

9 PARTY POLITICS, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND CHARTER 08

In this chapter we shall first briefly discuss the effect the writing of Chairman Mao has on Chinese rhetorical style. Those interested in in-depth treatments of contemporary Chinese political writing are directed to Schoenals' 1992 monograph, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*. The second part of the chapter will be more anecdotal as the authors will recount their own experiences in learning to write "academic" Chinese. This encompasses the period directly after the Cultural Revolution to the 1980s. Those who are interested in the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution itself should consult Xing Lu's 2004 study *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. The chapter concludes with a rhetorical analysis of recent petitions, including Charter 08, where we consider from where the authors may have drawn their inspiration and influence.

While the texts analysed in this chapter are taken from political, rather than academic, writing, they are all persuasive texts and thus are relevant to argumentative writing. We start by considering examples from Mao's political writing, which was influenced by translations into Chinese of Western writers, most notably translations of Marxist theoreticians, including Engels and Marx themselves. In a break from traditional Chinese writing styles, he wrote long sentences and, as these followed the modifier-modified principle, we tend to get long modifying elements and subordinate clauses preceding the head and main clauses. We previously pointed out that Wang Li had identified the Europeanisation of Chinese caused by translations of Western works into Chinese. One consequence was the Chinese "Europeanised" long sentence (*Zhongguo Yufa Lilun* 281) leading to an increase in sentence length in Chinese. Examples of these long sentences, which also illustrate this modifier-modifying or subordinate-main sequence, are provided by Cheng Zhenqiu (120), where he discusses issues connected with the translation of Mao's work into English.

Example 1 below is the Chinese pinyin version of a Mao passage. Example 1a is the “poor” translation of this passage into English, “poor” in that it follows the original Chinese sequence. It is worth noting at this early stage, therefore, that although the sentence length shows Western influence, the sequencing patterns remain Chinese. Example 1b represents a translation which alters the original Chinese sequence to better conform to the preferred English sequence. The relevant sections of each of these passages are italicised.

Zai zhe yi nian zhi liang nian nei keneng fasheng liang zhong qingkuang: yi zhong shi women tuanjie duo shu guli shaoshu de shangceng tongzhan zhengci fasheng le xiaoli, xizang qunzhong ye zhujian kaolong women, *yiner shi huai fenzi ji zangjun bu juxing baoluan*; yi zhong....

- 1a. Two things could happen in the next year or two: one is that our united front policy towards the upper stratum, a policy of uniting with the enemy, will take effect and that the Tibetan people will gradually draw closer to us, *so the bad elements and the Tibetan troops will not dare to rebel*; the other....
- 1b. Two things could happen in the next year or two: One is that *the bad elements and the Tibetan troops will not dare to rebel* as our united front policy towards the upper stratum, a policy of uniting with the enemy is taking effect and the Tibetan people are drawing closer to us; the other....

The first of the translations, (1a) follows the Chinese sequence. This follows the unmarked “BECAUSE-THEREFORE” sequence which places the subordinate clause(s) before the main clause. So the English translation (1a) follows the Chinese propositional sequence of “BECAUSE our united front policy is taking effect, THEREFORE the bad elements and the Tibetan rebels will not dare to rebel.” Cheng criticises this translation on the grounds that it does not provide the readers with the main point of the argument first, as preferred in English. This is why he recommends altering the order as it occurs in the Chinese and translating the passage as in (1b), where the main point, the fact that the Tibetans won’t dare rebel, is placed at the front and thus follows the preferred English placement.

In other words, then, the English translation in (1a) follows the normal Chinese unmarked “because-therefore” sequence. This results in a translation in

which the main point of the piece, that the bad elements and the Tibetan rebels will not dare to rebel, gets placed after subordinate detail. For a more effective English translation, the sequence of the propositions as expressed in Chinese needs to be reversed when translated, as in (1b). This ensures that the main point occurs towards the beginning of the piece, its normal unmarked position in English.

A further example of the need to reverse the normal unmarked Chinese “because-therefore” sequence when translating Chinese into English is provided in (2), also taken from Mao’s work. The main point, which occurs towards the end in the normal Chinese order, needs to be moved to the front to provide an accurate English translation (2a). The excerpt in the Chinese that has the dotted lines under it is represented in italics in both the pinyin version and the English translation.

lao zhong nong zhongjian de xia zhong nong, youyu tamen de
jingji diwei yuanlai jiu bu fuyu, youxie ze yinwei zai tudi gaige
de shihou bu zhengdang de ‘shou le yixie qinfan, zhexie ren zai
jingji diwei sheng he xin zhong nong zhongjian de xia zhong
nong da ti xiang si, *tamen duiyu jiaru bezuoshe yiban de gandao
xingqu.*

2a. *They (the lower-middle peasants) are generally interested in joining the cooperatives, because in economic status they are more or less similar to the lower-middle peasants among the new middle peasants, as they were not well off to start with and the interests of some were improperly encroached upon at the time of the agrarian reform.*

The original Chinese follows the “because-therefore” sequence of:

“BECAUSE the economic status of the lower-middle peasants was similar to the lower middle peasants among the new middle peasants, ... THEREFORE they are interested in joining the co-operatives.”

The English translation follows the opposite sequence, however, and needs to transpose the final part or main point of the Chinese text to the front in order to get the correct balance. For, if an English translation were to follow the original Chinese sequence, as in (2b), it would have the main point at the end and preface it with a great deal of subordinate information. It would read:

- 2b. The lower middle peasants among the old middle peasants, because their economic position was not prosperous, and some (of them) because they suffered oppression at the time of the land reform, (therefore) their economic status was more or less similar to the lower middle peasants among the new middle peasants, (therefore) *they are generally interested in joining the cooperatives.*

This translation follows the clause sequence of the original and clearly shows the unmarked “because-therefore” sequence being followed throughout the text.

This is further evidence that the sequencing principle for complex sentences that we have discussed earlier also operates at a level above the sentence. This may also help explain why people have classified Chinese as being indirect, as this inductive sequence allows the main and salient points to be made towards the end of an extended piece of text, with the subordinate information preceding it, in the ways illustrated in these two examples taken from the writing of Mao. When the texts become long, readers may well feel that they have to wait a long time for the main point while having to process a great deal of subordinate information while waiting.

Mao’s use of long sentences of the type illustrated above also made him difficult to read for the Chinese themselves. One reason for the publication of the famous *Little Red Book* was to provide a simplified version of his ideas that could be read and understood by the masses. In the previous chapter, we discussed the question of literacy and pointed out that the estimates for literate people ranged from 5% to as high as 40%, depending on how literacy was defined. While the evidence in the next section of this chapter is anecdotal, Kirkpatrick’s experience as a postgraduate student of Chinese literature at the prestigious Fudan University in the years 1976-1977 would suggest that the lower percentage rates were more accurate. In 1982, UNESCO reported that some 32% of the Chinese population was illiterate, although the figures for rural areas were much higher. The problem was recognised by the Chinese government which criticised primary education in rural areas for not providing adequate training even to teach children how to read and write (Seeberg 425). It also needs to be remembered that the period of the Cultural Revolution—which is usually considered to span the ten years from 1966-1976—denied many intellectuals an education while attempting to educate many who were illiterate. This explains why, even at a university as prestigious as Fudan, many of the local students of Chinese literature were illiterate, as they had been recruited from the so-called *gong nong bing* or workers, peasants, and soldiers. This meant that many of Kirkpatrick’s fellow students not only had never heard of famous contemporary Chinese writers such as Lao She and Ba Jin—their

works had been proscribed by this time—but they were also unable to read or write about the writers that were still approved, most notably Lu Xun and Mao himself. There were, of course, exceptions. Kirkpatrick's two roommates were both highly literate and well-educated, one being the son of an army general, the other the son of a high-level cadre. This was, presumably, why they were thought to be suitable roommates for a foreign student. They were both educated and politically trustworthy, both red and expert, as it were. Kirkpatrick also became aware of their literate ability when they confessed to him that they had been asked by the university authorities to translate into Chinese the articles he had written for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a weekly magazine then based in Hong Kong. As they had no English, not unnaturally they found the task of translating the articles into Chinese quite beyond them. But with the help of the original author, they managed most successfully, and were thus able to fulfill their duty.

As part of the course at Fudan, foreign students were required to undertake two weeks each of “learning from the peasants” and “learning from the workers.” The first took place in a People's Commune and the second in a machine tool factory. While at the commune, Kirkpatrick discovered that, while his peasant hosts were able to read the slogans in the Little Red Book and those which were displayed in vast numbers around the commune, they were unable to identify the individual characters which made up the slogans. Thus, if the order of the characters in the slogan were altered, the peasants were unable to read them. Mao was routinely described as the *weida-de lingxiu* 伟大的领袖 or *great leader*. The peasants would happily read off the standard phrase “*Women weida-de lingxiu Mao zhuxi*,” *Our great leader Chairman Mao*. But Kirkpatrick discovered that, when the characters *ling* 领 and *xiu* 袖 were presented separately to the peasants, they were unable to read them.

While at the factory, all the foreign students were assigned to political study groups, one foreigner to each study group. These study groups met three times a week for two hours each time. Tools were downed and the machines silenced as we sat in our groups to study the prescribed texts. At the time in question, the groups were studying Mao's essay “On the Ten Great Relationships.” The routine was that the political advisor would read a paragraph of the text while the rest of the group followed in their copies. After completing the paragraph, he would then invite comments from the rest of the group, an invitation that was invariably met by deathly silence, apart from the occasional embarrassed shuffling of shoes against the stone floor. After what always seemed a painfully long period of silence, he would then identify the key points, and then would direct a member of the group to read the next paragraph. During these political study sessions it quickly became clear that very few of the workers were able to read at all, as it was rare for one of the workers to be able to read his or her

paragraph. This was acutely uncomfortable for Kirkpatrick, as the political advisor would often ask him to read the paragraph on behalf of the poor worker who was unable to.

The modern literature course in which Kirkpatrick was enrolled was assessed by an end-of-course assignment, comprising a short dissertation of twenty-thousand Chinese characters. Choice of author and topic was limited to those approved by the authorities. The title of Kirkpatrick's dissertation was "The Effect of his Hometown upon Lu Xun's Short Stories." As recalled earlier in the introduction to this book, the dissertation was returned with the instruction to add more references to authority in order to bolster the argument. In the context, it was clear that "authority" meant Chairman Mao himself. Kirkpatrick then spent the next two weeks or so plowing through Mao's works looking for apposite quotes which could then be interspersed at appropriate points through the dissertation. Once the arguments presented in the dissertation had been buttressed—or, more accurately framed—by quotes from Mao, the dissertation was passed.

The importance attached to finding the apposite quote in order to justify one's position is nicely captured in an account given by Schoenals (24–5). In July 1972, the Communist Party's major propaganda organ, the People's Daily newspaper, published an article in which it stated that, "there has to be praise as well as criticism, although there should mainly be praise." A secretary of Yao Wenyan, a member of the infamous Gang of Four, then phoned the People's Daily office to ask for the reference. Schoenals quotes the person who had written the People's Daily article:

[I felt that] the passage might create a major problem, because I honestly could not think what the scriptural basis for this statement might be.... I discovered that Lin Biao of all people had remarked in 1964—in his "Instructions to the Entire Army on Organization Work"—that "in dealing with soldiers, there has to be praise as well as criticism, although there should mainly be praise." At the time [in 1972] the entire Party was in the midst of the anti-Lin Biao rectification campaign, but here was I—an editor with the People's Daily—propagating the point of view of Lin Biao. Outrageous! Was this not tantamount to disseminating Lin Biao's remnant poison? I became even more nervous.

The author of the article alerted other people in the People's Daily office to his problem and they joined in a frantic search for the original reference. The author continues the story:

Just before lunch, a Comrade came running into the office... mad with joy, saying: "We are saved! I've got a reference. In his 1964 "Conversation at the Spring Festival," Chairman Mao said exactly the same thing." Everyone was as if relieved of a heavy burden. All that needed to be done now was to use the quote from Mao as a reference, and then pass on a report to those on high.

The concern, if not downright panic, felt by the author of the People's Daily article at not being able to find the reference and then discovering that it had been said by the discredited Lin Biao serves to remind us just how difficult life was for intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution. It was not a time for academic writing. It was a time of an extremely confrontational style (Lu Xing, *Revolution* 192ff). As we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, we shall not here discuss this in any detail (see Lu Xing *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* for an in-depth study), but as Lu Xing herself points out, this confrontational and aggressive style is still seen today. As an example she cites the official language used to attack the Falun Gong. She quotes one of the people she interviewed:

The language used to attack Falun Gong is exactly the same language as that used to attack "cow ghosts and snake spirits" during the Cultural Revolution. On hearing such language, I felt like the Cultural Revolution had returned. (196)

This confrontational style has spread to the language of the dissidents. Xing Lu quotes another of her interviewees:

There is definitely a trace of the cultural-revolutionary style, even in the writings of political dissidents.... The language they use to attack the CCP is very similar to the Red Guard style. They use Mao's style of verbal aggression to condemn Mao. (196)

Here are two translated excerpts from Mao which show his confrontational and direct style.

I am hated by many, especially comrade Pang Dehuai, his hatred is so intense that he wished me dead. My policy with Pang Dehuai is such: You don't touch me, I don't touch you;

you touch me, I touch you. Even though we were once like brothers, it doesn't change a thing. [Source: "Minutes of Lu Shan Meetings" (1959), Mao Zedong]

A commune makes one mistake, there are 700,000 plus brigades, then we have 700,000 plus mistakes. If we let all these mistakes be published in newspaper, it takes forever to print them. What shall be the end result? The end result would be the collapse of this nation. Let's say the imperialists would leave us alone, our own people would rise to start a revolution, every one of us will be kicked in the arse. To publish a newspaper which specializes in saying bad words... once 700,000 bad incidents are published, and nothing else, I will be surprised to see our nation survive! No need to wait for an American or Chiang Kai-shek's invasion, our nation will be exterminated, this nation would deserve to be eliminated.... If communists do ten tasks, and nine are bad and published in newspaper, this nation will be eliminated, and deserved to be eliminated. [Source: "Minutes of Lu Shan Meetings" (1959), p. 136 Mao Zedong]

In the final section of this chapter we provide further support for Xing Lu's argument that the cultural-revolutionary style of aggression and confrontation is still very much in evidence, and that this is at great cost to public and civil discourse in China. In doing this we analyse Charter 08, the open letter issued in 2008 by a group of 303 Chinese authors to the Chinese Communist Party. In this open letter, the authors, the most well-known of whom is the Nobel Laureate, Liu Xiaobo, called for a reaffirmation of the following fundamental concepts: freedom, human rights, equality, republicanism, democracy, and constitutionalism. They also set forth nineteen specific demands.

We shall argue that the authors of Charter 08 must have realised that their letter would cause disdain, if not downright fury, among the Party elite, not least because of the way the argument and demands are framed. As will be shown, far from using a "bottom-up" form of persuasion as advised by Gui Guzi more than two thousand years ago and many others since, the authors chose to use language and a rhetorical structure representative of "top-down" rhetoric, reminiscent of the imperial edicts we included in Chapter 1. The translation below comes from the online forum Human Rights in China (<http://www.hrichina.org/public/index>) and can be seen at <http://www.hrichina.org/public/>

contents/press?revision_id=89851&item_id=85717). The Chinese text can be accessed at <http://www.2008xianzhang.info/chinese.htm>.

In the preamble, the authors write:

After experiencing a prolonged period of human rights disasters and a tortuous struggle and resistance, the awakening Chinese citizens are increasingly and more clearly recognizing that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal common values shared by all humankind, and that democracy, a republic, and constitutionalism constitute the basic structural framework of modern governance. A “modernisation” bereft of these universal values and this basic political framework is a disastrous process that deprives humans of their rights, corrodes human nature, and destroys human dignity.

They then seem to offer some praise by noting that the government did sign two human rights treaties in 1997 and 1998 and that the government has also promised “to formulate and implement a National Human Rights Action Plan.” But they go on:

However, this political process stops at the paper stage. There are laws but there is no rule of law. There is a constitution but no constitutional governance.... The power bloc continues to insist on maintaining the authoritarian regime, rejecting political reform. This has caused corruption in officialdom, difficulty in establishing rule of law, and no protection of human rights, the loss of ethics, the polarisation of society, warped economic development, damages in the natural and human environments, no systematic protection of the rights to property and the pursuit of happiness, the accumulation of countless social conflicts, and the continuous rise of resentment. In particular, the intensification of hostility between government officials and the ordinary people, and the dramatic rise of mass incidents, illustrate a catastrophic loss of control in the making, and the anachronism of the current system has reached a point where change must occur.

This preamble does not represent yin-yang persuasion as advocated by Gui Guzi and which we considered in Chapter 1. It is a withering attack on the

current government and its policies. Neither is the advice, which we repeat below, of Han Feizi heeded.

Men who wish to present their remonstrances and expound their ideas must not fail to ascertain their ruler's loves and hates before launching into their speeches.... If you gain the ruler's love, your wisdom will be appreciated and you will enjoy favour as well. But, if he hates you, not only will your wisdom be rejected but you will be regarded as a criminal and thrust aside. ...The beast called the dragon can be tamed and trained to the point where you may ride on its back. But on the underside of its throat it has scales a foot in diameter that curl back from the body, anyone who chances to brush against them is sure to die. The ruler of men too has his bristling scales. Only if a speaker can avoid brushing against them will he have any hope of success.

The authors then go on to call for the reaffirmation of six fundamental concepts, listed above. Here they spell out each concept and there is the frequent use of modals of obligation. For example, in the statements on human rights and equality they write:

To ensure human rights **must be** the foundation of the first objective of government and lawful public authority, and is also the **inherent demand** of "putting people first."

The principle of equality before the law and a citizen's society **must be** implemented; the principle of equality of economic, cultural, and political rights **must be** implemented.

This authoritative tone is maintained, if not strengthened, in the language of the nineteen "basic standpoints." Imperatives and "shall be" modals abound, as indicated in bold type. There is not space here to include all nineteen points. The first four are representative of the tone:

1. Amend the Constitution: Based on the aforementioned values and concepts, **amend** the Constitution, **abolishing** the provisions in the current Constitution that are not in conformity with the principle that sovereignty resides in the people so that the Constitution can truly become a document for guaranteeing human rights and [appropriate use of] public power. The Constitution **should be** the implementable

supreme law that any individual, group or party **shall not** violate, and lay the legal foundation for the democratization of China.

2. Separation and balance of power: A modern government that separates, checks, and keeps balance among powers guarantees the separation of legislative, judicial, and administrative power. The principle of governing by laws and being a responsible Government **shall be** established. Over-expansion of executive power **shall be** prevented; the Government **shall be** responsible to the taxpayers; the separation, checking and keeping balance of powers between the central and local governments **shall be** set up; the central power authority **shall be** clearly defined and mandated by the Constitution, and the local governments **shall be** fully autonomous.
3. Democratise the lawmaking process: All levels of the legislative bodies **shall be** directly elected. **Maintain** the principles of fairness and justice in making law, and democratise the lawmaking process.
4. Independence of the judiciary: The judiciary **shall be** nonpartisan, free from any interference. **Ensure** judicial independence, and **guarantee** judicial fairness. **Establish** a Constitutional Court and a system of judicial review; **maintain** the authority of the Constitution. **Abolish** as soon as possible the Party's Committees of Political and Legislative affairs at all levels that seriously endanger the country's rule of law. **Avoid** using public tools for private objectives.

Charter 08 concludes with the authors accusing China as being alone “among the great nations of the world” of remaining authoritarian and of causing untold suffering and holding back the progress of civilisation itself.

China, as a great nation of the world, one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and a member of the Human Rights Council, should contribute to peace for humankind and progress in human rights. But to people's regret, among the great nations of the world, China, alone, still clings to an authoritarian political way of life. As a result, it has caused an unbroken chain of human rights disasters and social crises, held back the development of the Chinese people, and hindered the progress of human civilization. This situation **must** change! The reform of political democratization **can no longer be** delayed.

Because of this, we, with a civic spirit that dares to act, publish the “Charter 08.” We hope that all Chinese citizens who

share this sense of crisis, responsibility and mission, without distinction between the government or the public, regardless of status, will hold back our differences to seek common ground, actively participate in this citizens' movement, and jointly promote the great transformation of the Chinese society, so that we can establish a free, democratic and constitutional nation in the near future and fulfill the dreams that our people have pursued tirelessly for more than a hundred years.

The overall tone of Charter 08 is one of command. The use of imperatives and modals recalls the *yang* rhetorical style of the imperial edicts exemplified in Chapter 1. There is also ample use of hyperbole and metaphor, typical of powerful discourse, and a marked absence of mitigated expressions, typical of powerless discourse (Van Dijk 184–5). “We do tend to leave implicit all propositions that we believe to be known or derivable by the recipients” (184–5). This tenet is also clearly breached, as the authors explicitly list the “fundamental concepts.” The nineteen “basic standpoints” are presented as explicit demands.

The use of pronouns further demonstrates an extremely antagonistic adversarial stance. The authors (we) are associated with “civic spirit.” “Because of this, we, with a civic spirit that dares to act, publish the ‘Charter 08.’” The explicitly addressed audience, the Chinese Community Party, is an inanimate “it,” the opposition, as exemplified in this excerpt from the preamble.

The “New China” established in 1949 is a “people’s republic” in name only. In fact, it is under the “Party’s dominion.” The ruling power monopolizes all the political, economic and social resources. It created a string of human rights catastrophes such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, June 4, and attacks on non-governmental religious activities and on the rights defense movement, causing tens of millions of deaths, and exacted a disastrous price on the people and the country.

Rhetorically, Charter 08 is not a petition. It is a demand. A Chinese academic remarked that, “My first impression of Charter 08 was that it is full of the scent of gun powder (火藥味) followed by bullets (or bullet points) out of a machine gun (衝鋒槍).” The provocative and antagonistic nature of the document must have been understood by the authors, so we assume that their real aim was never to persuade the Communist Party of the need to change. Instead, the two primary aims of the Charter must have been to gain an international

audience for their demands and to embarrass the Party. In the first of these they were successful. In the second, less so, as despite international protests, the government has imprisoned those it sees as the key players in the writing of Charter 08.

While, as we indicated earlier, the style here owes much to the Cultural Revolution, it is hard to see what language and rhetorical style a dissident in contemporary China can adopt. To recall Jullien's question from Chapter 1, "In the name of what, therefore, can the Chinese man of letters break free from the forces of power, affirm his positions, and thus speak openly?". Yet, Jullien also argues that "With such obliquity, dissidence is impossible" (137). But perhaps obliquity offers a possible rhetorical style for dissent. Would Charter 08 have been more persuasive had it been written in a traditional "bottom-up" *yin* style, as exemplified in the critical *baguwen* of Zhou Youguang which we illustrated in Chapter 4?

Charter 08 is commonly thought to have been inspired by Charter 77, the document published in January 1977 criticising the Czechoslovakian government (http://libpro.cts.cuni.cz/charta/docs/declaration_of_charter_77.pdf). One of its principal authors was Vaclav Havel, who, as is well-known, became the first President of the new Czech Republic. As Charter 08 was inspired by Charter 77, it is instructive to compare their rhetorical styles. While space forbids including all of Charter 77, we here provide some excerpts, along with a rhetorical analysis of the type we conducted on Charter 08. The opening paragraph of Charter 77 recounts the Czechoslovakian government's signing of pacts concerning rights. In this, it sets the frame within which the signatories of the Charter can argue for these rights to be upheld. This differs in style from Charter 08, where the opening paragraph records that China has "suffered a prolonged period of humans rights disasters and a tortuous struggle and resistance...." The opening paragraph of Charter 77 reads:

On 13.10.1976, there were published in the Codex of Laws of the CSSR/no. 120 an "International Pact on Civil and Political Rights" and an "International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," which had been signed on behalf of Czechoslovakia in 1968, confirmed at Helsinki in 1975 and which came into force in our country on 23.3.1976. Since that time our citizens have had the right and our state the duty to be guided by them.

The second and third paragraphs of Charter 77 provide further background and welcomes the government's signing of the pacts, but then points out the signing is "completely illusory."

The freedom and rights of the people guaranteed by these pacts are important factors of civilization for which, throughout history, many progressive forces have been striving and their enactment can be of great assistance to the humanistic development of our society. We therefore welcome the fact that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has expressed adherence to these pacts.

But their publication reminds us with new urgency how many fundamental civil rights for the time being are—unhappily—valid in our country only on paper. Completely illusory, for example, is the right to freedom of expression, guaranteed by article 19 of the first pact.

Contrast the comparatively measured tone here with the second paragraph of Charter 08, the first sentence of which reads:

“The monumental historic transformation in the mid-nineteenth century exposed the decay of the traditional Chinese despotic system and ushered in the most “unprecedented and cataclysmic change in several thousands of years” in all of China.”

Charter 08 then describes a series of reforms that were put in place during the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The failure of these and the “Party’s dominion” over the post 1949 “catastrophes” is clearly spelled out in the final section of paragraph 3.

The “New China” established in 1949 is a “people’s republic” in name only. In fact it is under the “Party’s dominion.” The ruling power monopolizes all the political, economic and social resources. It created a string of human rights catastrophes such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the Great Leap Forward, The Cultural Revolution, June 4, and attacks on non-governmental religious activities and on the rights defense movement, causing tens of millions of deaths and exacted a disastrous price on the people and the country.

The paragraphs following the opening three paragraphs of Charter 77 itemise areas where the pacts signed by the Czechoslovak government have been broken. However, the passive voice is used, and usually no agent is explicitly mentioned

(although of course it is implicitly understood that the government is the agent of these breaches of the pact and the “authorities and social organizations” are named as agents in one instance). Paragraph 4 of the charter provides a good example of this “agent-less passive” style.

Tens of thousands of citizens are not allowed to work in their own branches simply because they hold opinions which differ from official opinions. At the same time, they are frequently the object of the most varied forms of discrimination and persecution on the part of the authorities and social organizations; they are deprived of any possibility of defending themselves and are virtually becoming the victims of apartheid.

The direct agency of some part of the government is not mentioned again until paragraph 11, and even here it is the Ministry of the Interior which is named, not the government as a whole. The opening sentence of the paragraph reads:

Other civil rights, including the express banning of “arbitrary interference in private life, the family, home and correspondence” (artArt.17 of the first pact), are hazardously violated by the pact , too, that the Ministry of Interior by various means controls the life of its citizens, for example by the “bugging” of telephones and flats, control of posts, a watch on persons, the searching of homes, the creation of a network of informers from the ranks of the population (often recruited by impermissible threats or, on the contrary, promises), etc.

Agency is also attributed in paragraph 12.

In cases of politically motivated criminal proceedings, the investigating organs violate the rights of the accused and their defence counsels, guaranteed by Article 14 of the first pact and by Czechoslovak legislation.

The style then reverts to a measured description of a list of violations against the pacts, again using the agent-less passive. Then, however, in paragraph 15, the tone shifts and the active mood is employed. And in further stark contrast to the tone of Charter 08, the signatories indicate that they and “everyone of us has a share of the responsibility.” The paragraph reads:

Responsibility for the observances of civil rights in the country naturally falls, in the first place, on the political and state power. But not on it alone. Each and every one of us has a share of responsibility for the general situation and thus, too, for the observance of the pacts which have been enacted and are binding not only for the government but for all citizens.

Paragraph 16 continues with this notion of shared responsibility.

The feeling of co-responsibility, faith in the idea of civic involvement and the will to exercise it and the common need to seek new and more effective means for its expression led us to the idea of setting up CHARTER '77, the origin of which we are publicly announcing today.

The following paragraphs then further describe the origins and aims of the Charter, often in terms of what it is not. For example, "CHARTER '77 is not an organization, it has no statutes, no permanent organs and no organised membership."

The final paragraph concludes:

We believe that CHARTER '77 will contribute towards all citizens in Czechoslovakia working and living as free people.

Our argument here is simply that the rhetorical style and tone of Charter 77 is more measured and calm than its counterpart in Charter 08. Charter 77 describes, almost dispassionately, the violations of the pacts signed by the Czechoslovak government. The government itself is only rarely mentioned and then only specific organs of it (The Ministry of the Interior and "investigating organs"). Charter 77 also points out that the responsibility for observing human rights lies with the citizens as well as with the government. The tone of Charter 77 thus contrasts starkly with the far more authoritarian and imperial *yang* style of Charter 08.

Only time will tell whether Charter 08 will be successful in bringing about political change in China. But its adoption of a top-down rhetorical style and aggressive *yang* antagonistic tone will guarantee its official dismissal by the current regime. However, official dismissal does not necessarily mean that the political changes the Charter demanded will not be implemented at some time. After all, the People's Charter of nineteenth-century Britain was presented to the British parliament on three occasions (1836, 1842 and 1848). It was not supported

because its demands for universal suffrage and the abolition of the property requirement for politicians was seen as a threat to the status and privileges of the wealthy and propertied elite who made up the members of parliament at the time. However, all but the sixth of the demands made in the People's Charter have long since been implemented (Nash 10ff). The six demands of the People's Charter were:

The Six Points of the People's Charter

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT—to protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION from Members of Parliament—thus enabling the constituencies to return the man their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

It is worth stressing that, although the People's Charter did not adopt a "bottom-up" rhetorical style, it is also somewhat less imperious of tone than Charter 08. As we argue further below, only when the Chinese are able to

negotiate a reform of political and public discourse and rhetorical style which will allow the leaders and the governed to engage in critical, civic and constructive debate, will real political change be likely.

THE OPEN LETTER

The second text we analyse here is the 2010 open letter written by the mothers of those who died in Tiananmen. This letter carried 127 signatories with a further nineteen names added of those who had signed in the past, but had since themselves died. This is also taken from the Human Rights in China website and it is also their translation. We first provide the complete text and then discuss it. We have numbered the paragraphs for ease of reference when we discuss the text.

Please Show Courage, Break the Taboo, Face “June 4” Head on.

The Honorable Deputies of the Eleventh Session of the Second Plenary of the National People’s Congress and Committee Members of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference:

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the “June Fourth” Massacre.

(1) In the last century, on June 4, 1989, the Chinese authorities launched a massacre against peaceful demonstrators and civilians in the capital, seriously violating our country’s constitution and breaching their duty, as leaders of a sovereign state, to protect the people. This was an unconscionable atrocity that grew from a longstanding contempt for human rights and civil rights.

(2) Over this long stretch of time, government authorities deliberately played down “June Fourth,” forbade discussion among our people of “June Fourth,” and prohibited the media from touching on “June Fourth.” China has become like an airtight “iron chamber,” and all the demands of the people about “June Fourth,” all the anguish, lament, and moaning of the victims’ relatives and the wounded of “June Fourth,” have

been sealed off from this “iron chamber.” Today, as the deputies and committee members of these “Two Meetings” are stately seated in this assembly hall, can you hear the cry from “June Fourth”? Can you hear the painful sighs of the families of the victims of “June Fourth”? But now, the bloodstains of that time have long been washed away and the bullet marks rubbed out, and the site of the massacre is now decorated with exotic plants and flowers and has become a scene of peace and prosperity.

(3) But can all this conceal the sins of that time? Can it erase the sorrow of the relatives of the victims that deepens year after year?

(4) No! It absolutely cannot. The “June Fourth” massacre has long secured its place in history’s hall of shame. It absolutely cannot be diminished as a “political disturbance” or even a “serious political disturbance.” It was nothing short of an unconscionable atrocity. No amount of force can negate the bitter reality of the hundreds and thousands of lives snatched away by guns and tanks twenty years ago.

(5) Twenty years are not a short time; they are enough for a whole new generation to emerge. This new generation never experienced the bloodshed of that time, nor has it ever felt the desolate calm that settled on a killing field. It has passed; it seems that everything has passed. “Play not the songs of former dynasties; listen instead to the new tune of the ‘Willow Branch.’”¹⁹ In these twenty years, generations of our country’s leaders have succeeded the one before, from the second generation to the third, and then the fourth. You deputies and committee members of the “Two Meetings” have also changed from session to session. The passage of time and the shift of circumstances seem to have given the party and country leaders a kind of opportunity to minimise “June Fourth” and push it to a distant corner of history.

(6) Even so, China’s Tiananmen Mothers cannot consent. On the question of defining “June Fourth” we feel that we cannot afford to be the least bit vague. Whether to adhere to the initial interpretation or to change it, we must base it on facts and let

the truth do the talking. If Deng Xiaoping, then Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China, was wrong in “suppressing the counterrevolutionary rebellion,” then we must overturn it and correct it through established legal procedures and publicly announce it to the whole society, and should not explain it away with the vague term of “political disturbances.”

(7) The Tiananmen Mothers have always held one belief, and that is: act and speak according to the facts; accept no lies. From the start of our inquiry activities, we would repeatedly check and verify our data regarding the person of interest. As of now, not a single one of the 194 dead that we have examined had any history of violence. They are all among the innocent victims of that massacre. They gave their lives for the sake of justice and all we can do is return justice to them, to pursue the justice that comes late to them. Otherwise, we would not be able to face the spirit of the dead.

(8) Since 1995, our group of “June Fourth” victims and loved ones return here every year to write to the “Two Meetings” with three requests for officially acknowledging “June Fourth.” They are: start new investigations on the “June Fourth” incident, publicly announce death tolls, release a list of the names of the dead; clarify each case to the family members of the dead and compensate them according to law; investigate “June Fourth” cases to determine those responsible and punish them. To summarize, our three requests are: “Truth, Compensation, Responsibility.”

(9) We have always upheld the principles of peace and reason. We appeal to the two committees and government authorities to utilize the methods of democracy and open dialogue to come to a just resolution. Yet our requests have not been discussed in the “Two Meetings.”

(10) In 2006, we suggested the following in order to end the stalemate over “June Fourth” and ensure that the situation can develop along a steady path: use the principle of tackling the simpler problems first. The divisive issues that cannot be

resolved or agreed upon easily can be set aside temporarily. Instead, first solve the issues that involve the basic rights of the victims and their personal interests. These issues include: 1) remove all monitoring of and restrictions on the movements of “June Fourth” victims and their families; 2) allow families of the dead to openly mourn their loved ones; 3) stop intercepting and confiscating both domestic and international humanitarian aid contributions, and return all the aid money that was previously frozen; 4) relevant government departments should, in humanitarian spirit, help the victims who are facing hard times to find employment and guarantee them a basic livelihood, without any political conditions; 5) remove political biases against the disabled victims of “June Fourth” such that they are treated as all other disabled persons in regards to communal participation and treatment by society, etc.

(11) In 2008, we again proposed to the deputies of the “Two Meetings”: in the world today, dialogue has replaced confrontation. The Chinese government advocates using dialogue to resolve differences and conflicts on international issues. Thus we have an even stronger basis to ask that the government authorities resolve the internal differences and conflicts in the same way. If we are able to use dialogue to replace confrontation on the problem of “June Fourth,” it would benefit the whole country and be a blessing for all our people. The more dialogue we have, the more civility and law and order, and the less ignorance and tyranny. Dialogue does not lead society towards opposition and hatred, but rather, towards tolerance and reconciliation. Using dialogue to solve the problem of “June Fourth” is an imperative path toward societal reconciliation.

(12) Another year has passed now, yet we have heard nothing.

(13) We note that President Hu Jintao said the following in public not long ago: In determining every single policy, we start and end with whether the people endorse it or not, agree with it or not, are happy with it or not, and consent to it or not. We welcome these words. If this is so, then we suggest to the NPC and CPPCC: why not eliminate the taboo of “June Fourth”

and conduct a broad survey of the people's attitudes towards "June Fourth" countrywide, especially in Beijing, to find out what exactly the people endorse? What they agree with? What they are happy with? Consent to? We believe this should not be difficult to do.

(14) But the people of China know very well that the tragic case of "June Fourth" is an "ironclad case" created single-handedly by the second generation leader, Deng Xiaoping. As long as Deng Xiaoping enjoys any lingering prestige in our country from top to bottom and in future history, it would be an extremely formidable task to overturn the conclusion that has "already been decided on by the Party and government," and to discard the new "Whatever" policy.²⁰ Even if "suppressing the counterrevolutionary rebellion" is relabelled as a "serious political disturbance," the judgment, in essence, still has not changed.

(15) This then will require each deputy to demonstrate extraordinary courage and resourcefulness, political courage and wisdom, to break the taboo and face head-on the unspeakable tragedy that took place twenty years ago and resolve "June Fourth" with the truth. If this should happen, you will have brought a great blessing upon our people and your achievement will go down in history.

This is an open letter written to the deputies of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the committee members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). These are annual meetings held in Beijing and which run concurrently. They are often referred to as "Two Meetings," as is the case at one point in the letter. The adjective in the address term for the deputies and committee members is "honorable" (*zunjing* 尊敬) and is the standard polite term. This is the last iota of respect and the only nod towards *captatio benivolentiae* or facework that is shown in this letter. The two opening paragraphs use extremely forceful language to set out what the authors of the letter believe to be the true interpretation of what happened on June 4, 1989 and the authorities' role in it. The opening line presents as indisputable fact that the "Chinese authorities launched a massacre (*tusha* 屠杀) against peaceful demonstrators and civilians in the capital, seriously violating our country's constitution...." This action is then described as an "unconscionable atrocity"

(*buzhebukou-de fan rendao baoxing* 不折不扣的反人道暴行), which was caused by “a longstanding contempt of human rights and civil rights.” This gives the opening paragraph a highly confrontational tone, even though the authors later claim (paragraph 11), rather curiously given the circumstances, that “in the world today, dialogue has replaced confrontation.” The term “massacre” is used five times in the letter, including in the frame-setting opening line. Needless to say, this is not the term favoured by the official authorities, who prefer a range of far more neutral descriptions such as “incident” (*shijian* 事件), or “political disturbance” (*zhengzhi fengbo* 政治风波).

Throughout the opening two paragraphs, the Chinese authorities are in subject/actor position. They “launched a massacre....seriously violating....breaching their duty”, “deliberately played down June 4th”, “forbade discussion”, and “prohibited the media”. In contrast the demonstrators are described as “peaceful”, “victims”, and “innocent victims”.

The tone that the letter writers’ position is the indisputable truth is further underlined by their “one belief, and that is: act and speak according to the facts; accept no lies” (paragraph 7). While “they” (the authorities) have “forbade discussion,” etc., “we” (the authors) “have always upheld the principles of peace and reason” (paragraph 9). As was noted with the use of pronouns in Charter 08, this use of pronouns is also adversarial here. Simply speaking, “they” are all bad, “we” are all good.

In paragraph 6, the authors also directly challenge the authority and interpretation of Deng Xiaoping, the “paramount” leader at the time, saying that if he was wrong in suppressing “the counterrevolutionary rebellion, then we must overturn it and correct it.”²¹ This challenge to Deng Xiaoping’s interpretation is repeated in paragraph 14, where they also appear to recognise that to overturn his interpretation would be “an extremely formidable task.”

The direct and forthright condemnation of the authorities is followed by the first mention of the request (paragraph 8). The authors recall that, since 1995, they have written every year “with three requests,” which they then list. The authors then summarise the three requests as: “truth, compensation, responsibility”.

From paragraph 9, the tone of the letter changes appreciably, as the authors say that “we have always upheld the principles of peace and reason.” In paragraph 10, the authors repeat a suggestion they made in an earlier letter for adopting the principle of “tackling the simpler problems first,” and they call for the use of dialogue as “[t]he Chinese government advocates using dialogue to resolve differences and conflicts on international issues” (paragraph 11). Paragraph 11 also contains a general plea for the use of dialogue as this “would benefit the whole country and be a blessing for all our people.”

The authors also attempt to buttress their argument by referencing authority when they cite President Hu on the importance of pleasing the people and then suggest that the President's advice be followed in the investigation of June 4th. They conclude paragraph 13 with the sentence, "We believe this should not be difficult to do." This is somewhat contradicted, however, by the reference to Deng Xiaoping in the next paragraph and the description of "June 4th" as an "ironclad case."

The final paragraph attempts to persuade the deputies and committee members to call for a new investigation by appealing to their "courage and resourcefulness" and indicating that, were they to proceed, "you will have brought a great blessing upon our people and your achievement will do go down in history." It should be noted that the "you" is not in the original Chinese. Rather, the final paragraph begins "This will require each deputy to..." In phrasing the final paragraph in this way and emphasising "each of the deputies," the authors are attempting to distinguish between the "authorities" and the "Chinese government" from the individual deputies attending the "two meetings." As such, they are acknowledging that the real power still lies in the hands of a very small elite, and consequently that the likelihood of their requests being granted—or even discussed—remain miniscule.

The authors' realisation that their case is, in effect, hopeless, may explain the adversarial and confrontational tenor of the opening paragraphs in which they baldly state that the authorities are responsible for a "massacre" and for committing an "unconscionable atrocity."

As with the case of Charter 08, these Chinese citizens clearly feel a sense of hopelessness when it comes to finding a way of conducting civilised and constructive discussions with the Chinese government. There simply is no agreed form of public discourse or rhetoric which would allow such debate. The realisation of this is what gives the following excerpt from paragraph 11 of the Open Letter such poignancy:

If we are able to use dialogue to replace confrontation on the problem of "June Fourth," it would benefit the whole country and be a blessing for all our people. The more dialogue we have, the more civility and law and order, and the less ignorance and tyranny. Dialogue does not lead society towards opposition and hatred, but rather, towards tolerance and reconciliation.

Sadly, there remains little chance of this.

In this chapter we have discussed political writing in modern Chinese, using examples from Mao's writing and more recent dissident writing. We showed that,

although Mao's writing was influenced by European translations in that he wrote long sentences he also retained the traditional sequencing pattern of because-therefore or frame to main. We also showed that an unfortunate influence Mao's more confrontational style is that it has been adopted for contemporary political writing, as evidenced by the rhetorical style adopted by dissident groups. We consider the possible implications of this in the final chapter but, in the next chapter, we return to academic writing and consider the advice given in recent and contemporary composition textbooks to Chinese writers.