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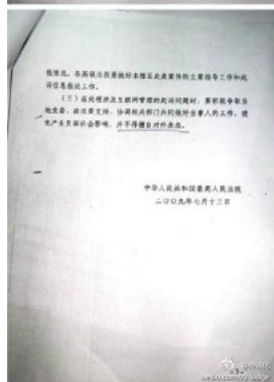
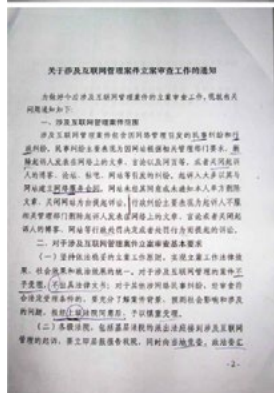
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INTELLECTUAL HYGIENE/*MENS SANA*

Gloria Davies



IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2013, the new administration of Xi Jinping banned university lecturers as well as popular and academic media from discussing ‘constitutionalism’ (the notion that the Chinese government and laws must be guided by the Chinese constitution). It also instructed them not to mention the ‘Seven Speak-Nots’ 七个不要讲 (七不讲 for short): universal values, freedom of the press, civil society, civil rights, historical mistakes by the Party, judicial independence, and [the existence of the] Party-elite capitalist class 权贵资产阶级. As of early 2016, these prohibitions remained in place with one small but crucially suggestive difference—in 2015, the government began referring to the ‘Seven Speak-Nots’ as ‘Western values’.



An Opinion on Strengthening and Improving Propaganda and Ideological Work in Higher Education Under the New Circumstances

Source: chinadigitaltimes.net

An Ominous Speech

The first assault on 'Western values' in 2015 was on 29 January when China's Education Minister Yuan Guiren 袁贵仁 addressed Chinese university leaders and education officials at a national meeting in Beijing. Yuan called for vigilance in 'ideological management, especially of textbooks, teaching materials, and class lectures'. He declared an 'absolute prohibition' 决不允许 on: 'textbooks promoting Western values'; 'remarks that slander the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party or that vilify socialism'; 'remarks that violate the country's constitution and laws', and 'remarks by teachers giving vent to personal grudges or expressing discontent in the classroom, thereby transmitting all manner of unhealthy feelings to their students'. On the Internet in the Mainland, these were quickly dubbed 'The Four Absolute Nos', written as either 四个绝不 or 四个决不, which all universities were to observe in order to prevent the dissemination of 'Western values' and to secure 'The Three Bottom Lines' 三条底线 in the areas of politics, law, and ethics.

The Beijing forum at which Yuan spoke had been convened to discuss a document titled 'An Opinion on Strengthening and Improving Propaganda and Ideological Work in Higher Education Under the New Circumstances' 关于进一步加强和改进新形势下高校宣传思想工作的意见 (hereafter 'Opinion'). This document, drafted by the General

Office and the State Council of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), had been published ten days earlier. The ‘Opinion’ refined the arguments of similar directives issued during Xi’s first year in office such as the ‘Sixteen Suggestions of the Chinese Communist Party

on Strengthening Ideological and Political Work among Young Teachers in Higher Education’ 中共16条意见加强高校青年教师思想政治工作, which was published on 28 May 2013.

Outside China, Yuan’s anti-Western invective drew a flood of critical responses from online and print media as well as within academia, much of it on forums like Twitter that are blocked in China. Within China itself, media censorship ensured that domestic voices critical of Yuan’s speech went largely unheard, with the notable exception of three pointed questions posted online by Shen Kui 沈焜, a professor and vice-dean at Peking University’s Faculty of Law whose specialty is constitutional and administrative law. The questions were: ‘How do we distinguish “Western values” from “Chinese values”?’; ‘How do we distinguish “attacking and slandering the Party’s leadership and blackening socialism” from “reflecting on the bends in the road in the Party’s past and exposing dark facts”?’ and ‘How should the Education Ministry that you lead implement the policy of governing the country according to the Constitution and the law?’

Pro-government commentators attacked Shen for posing what they characterised as misleading rhetorical questions. On the Communist Youth League website, two articles described Shen’s post as, respectively, ‘harbouring evil intent’ and ‘a dastardly deception’. Both referred to



Yuan Guiren
Photo: miniharm.com



Shen Kui
Photo: baike.baidu.com

Shen's post using the same stylised four-character phrase, 'Shen Kui's Three Questions' 沈崑三问. Four-character phrases abound in Chinese as concepts, literary allusions, proverbs, and slogans. Official speeches make ample use of them, for their association with venerable traditions suggests that what they are saying is self evident or true. Besides, they are easy to memorise. 'Absolute prohibition' and 'The Three Bottom Lines' are examples of four-character phrases that the minister employed in the speech to which Shen was responding, as is 'The Four Absolute Nos', which online commentators used to describe Yuan's speech.



Zhu Jidong
Photo: image.baidu.com

Zhu Jidong 朱继东, Deputy Director and Party Secretary of the State Cultural Security and Ideology Building Research Centre 国家文化安全与意识形态建设研究中心 of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, went even further. Accusing Shen of distorting Yuan's remarks to generate 'ideological chaos' 思想混乱, he called on 'the relevant government agencies' to investigate, prosecute and severely punish both Shen and others like him.

The controversy continued for a month or so. But media outlets were warned not to publish any more criticisms of Yuan's speech. Consequently, on the Internet in the Mainland, denunciations of Shen, mostly appearing on state-sponsored websites, greatly outnumbered reports of Shen's post and other commentaries critical of Yuan. The result was a carefully managed 'struggle for public opinion' 舆论斗争 (yet another four-character expression), as the state defended the unpopular directive and instructed its citizens precisely how it ought to be understood.

As noted in the 2014 *Yearbook*, the government under Deng Xiaoping introduced the phrase 'the struggle for public opinion' (one source dates its first appearance to a *People's Daily* editorial in 1980), launching a full-scale propaganda campaign against 'Western spiritual pollution' in 1983. Then, 'Western spiritual pollution' was presented as an external threat. By 2013, the government had begun to perceive the threat as coming from within. For commentators in and outside China, the renaming of the

‘Seven Speak-Nots’ to ‘Western values’ in 2015 did not so much signal an ethnocentric, even xenophobic, attitude towards education so much as a crackdown on ‘liberalism’ in general.

The attack on ‘Western values’ is not a negation of the entire spectrum of ideas that have originated in Western countries. Academics in favour of one-party rule vigorously promote anti-liberal Western thinkers such as Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, for example. Above all, the Party-state seeks to bolster its particular interpretation of Marxism as a kind of inoculation against what is alternatively called, in the foreign-image-conscious, English-language *Global Times*, ‘suspicious values’.

On 5 May 2015, one day after Youth Day, the Party Secretary of Peking University laid the foundation stone for a new building on campus to be named after Karl Marx. The building is one of the university’s ‘Six Marx Projects’ 六马工程. First announced at a national forum on Marxism in higher education held at Peking University on 30 March, the six projects include the establishment of a new research centre on ‘The Chinese Path and Sinicised Marxism’; the compilation of ‘The Treasures of Marx’ 马藏, envisaged as the world’s most comprehensive collection of writings by Marx and studies of Marxism in Chinese and other languages; the founding of a centre housing materials on international Marxism; the hosting of the first-ever World Congress on Marxism (which took place on 10–11 October, with over 400 invited participants from more than twenty countries); the establishment of a website devoted to Marxism, and, of course, the construction of the Marx Building. The Baoshan Bank reportedly donated 100 million yuan towards the building. Yuan called in his speech for ‘the main teaching materials produced by the Marx Projects to be the key index for evaluating all teaching’.



The site of the new Marx Building at Peking University
Photo: globaltimes.com.cn

The intensification of state-led initiatives to strengthen Marxism reflects the authorities' growing fear that exposure to liberal ideas will encourage citizens to demand greater freedoms and to exercise their constitutional rights in ways that undermine the one-party system. Yuan was not proposing an outright ban on the study of such ideas, which can range from the kind of rights-based liberalism of the American philosophers Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls to the left-leaning defence of the public sphere mounted by the German social theorist Jurgen Habermas and his followers. Yuan wants people to conclude for themselves that Western liberalism is unsuitable for China. Yet the Party has its work cut out. Yuan and other leaders are aware that the internationalisation of the curriculum at Chinese universities, opportunities to study and travel abroad (opportunities eagerly taken up by many of their own children), as well as access to TED talks and MOOCs are just some of the many ways by which Chinese citizens can acquire knowledge about the full range of 'Western values'.

The current assault on 'Western values' is only the latest of the campaigns against Western ideas since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Like previous ideological drives, the 2015 campaign is conceived of as a form of intellectual hygiene. 'Western values' transmit 'unhealthy feelings'. Only if everyone adheres to 'The Four Absolute Nos' and 'The Three Bottom Lines', can the country 'secure a clean and upright atmosphere in our classrooms and lecture theatres'.

Socialist Hygiene

At the height of Russia's civil war in 1919, there was a typhus epidemic. Lenin warned, 'Either the lice will defeat socialism, or socialism will defeat the lice'. The remark has become a *locus classicus* for socialist hygiene. Disease and filth must be purged not only from physical bodies and environments but hearts and minds as well.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT SELF-STUDY ROOM AND OTHER PROBLEMS,

by Lucille Liu

China's Ministry of Culture banned 120 Internet songs 网络音乐产品 in August for content that promotes 'obscurity and violence, incites criminal behaviour or harms social morality'. Websites and entertainment venues such as karaoke bars and cafés were given two weeks to remove the blacklisted titles or face severe penalties. The songs were also barred from commercial performances and from appearing in audio-visual publications.

Items one through seventeen on the list are from one band: Beijing hip-hop trio In3 阴三儿, which formed in 2006 and rose in prominence during the 2008 Olympics with radio hit *Welcome Back to Beijing* 北京欢迎你回来. Among their banned songs is the popular *Beijing Evening News* 北京晚报, which intersperses lyrics about local nightlife with social commentary on corruption and welfare: 'some sleep in underpasses, while some dine on government expenses', for example.

Once featured in a milk tea commercial, *I Love Taiwanese Girls* 我爱台妹 by MC HotDog and Ayal Komod 张震岳 with lyrics including 'I don't love Chinese ladies 小姐 (also slang for prostitutes), I love Taiwanese girls, may they reign forever', also appeared on the blacklist. Ayal Komod (of Amis, or indigenous Taiwan nationality) also saw his *Fart* 放屁 and *Cheating Couple* 狗男女, which the musician claimed he had not performed in at least a decade, wiped from the Internet.

The blacklist contained a mix of household names and obscure Internet artists. Some of the more eye-catching titles include *Suicide Diary* 自杀日记 by Beijing rap group Xinjiekou 新街口组合, *Fly to Other People's Beds* 飞向别人的床 by Internet rap artists Ceekay 沉珂 and Light Shen MC 光光, and the seemingly innocuous *University Student Self-study Room* 大学生自习室, about the difficulty of finding a quiet space for studying, by then-student Hao Yu 郝雨. As the list of banned songs circulated over the web, some Internet users sarcastically thanked the ministry for its recommendations.



Hao Yu, writer of *University Student Self-study Room*
Photo: baike.baidu.com



MC HotDog
Photo: flickr.com

JOURNEY TO THE WEST: CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION IN TRANSLATION,

by Nick Stember

In August 2015, something previously unthinkable happened: a translation of a popular Chinese novel won one of the most prestigious awards in world science fiction. By taking home the Hugo at the Seventy-Third WorldCon, Ken Liu's translation of Liu Cixin's 刘慈欣 *The Three-Body Problem* 三体 (Tor Books, 2014) demonstrated that popular Chinese literature was finally reaching an audience outside of China.

Liu Cixin is often called one of the 'three generals' of Chinese sci fi (the other two are Wang Jinkang 王晋康, known for his think pieces, and the famously acerbic Han Song 韩松). Liu is perhaps the most beloved writer of speculative fiction writing in China today, often compared to authors of 'hard' science fiction such as Isaac Asimov and Arthur C Clarke. An engineer by day, aside from his ambitious, award-winning trilogy, Liu Cixin has penned a number of short stories and novellas that grapple with the thorny ontology of human civilisation in the face of political and social collapse. Shortly after the Hugo announcement, the second volume of *The Three-Body Problem*, titled *The Dark Forest* 黑暗森林, was released by Tor Books.

In September 2015, Liu Cixin and a group of sci fi writers met with Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao 李源潮, with Li urging the writers to use their work to promote the cause of

In her 1987 novel, *Bathing* 洗澡 (the published English translation is titled *Baptism*), the eminent writer Yang Jiang 杨绛 explored how socialist hygiene changed China during the PRC's first 'thought reform' campaign, the 'Three Antis Campaign' 三反运动 of 1951. It was anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-'obstructionist bureaucratism'. The process of self-ex-

amination and ordeals of public 'self-criticism' and confession by which the accused (many of whom were university educated) were required to undergo 'self-criticism' to show they were no longer germ ridden was informally nicknamed 'bathing'. The type of intellectual hygiene demanded by the Xi-led party-state today involves none of the physical and emotional rigours of Maoist 'bathing': compliance with official directives is all that the authorities can hope to expect. But such campaigns can increasingly appear

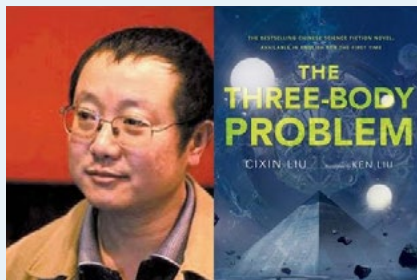
**Bathing by Yang Jiang**

Photo: eladies.sina.com.cn

‘national revival’ and inspire interest in science among the youth.

Although some individuals have cautioned readers against overly simplistic interpretations of Chinese science fiction as criticism of the Chinese government, given the state of the natural environment and limitations on freedom of speech, it is hard not to see social criticism in works such as Chen Qiufan's 陈楸帆 *The Smog Society* 霾 and Ma Boyong's 马伯庸 *The City of Silence* 寂静之城. Liu's *The Three-Body Problem* it-

self starts with a gruesome scene from the Cultural Revolution, which ultimately provides the premise of the trilogy's story. For his part, Ken Liu (also the co-translator with Carmen Yiling Yan of the first story, and translator of the latter story) argued in an essay from late 2014 that given the impressive diversity of Chinese fiction we might instead see such works as an expression of global humanism rather than domestic satire.



Liu Cixin and his Hugo award-winning book, *The Three-Body Problem*
Source: youtube.com

anachronistic to a population growing better educated and more cosmopolitan all the time.

Their defenders can also appear more than a little desperate. One of Shen Kui's critics stated that Shen's questions were as pointless as asking 'why the American President must oppose terrorism, or why the people of Great Britain must pledge allegiance to the Queen'. But to liken 'Western values' to 'terrorism' or monarchism to a national creed is poor logic, and unlikely to convince the unconvinced.

The Party is certainly aware of the gulf between itself and the people, amply illustrated by ceaseless online ridicule of official mottos and slogans (see the 2012 *Yearbook*, Chapter 2 'Discontent in Digital China', pp.118–141). In launching its 'Mass Line Education and Practice Campaign' in June 2013, Xi's government aimed to close the gap, or at least prevent it from widening. The 'Opinion' of 19 January 2015 recognises the importance of winning over China's intelligentsia. A key goal it lists is to 'realistically strengthen the Party's direction of propaganda and ideological work in higher education', noting that this was a task of 'extreme importance and real urgency'. 'Realistically' is the operative word here.

The state handsomely funds research into the topic of ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’. Party theorists and pro-government academics and writers have produced a prodigious number of books and articles on the subject. But the Chinese public’s reception of such works extends, in the main, from indifference to ridicule. There’s no guarantee that the Marx Projects will fare any better.

A Cancelled Reception

When ‘good cop’ ideological persuasion strategies don’t work, the Party employs punitive ‘bad cop’ backup tactics like censorship, harassment, intimidation, and even arrest and detention. The nationwide crackdown on feminists, rights defence lawyers, and others in 2015 (see Chapter 2, ‘The Fog of Law’, pp.64–89) attracted international attention and condemnation.

Less well known is the case of the influential monthly *Yanhuang Chunqiu* 炎黄春秋 (sometimes translated as *China Through the Ages* or *The Chronicles of China*). Founded in 1991 by veteran Communist Party members as a forum for independent intellectual inquiry, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* enjoys considerable authority in mainland intellectual and elite political

circles. It is famous for publishing critical accounts of Party history written by retired senior officials with intimate first-hand knowledge of the events they discuss. Authors include Li Rui 李锐, former personal secretary to Mao Zedong, and Sun Zhen 孙振, former editor-in-chief at Xinhua’s Sichuan bureau, who worked under Premier



Yanhuang Chunqiu
Photo: freeweibo.com

Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳, and who died under house arrest in 2005. Sun's published defence of his former boss's reputation infuriated Party leaders.

The seniority within the Party of many of *Yanhuang Chunqiu's* editorial staff and contributors has made the



Yanhuang Chunqiu's Spring Festival celebrations
Source: ntdtv.com

magazine unusually resilient in the face of censorship. Even among the present-day Party leadership, few would wish to be remembered for publicly attacking elderly Communists who had played major roles in national and Party history. Despite occasional attempts to interfere with its masthead and organisation, and the temporary suspension of its website in January 2013 following the publication of an editorial in support of constitutionalism, the Party-state has never banned or closed down the publication.

Every year, for the twenty-three years of its existence, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* has held a fellowship reception around the time of Spring Festival celebrations. In addition to staff and regular contributors, the invitees typically include China's leading liberal thinkers, advocates for political reform, and rights activists. The 2015 reception, with 240 invitees, was originally planned for 11 March. The magazine's supervisory organisation, the Chinese National Academy of Arts, relayed instructions from unnamed authorities '有关部门' for the event to be postponed to 18 March, until after the conclusion of the annual two-week meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC). Whether under further orders or of its own volition, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* reduced its guest list to 130 as well. On 17 March, it was informed by the restaurant at the China Science and Technology Hall, where the reception was to have been held, that the event could not proceed after all. The organisers made a final appeal via the Chinese National



Yang Jisheng

Photo: yzhy100.blog.163.com

Academy of Arts on 17 March but were refused. One invitee remarked that no one knew if the order had come from the Ministry of Culture, the Propaganda Department or the Public Security Bureau.

This was unprecedented. Throughout 2015, the government policed the magazine more strictly than ever before. Finally, on 1 July 2015, its editor-in-chief, Yang Jisheng 杨继绳, a former Xinhua journalist and the celebrated author of *Tombstone* 墓碑, about the Great Famine of 1958–1961, was forced to resign.

What's in a Name?

Yanhuang Chunqiu had previously avoided trouble for two reasons. First, it never challenged the legitimacy of Communist Party rule. Second, the ideology of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', if sacred, has been open to relatively fluid interpretation since it was introduced in 1982. It is unlike in the Mao era, when phrases like 'class struggle' and the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' for example, were rigidly defined by Mao himself. 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' initially described an attitude of cautious experimentation under one-party rule: 'crossing the river by feeling the stones' 摸着石头过河, to quote Deng Xiaoping quoting fellow Party elder Chen Yun 陈云. Since Xi assumed power in November 2012, however, the party-state's tolerance for open discussion and debate on matters of public interest has shrunk and its appetite for ideological consolidation has grown.

In 2008, *Yanhuang Chunqiu*'s long-time publisher Du Daozheng 杜导正 described the magazine's policy as 'adhering to the big picture while opening up the small picture' 大框框守住, 小框框放开. The 'big picture'

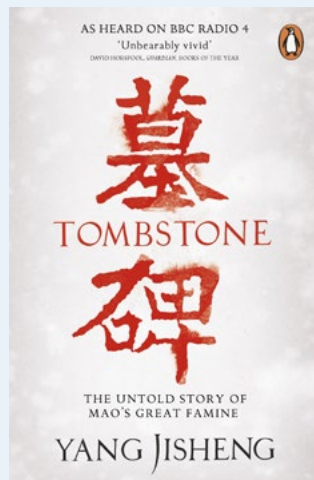
stands for the legitimacy of Party rule and ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. The ‘small picture’ refers to the specific matters of public and historical interest explored by the magazine’s contributors. In 2011, Du advised that the Party needed to ‘do three things: implement intra-party democracy, undertake systemic reform of the National People’s Congress, and open up public opinion’. Du’s words carry weight: he joined the Party in 1937 and, in the 1980s was director of the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP), the state agency responsible for regulating public culture in that first decade of reform.

Party leaders and state media have used the term ‘intra-party democracy’ 党内民主 widely since the late 2000s. It refers to concepts such as competition and merit guiding official appointments, transparency in governance, and the sort of internal checks and balances that would mitigate against corruption and the abuse of power. ‘Intra-party democracy’ promotes collective leadership via negotiation and compromise among ri-

TOMBSTONE, by Gloria Davies

Yang Jisheng 杨继绳, former editor of *Yanhuang Chunqiu* magazine, is the author of *Tombstone* 墓碑, a detailed and richly sourced documentation of the Great Famine of 1958–1961. The book was never published or legally distributed in mainland China, but released in Hong Kong in 2008. An English translation was published in 2012.

In December 2015, Yang was awarded the Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism by the Nieman Fellows at Harvard. He was invited to Harvard to accept the award in March 2016, but in February 2016, Yang said that his former employer, Xinhua News Agency, had forbidden him from travelling to the ceremony. In 2015, Yang travelled to Sweden to accept the Stieg Larsson prize, and in 2013, he had travelled to the United States to receive the Manhattan Institute’s Hayek Prize.



Tombstone by Yang Jisheng
Photo: youtube.com

val party factions. Those who openly promote ‘intra-party democracy’ are generally perceived—as is *Yanhuang Chunqiu* by most of the international media—as liberal leaning and on the Party’s ‘right’.

But political distinctions of ‘left’ and ‘right’ are often misleading in relation to the CCP. The ‘left’ usually describes people who defend Mao Zedong Thought and the Maoist legacy of central planning, and who seek to strengthen the power of the party-state and place high importance on propaganda and ideological work. Yet many on the ‘right’ also support these ideas. Similarly, if the ‘right’ refers to those who seek to advance China’s market economy and strengthen intra-party democracy, then all high-ranking Party leaders qualify as ‘right’. Like its predecessors, Xi Jinping’s government displays ‘left’ and ‘right’ tendencies at different times in relation to different issues.

In official discourse, ‘faction’ is a pejorative term. The Party is supposed to be a factionless organisation whose members are fully unified in their beliefs and values. Party factions are best understood, not in terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’ but as alliances based on personal networks formed around a central individual of influence and power. The US-based political scientist Cheng Li 李成 argues that elite politics in China revolves essentially around two of these ‘informal coalitions’. One is led by ‘princelings’. Also known as ‘Red Second Generation’, they are the descendants of historical CCP leaders and include Xi Jinping, son of Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋, as well as the now-disgraced and imprisoned former Party secretary of Chongqing, Bo Xilai 薄熙来, son of Bo Yibo 薄一波. The other coalition is that of the ‘populists’, sometimes referred to as ‘shopkeepers’: party members from humbler origins who worked their way up through the system, such as Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 and Zhou Yongkang 周永康, the latter to date the highest ranking official to be jailed for corruption.

An illustration of official use of the word ‘faction’ comes from a Xinhua article dated 4 January 2015. It named, for the first time, what it called ‘Three Notorious Factions’ 三大帮派 (the ‘Petroleum Faction’, the ‘Secretary Faction’, and the ‘Shanxi Faction’), as well as the disgraced offi-

图解“大老虎”背后三大帮派

新华社刊发文章指出，近年来落马的一些“大老虎”背后，多有一帮官员与之有着千丝万缕的利益勾连，形成一个或明或暗，或松散或紧密的“帮派”“团伙”，并首次公开给这些团伙命名为“石油帮”、“秘书帮”、“山西帮”。

三大帮派利益勾连党营私



‘Three Notorious Factions’: the ‘Petroleum Faction’ in the blue circle, the ‘Secretary Faction’ in brown, and ‘Shanxi Faction’ in yellow
Image: zhiyin.cn

cials associated with each of these. Xinhua's explicit reference to 'factions', five months before the start of the trial of Zhou Yongkang, aimed to show how successfully Xi's Anti-Corruption crusade had exposed and eradicated the rot from within.

The type of exposé for which *Yanhuang Chunqiu* is famous is altogether different. The magazine specialises in evidence-based narratives of events and persons that official accounts have distorted or suppressed. In 2014, the respected historian and public intellectual Zhang Lifan 章立凡 described *Yanhuang Chunqiu* as allied with Xi's faction. Xi's late father, Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋, was one of the magazine's early supporters. Yet in September 2014, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT) ordered the magazine to affiliate with an agency under the Ministry of Culture, and demanded far stricter standards of acceptable content. In an interview with the *South China Morning Post* on 19 September 2014, Zhang suggested that the magazine 'might have become a pawn in the power struggle between Xi and his political enemies, as the new affiliation order was made when Xi was on a tour of South Asia'.

In 2015, however, it became clear that Xi would offer the magazine no special protection. Following the cancellation of *Yanhuang Chunqiu's* annual fellowship reception in March, on 10 April 2015, SAPPRFT notified the magazine that of the eighty-six articles published in the first four issues of 2015, thirty-seven violated state regulations. The offending articles addressed 'topics of grave importance' 重大选题 (the official term for censored or 'sensitive' topics) but had not been submitted to SAPPRFT for prior approval. The notice warned that further violations would not be tolerated.

On 3 June 2015, the *People's Liberation Army Daily* posted an article on its Weibo account attacking *Yanhuang Chunqiu* for 'spreading confusion and deceiving ordinary citizens, especially retired cadres'. Titled 'Getting to the Bottom of *Yanhuang Chunqiu*' 起底炎黄春秋, the article accused the magazine of 'blackening Mao Zedong's name, blackening the memory of the nation's heroes and martyrs, and making history meaningless. In



Xi's first Weibo message

Photo: cdn.static-economist.com

truth, it nullifies the history of New China and uses public opinion to try and drag China back to capitalism.' The article was widely relayed on the Internet in the Mainland, attracting an overwhelming number of positive comments on state-sponsored websites, with only a minority defending the magazine. It was another well-orchestrated triumph in the party-state's 'struggle for public opinion'. On 25 December 2015, when Xi posted his very first Weibo message, he chose to do so on the *People's Liberation Army Daily's* Weibo account; the message was unremarkable ('...realise the China Dream and the dream of a strong army!' etc) but the media he chose to make it in was significant.

In two open letters written on 30 June 2015 and published online to mark his departure from *Yanhuang Chunqiu* on 1 July, Yang Jisheng confirmed that he had been forced to resign. He feared for the magazine's future, noting that it had, from its inception, observed the 'Eight Avoids' 八不碰, carefully circumventing all references to 'June 4', the separation of powers, Falun Gong, incumbent state leaders, the families of incumbent leaders, the transformation of the PLA from a Party to a state army, ethnic



The Dalai Lama

Photo: en.wikipedia.org

THE PARTY ARGUES BUDDHIST REINCARNATION WITH THE DALAI LAMA, by Matt Schrader

China's ongoing war of words with the Dalai Lama took a new turn in 2015. In a mid-December 2014 interview with the BBC, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader dropped a bombshell with his remark that his reincarnation was not a certainty. Whether or not he had an officially designated successor, he said, would be 'up to the Tibetan people', adding that, 'the Dalai Lama institution will cease one day. These man-made institutions will cease'.

How the Tibetan people would make clear their choice, the fourteenth and longest-serving Dalai Lama did not explain. But as he approached his eightieth birthday in 2015, his words were clearly a shot across the bow of the PRC government, which has long claimed its authority to designate the Dalai Lama's reincarnated successor, in line with its requirement that all religious practitioners inside China recognise the ultimate authority of the Communist Party.

It was not the first time the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama had clashed over issues of succession. When, in 1995, the Dalai Lama named a young Tibetan child as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama (the second most revered position in Tibetan Buddhism's hierarchy), Beijing promptly took the child into 'protective custody', and named another. The government's chosen Panchen Lama now fulfills the public role of that position within China; the Dalai Lama's choice, the government claims, lives a guarded but more-or-less normal life somewhere in Tibet.

In early 2015, at a press conference on the sidelines of the annual gathering of China's two legislatures in Beijing, Zhu Weiqun 朱维群, the chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress's Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee, accused the Dalai Lama of not showing a 'serious or respectful attitude' on the issue of reincarnation, and reiterated that 'the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama has to be endorsed by the central government, not by any other sides'.

Seemingly undeterred, in a July interview with Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* the Dalai Lama hinted that he had in mind a referendum of some kind among Tibetans to clarify the question of his succession. He also had a laugh at the CCP's expense, saying the Party was 'pretending that they know more about the reincarnation system than the Dalai Lama', and suggesting that the CCP 'should recognise the reincarnation of Chairman Mao Zedong, then Deng Xiaoping. Then they have the right to involve themselves in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation'.

The government was not amused by the suggestion. Writing in the Chinese-language *Global Times* in late November, Zhu Weiqun emphasised historic precedents for the government's position, highlighting the important role the Qing government had also played in the process; his claim, however, that this demonstrated China's sovereignty over Tibet glossed over the fact that over the course of the almost three-century-long dynasty (1644–1911), Beijing's say over this matter waxed and waned along with its influence in Lhasa, and was often subject to highly contentious political maneuvering.

Compromise does not seem to be on either side's agenda. In the same article, Zhu made clear how the government views the stakes in this theological debate when he wrote that 'the power of the central government to decide in matters of living Buddhas [such as the Dalai Lama] cannot only not be allowed to weaken, but must be strengthened to ensure victory in the struggle against separatism'.

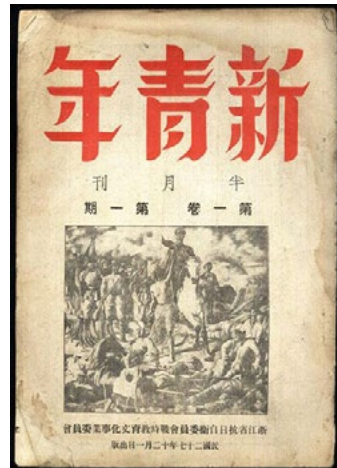
conflicts, and foreign relations. Yet this clearly was not enough. As of January 2016, a tightly constrained *Yanhuang Chunqiu* was still publishing.

How to be a Good Communist

September 2015 marked the centenary of the founding of *Youth* magazine (re-named *New Youth* in 1917), two of whose founding members, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 and Li Dazhao 李大钊, were also founders of the Chinese Communist Party in

1921. *New Youth* and the New Culture Movement it initiated are widely perceived in mainland intellectual circles as the prologue to the founding of the CCP. At a forum convened in August 2015 to commemorate this centenary, the eminent historian Lei Yi 雷颐 mused that while the New Culture Movement (also known as the May Fourth Movement) is typically described as the starting-point of a fundamental rejection of traditional ideas, it was much less radical than its predecessor, the movement for constitutional monarchy led by Kang Youwei 康有为 and Liang Qichao 梁启超 during the last two decades of the Qing dynasty, from about 1890–1911. Lei argued that the final decades of the Qing represented a unique period in which Chinese intellectuals, including those in exile, began to discard the moral and political principles underpinning a disintegrating dynastic system. No longer in awe of the so-called ‘sacred decrees’ 圣旨 as a result of the Qing’s apparent inability to meet the challenges of the modern world, they were emboldened to challenge its authority.

Within ten years of the fall of the Qing, by 1921, the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the CCP had become China’s two dominant political organisations. Both were Leninist in structure and sought to achieve one-party rule in China. They were allies until 1927 and enemies thereafter. Lei



New Youth

Source: dangshi.people.com.cn



Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao
Photo: dangshi.people.com.cn

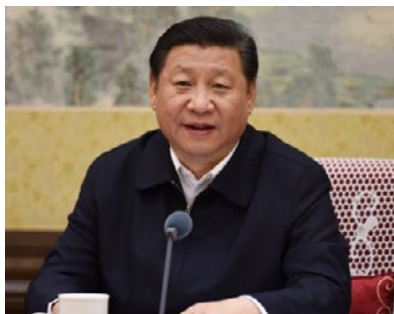
described how in the Republican era, there was immense pressure on intellectuals to choose a side—CCP or KMT—even if they disagreed with both. The result was ‘an inner contradiction and an inner tension. Intellec-

tuals were concerned about politics but lacked the power to produce political change. The parlous state of their society made it impossible for them to keep quiet. They felt compelled to do something but they also worried about their own professional careers.’ Worrying was justified, as neither party was kind to dissidents.

Among the examples provided by Lei was the case of Zhang Shenfu 张申府 (1893–1986). Zhang played a key role in the early dissemination of Marxism in China. He and Li Dazhao 李大钊 co-founded the Communist Small Group 共产党小组 at Peking University in 1920 and it was Zhang who recommended Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (China’s Premier from 1949 to 1976 and Deng Xiaoping’s mentor) for Communist Party membership. Lei noted that although Zhang fiercely advocated party discipline, he ultimately found it impossible to relinquish his intellectual independence and resigned from the CCP by 1925. After the Communist victory in 1949, Zhang obtained a position at the National Library in Beijing with Zhou Enlai’s help. Despite attempting to stay out of trouble, he was punished in 1957 as a ‘rightist’. Lei stated that Zhang embodied ‘the intellectual’s spirit of pursuing truth for its own sake’ and that he ‘never learned how to be agreeable’. Zhang was not politically rehabilitated until three years after Mao’s death, in 1979.

Lei and others who spoke at the commemorative forum made no mention of their own situation. Nothing was said of ‘The Four Absolute Nos’, the intensification of ideological instruction on university campuses or the plight of *Yanhuang Chunqiu*. However, the contemporary relevance of Lei’s remarks was not lost on forum participants. Historical innuendo is a well-established critical art in China.

Under Xi, party propagandists have produced numerous slogans describing the qualities the Party requires of its officials. One widely used four-character slogan in 2015 was the ‘Three Stricts and Three Genuines’ 三严三实: be strict with oneself in ‘moral cultivation, the use of power, and in the exercise of self-discipline’, while ‘planning and working in genuine ways and genuinely striving to be a decent person’. First used by Xi Jinping in a speech of 17 March 2014, official websites heavily promoted the slogan in June 2015. It was also the focus of the speech Xi delivered on 29 December 2015 at the ‘Democratic Life Meeting’ of the twenty-five-member Politburo. Xi told his colleagues to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and ‘strictly educate, manage and supervise’ erring family members and colleagues, to ensure their wrongdoings are ‘resolutely corrected’.



29 December 2015: Xi delivers speech at the ‘Democratic Life Meeting’ of the Politburo
Photo: Xinhua

Another slogan, ‘It is unacceptable to be a nice guy’ 好人主义要不得, appeared in many articles published on official websites in 2015. Lei Yi had suggested that Zhang Shenfu’s inability ‘to be agreeable’ was a mark of his personal integrity. But the party’s idea of ‘not being a nice guy’ has nothing to do with speaking truth to power. It warns officials against abusing their power by ‘being nice’ to greedy relatives and friends.

In his famous 1939 tract ‘On the Self-Cultivation of Communists’, written when he was a leader of the Communist underground. Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 urged his fellow Party-members to be fearless, selfless, and willing to die for the Communist cause:

As we Communists see it, nothing can be more worthless or indefensible than to sacrifice oneself in the interests of an individual or a small minority. But it is the worthiest and most just thing in the world to sacrifice oneself for the Party, for the proletariat, for the emancipation of the nation and all mankind, for social progress and for the highest interests of the overwhelming majority of the people.

THE WHITE-HAIRED GIRL AND PENG LIYUAN, by Emily Feng



1985: Peng Liyuan as Xi'er in *The White Haired Girl*
Photo: wyzzwk.com

On a dark and stormy night in pre-Liberation times, landlords from a town in Shaanxi gather in the mountains to pray to their ancestors. A sudden thunderclap, and a flash of lightning suddenly illuminates the visage of a woman with translucently white hair, her clothes reduced to rags. Mistaking her for a vengeful spirit, the men run screaming from the temple, never to return.

So goes the revolutionary opera *The White Haired Girl* 白毛女, first performed in 1945 in Yan'an. Its climactic revenge scene is meant to represent the symbolic triumph of the peasantry against the landed gentry and to foreshadow the eventual triumph of communism over feudalism.

The story is based on Chinese folktales that themselves were inspired by true events. They told of ghostly women with pure white hair despite their youth, thanks to malnutrition and lack of salt (and iodine), who roamed the mountains after fleeing a despotic landlord. The writer Li Mantian 李满天 wrote a short story based on these folktales in 1944 and presented it to the Communist cultural official Zhou Yang 周扬, who would later become the chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. The story went through several edits, transforming from a simple ghost story into a politically symbolic tale of liberation. The opera based on the story combines vocal styles from Western opera with stylised movements inspired by Peking opera, a theatrical embodiment of the Party's efforts to engineer a modern aesthetic wedded to ideological principles.

The narrative centres on Xi'er 喜儿, the daughter of a poor farmer in Shaanxi province. When her father is unable to pay back the debts he owes to Huang Shiren 黄世仁, the local landlord, Huang seizes Xi'er, who is betrothed to another poor farmer, Wang Dachun 王大春, to be his concubine. She escapes and flees into the mountains, where she survives for years before being found again by her fiancé, who had joined the Communists' Eighth Route Army and fought in the Anti-Japanese War. They rejoice.

Mao was reportedly moved to tears the first time he saw the opera. In 1950, it was turned into a movie of the same name, becoming one of the classics of revolutionary Chi-

Several articles published on official websites in 2015 described Xi's 'Three Stricts and Three Genuines' as an exemplary emulation of the ideals presented in Liu's 1939 tract. Yet none mentioned what Liu considered 'worthiest and most just'. Words like 'sacrifice', 'the proletariat', and 'the emancipation of all mankind' have rarely appeared in official discourse since the 1990s. The goals of today are more vague, wordier, more practical, and more narrowly nationalistic: 'to establish a well-off society and to fully realise the China Dream of reviving the greatness of the Chinese nation' 建成小康社会, 最终实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦.

nese film and named one of the 'eight model revolutionary operas' during the Cultural Revolution. Later, *The White Haired Girl* was adapted for Peking opera (1958) and the ballet (1965).

Fast forward to the twenty-first century. In October 2014, Xi Jinping delivered a speech on the role of literature and arts in China that was a conscious echo of Mao's original 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature'. In it, Xi stressed that art and culture was to serve the people: 'Art and culture will emit the greatest positive energy when the Marxist view of art and culture is firmly established and the people are their focus'. He criticised the 'cultural garbage' that results when artists fail to live up to such standards and 'indulge in kitsch'. In other words, artists and the arts must obey and support Communist rule.

Shortly after Xi's speech, China's Ministry of Culture announced a revival tour of *The White Haired Girl*, which opened in Yan'an in November 2015 and finished in Beijing in mid-December. It underwent a makeover to appeal to modern audiences, including 3D visual effects. Xi's wife, the singer Peng Liyuan served as the production's artistic director; in the 1980s she herself played Xi'er, a highly coveted role, when she was a star performer with the People's Liberation Army song-and-dance troupe.

A pared-down orchestral version of *The White Haired Girl* also enjoyed a one-off performance in March 2016 at The National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing. After previous performances, Chinese news reports described audience members young and old raving about the undiminished emotional power of the opera, even seventy years later. But here, even among the fifty and sixty year olds in the audience, who had seen the original production in their youth, audience members chuckled during otherwise serious moments at some of the more outlandish and clichéd elements of the plot and presentation, including the extremely tattered clothing of the peasants. As the music swelled, people checked their phones. Yet in the final scene, when Xi'er and Wang Dachun embraced after years of separation, any remaining cynicism gave way to a collective moment of silence as woman, soldier, and peasants linked arms and waved, the picture of a happy family.



The 2015 version of *The White Haired Girl*
Photo: Weibo

Launching his 'Mass Line Education and Practice Campaign' in June 2013, Xi spoke about self cultivation in a distinctly banal register. He asked Party members to 'look in the mirror, make themselves presentable, take a bath and cure what ails them' 照镜子、正衣冠、洗洗澡、治治病. In education and public culture, the Party-state under Xi's leadership has used the rhetoric of 'socialist hygiene' to justify its intensification of censorship. Yet, Xi's somewhat jocund remark reflects the predicament of a government whose legitimacy rests on its Communist past but for whom the very idea of being a good Communist has lost all meaning.

XI'S CATCHPHRASES IN 2015, by Lorand Laskai

Political discipline and rules 政治规矩

'Political discipline and rules exist to enable CPC cadres to defend the authority of the CPC Central Committee and cadres must follow those rules, aligning themselves with the committee in deed and thought, at all times and in any situation. Party unity must be ensured.'

At the fifth plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) in January, Xi said that to preserve party rule, cadres had to obey 'political discipline and rules'. This included 'unifying and concentrating power in one leader'.

New normal 新常态

'China's economic development has entered a "new normal". The rate of economic growth is shifting to a medium-to-high rate, the model of large-scale quick growth is shifting towards a quality-centred model of intensive growth, and the momentum from investments is transitioning towards innovation driven growth.'

Although Xi's signature term to describe China's economic slowdown, 'the new normal', was coined in 2014, it remained a centrepiece of the Chinese president's policy speeches in 2015, including the one given at the Boao Forum in March. By one scholar's estimation, by March of 2015, Xi had already used the term 'new normal' over 160 times since the 18th Party Congress.

Critical minority 关键少数

'Governing the country according to comprehensive rule of law must capture a "critical minority" of the leadership cadre.'

At a session for leading provincial-level cadres in February, Xi said a 'critical minority' of leading cadre was required to promote the rule of law and strengthen national defence and the military, among other goals. Xi has used the term repeatedly to emphasise the need for a disciplined vanguard within the top levels of the Party.

Feeling of progress 获得感

'Reform must be carried through from the first to last kilometre, breaking through obstructions and preventing omissions. The gold content of reform must be fully displayed so the people can have a feeling of progress.'

At the tenth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms on 27 February, and perhaps in an acknowledgement that fast-paced economic development does not objectively benefit everyone equally, Xi suggested using the people's 'feeling of progress' as a barometer for success. He later used the term when discussing cross-Strait trade dialogue with Taiwan: people on Taiwan, he said, needed the 'feeling of progress' if they were to 'close the distance between compatriots on both sides of the Strait'.

Purify the political ecology 净化政治生态

'When the political ecology is dirty, the environment becomes vile; when the political ecology is bright and clean, the environment is first rate. Political and natural ecology are the

same—neglect it even a little and it will very quickly become polluted. Once problems appear, recovery demands a large price.'

First coined last year, Xi has since used the concept of 'political ecology' on a number of occasions, including during the 2015 meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Toilet revolution 厕所革命

'Along with the quickened pace of agricultural modernisation and new rural construction, we must launch a "toilet revolution" to ensure the rural masses have access to sanitary toilets.'

Xi raised the need to make dramatic improvements to rural sanitation facilities on a number of occasions including during a visit to Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture in July. China's first 'toilet revolution' was in 1965; there have been at least three others since the 1980s.

Supply-side reform 供给侧改革

'At the same time as appropriately increasing demand, we must try hard to increase structural supply-side reforms, raise the supply system's quality and efficiency, and strengthen the momentum for sustainable economic growth.'

Xi first used the term 'supply-side reforms' during a meeting of the Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs on 11 November 2015 and has since used it repeatedly to underscore the government's resolve to curb oversupply and push through new structural reforms during the period of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan.

'Four-iron' cadres '四铁'干部

'In order to build a prosperous society and realise the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, we must groom officials to be as strong as iron in their belief, faith, discipline and sense of responsibility.'

At the National Party School Work Conference in December, Xi coined this new term to describe the calibre of cadre the country needs. The meeting came a few months after the party released new strict disciplinary regulations for party members.

Community of shared destiny in cyberspace 网络空间命运共同体

'Cyberspace is humanity's commons. The future of cyberspace should be in the hands of all nations. Each country should step up communication, broaden consensus and deepen co-operation, in order to jointly build a community of shared destiny in cyberspace.'

During the keynote address to the Second Wuzhen World Internet Conference in December, Xi adapted another favorite catchphrase, 'common destiny', to the politics of global Internet governance. He used it to stress the importance of establishing a 'multinational' regime for Internet management.

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