

China editor resigns over media censorship

Taken from BBC.com

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离职原因: 无法跟着你们姓 (个人原因, 未能提前三十天提交申请, 而造成单位无法及时进行社保公积金减员, 自愿暂扣工资, 直至财务结算完毕后发放。)					
申请人签名: 余少霖 2016年3月31日					

A top journalist at a Chinese newspaper says he is resigning because of the authorities' control over the media.

Yu Shaolei, an editor at Southern Metropolis Daily, posted a resignation note online, saying he could no longer follow the Communist Party line.

He also uploaded a message wishing those responsible for censoring his social media account well.

Chinese media outlets are subject to censorship, with government control tightening in recent years.

Mr Yu, who edited the cultural section of the newspaper, posted a photo of his resignation form on his Sina Weibo microblog account on Monday evening.

Under the "reason for resignation" section, he wrote: "Unable to bear your surname".

This was a reference to Xi Jinping's tour of state media outlets in February, when he said journalists must give absolute loyalty to the Communist Party, and bear the "surname of the Party".

Mr Yu's post was quickly deleted, although a cached copy was still viewable on monitoring

sites online.

He wrote: "I'm getting old, and my knees can't stand it after so many years [of kneeling]." He added what appeared to be a tongue-in-cheek apology to the censors responsible for monitoring his social media account.

"To the person responsible for watching my weibo feed and notifying their superiors about what to delete, you can heave a sigh of relief now, apologies for causing you stress over the last few years, and I sincerely wish your career will head in a new direction."

Journalists detained

When approached by the BBC, Mr Yu said he did not wish to comment further, and that he had said everything he wanted to say on social media.

It is not known if he has received any admonishment from the authorities, the BBC's John Sudworth in Beijing reports.

A columnist at the same paper, Li Xin, who disappeared in mysterious circumstances in Thailand after claiming he had been forced to inform on fellow journalists, is now back in police custody in China, our correspondent adds.

And last month, a front-page editor at Southern Metropolis Daily was fired after the headlines on the newspaper's front page, when read in a different direction, allegedly contained a veiled criticism of the government's demand that media "bear the surname of the Party".

In recent weeks, China detained more than 20 people following the publication of a letter calling on President Xi to resign on state-backed website Wujie News.

Those detained included journalists linked to the website, employees at a related technology company, and prominent columnist Jia Jia, who has since been released.

Two overseas Chinese dissidents also say their relatives have been detained in connection with the letter.

Wen Yunchao, who lives in the US, said he believed his parents and his brother had been detained because authorities were trying to pressure him to reveal information. But he told the BBC that he knew nothing about the letter.

Meanwhile, German-based writer Zhang Ping, also known by his penname Chang Ping, said three of his siblings had been detained and that Chinese police had demanded that he stop writing in German media.

Mr Zhang said he had written about the letter, but had no other connection to it.

Authorities in China said they were investigating Mr Zhang's relatives on suspicion of arson.¹

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35915056>



CREDIT: REUTERS/ALY SONG. The Telegraph



CREDIT: bbc.com

Background: the Communist Party of China

Founded in 1921 by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao it is nowadays the second largest party of the world. It was born within the left wing of the Nationalist Party (KMT) and it soon began to go against it. During the 30s, Mao Zedong became the Party's informal leader, being also the head of the Red Army which started its conflict with the KMT, ending up in a civil war.

Thanks to this Chinese Revolution led by Mao Zedong, he had the chance to lead the country. The ideology, which the Party took its inspiration from, was the Marxism-Leninism. However, it was applied to China as the Mao Zedong Thought, because it had to be suitable for a different country than the former Soviet Union.

After Mao, Deng Xiaoping became the leader who introduced the socialism with Chinese characteristics, opening up to the market economy, while remaining anti-capitalist. His ideas were opposed by the Maoists as well as by those who supported the liberalisation. The result of this conflict exploded in 1989 in Tian An Men Square. Deng prevailed and opened up China's economy, starting that process of expansion that we see today. Hu Jintao (the leader after Jiang Zemin) differently from his predecessors, introduced the collective leadership. He focused on economic growth, but at the same time, he brought serious social problems.

The current leader is Xi Jinping, elected in 2012. He struggles against corruption but he distanced himself to that collective leadership created by Hu, thus being likened to Mao.

Since Mao, the CPC has always been the only relevant party in China, although it now coexists with other eight parties.



CREDIT: china.org.cn

Xi Jinping and the Chinese Dream

Xi Jinping was born in 1983 and was elected as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012.

As said before, Xi's strong point is represented by a constant struggle against corruptions.

He has brought more market economic reforms to reinforce China's position on an international level and also to strengthened foreign policy, making it more assertive.

He is trying to make the Chinese population living under the so-called "Chinese Dream". By using this neologism, he is trying to spur young people to "dare to dream, work assiduously to fulfil the dreams and contribute to the re-civilization of the Nation"².

This dream, that 1.4 billion people are hoping to realize, concerns prosperity, collective effort, socialism and national glory. In order to rejuvenise the country, he aims to achieve the "Two 100th". According to this plan, by 2021 (the 100th anniversary of the CPC) China should become a moderately well-off nation and a completely developed one by 1949 (the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic).

Four main objectives have to be accomplished to fulfil this Chinese dream: China should be strong on every relevant level; it should be civilized with fairness and high morals; harmonious in terms of good relationships among social classes; finally it should be beautiful with low pollution and healthy environment. China wants to be modern which means reaching a good position among the world leaders for what concerns science, technology and economics.

The Chinese dream recalls the American Dream very much, by advocating the development of the self-made man and the importance of the entrepreneurial attitude, and by assuring a better life to people and an even better one to the future generations.

Moreover, not only he has tried to bring more internal unity and discipline to the Party, but also to increase the loyalty of every Chinese institution and individual towards it. To do so, Xi Jinping travelled around China and visited the country's three top media outlets. This was a very rare and important event during which he advised editors and reporters to pledge loyalty to the Party and keep its surname high. That is why Yu Shaolei spoke that sentence "I can not bear the Party surname": after many years of good service at the Southern Metropolis Daily he is not able to continue editing and banning articles where the press is the obstacle to freedom of thought and speech.

Xi Jinping's intent is to tighten the control of the Party over the media and to consolidate his power as leader of the nation. Some even say that he is becoming the most powerful Chinese leader after Mao. On the other hand, many can perceive his slow decline, mainly because of the rise of his political opponents.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Dream

Despite the strategy to constantly reinforce his power (also by appearing on every headline of the People's Daily), it seems that he is not completely assured of the real power he has on the state media, even though the most central ones (Xinhua and CCTV) are under his control.

This (over) control began at the very beginning of Xi's mandate. Already in 2013 the government demanded that journalists took a test in order to renew their press cards and to confirm their Marxist ideals more consciously³. Besides, more recently, the criminal charge of "picking quarrels and provoking troubles" could be also applied to online speech.

Opposite to all this, there are also people who think that the state media should serve the people needs and requests, instead of the Party's. Ren Zhiqiang is one of them: he is a popular property tycoon and a Party member, who wrote his thought on his microblog. As a consequence, his post has been deleted.

Analogies with 1984

This news story that I found on the bbc.com seems to retrace most of the plot of the novel 1984 by George Orwell, where the main character Winston Smith works for the Party as an editor. His duty is to rewrite episodes that "really happened", in order to make them suitable for the Party and to erase anything that could incite people to go against the Party itself or make people question the Party's capacity.

Hence, any kind of revolutionary outbreaks, led by men whose names have been changed too, are completely deleted from history books and changed into something favourable for the Party.

Yu Shaolei almost had the same role, the same duties to do his job well. On his personal Weibo page, he published his feeling about working for the Southern Metropolis Daily and the reason why he has resigned. At later time, he saw his own post erased by the censorship. Online western news websites (like the [bbc](http://bbc.com), [cnn](http://cnn.com), the [guardian](http://theguardian.com) etc.) have found the news on a cached version of the online post, on the FreeWeibo website.

Weibo is an allowed website in China, but it is constantly monitored by the Party censors. What could be stunning for westerns, is the fact that China has completely blacked out websites that are of daily usage for us: think of Google, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks, whose visualisations there is not permitted. The reason behind this is that it could allow people to ideologically (and possibly physically) gather and revolt against the government, as it happened in 2008 in the Xinjiang region, the very event that made Facebook to be banned.

³ http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/world/asia/china-media-policy-xi-jinping.html?_r=0

Websites

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