

HOW THE *GUANGMING DAILY* WAS TAKEN OVER AT THE TIME OF THE  
SMASHING OF THE “GANG OF FOUR”

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September, 2010

*[This document, an oral history by a former Organization Department functionary, provides some of the on-the-ground detail surrounding the 1976 coup against the “Gang of Four,” the faction centered on Mao Zedong’s wife Jiang Qing that dominated the propaganda system in the early 1970s, promoting the radical line. They were placed under arrest about a month after Chairman Mao’s death. The narrator, Sun Zhongfan (1941-2010) spent most of his career in the technical education field. He retired as head of the China Academy of Industry and Transportation. In 1976 he was one of those charged with purging the Guangming Daily, a newspaper primarily directed toward the intellectual community and prior to Mao’s death very much under Gang control. The narrative strongly brings out the dangers of being “criticized by name,” and also provides a little information over a rather obscure point of sinological Kremlinology, Chairman Mao’s supposed “last words” to the effect that the Party should act according to the “set direction.” Somehow Hua Guofeng, Mao’s successor as Party Chairman and front man for the coup, found this threatening. According to Sun, however, the turn of phrase was relatively innocent, not a part of any plot by the radicals to seize power. Sun argues that the purge of the Guangming Daily was carried out in a principled and professional manner, and—again relatively—perhaps it was. The team did, after all, dare to take issue with a position publicly asserted by the new Chairman. But the narrative also shows that those dismantling the system of arbitrary totalitarian terror could also be*

*callously repressive in their turn. Poor Mo Ai, the paper's editor, was kept under suspicion for five years, even after the team Sun was a part of had advised that he did not engage in political plots and basically was simply carrying out his duties.]*

On 6 October 1976 the “Gang of Four” was smashed. That evening, the CPC Central Politburo convened an emergency meeting to decide several major matters concerning the Party and state. Among these, it decided rapidly to take over the instruments of public opinion controlled by the Gang. It ordered Geng Biao, Chi Haotian, Zheng Pingnian, Liu Xixiao, and other comrades, 12 in all, temporarily to seize the Central Broadcasting Station, the New China News Agency, the *People's Daily* newspaper system, the *Guangming Daily* newspaper system, and other major news units.<sup>1</sup> . . . Although the *Guangming Daily* was not among the “two papers and one magazine,”<sup>2</sup> for special reasons it received the same amount of attention from the Center. At that time I was a member of the core group in the Central Organization Department and responsible person<sup>3</sup> for the Organization Department. I was sent by the Center to lead the small group charged with taking over the *Guangming Daily*. As someone who played an important role at that time in history, I think it is necessary to explain clearly what happened at that time, providing research material for posterity.

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<sup>1</sup> The ranking figures are Geng Biao (1909-2000) and Chi Haotian (1929- ). Geng was a soldier prior to Liberation but then served in various diplomatic positions. In 1976 he was in charge of the CPC's relations with foreign parties. Chi, also a soldier, was then deputy political commissar of the Beijing military region, charged with supervision of the mass media in Beijing.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the *People's Daily* (the paper of the Communist Party), the *Liberation Army Daily* (the paper of the army), and *Red Flag* (the theoretical journal of the Central Committee). Authoritative pronouncements during the Cultural Revolution era were often made by joint articles in these three publications.

<sup>3</sup> This was the term used for persons in charge of various organizations in the Cultural Revolution era, perhaps to avoid being too precise over whether there was someone officially in the formal position of authority.

## **Extraordinary Methods for Extraordinary Times**

1976 was an extremely unusual year in the history of New China. With the passing of Chairman Mao Zedong, the Gang of Four intensified its efforts to usurp the Party. Wang Hongwen<sup>4</sup> had a death grip on the Organization Department. He ranted that “the counterrevolutionary revisionist line of Deng Xiaoping, especially on organizational matters, has had a certain influence in the Organization Department. We must make contact with the reality within the Organization Department and develop deeply penetrating criticism.” At two in the afternoon on 7 October I was revising an inspection report on the Organization Department for the Center. There was a call from the then-responsible person for the Organization Department, Yu Guofeng, telling me to accompany him to Zhongnanhai<sup>5</sup> and to bring along articles of personal hygiene. Along the way he told me that the leading comrades at the Center wanted to talk to us and the Center had a new job for me. Since the moves against the Gang of Four had been taken far outside of regular channels and were highly secret, I had no notion at all about any of that; nor could I guess what sort of new job I might be given. According to custom nurtured by many years of work in the Central organs, I had not told my family anything. Because it was unusual for me to be in such a hurry to leave, my wife was afraid and remained anxious until the news of the smashing of the Gang of Four became public.

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<sup>4</sup> Wang Hongwen (1935-1992) was the youngest member of the Gang of Four, previously a security officer at a Shanghai factory. In 1976 he seems to have been in overall supervision of organizational and security work. He ranked third in terms of Party protocol, and there were various assertions (especially from Zhou Enlai) that he would be Chairman Mao’s “successor” (when the references below to him as “successor”). It is not certain that these assertions should be taken at face value.

<sup>5</sup> Zhongnanhai is a park (not open to the public) to the west of the old Imperial Palace. Within are the headquarters of many Party and State agencies and the residences of many (in 1976, probably all) of the highest-ranking leaders of the country.

When we arrived at the Purple Pavilion in Zhongnanhai, Hua Guofeng, Ji Dengkui, and Su Zhenhua<sup>6</sup> were engaged in conversation with Chi Haotian. The working personnel had Yu Guofeng and myself to stay in the rest area in the antechamber. After a while, Wang Weiqing, who then was in charge of the State Council's Work Office, arrived. He was in on the news and whispered to me, "Last night the Center arrested the Gang of Four." At that point, Ji Dengkui came out of the meeting room. He had me and Wang Weiqing telephone Hu Ying at the *People's Daily*, Xie Lifu at New China, and Mo Ai at the *Guangming Daily*, telling them to come to the Purple Pavilion. They were told that the Center leadership wanted to talk to them. There was an additional order that when each one arrived, he was to be taken to a room by himself and that they were not to be allowed to see each other.

When Hua Guofeng and Chi Haotian had finished their discussion they left the Purple Pavilion to go do something else. Ji Dengkui and Su Zhenhua, the two representatives of the Politburo Standing Committee, then called Guo Yufeng, Wang Weiqing, and me into the conference room. Ji Dengkui did most of the talking. He said: "Ever since the passing of Chairman Mao, the Gang of Four has been carrying out activities intending to usurp the Party and seize power. Last night the Center chose methods to divide the Gang and place them under investigation. The Central Politburo held a meeting last night and elevated Hua Guofeng to Chairman of the Central Committee." As he spoke, he showed us a xerox of Chairman Mao's comment in his own handwriting: "If you take charge, my

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<sup>6</sup> Hua Guofeng (1921-2008) was the actual successor to Mao Zedong. Ji Dengkui (1923-1988) was a provincial official who rose mysteriously to Politburo rank in the 1970s. Very little is known about him. He was probably something of a leftist, and was removed from public life in 1980, after the triumph of Deng Xiaoping. Su Zhenhua, 1907-1977, was a career soldier, in 1976 commander of the navy.

heart's at ease.”<sup>7</sup> “Because the propaganda agencies have been controlled by the Gang of Four for a long time, in order to prevent anything untoward the Center has adopted special measures toward each of the propaganda agencies. Last night Comrade Geng Biao took control of the Central People's Broadcasting Station. The Center has ordered that Chi Haotian and Sun Tieqing take control of the *People's Daily* system. Zheng Bingnian has occupied the New China News Agency. Liu Xixiao and the two of you should take control of the *Guangming Daily* system. Liu Xixiao right now is on an outside assignment but has been ordered to come back immediately. But in the meantime you two should go take control. Because things now are fairly complicated, we can't immediately announce the news that the Gang has been smashed. There is still a lot of work to do. You have three tasks in taking over the newspaper: 1) Control the gateway of the news and henceforth not allow any more material from the Gang to be published; 2) stabilize the personnel working at the paper; 3) Once the Center publishes the news that the Gang has been defeated, lead a movement inside the paper to criticize the Gang of Four. The existing leadership of the paper will now work under your direction.” After he had finished speaking Ji Dengkui showed Wang Weiqing and me a note by Hua Guofeng written out in his own hand. It said:

*The Center has decided: Liu Xixiao, Wang Weiqing, and Sun Zhongfan, these three comrades, should take control of the Guangming Daily system and for the time being act as leaders of its leading group. Comrade Liu Xixiao will be head of*

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<sup>7</sup> This was a note by Mao to Hua Guofeng, apparently written at the time of the 5 April 1976 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in memory of Zhou Enlai (who had died in January of that year) and protesting the reign of (what later came to be called) the Gang of Four.

*the group. For the time being all decisions concerning the work of the paper will be made by the small group.*

### **Deciding on the Membership of the Temporary Leadership Group**

Ji Dengku said next: “Little Sun, you’re not a simple person. When the Gang was running wild you were under immense pressure. But you continued to seek truth from facts and did not shift with the wind.” I understood from this the reason that I had been selected to be part of this leadership group.

After the 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress [in 1974], Wang Hongwen, acting in his capacity as successor, took control of the work of labor unions and the youth and women’s organizations. He put in his own people, a bunch of “little brothers” who came from the rebel faction. In 1975, with the approval of the Center, in order to prepare for the coming session of the National People’s Congress Ji Dengkui ordered that I take responsibility for the work of these organizations. Not long afterward Deng Xiaoping was put in charge of the daily work at the Center. He heard about Wang Hongwen’s slogan, “We Don’t Want any Little Lambs,” and personally intervened. He took back control of the labor, youth, and women’s organizations from Wang Hongwen. Under Deng Xiaoping’s direct leadership the work of the labor, youth, and women’s organizations underwent a readjustment and the very bad influence of the gang of rebel bosses was undone. . . . Wang Hongwen and Jiang Qing were very dissatisfied about this. These organizations formed one of the battlefields in the political struggle between the Gang of Four and Deng Xiaoping and other Center leaders.

From 2 November 1975 until February 1976 the Politburo held a series of meetings to criticize Deng Xiaoping (his name was not mentioned openly in society; instead there

was the “attack on the rightist restorationist wind”). At that time Jin Zumin, in his capacity as head of the Labor Unions’ preparatory committee, told me that in my own organizational preparatory work I had passed on Deng Xiaoping’s talk about “how can we talk about class struggle every single day.”<sup>8</sup> This had later been included in the “100 Examples of Deng Xiaoping’s Words,” compiled by Liang Xiao,<sup>9</sup> and had been transmitted to the entire country. Jin Zumin’s revelation was treated as a great treasure by the Gang of Four. At a Politburo meeting on 5 January 1976 Wang Hongwen ordered a criminal investigation about this. On 25 February 1976 the Center convened a get-acquainted meeting and criticized Deng Xiaoping by name. The Gang of Four slandered Jin Zumin’s action as a crime against Chairman Mao and intensified their criticism. Wang Hongwen continued to bring all of this up at Politburo meetings.

On 29 March Ji Dengkui held discussions with me and Guo Yufeng. On the afternoon of 30 March Guo Yufeng convened a meeting of the Organization Department core group. I made a speech from the perspective of preparatory work for the inspection of the workers, youth, and women’s organizations, explaining in detail all that Deng Xiaoping had said about this work and the context in which he said it. The core of the speech was to refute the slanders and attacks against Deng Xiaoping by the Gang of Four and their claws and teeth. I said openly that Deng Xiaoping had never said any such things. After the meeting my speech was printed in the bulletin of the Organization Department core group and sent to the Center. The bulletin was given to Ji Dengkui, along with my

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<sup>8</sup> “Talk about class struggle every day, every month, every year” was a Cultural Revolution-era radical slogan.

<sup>9</sup> Liang Xiao (梁效) was the pen name of a “writing group” at Peking and Tsinghua universities that produced essays and commentaries for the radical Maoists. Their name is homophonous with “two schools” (兩校).

transcription of the “Record of Comrade Deng Xiaoping’s Statements to the Leading Group Concerned with Workers’, Youth, and Women’s Work.” On 11 June Wang Hongwen issued a directive on “Going Deeper in Exposing and Criticizing Deng Xiaoping’s Counterrevolutionary Revisionist Line.” He refused to let go of Deng Xiaoping’s words on workers’, youth, and women’s work, and he was even more angry about my words in the bulletin. Ji Dengkui told me, “Wang Hongwen was very angry about your bulletin and wanted to conduct an inspection concerning the original transcript of Deng’s remarks. Wang Hongwen also said, ‘It looks like Sun Zhongfan has waded pretty deep into the swamp; you need to help him get turned around.’”

Because Wang Hongwen had criticized me by name, the Organization Department carried out two investigations of me and there were preparations for a criticism-struggle. Therefore, when on 7 October Guo Yufeng told me to bring my articles of personal hygiene with me to his office, my first reaction was that was that I was going to be locked up. I never imagined that the Center would send me to manage the *Guangming Daily*.

When I visited Ji Dengkui in the mid-1980s, he told me about the process of deciding who should take charge of the news units. The decision to give control of the Central Broadcasting enterprise was made in a consultation between Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying. The Center then entrusted the decision concerning the other agencies to Ji Dengkui. At that time Ji Dengkui worked mainly with Li Xiannian in making these selections, with Hua Guofeng approving all the final choices.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ye Jianying (1897-1986), of the PLA’s 10 marshals, was the main organizer of the coup against the Gang of Four. Li Xiannian (1909-1992) was a soldier and military political officer prior to Liberation. After the establishment of the PRC he worked mainly in state economic administration. He was Chairman (i.e., president, chief of state) of the PRC from 1983-1988.



It was Li Xiannian who proposed that Liu Xixiao be in charge of the group at the *Guangming Daily*. Li Xixiao entered Wuhan University in 1934 as a physics major. During the War of Resistance he participated in the student movement. Later he put down the pen to take up the lance and did military-political work in the New Fourth Army. He was very close to Li Xiannian. After the establishment of New China he worked at different times in the areas of industry and national defense science. He was part of the team responsible for the “two bombs, one star.”<sup>11</sup> During the Cultural Revolution he was one of Premier Zhou’s liaison people, linking with the Academy of Sciences. He later became head of the State Council Group for Scientific Education and was deeply trusted by Premier Zhou and other Central leaders. The *Guangming Daily* was a newspaper directed toward intellectuals, scientists, and educators. Given his background in science, industry, and education, along with his political standpoint and sophistication about policy, in terms of ability he was the most appropriate choice as leader.

Wang Weiqing was also proposed by Li Xiannian. Not long after coming to the *Guangming Daily* he was transferred by Li Xiannian because of the needs of work and was replaced by Zhao Zhenqing. During the Cultural Revolution Zhao Zhenqing was in charge of the Second Office of the Central Organization Department. (At that time the Organization Department was organized into two levels, Bureau and Office. The Second Office was equivalent to what was later called the Local Cadres Bureau.) Toward the end of the Cultural Revolution he served as head of the Political Office of the Second Ministry of Machine Building and was very close to Liu Xixiao. Later he became head of the Organization Department of the Shanghai Party Committee and Deputy Head of the

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<sup>11</sup> The two bombs are the atomic and hydrogen bombs; the “star” is an artificial earth satellite.

Central Organization Department. By an interesting coincidence, in 1964 he had participated in a movement by the Organization Department to select “successors to the task of the proletarian revolution” from among college students, and I was one of the 60 students chosen at that time. Therefore, it could be said that Zhao Zhenqing was my patron.

### **How the *Guangming Daily* Was Taken Over**

After Ji Dengkui and I had conferred, we conveyed the decision of the Center separately to Lu Ying, Xie Lifu, and Mo Ai. When he spoke with Mo Ai he did not directly bring up the matter of the smashing of the Gang of Four. But he did say in a very serious tone, “We have been entrusted by the Comrade Hua Guofeng, the Chairman of the Party Center, to speak to you. The Central leaders who used to be your leaders are your leaders no more. The Center has decided to send Liu Xixiao, Wang Weiqing, and Sun Zhongfan, those three comrades, to take up the occupation of the *Guangming Daily* and act as the core leadership group there. From now on, you must inform these three comrades on all matters concerning the work of the paper and get their agreement before you do anything. You need to coordinate with them in your work. This is a way in which the Center is testing you.” After he had finished speaking he had me show Mo Ai the handwritten note by Hua Guofeng. Mo Ai was extremely nervous. After he read the document he said: I obey the decision of the Center.

According to the arrangements made by Ji Dengkui, Wang Weiqing and I drove to the *Guangming Daily* in Mo Ai’s car and immediately set out doing our very intense work. After we got to the paper we told Mo Ai: From today forth we want to see the mock-up of the paper; the paper can go to press only after we have read it and made our

revisions. You are still responsible for the routine work of the paper and if there are any problems we can talk about them. Mo Ai asked: Should there be a general meeting of all the employees to announce the decision of the Center? We said: There's no hurry to convene a general meeting. Let's wait until Comrade Liu Xixiao gets here. You can make the announcement to the leadership small group. Mo Ai immediately convened a meeting of the small group that lasted only for a few minutes. He told them about Hua Guofeng's handwritten note and that the mock-up of the paper should be shown first to Comrades Wang Weiqing and Sun Zhongfan, to be printed only after we had approved it. He also said: If anyone has any questions, bring them up with them. After the meeting Mo Ai had the paper get us an office and had the editorial department send us a mock-up of the next day's paper. Thereafter we read the galleys each day. We became the paper's "guardians of the gate."

Liu Xixiao returned to Beijing on 9 October. After he met with Hua Guofeng he came quickly over to the paper and listened to a report about what had gone on over the past couple of days. During that extraordinary era, the Gang of Four had a tight grip on the arena of public opinion. Most of the items in the press were propaganda for the Gang of Four or criticism of Deng Xiaoping. The Center wanted that sort of thing eliminated before it publicly announced the smashing of the Gang of Four. Some of the articles could be used after being revised and others had to be scrapped entirely, with something else put in their place. Sometimes when an article was completely unusable we had to put a Xinhua bulletin in its space, something that was not done at the *Guangming Daily*. When he heard the report, Li Xixiao ordered that until the Center publicly announced the smashing of the Gang of Four, the paper should publish more articles on science and

technology. When I transmitted this opinion to Mo Ai, he understood the spirit of the thing, and immediately organized a group to draft the appropriate kinds of articles.

11 October was the fifth day of our occupation of the paper. By that time it had become generally known among those working there that the Center had deployed a small group to inspect the galleys before they were printed. This had not been openly announced, but the working personnel could infer that this had happened, based on their many years of experience in propaganda work and their highly developed sensibilities. I wrote in my diary at that time, “Today the general editorial office has sent us a mockup that does not contain any propaganda for the Gang of Four. It’s become much easier to get that kind of result than it had been during the previous days. Once Xinhua stopped sending in stories in the evening, the mockups for tomorrow’s paper were put together and returned to the editorial office and sent to the printers by two in the morning. This is the earliest I’ve been able to get to bed since taking over this work.”

By January 1977 the actions and work of the *Guangming Daily* were all on the right track and the work of our team was concluded. It was time to set up a regular leadership group for the *Guangming Daily*. During the fermentation leading to the selection of the leadership group Liu Xixiao took care to preserve the continuity of the paper. He hoped that I would remain among the leadership group. I said I had no experience in propaganda work and that when my job there was finished I wanted to return to the Organization Department. I asked the opinion of Zhao Zhengqing, and he also thought I ought to return to the Organization Department. Liu Xixiao and Guo Yufeng consulted together; Liu again expressed the hope that I would stay at the paper, but Guo thought I should return to the Organization Department. On 14 January the Center assigned Fan Ge and three

others to take over leadership of the paper, with Fan Ge as head of the small group and also head of the *Guangming Daily* system. On 20 January the paper convened a general assembly of all those working there and announced the decision of the Center. On 22 January the paper convened an enlarged meeting of the core leadership group. Liu Xixiao gave a speech summarizing in general terms the decisions of the Center concerning the paper and formally turned over leadership to Fan Ge. After the meeting Li Xixiao and the rest of us who were members of the temporary leadership team left, our work having come to a victorious conclusion.

### **Handling the Problem of Mo Ai by Seeking Truth From Facts**

We kept control of the *Guangming Daily* for 108 days. During that time there is one thing worth expanding on: the investigation of how the paper had come to publish “Liang Xiao’s” essay, “Always Act According to the Direction Set by Chairman Mao.” This went together with the investigation of the responsible persons for the paper, Mo Ai and Sun Guanlong. In 2005 Phoenix Satellite TV interviewed Wang Zhongren, who had been the responsible person for the internal edition of the *Guangming Daily* and who had participated in the investigation of Mo Ai, devoting one program in its “Oral History” series to this. After I saw it I felt that Wang Zhongren in general told the true story and that it fit with history. However, because at that time Wang was not near enough to the center of things, some of the details were not sufficiently accurate—for example, when he said that “Guo Yufeng made a search for things that Mo Ai had said.” Wang Zhongren’s account does reveal an important historical truth: in its investigation of Mo Ai and the article on “acting according to the direction set” Liu Xixiao and his group had upheld the principle of seeking truth from facts and after investigation were able to

establish that the article was not indeed an “anti-Party slogan for the usurpation of power” put together by the Gang of Four. By treating the special history of the Cultural Revolution in a dialectical fashion we were able to resolve the issues concerning Mo Ai and other comrades who had committed errors. We saw that the “expose, criticize, investigate” movement did not do too much harm to the cadres and we were able smoothly to put the paper back on the right track. That is to say, in the work of leading the movement in the paper we did not commit this or that kind of “leftist” mistakes, even if this meant taking a great risk.

On 7 October 1976 Hua Guofeng specifically mentioned the *Guangming Daily* at a get-acquainted meeting of the Central Politburo. On 17 October Liu Xixiao passed on Hua Guofeng’s words to me and the other members of the team: “What is even more wicked, in a planned and deliberate manner they cooked up the story that Chairman Mao’s dying words were ‘act according to the set direction.’ They wanted to win over public opinion. On 4 October the front page of the *Guangming Daily* carried the article by Liang Xiao, a name used by writers at Tsinghua and Peking Universities, under the title, ‘Act Always According to the Direction Set by Chairman Mao.’ It said, with ulterior motives in mind, ‘Any revisionist bigshot whatsoever who has the gall to change the direction set by Chairman Mao will certainly come to no good end.’ This article in the *Guangming Daily* was an arrow shot from ambush, an attack on us accusing us of falsification and treason, making us out to be renegades.” According to Liu Xixiao, Hua Guofeng thought that the essay by Liang Xiao was a slogan for a counterrevolutionary seizure of power by the Gang of Four, and reading that essay was decisive in the decision to move against the Gang of Four on 6 October. (In the mid-1980s Liu Xixiao and I joked

that from a historical point of view the publication of that article was an instance of a bad thing turning into a good thing.) Therefore, the Central Leadership decided that Mo Ai and the leader of the drafting group, Sun Guanlong, be set apart for a special investigation. We decided that Shi Haiyun should take over from Mo Ai in running the routine work of the paper, with Zhang Changhai made responsible for editorial work. Liu Xixiao had me draft an initial report to the Center. The Center approved the report and on 18 October it was announced to the entire paper that there would be a special study group to focus on Mo Ai and Sun Guanlong. At the same time, because Wang Weiqing had other important work, he was transferred by the Center. Wang Zhenqing, the temporary head of the Political Office of the Second Machine Ministry, and the old cadre Wang Jiefu were assigned to the newspaper to undertake the work of the purge.

The investigation of Mo Ai and the others focused on their relationship with the Gang of Four. After conducting a detailed investigation, the comrades of the temporary leadership group concluded: Mo Ai's relationship with Yao Wenyuan<sup>12</sup> was a regular one; the two did not have special organizational links. With the onset of the investigation Mo Ai on his own turned over all the records of his three years of management of the *Guangming Daily*, his telephone log (including conversations with Yao Wenyuan), and all of his correspondence, without holding anything back. He had a good attitude. The article on the "set direction" had been commissioned by the Central Propaganda Department itself and was not inspired by Yao Wenyuan. Liao Xiao produced the first draft on 24 September. Mo Ai approved the draft on 30 September, three days before 2

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<sup>12</sup> Yao Wenyuan (1931-2006) was a literary critic who became involved in radical politics in the 1950s and 1960s. He was in charge of the propaganda system for the Gang of Four.

October, when Hua Guofeng exposed the plot about the forged “final words.” This precluded the essay’s having been inspired by the Gang of Four as a way to attack Hua Guofeng. Therefore, there was no direct connection between the publication of the article and the plot by the Gang of Four to usurp the Party.

People with some experience in political struggle who had gone through that decade all know that coming to such a conclusion was a dangerous risk. The Chairman of the Party had already made a pronouncement on the matter and this had been publicized throughout society. Mo Ai had already been labeled a “crony” of the Gang of Four, one of their “intimates.” Liu Xixiao called many meetings of the temporary leading group going over the circumstances of the case. We consistently maintained that Mo Ai’s problem was in mistakenly implementing the line of the Gang of Four, and that looking over his entire history it could not be said that he was a backbone element of the Gang of Four. Therefore, upon our dissolution we reported orally and in writing to the Propaganda Department proposing that the investigation of Mo Ai and Sun Xiaoguang be ended. The Propaganda Department did not agree and after that there was much turnover among the leadership of the news organizations. On 16 December 1978, at the direction of the Propaganda Department the investigation and isolation of Mo Ai came to an end. On 28 December 1981 the editorial office of the *Guangming Daily*, with the approval of the Propaganda Department, issued a conclusion of the Mo Ai investigation. The first part consisted of the findings we had initially reached; the second part concerned other mistakes made during Mo Ai’s management of the *Guangming Daily* (conclusions reached after we had finished our work at the paper); finally there was a conclusion that no further action was needed. It was concluded that the “above errors by Comrade Mo Ai



were basically errors made in the course of open propaganda and they were influenced by the ‘leftist’ deviations prevalent at the time. Thus we conclude that no further action is needed.” It must be said that the Center’s handling of Mo Ai’s case was objective, open, and in accord with historical materialism and the correct policy of the Party toward cadres.

The 108 days we spent at the *Guangming Daily* is a very short time. It makes us very happy now to know that in such a short time after the Cultural Revolution the *Guangming Daily* was quickly restored to normal and later played a leading role in the subsequent changes. It led the way in publishing “Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth” and other articles, promoting the liberation of thought. We can feel proud of the role we played in this matter under those special historical circumstances.

*Tide of the Century*, September 2010