

Guangzhou's Democracy Movement in Cultural Revolution Perspective*

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China's "democracy movement" seems, for the moment, to have passed into history. It began with wall-posters in Beijing in November 1978 and reached its high-tide the following February and March. By late March–April 1979, however, the first of a series of restrictions had been placed on participants, and the movement's most outspoken representatives, such as Wei Jingsheng, had been arrested. A year later there was a second crackdown, and even moderate members of the movement were ordered to desist. The final crackdown occurred in April 1981 and resulted in the arrest of more than 20 activists. Although the movement focused upon Beijing, where a wide variety of "unofficial" or "people's publications" (*minjian kanwu*) vied for domestic and international attention, many of China's provinces and cities produced their own "democracy activists" and publications.

Were case studies of these local movements available, they might further our understanding of such broad issues as local implementation of national policy, patterns of political participation, and so forth. However, little has been written about developments outside the capital. The present article is an attempt towards meeting this need.

There are both great advantages and possible pitfalls stemming from the choice of Guangzhou to fill this lacuna. Primarily because of its proximity to Hong Kong, our knowledge of developments in Guangzhou is substantially greater than that for any other city except Beijing. This is no less true of the democracy movement. Unofficial publications from Guangzhou frequently turned up in Hong Kong, with the more interesting articles readily reprinted.¹ Autobiographical accounts by the leading figures in Guangzhou's democracy movement also appeared.² As part of the steady two-way traffic between the cities, reporters from Hong Kong frequently went to Guangzhou to conduct interviews and gather facts.³

Given its special circumstances, however, some might argue that an analysis of developments in Guangzhou may have only limited applicability in understanding the movement elsewhere. For example, aware of

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1. Occasionally, Hong Kong magazines printed forgeries, such as articles from the *Xinminzhu langchao* (*New Democratic Wave*). *Dongxifang* (*East and West*), one of those guilty of publishing this material, exposed the forgery in its next issue.

2. See Liu Guokai, "Why I took part in the socialist democracy movement," in *Zhongguoren* (*The Chinese*) (December 1980), pp. 84–90. He Qiu's account of his participation appears in *Guanchajia* (*The Observer*), No. 36 (20 October 1980), pp. 12–15. Excerpts are translated in *Intercontinental Press*, 29 September 1980, pp. 1000–1001.

3. Those making up the Li Yizhe group were interviewed most extensively. See *Dongxiang* (*Trend*), Nos. 5 and 6, February and March 1979; *Zhengming* (*Contention*), No. 26, December 1979; No. 51, January 1982; *Guanchajia*, No. 23, September 1979 and No. 26, December 1979; *Qishi niandai* (*The Seventies*), No. 7, July 1982. An interview with He Qiu appears in *Zhongbao yuekan* (*Centre Daily News Monthly*), No. 4, May 1980. Periodic reports of Guangzhou's democracy movement appeared in *Dongxifang*, No. 18 (June 1980), pp. 8–11; No. 22 (October 1980), pp. 4–9; No. 25 (January 1981), pp. 7–8, 75.

the visibility of their city to the outside world, authorities in Guangzhou adopted a relatively tolerant attitude in the early stages of the democracy movement. At a time when many activists were being suppressed throughout China, one leading participant acknowledged that Guangzhou was something of a “liberated area” for the movement, due to the moderate policies of its leaders.⁴ In the latter part of the movement, when nationwide suppression had practically halted democracy movement activities, Guangzhou’s activists played an important national role for a time.

Guangzhou further stands out because, as early as November 1974, it produced the now world-famous “Li Yizhe big character poster,” with its broadside against the “Lin Biao system” that had “suppressed the democratic rights of the masses,” prompting some to label the city as the cradle of the democracy movement. Although the activities of the Li Yizhe group will be discussed briefly below, it is mentioned at the outset because it illustrates an implicit argument of this article, *viz.* the democracy movement in Guangzhou, despite its particular characteristics, was in many ways typical of developments elsewhere. In this regard, two aspects of the poster, entitled “On socialist democracy and the legal system,” stand out.

First, the ideas expressed in the poster reflected the viewpoint of many Red Guards who had become disillusioned with the direction taken by the Cultural Revolution after 1967. A number of the points – particularly the danger of the emergence of a new ruling class within the Chinese Communist Party – had already appeared in late 1967 in some of the manifestos of “radical” Red Guard groups that had spun off from Rebel factions (*zaofanpai*) throughout China. In Beijing the “April 3 Faction” had re-analysed Chinese society under socialism and called for a redistribution (*zai fenpei*) of wealth and power, so that the labouring people rather than Party officials would become “the masters of society.”⁵ In Hubei rather similar arguments were made by radical groups.⁶ The most prominent of these early groups was Hunan’s Provincial Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee (*Shengwulian*).⁷ Secondly, the background to the Li Yizhe poster and the subsequent events set in motion reveal the intimate relationship between successful protest and political backing. Li Yizhe – as was the case with other groups or individuals who went “against the tide” (*fan chaoliu*) – became entangled in local politics.

More specifically, this article will use the example of Guangzhou to demonstrate the following points: first, that the events of 1978–81 had historical roots in the factionalism of the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Movement of the

4. Interview with Wang Xizhe in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (November 1981), p. 12.

5. *Hongweibing (Red Guard) (Beijing)*, 2 August 1967, p. 4.

6. In Hubei there was the Big Dipper Study Group (*Beidouxing xuehui*) and the *Yangzi River Commentary (Yangzijiang pinglun)*. See interview with H.W.C., 12 May 1976.

7. Translations of articles for and against *Shengwulian* can be found in Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1969), pp. 73–100 and 102–118.

early 1970s. Secondly, that the relationship between the democracy activists and local and national officials should not be seen as uniformly antagonistic, but rather in more complex terms. Officials freely made use of activists to further policy goals at the same time that activists used the few political resources they had to further their own aims, often testing the boundaries of the permissible. Thirdly, that despite the high visibility of the more outspoken of the activists, most of the movement's participants expressed loyalty to the Party. Fourthly, that the authorities were more fearful of a possible organizational network of democracy activists and their sympathizers within the Party than they were of the ideas espoused.

In tracing the development of Guangzhou's democracy movement we are not primarily concerned with an exposition of the political philosophies of individual thinkers. Greater emphasis will be placed on the political relationships between the activists and Party officials. Our analysis will centre on the activities of Wang Xizhe and Li Zhengtian, the only two of the four authors of the Li Yizhe poster who continued to play an active part in the democracy movement up to 1980–81, as well as on the activities of those closely associated with the most influential and politically-orientated of Guangzhou's unofficial publications – *Renmin zhisheng* (*The People's Voice*), established and edited from 1978–79 by Liu Guokai, and *Renmin zhilu* (*The People's Road*), established and edited from 1979–80 by He Qiu.

*Background to the Democracy Movement: Developments in Guangzhou, 1966–79*⁸

Cultural Revolution factionalism did not cease following the demobilization of the Red Guards in 1968; it merely entered a quiescent state. The death of Lin Biao in 1971 and the subsequent emergence of the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Campaign in 1974 brought open, free-wheeling debate and urban protest back into the streets. Wall-posters were permitted for the first time in six years. Erstwhile factional leaders began to re-assemble their remaining troops. Although this heady atmosphere had dissipated by the start of the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975, the brief period of turmoil was marked by a relationship between local leaders and mass activists that resembled their association in the late 1960s. Party officials used the activists against political opponents and to express views they themselves could not voice publicly. The activists, for their part, had their own agenda, seeking to use their ties to prominent officials to further factional or individual goals. The clearest example of this was the relationship between Li Yizhe and the provincial Party leadership. With the political demise of the "gang of four" in October 1976, many who had achieved prominence through Cultural Revolution factional activities began to lose their positions of influence, a process that continues with the current Party consolidation campaign. The rise of the democracy movement activists must be

8. For an extended account of this period, see Rosen, AAS paper, March 1982.

understood in this historical context. In Guangzhou, for example, virtually all the leading activists were in their 30s and had experienced the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guard movement first hand. Likewise, most of them had fought on the Rebel side and had suffered as a result. Many had spent some time in detention, either because of Red Guard activities or opposition to the “gang of four.” It is useful, therefore, to frame our discussion of post 1978 events with a brief account of earlier factional developments.

The demobilization of Guangzhou’s Red Guards hit hardest at the “Rebel” (Red Flag) faction. Their “Conservative” (East Wind) opponents, having been united in supporting Commander Huang Yongsheng and local military control, reaped most of the rewards following demobilization.⁹ The fall of Lin Biao in September 1971 set in motion the events that led to a revival of the Red Flag faction. Guangdong province had been a stronghold of the Lin Biao forces. Huang Yongsheng, the regional military commander who had opposed the Flag faction, had been promoted to Beijing to become chief of staff in 1968. With Lin’s fall, his key subordinates – like Huang – fell as well. During Lin’s power struggle with Mao Zedong in 1970–71, the Lin Biao forces had prepared a blacklist of those in Guangdong to be eliminated in the event that the Lin forces found it necessary to retreat to their provincial stronghold. Among the prominent individuals on that list, which was uncovered during the campaign to criticize Lin, were veteran cadres such as Zhao Ziyang and leading Flag faction Rebels like Wu Chuanbin. Thus, there developed a common interest between these two groups in rooting out Lin’s followers. Rebels who had been detained in 1968 and 1969 began to be released in October 1972.

Li Zhengtian, a member of the radical wing of the Red Flag faction, had begun, while still in detention, to seek the reasons for the failure of the Cultural Revolution, focusing on the lack of socialist democracy and law. By 1973 his manuscript on this subject, highly critical of the “Lin Biao system,” had become the focus of a series of well-attended discussions among a wide variety of former Rebels. While 30 of them had signed an outline of his draft, by December of that year an uncertain political atmosphere had left only hardcore elements Chen Yiyang and Wang Xizhe to join Li Zhengtian in signing a new draft (hence the name Li Yizhe). Guo Hongzhi, a fourth member of the group, was a veteran Party cadre, making it difficult for him to support Li Yizhe publicly.¹⁰

9. For a detailed account of the origin and development of these factions, see Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1982).

10. The most detailed account of the activities of Li Zhengtian and the Li Yizhe group appears in a series of articles by Zi Chuan, “Li Yizhe yu wo” (“Li Yizhe and I”), in *Beidou* (*Big Dipper*), Nos. 1–4, 6–7, 1977. Zi Chuan had been a leader of Guangzhou’s Rebels during the Cultural Revolution. Much of my information in this section derives from Zi Chuan’s account and my discussions with him. Another important source is Qi Hao (ed.), *Guanyu shehuizhuyi minzhu yu fa zhi* (*On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System*) (Hong Kong: Bibliotheque Asiatique, 1976), pp. 1–44. For a recent comment on the views of Li Zhengtian and Wang Xizhe at this time, see Wang Min, “‘Li Yizhe’ gei houlairendi jidian qishi” (“The inspiration ‘Li Yizhe’ provided for those who came after”), in *Zhongguo zhichun* (*China*

It was the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Campaign, which had begun in earnest by February 1974, that brought the new Guangdong leadership headed by Zhao Ziyang (who became first secretary of the provincial Party committee in April) and Xu Shiyu (who had been transferred from Nanjing at the end of 1973 to become military commander) into close concert with the erstwhile Rebels. As well known opponents of Huang Yongsheng and the local military, key Rebels were rehabilitated and given responsibilities in the campaign. Wu Chuanbin and other leading Rebels were reportedly meeting with Zhao Ziyang or Xu Shiyu on a daily basis. When the revived Rebels, restored to an equal footing with their opponents in East Wind, began to investigate atrocities committed by the Conservatives under the protection of Huang and the military, the old factional animosities often could not be contained. For example, when a report detailing a military massacre on Hainan Island was presented by the Rebels, an East Wind leader who had become a member of the standing committee of the provincial revolutionary committee pounded the table and swore: "Dammit! Are you people carrying out the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Campaign, or trying to stand up for the ghosts and monsters?"¹¹

Operating independently of the mainstream Rebels, much as he did during the Cultural Revolution, Li Zhengtian and his colleagues in Li Yizhe sought to foster a large-scale social movement that would compel provincial and municipal authorities to rehabilitate Rebel leaders and their cadre supporters who had been suppressed in the Cultural Revolution. Their most famous poster was in fact only one of a series, including the first poster to appear on a Guangzhou street since 1968. Moreover, their poster campaign was co-ordinated with a direct action campaign involving marches and mass meetings, all designed to pressure municipal officials into increasing support for the Rebels.

The appearance of "On socialist democracy and the legal system" in November 1974 coincided with a high-tide of urban protest throughout China. In Guangzhou, for example, there were demobilized soldiers demonstrating for a pay increase, young factory workers and sent-down youth protesting against a variety of social inequities, and former Red Guards demanding punishment for those in the military guilty of participating in massacres in 1968.¹² Transmitted to Beijing precisely when the central leadership was readying a crackdown against social protest, the Li Yizhe poster, with its warnings against the rise of a new class in the Party, its advocacy of the forms of mass democracy associated with the Red Guard movement, its criticism of the young heroes fostered

Spring, No. 2 (March 1983), pp. 24–26. Also see the screenplay "Wang Xizhe," by Xiao Feng, *Zhongguo zhichun*, Nos. 4–9, July 1983–January 1984.

11. Interview with Wang Min, 25 May 1982; *Beidou*, No. 4, p. 13. "Ghosts and monsters" meant those of bad class background.

12. Qi Hao, *On Socialist Democracy*, p. 167; *Beidou*, No. 7, p. 25; B. Michael Frolic, *Mao's People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 257–65; Wen Sang, "Guangzhou fuyuan tuiwu junren naoshiji" ("An account of the disturbance created by Guangzhou's demobilized soldiers"), *Zhonghua yuebao* (*China Monthly*), August 1975, pp. 31–34.

by the radicals in the leadership, and so forth, drew the fire of both moderates and radicals at the Centre.

Back in Guangzhou, the members of Li Yizhe were subjected to mass criticism. According to one account, over 7,600 criticize Li meetings were held between January and March 1975.¹³ However, having made it clear to some Party officials that their poster had been directed not just at Lin Biao, but at “Jiang Qing and company,” leading cadres such as Zhao Ziyang allowed Li Zhengtian and his colleagues to respond to their critics, thereby providing Party moderates a forum for ideas they could not otherwise have presented.

Ironically, the demise of the “gang of four” did not redound to the benefit of Li Yizhe. In fact, one consequence of the “gang’s” arrest was the increased suppression of political dissidents, as well as those associated with past factional activities of any kind. One brief illustration of how this occurred in Guangzhou reveals the complexity of political alliances in late Maoist China. After the Fourth National People’s Congress in 1975, Deng Xiaoping took a variety of initiatives in industry, agriculture, education, and so forth, that were diametrically opposed to the Cultural Revolution reforms. Moreover, he made it abundantly clear that he would not tolerate any radicals who opposed his plans after the death of the ailing Mao and Zhou Enlai.¹⁴ With rehabilitated cadres returning to positions of influence to carry out the new initiatives, a common interest grew among those who owed their posts to the Cultural Revolution, regardless of faction. Without harbouring any love for the radicals in Beijing, they recognized that their own survival depended on the existence of individuals like Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao at the Party Centre. Because of this, prominent young cadres from both Guangzhou factions wrote letters in 1975 to known supporters of China’s radicals in Beijing, offering their encouragement in defending the gains of the Cultural Revolution. They were seeking to develop contacts at the Centre as a form of protection for their own positions. Although these letters elicited no response, after the collapse of the “gang” they were discovered and used as evidence against leading young cadres in Guangzhou. As a result, some of the most prominent leaders of Red Flag and East Wind lost their posts.¹⁵

The members of Li Yizhe fared no better. In March 1977 they were thrown into prison. But their case was complicated. There were a fair number of provincial-level cadres sympathetic to their ideas.¹⁶ In addition, those suspected of supporting Li in each unit had been made targets of struggle, with almost 1,000 people being forced to attend study

13. *Beijing Spring*, No. 2 (27 January 1979), pp. 3–5, translated in Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), No. 73728, 20 June 1979, pp. 38–41.

14. Kenneth Lieberthal, “The background in Chinese politics,” in Herbert J. Ellison (ed.), *The Sino-Soviet Conflict: A Global Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), pp. 20–21.

15. Interviews with W.M. and C.Q., both of whom participated in Guangzhou’s democracy movement.

16. Interview with W.C.J., 5 August 1980, who stated that nine provincial-level cadres were implicated in the Li Yizhe case.

classes.¹⁷ Compounding the complexities, their case had aroused international attention; prominent political leaders such as Jacques Chirac (the mayor of Paris) had publicly called for their release. Amnesty International had “adopted” them and campaigned actively on their behalf. Nevertheless, in December 1977, an old nemesis of the Rebels, Jiao Linyi, the first secretary of Guangzhou's municipal Party committee, declared that Li Yizhe was a counter-revolutionary clique which included many cadres.¹⁸

The Rehabilitation of Li Yizhe. Li Yizhe received their official rehabilitation before a large crowd on 6 February 1979.¹⁹ The ceremony was treated as an important event, with several leading cadres from the provincial Party committee in attendance. News of the rally and support for Li Yizhe appeared in official newspapers and magazines. A Hong Kong magazine was invited to cover the rally and report the events abroad. The members of Li Yizhe had turned into heroes. What had happened?

The rehabilitation of Li Yizhe stemmed from a series of decisions taken at a central work conference convened by the Party in mid 1978, and ratified at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee in December. This Plenum announced the successful completion of the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and the “gang of four,” and shifted the emphasis to socialist modernization.²⁰

Of most relevance to the Li Yizhe issue were the decisions taken to “reverse verdicts” on cases long since decided. The first outstanding example of this was the reinterpretation, in November 1978, of the Tiananmen Incident of 5 April 1976, from a counter-revolutionary to a revolutionary incident. In that incident, a mass demonstration in Beijing's Tiananmen Square commemorating the death of Premier Zhou Enlai, supporting Zhou's hand-picked successor Deng Xiaoping, and voicing anti-government sentiments was dispersed by militia, army and public security forces. As a result of this demonstration, Deng Xiaoping was dismissed from all of his posts.²¹

Following the reinterpretation of the Tiananmen Incident, localities throughout the country began to reinvestigate all cases involving those convicted of opposing Lin Biao and the “gang of four.” In Guangdong, the provincial Party committee ordered that the re-evaluations of all cases be completed by June 1979.²²

Since their international recognition had made the Li Yizhe group among the most prominent of the “gang's” victims, a well-publicized

17. *Beijing zhichun (Beijing Spring)*, No. 2 (27 January 1979), in JPRS, No. 73728, pp. 38–39.

18. *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 53–54.

19. This section draws from my introduction to *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 3–14.

20. *Peking Review*, No. 52 (29 December 1978), pp. 6–16. For Deng's speech on emancipating the mind, delivered at the closing session of the work conference, see Daily Report, 5 July 1983, pp. K 10–19 (*Renmin ribao [People's Daily]*, 1 July 1983).

21. On the reinterpretation of this incident, see *Peking Review*, No. 48 (1 December 1978), pp. 6–17.

22. New China News Service (NCNA), 1 February 1979, in JPRS, No. 72912, 2 March 1979.

rehabilitation would aid in convincing both domestic and foreign public opinion that the new leadership's commitment to restore socialist democracy and rebuild the legal system was genuine. Recognizing this, the provincial Party committee had decided to rehabilitate Li Yizhe as early as December 1978. But Li Yizhe was sophisticated enough politically to understand that China's reformist-minded leadership needed its support. Therefore, the members of Li Yizhe deliberately delayed their own rehabilitation until Guangdong's leaders agreed to release others implicated in their case or in similar cases.²³ They met four times with Xi Zhongxun, who had just become first secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee, before they agreed to attend a rehabilitation meeting. During this period wall-posters by those implicated in the Li Yizhe case appeared in Guangzhou insisting on certain conditions for their rehabilitation. Others protested that a number of the very people who had been persecuting Li Yizhe, such as Chen Yueping, the director of the propaganda department of Guangdong province, were now actively involved in preparing for the rehabilitation. What was necessary instead, they argued, was an investigation of those who had taken part in the movement to criticize Li.²⁴

In addition to its importance to the Chinese leadership, the rehabilitation of Li Yizhe was important also to activists in the democracy movement. For example, one prominent activist in Beijing claimed that many of the participants in the Tiananmen Incident had read the Li Yizhe poster prior to their participation.²⁵ After the Chinese press had widely praised the members of Li Yizhe as among the earliest and most articulate exponents of democracy and the legal system, and proclaimed that their poster had "signalled the impending mass campaign against the 'gang of four' as well as presaged a popular revolution symbolized by the 'Tiananmen Incident' and the collapse of the 'gang of four,'" the members of Li Yizhe overnight became elder statesmen to those in the rapidly burgeoning democracy movement. The official press had, of course, cautioned that not all of Li Yizhe's ideas had been correct. Most notably, their characterization of Chinese society as containing a stratum of those with special privileges was criticized. But, one commentary went on, the group had already corrected a number of mistaken formulations in their poster.²⁶

23. Their holdout was not atypical. Other individuals throughout China who had been offered rehabilitation held out for high positions, good jobs, better living conditions, a more thoroughgoing verdict reversal, and so forth. Daily Report, 23 April 1979, pp. L 6–12 (*Renmin ribao*, 21 April 1979).

24. Some of these posters are translated in *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 15–32.

25. *Beijing zhichun*, No. 2, 27 January 1979, in JPRS, No. 73728, 20 June 1979, p. 41. According to a number of informants familiar with that incident, however, this claim is an exaggeration. One estimated that fewer than 10% of the participants would have read the Li Yizhe poster, primarily children of high-level cadres. Possession of the poster was treated seriously. One informant related how an acquaintance of his, whose house was searched by the public security authorities on a completely different matter in 1975, was given several months detention when a copy of the Li Yizhe poster was discovered there.

26. *Guangdong qingnian (Guangdong Youth)*, No. 2 (February 1979), pp. 3–6, especially p. 6.

Interviews given to foreign reporters by members of Li Yizhe reveal why they were so useful to China's new leaders:

Pioneers of China's current democratic movement and once the nation's most celebrated political prisoners, the group of three young Chinese known collectively as "Li Yizhe" reject the brand of "dissidents" and support the new regime and its policies.

Their merits now recognized by the regime, the three will continue to publicize reports about the Cultural Revolution period through official channels in . . . Guangdong. Asked about parallels made by foreign observers between them and Soviet dissidents, they said: "We are not opposed to the Chinese Communist Party. [. . .] We support the current leaders. We wrote our big character posters to express the hope of the Chinese people that leaders like them would appear to overthrow the [gang of] four." They denied accusations by Maoist groups abroad, particularly in France, saying that China had "given way to revisionism."²⁷

The prominence of the Li Yizhe case and the publicity given to their rehabilitation made the members of Li Yizhe unique in China's democracy movement. It also created a dilemma for the four individuals who comprised the group. As democracy activists throughout the country sent congratulations and made contact with Li Yizhe, the group was in the process of cementing its ties to the new provincial and municipal Party committees. There were still members of the committees not reconciled to the rehabilitation, however. For example, local reports from Guangdong television, Guangdong radio, *Nanfang ribao* (*Nanfang Daily*) and *Guangzhou ribao* (*Guangzhou Daily*) seemed to differ in their assessments of Li Yizhe. In particular, *Nanfang ribao* did not affirm the correctness of Li Yizhe's views; moreover, the newspaper claimed that Li Zhengtian in his talk at the rehabilitation rally had dwelled on the wrongs (*weiqu*) they had suffered.²⁸

In March 1979 as many as 23 leaders were involved in a reshuffling of the Guangzhou Municipal Party Committee. Most prominently, First Party Secretary Jiao Linyi was blamed for his handling of the Li Yizhe case and for leading Guangzhou into a "badly battered" state (*jiaotu lan'e*). He left to attend the Central Party School in Beijing on 12 March. Jiao reportedly had offered to give up all his duties if allowed to remain in Guangzhou, but the higher authorities refused.²⁹

So long as the goals of the democracy movement and the reformers in the Party represented by Deng Xiaoping at the centre and Xi Zhongxun in Guangdong coincided, the members of Li Yizhe would have no problem retaining the support of both constituencies. But it was a balancing act that could not be sustained if the interests of the two constituencies diverged. In fact, of course, that is precisely what happened and very quickly. The democracy movement for Deng was a *means* through which to consolidate his leadership and push ahead with his economic reform policies. For democracy activists, political modernization and economic

27. Daily Report, 15 February 1979, p. E1 (AFP, 15 February).

28. Li Yizhe members denied that Li Zhengtian had discussed their grievances at the rally. See *Dongxiang*, No. 6 (March 1979), pp. 34–35.

29. *Dongxiang*, No. 7 (April 1979), p. 11 and *Zhengming*, No. 18 (April 1979), p. 41.

modernization were intertwined, with democracy – the so-called “fifth modernization” – an *end in itself*.

The members of Li Yizhe, whose posters had been drafted after extensive discussions and numerous revisions, in a political atmosphere that dictated a careful wording of texts and a minimum of disagreement, suddenly, with their rehabilitation, no longer had any compelling reason to develop a common position on the controversial problems they were addressing. In the new, relatively open atmosphere of early 1979, Guo Hongzhi and Chen Yiyang soon became inactive politically.³⁰ Li Zhengtian and Wang Xizhe remained active but moved in different directions. Most fundamentally, Li and Wang differed over crucial requirements for the construction of socialism in China under current conditions. Their positions mirrored those separating Party reformers from the majority of the democracy activists. Li considered the key question to be the economic modernization of the country, which would lead to a boost in the living standards of the labouring people. Because of this, he identified with and supported Deng Xiaoping, Xi Zhongxun and the reform group of the Party. As Li told a reporter from Hong Kong, China’s real danger did not stem from people like Deng and Xi, but rather from those who had built their careers on their prominence in the Cultural Revolution.³¹ According to one disgruntled former activist who had worked with both Wang and Li since the Cultural Revolution, Li had applied for Party membership two days after his release from jail, but was not accepted.³²

Wang, on the other hand, accepted the mantle “elder statesman” in the democracy movement. He began to write a series of articles that explored the proper state form for present-day China, the type of government that would best guarantee freedom and democracy to the people and allow them some form of supervision over the Party.³³ Li characterized Wang’s

30. Chen Yiyang’s health had deteriorated during his ordeal and his family had suffered because of his activities. He currently works in the library of the Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences. The victory of the Party reformers over their radical opponents made Guo’s further participation unnecessary.

31. See Li’s “Take the road of scientific socialism” in *Guangdong qingnian*, No. 12 (December 1979), pp. 7–9, and the interview in *Zhongbao yuekan*, No. 2 (March 1980), p. 31. Also see *Guanchajia*, No. 26 (December 1979), pp. 8–11, translated in *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 106–115, and *Zhengming*, No. 82 (August 1984), pp. 30–33.

32. Interview with Wang Min and “‘Li Yizhe’ gei houlairende,” p. 25.

33. Four of Wang’s essays, an appeal for the release of Liu Qing – arrested for selling transcripts of Wei Jingsheng’s trial – plus comments made by Wang and others at a Guangdong Provincial Youth League forum, and a response by Wang to an article misquoting him at that forum, all appear in *Wang Xizhe lunwenji* (*A Collection of Wang Xizhe’s Essays*) (Hong Kong: Qishi niandai zazhishe, 1981). The four essays are “Strive for the class dictatorship of the proletariat” and “Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution,” both translated in Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger, *Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1985); “The orientation of democracy”; and “Proletarian dictatorship is a humanitarian dictatorship,” translated in abridged form in Helen F. Siu and Zelda Stern, *Mao’s Harvest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 210–19. All of this material originally appeared in *Qishi niandai*. Another of Wang’s essays is “Party leadership and mass supervision,” reprinted in *Zhanwang* (*Outlook*), No. 434 (1 March 1980), pp. 11–14. A number of these essays first appeared in *Renmin zhisheng* (*The People’s Voice*), and *Renmin zhilu* (*The People’s Road*), the two major unofficial publications in Guangzhou.

concern with the improvement of proletarian dictatorship as advocating “democracy for democracy’s sake” and even criticized Wang’s use of the term “class dictatorship” as unscientific.³⁴

Li’s identification with the Party leadership and Wang’s identification with the democracy movement activists dictated the future actions of both, causing each of them some frustration. Unlike Wang, Li was not interested in writing for, being interviewed by, or attending meetings organized under the auspices of those representing Guangzhou’s unofficial publications. He submitted his material only to official organs so that, if published, its arguments would receive wide circulation and be treated by his readership as authoritative. This of course subjected him to much greater censorship than Wang. For example, his article entitled “Take the road of scientific socialism” appeared in *Guangdong qingnian* (*Guangdong Youth*) minus a section on class dictatorship. His speech at a youth forum entitled “Unlawful law and crimeless crime” was never accepted for publication in China, despite repeated submissions.³⁵ Other essays dealing with specifically political topics, such as “Class dictatorship and people’s democracy,” seem not to have been published at all.

Wang, on the other hand, was a willing participant in discussions organized by unofficial publications, submitted articles to and was interviewed in these publications, and had many articles reprinted or initially published in Hong Kong magazines. He at times criticized Party leaders such as Xi Zhongxun and openly discussed his disagreements with them in unofficial publications. Although Wang felt that Party reformers and movement activists were united around common objectives and was reluctant to draw a distinction between an official movement and a people’s movement, he simultaneously argued that the motive force for change “has always come from the lower strata... and only later been accepted by the upper strata.” In this regard, he was pessimistic that Party reformers would act to bring about democracy and freedom unaided. He traced the Tiananmen Incident, the purge of the “gang of four,” and the Party reform movement itself to this pressure from below.³⁶ By 1980 he had expanded his contacts with those in the democracy movement and edited a newsletter, with each issue containing a short (five to eight page) article by some member of his “circle” on a current topic (for example, how to assess the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong Thought in his later years, and so forth).

After the dissolution of Li Yizhe, Wang treated his articles as sequels to the former group’s posters. He told interviewers that this was reasonable since in fact he had done most of the original drafts of the posters, minimizing Li Zhengtian’s role as primarily one of “making connections in society.” Li Zhengtian strongly resented both the attachment of Li

34. *Zhongbao yuekan*, No. 2 (March 1980), p. 31.

35. *Ibid.* This speech was published, without Li’s approval, in *Guanchajia*, No. 34 (20 August 1980), pp. 15–17.

36. See the interview with Wang Xizhe in *New Left Review*, No. 131 (January–February 1982), pp. 62–70. The complete text of the interview, conducted by Wang Huaixue in Guangzhou on 26 December 1980, appears in *Qishi niandai*, July 1982, pp. 34–38. A translation is in JPRS, No. 81700 (3 September 1982), pp. 86–97.

Yizhe's name to Wang Xizhe's articles and the implication that Wang was the moving force behind Li Yizhe.³⁷

Li's offer of full support to China's reformers in the Party leadership did not always endear him to others in the democracy movement. For example, his insistence to Hong Kong reporters that, despite the arrest of Wei Jingsheng and others in Beijing in 1979, the Guangdong Provincial Committee still maintained good relations even with those critical of its leadership, angered some in the movement. Liu Guokai, editor of *Renmin zhisheng*, complained in a letter to a friend that Li was the only one who still had close ties with Xi Zhongxun and the provincial committee. His own magazine was being forced to cease publication. Of the original Li Yizhe group, only Wang Xizhe still had "the spirit of struggle," according to Liu. At least he "had not surrendered in order to gain fame and position."³⁸ One Hong Kong reporter said Li's behaviour was related to his desire to settle down, quoting Li as saying: "I'm over thirty years old now. I don't plan on going back to jail."³⁹ Ultimately, Li's direction was to lead to complete withdrawal from the democracy movement while Wang's led, by April 1981, to his arrest.

The Beginning and the End of the Democracy Movement, 1979–82

One is not likely to mistake the democracy movement in Guangzhou for the one in Beijing. Guangzhou did not produce a Wei Jingsheng who sought to transform China from a Marxist state with a one party dictatorship to a state modelled on Western European or American democracy. Nor did Guangzhou produce a Fu Yuehua, who would lead hungry petitioners down Zhongshan Road. Guangzhou's democracy activists all espoused a belief in Marxism and offered support to China's reformist leaders, such as Deng Xiaoping and Xi Zhongxun. The critiques of Chinese society and of China's leaders presented in Guangzhou's unofficial journals were mild, and generally pointed to a gap between the government's professed goals and their actual implementation, rather than a call for a new leadership or a new state form.⁴⁰ If this was true of such "comprehensive" (*zonghexing*) journals as Liu Guokai's *Renmin zhisheng* and He Qiu's *Renmin zhilu*, which addressed social and political

37. Wang's comments can be found in *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, p. 83. Li's response is in *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 111–13.

38. For Li's statements, see *Zhengming*, No. 26 (December 1979), translated in *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 116–21; Liu's letter is in *Dongxifang*, No. 13 (January 1980), p. 88.

39. *Dongxifang*, No. 18 (June 1980), p. 9. In fact, Li at present is much in demand as a lecturer on his speciality: painting nudes. He has no financial problems, is respected, and has an easy conscience. See *Qishi niandai*, April 1982, p. 6.

40. All of Guangzhou's activists would fit into the category Brodsgaard calls the "socialist democrats," as distinct from the "abolitionists" represented by Wei Jingsheng, the Enlightenment Society and the Human Rights League. The Guangzhou case would also fit Brodsgaard's argument that socialist democrats had been Rebels (he uses the term radicals) in the Cultural Revolution while the abolitionists had been Conservatives (he uses the term moderates). Guangzhou's most important activists had all been Rebels. See Kjeld Erik Brodsgaard, "The democracy movement in China, 1978–1979: opposition movements, wall poster campaigns, and underground journals," *Asian Survey*, July 1981, pp. 742–74.

issues directly, it was still more the case with journals such as *Weilai* (*Future*), *Shenghuo* (*Life*) and *Langhua* (*Spray*), which used literary and artistic forms to express social concerns. Even the views of Wang Xizhe were not unlike those in certain Party publications, albeit Wang's ideas usually were expressed six months to a year before they appeared in Party publications. Moreover, activists in Beijing and Guangzhou acknowledged that the movement in Guangzhou lacked the public support it had received in Beijing and several other major cities.⁴¹

In turn, officials in Guangzhou did not initially adopt the harsh tactics employed in Beijing. The impact of the first crackdown in April 1979 was felt in a more subtle manner in Guangzhou. The first arrests in Guangzhou came only in August 1980, and even then, as we shall see, they did not lead to a lengthy imprisonment, but rather constituted a warning. The authorities' strategy in Guangzhou was based on persuading democracy activists to disengage themselves voluntarily. Rather than order the closure of any journals, they sought first to convince the activists that the current leadership was already carrying out the desired reforms, albeit gradually, and that politically concerned youth would, on occasion, be allowed to publish in official organs. If this did not work, they attempted next to remove the audience for unofficial journals by banning public sales. In the end, they seemed concerned less with the political and economic philosophy of the journals and more with the organizational networks local activists were establishing throughout the country.

Such inter-provincial connections were particularly disturbing to a leadership acutely sensitive to the similar tactics that had been used by China's radicals to press the Cultural Revolution forward. Ironically, it was Guangdong's mild strategy of gradually convincing the editors of the people's publications to cease their activities that eventually led to what the leadership feared most. Reasoning that the only way to survive and press their case for legal status was through a co-ordinated, national campaign, Guangzhou's people's publications began, early in 1980, to develop strong inter-provincial connections. In fact, it was only when Guangzhou's remaining activists – Wang Xizhe and He Qiu – had become part of a nationwide network of those issuing people's publications, within a national association, that Guangdong authorities cracked down and made arrests. Even then, these arrests were dictated by national-level decisions to close down – by any means necessary – all remaining “illegal publications” before June 1981.

Pressure from Guangdong's Leaders: 1979. The organizational issue – the “linking up” (*chuanlian*) of those engaged in the democracy movement – seems to have been regarded as most threatening from the start. Certainly, the initial issues of journals like *Renmin zhisheng* and *Weilai* in December 1978 and January 1979, with their inaugural comments

41. See Li Yi, “Why is it that Wang Xizhe's articles arouse sympathy?”, in *Qishi niandai*, July 1981, pp. 30–32. Also see the Wang Xizhe interview in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (November 1981), p. 7 and *Beijing qiushi* (*Autumn Fruits in Beijing*), No. 1 (March 1979), pp. 11–12, translated in JPRS, No. 74532 (7 November 1979), pp. 32–34.

praising Marxism, the Tiananmen Incident, the dawning of a new era, and so forth, were mild enough.⁴² But the Tiananmen issue had the potential to be worrisome. Like the Li Yizhe poster, the Tiananmen Incident was viewed by China's leaders as a clear indication that the masses were firmly opposed to the "gang of four." Such spontaneous activities had been the only way to express deep-seated opposition during the "fascist dictatorship" of the "gang." Under present conditions, however, unmediated activities of that sort were no longer welcome.

For those in the democracy movement, on the other hand, the Tiananmen Incident offered a different lesson. It suggested, as Wang Xizhe was later to write, that the political consciousness of the masses was beginning to develop to a point where the direct administrative leadership of the Party might not be necessary. The masses were becoming capable of governing themselves more directly.

As early as 1979 a pattern began to develop in which Guangdong's leaders sought to defuse the social mobilization activities organized by Guangzhou's activists around the time of the celebration of the anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident, and instead moved to bring all such activities under official sponsorship. It was the events surrounding the 1979 celebrations and, according to informants, the misperception of these events by the provincial Party committee, that initially led Guangdong's leaders to monitor and organize such activities.

Liu Guokai, for example, had prepared a comprehensive evaluation of the Cultural Revolution, to be delivered on 5 April 1979. To generate interest, he posted notices advertising his talk. At the same time, the editors of *Weilai* were organizing their own commemoration of the event. To avoid conflicts with others organizing similar events, they scheduled a forum for 1 April, on the general topic: "Under the present conditions, how can we correctly use our democratic rights? Integrating the democracy movement throughout the country, how can we develop the April 5 spirit?"⁴³ Over 150 people attended the forum, including Wang Yizhe and Chen Yiyang of Li Yizhe (Li Zhengtian had turned down his invitation), Liu Guokai, students from many Guangzhou universities, some cadres, and so forth. The forum was wide-ranging, with many speakers straying from the original topic to express their views on the meaning of democracy and freedom, among other things. Although speakers praised Deng Xiaoping as – in Wang Xizhe's words – "a great proletarian revolutionary," some comments must have raised eyebrows among those more conservative on Guangdong's provincial committee. For example, Wang Xizhe concluded his rousing speech urging those in attendance to avoid ossification (*mamu jianghua*); instead, they should grasp their pens and use them to struggle to bring real democratic rights to the masses. Citing the spirit of Deng Xiaoping's remarks the previous November, he also stated

42. See *Weilai* (Future), No. 1, December 1978; *Renmin zhisheng lichangshu* (Standpoint of the People's Voice) in *Guonei minkan xuanji* (Selections from Internal People's Publications), No. 1 (17 January 1980), pp. 8–13. A summary of *Renmin zhisheng*'s first issue appears in *Feiqing yuebao* (Bandit Intelligence Monthly), 15 December 1980, pp. 60–61.

43. *Dongxiang*, No. 7 (April 1979), pp. 9–11 has details of this forum.

that basic rights like freedom of speech, the press, assembly and so forth would definitely be guaranteed by law and that any Party committees or leaders who issue orders prohibiting big character posters or people's publications are flagrantly violating the Constitution, something that absolutely cannot be tolerated.

Wang's prepared speech was entitled "Strive for the class dictatorship of the proletariat."⁴⁴ Among Wang's points later considered most controversial by the provincial Party committee were his statements that many of China's calamities had their origins in Mao's *Notes on Political Economy*, written in 1959 after his criticism of Peng Dehuai; that President Tito of Yugoslavia was the greatest Marxist of the age; and that China's bureaucratic system, including lifetime tenure for cadres, is undemocratic and divides officials from the people.⁴⁵ Both these main points – the denigration of Mao Zedong and the danger of Party bureaucrats forming a class apart from the ordinary masses – were developed further in later essays by Wang and were in part responsible for his arrest in 1981.

The free-wheeling nature of this forum "alarmed" (*jingdong*) all Guangzhou, according to one account.⁴⁶ Reportedly, the provincial Party committee assumed – erroneously – that those involved in the democracy movement had already become united and were edging away from Party control. Xi Zhongxun criticized Wang Xizhe by name at a provincial Party committee meeting on 2 April, calling his opinions "inflammatory." Still to come was Liu Guokai's 5 April speech on the sensitive topic of the Cultural Revolution. Acting quickly, Xi Zhongxun and Yang Shangkun – the first and second secretaries of the provincial Party committee – on 3 April received the members of Li Yizhe, two editors of *Weilai*, and Liu Guokai, and invited them (along with 20 other members of *Weilai*) to participate in a discussion meeting sponsored by the provincial Communist Youth League on 5 April. Representatives from each group involved in the democracy movement were asked to speak on a topic of their choice.

Li Zhengtian, who had not responded to the invitation from *Weilai*, accepted this official invitation and spoke on the arbitrary character of the legal system during the Cultural Revolution. Wang Xizhe spoke on the necessity for mass supervision over Party leadership.⁴⁷ Once again, Wang's comments aroused the criticism of Xi Zhongxun. Wang had rejected the expression "only socialism can save China" as unscientific and dangerous because he felt that it stressed voluntarism and had led to ultra-leftist excesses since 1958. It implied that people could freely choose their own social forms and was therefore not Marxist.⁴⁸

Wang's independence must have been especially irksome because it came precisely when the Party Centre was cracking down on dissidents in

44. *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 84–105.

45. *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 77–83.

46. *Dongxiang*, No. 7 (April 1979), p. 11.

47. Li's talk, "Unlawful law and crimeless crime," is in *Guanchajia*, No. 34 (August 1980), pp. 15–17; Wang's talk, "Party leadership and mass supervision," is in *Zhanwang*, No. 434 (1 March 1980), pp. 11–14.

48. Wang Xizhe interview, *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, p. 81.

Beijing. On 16 March and again on 30 March, Deng Xiaoping had spoken to a group of high-ranking cadres, warning that the democracy movement had “gone too far,” that some of its practitioners were not furthering stability, unity and the Four Modernizations. Political discussions in future, he argued, must uphold the Four Basic Principles, i.e. socialism, proletarian dictatorship, Party leadership, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.⁴⁹ The press quickly picked up the theme. An editorial in *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*) on 5 April, praising the “Tiananmen revolutionary spirit,” claimed that the Tiananmen Incident was revolutionary because it had supported these Four Principles. The struggle against the “gang of four” was a struggle to maintain these principles. The editorial closed by warning that those few people who wanted to use “the 5 April banner” to oppose the Four Principles would be watched closely.⁵⁰

The impact of this crackdown was felt in Guangzhou. Unlike Beijing, no one was arrested at this time; pressure was more subtly applied. For example, when Xi Zhongxun received the leaders of *Weilai* early in April he praised their magazine, and told them the issues they raised – such as the low standard of living of the masses – were important issues. On the other hand, he said, they of course knew that the existing problems were due to a variety of factors, including China's backwardness and the erroneous policies of previous leaders, such as the “gang of four.” Since the Centre was actively engaged in solving these defects, he wondered whether it was a good idea to dwell on such problems in their publication. It was an amiable meeting and Xi did not advise *Weilai* to cease publication, although it was clear that such a decision would not displease him. Since the journal's leading figures were all university students who had been Flag faction Rebels during the Cultural Revolution, they had sufficient political awareness to realize that such gentle persuasion was merely an opening gambit, likely to be followed by more direct entreaties. After considering their financial, supply and printing problems, the drain on their study time, the possibility that continued activities might affect their graduation assignments, and so forth, they decided to cease publication. *Weilai* was therefore the first of Guangzhou's people's publications to fold, after four issues, in April 1979.

The pressure on Wang Xizhe was of a different kind. He was simultaneously more potent and more vulnerable than a university student. With Li Zhengtian careful to avoid contact with unofficial publications, Wang was the last of the Li Yizhe group still active in the democracy movement. The transfer of a few cadres like Jiao Linyi who had been most visible in prosecuting the case against them did not make Li Yizhe any more popular with certain segments of Guangdong's entrenched bureaucracy. Since he was determined to remain both active and independent, Wang's best chance for survival, given his enemies, was to build bridges to the newly-arrived leaders, Xi Zhongxun and Yang

49. The 30 March speech, “Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles.” appears in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (1975–82) (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 166–91.

50. *Renmin ribao*, 5 April 1979 in *Inside China Mainland*, July 1979, p. 14.

Shangkun, to gain their protection. Given Wang's personality and principles, this does not seem to have been possible. As we have seen, he had already incurred the displeasure of Xi Zhongxun in his speeches at the April forums. His opponents seized the opportunity to create difficulties for him. For example, the Guangzhou Municipal Party Committee treated Xi's 2 April talk in which he criticized Wang as a Party document and transmitted it down to subordinate units, giving it wide circulation. According to Wang, this was done without informing the provincial Party committee. To cite an earlier example, on 17 March, Xi had personally approved Wang's application to work at the Pearl River Film Studio. Others on the provincial committee delayed the transfer until Wang gave some indication he would be discreet in his activities following his rehabilitation. Expressing his scornful disdain, he made it clear he would not become submissive simply for the sake of employment.⁵¹

Wang clearly felt he was a marked man. As he told an interviewer after being criticized in April:

At many discussion meetings today, [such as] discussion meetings of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences . . . [speeches are] more radical than mine; yet nobody has given them the big stick. However, I was destined to be treated with the big stick because we have always been suspected of being "reactionary."⁵²

At this same time, the local press was echoing the 5 April *Renmin ribao* editorial on drawing the proper lessons from the Tiananmen Incident. In five editorials between 29 May and 2 June *Nanfang ribao* lashed out at both "rightist" and "leftist" deviations to the Four Basic Principles. The 1 June editorial had passages that seemed to have been written specifically for Wang Xizhe:

At present, there are those who, either consciously or unconsciously, extol the spontaneity of the masses while ignoring the importance of the Party's leadership, even going so far as to take the mass movement at Tiananmen Square in 1976 as proof that revolution without the leadership of the Party is possible Although the April 5 movement was not a mass movement led directly by the Party, all the comrades who participated in the movement had undergone many years of training by our Party, and many of the key forces were Communist Party members and Party cadres, or members of the Communist Youth League Therefore, in a certain sense, the April 5 movement was not at all estranged from the leadership of the Party. We must never conceive of the 1976 mass movement . . . as a purely spontaneous movement like the May 4 Movement.⁵³

51. Wang interview, *Chinese Law and Government*, pp. 78–83.

52. *Ibid.* p. 78.

53. These editorials are translated in JPRS, No. 73857 (18 July 1979), pp. 6–23. It is interesting that a number of passages in the editorial quoted have very similar wording to Wang Xizhe's speech "Strive for the class dictatorship of the proletariat." A draft of the speech was delivered, as we have seen, on 1 April, at the forum organized by *Future*, and was subsequently criticized by Xi Zhongxun. The speech, with wording similar to the 1 June *Nanfang ribao* (*Southern Daily*) editorial, was not published until July 1979 in *Renmin zhisheng*. It is clear that the draft had been revised to conform more with editorials in the official press. In fact, Wang specifically quotes a passage from the 5 April *Renmin ribao* editorial. *Chinese Law and Government*, summer 1981, pp. 102–103. Xi Zhongxun's views at this time can be found in his talks with youths, in *Guangdong qingnian*, No. 5–6 (May–June 1979), pp. 3–7.

After April the only other individuals still active were those engaged in publishing *Renmin zhisheng*, particularly Liu Guokai and He Qiu. Unlike university students concerned about receiving satisfactory job allocations, they were better able to withstand the subtle pressure the authorities began to exert. Because of this, however, the pressure was sometimes a bit less subtle. For example, in an open letter to the provincial and municipal committees, the editorial board complained that although an official notice of late March–early April 1979 had directed that wall-posters be placed in designated places, no places had ever been designated. Moreover, the letter went on, it seemed odd that only those items posted by *Renmin zhisheng* seemed to have been torn down.⁵⁴

Nor did the new emphasis on the Four Basic Principles deter Liu and He. In fact, He wrote an article praising this requirement as absolutely correct, as necessary to avoid ideological confusion. On the other hand, He wrote, quoting a recent speech given by Zhao Ziyang in Sichuan, “if a person’s mind has not become emancipated, then he cannot correctly persist in the Four Basic Principles, even to the point that he can propagate sham Marxism and sham socialism for a long period, as was done by Lin Biao and the “gang of four,” and take this for the Four Basic Principles!”⁵⁵

In September, He Qiu left *Renmin zhisheng* and created *Renmin zhilu*. The two journals were similar; in fact, He Qiu sent his first issue to subscribers of *Renmin zhisheng* and called it a continuation of that journal. There were early attempts to persuade He not to continue his journal. For example, the provincial Communist Youth League tried to convince him to submit articles to official magazines, that his journal was unnecessary. He’s response was that he was simply exercising his constitutional right, that the two activities were not mutually exclusive. After issue No. 2 appeared the authorities held a forum for those engaged in publishing the people’s publications, hoping to persuade them that in light of the many problems to be tackled, which could not be solved quickly, the best strategy would be to put aside their publications and join in a common effort to construct the Four Modernizations.⁵⁶

When these methods did not bear fruit, others were tried. On 18 December 1979 *Renmin zhisheng* and *Renmin zhilu* were informed that, according to the 1952 Regulations on Registering Publications, public sales were forbidden unless guarantees from two private shops were obtained. When the journals protested that such shops no longer existed, the official reply was simply that the old publications law had never been superseded; if a publication was unable to meet the requirements, it could

54. *Renmin zhisheng*, No. 8 (July 1979), p. 12.

55. *Renmin zhisheng*, No. 7 (June 1979), pp. 9–11. The interpretation of the Four Basic Principles as necessary to correct “rightist deviations” was widespread among cadres in Guangzhou. See *Nanfang ribao*, 31 May 1979, in JPRS, No. 74061 (23 August 1979), pp. 9–14.

56. He describes these attempts in *Zhongbao* (Centre Daily News), No. 4 (May 1980), p. 18. Liu Guokai, more concerned with getting his ideas to a wider audience, published his “Democracy means rule by the majority,” in *Guangdong qingnian*, No. 8 (August 1979), pp. 7–8.

not continue to be sold to the public.⁵⁷ *Renmin zhisheng* complained that back in March they had applied for registration with the provincial and municipal committees, but had received no response. Therefore, they had done everything possible to meet their responsibilities. *Renmin zhilu* complained that they had duly sent each issue to the publications bureau and other related government departments. Thus, the provincial committee's request was unreasonable.

In the end *Renmin zhisheng* ceased publication with a public statement detailing their objections to the tactics of the authorities.⁵⁸ *Renmin zhilu* was less pliable. They agreed to stop selling the journal publicly but, arguing that the Constitution stipulated freedom of the press, began with issue No. 3 to post the publication directly to subscribers.⁵⁹

These unpublicized attempts by Guangdong's leadership to terminate the democracy movement contrast with the much more visible mechanisms being used in Beijing at the same time. In late November 1979 representatives on the standing committee of the National People's Congress complained that the existence of "Democracy (Xidan) Wall" in the centre of Beijing was disrupting social order and public security, that it had become "a medium to conduct counter-revolutionary activities." On 6 December the Beijing Municipal Revolutionary Committee issued a notice restricting public posters to Yuetan Park in the city's western suburbs. Moreover, all persons availing themselves of these facilities had to register their names, pseudonyms, addresses and units. Finally, individuals were now to be held responsible for the political and legal implications of the contents of their posters.⁶⁰

The Democracy Activists Draw Together: 1980. By the beginning of 1980 in Guangzhou, only Wang Xizhe and He Qiu of the movement's major figures were still active. The small literary magazines – *Shenghuo* and *Langhua* – still existed, but were of rather low quality and had very limited circulation.

The response of the remaining activists was to seek to forge a closer unity against the tightening clamp. On 10 January *Renmin zhilu*, *Shenghuo* and *Langhua* issued a joint letter addressed to "people's publications throughout the country." The letter discussed the publication restrictions

57. A copy of the "Temporary methods for periodical registration" ("Qikan dengji zhanxing banfa") issued in 1952 is in *Zhongyang renmin zhengfu faling huibian (Compendium of Central People's Government Laws and Decrees: 1952)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1954), pp. 206–207 (in Chinese). Also see the "Temporary regulations for publishing, printing and distributing books and periodicals" ("Guanli shukan chubanye yinshuaye, faxingye zhanxing tiaoli"), pp. 203–205, above source.

58. *Guanchajia*, No. 31 (16 May 1980), p. 15 and *Dongxifang*, No. 16 (April 1980), pp. 41–42.

59. The response from *The People's Road* is in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, August 1981, p. 5 and *Zhongbao*, No 4 (1980), p. 18. The attempts of the editor of *Jintian (Today)*, a literary magazine in Beijing, to acquire official registration are described by Linda and Jay Mathews. First he went to the municipal registration bureau which agreed that they register publications, but only after the contents had been approved by the culture bureau. The culture bureau could not help him because they only approve the contents of publications that are already registered.

60. *Beijing Review*, No. 49 (7 December 1979), pp. 3–4 and No. 50 (14 December 1979), pp. 6–7.

recently imposed in Guangzhou and other cities. It acknowledged that drastically declining circulation figures, dwindling influence, financial problems, arrests, and so forth had caused great disheartenment. The only hope was to obtain legal registration for their publications. Since the National People's Congress had adopted a resolution on the validity of the laws and decrees fashioned since 1949, the 1952 publishing law was still in effect and usable. It was therefore necessary, the letter went on, to submit for amendment to the Congress those clauses and articles of the laws which did not apply to present social conditions. Since this was an issue faced by all, an organized national movement was required. "Guerrilla tactics" by individual publications would merely lead to the failure of their publications one by one. The suggestion by some that a national publication was needed to organize the fight was deemed premature.⁶¹

Soon after this, Wang Xizhe began to edit a journal of his own, called *Xueyou tongxin* (*Learners' Newsletter*), offering those in the movement an opportunity to comment on current issues. The format of a newsletter was chosen as an expediency after public sales of journals were banned. Wang sent his newsletter through the postal service to those still active in the movement. This also allowed individuals like Liu Guokai, who no longer dared edit their own publication, to continue contributing their ideas for discussion.⁶²

But the pressure was increasing. On 16 January Deng Xiaoping spoke to a cadre conference and complained about the "factors of instability" threatening China's progress. He cautioned against underestimating the "so-called 'democrats' and 'dissidents' who openly oppose the socialist system and the CCP leadership . . ." Further, he linked the "democrats" and "dissidents" with anarchists and others who "sabotage social order." Admitting that these factors of instability do not all have the same nature, he warned that "under certain conditions they are completely capable of banding together to form a sabotage force which could cause a great deal of turmoil and damage." Moreover, Deng stated that the "four greats" – speaking out freely, airing views fully, holding great debates and writing big character posters – had never, as a whole, played a positive role. Receiving applause, he announced that the Central Committee would submit a motion to the standing committee of the National People's Congress to abolish the Constitution's article concerning the four greats.⁶³ Deng's speech began to be quoted frequently and extensively in *Renmin ribao*.⁶⁴

Perhaps fearing that Deng's message would not be sufficiently loud to reach all the way to Guangzhou, the provincial Youth League committee

61. *Zhongguoren*, May 1980, pp. 34–35 and *Dongxifang*, No. 15 (March 1980), pp. 19–20 (JPRS, No. 75237 [3 March 1980], pp. 23–25). For Xu Wenli's comments in *Le Monde*, 6 February 1980, p. 8, see JPRS, No. 75255 (5 March 1980), pp. 7–11.

62. Liu Guokai, "The ten years were certainly not a total disaster," *Xueyou tongxin* (*Study Bulletin*), 1980.

63. *Zhengming*, No. 29 (1 March 1980) pp. 11–23 and Daily Report Supplement, 11 March 1980, pp. 1–27. It is now officially available in *Deng's Selected works*, pp. 224–58.

64. *Renmin ribao*, 21 February 1980.

invited representatives from the remaining people's publications to a forum on 11 February at which Deng's speech was transmitted and discussed. At the exit each participant was given a *cinema* ticket and a copy of the latest *Guangdong qingnian* magazine.⁶⁵

The response to Deng's speech was not long in coming. On 16 February the editorial boards of *Renmin zhilu*, *Shenghuo* and *Langhua* issued another joint letter. Complaining that their January appeal had generated only scattered and unsystematic responses, they argued that developments over the past month had made unity more urgent than ever. Once again, however, they felt that given the precarious existence of each individual publication, creating a national publication was unrealistic. That might come later, as step two, but only after the democracy activists established more unity among themselves.

As to Deng's speech, the letter's basic position was that it had changed nothing. First, it was not a Central Party document. It should be discussed by the masses. Those with different opinions should boldly bring them up. Even if it were a Central Party document, it would only have the function of a policy guideline, not the status of a law. The people have not had their proper role in legislation in the past and this should be rectified.⁶⁶ In a more complete – and less confrontational – response, an article in *Renmin zhilu* agreed completely with Deng's speech and the ensuing articles in *Renmin ribao* that stability and unity were absolutely necessary. They argued, however, that the demands of the masses for democracy had never hindered stability and unity. Moreover, real stability and unity could only be obtained by an emancipation of the mind and the full and lively development of socialist democracy. In this regard, the closing down of Democracy Wall and the proposed abolition of the four greats without a vote or a canvassing of the opinions of the masses was retrogressive.⁶⁷

But the process of dismantling the four greats rolled forward. At the end of February, as Deng had suggested, the Fifth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee raised a motion to remove the four greats from the Constitution. On 14 April the standing committee of the National People's Congress made a similar recommendation. Finally, the Third Session of the Fifth National People's Congress adopted a resolution revising the text of Article 45 of the Constitution, thus finalizing the process.⁶⁸

In Guangzhou, the authorities continued to seek the voluntary termination of the remaining publications, and to give the impression to outsiders that such a termination was due solely to lack of support by the populace. This was the thrust of the comments made by Yang Shangkun in an interview given to Hong Kong's *Dagong bao* in mid February 1980: The problems we have had in terms of social atmosphere and social order can be traced to the damage left over from the 10 years of evil perpetrated by Lin Biao

65. *Renmin zhilu*, message to readers, 13 February 1980. At the same time, the editorial board apologized that the publication would temporarily appear on an irregular basis.

66. *Ibid.* 16 February 1980.

67. *Ibid.* No. 4 (April 1980), pp. 33–36.

68. Daily Report, 8 September, pp. L 20–23; 9 September, pp. L 11–12; 10 September, p. L 30; 11 September, p. L 5, all 1980 (NCNA). *Beijing Review*, 6 October 1980, pp. 22–28.

and the “gang of four.” A bit of time is still required. Generally speaking, Guangzhou’s political situation is comparatively stable. There have been no mass demonstrations on Guangzhou’s streets nor has there been a so-called “Democracy Wall.” Some privately issued publications demanding great democracy did appear on Guangzhou’s streets, but the masses have already become fed up with them, they had no market, and finally they perished as they had emerged [*zisheng zhimie*].⁶⁹

The reality, as we have seen, was much more complex. In part, Yang was certainly correct. The people’s publications by now were largely talking to themselves. Mass interest, for a variety of reasons, had clearly dwindled. Undeniably, most people were more interested in buying the latest glossy movie magazine than in reading badly printed articles on the relationship between the Four Principles and socialist democracy, particularly since such material could only be received through the post! With the fourth anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident approaching, the provincial Youth League committee, as it had done in 1979, organized a forum and invited Wang Xizhe, Chen Yiyang, Li Zhengtian, Liu Guokai, He Qiu, representatives from *Langhua* and *Shenghuo*, student representatives from Zhongshan University, South China Engineering Institute, South China Teachers’ Training Institute, reporters from *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (*China Youth Daily*), and young cadres from the Ocean Shipping Bureau. The forum was to be held on 4 April to discuss the communiqué of the Fifth Plenum held in February.

On the eve of the forum, Xi Zhongxun put the provincial Party committee’s position on public record with an article in *Guangdong qingnian*. To guarantee wider circulation, the article was broadcast several times on Guangzhou radio and occupied half of page one in *Nanfang ribao* on 4 April, the day of the forum. Entitled “Glory to the youth devoted to the Four Modernizations,” Xi assailed those who “previously had been enthusiastically engaged in writing big character posters and distributing their own publications,” and were now “‘fighting for democracy and human rights.’” He accused them of “still carrying out secret liaison work” and “making secret contacts abroad.” In “flouting the state’s decrees and regulations on publishing” and “spreading . . . erroneous and reactionary sayings,” he warned that they were “taking an antagonistic stand against the Party and people.”⁷⁰

The Fifth Plenum had, among other things, rehabilitated Liu Shaoqi, dismissed four of Deng’s opponents – the so-called “whateverists” – from the Politburo, elected Deng protégés Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang to the Politburo’s Standing Committee, and proposed to the National People’s Congress that the four greats be deleted from Article 45 of the Constitution.⁷¹ Participants at the 4 April forum, in their discussion of these developments, were remarkably frank. Although disagreements concerning the Liu Shaoqi rehabilitation and the dismissal of the “whateverists”

69. *Dagong bao* (*Impartial Daily*), 19 February 1980, p. 2.

70. *Nanfang ribao*, 4 April 1980, p. 1 (JPRS, No. 75872, 13 June 1980, pp. 21–26).

71. *Beijing Review*, 10 March 1980, pp. 7–12. Deng’s comments on the four greats is in his 29 February 1980 speech at the Fifth Plenum. See *Daily Report*, 15 July 1983, pp. K 8–15 (*Hebei ribao* [*Hebei Daily*], 3 July).

were primarily over the handling of these issues rather than the verdicts reached, the participants – with the notable exception of Li Zhengtian – were unanimous in questioning the wisdom of eliminating the four greats. As usual, Wang Xizhe was most outspoken, arguing that such an abolition seemed to indicate that “Deng Xiaoping does not respect the Constitution.” Since he had confirmed to foreigners in 1978 the right of the masses to put up big character posters, “how could he say a year later that the ‘four greats’ have never played a positive role?”⁷² The forum ended amicably with another scheduled for 4 May.

Since these closed forums were useful as a means by which the leadership could gauge the opinions of youth, such discordant views could be tolerated. On the other hand, it was understood that records of these meetings were to remain private. The meeting became controversial when a Hong Kong newspaper – *Zhongbao* (*Centre Daily News*) – reported the meeting in its lead story on page one under the headline “Opposition to Abolition of the ‘Four Greats,’ the Spearhead is Directed at Deng Xiaoping.” The report cited Wang Xizhe’s speech in some detail, claimed that the meeting was marked by enthusiastic, uninterrupted applause, that the representative from Zhongshan University announced that at a forum on the Fifth Plenum held at his university, not a single student approved the abolition of the four greats, and so forth.⁷³

The authorities in Guangzhou reacted angrily. They called another meeting on 7 May to discover who had leaked the information to a Hong Kong paper and, according to *Zhongbao*, to compel the original participants to bring their political stand in line with current policy.⁷⁴ Previous forums had all been recorded and sent to higher levels. After this, no recording or note taking was to be permitted.

But the incident did not end there. Li Zhengtian, upon receiving a copy of the Hong Kong report from a Japanese friend, published a rebuttal in *Dagong bao* (*Impartial Daily*), a Hong Kong newspaper more in sympathy with official Chinese policy. He claimed the original *Zhongbao* report was inaccurate. The report had made it seem that everyone had opposed the abolition of the four greats. He, for one, had supported such a proposal, although opinions, he admitted, differed on the question. The statement that the spearhead was directed at Deng Xiaoping was absurd, according to Li; even Wang Xizhe had supported Deng and backed the current leadership. In addition, there had been no enthusiastic applause, as claimed by the newspaper. Finally, Li closed by making his own political position clear:

There is one point that is definite: In China today the people’s minds are on stability and the Four Modernizations. The Fifth Plenum was popular with the people, Deng Xiaoping is popular with the people. If this is not understood, then it is not possible to understand the feelings of the Chinese people today.⁷⁵

72. *Qishi niandai*, June 1980, pp. 54–56 (JPRS, No. 75962 [30 June 1980], pp. 131–35).

73. *Zhongbao*, 18 April 1980, p. 1; *Zhongbao yuekan*, No. 4 (May 1980), p. 17.

74. *Zhongbao*, 1 June 1980, p. 1; *Zhongbao yuekan*, No. 6 (July 1980), p. 105.

75. *Dagong bao*, 4 June 1980, p. 2.

In response, *Zhongbao* agreed to retract the statement about enthusiastic applause, but remained firm on the rest of their report. They cited a 1979 speech given by Wang Xizhe to show that his comments on Deng were consistent with earlier statements. Moreover, they praised Wang Xizhe for his brave struggle to bring real human rights to China and contrasted his behaviour with that of Li, who had become interested in seeking stability and supporting the current leadership rather than working for democracy and the legal system.⁷⁶

It remained only for Wang Xizhe himself to enter the fray, since much of the dispute centred on what he did or did not say at the forum. He recorded his views and sent them to *Qishi niandai* (*The Seventies*), which had published the account of the forum. After painstakingly clarifying which parts of the published version were accurate and which were partially incorrect, he argued that the record of the forum should not have been leaked to Hong Kong, that it was an internal meeting where participants spoke freely. Allowing such meetings to occur was a credit to Guangdong's handling of the democracy issue. He implied that this incident could make it more difficult for them to continue in this way. Finally, although he acknowledged that his comments about Deng were reported rather accurately by *Zhongbao*, he objected to the newspaper's characterization as "pointing the spearhead at Deng." This implied a polarization. Some of Deng's actions were worthy of affirmation, some might be criticized; we must look at him as a whole. Since he represents the reformers in the Party, Wang concluded, even though we may at present disagree with some of his policies, we must acknowledge that they are probably an historical necessity.⁷⁷

Apart from what it revealed about the attitudes of students and other youth in Guangzhou, the events surrounding the 4 April forum raised another issue: the Hong Kong connection. Xi Zhongxun's article had specifically condemned "those who carry out secret liaison work" and make "secret contacts abroad," who "spread erroneous and reactionary sayings," and so forth. He Qiu and *Renmin zhilu*, which had relayed the proceedings of the forum to Hong Kong, took a very different view of the matter. He had made this clear in his own response to Xi Zhongxun's 4 April article. He defended the right of those throughout China devoted to the democracy movement to establish communications, and engage in mutual concern and support activities, as stipulated by the Constitution. Moreover, he found the ties that had developed between Hong Kong students and democracy activists laudable. Hong Kong students who had become disillusioned after the downfall of the "gang" and the collapse of the Maoist faction in the student movement were again becoming concerned with the motherland, a development traceable to the emergence of the democracy movement.⁷⁸ And, indeed, *Renmin zhilu* often had articles from the Hong Kong newspapers and magazines reprinted in its

76. *Zhongbao yuekan*, No. 6 (July 1980), pp. 105–106.

77. *Qishi niandai*, August 1980, pp. 39–40.

78. *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (August 1981), pp. 4–5 (Chinese edition).

pages. At forums held by the journal, articles from the Hong Kong press were discussed. Since many of Wang Xizhe's writings were reprinted in Hong Kong and elicited rebuttals, when Wang attended these forums the discussions could be quite lively.⁷⁹ This interaction with Hong Kong gave the democracy movement in Guangzhou its unique flavour.

But it was this insistence on the right of liaison and co-ordination between democracy activists inside and outside China that was more and more seen as the most threatening issue to Guangdong's leaders. As early as September 1979 He Qiu had spoken of the necessity for "national co-ordination on the plane of ideology" to prevent the fragmentation of the movement.⁸⁰ As official pressure had increased, he had spoken more urgently of some form of co-ordination short of a national publication. Wang Xizhe already had a circulating newsletter allowing him to maintain contacts throughout the country. It seemed only a matter of time before some united action would be taken by those publications still functioning.

On 20 May such an action occurred. Eleven organizations from cities as geographically separated as Beijing, Changsha, Hangzhou and Guangzhou distributed a leaflet in Beijing demanding the release of Liu Qing, who been arrested in November 1979 for having distributed a transcript of the October trial of Wei Jingsheng. The signatories to the leaflet argued that Liu Qing's detention was illegal since he was arrested for having published the proceedings of a trial that was theoretically public. The leaflet also protested that only the official media had been able to report the trial.⁸¹ It is worth noting that none of Guangzhou's activists had supported Wei Jingsheng's views. And, although virtually all objected to his arrest and sentencing, it was only the arrest of Liu Qing that stimulated them to act. They began to link their appeals for a publications law and the retention of the four greats to their support for Liu.⁸²

More formal organizational ties were also being discussed at this time. From 10–12 June 1980, Wang Xizhe reportedly joined prominent activists from various cities at a secret meeting in Beijing to discuss the possibility of setting up a "Chinese Communist League," which would serve as a "newly organized proletarian party."⁸³ But Wang and others apparently felt that further ideological and organizational preparations were necess-

79. See, for example, the brief record of the 1 October 1980 forum in *Renmin zhilu*, No. 7 (ca. November 1980), p. 17. Li Min, the editor of *Langhua*, gave a speech on the failure of socialist systems throughout the world, including Yugoslavia, a country for which Wang had a particularly high regard. In disputing Wang's notions of Yugoslavia, he cited the critique published in Hong Kong of Wang's analysis of that country. Wang's "Strive for the class dictatorship of the proletariat" – in which he praised Yugoslavia – was critiqued in *Zhongguoren*, February 1980, pp. 31–36; Wang's "Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution" was critiqued in *Qishi niandai*, April 1981, pp. 18–28.

80. He Qiu interview in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, August 1981, pp. 4–5.

81. Daily Report, 21 May 1980, p. L 16 (AFP, 20 May). Liu Qing, a former member of the April 5 Forum still in prison, has written an account of his participation in the democracy movement. See *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, fall–winter 1982–83.

82. See the 16 July 1980 proposal for a publications law and the retention of the four greats signed by fifteen people's publications in *Renmin zhilu*, No. 6 (August 1980), pp. 1–3.

83. This paragraph is based on the 8 June 1982 court judgment against Xu Wenli, the editor of Beijing's *April Fifth Forum*. See *SPEARhead*, No. 16 (northern winter 1982–83), pp. 26–27 for this judgment.

ary before such a step could be taken. Instead, it was decided to publish *Xuexi tongxun* (*Study Bulletin*), with various activists alternating as editors. Six issues of this *Bulletin* were published between July 1980 and February 1982, with several hundred copies of each issue circulated throughout China.

On 30 July Liu Qing was sentenced to three years' hard labour without an open trial.⁸⁴ On 30 August, 12 organizations throughout the country established a committee to "rescue" (*yingjiu*) Liu Qing.⁸⁵ Both Liu Guokai (for the defunct *Renmin zhisheng*) and He Qiu (for *Renmin zhilu*) were members of the committee. Wang Xizhe, predictably, independently sent his own long letter to members of the Fifth National People's Congress, appealing on Liu Qing's behalf.⁸⁶

Guangdong authorities lost little time in responding. On 31 August at 3 a.m. members of the Municipal Public Security Bureau came to He Qiu's home and arrested He and three other activists from outside Guangzhou. The three were arrested for illegally visiting He's house without reporting. He Qiu was arrested for receiving visitors illegally.⁸⁷ All were involved in the campaign for the release of Liu Qing and were in Guangzhou to help organize the first National Conference of the National Association of People's Publications. Other representatives were detained on their way to Guangzhou for the conference.

Having made their point, the authorities released He Qiu and the others in mid September.⁸⁸ Undeterred, the National Association was formed on 15 September and the first issue of its official organ – *Zeren* (*Duty*) – was published. The association initially included 21 magazines with editorial duties for the new journal to be rotated each issue and all organizations to contribute articles. Guangzhou was represented only by He Qiu and *Renmin zhilu*. The creation of this unified association led to the appearance of new magazines and the revival of some that had been defunct. Membership in the organization eventually rose to more than 30.⁸⁹ Nine issues of *Zeren* were published before its major writers and editors were arrested. In the view of the Association's founders, the main obstacle to economic development in China was the entrenched bureaucrats on top acting dictatorially and the masses on the bottom who had lost political confidence in them. The answer was a mass democratic movement that

84. *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, June 1981, p. 11; Daily Report (4 August 1980), pp. 2–3 (AFP, 4 August).

85. See the 31 August communiqué on the establishment of the committee (mimeo, in Chinese).

86. *Qishi niandai*, October 1980, pp. 19–21.

87. *Zhongbao*, 5 and 6 September (1980), p. 1; *Intercontinental Press*, 29 September 1980, p. 1000; Daily Report, 10 September 1980, pp. L 32–33 (AFP, 10 September).

88. *Intercontinental Press*, 13 October 1980, p. 1045, reported He Qiu was released on 16 September; *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, June 1981, pp. 11–12 reported He Qiu was detained for 20 days, and was arrested again on 19 September for three days for putting up a poster advertising the journal *Zeren* (*Duty*). In fact, after his second arrest, He Qiu had still not been released by 23 September. When an Austrian reporter arrived that evening to interview him, another member of *Renmin zhilu*'s editorial board was substituted. *Renmin zhilu*, No. 7 (ca. November 1980), pp. 13–15.

89. *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, June 1981, p. 12; Daily Report, 29 September 1980, pp. L 4–5 (AFP, 26 September).

would induce the bureaucrats to give up their power and restore the confidence and enthusiasm of the masses.⁹⁰ Their main task, as with the other magazines before them, was to get their publication registered, and accepted as legal. This unsuccessful effort was to occupy much of their remaining time.⁹¹

The Final Crackdown, 1981. The final crackdown began early in 1981. It took the form of linking the democracy activists and their publications to the political style of the Cultural Revolution and the “gang of four.” It was preceded by a campaign in the press to refute the notion that a bureaucratic class existed in the Party. These points had been raised by Deng Xiaoping in an important speech delivered on 25 December 1980 at a central work conference.⁹² Deng referred to the “so-called ‘dissidents’ . . . who oppose the Party leadership, who want liberalization and capitalism and who oppose socialism.” He cautioned against exaggerating the pursuit of special privileges by some cadres, saying, “There is absolutely not, or could there ever be, a so-called ‘bureaucratic class’ (within the Party),” and urged Party propagandists to “guard against creating various images among the masses that do not square with reality.”⁹³ By inveighing against, and linking together in the harshest terms, all sources of local instability, from gang rape and white slavery to illegal publications, Deng sounded the death knell to the democracy movement.

In fact, there may have been some basis to official concern over a revival of Cultural Revolution tactics. This stemmed from the very different assessments of the Cultural Revolution made by China’s leaders and democracy activists. For example, the Party had been endeavouring for several years to produce a “scientific summary” of the Cultural Revolution that would foreclose further debate. This summary finally appeared in June 1981, at the Sixth Plenum.⁹⁴ The Cultural Revolution was termed a complete disaster, as responsible, according to Hu Qiaomu, for breeding scepticism among youth.⁹⁵ Democracy activists, on the other hand, were

90. Zeren, No. 1 (15 September 1980), pp. 3–6; *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, July 1981, pp. 14–15 (English).

91. For example, see the National Association’s “Open letter to the NPC” of 21 September 1980 in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, July 1981, p. 16. He Qiu’s application to the propaganda department of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee to register *Ziyoutan* (*Free Exchange*) is translated in *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, May 1981, pp. 7–8. The application was delivered on 12 January 1981, but was not accepted. It was eventually sent by registered mail. Twenty-two “citizens” at Beijing University prepared a draft publication law on 10 December 1980 and sought to collect signatures to support their proposal. See *ibid.* February 1981, pp. 1–2 and *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo chubans yinshua faxingfa* (*Publication, Printing and Distribution Law of the People’s Republic of China*), 10 December 1980 (mimeo); it has been reprinted in *Qishi niandai*, March 1981, pp. 81–82.

92. *Issues and Studies*, July 1981, pp. 101–119.

93. Deng’s speech led to an avalanche of articles refuting the idea of a “bureaucratic class” in China. See, *inter alia*, *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (*China Youth Daily*) 7 February 1981, p. 3; Daily Report, 10 February 1981, pp. L 1–3 (NCNA, 9 February); Daily Report, 31 March 1981, pp. L 1–8 (*Hongqi* [*Red Flag*], 1 March).

94. *Resolution on Party History 1949–81* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981).

95. Daily Report, 15 December 1981, pp. K 5–31 (*Hongqi*, 1 December).

not content to treat the Cultural Revolution as an aberration to be dismissed, and rather sought to continue their study of that movement, to seek the underlying causes. Moreover, as Liu Guokai had argued in an essay, the Cultural Revolution had some positive aspects, including such events as the criticism of the “bourgeois reactionary line” in 1966–67, the criticism of the bureaucratic system by the “ultra-leftists” in 1968, the calls for rehabilitation during the Lin Biao/Confucius campaign in 1974, the Li Yizhe poster, the Tiananmen Incident, and so forth. Figuratively turning Hu Qiaomo on his head, Liu (and other democracy activists) argued that the history of the Cultural Revolution was the history of youth gradually becoming enlightened about the nature of Chinese society. In fact, of course, Hu’s “scepticism” and Liu’s “enlightenment” shared a great affinity.⁹⁶

The official press and local authorities soon began to echo Deng’s themes. A *Renmin ribao* editorial on 8 February linked those who advocate “winning democracy and freedom” by means of the four greats with the “remnant forces of Lin Biao and the ‘Gang of Four,’” in that both failed to understand “the dialectical relationship between promoting democracy and strengthening Party leadership.”⁹⁷ On 20 February a Central Committee/State Council directive provided guidelines to local areas for suppressing “illegal publications and illegal organizations.”⁹⁸ Guangzhou was right in step. In January, Ren Zhongyi, who in November had replaced Xi Zhongxun as first Party secretary in Guangdong province, emphasized the importance of restoring social order and political stability. In February Liu Tianfu, the vice-governor of the province, stressed in his work report the necessity to “resolutely ban all illegal organizations and publications according to the relevant regulations and laws.”⁹⁹

In March the Centre issued Document No. 9, which was directed at the liaison and co-ordination activities of the democracy activists. Those who persisted in “illegal underground activities” were to be warned, summoned for trial, arrested and kept in custody. Their premises were to be searched for incriminating evidence. All units were to determine whether any of their people were involved. Any cadre found supporting these activities was to be dismissed from the Party. Guangdong province added an appendix to this document stating that, in the division of labour agreed upon by the “illegal organizations,” Guangdong’s activists had been put in charge of overseas relations. It also stated that of the original Li Yizhe members, Li Zhengtian and Chen Yiyang had repented, but Wang Xizhe continued to spread anti-Party and anti-socialist views.¹⁰⁰ On 22 April the province issued Document No. 17, specifically naming the illegal or-

96. Liu Guokai, “The Ten Years.”

97. Daily Report, 9 February, 1981, pp. L 5–8 (*Renmin ribao*, 8 February).

98. This directive is translated in *Issues and Studies*, November 1983, pp. 103–110.

99. Daily Report, 22 January 1981, pp. U 8–9 (*Hong Kong Wenhui bao*, 18 January); JPRS, No. 77573, 12 March 1981, p. 31 (*Wenhui bao*, 26 February).

100. Daily Report, 10 April 1981, pp. W 1–6 (*Zhengming*, April 1981); JPRS, No. 78312 (17 June 1981), pp. 60–62; *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, May 1981, pp. 2, 4.

ganizations and publications with Guangdong ties that must be banned.¹⁰¹

Because the imminent crackdown was expected to occur before June, when the Sixth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee was due to meet, the democracy activists made one last effort to negotiate a legal status for their publications. As the fifth anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident was approaching, activists from all over China gathered in Beijing to develop a common strategy and to celebrate the anniversary. The official press warned against using this anniversary to engage in demonstrations, arguing that the original 5 April demonstration had been due to extraordinary circumstances, which no longer prevailed. With democracy and the legal system being restored and strengthened, questions could now be raised and suggestions made through proper channels.¹⁰²

Arrests followed quickly, starting with two Beijing activists on 10 April. Wang Xizhe was arrested on 20 April in Guangzhou. He Qiu was arrested in early May in Beijing. As if to demonstrate the danger of "overseas connections," police in Guangzhou commenced a round-up of Taiwan spies.¹⁰³ Concurrent with the arrests, newspapers in Guangzhou warned of the dangers of bourgeois liberalization that were a side-effect of opening Guangdong to the outside world. Those who asked for "absolute democracy" and "absolute freedom" had been infected; the answer was a strengthening of Party leadership.¹⁰⁴

Wang Xizhe was tried on 28 May 1982 in the Guangzhou People's Court before an audience of 40. Notice of the trial was posted outside the court three hours prior to the trial; having received no notification, Wang's family did not attend. Wang was charged with three offences: (1) sabotage of the implementation of the laws and decrees of the state; (2) engaging in counter-revolutionary agitation and propaganda; and (3) engaging in the plotting of a counter-revolutionary clique. Wang's articles written between 1979–81 were cited as evidence for the first charge. His open letter to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress protesting the sentence against Liu Qing was cited as evidence for the second charge. Evidence for the third charge was not revealed. Wang was sentenced to 14 years in prison with an additional deprivation of political rights for four-and-a-half years.¹⁰⁵

He Qiu was tried on 29 May 1982 on two charges, the same as the first two charges against Wang. The basis of these charges was said to be He's insistence that "legal acts" of security officials were in fact "illegal." The prosecution entered into evidence an article written by He in which he stated that the detention of Liu Qing had been illegal. He's wife received

101. *Zhengming*, No. 44 (June 1981), pp. 22–25.

102. *Qishi niandai*, February 1982, p. 89; Daily Report, 27 March 1981, pp. L 11–12 (AFP, 26 March); Daily Report, 16 April 1981, p. K 3 (AFP, 5 April); Daily Report, 6 April 1981, pp. K 3–5 (*Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 4 April).

103. Daily Report, 22 April 1981, p. K 2 (AFP, 21 April).

104. Daily Report, 1 June 1981, pp. P 1–5 (*Nanfang ribao*, 15 May); Daily Report, 11 May 1981, p. K 2 (AFP, 10 May); Daily Report, 12 May, 1981, p. K 1 (AFP, 11 May).

105. *Monthly Bulletin of the Chinese Democratic Movement*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (November 1982), p. 3.

word of the trial while at work; the trial had already concluded by the time she reached the court. He's sentence was for 10 years. Wang Xizhe immediately appealed, but his sentence was upheld and publicly announced on 20 July.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Although our analysis of the democracy movement in Guangzhou has highlighted some unique features – the Red Flag/East Wind factional split, the influence of the Li Yizhe case, the Hong Kong connection, and so forth – it is important to realize that, specific events aside, much of the Guangzhou experience is broadly similar to events elsewhere. For example, the continuation of Cultural Revolution factionalism into the mid 1970s was common in most provinces, with the recent public exposure of the serious problems in Hunan and Guangxi representing the most intractable cases.¹⁰⁷ There were even “Li Yizhes” in other cities.¹⁰⁸ In part because such “leftist” magazines as *Zhengming*, *Dongxiang* and *Qishi niandai* had good connections in Guangzhou – at least through mid 1979 – our knowledge of events in that city is relatively greater.¹⁰⁹

The ebbs and flows of the movement in Guangzhou from 1979–81 and the development and shifts in the thought and aspirations of its members were closely tied to the responses of local and national officials. If local officials at first generally employed methods of persuasion, by mid 1980, as the movement in Guangzhou became part of a larger, loosely co-ordinated national movement, Guangzhou's authorities likewise began to bring their methods of control into line with those used in Beijing. Repression replaced persuasion.

Perhaps two final, more general observations can be offered. First, judging from the pattern of suppression of the democracy movement, it appears that China's leaders were much more disturbed by the organizational ties established by activists throughout the country than they were by heterodox political ideas. The Wei Jingsheng case is of course an atypical exception to this generalization. This fear is not uncommon in socialist countries, as the recent developments following the growth of the Solidarity movement in Poland make clear. The leadership equally feared a link between democracy activists and Party members. Obviously, without the backing of Party members, the movement could be crushed at will. As Hu Yaobang put it in January 1981:

106. *Ibid.*; *Intercontinental Press*, 28 June 1982, p. 561.

107. On Hunan, see *Daily Report*, 16 August 1983, pp. P 4–6 (Radio Changsha, 13 August); on Guangxi, see *Zhengming*, No. 70 (August 1983), pp. 12–15.

108. Jie Ming, “Nanjingdi Li Yizhe: Xu Shuiliang” (“Nanjing's Li Yizhe: Xu Shuiliang”), *Dongxiang*, No. 5 (February 1979), pp. 23–24.

109. For a report on the 1979 ban on these magazines see JPRS, No. 73903, 25 July 1979 (*Qishi niandai*, July 1979); for the more complete 1981 ban, see *Daily Report*, 16 April 1981, p. W 10 (*South China Morning Post*, 13 April). For detailed accounts of the growing problems of these magazines in maintaining access to China, see *Daily Report*, 29 September 1981, pp. W 1–6 (*Jingbao* [*The Mirror*], September 1981) and *Baixing* (*Hundred Names*), 16 August 1981, pp. 3–7.

These illegal magazines and illegal organizations... have behind-the-scenes backers. There are people within the Party who support them. There are people within the Party whose views on these young people are wrong – they think some young people are so smart that they can take over the country.¹¹⁰

It was the support they had among some Party members that had made the Li Yizhe case complicated from 1974 to 1977. The arrest of Wang Xizhe in April 1981 became particularly serious when a search of his home revealed a copy of the “Draft resolution on certain historical questions,” since only 6,000 copies had been printed and distributed to high-ranking cadres.¹¹¹ It was also the organizational activities of Xu Wenli, Wang Xizhe and their fellow activists that were cited as the most serious offence at Xu’s trial in Beijing. In Xu’s case, his “crime of organizing a counter-revolutionary clique” carried “a punishment of 12 years in prison and the deprivation of political rights for three additional years”; the “crime of making counter-revolutionary propaganda and instigation” carried a lesser sentence of five years and deprivation of political rights for two years (this combined into a 15-year prison term followed by the deprivation of political rights for four years).¹¹²

Secondly, the motivations of Deng Xiaoping and the Party reformers must remain subject to varying interpretations. It could be argued, for example, that their commitment to the forms of democracy associated with the Beijing Spring was purely tactical. Wall-posters in late 1978 and early 1979 were useful in aiding Deng to dispose of the “whateverists”; with that accomplished, they became counterproductive. In a similar way, individuals like Li Zhengtian had been useful for Guangdong’s leaders during the campaign against Lin Biao and his followers in Guangzhou, and later to express views against China’s radical leaders that could not be expressed otherwise. Alternatively, one might accept the sincerity of the original commitment, à la Mao and the Hundred Flowers Movement, and argue that Deng’s greatest concern became the anti-reform factions at the centre of state power. In order to legitimate his demotion of those groups and to appear even-handed, he used the attack on the extra-Party democrats to demonstrate his impartiality to his constituencies in the state power groups. Again, emulating Mao’s treatment of the Red Guards in 1968, Deng’s action was necessitated by his state power interests at that moment.¹¹³

Nevertheless, future flowerings will likely depend on future leadership struggles. Certainly, given the cynicism among youth of several generations in China today with regard to bureaucratic privileges, power struggles, and so forth, it may be possible, after a period of time, for future leaders once again to mobilize activists to protest.

110. *Freedom at Issue*, No. 63 (November–December 1981), p. 24 (*Zhengming*, June 1981).

111. *Ibid.*

112. *SPEARhead*, No. 16 (1982–83), pp. 26–27.

113. This latter assessment of Deng’s motives is adopted by Edward Friedman. For an essay which places Wang Xizhe on a continuum with Party democrats, see his “The societal obstacle to China’s socialist transition: state capitalism or feudal fascism,” in Victor Nee and David Mozingo, *State and Society in Contemporary China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 148–71.