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Notes

Elite Information in China

Michael Schoenhals

VIRTUALLY ALL scholarly studies of the Chinese political elite have been hampered by the almost complete lack of information about how its members regularly secure data necessary for rational policy and decision-making. Outside of China, and indeed even outside of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), little is known about this important subject. Through what means do the members of the CCP central leadership and the State Council keep themselves up to date on what is happening within China and beyond its borders? How do they get prompt reports on important political events, natural disasters, or societal developments? How do they stay briefed on the political climate prevailing among the Chinese population, what "the masses" think of the CCP, and how the lower level echelon of the party views those at the top? What are the channels through which they receive their daily news, and how do these channels fit into China's political system?

This article tries to provide some answers, albeit tentative and speculative ones, to these questions by describing and analyzing *Neibu Cankao* (Internal Reference), the most important controlled-circulation information bulletin in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Published twice daily by the New China News Agency (Xinhua), *Neibu Cankao* contains domestic news reports intended exclusively for China's political

elite. The following pages will briefly present its history, its editorial policy, and its contents. Also included is a short section on the role restricted news bulletins play in the Chinese political system and a brief overview of other PRC "internal" publications similar to, but more widely distributed than, *Neibu Cankao*.

Reliable information on *Neibu Cankao* is difficult to obtain. Although foreigners working in China in recent years have found it increasingly easy to gain access to other supposedly classified publications, such as Xinhua's *Cankao Xiaoxi* (Reference News) and *Cankao Ziliao* (Reference Materials),¹ *Neibu Cankao* has remained more or less inaccessible. Indeed, references to it can be found only in official publications governing journalistic work in China and in some pronouncements of high-ranking Chinese officials. For this reason, information on *Neibu Cankao* is somewhat sketchy and almost completely derivative; to my knowledge, few, if any, foreigners have ever seen it, and if they have there has been scant mention of it. Nonetheless, careful examination of official Chinese documents on *neibu duwu* (internal reading material) does yield considerable insight into an area one Western authority on China's political elite says we "know almost nothing about."²

Xinhua's News for Elites

Xinhua was founded by the Chinese Communist Party in 1937. During China's War of Resistance

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¹ See, e.g., Jörg-Meinhard Rudolph, "China's Media: Fitting News to Print," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), July-August 1984, pp. 58-67; and idem, "Cankao Xiaoxi: Foreign News in the Propaganda System of the People's Republic of China," *Occasional Papers/Reprints Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*, Baltimore, MD, University of Maryland Law School, 1984.

² Kenneth Lieberthal, quoted in Godwin C. Chu and Francis L.K. Hsu, Eds., *China's New Social Fabric*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1983, p. 112.

against Japan (1937–1945) and prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it was the party's official news agency. In 1950, by decision of the new People's Government, it also became the official news agency of the state.³ Today, it is a central government organ (subordinate to the State Council), but is closely tied to the party Central Committee Propaganda Department and is an integral part of China's political system.⁴ Its current director, Mu Qing, is a member of the Central Committee⁵ and holds a formal position equivalent to that of a State Council minister.⁶

Xinhua's primary task has remained more or less the same since 1950, despite the numerous political campaigns and upheavals that have shaken China during the last 35 years. In one document, this task is defined as the collection and dissemination of information about "new things, new conditions, new people, and new experiences." Such information is to "serve a didactic purpose and be of use to the masses as guidance or reference for them in their work." Finally, Xinhua news dispatches are to be "comprehensive, timely, and accurate."⁷

But Xinhua does not serve only "the masses." A lesser known, but equally important, task of Xinhua is serving the special information needs of China's political elite. Through such publications as *Neibu Cankao*, China's news agency supplies the central party, government, and military leadership with regular reports about such things as the "views and moods prevailing among the masses" and "problems and defects in the work" of the party.⁸ In short, it satisfies fundamentally different needs for the PRC's leaders than for the rest of the Chinese population.

Since Xinhua began publishing *Neibu Cankao* in 1951,⁹ it has remained the most exclusive publication of its kind in China. Although its exact circulation is not known, circumstantial evidence and statements

from Chinese informants¹⁰ (the reliability of which cannot be verified) suggest a readership of some 1,000 to 2,000. One CCP document describes the readership of *Neibu Cankao* as all "responsible comrades within the central leadership." Just how many people this might actually refer to is difficult to determine, but CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang has put a similarly designated category of people at between one hundred and a few thousand.¹¹ About all one can say with certainty is that the circulation of *Neibu Cankao* is extremely restricted. In the 1950's, it was published somewhat irregularly, though on average it appeared once a day; today it appears twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.¹²

Initially, *Neibu Cankao* was edited in a somewhat improvised fashion, without precise and established guidelines as to its content and editorial policy. In July 1953, however, the CCP Central Committee presented Xinhua with a set of regulations detailing what it wanted the bulletin to contain. These "Regulations Governing the Writing of Internal Reference Materials by Xinhua Journalists" still constitute the basic charter of *Neibu Cankao*. According to the "Regulations," *Neibu Cankao* is to contain information on the following six topics:

- (1) *How the party's short- and long-term policies are carried out in various localities and problems that arise in this process, especially the kinds of difficulties, erroneous tendencies, errors, and shortcomings encountered, knowledge of which might be of reference value for the work of leading organs.*
- (2) *The current political and ideological climate among the different social strata of the people. Their views on important domestic and international politi-*

³ The earliest reference to *Neibu Cankao* I have come across is Jan. 30, 1953 (ibid., p. 248). However, counting backward from two 1959 issues, the exact publication dates and serial numbers of which are known, and assuming that *Neibu Cankao* appeared more or less once a day in the 1950's, I arrive at 1951 as the most likely year in which it commenced publication. Judging from information provided in *Wenjian Huibian*, it seems highly unlikely that *Neibu Cankao* existed prior to the First National Xinhua Work Conference that convened in December 1950.

⁴ My main informant is a journalist, who, in 1982–1983, worked for a newspaper in Beijing, which is where I spoke with him. Other informants were friends of the offspring of persons having access to the *Neibu Cankao*.

⁵ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, p. 248; and *Xuanchuan Dongtai Xuanbian 1979* (Selections from Propaganda Trends 1979—hereafter *Xuanbian 1979*), Beijing, Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1981, p. 204. *Xuanchuan Dongtai* (Propaganda Trends) is the *neibu* weekly bulletin of the CCP Propaganda Department. Before the Cultural Revolution, it was called *Xuanjiao Dongtai* (Trends in Propaganda and Education), but after having been discontinued in 1966, it resumed publication under its current title in 1979. It is, according to its preface, a publication intended to "guide the work" of its readers, defined by the editors as CCP cadres "on or above the county level" who are engaged in propaganda work.

¹² From the same journalist cited in fn. 10.

³ *Zhongguo Gongchandang Xinwen Gongzuo Wenjian Huibian* (Collected Documents on Journalistic Work of the Chinese Communist Party—hereafter *Wenjian Huibian*), Beijing, Xinhua Chubanshe 1980, Vol. 2, p. 66. This *neibu* compilation in three volumes contains 359 documents on CCP press and propaganda work written between 1921 and 1956, almost none of which was previously known or available outside China.

⁴ For details on the relationship between Xinhua and the CCP Propaganda Department, see *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, pp. 191–92.

⁵ See US Central Intelligence Agency, *Directory of Chinese Officials: National Level Organizations*, CR 85–12068, Washington, DC, June 1985, p. 122.

⁶ *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Quanguo Renda, Zhongyang he Difang Zhengfu, Quanguo Zhengxie Lijie Fuzeren Renming Lu* (List of the Names of Responsible Persons of Past National People's Congresses, Central and Local Governments, and National Political Consultative Conferences of the People's Republic of China), Beijing, Renmin Chubanshe, 1984, includes the head of Xinhua among persons of ministerial rank.

⁷ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, p. 250.

⁸ Ibid.

cal events. The difficulties they encounter in their life and work and their opinion of leading organs.

(3) Problems in united front work.

(4) [Party] work experiences whose unripe or experimental nature makes them unsuitable for open reporting.

(5) Details about natural disasters in various parts of the country and the activities of counterrevolutionary elements.

(6) Other important conditions about which open reporting would be inappropriate.¹³

Although these topics have remained the same for over three decades, the way in which they have been interpreted by Xinhua editors and journalists has not. "Important conditions about which open reporting would be unsuitable" have in part depended on historical and political circumstances. Presumably, they encompassed a much broader range of facts in the days of the Korean war than they do today. Some indication of what is generally considered "inappropriate" for "open reporting" by the current Chinese leadership is given in a summary of discussions on economic policy published in 1979 in the weekly bulletin of the CCP Propaganda Department. The summary addresses what kind of facts should be reported openly and what kind of reports should be published only in so called internal publications:

However, . . . whatever forms part of the downward adjustments should not be mentioned in the open propaganda. Internal publications [neibu kanwu] should systematically reflect the situation and problems occurring on the economic front in the course of increasing production and practicing economy and carrying out the policy of readjustment, so that central, provincial, and municipal party committees may be guided by them in good time.¹⁴

As for the style and language to be used by Xinhua journalists when writing "internal" reference materi-

¹³ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, pp. 250-51.

¹⁴ *Xuanbian* 1979, p. 113. A monthly title and author index to a large number of *neibu* PRC periodicals in the fields of philosophy, politics, law, economics, literature, religion, sociology, history (including CCP history), and education is currently edited and published by the library of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences under the title *Neibu Ziliao Suoyin* (Index to Internal Materials). Unfortunately, the index is neither for sale in bookshops nor available for subscription through the regular distribution system of China's postal service, but can only be subscribed to directly from the publishers by PRC units, schools, and organizations above the county and regiment levels. Subscriptions from individuals are currently not accepted. It should be pointed out here that the index does not list articles appearing in *Neibu Cankao*, but only more widely distributed *neibu* publications such as those put out by CCP party schools, professional organizations, and academic institutions.

als, the CCP has emphasized that they should not be propagandistic, but aim only, or as far as possible, at presenting "pure facts." The 1953 "Regulations" explicitly state that "when writing reference materials, journalists are only responsible for the objective reporting of facts. They should neither express views about the things they describe nor put forth demands for action on the part of the authorities concerned."¹⁵

An Excerpt from *Neibu Cankao*

Xinhua reports carried in *Neibu Cankao* are rarely reproduced elsewhere, but sometimes it does happen that other "internal" publications quote or reprint them. The following is an excerpt from a restricted Xinhua news dispatch, as reprinted in the *neibu* bulletin of the CCP Propaganda Department, *Xuanchuan Dongtai* (Propaganda Trends), on December 3, 1979:

During the latter part of October, feudal superstitious activities of mass character, revolving mainly around asking the Gods for medicine, have spread rapidly from the Yinnan region to the old city, new city, and suburbs of Yinchuan [capital of the Muslim Autonomous Region of Ningxia] and the counties of Yongning and Helan, subordinate to Yinchuan municipality, where they are increasing in magnitude. In a very short time there have appeared 29 places of activity in Yongning county, spread over all the eight communes in the county. The number participating each time in the superstitious activities ranges from a minimum of ten people to a maximum of a thousand. Furthermore, at approximately 10 o'clock in the evening, on October the 17th, 28 trucks from Yinchuan and Helan transported staff, workers, and local residents to Yongning to burn incense and ask for medicine. During the last couple of days, these activities seem to have become the main topic of conversation in the alleys and courtyards here. . . .¹⁶

This short excerpt is an example of the kind of factual report that attempts to provide members of China's political elite with an idea of the mood prevailing among a part of China's population. In a later section of the same report, the editors discussed the inhabitants' difficulties generally and attributed the resurgence of "feudal activities" in the area to a lack of proper medical facilities and doctors. Similar Xinhua reports, originally circulated only among those in the central leadership, and later reproduced in

¹⁵ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, p. 251.

¹⁶ *Xuanbian* 1979, p. 267.

other restricted but more widely distributed publications, have included a description of the poor morale prevailing among People's Liberation Army soldiers in Fujian; a very detailed account of a series of bestial mass murders in Guizhou; a piece about an African student who handed in obscene photographs of himself and two naked Chinese women to a photo shop in Shanghai to be developed and printed; and a description of how the 61 CCP members among the Chinese personnel employed at Beijing's joint-venture Jianguo Hotel grapple with the delicate problems posed to them by their "capitalist" working environment.¹⁷

Other Neibu

What are some of the other *neibu* news bulletins of lesser standing and wider circulation than *Neibu Cankao*? Among these, Xinhua's bulletin containing translations of international news from foreign sources, *Cankao Ziliao*, is perhaps best known outside the PRC. A fairly well known bulletin containing domestic news intended primarily for a local (as opposed to national/central) privileged party and government audience is *Baokan Wenzhai* (Newspaper Excerpts), put out by the publishers of the Shanghai *Jiefang Ribao* (Liberation Daily).¹⁸

In the early 1950's, the official party paper, *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), published a reference bulletin similar to *Neibu Cankao*, but it was discontinued after a few years since it was considered to be little more than a duplication of the latter.¹⁹ At present, *Renmin Ribao* edits a *neibu* bulletin entitled *Qingkuang Huibian* (Situation Summary).²⁰ Before the Cultural Revolution, this publication was called *Meiri Qingkuang Jianbao* (Brief Daily Situation Reports).²¹ *Qingkuang Huibian* is different from *Neibu Cankao* in that it contains not only "pure facts" and news dispatches written by *Renmin Ribao* journalists, but also a considerable proportion of opinions, appraisals, and comments by these same journalists. One Zhang Shihong, for instance, made the following very pertinent comment on the overall information policy of the CCP in issue No. 1178 of *Qingkuang Huibian* in 1979:

*There are those who claim that to let the masses know more about what goes on among the leaders of the party would lead to ideological confusion. In reality, this is not at all so. It has always been insufficient knowledge of things that has created ideological confusion. . . .*²²

Intra-Elite Communications

If Zhang's statement could be taken at face value, there would seem to be little need for *neibu*. But PRC history suggests otherwise. Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and other high-ranking CCP leaders have on many occasions commented favorably upon restricted Xinhua news bulletins. For example, in a letter to Xinhua on February 2, 1953, Mao praised the agency for its coverage in *Neibu Cankao* on "bureaucratic habits, abuses of power, and illegal acts" among CCP cadres in the Chinese countryside and stated that the Central Committee got a good idea of how its instructions were being implemented by reading the internal reference bulletin. (Later in 1953, Mao's letter was circulated within Xinhua together with a comment that Mao had instructed the agency and its local bureaus to "cover and expose bureaucratism, commandism, and offenses against law and discipline and to print this kind of news in *Neibu Cankao*."²³ After the upheavals in Tibet in 1959, Mao wrote another letter to Xinhua suggesting that the agency keep the Beijing leadership informed about the situation among the Tibetans by way of *Neibu Cankao*.²⁴

In 1956, Liu Shaoqi met and talked to the Xinhua leadership on at least two occasions. He stressed that it was imperative for political and tactical reasons to make a clear distinction between those events that could be openly reported and those about which reports should be confined to *neibu* news bulletins. In May 1956 he said:

Something that has happened may be true, but if open reporting about it serves the enemy and not our own cause, then we cannot allow it to be openly reported, but should rather write about it internally. Journalists

¹⁷ *Xuanchuan Dongtai Xuanbian 1980* (Selections from Propaganda Trends 1980), Beijing, Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1981, pp. 173-78, 273, 277; and *Xuanchuan Ziliao* (Propaganda Materials), No. 13, Chengdu, Zhonggong Sichuan Shengwei Xuanchuanbu, 1984, pp. 6-15.

¹⁸ Information on the contents and circulation of *Baokan Wenzhai* was given to me by foreign students studying in Shanghai. Additional information on *neibu* news bulletins published in Shanghai is provided in *Ziliao Gongzuo Tongxun* (Newsletter on Documentation), Beijing, People's University, No. 3, 1981, pp. 45-47.

¹⁹ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

²⁰ *Xuanbian 1979*, p. 65. The English journalist Philip Short refers to *Qingkuang Huibian* in his book *The Dragon and the Bear*, but his comment that it is comparable

to, but on a higher level of secrecy than, *Neibu Cankao* is, in my opinion, wrong. It is an entirely different type of publication and is by no means, as he claims, a "secret bulletin of domestic political intelligence." See Philip Short, *The Dragon and the Bear—Inside Russia and China Today*, London, Abacus, 1982, p. 139.

²¹ Information on the different *neibu* publications put out by the publishers of *Renmin Ribao* is provided in *Tantan Baozhi Gongzuo* (On Newspaper Work), Beijing, Xinwen Yanjiusuo, 1978, pp. 119-20.

²² *Xuanbian 1979*, p. 69.

²³ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 2, p. 248, contains both Mao's letter and Xinhua's comment.

²⁴ *Mao Zedong Shuxin Xuanji* (Selected Letters of Mao Zedong), Beijing, Renmin Chubanshe, 1983, pp. 555-56.

in China and journalists stationed abroad both must produce internal reference materials. *Neibu Cankao* should be made into an authoritative publication.²⁵

One month later, in June 1956, Liu told the leadership of Xinhua that they "must run *Neibu Cankao* and *Cankao Xiaoxi* seriously. You must take your work seriously. . . . You must call a special conference, and discuss how to run *Neibu Cankao*."²⁶ In November 1956, presumably in direct response to this call for an elevation in the status of *Neibu Cankao*, Xinhua submitted a report to the CCP Central Committee stating that the agency had two primary tasks of equal importance: to provide to central party leaders reference materials and photographs not suitable for distribution among the general Chinese public, and to gather and release, inside China and abroad, important and interesting news about Chinese and foreign politics, economics, culture, etc. (including both text and photographs).²⁷

While *Neibu Cankao* is primarily a medium for the transmission of news and information from a nationwide network of journalists to a small elite readership, it at times also functions as a vehicle for high-level intrabureaucratic communication. China's leaders themselves occasionally publish comments and letters in *Neibu Cankao*. In this way, they are able to communicate their views on particular issues to the rest of the party, government, and military leadership without using more formal channels, such as circulars or directives from the various executive bodies and departments of the Central Committee.²⁸

²⁵ *Wenjian Huibian*, Vol. 3, p. 363.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 381. It has been assumed by some Western scholars that *Cankao Xiaoxi* commenced publication in 1956 (see, e.g., Helmut Opletal, *Die Informationspolitik der Volksrepublik China* [Information Policy of the People's Republic of China], Bochum, Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1981, p. 98 passim). As a matter of fact, this is wrong. *Cankao Xiaoxi* had already existed for some time when it was mentioned by name in the July 1953 CCP CC regulations referred to above. My guess is that *Neibu Cankao* and the original *Cankao Xiaoxi* both saw the light of day at about the same time, i.e., in 1951. The reason why Liu Shaoqi did not, as might have been expected in this context, refer to *Cankao Ziliao* (a detailed description of which can be found in Rudolph, "China's Media," pp. 58-67) is that most likely it did not exist in 1956. Possibly *Cankao Ziliao* was created to succeed the original *Cankao Xiaoxi* in 1957 when the circulation of the latter was increased from 2,000 to 400,000. The earliest issue of *Cankao Ziliao* I have come across is one dated Nov. 8, 1957.

²⁷ See the 28-page Red Guard pamphlet *Zhanduan Liu Shaoqi Shenxiang Xinhua She de Heishou* (Chop off Liu Shaoqi's black hand, reaching out for Xinhua), n.p., n.d., p. 13.

²⁸ See Kenneth Lieberthal, with the assistance of James Tong and Sai-cheung Yeung, *Central Documents and Politburo Politics in China*, Ann Arbor, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies No. 33, 1978, pp. 6-21, for a discussion of the significance of Central Committee circulars as a vehicle for intrabureaucratic communication within the Chinese political system. An index to the circulars has been compiled by the Domestic Documentation Section of *Renmin Ribao* (Beijing) and published by the publishers of *Renmin Ribao* under the title *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Suoyin* (Index to Circulars of the CCP Central Committee). See also *Ziliao Gongzuo Tongxun*, No. 1, 1982, p. 21.

In issue No. 2929 of *Neibu Cankao*, published on December 8, 1959, a letter from Mao Zedong accompanied a Xinhua report on pig breeding in a People's Commune in Hebei Province. Mao's letter apparently was originally directed to the head of Xinhua, Wu Lengxi; it began with the words, "This document is very good, please reproduce it in Xinhua's *Neibu Cankao*," and went on to point out that the CCP leadership at every level ought to consider the possibilities of expanding pig breeding on a grand scale.²⁹

Useful Tool or Unreliable Crutch?

Given the importance of *Neibu Cankao* as a medium through which the Chinese political elite gets most, if not all, of its daily information on what is happening in China, it is hardly surprising that at times it has been used covertly by some members of that elite to try to lobby for their own stand in important policy matters. Assuming for instance that members of the CCP Politburo read *Neibu Cankao* every day—and Mao Zedong for one said that it and Xinhua's other news bulletin, *Cankao Ziliao*, were the two daily sources of information that he always read, no matter how busy he was³⁰—whoever controls the contents of *Neibu Cankao* wields a considerable amount of political power and influence in China.

In 1962, Mao Zedong castigated Xinhua because it had recently published too many positive reports in *Neibu Cankao* on successful experiments in the PRC countryside with so-called responsibility systems.³¹ Judging from admittedly scant evidence, it seems that Mao was afraid that too many of these positive reports might eventually make a majority of the CCP leadership come out in support of such experimental systems. Knowing the degree to which his colleagues were dependent on *Neibu Cankao* for their knowledge of what went on in the countryside, Mao used his own political power and authority simply to forbid the further publication of reports on the responsibility system. In this way, he successfully obstructed further

²⁹ For Mao's letter and the editor's reference to *Neibu Cankao*, see *Mao Zhuxi Guanyu Fazhan Yangzhuyue de Zhishi* (Instructions from Chairman Mao on the Development of Pig Breeding), n.p., n.d., 1975, pp. 1-2. For an English-language translation, based on a garbled Red Guard version of the text, see Joint Publications Research Service, *Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought (1949-1968)*, JPRS Nos. 61269-1 and 61269-2, Washington, DC, 1974, pp. 173-77.

³⁰ *Mao Zedong Xinwen Gongzuo Wenxuan* (Selected Texts on Journalism by Mao Zedong), Beijing, Xinhua Chubanshe 1983, p. 215.

³¹ Helmut Martin, *Mao Zedong Texte* (Mao Zedong Texts), Munich, Hanser Verlag, 1982, Vol. 5, p. 653; Martin's source was a Red Guard publication entitled *Xinwen Zhanxian Liangtiao Luxian Douzheng Dashi Ji 1948-1966* (An Account of Important Events in the Struggle Between Two Lines on the Journalistic Front, 1948-1966), n.p., n.d.

lobbying in Xinhua in support of a policy he himself opposed.

Despite a general tendency among many Chinese to view any *neibu* information as reliable and "truthful,"³² China's leaders seem to be aware that uncritical overreliance on Xinhua reports can be highly dangerous and have politically disastrous consequences under certain circumstances. Examples of members of China's political elite's making "erroneous" decisions based on misleading information from Xinhua in *Neibu Cankao* abound in the history of the PRC.

For instance, in February 1959, while talking to provincial and municipal party secretaries, Mao Zedong indicated that his information in May and June of 1957 concerning the amount and scope of unrest at Beijing University had been skewed. Xinhua's reports in *Neibu Cankao*, he said, had been exaggerated and had unduly frightened him and presumably other CCP leaders. He suggested that the decision to launch the Anti-Rightist Campaign had been based partly on an incorrect assessment of the political situation. Thus, Mao warned his audience that it should not just read, trust, and rely on *Neibu Cankao*.³³

Criticism has also come from those outside of official political circles. During the 1979 "Democracy Movement," for example, opinions echoing those of Mao some 20 years earlier were voiced by dissidents. One member of the editorial board of *Beijing Zhi Chun* (Beijing Spring), a leading journal of the movement, said in a report to the Qinghua University CCP Committee in May 1979 that one of the reasons why "magazines run by the people"—that is, non-CCP-controlled publications—were useful was because they gave the "party center" an opportunity to hear "the voice of the grass roots and the masses." The "democratic journals," he said, are "much more immediate and vivid" than Xinhua's *Neibu Cankao*.³⁴

Neibu Cankao's checkered history may or may not have something to do with the recent emergence of yet another highly restricted *neibu* periodical. Writing about "errors" and "shortcomings" within the CCP on higher levels than that covered by Xinhua reporters and *Neibu Cankao* seems to be the task of a group of writers/journalists newly affiliated with the CCP Discipline Inspection Commission, the party's watchdog organization charged with combating corruption and political misbehavior.³⁵ These writers/journalists live and work under somewhat special conditions due to the sensitive nature of their work. In most cases the Discipline Inspection Commission supplies them with the "raw facts" on which they are to base their stories, which are then printed in the Commission's bulletin.

Unfortunately, the name, frequency, and circulation of this bulletin are still unknown outside China.³⁶

Curbing Jurisdictional Conflicts

Xinhua journalists, irrespective of where they work, are directly subordinate to the central authorities in the head office in Beijing. One of the journalists' most important tasks is to be the eyes and ears of the CCP center. In this respect they are different from other Chinese journalists who work for local or provincial newspapers. The 1953 CCP regulations governing internal Xinhua news bulletins clearly anticipated the possibility of conflicts arising between leaders of local party committees and conscientious Xinhua reporters covering, for example, those committees' implementation of central directives. Section III of the regulations, entitled "On Relations with Party Committees," addresses the relationship between Xinhua journalists and CCP party committees:

Xinhua journalists working in various localities must carry out their work under the leadership of the Xinhua Head Office as well as under the simultaneous supervision of the party committees on the various levels. Attention must be paid to the prevention of anything suggesting disrespect of the views of the party committees. Of course, respecting the views of the party committees does not mean that journalists are not allowed to disagree and hold a different opinion on certain matters. Neither does it mean that they should not report to the center on shortcomings in the work that they witness. In order to facilitate their work, it is hereby stipulated that: Materials concerning matters pertaining to the work of party committees under the prefectural level written by journalists of Xinhua may be sent directly to the Xinhua Head Office; materials containing reports on problems in the work of party committees on the provincial and municipal levels should first be passed on to the responsible person within the provincial or municipal party committee to look at before they are sent to the Xinhua Head Office. If a journalist is of the opinion that something

³² Rudolph, among others, notes that the *neibu* classification enhances the credibility of periodicals in the eyes of the Chinese public. See "China's Media," p. 66.

³³ *Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought (1949-1968)*, p. 152.

³⁴ *Qingnian Yanjiu* (Youth Research), No. 2, Beijing, Gongqingtuan Zhongyang Yanjiushi, 1979, p. 19.

³⁵ For a brief discussion of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, see William deB. Mills, "Generational Change in China," *Problems of Communism*, November-December 1983, pp. 31-32.

³⁶ Information on this bulletin was given to me by a PRC journalist who had turned down an offer to work for the Discipline Inspection Commission.

ought to be reported to the party center, even though the provincial or municipal party committee disagrees with the materials, the latter should be accompanied by the view of the party committee. . . .³⁷

Inasmuch as there appears to be no source other than *Neibu Cankao* through which party and govern-

ment organs at lower levels can receive regular, straightforward information on the "shortcomings" and "erroneous tendencies" at higher levels, *Neibu Cankao* has become an integral part of that set of checks and balances by which the CCP center skillfully retains a high degree of control over the rest of the party. In some ways, this aspect of *Neibu Cankao* almost surpasses in importance its uses as a channel of information.

³⁷ Wenjian Huibian, Vol. 2, p. 251.