

Three: A Mayor Of Mean Spirit

3: Censorship With A Vengeance



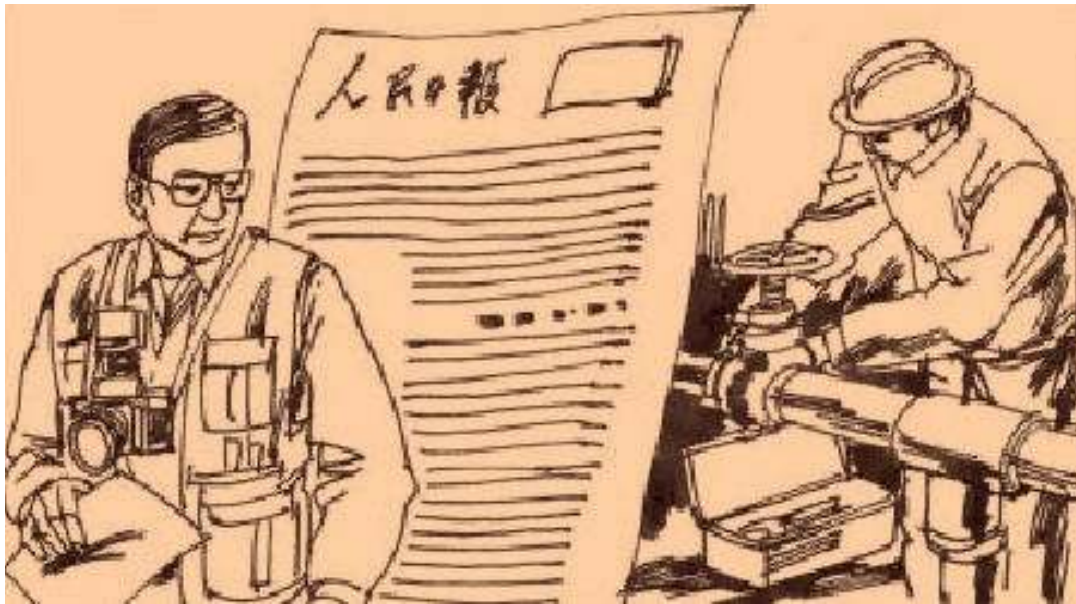
While Jiang Zemin may be incompetent with real tasks, when it comes to boasting, few are his match. He had naturally come to understand the power of the media. Many Shanghai publications are read all over across China. So Senior Party Bosses in the Central Party Committee would read them, too. Jiang Zemin thus devoted much attention to propaganda in the mass media. One maneuver he made, was to place members of his clique in the dept. of propaganda. After he became Mayor, he paid special attention to the contents of media reports. Sometimes he came across as almost paranoid.



From the beginning of 1986, Jiang Zemin chaired all meetings with the dept. propaganda, as well as meetings of the senior editors, of all major Shanghai's media. No previous Mayor has ever done this. The routine became important for him. One time, the egotistical Jiang Zemin tried to show off his foreign language skills at a press conference, by incorrectly use the English word "faces", to represent the Chinese word "Mian Mao". The following day, the Liberation Daily dutifully substituted in its report the English word "faces" with the Chinese "Mian Mao", so that its readers could understand it.



Jiang Zemin threw into a rage. Everybody knows that Jiang Zemin liked to make a show. As Mayor, he had taken charge of the railway stations, where he could draw the most attention.



A water-leakage at a new railway affected his image. He went in person to the local water supply bureau and yelled at its workers. The pipe was apparently fixed on the very same day. A few weeks later, journalist Xu Jinggen, of the Liberation Daily, voiced criticism against Jiang Zemin, for giving such weight to a triviality like a pipe, while neglecting matters of importance.



Jiang Zemin outraged about the article, and called a special meeting attacking and blaming Xu Jinggen and his superior for the report. As if it's not enough, he soon rectified and reorganized the media. Editors-in-chief and managers, who had a history of truthful reporting, were all removed. From that point on, no media in Shanghai dared to comment on Jiang Zemin.



In 1989 the country was full of discontent. Hu Yaobang, the open-minded reformer, passed away, which triggered student movements around the country, with large scale demonstrations, assemblies, and petitioning activities, calling for a dialogue between the leaders of the country and the students, to promote political reform, and have the country foster democracy and rules of law.



On the morning of April 22nd, the funeral for Hu Yaobang was held in the Great Hall of the People. President Yang Shangkun hosted the funeral, which was attended by top officials. While Jiang Zemin in Shanghai opposed to the funeral, he nevertheless sent a wreath to Beijing as a sign of mourning.



The founder and the chief editor of the World Economic Herald was Qin Benli, an intellectual in his seventies, whom news editors held in the highest regard. His publication promoted the democratic idea, and won the trust of over three hundred thousand highly educated readers. It even had significant weight in setting the tone of the national level discussion. After Hu Yaobang passed away, the editors of the Herald set to publish a forum. Qin Benli thought the forum should hit upon pertinent social and political issues, rather than just go through the usual motions of memorializing the late leader.



Jiang Zemin sent Zeng Qinghong, the deputy Party chief, along with Chen Zhili to speak to Qin Benli to stop the publication. Qin Benli held his ground.



Jiang Zemin became desperate, and enlisted Wang Daohan behind him. He demanded of Qin Benli, in severe terms, to change the final wording of the publication. Wang Daohan further employed Party logic to persuade Qin Benli. By that point, however, over one hundred thousand copies of the publication had already been delivered. The publication was met with supports from vast numbers of readers across the country and overseas.



The evening after the People's Daily published its editorial "We Must Unequivocally Oppose The Turmoil", Jiang Zemin at a large meeting, attended by 14 thousand CCP members, announced the dismissal of Qin Benli from his position, and restructuring the World Economic Herald



On April 27, Jiang sent Liu Ji and Chen Zhili, the leaders of Shanghai City Restructuring Leadership Group to take charge of the Herold. Chen Zhili, every bit as relentless as Jiang Zemin, followed his every order. She fired all the Herold employees, and barred all of its editors from further media works of any type.



At this time, Qin Benli had been suffering from cancer and was bedridden. Chen Zhili visited Qin Benli with a wide smile on her face. And then she proceeded to read aloud to the dying Qin Benli a CCP discipline note against him. Her intention couldn't have been more obvious: she not only wanted Qin Benli to die right away, but also wanted him to die without any peace.



The CCP's rule lacks legitimacy, unlike any elected government. So it hardly can facilitate any peaceful or smooth transition of power between the generations. To find the qualified successor to rule the Party has always been an ultimate challenge. The way Jiang Zemin handled the Herold case impressed the elderly Party bosses, and made them have realized that, after all, this was the successor they had been looking for.