag* (theoretical magazine) and *The People's Daily* established as the authoritative voices of the Central Committee, to which all other media should defer. Journalists were incorporated into the bureaucracy, ranked in equivalence with soldiers or cadres in the executive (ministries) or local administration. The executive structure was paralleled by a media structure. At the apex were the three above-mentioned media. Each Province and locality had its equivalents and there was a range of comparable publications produced by official bodies in such areas of interest as agriculture, youth, trades unions, medicine, coal mining or education. As broadcasting developed, it adopted the same structure.

The popularity of newspapers plummeted as they became ever more dreary, containing little but standardized political bulletins. In response President Liu Shaoqi called for media which could, within a general consensus, criticize and debate and act as a bridge between leadership and citizenry (Liu, 1984, p. 395). For a period during the 1950s journalists were allowed such leeway, but then were crushed in the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957. A second period of analytical and critical journalism came about once it had become possible to acknowledge the Great Leap Forward of 1959 as a disaster and the media's cover up. The Cultural Revolution of 1965-78 put paid to that; the media

shrank to pitiful numbers and terror ensured that the lower-level organs often merely reproduced what was being printed in Beijing.

With the death of Mao Zedong (1976) and the fall of his accomplices debate and criticism re-emerged along with acceptance that journalism must be allowed to report unpalatable truths, always accepting the general consensus that the purpose of journalism is to advance China and not undermine the Party, which the Chinese were expected to acknowledge as the best hope for the future. The Democracy Movement of 1979-80 went too far for the liking of Deng Xiaoping—or, in another interpretation, he had to fell it to placate his own critics on the left, already itchy at his economic reforms—and was replaced by an uneasy *modus vivendi* until the mid-1980s brought an upsurge of optimism and radical thinking. The discussions extended little by little to cover not only demands for even faster economic changes but to argue that further progress and assurance that China would not return to the horrors of the Cultural Revolution required political changes too. Journalists, in particular those working on the establishment's own key organs, took a prominent part in the demonstrations preceding the Tienanmen Massacre and many suffered in the subsequent repression.

Journalism Since 1989

The consensus achieved by Deng Xiaoping's successor, Jiang Zemin, has been more tolerant and, when sensitive, sensitive differently. The main concern of the Jiang era has been to promote the free market as the best means by which the economy may develop; the media are seen as liberating minds and inciting entrepreneurialism. The cultural and ethical conservatism

associated with the media are moral values guardians of the people and Party.

As to the environment, from the Ministry the ending of much of the staff on private permission to that advertising retained by themselves. E the media have recognition; for of the free market public by Deng Southern Tour new titles, new advertising, new manner in which provincial pioneer *ness News*, has nities thus promote Huang Cheng issue.

As to content news program negative stories tended to inspire Today there is official, positive also developed or investigative responding to and sometimes on *60 Minutes Panorama*.

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associated with Jiang has meant that the media are called upon to uphold moral values and to serve as the guardians of the interests of both people and Party.

As to the economic and institutional environment, in 1992 new guidelines from the Ministry of Culture made for the ending of government subsidies for much of the media, the engagement of staff on private sector contracts and permission to diversify. It also allowed that advertising revenues be largely retained by the media organizations themselves. Between 1978 and 1989 the media had expanded out of all recognition; following the confirmation of the free market direction made explicit by Deng Xiaoping during his Southern Tour in 1992 the explosion of new titles, new channels and new advertising has been phenomenal. The manner in which one newspaper, the provincial pioneering *Chengdu Business News*, has exploited the opportunities thus provided, is well illustrated in Huang Chengju's study in this Special Issue.

As to content, before 1978 Chinese news programmes famously eschewed negative stories and favoured those intended to inspire or awe the masses. Today there is still plenty of room for official, positive stories but there has also developed a new genre, in-depth or investigative programming, corresponding to the UK's current affairs and sometimes consciously modeled on *60 Minutes*, *The Cook Report* or *Panorama*.

Already in 1979 it was possible to criticize aspects of official behaviour and to expose official malpractice; programmes giving space for ordinary people to voice their opinions and human interest stories appeared and, with a brief hiatus in 1989–90, there has been a continuous development, with the media encouraged to become more realistic. Since 1993 in particular there

have been many more stories both closer to the lives of ordinary people and more reflective of the society. Radio showed how the media could be audience-led rather than leadership-led (Polumbaum, 1990, p. 3) and first started phone-in shows, opinionated chat hosts and the airing of every kind of grouse or inquiry of the public authorities (Crook, 1997). Accidents, disasters, crime, price rises, inflation and environmental problems have become routine (Jiang, 1995, p. 73) and such coverage has been theorized as the principle of "Three Proximities", meaning proximity to the public, proximity to reality and proximity to day-to-day life as well as incorporated into mission statements (Du, 1998). How the Chinese media have taken on board the concept of "audience" to complement, and perhaps replace that of the "people/masses" of communist typology and how this process of "hailing" or identifying people in a new way is changing politics and society is the theme of Zhang Yong in this issue of *Journalism Studies*.

The most famous vehicle for investigation is *Focal Point*, within CCTV's magazine *Oriental Horizon*. While ratings for network news are 40 per cent of the maximum audience of 900 million, for investigative and critical features on *Focal Point* they can be as high as 70 per cent (Li, 1998). Eighty per cent of CCTV's mail comes to *Focal Point*, 3–4,000 letters a week, along with many thousands of calls dealt with by a full-time staff. It is widely believed that ministers watch the programme before making policy. President Jiang Zemin has been known to call in, and Premier Zhu is believed to have instructed ministers to watch it (Jiang, 1998); in late 1997 Li Peng visited the offices and expressed his appreciation of the team's work (Li, 1998). These observations support Gordon's contention that the leadership perceives no

contradiction between investigative media and its own authority (Gordon, 1997).

In trying to understand what these innovations mean Zhao Yuezhi has broken new ground, analysing their social and cultural significance in her 1998 book, reviewed in this issue by Michael Yahuda. Her article in this edition of *Journalism Studies* takes today's Chinese investigative journalism, rather as Ettema and Glasser (1998) have done in the United States, and I myself in a modest way for the United Kingdom (deBurgh, 2000), and shows how it can serve the *status quo* no less in China than in other societies, that it is by no means always the unorthodox its practitioners sometimes believe it to be. With many concrete instances, Zhao demonstrates how exposure of corruption or administrative blunders serves the purposes of government although she does assign journalists some critical functions independent of the power holders. Also in this issue, Xu Hua's culturalist interpretation is another stimulating approach to making sense of *Oriental Horizon*.

It remains only to add that in this new climate of varied, competitive and sometimes iconoclastic journalism, the official organs of the Party are beached. They are losing money because they are less able to respond to the market pressures which have forced the changes on their peers. Although they have improved the quality of their information their veracity is in doubt; the politically minded probably get their news from Voice of America, the BBC or the Internet. The unpolitical have a host of competitors from which to choose.

Homo Journalisticus in China

Chinese media education, compared to Europe's, has a long history which can

be traced back to 1918. This can be attributed to the predilections of the early reformers, the example of the United States and the Bolshevik origins of both Nationalist and Communist parties. The Anglophone distinction between Media Studies and Journalism Education does not exist. For convenience I will refer to the departments in which these things are taught and researched today as schools of media.

The Beijing University Journalism Society was founded in 1918; one of the initiators was a graduate in journalism from the University of Michigan. It held classes, organized visits to newsrooms and gave students opportunities for practical training through work on a weekly publication (Chang, 1989, p. 232). A journalism department at St John's University in Shanghai took its place in 1920, followed by one at Yenching University (Beijing) in 1924 and at Fudan University (Shanghai) in 1929. There were close connections with US journalism schools and US teachers were common. The Department of Journalism of Chengchih University, originally the Nationalist Party Academy, was founded in 1935 but transferred to Taiwan in 1949, where it is the most distinguished such department in the Republic of China.

The pre-eminent university schools of media in the People's Republic today are those of Fudan University and Renmin (People's) University. Renmin, in Beijing, incorporates Yenching's department. In 1959, independent of the university system, the Beijing School of Journalism was set up; in 1996 this was incorporated within the (National) Beijing Broadcasting Institute which had been established in 1959 to train technical, managerial and presentation staff.

In the early 1980s *Xinhua* set up its own school and the *People's Daily* invested in the Institute of Journalism of the Academy of Social Sciences, which

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8. This can be seen in the collections of the example of the Bolshevik origins Communist par-distinction between Journalism and Journalism. For convenience departments in taught and roles of media. University Journalism in 1918; one of the graduate in journalism of Michigan. It visits to news-ports opportunities through work on a Chang, 1989, Department at Shanghai took its lead by one at Beijing in 1924 (Shanghai) in the connections schools and US. The Department Chengchih University Nationalist Party in 1935 but in 1949, where it had such departments in China. University schools in Republic to University and University. Renmin, Peking's dependent of the Beijing School of in 1996 this the (National) Institute which in 1959 to train and presentation

Xinhua set up its *People's Daily* in Journalism of sciences, which

is the principal producer of Masters and Doctorates in media studies. Today, under the Ministry of Education, there are altogether some 120 specialist schools of media (He, 1998). This figure excludes lower level, employer and Chinese Association of Journalists' courses. In 1982 453 journalism graduates were produced (Zhang, 1999); in 1996, 9200.³ Academic staff totalled 1303 and most of them are engaged in research, ensuring substantial product in media studies which remains to be analysed.⁴ As to the theoretical issues raised by the study of the Chinese media, these are reflected upon carefully in our first contribution, from the leading international scholar in the field of Chinese media studies, Lee Chin-Chuan.

There is eager competition to study to be a journalist, particularly a television journalist, in China today. They enjoy high pay, status and opportunities to advance in many directions. A typical undergraduate student studies for 4 years, across seven semesters. The eighth semester is a placement in a media organization which takes place in the third year. This is the "Culminating Placement". Students will usually have carried out one or more "Taster Placements" of a few weeks much earlier in their Course. The placements are chosen in consultation with the student and it is expected by all parties that a successful placement will lead to a job upon graduation (Zhongguo Renmin, 1998; Fudan Daxue, nd).

At Fudan Journalism Department, students divide into four streams, News Journalism, Broadcast Journalism, International Journalism and Commercial Communications. Modules at both Renmin and Fudan are of three types, those required under the national curriculum and including Philosophy, History, current political principles, the Classics, World History, Chinese His-

tory and Foreign Languages (of which one is selected from Japanese, English, Russian French and German⁵). The core subjects for the degree in journalism include Theory of News, Interviewing, Editing and News Analysis. Finally there are options selected from other departments. Compared to the US and UK courses with which I am familiar, there is more cultural background; compared to Spanish courses there is more practice.

In China it is appropriate to lump together media school academics, media managers and journalists as "media people" and to regard the accounts of academics as being at one with practitioners in a way that would not be the case in the West. This is because they work together in rather closer relationships than their western equivalents. Most journalists⁶ practicing in the elite media have graduated from media schools⁷ where they have undertaken a rigorous curriculum, which will usually include a grounding in Chinese literature. Theory and practice are combined more than in the very vocational Anglophone Departments of Journalism. Aside from a common literary grounding and other modules more immediately related to current media, in the third year they go on to select one of usually two or three pathways, typically broadcast journalism, print journalism or commercial journalism (advertising/public relations), yet these distinctions do not appear to diminish the sense of solidarity among students, graduates and teachers of the faculties.⁸

The relationship between politics and the media world is quite different in the United Kingdom and is probably itself a subject worth studying. It is well known that senior journalists in the national media such as *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency* obtain executive positions in party and government in Beijing. Something similar seems to pertain in the provinces. The Deputy

Mayor of Shanghai—a national political figure—was formerly of the Journalism Department of Fudan University; the present Dean's last job was as a senior government official in Anwei.

On a recent visit to Fudan I experienced the way in which media personnel are reminded of their position when I attended the Seventieth Anniversary Celebration Meeting of Fudan University School of Journalism and the Sixth National Conference of Communications Research which followed it. Present were, as you might expect, the cream of journalism academics concerned with the electronic media, including the Internet. In addition there was a large number of media personnel including the Chief Executives of, *inter alia*, *Liberation Daily*, *Shanghai Television* and *Wenhui Daily*, senior executives of the *New China News Agency*, *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily* and many others; as the celebratory meeting went on the announcer read out the names of the "top leaders" who were arriving continuously plus messages of solidarity from those who sent their apologies.

Aside from the obvious point that the Fudan School and its Dean wished to emphasize the importance of the School and its excellent political connections to all those present, the immediate significance of all this did not come home to me until I had heard all the speeches, especially the final one by Mr Gong Xueping. Mr Gong's speech was preceded by that of Professor Chen Guilan, Dean, Fudan School of Journalism, and those of senior leaders from the National Journalists Association, Propaganda Department, Beijing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), *Canton Daily* (the CEO of which presented an enormous cheque, of 1 billion RMB, for bursaries), *Beijing Daily*, the CCP's Beijing Committee, the CCP Branch of *Liberation Daily*, Shanghai CCP Propa-

ganda Department, the Wenhui-Xinming Press Group, *Shanghai Television*, the Fudan University CCP Branch, Alumni, the Fudan staff and the Fudan students and the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai CCP.

Finally came Mr Gong Xueping, "Honorary Dean of the Journalism School of Fudan University and Vice General Secretary of the Shanghai CCP", Shanghai's Deputy Mayor. While the preceding speakers limited themselves to platitudes he departed from his set text often; he presented himself as someone who well understood the aspirations and frustrations of journalists and academic journalists and was on their side, yet in the process probably left many rather bemused. He declared that the task of the reporters was to report anything, to respond to the needs and demands of ordinary people and cover matters they care about from poor housing to corruption to pollution. However, he argued that there was not much point in making general accusations against a government which was struggling to cope with huge problems and he gave the example of water.

Don't tell people that only 40 per cent of the water of this city is fit to drink [he did not make clear if this was off-the-cuff or an official statistic!] but go out and find the factories, the individuals, the communities who are polluting the water and expose them.

In other words, get at the manifestations but not the system, a sceptic might interpret. From an administrator's point of view, the reporter who does this is a help rather than a pain; they are on the same side, all for better water. Mr. Gong also discoursed at length upon the nature of truth, sug-

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Wenhui-Xin-Shanghai University CCP staff and the Propaganda Shanghai

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gesting that the vaunted impartiality of, e.g. the BBC, was not so impartial when you considered some particular examples. Truth, he opined, can be subjective; it depends from what angle you look at it. "Truth serves purposes so do not be taken in" seems to me to summarize his message.

While appearing to be unambiguous and forthright and indeed being tailored to please his audience by its advocacy of journalism as a key mechanism by which China might modernize, the speech was in fact quite contradictory. It was noticeable less for any clear guidelines than for the sight of a politician courting the constituency both with gifts—he called upon the media executives present to emulate *Canton Daily* and give money to Fudan—and with flattery; and the whole event and his presence at it was loaded with political innuendo. For example the today almost-unheard word "comrade" was used every moment; references to Marxism, Mao Thought and Deng Theory were plentiful and the intimate relationship between the media and politics was the common premise. Finally, the hectoring tone of the political speeches was not only curious to me but considered rather out of order by at least some visiting academics, who thought it most inappropriate for a university, a throwback to the "bad old days" when politics dominated everything. It is likely, however, that the students were less sceptical; at least they applauded Mr Gong enthusiastically, in contrast with their teachers.

Two Key Issues Today: "law and regulation" and "what is a journalist?"

In 1989, before the Tiananmen Incident, Chinese journalists were hoping for a Press Law which would establish their right to report, criticize and investi-

gate according to professional criteria. They had identified three contradictions: professional values were made subject to politicians' agendas; ownership was too concentrated to allow of variety; journalists' work was not managed by professionals. (Polumbaum, 1990). They argued that journalists had an important social function which was being thwarted.

The community was receptive. Many of those returned to power after the Cultural Revolution had suffered from the lack of legality and had seen how abuses and failings could be covered up when the media was terrorized into silence. It has become increasingly possible to find out the truth about the terrible 50 years past, at least for intellectuals in the cities.⁹

Although there was a hiatus after the Tiananmen incident, journalists have continued to argue for media law, encouraged by the government's declarations about the need for "the rule of law", by which it means rule *by* law, or rule according to regulation rather than according to individual whim (Cullen and Hua, 1998, p. 156). This is not necessarily to argue for greater freedom, but for less arbitrariness. The journalists call on all the usual arguments to justify their case: a better informed citizenry; political participation; social stability; checks on authority. In practice, their concrete aims are modest. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Working Party on Media Law Reform, which spent a month at Nottingham Trent University, England, in 1999 to study English approaches to media law, has been urging the need for "a national press law to protect the news media from abuse from the executive and the Party" (Zhang, 1999, p. 2).

An important influence on the media came about as a by-product of the first Civil Law, effective on 1 January 1987. It became possible for the first time to

sue for defamation of character or infringement of privacy. There has been a rapid development in the number of libel cases (well over 1,000 to date) in which journalists and media organizations have been cited as defendants. Of these cases, about one-third were won by the plaintiffs, one-third by the defendants, and the rest settled out of court. Zhang Ximin, Director of the Media Law Programme at CASS argues that since the media are still in many respects extensions of government:

the fact that journalists have lost many of the libel suits brought against them in court does not necessarily mean that it is a setback for freedom of the media. It can sometimes mean quite the opposite as it can imply an increase in legal protection of the rights of individual citizens and an increase in constraints upon the power of the government" (Zhang, 1999, p. 3).

In what senses are Chinese journalists still arms of the government? The tradition of the Chinese journalist is of an intellectual engaged with the future of his or her country. The journalist is not an outsider, looking in, still less merely an individual professional with personal mission or ambition, but a social activist. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the early reformers, aiming to change China that it might resist imperialism, seized upon the media of the day as their means. This instrumental attitude to the media persists as surely as the belief that one of the tasks of the journalist is to propagate the belief of a China wronged and on the path to restitution of its rightful place in the world. In this connection, Cao's thoughtful and engaging analysis of the reporting of the Hong Kong handover in the Chinese press helps us to gain an insight into fundamental factors

in the mind-set of Chinese journalists, factors as important as the institutional framework within which they are contained, and without which it is probably impossible to understand their approach to journalism. Furthermore, while emphasizing the inter-relationships between journalism and the political process, he touches upon the relevance of journalism to the reproduction of social identities.

For Liang Qichao (1873–1929), the doyen of modern Chinese journalism, journalism was not only the means by which he expressed his patriotism but also a modern vehicle for exercising the didactic function of the traditional *literatus*. The first newspaper he founded was the *Qing I Bao*, named after a student movement of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) which had criticized the rulers. So although many of the reformer-journalists of the early years of the century sought to reject Confucianism as social ideology, they remained wedded to the Confucian idea of the function of the *literati* and arrogated to themselves the right to teach, exhort and berate their fellow Chinese. The first textbook for tyro journalists, published in 1919, also held that newspapers should monitor government and represent the people (Hao and Zu, 1998, p. 3). It was merely reflecting what was established opinion among the intellectuals. Long before the present fashion for Habermas, they had identified the roles that the press could play in social development, were the rulers but to allow it to do so.¹⁰

Today, journalists are moved by the pressure of the market and to some extent by the pressure of a society where inhibitions are weakening, to long for their professional independence. Perhaps the generation of Liu Binyan¹¹ is the last to see itself as working totally within the system for Party and government. Today, with the Leninist system much discredited,

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Journalists probably find it difficult to maintain the façade of orthodoxy. They now know other ways of being a Chinese journalist (the past, outside the People's Republic) and about how journalists function in other polities. How do journalists cope with, on one hand, having professional ideals, and on the other hand failing to live up to them? Cognitive dissonance is not an expression which trips often from the lips of journalists; He Zhou, in another path-breaking essay in this issue of *Journalism Studies*, uses that concept to help us understand how they may do so.

This introduction has sought to show

how our present edition of *Journalism Studies* engages with key questions dealing with those who mediate reality to the country with the world's largest population. Eventually this topic may become mainstream within the Academy. Meanwhile we trust these articles will stimulate more people into this absorbing field.

Acknowledgement

Jiang Xinyi, of the Fudan University School of Journalism, read my draft and made comments. I herewith express my thanks to her, while reserving responsibility for any errors.

Notes

- Lin Yutang (1936) *A History of the press and Public Opinion in China* Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh. To say this is not to belittle the significance of, *inter alia*, the *tipao*, the most advanced system of information provision at its time (probably current as early as the Later Han), but to distinguish between their content and functions and those of modern media.
- Scaplica may refer to Gray (1990), Nathan (1985) and even Judge (1996).
- Includes 3,000 not doing pure, full-time degrees. Excludes 332 master degrees and 30 doctoral completions.
- Source: "Guanguo Gaoxiao Xinwenyuan, xi (zhuanye) jiben qingkuang diaocha tongji jiegou 1996" published by Renmin University Department of Journalism, Beijing, 1997.
- Xu Xiaoge, of Nanyang University Singapore, is working on a taxonomy of Chinese media studies which now includes many hundreds of books and, quite possibly, as many as 100 academic journals. The most prestigious journals are probably *Academic Journalism* (Fudan University) and *International Journalism* (Renmin University). Lee Chin-chuan (personal communication, May 2000) considers that, after Hu Qiaomu provided the framework by backing academic study of the subject just after the Cultural Revolution, the greatest impetus for developing media studies came from the translation of Siebert's 1956 classic *The Four Theories of the Press*.
- At Renmin and Fudan Universities; it may be that other universities offer less choice.
- This assertion was repeated to me both at the Schools and by senior professionals. As in the United Kingdom, the early years of television saw many people entering the profession without degrees (particularly in the technical side, from which they could progress to direction and production as easily as journalists). However, Shanghai TV has declared that its professionals will in future all be graduates. There is therefore a demand for night-school classes in Shanghai's schools of journalism.
- Those who took their first degree in Chinese language and literature or Economics (the two main rivals to journalism) appear mainly to have made up for it by taking the MA in journalism which all the top universities offer. The fact that the MA takes 3 years does not appear to be a disincentive since it would seem that virtually nobody can be employed as a reporter until their late 20s, so that gaining an MA is a good way to bide time.
- On a visit to one of China's biggest and most important TV stations, the lecturer accompanying me bumped into 24 people who had been her students or whom she knew as having graduated from her School of Journalism, one of whom was the Chief Executive (who asked her to lecture the following month on what she had learned from a recent overseas trip) and others in the senior management team.
- We cannot be sure how much people know about the bloody and violent repression in the countryside in the 1950s, the manner in which the Party sacrificed the lives of tens of millions in the late 1950s/early 1960s or other periods when power-crazed thugs were let loose. The novels of Zhang Ailing, who wrote what are some of the most moving condemnations of the way the CP brought terror and destruction to the countryside in the early years, are now on sale in China; whether the kind of factual information contained in Jasper Becker's *Hungry Ghosts* (London, John Murray, 1997) is available is open to doubt.

¹⁰ It is ironic that, nearly 100 years later, this is still the key issue for journalists.

¹¹ The distinguished investigative reporter. On Liu, see Michael S. Duke (1985), *Blooming and Contending*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

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理论探讨

英语国家新闻观念中的 真实性与客观性问题

戴雨果(Hugo De Burgh)

1. 问题的提出

前英国广播公司(BBC)战地记者马丁·贝尔是英语国家中最负盛名的记者之一,采访足迹遍布 80 个国家,报道过 11 次战争,包括圣尔瓦多战争及波西尼亚战争。在一系列节目、演讲及一本书中,他对英语国家新闻客观性这一基本信条提出了质疑,并以“新闻倾向性”取而代之。本文以新闻史中的真实性为视角,对马丁·贝尔这一观点及反对意见做一探讨,并提出了这样一个问题:新闻的真实性还能否得以维护。

1.1 当代新闻客观性的常规概念

英语国家记者倾向于认为,世界上只有两种新闻:好新闻和坏新闻。下面一段话代表了这种观念:“所谓西方新闻是有的事儿,新闻只有好与坏之分。每种文化可以有自己的传统,每种语言可以有不同的声音,但在全世界的好记者当中,将他们联系在一起的东西,比使他们分离的东西多得多,四海之内的好记者都认为,他们肩负着某种共同的职责。”

这一职责的基本概念如下:a. 客观现实存在于人的意识之外,等待记者去理解并反映出来。b. 记者与客观现实之间的关系(记者在这一关系中应用一些原则)是识别真正记者的试金石(记者不应是傀儡、公关的役仆或某一派别的代言人)。c. 不按记者行为准则行事的记者,是不合格的记者,他们已被强加于头上的政客的意识形态所左右。d. 英语国家的记者认为,自己遵守的不是某种意识形态,而是反映

新闻本质特征的行为规范。美国著名记者瓦尔特·李普曼说:“新闻的功能是提示某一事件的发生,真实的功能在于将隐蔽的事实公之于众,并揭示事件之间的相互关系,描绘出一幅现实的图画,使人们行事有据可依。”

如今,这一简单的概念已遭到批评。李普曼的观点引发这样一个问题:世界上是否真的有“事实”与“客观”这么一回事?现实是否也取决于观察者?新闻界与学术界对此莫衷一是。在报道国外重要题材时,比如说中国,记者提出的批评是公正的判断,还是种族帝国主义的偏见?战地记者以特有的方式“提供事实”时,他们是否真的在提供事实,还是囿于政治文化的束缚,只陈述偏颇之见?这正是当今真实性与客观性辩论中两个焦点问题,也是我下文将论述的中心。这些问题的背后还存在着“亚洲价值”与“西方价值”两价值系统之间的关系及当代世界文化特征等诸问题,对客观性提出异议的意见认为,客观性只反映某一特定的历史状况,如社会、经济、政治等状况,而这些状况是变化的,变化使客观性成了非本质特征。我将在下文回顾一下客观性产生的历史过程。

2. 客观性的产生

早在英国内战期间(17 世纪中叶),相互竞争的媒体就不断报道不同的观点。18 世纪时,政府与社会要人极力限制作家表达自己意见及针砭时弊的权利,因而以作家出版商为一方,社会上当权派为另一

方的法庭之战连连不断。但是“客观性”并没有成为一个问题。媒体唇枪舌剑,争论不休,同时极力争取论战的自由。早期美国殖民地生机勃勃的报界也是同样状况。19世纪初至1852年间,(伦敦)《时代报》率先争取了政治独立,自称不为党派利益所左右,进行客观报道。1852年是极有意义的一年。战地记者威廉·罗素的克里米亚战争报道刊登在《时代报》上,该报告揭露了一些令政府难堪的事实,军队真实的状况,药物的匮乏,管理的失误等等。这种事情在过去绝无仅有,因此,政府大为恼火。到底发生了什么情况,使这一事件得以发生?

我们可以从政治,经济,技术,体制四个方面探讨客观性的产生,这四方面互为补充。哈伯马斯认为,与过去充满偏见、政治色彩过浓的新闻相比,公正客观信息的出现,是英美消息灵通的社会舆论崛起的产物,社会舆论要求新闻必须公正。这一“公众圈”由不同探讨时事的各种群体组成,这些群体希望以媒体输送的信息为基础,对自我利益及政府政策进行分析,不同群体分析的结果往往相差甚远。不过,不论哪种群体,其信息源却是一个,即媒体,媒体为“公众圈”输送信息,促进其成长,使其信息灵通。这一过程促成了政治的新发展,最终导致了现代民主。

施勒则认为,客观性之出现,是商业利益驱动的结果,即把消息卖给尽可能多的人,得罪尽可能少的人。施勒同时强调,19世纪盛行的实证主义的科学态度,对传播学的影响不亚于对学术研究的影响,德斯蒙德将公正性的出现归之于技术的进步,技术对写作、电报,及商业新闻社的影响是立杆见影的。按现代标准,以前的电报文字堆积辞藻,充满了主观评论及细节,这些文章,是社外记者在苦等船只的数日中写成。美国内战吸引了比以往任何一次战争都多的记者,并首次使用电报发稿。电报费高昂,论字付费,所以稿件越精炼,电报费就越低。记者们不得不大刀阔斧地把稿件削减成最基本的事实,并重点突出,一目了然。编辑收到稿件后,可增添主观说明性材料,拉长篇幅。这一新的报道形式,很快引出其他变化,特别是所谓“倒金字塔”型新闻结构。这种结构要求报道以主要事实开篇,不要引文,然后根据重要性原则逐渐展开内容,增添骨肉。这样,编辑可自由删砍文章后边的部分,而不影响全文内容,由于前重后轻俗称“倒金字塔”型。与此相反的是故事型结构,无关紧要的细节在篇首出现,逐渐引出高潮。金字塔的内容含“五个H和一个W”,这是每个新闻系学生必学的基本要素,即:发生了什么,哪里发生的,何时发生的,涉及谁,为什么发生,及怎样发生的,电

报的应用使记者必须满足这些要素,结果是内容更准确,更易于理解。

以客观信息为主的新闻,与散漫、主观的材料截然不同,这已成为新闻的信条。另一个较大的变化是新闻社的出现。正如德斯蒙德所说:“某报社记者的文章,只能被自己的报社接受;新闻社同样题材的稿件,需要发往数十个报社,只允许被少数几家报馆拒绝。”因此,新闻社的稿件只写大家都接受的事实,不多发议论,这些稿件也为各家报社自己记者的文章,提供了一个客观参考点,一个平衡点。这种做法加强了准确性,避免了新闻过度渲染,并将新闻与报纸广播中允许掺入主观因素的节目相区别。新闻还鼓励使用目击者,视其为了了解事件真相的关键因素,特别记者的队伍也因而突然壮大起来,证言采访成为媒体拿手好戏。这些新事物都产生于19世纪50年代。此时,真实的照片也应运而生,所有这一切使人们相信,意识之外有个现实,需要记者来捕捉。

广播电视频道的限制,是促进客观性概念流传的最新因素。因为人们认为,某些报纸的宗派性倾向,不适于广播领域。服务大众的观念,即广播电视为全民族,为所有观众服务,而不是为其中一部分人服务的观念,开始出现。随着因特网及数字化对媒体影响逐步加深,客观性的技术根基也在改变,没有变化的是客观性的哲学层面,启蒙运动以来“客观”的观念,已逐步渗透到欧洲人的意识之中,虽然相对论、文化决定论等新思潮,对启蒙运动以来的科学主义提出了挑战,人们仍然对科学研究、社会科学的经验主义论、及统计数据有相当的信仰。这一信仰使记者们认为,不偏不倚的态度使自己享有独特的社会地位。新闻可监督政府、政府官员及各种社会组织,为社会提供信息。选民和决策人都可以以这些信息为依据,做出合理的决定。图茨曼将记者的这种观点称为“战略手腕”,记者用它来保护自己,反击被得罪了的人的批评。这是一种防御性措施,记者可以称自己的工作为报道事实,而非个人的见解;从而摆脱对被报道事实的抱怨(有时是令人难堪的事实)。另外,对记者的评价,也变成了对其观察现实的技巧的评判,而非其观点态度。艾伦指出,这种不得已而为之的职业手腕是“一种抵御政治干预的武器”。莎勒比认为,这是英美国家特有的现象。不过,其他国家的记者,也力图使这一观念在本国生根开花。最后一点,谈到公正性时,应该注意英语国家的记者对以下两对概念严加区别:专题节目与新闻节目,新闻报道节目与政论性节目。后面将详谈这些区分。

19世纪的英国、美国,越来越多的人卷入政治,政府也越来越注意对大众利益作出反映。其中有许

多因素,但大众传媒对创造出一个“消息灵通的公众”,并提高政论的质量影响很大。但是,随着媒体越来越大众化,“消息灵通的公众圈”观念在某种程度上被冷落了。越来越多的媒体经营者瞄准了非政治性的大众市场,并以所谓人性的故事、专题采访及轰动效应等手法吸引顾客。一方面,它扩大了对什么是新闻事件的理解,以前的观念可能过于狭窄;但另一方面,它削弱了传媒针砭时弊的力量。这股势力发端于本世纪之初,目前正方兴未艾,且势头越来越猛。哈伯马斯认为,它“将公民从公众辩论中驱逐出去”,并把社会分割成掌握“真正”知识武器的少数派,和被“文化消息”灌得乐呵呵的多数派。

3、对新闻客观性的批评

3.1 新闻并未反映现实

马丁·贝尔结合自身的经历,举例说明并不存在什么新闻公正性。他提出“镜子并不影响它反映的现实,而电视形象却影响现实”。他举例说,战争期间电视镜头常用来为交换俘虏作证,如果没有电视镜头,俘虏交换就可能不会发生。战地指挥官也常为了电视镜头部署军事行动。他甚至说如果有电视镜头在场,日本在中国东北的暴行,及南京大屠杀就可能不会发生。换句话说,电视有好的一面也有坏的一面。

3.2 新闻是有选择性的

过去三十年的媒体学研究也支持了贝尔的说法。许多人认为媒体选择现实的标准,依不同的因素不断变化,如:不同的媒体老板(如欧洲发行量最大的通俗小报“太阳报”有其独特的选材标准,这是其老板鲁伯特·莫道夫特殊天才的产物)、不同的政治环境、不同的听观众、不同的观众期望值、不同的记者教育和社会背景、当时消息来源的局限、摄制组人手及见证人的多寡、当日新闻综合性的需要、避免同类消息重复,等等。当所有这些因素对什么会变成新闻产生影响时,那种把新闻不折不扣反映现实,当作放之四海而皆准的理想观念就要打折扣了。

3.3 没有绝对的旁观者

英国广播公司在对本公司记者发行的守则中规定,记者在报道中应该做到客观、不以感情用事。马丁·贝尔则认为,当暴虐在横行,人们在受苦之时,不偏不倚地报道是不可取的。用他的话说,这意味着记者“被阉割了”。他反问道,在报道1945年德国在欧洲的暴行时,记者能做到无动于衷么?如果他们做不到,为什么我们要做到?前南斯拉夫发生的战争,不仅对贝尔影响极大,对其他记者也是如此。有

些记者在批评不偏不倚的态度方面,比贝尔更进了一步:“有些记者和电视人说波斯尼亚战争和别的战争没有什么两样”,认为太“投入”不是好的新闻行为。我无法理解他们,如果你认真地报道这样的战争,不管你喜欢与否,你无法不投入。你的行为必定产生后果。”贝尔指出,屠杀人类行为需要有同谋,就是说“不仅仇恨是根源,对暴行的漠视也是帮凶”。乌利亚米甚至声称“我要宣布我是有偏向的,我站在波斯尼亚穆族一边,反对用历史性的军事行动消灭穆族。我认为对波族的暴行没有讨价还价的余地。”总之,新闻的“倾向性”观念否认新闻的“客观性”观念,其理由一是不可能;二是不道德。现在我们回过头来谈新闻“客观性”观点如何为自己辩护。

4、对新闻“倾向性”观点的批评

4.1 客观报道的必要性

在报道前南斯拉夫战争中,许多新闻记者被杀。据说主要是被塞族所杀,因为塞族认为,所有的新闻记者都和他们作对。他们这样看记者是因为这次战争的报道对穆族很仇视。批评“新闻倾向性”的观点认为,好的新闻记者,应被冲突的各方所信任;当然那些狡诈的恶棍除外,因为记者是唯一获得客观事实的来源。这种状况在车臣实现了,记者争取到了双方的尊敬。英国著名记者约翰·辛普森在初出茅庐当记者时,顶头编辑的一席话对他影响极大:“如果我要影响人们的观念,就去当政治家,要想告诉人们发生了什么,就去当记者。”这句话概括了以往报道战争的教训。如今已是英国广播公司华盛顿特派记者的辛普森认为,记者的职责是了解事件的真相,不论是政治的、军事的、还是社会的真相。记者的确同情受害人,但记者的首要职责不是同情,而是了解事件的原委。有一个记者生动地描绘了一个感情与事实被混为一谈的场面:“我记得看到一个英国广播公司的记者,站在被砍刀肢解的尸体边,面对着摄像机镜头,舞动着拳头绝望地喊道:谁能解释这是怎么回事?这是无法解释的,它超出了人的理性。我们都能理解他的绝望,但不能接收这种报道方式。记者的职能有两个:一是提供事实,二是尽量去揭示事件以某种方式发生的原因。”其理由是,如果连记者都不能保证客观,还有谁能做到客观呢?记者是唯一能够提供可靠消息的来源,可靠的消息是理性地判断事件的基础,采集可靠的消息是记者的天职,不允许在这方面打折扣。

4.2 为什么感情上的不偏不倚是至关重要的?

唐可利指出,“记者开始认为,报道应反映记者

对所报事件的情感,这种做法是通过取材、用材来偏袒一方的第一步,也许是无意识的一步”。英国广播公司新闻部总裁说,在报道王妃戴安娜死亡事件中,记者表现出的情感,以其特有的方式传达出比事实更真实的真实。唐可利对这一说法感到震惊。霍尔说,“通过播出普通人的一些想法和情感,我们可以得到一些真实,而没有这点真实,不管收集了多少事实都没有用。”但是唐可利和许多其他观察家认为,不偏不倚是记者的职业功能,是至关重要的。每个记者都知道,要操纵事实为我所用,是多么轻而易举,不管是通过选材还是变换提问的方式。用电视纪录片唬弄观众也并非难事,现代数字技术更使这成了小菜一碟。汤姆·沃尔夫,当代最著名的美国记者之一,最近专门写了一本这方面的戏剧。只有坚守职业道德,做到不偏不倚,才能保证上述问题不发生。

4.3 感情用事的危害

对“倾向性新闻”批评最激烈的是麦克·休姆,他认为感情投入的危害是极大的,不仅影响到新闻界,而且影响整个社会对某一事件的理解。向无辜者实施暴行令记者震怒,但记者只局限于身边的灾难,没有意识到另外的地方同样的暴行正在发生,产生出另外的牺牲品,他们把重点放在戏剧性和残暴性上,而将分析置之度外。他们实际是为正在受害的一方呼吁。休姆认为,这种行为的结果是记者接受了受害人的说法,把国际媒体调动起来,为一方受害人呐喊,而全然不顾另外一方的受害人。此举只把记者塑造成为压迫者申冤的斗士,而非客观事实的探求者。休姆指出,由于对南斯拉夫战争、库尔德问题及卢旺达问题的报道,国际媒体被人们看成是谁有本事谁就能左右的舆论工具,因而失去了人们的信任。他还认为,西方国家的政府政策是根据民意制定的,而民意却被记者用情绪化和肤浅的报道所左右,这种报道服务于媒体老板及持股人的商业利益。

5、目前记者如何为“客观性”辩护

以上我论述了早在19世纪,“客观性”就已成为英语国家新闻记者坚定不移的信条,但这并不意味着具有传教士般热情感情投入的记者从此绝迹了。在19世纪90年代,威廉·斯蒂德揭露了雏妓问题,及当局对此现象的默许,赢得了舆论的支持,从而促使了有关法律的改变,新条文得以实施。当代最投入的记者莫如保尔·富特了,他为在英国发生的不公平现象,奔走呼号了三十年之久。澳大利亚人约翰·皮埃尔,因揭露越南战争中鲜为人知的内幕而成名。在这些大名鼎鼎的记者当中,当然不难发现极其投

入的人,那么我们如何看待公平性的问题呢?我认为结论在于新闻的职业操作上,而不在记者的社会特征上。英语国家新闻的职业操作,应区分以下几个概念,并意识到公正性与投入性是并行不悖的。

第一要区分的概念是政论与新闻,政论不等于新闻。威廉·考贝特是个政论家,他发现社会上某种不公现象,将其概念化,然后以此向社会发起进攻。但现在与过去有一点显著的不同,现在社会科学的观念已深入社会,人们觉得有必要拿出大家都认可的证据,来支持某种声讨。不过,马丁·贝尔说:“我的经验是,讨伐者和倡议者总能找到他们想找的东西,他们对相反的事实及事件的复杂性视而不见。”但是,考贝特式的政论家也可以做个好记者。例如,约翰·皮埃尔在其批评现代报业管理的书《破镜》中是个政论家,当然其中不乏大量的事实,而在报道越南战争中美军兵变事件时,却是以事实说话。

我以威廉·罗素及克里米亚战争为例,谈第二个需要区分的概念。我们能说罗素是个片面的记者么?不会。他观察到了士兵的痛苦,而不仅仅只报道军官的意见,这使他在当时与众不同,他以一种个人的,也许是片面的方式写了他想写的话题。以前的记者没有注意到士兵的生活同样是重要的,因而报道存在片面性。罗素写了士兵的生活,其他的记者便意识到了自己的局限。然而,没有人认为罗素提供的事实有问题,任何一个记者可以一件一件地核实罗素的素材,写出同样的报告。用科学研究的话说,就是“有可复制性”。所以我认为第二个要区分的概念是,选材的片面性与方法的非片面性。例如,揭露导致理查德·尼克松总统下台的水门丑闻的两个记者,伍德沃德和伯恩斯坦,也许他们是不喜欢尼克松的自由党人士,想揭露他们认为尼克松干了的坏事。但是,现在没有人否认他们俩所揭露的尼克松丑闻有假。他们拿出了包括尼克松朋友在内所能接收的事实,虽然有些人是多么不情愿接受这些事实。

第三个要区分的概念是新闻与时事的分别。英语国家严格区分这两种不同的节目样式,而很多国家没有这种区别。时事被定义为对新闻的深度报道,并不受新闻样式的限制,而新闻则是“事实的手记”,新闻与非新闻之间有严格区分,时事可以加入分析,可以有幽默感及娱乐的因素,所以有很多主观成分。有趣的是新闻与调查新闻也不同,调查新闻不对某一事件做出反应,而是选出一个题目做深入调查。调查新闻的不足在于选材的主观性,一旦题材确定之后,记者的手法及态度都应是公正的,应具有“可复制性”。

第三个概念也可说成是新闻与非新闻样式的区

别。在时事节目及报纸的专题栏目中,选材具有很大的主观随意性,主要标准是内容、可读性、及观众的胃口等,而非事实的准确性。当前英语国家媒体业的新变化,使这一区分更复杂化了,媒体越来越不重视“硬”新闻,越来越像“软”杂志,充斥着使人惊讶的地方“故事”。尽管如此,这一区分还是存在的,新闻比非新闻取材更严格,因为新闻是正在发生的事情,可以发生在任何一个地方,如:世界、欧洲、英国、本省、本市、本区、本村,等等,这些事件的发生是我们无法控制的,许多事件必须报道,不管记者对其他的事多么着迷。

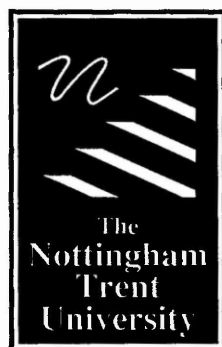
最后要区分的概念是报道的手法。传统的方法是挖掘事实,提供事实,不加解释,如事实有出入,则提供两种不同的说法,或让证人说话。这就是所谓“平衡”的原则。在英国,法律要求广播电视必须做到这种“公平”,但报纸有更大的自由。有些评论家对这种狭隘地保证“客观性”不以为然,他们认为,“事实”的来源也是受各方利益及文化因素影响的,因此要做到客观,必须从不同的角度来报道。因此记者也同社会科学研究者一样,被要求从不同的方面提供佐证,即向持有不同观点的单位和个人核对,然后才算客观公正。这只是一种理想而已,而且比此观点刚提出来时更难实现,因为由于技术的进步、竞争的日趋激烈、和内容雷同化的趋向,媒体要求记者发现新闻、报道新闻的速度越来越快。

新闻客观性的争论还在继续。依我之见,尽管马丁·贝尔极力推崇“倾向性新闻”,它并没有改变人们对真实性与客观性的需要,而少了真实与客观,新闻行业存在的必要性也就没有了。马丁·贝尔在学术界有着强大的同盟军,因为在学术界,相对论与文化制约论已被广泛接受,作为观察现实、交流信息的前提。英语国家新闻记者恪守客观性的原则,还能持续多久? 辩论还在继续。

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