

**The Photo Network:
Visual Communication in the Media
of the People's Republic of China,
1942—1981**

Dissertation

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Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.”

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology: Parts I & III*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1939 (manuscript 1845-46).

1 Introduction

When Marx and Engels formulated the above-quoted analogy between ideology and the images produced by a camera obscura in the 1840s, the process invented by Louis Daguerre to permanently record and fix the images created by the camera obscura had already been public knowledge for some years.¹

Like the writings of Marx and Engels, different photographic processes would soon find their way to China to be used there, though it would take nearly a century – until the 1930s – for Chinese photographers to develop a concept of photography which integrated ideology with photographic practice.

Just like Marx and Engels had grounded ideology – “conceptions, ideas, etc.” – in underlying productive forces and social intercourse, said concept of photography, developed by Chinese photographers like Sha Fei 沙飞 (1912—1950), emerged as an answer to the national crisis of China, which suffered from widespread poverty, political unrest and the Japanese aggression against and eventual invasion of China.

¹ Louis Daguerre gifted his “Daguerreotype”-process to the French government, which publicized it to the world on August 19, 1839, allowing anyone to photographically preserve the images created by a camera (obscura). Naturally, the physical principle of the camera obscura had been public knowledge for much longer.

The answer which Sha Fei and other photographers came up with was *xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 – “news photography”²: A concept of photography which centered on the duty of the photographers to “awaken” their compatriots to the national crisis, in order to strengthen the national salvation movement (*jiuwang yundong* 救亡运动) and restore freedom to China. During the Anti-Japanese War, which is the term used in China for the East Asian theater of the Second World War, and the following Chinese Civil War, the photographers practicing “news photography” linked up with the Chinese Communist Party and were integrated into its emerging propaganda system, in the process creating dedicated institutions and organizations like illustrated magazines to support the creation of “wartime news photography” (*zhanshi xinwen sheying* 战时新闻摄影). The first illustrated magazine – as a dedicated publication channel for photographs – under direct CCP administration was the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jin-Cha-Ji huabao* 晋察冀画报), which was first published in 1942.

After “liberation”, as the victory of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War (1945—49) was from then on called in China, the photographers who had been integrated into the CCP-administration during the war occupied the leading positions in the emerging system of an illustrated press, making sure that their tried and tested news photography came to be the standard for photography after the foundation of the PRC in 1949.

Like news photography had emerged as a response to specific conditions, the photographer cadres of the People’s Republic of China set out to create institutions which would ensure the conditions would be favorable for news photography to be the dominant form of photography produced in the PRC. This agglomeration of institutions is described as the “photo network” (*sheying wang* 摄影网) in this study. It encompassed numerous illustrated magazines, newspapers, vocational magazines, Xinhua News Agency’s department of photography, the Photography Association, different exhibition formats, different publishing companies etc. and even institutes of journalism at universities.

The photo network, which was centered on Xinhua News Agency’s department of news photography (*Xinhua tongxunshe xinwen sheying bu* 新华通讯社新闻摄影部) connected all institutions which used photography to distribute visual communication to a larger (if not to say mass) audience, and in theory, the only form of photography allowed to circulate and be distributed through this network was news photography.

² Instead of the more common translation “photojournalism”, the author of this study opts to translate *xinwen sheying* as the somewhat clumsy-sounding “news photography”, in order to avoid the connotations which invariably cling to the western conception of the term “photojournalism” (i.e. timeliness, objectivity, etc.).

Again, the work environment of the photographers connected by the photo network shaped the form of photography that could be published in China between 1949 and 1981. This photo network, and the (news) photography created within it, are the principal objects of this study, which hopes to reveal how the conditions under which Chinese photography was created determined the form and content of the photos made by Chinese photographers. The study is consequently – in addition to a prologue on wartime China – divided into two major parts: One part on the emergence and development of the Chinese photo network, i.e. its organizational history from 1949 to 1961, and another on the products of the network, i.e. photos created and distributed within the network between 1949 and 1981.

1.1 The Photo Network

The photo network itself is analyzed in the period between 1949 and 1961. During these years, the photo network witnessed considerable growth and integration of institutions in the boom years following the foundation of the PRC, reached its largest extend and highest level of complexity under the economic policy of the “Great Leap Forward” around 1959, and was eventually reduced to a centrally controlled core after the disastrous failure of the “Great Leap” in 1961. Up to the 1980s, the network would not change its way of operation in any fundamental way. While the network did see fights between rival political factions during the “Cultural Revolution” and eventually even the takeover of all media institutions by the military, the underlying institutional structure did not change during that time. Detailed structural analysis of the network in this study thus ends with the state reached by the network in 1961.

The concept of a network of photography – describing how photos and their creators were linked by organizational and biographical connections – was chosen by the author in response to the studies so far published on Chinese photography, which by and large concentrated on narrow topics within photography, without giving due room to the production background of photographic creation. Furthermore, the concept of a photo network is already appearing in the sources used for this study, wherein leading cadres discussed the creation of institutions to connect photographers and enable inter-organizational exchange of work experience etc.

As a case in point, the People's Liberation Army's first vocational magazine on photography was titled *Sheying wang* 摄影网, meaning *Photo Network*.³ In order to obtain information on the photo network, the photographers and picture editors active within it, as well as the operation procedures followed by them, a large number of sources was used:

First and foremost, vocational magazines published within the photo network preserve a plethora of discussions among photographers, (political) campaigns to direct the work of photographers, information on operation procedures etc. These magazines are introduced in detail in section 3.4, a large number of them was surveyed and digitized (i.e. photographed) by the author of this study, in total adding up to about 15.000 pages of vocational magazines.

Furthermore, Chinese compilations of CCP directives on propaganda, as well as historical documents on the operations of Xinhua News Agency provide very specific information on organizational structures within the photo network at specific points in time.⁴

Two dictionaries on Chinese photographers, published in the 1980s, provide a wealth of very specific and very detailed information on Chinese photographers' biographies, though the information is naturally fractured and broken down to the level of individual actors. Unfortunately, political bias in the creation of these dictionaries is evident from many photographers' biographies, which largely omit references to the photographers' activities during the contentious "Cultural Revolution" or leave out photographers persecuted as "rightists".⁵

Textbooks on photography, discussed in section 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 also provided valuable information on how photography could be conceptualized at specific points in time, with especially the example of the numerous revised editions of Lin Zecang's 林泽苍 *Photographic Essentials* (*Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知) providing traces of an informal discourse between Lin and the CCP authorities on permissible forms of photography.

³ Compare section 3.1 of this study.

⁴ These are: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP], 4 vols., Beijing: Xuexi CBS.

Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols.

⁵ Chen Zhi'an 陈之安; Ding Wenfang 丁文方 (eds.) (1985): *Zhongguo sheyingjia cidian* 中国摄影家辞典 [Dictionary of Chinese Photographers], Jinan: Shandong daxue CBS.

Yu Baoping 于保平 (ed.) (1989): *Zhongguo sheyingjia dacidian* 中国摄影家大辞典 [Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Photographers], Jinan: Zhongguo.Huanghe CBS.

These sources were surveyed and the fractured information was connected, in order to arrive at the first systematic exposition of the operations of the Chinese illustrated media, i.e. the photo network during the early PRC and the time of the “Great Leap Forward”

As is shown in this study, the photo network cannot be assumed to have been a homogenous, unchanging institution: The specific arrangement of the institutions which formed the network changed considerably during the period under scrutiny. And even though the veteran-photographers of the war against Japan continued to occupy almost all positions of influence in the network, the manpower requirements of the growing photo network necessitated inclusion of the “old photographers” – i.e. photographers who had been educated before the war, or even directly by the CCP’s enemy Guomindang – which introduced differing opinions on how photographs should be created into the photo network.

Therefore, to ensure that all photographers within the network followed the same concept of photography, institutions like the Photography Association were created to handle the education of photographers within the network according to the needs of the party. For this purpose as well, large scale campaigns like the promotion of the “Soviet model” of photography (about 1953—1956), the “Hundred Flowers” (1956—57) and the rectification campaign against “rightist elements” (1957 and onward), were carried out in the network with the aim to establish one “correct” form of photography to be practiced in the photo network: news photography.

1.2 Photography as Visual Communication within the Photo Network

The second part of this study takes into focus the photos produced and published through the photo network between 1949 and 1981, which is between the foundation of the PRC and the abandonment of class-struggle based, “revolutionary” Maoist policies by the CCP in 1981. These photos are analyzed as a form of visual communication, which employed specific forms in order to transmit meaning to the recipients of the photo network’s products. The method used for the analysis of these images is the art historian’s method of Iconography.⁶

⁶ Büttner, Frank; Gottdang, Andrea (2006): *Einführung in die Ikonografie: Wege zur Deutung von Bildinhalten*, München: C.H. Beck.

Since the PRC was undergoing the post-civil-war transformation to a plan-based, socialist economy during the period under scrutiny, even news photos would be produced according to 3-month reportage plans (*baodao jihua* 报道计划), perhaps explaining the absence of spontaneity and rigidity of forms within “news photography” at the time, which is commonly also attributed to propaganda photography.

In order to gather sufficient photographs for a study of the forms used in Chinese photography of the time, the two most important illustrated magazines with national reach – *People’s Illustrated* and *People’s Liberation Army Illustrated* – were digitized by the author, as was *News Photos*, Xinhua News Agency’s daily catalogue of news photos, from which lesser organizational centers of the photo network could select and order photos for their own use and further distribution. These added up to about 60,000 pages digitized and surveyed by the author. Additionally, the catalogues for the National Photographic Art Exhibitions published during the period under scrutiny were acquired by the author – as well as numerous photo books and other Chinese publications on photography – ensuring that a dependable cross-section of photos circulating in the photo network forms the base of this analysis.

A virtually unlimited number of topics were transformed into visual communication through the photo network, necessitating a choice by the author of which topic to pursue in detail. The depiction of the country’s and CCP’s leaders was selected for this purpose, since the politically highly sensitive depiction of the leadership can be assumed to have received special attention by the photographers and editors employed in the network.

The hypothesis for the analysis of the visual communication within the photo network was that the basic program controlling all aspects of the network’s operation would transform political power into visibility (in the products of the network). The hypothesis is tested for a number of case studies, ranging from Mao as a symbol for the CCP and state, a standardized depiction of power, non-administrational visibility, the negation of visibility, power based on the imitation of certain forms of visibility and finally the reversal of the basic program resulting in invisible power and visible powerlessness.

As with the organizational or structural history of the network itself, during the period under scrutiny in this part (1949—1981), the forms used for the visual expression of power varied considerably, putting into doubt the common perception of Chinese state administrated photography as a mass of uniform material, which furthermore did not reflect “reality”.

On the contrary, the variance of forms observable in the products of the photo network shows that Chinese propaganda photography, i.e. news photography, did indeed closely reflect the reality of its production in a very precise way, for those who understood and understand how to read it.

1.3 Previous Scholarship on the Photo Network and Chinese Photography

Literally hundreds of studies have been written on Chinese photography and visual culture, respectively Chinese visual history. The numbers get even larger if we include the wider spheres of the historiography of Chinese art of the 20th-century or even the colourful topic of Chinese propaganda. Still, no studies have yet been written on the Chinese photographic illustrated press as a network of photography, necessitating the author of this study to by and large rely on primary sources in the writing of this study.

Nevertheless, some exemplary works of scholarship which influenced the author's outlook in this study will be presented in the following section. These are divided into Western and Chinese studies:

1.3.1 Western Scholarship

Even though analyzing mostly textual materials, Daniel Leese's 2011 study of the Mao cult opened up new perspectives on Chinese propaganda, taking the "hows" and "whys" of the emergence of propagandistic forms into focus,⁷ which greatly inspired this study.

While in recent editions, Rosenblum's and Stoll's *world history of photography* does add photography from what was formerly called "third world" countries such as China, until fairly recently, Chinese photography as a whole was woefully underrepresented in the western historiography of photography.⁸

⁷ Leese, Daniel (2011): *Mao cult: Rhetoric and ritual in the Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge: University Press.

⁸ Rosenblum, Naomi; Stoll, Diana (2019): *A world history of photography*, 5th ed., New York: Abbeville Press.

The first full-featured history of Chinese photography was published by Claire Roberts in 2013, though her – admittedly groundbreaking and thorough – approach of highlighting single, outstanding photographs produced between 1844 and 2010 does not provide the reader with a deeper, systematic understanding of the factors determining the photos creation.⁹

In recent years, a number of volumes on the visual history of China have been published,¹⁰ which contain studies discussing some of the topics touched upon in this study as well. Of note is Mathew D. Johnson's 2014 "Cinema and Propaganda during the Great Leap Forward",¹¹ in which Johnson analyzes an "exhibition network" (*fangying wang*) for movie display in rural areas, which in many aspects parallels the "photo network" described in this study. Pang Laikwan's 2012 study on "The Dialectics of Mao's Images: Monumentalism, Circulation and Power Effects" takes the production of visual propaganda art featuring Mao Zedong into focus, but omits photographs.¹² In the same volume, Stefan Landsberger calls for scholars to establish "the credentials of Chinese propaganda posters as reliable sources"¹³, which he himself attempts to do in his study. Landsberger provides a valuable model of taking the producers of propaganda into focus.

Even Sha Fei – identified as one of the photographers who established an ideological photography in China in this study – has already become an object of study in Shana J. Brown's 2012 "Sha Fei, the *Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial*, and the Documentary Style of Chinese Wartime Photojournalism",¹⁴ though her conclusion to identify Sha Fei as firstly a documentary photographer, whose "images were likely captioned and utilized freely by party propagandists as suited their purposes, and Sha Fei might not have been personally responsible for any errors."¹⁵ is not supported by the results of this study.

⁹ Roberts, Claire (2013): *Photography and China*, London: Reaktion Books.

¹⁰ E.g. Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.) (2012): *History in images: Pictures and public space in modern China*, Berkeley: University of California.; Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.)

(2012): *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still images in Historical Narratives*, Leiden: Brill.;

Cook, James A. et al. (eds.) (2014): *Visualizing modern China: Image, history, and memory, 1750-present*, Lanham: Lexington Books.

¹¹ In: Cook 2014, pp. 219-239.

¹² Pang, Laikwan (2012): "The Dialectics of Mao's Images: Monumentalism, Circulation and Power Effects", in: Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.) (2012): *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still images in Historical Narratives*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 407-435.

¹³ Landsberger, Stefan (2012): "Contextualising (Propaganda) Posters", in: Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.) (2012): *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still images in Historical Narratives*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 379-405. p. 400.

¹⁴ Brown, Shana J. (2012): "Sha Fei, the *Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial*, and the Documentary Style of Chinese Wartime Photojournalism", in: Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.) (2012): *History in images: Pictures and public space in modern China*, Berkeley: University of California, pp. 55-80.

¹⁵ Brown 2012, p. 80.

Furthermore, Brown's supposition of a "romantic documentary style of the wartime era"¹⁶ being discernible from later, post-war propaganda, disagrees with the findings of this study, which has post-war photographic practices originate precisely in the ideas arrived at during wartime. As a case in point, writings by Sha Fei and his colleagues containing the "Yan'an spirit" of art being subservient to politics i.e. the CCP, predate the actual formulation of the "Yan'an spirit" by Mao Zedong a full three years, as is shown in section 2.6.

Another remarkable study is Wu Hung's 2016 *Zooming in. Histories of Photography in China*,¹⁷ which tackles a wide range of topics, including the genesis of Mao Zedong's standard portraits and manipulation of photographs within the photo network.

Finally, straddling the border of Western and Chinese scholarship on photography, Li Zhensheng's 2003 illustrated autobiography of his life as a newspaper-photographer in the province of Heilongjiang in the years up to and during the "Great Cultural Revolution" provides many unique insights into the social life of a press photographer in Maoist China, as well as photographic evidence of visual practices during that time.¹⁸

1.3.2 Chinese Scholarship

Chinese scholarship on all aspects of the history of photography in China is plentiful, and the attention to detail as well as access to sources of the Chinese photography historians is remarkable. However, in almost all cases careful readings are necessary, since only few of the studies conform to academic standards. Reasons for this are chiefly the fact that the Chinese historians are forced to operate in a publishing environment still controlled by the CCP, which makes adherence to certain "truths" unavoidable, no matter if these reflect the historical reality or not. This applies even more so for a topic as close to politics as mass media photography, which precludes any work as unrestrained as Li Zhensheng's 2003 autobiography from having a chance to be published in China.

Still, further problems to research are posed by former cadres of the photo network, who are enjoying a second career as writers of photographic history. While they enjoyed unique insights, naturally their recollections of past events need to be taken with a grain of salt. One example of this would be Chen Changqian's 1996 *History of Contemporary Chinese*

¹⁶ Brown 2012, p. 79.

¹⁷ Wu Hung (2016): *Zooming in. Histories of Photography in China*, London: Reaktion Books.

¹⁸ Li Zhensheng (et al.) (2003): *Red-color news soldier: A Chinese photographer's odyssey through the cultural revolution*, New York: Phaidon.

Photographic Art, 1949—1989.¹⁹ Chen, former editor of the vocational magazine *Chinese Photography* also features prominently in section 3.9 of this study, where the establishment of full CCP control over photography in the late 1950s is discussed. Other writers of photographic history are the sons and grandsons of prominent actors of the period under scrutiny in this study, which presents almost the same problem.

Nevertheless, studies that need to be pointed out as very helpful for this study, and which are commendable for their quality and depth are Chen Shen's and Xu Xijing's 2011 *History of Chinese Photography*,²⁰ and Gu Di's 2009 *Historical Records of Chinese Revolutionary Photography* in two volumes.²¹ Especially insightful is also Zhao Junyi's 2013 *Collected Pearls from the History of Chinese Photography*,²² which does not attempt to provide a continuously narrated history, but nevertheless throws spotlights on numerous remarkable pictures and historical incidents within the wider history of Chinese photography.

1.4 Scholarly and Technical Remarks

All Chinese texts quoted in the following study were translated by the author, unless noted otherwise in the footnotes. Even though many, if not most of the primary sources used (i.e. the vocational magazines) were published before the reform of the Chinese writing system in the late 1950s, in order to unify the typeface of this study, all Chinese words and expressions are written in their simplified forms.

Romanization of Chinese terms follows the system of *Hanyu Pinyin* used in the PRC, only where names in older romanization schemes have entered common use (e.g. Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Hong Kong) the old forms are used in this study as well.

Even though this analysis of Chinese photography in the time from 1942 to 1981 as a network of photography is exhaustive and thorough, it must nevertheless not be forgotten that the photo network did not exist in a vacuum, but was embedded and integrated into the wider Chinese society of the time.

¹⁹ Chen Changqian 陈昌谦 (ed.) (1996): *Dangdai Zhongguo sheying yishu shi, 1949-1989* 当代中国摄影艺术史 [History of Contemporary Chinese Photographic Art], Beijing: Zhongguo sheying CBS.

²⁰ Chen Shen 陈申; Xu Xijing 徐希景 (2011): *Zhongguo sheying yishu shi* 中国摄影艺术史 [A History of Chinese Photography], Beijing: Sheng huo, du shu, xin zhi sanlian shudian.

²¹ Gu Di 顾棣 (2009): *Zhongguo hongse sheying shilu* 中国红色摄影史录 [Historical Records of Chinese Revolutionary Photography], 2 vols., Shanxi: Shanxi Renmin CBS. Gu was one of the photographers originally trained by Sha Fei himself.

²² Zhao Junyi 赵俊毅 (2013): *Zhongguo sheying shi shizhu* 中国摄影史拾珠 [Collected Pearls from the History of Chinese Photography], Beijing: Zhongguo minzu sheying yishu CBS.

Therefore, all of the influences on Chinese photography, for example the war, promotion of the “Soviet model”, integration of “old photographers”, the “Great Leap Forward”, the “anti-rightist” campaign, the political upheaval of the “Cultural Revolution” etc. etc. all took place across the whole of mainland China during the period under scrutiny. The effect of the network appearing to exist on its own results from the perspective of the analysis chosen for this study, which in defining its object has to cut many strands connecting the photo network to the wider fabric of society, as happens with a thinly sliced histological specimen under the microscope.

Nonetheless – and same as with the histological specimen – the concentration on just the photo network allows to systematically take details into focus, which would all too easily get lost in studies with a wider focus.

In order to encourage and enable further studies of Chinese (news) photography by other researchers, a list of illustrated magazines published in China between 1945 and 1980, which formed the principal distribution channels of photography, is given in the appendix of this study.

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2 Prologue

To understand the historical development of photography in the People's Republic of China (PRC), it naturally does not suffice to begin the analysis with the foundation of the PRC in 1949. The photographers active in the “New China” had not only already organized photographic publishing activities in the field during the Anti-Japanese War (i.e. the Japanese invasion of China, 1937—45) as well as in the subsequent Chinese Civil War (1945—49), but for most of them, their careers and photographic education had already taken place before the war, in the Republic of China (1911—1949).

As was the case with other media like newspapers and the film industry, Shanghai played an important part in the development of photography and its use in the illustrated press in China, because its situation as a treaty port ensured an influx of foreign technological know-how as well as the financial means necessary to develop it. Under the social conditions of port cities like Shanghai, a new stratum of urban, western-educated Chinese “petty-intellectuals”²³ began to appear, which the photographers discussed in this chapter naturally also belonged to. They had been trained in the cities and found employment and sometimes even fame there, through the exhibition and publication of their works.

Following the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, some of these photographers formed the core personnel responsible for carrying out photographic activities in the communist-controlled areas of China, like the Jin-Cha-Ji base area (*Jin-Cha-Ji genjudi* 晋察冀根据地, in northeastern China near Beijing) and the Shan-Gan-Ning border area (*Shan-Gan-Ning bianqu* 陕甘宁边区, with its capital Yan'an, located in northwestern China). They also established structures for the training of new photographers and later on – owing to their experience and longstanding connections to the communist leadership – occupied the central positions in the emerging media system of the PRC, which included the photo network.

²³ Compare Culp, Robert (2019): *The Power of Print in Modern China. Intellectuals and Industrial Publishing from the End of Empire to Maoist State Socialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 60ff.

Two examples of these progenitors with an especially strong influence on the development of photography in the PRC are Sha Fei 沙飞 (1912—1950) and Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1900—1994). Through an analysis of their whereabouts before and during the war it becomes possible to understand which factors influenced their conception of photography, and how they in turn influenced their younger colleagues and successors, laying the ground for the dominant – or mainstream – conception of photography to emerge in the PRC after the communist victory in the civil war.

Even though Wu Yinxian would live on to enjoy four more productive decades afterwards, this chapter will end in 1950 with the death of Sha Fei, which all but marked the end of Chinese wartime-photography.

Because this chapter is intended as a prologue to provide the reader with the historical background of the photo network emerging in the post-war PRC, it will only roughly outline the developments between 1937 and 1949, by introducing some key actors and texts on communist photography of that time.²⁴

2.1 Sha Fei

Sha Fei 沙飞 was born in 1912 in the city of Kaiping 开平 in the province of Guangdong under the name Situ Chuan 司徒传. At only 14 years of age he took part in the 1926 Northern Expedition of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army of the Guomindang government as a radio operator. From 1932 onwards, he worked as a radio technician at the radio station of the city of Shantou 汕头 in the province of Guangdong.²⁵

As a personal answer to the national crisis in the face of Japanese aggression against the Republic of China, which manifested itself in military clashes like the Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931 or the Shanghai Incident from January to May 1932, Situ Chuan decided to become a writer. He found role models in Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881—1936), Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896—1981) and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892—1978), who each had already made the national crisis a prominent part of their work.²⁶

²⁴ More extensive studies on this period have been published in China in recent years. Remarkably thorough is Gu 2009.

²⁵ Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 264-265.

²⁶ Jiang Qisheng 蒋齐生 (1981): “Sha Fei – Kaichuang Zhongguo renmin geming sheying shiye de sheying gemingjia 沙飞—开创中国人民革命摄影事业的摄影革命家 [Sha Fei – Photographer-Revolutionary and Founder of the Chinese People's Revolutionary Photographic Undertaking]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1981, no.3, pp. 18-20.

Shortly after taking up his job in Shantou, his interest in photography began to develop after he bought a camera on the occasion of his honeymoon in 1933. Besides photos documenting his honeymoon voyage, which are the earliest surviving photos taken by him, he soon got interested in landscapes and still lifes – classic subjects of artistic or amateur photography. Not long after, he began to take photos of mundane street scenes and everyday life.

2.2 The Black and White Photo Society

In June 1935, Situ Chuan joined an association of Shanghai photographers, the Black and White Photo Society (*Heibai yingshe* 黑白影社), and was allowed to exhibit some of his photos in the third and fourth exhibitions organized by the group in 1935 and 1936.²⁷

Founded in the beginning of 1930 by the six photographers Chen Chuanlin 陈传霖 (1901—1978), Lin Zecang 林泽苍 (1903—1961), Lin Xuehuai 林雪怀, Nie Guangdi 聂光地 (1907—1977), Cao Yunfu 曹云甫, Lin Yunsheng 林云声 und Yu Tangyong 余堂庸, the group grew rapidly in the coming years. At the outbreak of war in 1937, the members of the group already numbered 168, including both amateurs like Situ Chuan, as well as renowned professionals like Wu Yinxian. This made the Black and White Photo Society not only the largest assembly of photographers in pre-war China, it was also the first association of photographers with a national reach, since its members lived not only in Shanghai, but like Situ Chuan were coming from different places all over the country. During the eight years of its existence (1930-1937), the members of the group organized four large-scale photo exhibitions, for which three catalogues were published.²⁸

²⁷ Li Mei 李媚; Ruan Yizhong 阮义忠 (eds.) (2002): *Sha Fei* 沙飞, Beijing: Zhongguo gongren CBS (Zhongguo sheyingjia congshu), [page numbers not printed].

²⁸ Wang Tianping 王天平; Ding Binxuan 丁彬萱 (2012): *Shanghai sheying shi* 上海摄影史 [The History of Photography in Shanghai], Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu CBS, pp. 23-24.



Figure 1: Jin Shisheng 金石声 (1937): “Photo exhibition of the Black & White Photo Society, Shanghai 1937”, in: Jin Hua 金华 (2017): Chenji. Jin Shisheng yu xiandai Zhongguo sheying 陈迹.金石声与现代中国摄影 [Relics. Jin Shisheng and modern Chinese Photography], Shanghai: Tongji daxue CBS. p. 50.

Differing from other contemporary and preceding assemblies of photographers like the Chinese Association of Photography (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中国摄影学会), founded in Shanghai in 1925 and the Chinese Photography Study Group (*Zhonghua sheying xueshe* 中华摄影学社), also founded in Shanghai in 1928, the Black and White Photo Society allowed members to exhibit photos with a comparatively wide stylistic and subject range. Besides the landscapes, still lifes, flowers and birds, portraits, photos of architecture and nudes which were considered artistic photography at the time, the exhibitions of the Black and White Photo Society also showed scenes of the life of working people and the urban poor, with the aim of reflecting on the underlying social conditions. These photos could thus perhaps be classified as documentary photography.²⁹

In line with this outlook, membership in the Black and White Photo Society was not restricted to professional photographers, but was open to amateurs like Situ Chuan which offered them the opportunity to exchange both knowledge and opinions with a large circle of likeminded photographers. While no sources corroborate this connection, the establishment of a casual acquaintance between Situ Chuan and Wu Yinxian already at this point is a distinct possibility.

²⁹ Ibid.

2.3 Sha Fei's Breakthrough as a Photojournalist

In September 1936, Situ Chuan enrolled at the Shanghai Professional Art School (*Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao* 上海美术专科学校), founded by the painter Liu Haisu 刘海粟 (1896—1994). He did not stay for long though, because only about a month later he would make his breakthrough as a photojournalist, when his 20-photo series of the famous writer Lu Xun's funeral in October – “Commemorating Mister Lu Xun” (*Jinian Lu Xun xiansheng* 纪念鲁迅先生) – was printed by several important newspapers and illustrated magazines.³⁰ It was also on this occasion that he adopted the name Sha Fei – meaning “Sand flying” – which he explained with his wish to “drift around the sky of the motherland like a tiny grain of sand.”³¹

Not long before, Sha Fei had encountered Lu Xun at the second national woodcut exhibition on October 8, 1936 and used the chance to take what was to become one of if not the most famous photo of the renowned writer: “Lu Xun with the young woodcut artists” (*Lu Xun yu qingnian mukejia zuotan* 鲁迅与青年木刻家座谈), given in figure 2.

³⁰ Among others, the photos were printed in the publications *Shenghuo xingqikan* 生活星期刊, *Liangyou* 良友, *Zhongliu* 中流 and *Zhonghua tuhua zazhi* 中华图画杂志. Compare: Jin Yan 金岩; Gao Yaxiong 高亚雄; Chen Xifang 陈熙方 (eds.) (1986): *Sha Fei sheyingji* 沙飞摄影集 [Collected Photographs of Sha Fei], Shenyang: Liaoning meishu CBS. p. 37.

³¹ Jin 1986, p 5.



Figure 2: Sha Fei 沙飞 (1936): “Lu Xun and the young woodcut artists”, in: Jin 1986, pp. 12-13.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in light of Lu Xun’s significance for Chinese literature and culture of the 20th century, most biographers of Sha Fei lay particular emphasis on the importance of his encounter with Lu Xun, which allows to neatly connect the history of the PRC’s press corps (and Chinese photography) with one of Republican China’s most outstanding intellectuals and important protagonists of the May 4th Movement. One biographer even went as far as to declare that when he was executed, Sha Fei carried the photo of Lu Xun, which he had taken 14 years before, in his pocket.³²

How close the contact between the young photographer and the writer had been after all remains difficult to fathom. In a short report on the woodcut exhibition, published in October 1936, the organization of which he apparently also took part in, Sha Fei mentioned some participants by name and described their interaction with Lu Xun. However, he did not mention any contact between the writer and himself at all:

³² Li 2002, [page numbers not printed].

[...] on the third and final day [of the exhibition], October 8, I went to lunch at 12:30h. When I came back into the assembly hall, to my surprise mister Lu Xun was already there. He had not yet recovered from his illness in summer and was quite thin, but he was happily and excitedly commenting on the artworks exhibited. He appeared like a mother, in the way he was surrounded by the young woodcut artists, who listened carefully to what he said. I was also extremely happy and seized the opportunity to secretly take a photo.³³

A few years later, after the outbreak of war, in May 1941, Sha Fei would again publish an article about this day, in which he now described his own interaction with the writer. While the factuality of his description seems doubtful in light of the earlier article, Sha Fei's intention behind the article is unambiguous: He was establishing a direct link between his activities and the person of Lu Xun.

After we had finished looking at the woodcuts, we sat down on the rattan chairs, where he summed up his opinions. He suggested that we select 200 woodcuts to publish in one volume and even agreed to help us find a publisher. He also said that the future direction of woodcutting should be to organize and unite the woodcut artists and to link up with international, progressive art organizations and authors.

I took out my camera and took a photo of this memorable scene. He asked me “Did you recently take some good photos?”

“I took some photos of the life of workers at the dock no. 16, and nowadays I like to study woodcutting”

“In that case you especially need to pay attention to making good sketches.” And thoughtfully he added: “Only when the foundation is prepared well, you can produce a good artwork!”

Even until today it feels like his words are still ringing in my ears, I will never forget mister Lu Xun.³⁴

Leaving aside the question if the scene happened as described, his use of the pronoun “we” in the beginning shows that Sha Fei considered himself – at least retrospectively in 1941 – one of the artists influenced by Lu Xun.

³³ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1936): “Lu Xun xiansheng zai quanguo muke zhanhuichang li 鲁迅先生在全国木刻展览会里 [Mister Lu Xun in the Assembly Hall of the National Woodcut Exhibition]”, in: *Guangzhou minguo ribao* 广州民国日报 [Guangzhou Republican Daily], 28.10.1936, reproduced at: http://shafei.cn/firstedition/shafeizuopin_02_01.htm, last checked 25.01.2016.

³⁴ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1941): “Wo zuihou jiandao Lu Xun xiansheng de yi tian 我最后见到鲁迅先生的一天 [The day I last saw mister Lu Xun]”, in: *Kangdi sanrikan* 抗敌三日刊, 1941.05.01, reproduced in: Chen Jianhua 陈建华; Tian Jin 田进 (1988): *Sha Fei yanjiu* 沙飞研究 [Research on Sha Fei], Shanxi: Sha Fei sheying xueshu yanjiuhui, pp. 8-9.

Shortly after this encounter, Sha Fei began to organize exhibitions of his own photos, for example from December 3 to 5, 1936 in Guangzhou in Guangdong province and June 25 to 27, 1937 in Guilin in Guangxi province.³⁵ According to the exhibition catalogue, some of the photos exhibited were the already mentioned ones of Lu Xun, which must have helped with drumming up interest for the exhibition.³⁶ Further photos were showing the landscape and everyday life of the inhabitants of Nan'ao island (*Nan'ao dao* 南澳岛) off the coast of Guangdong, however they were presented in the context of a perceived threat to the Chinese nation posed by Japan. This perspective was also given room in a text that was published in the exhibition catalogue in 1937, which besides giving an early “revolutionary” definition of photography also testifies to Sha Fei’s considerable sense of mission:

I am studying photography for less than five years now, but during this short time I was often hindered by adverse circumstances, which nevertheless – no matter how adverse the circumstances – could not obliterate my aspirations.

Because I think that photography is a kind of most powerful weapon for revealing reality, I always wanted to use it as a tool for describing the various appearances of reality.

Photography is one of the formative arts (*zaoxing yishu* 造型艺术), but many people still take it to be a toy used for memorial souvenirs, recreation and diversion. This completely overlooks its artistic significance and makes photography fall into the abyss of a senseless, hackneyed Aestheticism, where it sinks into a besotted ocean of escapism. What a terrible and unfortunate matter!

In our real world, so many people are murdered, suppressed and enslaved by the insane Jingoists (*qinlüezhuyi zhe* 侵略主义者)! This irrational society is humanity’s greatest shame, and it is the task of art to help humanity understand itself, remold society and restore freedom. Because of this everyone engaged in art work – especially photographers (*sheying de ren* 摄影的人) – should not imprison themselves in a glass box and intoxicate themselves with self-satisfaction, but instead should go deeply into all strata and corners of society to seek out real subject matters.

In these five years, because of the restrictions imposed on me by my job, I still could not get to the subject matters I was seeking. At the same time, I had no opportunity to improve my technique. These fetters make me most uncomfortable, but I was not discouraged by them. These adverse circumstances only served to make me resist more – With redoubled effort I achieved this pitiful result [of the exhibition]. [...] ³⁷

³⁵ Jiang 1981, p. 18.

³⁶ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1937): “Sha Fei sheying zhanlan (Guilin) mulu 沙飞摄影展览（桂林）目录 [Catalog of Sha Fei’s Photo Exhibition (Guilin)]”, in: Sha Fei 沙飞 (1937): *Sha Fei sheying zhanlan (Guilin) zhuankan* 沙飞摄影展览（桂林）专刊 [Monograph on Sha Fei’s Photo Exhibition (Guilin)]”, reproduced in: Wang Yan 王雁 (1996): *Sha Fei jinian ji* 沙飞纪念集 [Sha Fei Commemorial Collection], Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin CBS. p. 99.

³⁷ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1936/1937): “Xie zai zhanchu zhiqian 写在展出之前 [Written before the Exhibition]”, in: *Sha Fei yingzhan zhuankan* 沙飞影展专刊 [Monograph of Sha Fei’s Photo Exhibition], reproduced in: Chen; Tian 1988, pp. 1-2.

The restrictions (or even adverse circumstances) mentioned by Sha Fei, due to his job as a radio technician in Shantou, may explain his somewhat curious photos from Nan'ao island: "Idyllic" photos of rural or coastal life which were nevertheless presented in the context of a national crisis. It is highly likely that the photos had been taken by Sha Fei in the preceding years, because Nan'ao island is situated a few kilometers from the Chinese coastline, just east to the port of Shantou. The island would have been a convenient destination for a short weekend trip. Besides the use of the photos in his exhibition, Sha Fei also managed to have seven photos of the island published in *Life Weekly* (*Shenghuo xingqikan* 生活星期刊) in November 1936.³⁸

Soon, Sha Fei would not have to worry anymore about his job restricting his photographic activities: On July 7, 1937 Japanese and Chinese troops clashed near the Marco-Polo-bridge on the outskirts of Beiping (today's Beijing), which all but formally started the Second Sino-Japanese War. Soon large-scale hostilities erupted, with Beiping quickly falling to the Japanese in August, and the battle for Shanghai beginning in August as well. Under the impression of the Japanese invasion, Sha Fei wrote his hitherto most important text, on "Photography and the national salvation" (*Sheying yu jiuwang* 摄影与救亡), which was published in the *Guangxi Daily* (*Guangxi ribao* 广西日报) on August 15, 1937.

Photography is one branch of the formative arts but is differing from the other formative arts in that it cannot freely create but must reflect or recreate some object according to the facts. That is why at first it was denied the status as art. However in being forced to reflect or reproduce some object according to the facts, even so in this process of reflection or reproduction, there must be a careful treatment according to the photographer's artistic taste, because only like this can the viewer be [emotionally] moved. This is why photography in the end was accepted as a branch of the formative arts.

But exactly because photography has to reflect or recreate some object according to the facts, it is able to arouse the truest emotions in the viewer and cause the deepest impression. Furthermore, using the help of science, photography is able to capture all objects through its lens in the shortest of moments and reproduce their forms in a hundred or thousand times in an instant, which is another characteristic in which it differs from the other formative arts.

In these days of national calamity, everyone knows that freeing the nation from oppression cannot be achieved by a small group of people. This is why "awakening the people" (*huanxing renmin* 唤醒人民) is an urgent matter for the national salvation movement (*jiuwan yundong* 救亡运动).

³⁸ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1936): "Nan'ao dao: Riren nanjinzhong de yige mubiao 南澳岛: 日人南进中的一个目标 [Nan'ao Island: An Objective in the Japanese Southern Advance]", in: *Shenghuo xingqikan* 生活星期刊, 1936, no. 26, p. 27.

However, even until now, more than 80% of the country's population are illiterate, which is why solely propagating the national crisis through text can hardly produce a good result. Photography on the other hand possesses all the above-mentioned fine characteristics, therefore today it is the most powerful weapon for propagating the national calamity.

I remember, not long ago, mister Guo Moruo said “a good photo surpasses a whole essay” – the general idea was like this, but I do not remember the source anymore. This is a new appraisal of photography by the cultural circles, and at the same time an enthusiastic expectation and powerful inspiration for our photography circles.

Because photography is so important for the movement to save the nation, photographers have to rise on their own initiative and dutifully take on this important task. They have to use all their energy, time and wealth for the treatment of meaningful subject matters, have to reflect and uncover the savage invasion of our country by the enemy, the scenes of our heroic troops killing enemies on the frontlines, as well as our compatriots in the various areas joining the national salvation movement, and thus awake our nation's consciousness to save itself.

At the same time, the photographers need to rigorously organize themselves and have to cooperate with the government and publishing circles in a practical way, to ensure our compatriots in the whole country see as many meaningful photos as quickly as possible, in order for them to realize the common goal of working together to solve the national crisis. This is the inescapable mandate of our photographic circles.

Guilin, August 13, 1937³⁹

Two months after publishing this text, which called on all photographers to concentrate on propagating the political issue of “national salvation” and cooperating with the government and “publishing circles”, Sha Fei joined the communist Eighth Route Army (*Balujun* 八路军) in Wutai 五台 county of Shanxi province, as one of the first photographers with the communist troops. He would soon be joined by others, such as Wu Yinxian.⁴⁰

2.4 Wu Yinxian

Wu Yinxian (1900—1994) was born in MUYANG 沭阳 county of Jiangsu province. After graduating from elementary school, he began a dual education in Jiangsu's factory number four (*Jiangsusheng disi gongchang* 江苏省第四工厂), which produced cotton yarn and cotton cloth. Already here he developed a keen interest in art, which he pursued in his spare time, and towards the end of his education was allowed to design patterns to be printed on the cotton cloth produced in the factory.

³⁹ Sha Fei 沙飞 (1937): “Sheying yu jiuwang 摄影与救亡 [Photography and the National Salvation]”, in: *Guangxi ribao* 广西日报, 15.08.1937, reproduced at: http://shafei.cn/firstedition/shafeizuopin_02_08.htm, last checked 26.01.2016.

⁴⁰ Jiang 1981, p. 18.

Following his graduation in 1918, he stayed with the factory for some time, designing printing patterns and teaching drawing to new students arriving at the factory. In 1919 he enrolled at the Shanghai Professional Art School (*Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao* 上海美术专科学校), where he received a formal artistic education focused on drawing for the first time. Around this time, he got interested in photography, after he discovered a Kodak “Brownie” box camera in a second hand-store.⁴¹

After graduating in 1922, Wu returned to his birthplace and became an art teacher at the Muyang normal and middle school (*Muyang shifan he zhongxue* 沐阳师范和中学). In his spare time he continued to devote himself to photography.⁴²

Towards the end of 1927 he left his hometown to go to Shanghai, where he found employment painting backdrops for theater plays and photo studios at the Yihai set company (*Shanghai Yihai bujing gongsi* 上海艺海布景公司). In the next year he published his first book *An Introduction to the Craft of Knitting* (*Bianzhishu chubu* 编织术初步), which perhaps still relied on his experiences at the cotton factory. However, the publication of this book also marked the endpoint of Wu’s career of working with fabrics, for beginning in 1930 he formally joined the Shanghai Red Lantern photo studio (*Shanghai hongdeng zhaoxiangguan* 上海红灯照相馆) as a photographer.⁴³ Unfortunately for Wu, the employment was to last only a short time, because the photo studio, situated in the district of Zhabei, was destroyed by Japanese aerial bombardment during the “Shanghai Incident” (January 28 to May 5, 1932).

Wu Yinxian consequently was forced to take up a job as interior designer at the Tianyi movie studio (*Tianyi yingpian gongsi* 天一影片公司). This turned out to be a stroke of luck: Even though it was his first foray into the movie industry, his artistic education and especially his experience as a photographer enabled him to quickly open up new work opportunities for him in the studio. He also continued to devote considerable time to his own photography and was now able to profit from the opportunities he found at the movie studio: Many of his photos of film stars were published in the illustrated magazines of Shanghai, or shown in the exhibitions of the Black and White Photo Society that Wu had joined in the meantime. He left the Tianyi movie studio in 1935, to join the Diantong movie studio (*Diantong yingpian gongsi* 电通影片公司), which was directly controlled by the Communist Party.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bai nian Wu Yinxian bianweihui 百年吴印咸编委会 (ed.) (2000): *Bai nian Wu Yinxian* 百年吴印咸 [Wu Yinxian at 100], Beijing: Zhongguo dianying CBS. pp.10-11.

⁴² Chen; Ding 1985, p. 382.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

This time he did not work as interior designer anymore, but as a cameraman, being responsible for the camerawork of Xu Xingzhi's 许幸之 (1904—1991) movie *Children of Troubled Times* (*Fengyun ernü* 风云儿女), released the same year. The theme song of the movie would later go on to be reused as the national anthem of the PRC. This employment at the Diantong movie studio firmly marks the point when Wu joined the circle of Shanghainese left-wing filmmakers around director and actor Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之 (1909—1978), who became a close friend of Wu. After the studio was forced to close its doors, Wu followed Yuan to the Mingxing studios (*Mingxing yingpian gongsi* 明星影片公司), where he went on to be the cameraman for Yuan's films *Unchanged Heart in Life and Death* (*Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心) of 1936 and *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi* 马路天使) of 1937, commonly considered the classic work of Chinese pre-war cinema. Wu Yinxian had arrived in the inner circle of left-wing filmmakers and his close cooperation with Yuan Muzhi would endure even beyond the outbreak of war with Japan.⁴⁵

After the beginning of the Japanese invasion of China in August 1937, together with Xu Xingzhi, Wu tried to produce a documentary movie about the resistance against the Japanese invasion, which was to be titled *Long Live China* (*Zhongguo wansui* 中国万岁), but the Guomindang government stopped the project and censored the movie as communist propaganda, confiscating and destroying the movie. In the following months, Wu Yinxian was forced to flee Shanghai, moving to Taiyuan in Shanxi province and Hong Kong, before Yuan Muzhi telegraphically invited him to the communist capital of Yan'an in the summer of 1938.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Chen; Ding 1985, p. 383.

⁴⁶ *Bai nian Wu Yinxian* 2000, p. 16.

2.5 The Flight from the Cities

After the outbreak of war in August 1937, many Chinese fled the urban centers on the coastline to avoid the Japanese onslaught. A large group of these followed the Guomindang government to their new provisional inland capital of Chongqing in Sichuan province, but some, like Sha Fei and Wu Yinxian went on to join the communist troops in other areas of China, where these had begun to establish so called revolutionary base areas (*geming genjudi* 革命根据地). Like most artists or intellectuals, the photographers were not primarily involved in directly fighting the Japanese troops (and later those of the Guomindang), but contributed to the establishment of a system of propaganda and education (*xuanjiao xitong* 宣教系统), intended to legitimize the actions of the CCP, and to facilitate the exchange of information.⁴⁷

Sha Fei and Wu Yinxian were but the most prominent of the photographers to join this system, the structure of which – as well as the people who worked for it – would form the basis of the later system of the illustrated press following the foundation of the PRC. Since the specific arrangement of this system depended on the local conditions in the different communist base areas, it must be discussed separately for the different base areas. Quite unsurprisingly – when keeping in mind Sha Fei’s mentioning of the low level of literacy – photography came to play an important part in this emerging propaganda system.⁴⁸

Therefore both Sha Fei as well as Wu Yinxian had no problems to quickly occupy positions of leadership, with Sha Fei being especially influential in the Jin-Cha-Ji base area (*Jin-Cha-Ji genjudi* 晋察冀根据地) roughly covering the provinces of Shanxi, Chahar and Hebei, and Wu Yinxian playing an important role in the Yan’an film group (*Yan’an dianying tuan* 延安电影团) in the capital of the Shan-Gan-Ning base area (*Shan-Gan-Ning genjudi* 陕甘宁根据地) situated in the provinces of Shanxi, Gansu and Ningxia. These two places were the organizational centers of communist photography during wartime, and had a direct influence on surrounding, smaller base areas. These are shown in the map on the following page.

⁴⁷ Cheek, Timothy (1997): *Propaganda and culture in Mao's China. Deng Tuo and the intelligentsia*, New York: Clarendon Press. p. 15.

⁴⁸ Gan Xianfeng 甘险峰 (2008): *Zhongguo xinwen sheying shi* 中国新闻摄影史 [The History of Chinese News Photography], Beijing: Zhongguo sheying CBS. p. 70.

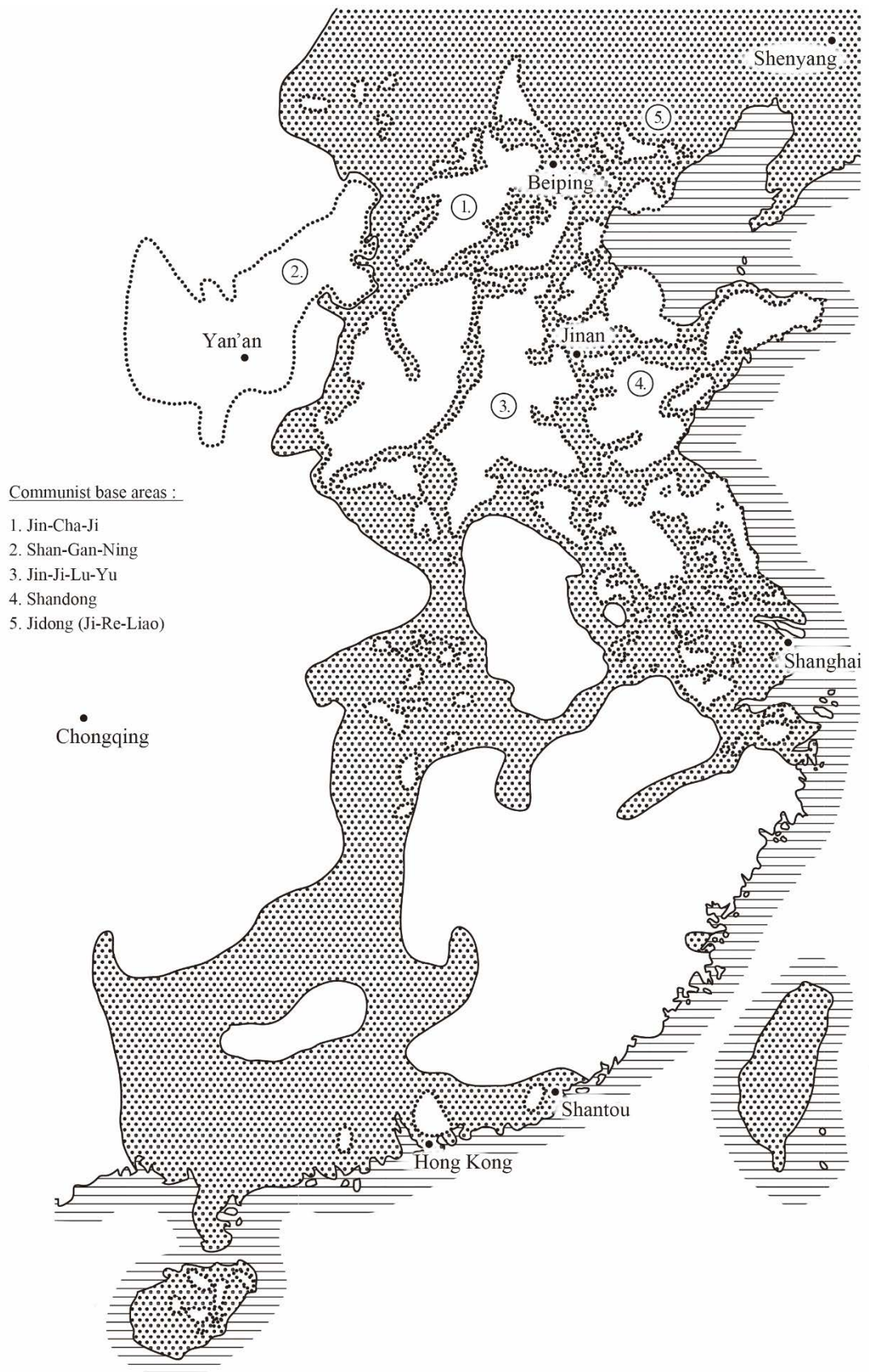


Figure 3: Map of Japanese-occupied China in 1945, showing communist base areas behind Japanese lines. Design based on maps published in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1962, no. 7, p. 7. and *Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报 [PLA Illustrated], 1970, no. 9, p. 17. Design by author, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.

The map in figure 3 is based on largely identical maps published in the *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报) 1962, no. 7 and *People's Liberation Army Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报) 1970, no. 9, which illustrated the situation of China near the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945.⁴⁹ Since it is adapted from propagandistic sources, it should not be assumed to be completely accurate, but rather to be an illustration of the area claimed to be under communist control during the war.

In the map, the Japanese occupied areas are marked with a dot pattern, with the claimed communist base areas outlined by dotted lines around white spaces. Same as with the area occupied by Japan, over time these areas fluctuated wildly in size and demarcation, with the borders giving a rather optimistic impression of the communist areas of influence. Analysis of the communist base areas (and the Japanese occupied areas) brings out the importance of topography and availability of transportation routes. While the Japanese troops enjoyed technical superiority over the Chinese troops, they were vastly outnumbered by the Chinese population they tried to control. Only along routes of transportation such as railways, roads and rivers were they able to bring to bear a temporal numerical superiority. These transportation lines were thus the areas most removed from communist influence.

In areas difficult to access however, like mountains or forests, even behind the nominal Japanese line of occupation, the communist troops were able to operate largely unhindered. This explains the shapes of both the Japanese occupied areas, as well as the communist base areas, which extend along transportation lines or respectively are separated into different areas by them. Differing from these base areas behind Japanese lines, who were occasionally targeted by the Japanese troops, the unoccupied border area of Shan-Gan-Ning, commonly known by the name of its capital Yan'an, was more in danger of attack from the troops of the Guomindang government, which resided in the city of Chongqing.

⁴⁹ Compare: "Kang-Ri minzhu genjudi shiyitu 抗日民主根据地示意图 [Sketch Map of the Anti-Japanese Democratic Base Areas]", in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1962, no. 7, p. 7. and *Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报 [People's Liberation Army Illustrated], 1970, no. 9, p. 17.

2.6 The Jin-Cha-Ji Base Area

In October 1937, Sha Fei joined the communist-aligned All People's News Agency (*Quanmin tongxunshe* 全民通讯社) as a photo reporter in Taiyuan. Near mount Wutai (Wutaishan 五台山) in Shanxi province he made contact with the communist troops of the Eighth Route Army (*Balujun* 八路军) and joined them on the spot. After the area was formally declared the Jin-Cha-Ji military region (*Jin-Cha-Ji junqu* 晋察冀军区) in November, the communist troops began to establish all kinds of organizational structures. In December, Sha Fei was named head of the editorial office of the military region's department of propaganda (*junqu zhengzhibu xuanchuanbu bianjike* 军区政治部宣传部编辑科) by the commander of the military region, Nie Rongzhen 聂荣臻 (1899—1992).⁵⁰ Furthermore, from December 11, the *Resistance Daily* (*Kangdi bao* 抗敌报), which had been published before in the shape of a mimeographed handbill, became the official mouthpiece of the military region's political department. From then on it would be published every three days as a simple, two-page lithographic print. Sha Fei became the deputy director of this publication, serving directly below its director Deng Tuo 邓拓 (1911—1966), who would go on to become editor-in-chief of the CCP's mouthpiece *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) after the war.⁵¹

In the months to come, Sha Fei would not only be engaged in editorial work for the *Resistance Daily*, he also used every opportunity to accompany the troops and document the life in the military region with his camera. His unquestionably most famous, and most widely reproduced photo of this time – given in figure 4 – shows soldiers of the Eighth Route Army near the Great Wall. The photo is remarkable for its formal strictness and use of symbolism: While most of the photos made at the time by photographers of the communist troops are “mere” documentary photos, which tried to document the circumstances in the base areas in a favorable light, though often with a shoddy quality owing to the difficult technical situation, Sha Fei's photo of the soldiers on the Great Wall shows a carefully thought out composition: The diagonal composition of the picture, formed by the Great Wall receding into the distance, visually connects the communist troops in the foreground left corner with the wall, symbol of ancient Chinese achievement and resistance against barbarian, outside enemies.

⁵⁰ Gan 2008, p. 74.

⁵¹ Cheek 1997, p. 72.

Especially in comparison with other shots of troops near the Great Wall taken at the same time,⁵² the staged quality of the photo is obvious. This however results from the circumstances in the base areas: For photographers, who were fully part of the military's hierarchy, and considered photography as one of the weapons available to them, detaching a small group of soldiers to a specific place for the sole purpose of staging a well-planned picture would have been a military operation like any other, with the difference that instead of Japanese or Guomindang soldiers, only a photo was shot and later presented to various audiences.



Figure 4: Sha Fei 沙飞 (1938): “Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army at the Great Wall”, in: Jin; Gao; Chen 1986, p. 40.

⁵² Compare: Jin; Gao; Chen 1986.

Outdoor-photo exhibitions came to be recognized as a practical way to carry out pictorial propaganda: In January 1939, together with Luo Guangda 罗光达,⁵³ Sha Fei organized the first open air photo exhibition of the military region in Jiaotan 蛟潭 village in the county of Pingshan 平山, of Hebei province. The title of the exhibition was *Anti-Japanese base behind enemy lines – Jin-Cha-Ji photo exhibition (Dihou kangri genjudi – Jin-Cha-Ji sheyingzhan 敌后抗日根据地—晋察冀摄影展)*. A few months later, the two of them organized a touring exhibition, but before they could print the photos for it, they had to construct a photo enlarger by themselves.⁵⁴ Especially under the difficult material situation in the base areas, these outdoor exhibitions were a very useful early propaganda tool, because even with a limited amount of photos, the often illiterate inhabitants of a village or small town could be shown the communist troops' perspective on the war, simply by hanging the photos on a wall (or even a hillside as in figure 5). Furthermore, the exhibition could easily be transported to other places, to avoid Japanese attention and be shown again and again.

⁵³ Luo Guangda 罗光达 (1919 – 1997) was born in Wuxing 吴兴 county in the province of Zhejiang. He lived in Shanghai from 1935 and came into contact with underground CCP members there. He took part in activities promoting resistance against Japan and advocating the salvation of the nation (kang Ri jiuwang huodong 抗日救亡活动), and in his spare time studied photography.

After the fall of Shanghai in 1938 he organized a Shanghai young professionals' group for national salvation (*Shanghai zhiye qingnian jiuwang tuan* 上海职业青年救亡团). Soon after, he joined the communist troops in Yan'an and attended the Public School Shanbei (*Shanbei gongxue* 陕北公学). After becoming a party member, he went on to Jin-Cha-Ji to become a photo reporter for the local headquarter's news photography section (*xinwen sheying ke* 新闻摄影科). After helping Sha Fei with setting up the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated*, in 1942 he became vice-director of the magazine. He later transferred to other base areas to establish further illustrated magazines, and in 1944 became director of the *Ji-Re-Liao Illustrated (Ji-Re-Liao huabao* 冀热辽画报) and in 1945 director of the *Northeast Illustrated (Dongbei huabao* 东北画报). He left the magazine in 1948 and transferred to the Northeast movie studios (*Dongbei dianying zhipianchang* 东北电影制片厂). Until his retirement in 1984, he successively worked for the central film bureau (*zhongyang dianying ju* 中央电影局), Chinese head office of film distribution (*Zhongguo dianying faxing zonggongsi* 中国电影发行总公司), central academy of drama (*zhongyang xiju xueyuan* 中央戏剧学院), as well as many other administrative centers of the cultural establishment.

Compare: Yu 1989, pp. 749-750 and Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 572-573.

⁵⁴ Gan 2008, p. 74.

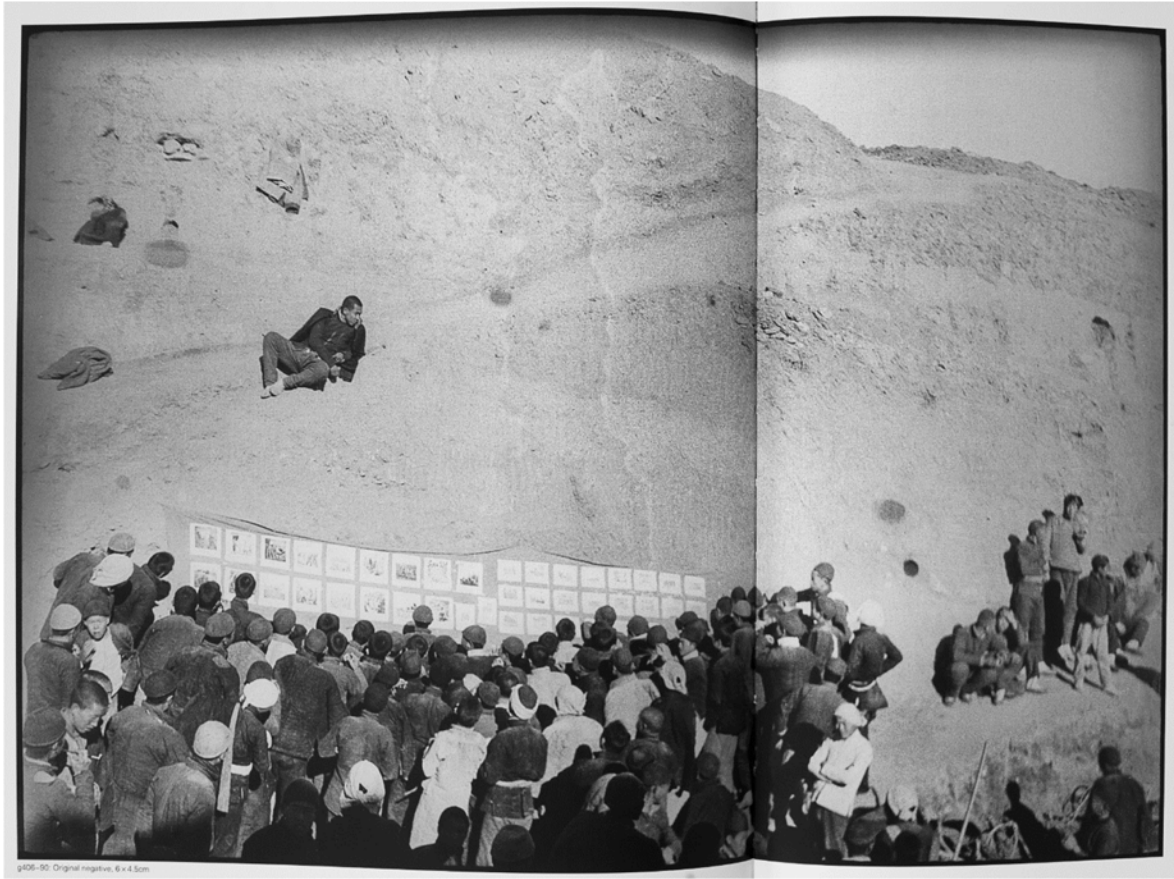


Figure 5: Unknown photographer (August 1945): “Communist photo exhibition in Quyang 曲阳 county, Hebei province”, in: Si Sushu 司苏实 (2015): *Hongse yingxiang 红色影像 [Red Images]*, Beijing: Lianhe chubanshe. pp. 206-207.

Around this time, Sha Fei also began to train new photographers to help in his work, by having them join his daily routine as apprentices.⁵⁵

Since the photographs taken by Sha Fei and his colleagues had proven very useful for propaganda purposes, the commander of the military region Nie Rongzhen agreed to open a news photography section (*xinwen sheying ke* 新闻摄影科) at the department of propaganda in February 1939. Sha Fei was named the director of this section, his task was to coordinate all photographic activities within the military region. This news photography section was the first formal administrative body directing and regulating photographic work under Communist Party authority in China.⁵⁶

Under the control of the news photography section, efforts were undertaken to extend, improve and standardize the training of photographers. The concept of organizing

⁵⁵ Jiang 1981, p. 18 names the photographers personally educated by Sha Fei besides Luo Guangda as Zhao Lie 赵烈, Bai Liansheng 白连生, Yang Guozhi 杨国治, Li Hongnian 李鸿年, Ye Manzhi 叶曼之, Ye Changlin 叶昌林, Gu Fen 谷芬, Zhao Hui 赵辉, Zhou Yuwen 周郁文, Zhang Jinxue 张进学, Liu Peijiang 刘沛江, Qu Zhiquan 曲志全, Gu Di 顾棣 and Ji Lianbo 冀连波.

⁵⁶ Chen 1985, p. 265.

photographic training classes (*sheying xunlian ban* 摄影训练班) was adopted from Shi Shaohua 石少华, who had already established these in the Jizhong military region (*Jizhong junqu* 冀中军区), situated in central Hebei province. Between July 1941 and spring of 1949, 60 to 70 “photography soldiers” (*sheying zhanshi* 摄影战士) were trained in these classes and were afterwards assigned to different units in the military regions, where as photographers (*sheyingyuan* 摄影员) they filled a specialist’s role similar to radio operators or paramedics.⁵⁷

2.7 Deng Tuo’s and Sha Fei’s Introductions for Wu Yinxian’s Textbook on Photography

In the summer of 1939, Wu Yinxian visited the Jin-Cha-Ji military region in his role as a member of the Yan’an film group. While the film group had originally come to the military region to report on the work done there, responding to a request by Sha Fei, Wu Yinxian also wrote a small textbook on the basics of photography during his stay. This book – the earliest communist textbook on photography in China – was from then on used for the training of new photographers in Jin-Cha-Ji. The introductions, which Sha Fei and Deng Tuo wrote for this *General Knowledge of Photography* (*Sheying changshi* 摄影常识), provide definitions of photography and cultural work under the control of the CCP during wartime, which predate the “Yan’an spirit” of May 1942 by roughly three years. This spirit, which was pushed through in the areas under control of the CCP (after the war and even until today it was never repudiated), was carried out through a rectification movement among the writers and artists aligned with the CCP. The goal of the rectification was to make all art production conform to the goals of the CCP, or as Mao formulated it at that time:

⁵⁷ Gan 2008, p. 74 and Jiang 1981, p. 18.

It is very good that since the outbreak of the war of resistance against Japan, more and more revolutionary writers and artists have been coming to Yan'an and our other anti-Japanese base areas. But it does not necessarily follow that, having come to the base areas, they have already integrated themselves completely with the masses of the people here. The two must be completely integrated if we are to push ahead with our revolutionary work. The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind.⁵⁸

As we can see from the texts discussed below, written by Deng Tuo and Sha Fei already in 1939, not all artists who had come to the base areas were in need of political guidance. Three years before the party felt the need to pressure other artists into compliance, the photographers were already working according to the “Yan'an spirit”, even though they were based in Jin-Cha-Ji.

As a professional writer, Deng Tuo, director of Jin-Cha-Ji's *Resistance Daily* and later on editor-in-chief of the *People's Daily*, did not specifically write about the peculiarities of photography in his introduction. He instead integrated it with or equated it to other mediums of communication, sketching up their required social role under the condition of war in 1939. Besides this, he showered Wu Yinxian with praise for his work, which is left out from the following translation. From Deng's introduction the reader can learn about Deng's self-understanding as a journalist aligned with the CCP:

Speaking of photography, especially during the ongoing war of resistance, it would be an unforgiveable sin if someone treats it as a matter of diversion or a private, artistic hobby.

Photography must – if it has not already done so – turn into a serious work. This must be felt and realized by all progressive photographers, and in this war it is a political task and a requirement for the photographers that cannot be overlooked.

Our photographers must point the lenses of the cameras which they are holding in their hands towards the war. They must unleash the power of their lenses to serve the welfare of the nation, the state and the numerous people, just like the soldiers' guns and the writers' pens! Fight!

⁵⁸ Fairbank, John K.; Feuerwerker, Albert (eds.) (1986): *The Cambridge History of China: Republican China 1912–1949, Part 2.*, vol. 13, Cambridge: University Press. p. 477. Translation quoted from source.

But this will not suffice. The photographers must subordinate themselves to other people, they must subordinate themselves to the people's masses, they must master photography, must master the use of the photographic tools and must turn the photographic tools into weapons well understood by the masses.

Like this, the vast masses will become like armed soldiers who can defend themselves with a gun, or like those who can write and thus defend themselves with the pen. This kind of effort has an enormous significance for our struggle. This is the holy task (*shensheng renwu* 神圣任务) of the progressive photographers and our glorious cause. [...]⁵⁹

It becomes clear here that Deng condemned any type of photography which did not serve as a tool or weapon in the war against the Japanese. Just like the soldiers and writers, the photographers were asked to subordinate themselves to institutions identified as nation, state and the people, but which naturally meant the emerging institutions under the control of the CCP. It must be pointed out that this description of photography's function did not just refer to some imagined or distant ideal, but did indeed already describe the conditions on the ground in the communist base areas in 1939, where the photographers were members of the military and thus were embedded into rigidly controlled hierarchies, even formally belonging to the armed forces of the CCP. These structures were naturally also relied on in the training of new photographers, who therefore were undergoing something more akin to a military drill than to an esthetic or artistic education.

Thus not at all surprisingly, Sha Fei's introduction to Wu Yinxian's textbook shared his colleague Deng Tuo's perspective. Besides even stronger praises for Wu – again left out from the following translation – Sha Fei put forward demands remarkably similar to the ones made by Deng, but due to his experience with photography, he was able to devote some thought to functional considerations on photography, integrating the medium's characteristics, which echo some of his writings of the pre-war period. Due to the importance of the text, and its high density of information, despite its length it is reproduced here almost fully:

In the course of this great national war of self-defense, everything has to serve the war of resistance and the construction of the state. Photography is one of the formative arts, but at the same time it is a product of science. It has outstanding characteristics: First of all it can reflect reality in the most authentic way, which is why it can give people a most authentic sensation and the most concrete and deep impressions, which they easily accept and welcome.

⁵⁹ Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1939): *Sheying changshi* 摄影常识 (with introductions by Sha Fei 沙飞 and Deng Tuo 邓拓), Jinchaji junqu: Zhengzhibu sheyingke. p. 1-2.

Furthermore it can reflect reality very rapidly and at the same time disseminate those things it reflects both widely and quickly.

Therefore there can be no doubt that it is a tool of propaganda with the weighty responsibility of reporting on news and a sharp weapon in our struggle.

Now because photography is a formative art, and at the same time a product of science, and additionally has the weighty political responsibility of reporting on news, anyone engaged in wartime news photography (*zhanshi xinwen sheying* 战时新闻摄影) must not only possess the correct political understanding and the methods of journalistic news gathering, but also an artistic training and scientific knowledge.

Without artistic training, the frame (*huamian* 画面) will be pedestrian and lacking in strength and beauty, therefore being unable to move people.

Without scientific knowledge it might happen that even though a good photo was taken, due to an error in the process of development, drying or enlarging, there will be no success.

Without the correct political understanding and the methods of journalistic news gathering, reality cannot be grasped and the work cannot be carried out smoothly, and ultimately the weighty political responsibility cannot be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, many people do not have a clear understanding of photography. Some think that photography is no more than an amusing toy or a kind of souvenir. This completely overlooks photography's political significance. Others think photography is a simple affair that does not require studies or research, that just by taking a camera in hand you could take a photo of anything. Of course photography is not an incomprehensible, mysterious thing, but it is also not as simple as these people think, and there is no way around studying and research.

For strengthening the power of resistance, and to fulfill the task of this powerful tool of propaganda, we reflect and propagate the large scale Guerrilla war unleashed by the troops, government and people in north China to the whole country and the whole world [...]

Let all compatriots and the people of the whole world know there is a large and strong anti-Japanese base area behind the enemy lines in north China, and let them understand the general situation here, and make them trust in the promising future of the war of resistance, make them realize more clearly the brutality and deviousness of the Japanese invaders and their miserable fate.

We therefore decided to mobilize all cameras in this military region and to gather all comrades who want to engage in news photo work (*xinwen sheying gongzuo* 新闻摄影工作), in order to together take up the weighty responsibility handed to us photo reporters by the times. We know that without organization or a plan we cannot develop a powerful force.

Photography is a professional technical ability, therefore the lack of reference material is without a doubt a huge obstruction to the development of our work. To solve this problem of food for thought (*jingshen shang de shiliang* 精神上的食粮), we decided to publish a few small books and a magazine devoted to the research of news photography, as well as have a travelling exhibition of photos, in order to provide the comrades with the required reference materials. [...]⁶⁰

Sha Fei had already developed his understanding of photography as a tool – or weapon – for the reflection and criticism of social conditions before the outbreak of war. In the setting of the north Chinese base areas of 1939, these ideas could be adapted surprisingly seamlessly to the requirements of the CCP administration, which Sha Fei did in this text.

Taking his concept of photography as both a form of art, as well as a technical/scientific process with specific useful properties for (mass) communication – especially within a largely illiterate rural society – Sha Fei postulates that the existence of these properties results in the political obligation of photographers to submit to the control of the CCP, in order to use photography's abilities to the fullest.

According to Sha Fei, the mentioned technical background of photography only needed to be mastered enough to turn it into an efficient tool of propaganda (*xuanchuan gongju* 宣传工具). Furthermore, the “weighty political responsibility of reporting on news”, depending on the “correct political understanding” of the photographer ensured that the decisions of what to photograph (or what to better not photograph) were made based on political criteria. In the coming years, this conception of photography would come to dominate the work of photographers in China, not just in the Jin-Cha-Ji military region.

Of special importance is that in this text Sha Fei used the term “news photography” (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) for the first time, endowing it with a meaning which was completely grounded in the wartime environment, and was not connected anymore to photojournalistic practices of the pre-war time, which – at least for the illustrated press in Shanghai – had been demand- or market-driven. Consequently, the photography carried out in the institutions of the photo network after the foundation of the PRC would also be called “news photography” (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) and largely follow the guidelines established by Sha Fei and his colleagues.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

2.8 The *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated*

Comparable to the efforts already undertaken to formalize photographic training activities and concentrate them in one institution, which were described above, the Jin-Cha-Ji base area soon witnessed endeavors to create better channels for the publication of the photos created by Sha Fei and his colleagues.

In October 1940, Sha Fei was given the task to begin preparation of an illustrated magazine which was to concentrate fully on the publication of photos. Already at this point, the institutions in the different base areas were producing around 30 publications in total, but where these were able to print pictures, they nevertheless were still limited to reproductions of drawings, woodcuts and other simple illustrations. The planned focus on photos, which was to be implemented by Sha Fei, was a first for the communists, which consequently required complicated technical preparations.⁶¹

In the Spring of 1941, first printing tests were undertaken at the printing office of the Jin-Cha-Ji military region in the village Zhijiaogou 支角沟 in the county of Pingshan 平山 in Hebei province. With a photo titled "The People of the Border Region Oppose the Anti-communist Civil War" (*Bianqu renmin fandui fangong neizhan* 边区人民反对反共内战), taken by Sha Fei's apprentice Zhou Yuwen 周郁文 (1912—1950), the first photo ever to be taken and published in the base area was printed in the *Resistance Three-Day Publication* (*Kangdi sanrikan* 抗敌三日刊) on April 14, 1941. A few days later, Deng Tuo's *Jin-Cha-Di Daily* (*Jin-Chaj-Ji ribao* 晋察冀日报) began to print photos as well. Already this made the two publications produced in Jin-Cha-Ji the most technically advanced ones of all the base areas, but there was more to come.

In May 1941, a preparatory group for the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jin-Cha-Ji huabao choubeizu* 晋察冀画报筹备组) was formally established under the leadership of Sha Fei. In January 1942, a meeting of him with the commander of the military area, Nie Rongzhen, the director of the political department Zhu Liangcai 朱良才 (1900—1989) and the director of the department of propaganda, Pan Zili 潘自力 (1904—1972) was conducted to decide on the editorial policies and the propagandistic responsibilities of the new illustrated magazine, demonstrating that Sha Fei was already operating fully embedded in the CCP's propaganda system.

⁶¹ Li; Peng 1981, p. 30.

To test the editorial process, on March 20, 1942, a *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated Special Issue on Current Affairs* (*Jinchaji huabao shishi zhuan* 晋察冀画报·时事专刊) was published. This was followed by the formal foundation of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* office (*Jinchaji huabao she* 晋察冀画报社) on May 1st, 1942 in the village of Nianpan'gou 碾盘沟 in the county of Pingshan 平山, Hebei province, not far from the base area's original printing office. The date also coincided with Sha Fei's formal acceptance into the CCP.



Figure 6: Sha Fei 沙飞 (1942): “Technical camera used for production of printing plates in the village of Nianpangou 碾盘沟, Hebei province”, Note the use of the camera outdoors, made necessary by the need for sunlight to expose the printing plates. In: Si 2015, pp. 206.

The *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* office consisted of an editorial section (*bianji* 编辑), publishing section (*chuban* 出版), printing section (*yinshua* 印刷) as well as a general services section (*zongwu* 总务). All in all, around 100 people worked under the direction of Sha Fei, his deputy Luo Guangda and Zhao Lie 赵烈, another apprentice of Sha Fei, who was responsible for political coordination. Around two years after the first preparations had begun, in September 1942 the first issue of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* was published with a print run of 1000 90-page magazines. The issue was dated back to July 7, 1942 in order to coincide with the 5th anniversary of the Japanese invasion. Of the 160 photos printed in the first issue, 80 were taken by Sha Fei himself, with others taken by Wu Yinxian, Shi Shaohua, Zhou Yuwen, Ye Manzhi 叶曼之, Li Hongnian 李鸿年, Lü Zhengcao 吕正操, Yang Guozhi 杨国治, Zhao Lie, Zhang Jinxue 张进学 and Liu Ying 流萤.

The texts printed in the magazine, such as the photos' captions, prove that the audience addressed was both national as well as international, since they were printed both in Chinese and English.⁶²

The second issue of the magazine was published on January 20, 1943 which until December 1947 was followed by 13 issues published on an irregular schedule. Long after the victory over Japan, and during the ongoing Chinese Civil War, the magazine was renamed *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报) in 1948.

While the slow and irregular publishing schedule of the magazine already points to problems during its production, in hindsight it seems remarkable that the publication of an illustrated magazine was possible for the communist troops at all: During its operations, the editorial and printing sections of the magazine were forced to change their location under the pressure exercised by the Japanese army multiple times, from the original Nianpan'gou 碾盘沟 to Caojiazhuang 曹家庄, later on to Shangzhuangcun 上庄村 in the county of Fuping 阜平 in Shanxi province. In September 1943, the Japanese army began a large-scale attack on the base area, which again forced the magazine's personnel to flee, reaching Boyacun 柏崖村 in Shanxi province in December, where they were nevertheless ultimately surrounded by Japanese troops. Most of the staff of the magazine was able to break out from the encirclement, but nine staff members, including the already mentioned Zhao Lie were killed by Japanese troops.⁶³

The historical significance of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* lies both in its status as the first photographic illustrated magazine under formal CCP control in China, as well as in the large number of photographers trained by its director Sha Fei. Being the forerunner of CCP-controlled illustrated publishing, the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* became not only the model to be emulated by smaller illustrated magazines published in other base areas of northern China, it also provided a model for – and itself “evolved” into – the larger magazines founded by the military in the closing stages of the war and immediate post-war era. The origin of most of the organizational practices and techniques used after the war can thus be conveniently traced back to this magazine.

⁶² Gan 2008, pp. 74-75.

⁶³ Ibid.

Furthermore, the training of other photographers, both by Sha Fei himself, as well as close colleagues of his like Luo Guangda and Shi Shaohua, which all took part among comparatively small groups of people, all sharing similar experiences during the war years, ensured that after the war, the illustrated media of the PRC would be carried by a group of like-minded, personally loyal, staunchly communist photographers, who were also willing to enforce their views on other photographers who had not received this kind of training during the war.

2.9 Publications in other Communist Base Areas

Similar to the case of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* already described above, the conditions under which the various illustrated magazines in northern China were produced, can only be called adventurous. This was especially true for the smaller base areas around Jin-Cha-Ji, which relied on help from the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* in establishing own illustrated magazines, or at least small photographer-corps.

In June 1944, Luo Guangda was sent to the Jidong base area (*Jidong genjudi* 冀东根据地) in Hebei province with a handful of workers and printing equipment, in order to found a branch office of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated*. Due to especially fierce fighting with the Japanese troops, the group was at first unable to establish a new magazine there and had to restrict themselves to photographic documentation of the combat, as well as the training of new photographers. Finally in April 1945, they were able to found the *Ji-Re-Liao Illustrated* (*Ji-Re-Liao huabao* 冀热辽画报). After Japan surrendered, the staff of this magazine went to Shenyang 沈阳 in Liaoning province where – reinforced by cadres from Yan'an – they were assigned to the department of propaganda of the Central Committee of northeast China (*Dongbei zhongyangju xuanchuanbu* 东北中央局宣传部).⁶⁴ The group was provided with printing equipment captured from the Japanese and began to publish the *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报) in May 1945.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Photographers associated with this group included Luo Guangda 罗光达, Zhang Jinxue 张进学, Qi Guanshan 齐观山, Yu Shu 于舒, Qian Yi 钱谊, Shen Shu 申曙, Wang Wen 王文, He Wei 何畏, Zhou Fen 周奋, Yuan Naidong 袁耐冬, Yang Silu 杨思禄 and Chen Mingcai 陈明才. Compare: Gan 2008, p. 79.

⁶⁵ Wu Qun 吴群 (1983): „Jiefangqu xinwen sheying gongzuo shiliao (sanpian) 解放区新闻摄影工作史料 (三篇) [Material on News Photo Work in the Liberated Areas (Three Essays)]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying shiliao* 中国摄影史料 [Historical Material on Chinese Photography], 1983, no. 5/6, pp. 31-35. p. 33.

Already since January 1943, the authorities in the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu base area (*Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu genjudi* 晋冀鲁豫根据地) in southern Shanxi province had published the *Battlefield Illustrated* (*Zhanchang huabao* 战场画报). The magazine's editor-in-chief was the woodcut artist Ai Yan 艾炎 (1914—), supported by the photographer Gao Fan 高帆.⁶⁶ Since at first the material conditions were very difficult, only woodcuts and simple illustrations could be reproduced through a lithographic process. Later on, the conditions in Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu improved and it was decided to begin printing photos in the *Battlefield Illustrated*.

In order to get the equipment necessary for this, Gao Fan was dispatched to Jin-Cha-Ji to acquire printing equipment. In the course of an expedition lasting 40 days, together with other soldiers he crossed Japanese lines multiple times, to bring printing equipment to the *Battlefield Illustrated*, which was used to print 21 photos in issue 12 (August 1944) of the magazine. Henceforth, the publication of photos became part of the operations at the *Battlefield Illustrated*. After the Japanese surrender, the *Battlefield Illustrated* was discontinued, but in February 1946, the head of Jin-Cha-Ji's photography section (*shayingke* 摄影科), Pei Zhi 裴植 (1918—), arrived in Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu together with the photographer Yuan Kezhong 袁克忠 (1921—2007), technicians Qu Zhiquan 曲志全 and Sun Xianfang 孙宪芳 as well as four others, to enlarge the editorial office of the *Battlefield Illustrated* and publish it under the new title *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报).⁶⁷

In April 1946, the deputy director of Jin-Cha-Ji's photography section, Zheng Jingkan 郑景康 took editor Luo Chengzeng 罗程增 and photo reporter Meng Zhenjiang 孟振江 (1919—1947) to Shandong province, to assist in the establishment of a *Shandong Illustrated* (*Shandong huabao* 山东画报).

⁶⁶ Gao Fan 高帆 (1922-2004) was born in Xiaoshan 肖山 county of Zhejiang province under the name Feng Shengliang 冯声亮. He joined the communist troops in Yan'an in 1938, where he successively attended the Public School Shanbei (Shanbei gongxue 陕北公学) and the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College (Kang-Ri Junzheng Daxue 抗日军政大学). During the war he was mostly active behind Japanese lines, such as in the Taihang mountains (Taihang shanqu 太行山区). Later he joined the propaganda department of the 129th division, where he was engaged in artistic and photographic propaganda work. Shortly after the end of the war, he became editor-in-chief of the military's *Southwest Illustrated* (*Xinan huabao* 西南画报). 1951 he was transferred to the general political department of the PLA (Jiefangjun zongzhengzhibu 解放军总政治部) where he was involved with the foundation of the *PLA Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报), for which he successively served as deputy-editor-in-chief, editor-in-chief and finally director. Later on he also served as vice-president of the Photography Association and editor-in-chief of its publication organ *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo shaying* 中国摄影). Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 684-685.

⁶⁷ Gan 2008, p. 75. This *People's Illustrated* was obviously not the *People's Illustrated* established in 1950, which is discussed in chapter 3.

Similar to the situation in Jidong described above, at first they had to limit themselves to the training of new photographers, before they could eventually complete their mission.⁶⁸ In 1947 the group also helped to found the *Central-Ji Illustrated* (*Jizhong huabao* 冀中画报) in the central-Ji military region (*Jizhong junqu* 冀中军区).⁶⁹

2.10 Wu Yinxian's Activities in Yan'an and the Yan'an Film Group

Even though there was a certain level of exchange between the different communist base areas, the local conditions imposed limits on the extent of organizational structures which could be established in the different base areas. In the northeastern part of China, which was under Japanese occupation, the problems that had to be dealt with were similar in nature, and the influence from the Jin-Cha-Ji base area on its surrounding base areas was strongest. In Shan-Gan-Ning (*Shanganning genjudi* 陕甘宁根据地), with its capital of Yan'an, located in the Northwest, outside the area occupied by Japan, different structures were able to develop.

Wu Yinxian came to Yan'an in September 1938, after he had been invited by his colleague and friend Yuan Muzhi. Yuan had suggested to Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898—1976) to produce a documentary movie on the communist Eight Route Army, which marked the beginning of movie production under fully formalized CCP control. For this goal, a film group of the general political department of the Eight Route Army (*Balujun zongzhengzhibu dianyingtuan* 八路军总政治部电影团) – short Yan'an film group – was established, with Yuan Muzhi and Wu Yinxian both being founding members of the group. One Tan Zhengjian 谭政兼 was named head of the group, and besides Yuan Muzhi and Wu Yinxian, Xu Xiaobing 徐肖冰 (1916—2009) and nine others joined the group. In 1942, Wu Yinxian was made head of the group, with Xu Xiaobing becoming his deputy.⁷⁰

The task of the group was to produce films and photos in support of the communist war effort, but similar to the other base areas and in spite of the impressive name of the group – suggesting a certain professionalism – the actual situation on the ground was dire.

⁶⁸ Li; Peng 1981, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Gan 2008, p. 75, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁰ Gan 2008, p. 70.

In the beginning, the Yan'an film group had only two movie cameras at their disposal, of which one – a Bell & Howell Eyemo camera – had been a present, handed over “in a taxi in a dark street” to Wu Yinxian personally by the Dutch director Joris Ivens, along with a few rolls of film. He had come to China in 1938 to film his movie *The 400 Million*, a documentary about the Chinese resistance against the Japanese invasion. This had brought him into contact with the CCP, however, the Guomindang government – which organized his travels in China – prevented him from seeing and filming the communist base areas themselves.⁷¹

Apart from these movie cameras, the group only possessed three stills cameras, i.e. photo cameras, of which one had been contributed by Xu Xiaobing, and the two others by Wu Yinxian. As suggested by Yuan Muzhi, the first film produced by the group was a documentary on *Yan'an and the Eight Route Army* (*Yan'an yu Balujun* 延安与八路军), the work on which also took the members of the film group to Jin-Cha-Ji, resulting in the contact between Sha Fei and Wu Yinxian and the creation of Wu's *General Knowledge of Photography* described above.

The production of *Yan'an and the Eight Route Army* was supported by the highest echelons of the CCP: Mao Zedong, Nie Rongzhen, He Long and Ren Bishi not only channeled funding towards the movie, they also sometimes visited the filming locations. This gave Wu Yinxian the chance to take photographs of them and made Wu one of the first to depict Mao Zedong as a political leader. Yang writes that Wu Yinxian took the first official portrait of Mao as party leader in 1942,⁷² however this surely very important photo is not included in collections of Wu Yinxian's photos published later.

Especially a series of photos which Wu took in 1943, while Mao was giving a speech with the title “Get Organized” (*Zuzhi qilai* 组织起来) in front of the “labour-heroes of the Shan-Gan-Ning border area” (*Zhongyang zhaodai Shan-Gan-Ning bianqu laodong yingxiong dahui* 中央招待陕甘宁边区劳动英雄大会) gained acclaim. In spite of the photos showing the difficult circumstances of their creation, with a high contrast due to under exposure of the negatives, the photos became classic images of Mao Zedong, for the simple reason that later on, no photos as dynamic as these were ever taken of the chairman again. This made them valuable models used for paintings of Mao.⁷³

⁷¹ Schoots, Hans (2000): *Living dangerously. A biography of Joris Ivens*, Amsterdam: University Press. p. 148.

⁷² Yang Xiaoyan 杨小彦 (2009): *Xin Zhongguo sheying 60 nian* 新中国摄影 60 年. 1949-2009 [60 Years of Photography in the New China], Shijiazhuang: Hebei meishu CBS. p. 30.

⁷³ Yang 2009, p. 33.



Figure 7: Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1943): “Mao Zedong giving the speech ‘Get Organized’ (Zuzhi qilai 组织起来)” (1), in: Bai nian Wu Yinxian 2000, pp. 56-57.



Figure 8: Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1943): “Mao Zedong giving the speech ‘Get Organized’ (Zuzhi qilai 组织起来)” (2), in: Bai nian Wu Yinxian 2000, pp. 56-57.



Figure 9: Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1943): “Mao Zedong giving the speech ‘Get Organized’ (Zuzhi qilai 组织起来)” (3), in: Bai nian Wu Yinxian 2000, pp. 56-57.



Figure 10: Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 (1943): “Mao Zedong giving the speech ‘Get Organized’ (Zuzhi qilai 组织起来)” (4), in: Bai nian Wu Yinxian 2000, pp. 56-57.

After the New Fourth Army Incident (*Wannan shibian* 皖南事变) in January 1941 – battles between Guomindang and CCP troops, which ended the united front against the Japanese invaders – the Guomindang began to put military pressure on the communist base areas it could reach, which by and large was Shan-Gan-Ning in the Northwest. This made it very difficult to bring photographic supplies like film or development chemicals to Yan'an and forced the film group to change the focus of their work to producing still photos, which needed much less film compared with motion pictures. Additionally, some of the members of the group began to concentrate on training new photographers. Perhaps the earlier contact with Sha Fei had inspired them?

The first documented training efforts happened in December 1941, when the cultural club of Yan'an (*Yan'an shi wenhua julebu* 延安市文化俱乐部) announced the establishment of a photographic study group (*sheying yanjiu xiaozu* 摄影研究小组) in the *Liberation Daily* (*Jiefang ribao* 解放日报), the newspaper of the base area. The group was headed by Wu Yinxian and Zheng Jingkang 郑景康,⁷⁴ anyone interested in discussing questions of photography was invited to join. Besides technical questions, the problem of “how photography could serve the people” was to be discussed as well.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Zheng Jingkang 郑景康 (1904—1978) was born in Guangdong province as the son of renowned reformer Zheng Guanying 郑观应 (1842—1923). From 1920 he attended Shanghai's Young People College of Commerce (*Shanghai qingnian shangye zhuanke xuexiao* 上海青年商业专科学校), changing to the Shanghai Professional Art School (*Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao* 上海美术专科学校) in 1923, where he studied painting and came into contact with photography. In 1929 he began to work for the Shanghai branch office of Kodak (*Keda* 柯达), and became a professional photographer, consequently opening his own photo studio (*Jingkang sheying shi* 景康摄影室) in Hong Kong in 1930, specializing on portrait photography. He returned to mainland China in 1932, and in the following years became somewhat famous through exhibitions of his photos and publishing them in magazines such as *Liangyou* 良友, *Shidai* 时代, *Chenbao huakan* 晨报画刊, etc.

After the outbreak of war in 1938 he went to Wuhan to work for the photo studio of the section for international propaganda of the Guomindang government (*Guoji xuanchuan chu sheying shi* 国际宣传处摄影室). In the following years he came into contact with the CCP, and – following an invitation by Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying 叶剑英 – went to Yan'an in December 1940, soon becoming an important part of photographic operations there. He took part in the 1942 conference on questions of literature and art, representing the photographers. In the following years he gained acclaim for the photos he took of the CCP leadership. He left Yan'an in 1945, afterwards working successively at the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jinchaji huabao* 晋察冀画报), *Shandong Illustrated* (*Shandong huabao* 山东画报) and *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报). After the war, he was working for different units of the photo network, specializing on photographic theory and education. In 1964, he took the photo which formed the basis for the painting of chairman Mao which was attached to the Tian'anmen.

Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 535-537.

⁷⁵ Li, Ruifeng 李瑞峰; Peng, Yongxiang 彭永祥 (1981): “Yan'an jiefang ribao (1941-1946) suokan sheying huodong qingkuang 延安解放日报 (1941-1946) 所刊摄影活动情况 [On Photographic Activities published in Yan'an's *Liberation Daily* (1941-1946)]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying shiliao* 中国摄影史料 [Historical Material on Chinese Photography], 1981, no. 2, pp. 29-32, p. 29.

In February 1942, a second class of the study group was opened, which even concluded with a little photo exhibition of the participants. After this, the next documented classes (*xunlianban* 训练班), which were organized by the film group under the guidance of the political department of the united government (*lianzheng zhengzhibu* 联政政治部) happened in early 1945. On February 6, 1945, the *Liberation Daily* published a short notice on the curriculum of a new class:

The photography class of the political department of the united government has already begun on the 27th of the last month. Responsible for the teaching is Wu Yinxian, a first order model worker of our base area. The participants are those members of the different units of our troops, who already learned how to photograph, as well as other comrades interested in photography. The class will go on for three months, during the first month the focus will be on theoretical education, during the second month the focus is on practice, and in the last month the experiences and knowledge gained should be discussed and exchanged. In these three months, all participants will learn how to take photos, to develop them, to print and enlarge them, and thus know all necessary skills to produce long-lasting photos. In these times when we are lacking materials, everyone needs to learn how to use substitute materials and how to get a large propagandistic effect with a small supply of materials to come to terms with the condition in the border area.⁷⁶

After the Japanese surrender later that year, Wu Yinxian, Xu Xiaobing and other members of the film group were transferred to the “Northeast liberated area” (*Dongbei jiefangqu* 东北解放区), which ended the activities of the Yan’an film group.⁷⁷ From 1946 on, the group was active in the city of Hegang 鹤岗 in today’s province of Heilongjiang, where they were involved with the establishment of the Northeast film studio (*Dongbei dianying zhipianchang* 东北电影制片厂). Between 1949 and 1955, Wu Yinxian was director of the studio and would go on to be active in the higher echelons of the propaganda system for the next decades.

⁷⁶ Li; Peng 1981, p. 30.

⁷⁷ Gan 2008, p. 70.

2.11 The War's End and the Death of Sha Fei

After the Japanese surrender and the retreat of the Japanese troops from northern China, the CCP could rely on its already established structures to quickly establish further illustrated magazines and other organs of propaganda there. In 1948 the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* and the *People's Illustrated* of the Jin-Ji-Lu-yu base area were combined, creating a much larger magazine which was published for the first time in October 1948 under the title *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报). Its director was Sha Fei, with Shi Shaohua, Wu Qun and Gao Fan acting as vice-directors.⁷⁸ The magazine would later change its title again, to become the army's own *People's Liberation Army Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报), published no longer on a regional, but on a national scale, with Gao Fan serving as its editor-in-chief.

Sha Fei would not be able to witness this anymore. Around the time of the creation of the *North-China Illustrated*, he developed a mental illness, which caused him to shoot and kill his physician, the Japanese Tsuzawa Masaru 津泽胜.⁷⁹ As a punishment, Sha Fei was stripped of his CCP membership and executed on March 4, 1950. The Chinese photography historian Yang Xiaoyan remarked that his death marked the break between a “revolutionary photography of visual mobilization and the beginning of a new photography (*xin sheying* 新摄影) which set out to establish a new visual order through propaganda.”⁸⁰ The construction of this new visual order, and especially the institutions carrying it will be the topic of the next chapter.

2.12 Conclusion

Beginning with a critical, documentary concept of socially conscious photography – as can be found formulated in the early writings of Sha Fei – during the course of the war, the concept of photography used by “red” Chinese photographers came to align itself closer and closer with the cultural policies put forward by the CCP.

⁷⁸ Yang 2009, p. 8, Li 2002, [page numbers not printed] and Chen 1985, pp. 397-398.

⁷⁹ Most unfortunately, and for reasons unknown, the Chinese sources treat the highly unusual presence of a Japanese physician in post-occupation China as not worthy of further attention, or merely as a given fact. Was he a prisoner of war, or perhaps an anti-imperialist Japanese activist? Unfortunately, the author of this study was unable to find further information on Tsuzawa Masaru.

⁸⁰ Yang 2009, p. 7.

Quite remarkably, it seems that the photographers aligned with the CCP were even ahead of the party line itself, since in their writings, the demand of full CCP-control over cultural production (in their case photography) was formulated a full three years before Mao's "Yan'an speeches", in which he asked for the same. The speeches – and the conference/rectification movement for which they were prepared – are commonly taken as the ultimate cause for the shape of art and literature produced in the PRC. Perhaps for the constantly changing and evolving environment of the base areas during war-time, cause and effect of influences on cultural production cannot be delineated this easily.

Towards the end of the civil war, Chinese photographers were already relying on a concept of "news photography" (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) which had taken shape in the war-time environment and which cannot be simply translated as "photo journalism", with the meanings attached and implied by the English word anymore. Due to the continuing influence of the war-time actors this concept of "news photography" would come to dominate the photography of the PRC for decades to come, which will be discussed in the next chapter. As for Sha Fei, who had been purged from the records following his execution in 1950, his case got reversed in 1986, after his family and former colleagues had pressured the CCP about this for five years. He got posthumously acquitted on medical grounds and had his party membership restored in May and June of 1986 respectively.⁸¹

⁸¹ Compare: Cai Zi'e 蔡子谔 (2002): *Sha Fei zhuan* 沙飞传 [Biography of Sha Fei], Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian CBS. pp. 510-511.

3 The Photo Network

The communist victory in the Chinese civil war and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 led to new and different requirements for the illustrated media: Propagation of the necessary reforms and changes to the "old society" were to be handled by soon to be created civilian (i.e. Chinese Communist Party, CCP) controlled media institutions. These institutions were led and largely staffed by the old guard of trustworthy photographer-cadres who had made a name for themselves during the Anti-Japanese War and the civil war. A fine example is the director of Xinhua's department of photography (*Xinhua she sheying bu* 新华社摄影部) and later chairman of the Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中国摄影学会) Shi Shaohua 石少华 (1918-1998), who can be considered the "leading" photographer of China up to the "Cultural Revolution" in 1966.

The system staffed by these photographer-cadres was constituted by the photography department of Xinhua News Agency, a number of illustrated magazines published on a national scale, as well as a small but growing number of illustrated magazines published in the provinces. In addition, most of the larger institutional centers published vocational magazines or at least internal newsletters for their editorial departments to direct the work of their photographers, which makes it possible today to retrace the communication between the administration, (picture-)editors, and photographers. By 1958, with the publication of *Popular Photography* (*Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影) the party's control of photographic activities even extended to the level of amateur photographers.

This rapidly expanding system of photographic publishing demanded manpower, which the number of wartime photographer-cadres were unable to meet and the existing military administered training classes and progressively established civilian classes were yet unable to provide. Consequently it was necessary to not only depend on the photographer cadres who had been trained in the field during the war, but also on the so called "old photographers" (*lao sheyingjia* 老摄影家), who had learned their trade in the pre-war "old society" or even as members of the Guomintang's own press apparatus.⁸²

⁸² For a short discussion of the Guomintang's wartime (foreign) propaganda system compare: Wei Shuge (2014): "News as a Weapon: Hollington Tong and the Formation of the Guomintang centralized Foreign Propaganda System, 1937-1938", in: *Twentieth-Century China*, 2014, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 118-43.

These “old photographers”, who had successfully worked in the publishing industry and for the illustrated media of China before the war, naturally had their own ideas and conceptions of how photography should be done, which were often incompatible with the ideas of the military-trained photographers aligned with the CCP. The result of this volatile mix of different perspectives vis-à-vis photographic activities was the appearance of a multitude of debates and propagation of centrally controlled campaigns in the vocational magazines, which were used to establish a “correct” style of photography to be emulated by all photographers. This often involved dire condemnation of and personal attacks on those photographers deemed to stand in the way of a new pictorial perspective on China, either by being unable or unwilling to accept the new styles.

The mass movement of the “Great Leap Forward” (*Dayuejin* 大跃进) in 1958 brought even further expansion of photographic activities, along with accompanying campaigns to coerce the photographers to follow the CCP’s direction. Due to the eventual social havoc wreaked by the failed attempt at economic advancement, most of these activities – especially in the provinces – had to be aborted in the years 1960 and ‘61, leaving only a centrally controlled core of the photographic system to remain, which had undergone campaigns to rid the illustrated media of those opposed or indifferent to the influence of the CCP. The ups and downs in the development of this photographic network are the subject of the following part of this study.

3.1 The Beginnings of the Photo Network

After the war, the establishment of new channels of publication for photographs largely followed two strands of development: A number of illustrated magazines, like the *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报), were published by editorial departments which had been established during the war (i.e. under military supervision) without changes of personnel. In other cases like the *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报), later becoming the *PLA Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报) their editorial offices were formed by merging the editorial staff of two or more smaller, preexisting magazines.

Other channels were created from the ground up, meaning their operation relied on structures which did not have immediate predecessors during the war. The foremost example of this is the news photography department of Xinhua News Agency (*Xinhua tongxunshe xinwen sheying bu* 新华通讯社新闻摄影部). While its operations relied heavily on the veteran photographers and editors who had earned their stripes during the war, the way their work was organized had no precedents in the communist administrated areas.

The new department formed the core of a complex system or network of photography which handled every aspect of photographic work from training and upkeep of photographers and picture editors; allocation of photographic materials (cameras, films, development chemistry, photo paper, printing plates, etc.); production, filing, and ultimately distribution of photographs through various channels like newspapers, magazines, exhibitions, and publishing companies which produced products like postcards, posters, calendars etc. In short: all the prerequisites necessary for undertaking communication in the medium of photography.

What made this system centered on Xinhua's department of photography so outstanding in the history of Chinese photography was not the plethora of functions it could fulfill, for most of these had been fulfilled to some extent by lesser organizational centers before, but that it connected all formerly existing organizational centers of photography, along with the large number of photographers attached to them, which allowed the leadership to control and unify the forms of expression used in the photographs published through the network.

As a descriptive term for this system of photography, the author suggests "photographic network" or "photo network". These terms are not completely invented by the author but have some – rather loosely connected – precedents in the sources: Even though it was not widely used, both the term "photo network" (*sheying wang* 摄影网) as well as the concept of a network of photography existed among Chinese photographers in the 1950s.

The simple term "photo network" must have actually been well known to most photographers in China during the early 1950s, for the vocational magazine on photography which was published by the People's Liberation Army between June 1948 and November 1954, serving to facilitate exchange of information between the photographers of different base areas and later army groups, was titled *Photo Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网).⁸³

⁸³ Compare section 3.4 on Vocational Magazines.

Later on, when Xinhua founded (civilian) branch office photography departments in the various provinces of China, the instructions for the establishment of the departments specifically mentioned the network aspect of this organizational growth:

At the moment, many small publications in the counties and towns have their own photo reporters (*sheying jizhe* 摄影记者), they are the primary base of our countries news photography undertaking. However, the professional level of most of these needs to be urgently raised. After the establishment of branch office news photography departments the party committees (*dangwei* 党委) can use them as the center to hold photographic training classes (*sheying xunlianban* 摄影训练班) and other methods of exchange of work experience to raise the level of the cadres and construct a powerful photographic network (*sheying wang* 摄影网) on the provincial level.⁸⁴

While in this source the concept was only used for the provincial level, the author argues that it is indeed a fitting term for the entirety of CCP-organized photography in the 1950s and even up to the end of the period under discussion in this thesis, because the national system of photographic production and distribution centered on Xinhua's (central) department of photography not only mirrored the network aspect of the provincial media on a larger, national scale, but also contained in itself the smaller, provincial networks, making them both accessible by Xinhua's center, as well as other centers of the network.

3.1.1 The First Department of News Photography

In April 1950, a department of news photography (*xinwen sheying ju* 新闻摄影局) was founded at the general news office of the Central People's Government (*Zhongyang renmin zhengfu xinwen zongshu* 中央人民政府新闻总署). The vice-director of the general news office, Sa Kongliao 萨空了 (1907—1988), became the director of the newly formed department, while veteran photographer-cadre Shi Shaohua was selected as general secretary of the department and head of the subordinated section for photography (*sheying chu* 摄影处), which put him in control of the day-to-day photographic operations.

⁸⁴ “Guanyu zai quanguo Xinhua fenshe jianli xinwen sheying bu de zhishi 关于在全国新华分社建立新闻摄影部的指示 (1958.10.13) [Instructions on the Establishment of News Photography Departments in all National Branch Offices of Xinhua.], Fu yi: Guanyu zai quanguo Xinhua fenshe jianli Xinwen sheying bu de qingshi baogao 附一：关于在全国新华分社建立新闻摄影部的请示报告 (1958.09.29) [Attachement One: Report Asking for Instructions on the Establishment of News Photography Departments in all National Branch Offices of Xinhua]”, in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 4, pp. 288-291, p. 290.

Besides the section of the department controlled by Shi, it also consisted of an office of photographic research (*sheying yanjiushi* 摄影研究室), a department of picture-management (*tupian jingli bu* 图片经理部), an art section (*meishu chu* 美术处), as well as the editorial department of the *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao bianjibu* 人民画报编辑部), which will be covered in detail later. The first issue of this CCP controlled illustrated magazine was published in July of 1950.⁸⁵

The department thus managed all aspects of photographic activity, beginning with photographic coverage, filing and distribution of photographs, and eventual publication through the *People's Illustrated*. The department also devoted attention to improving and guiding photographic work through the research office, and published its own vocational magazine, the *Photography Work* (*Sheying gongzuo* 摄影工作).⁸⁶

The early photo network – even though it could hardly be called a network at that point – centered on the department of news photography is shown in the following diagram in figure 11:

⁸⁵ Chen 1996, p. 223.

⁸⁶ The first issue was published in March 1951. In total 6 issues were published until February 1952. Compare Ma Yunzeng 马运增 (1982): “Zhongguo chuban de sheying zazhi he neibu sheying kanwu 中国出版的摄影杂志和内部摄影刊物 (1950-1980) [Chinese Photographic Periodicals and Internal Photographic Publications]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying shiliao* 中国摄影史料 [Historical Materials on Chinese Photography], 1982, no. 3, pp. 31–40. p. 31.

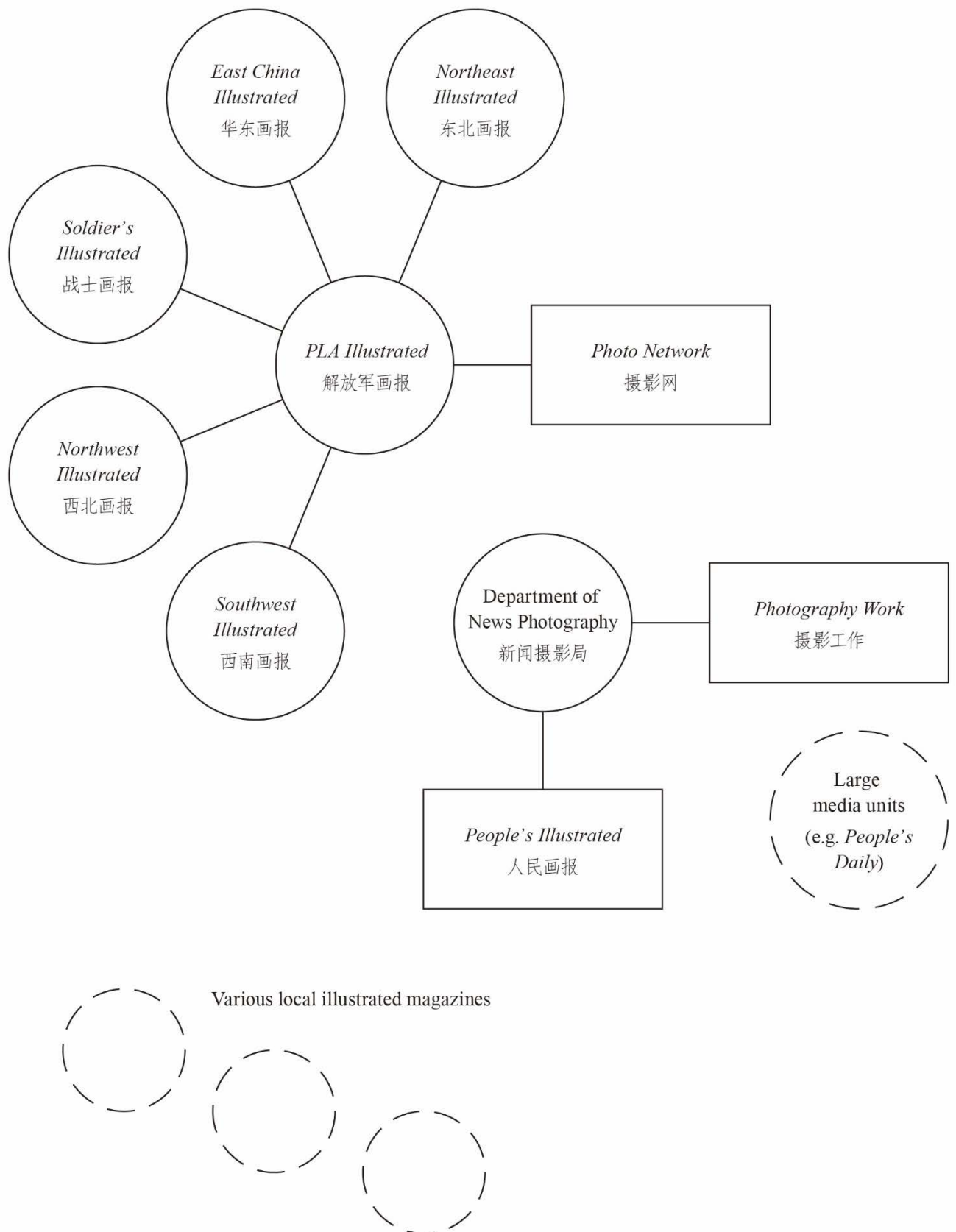


Figure 11: The organizational situation of the illustrated press in the PRC in 1951. Design by author of this study, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.

In the diagram, units with the organizational capabilities to both produce and publish photos are represented by circles. Units of theoretical guidance (vocational magazines in this case), or units with only the ability to publish photos (without the capability to produce them) are represented by boxes. The broken circles represent smaller, local illustrated publications, over which CCP control was rudimentary; furthermore, their numbers fluctuated considerably over time. The larger broken circle represents large newspapers, such as Beijing's *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报), or Shanghai's *Wenhui News* (*Wenhui bao* 文汇报), which also employed photographers, and were able to print their own photos.

As can be seen, in the early stage of the photo network, only the People's Liberation Army's media could be meaningfully described as a network, with regional units of illustrated magazines also making their photos available to the central *People's Liberation Army Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报), which was published nationwide. The editorial office of the *PLA Illustrated* additionally published the vocational magazine *Photo Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网) to guide the work of the photographers attached to the regional illustrated magazines of the military in different areas of the PRC.

The civilian-controlled department of news photography, also published an illustrated magazine with national reach, the *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报), as well as a vocational magazine with the title *Photo Work* (*Sheying gongzuo* 摄影工作), however, it could only rely on its own photographers and was not institutionally connected with other media.

3.1.2 Shi Shaohua, Director of Xinhua's Photography Department

Shi Shaohua (1918-1998) was born in Hong Kong to a family coming from Panyu county in Guangdong province. He attended the middle school attached to Guangzhou's Lingnan University in 1932 and later on continued his studies at the same university. Already during these years he developed an interest in photography which he pursued in his free time.

After the Japanese attack on China in 1937, he travelled to the Shan-Gan-Ning border region to join the forces of the CCP. Here he successively attended the Shanbei Public School (*Shanbei gongxue* 陕北公学), the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College (*Kangri junzheng daxue* 抗日军政大学) and finally the research group for higher political and military affairs (*Kangda gaoji zhengzhi junshi yanjiudui* 抗大高级政治军事研究队) at the same college, preparing him for his CCP membership, which he received in 1938.

In 1939 he attracted some attention at the celebration of the third anniversary of the founding of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College for the photos he took of some high-ranking cadres including Mao Zedong. Afterwards he became a photographer for the group of reporters attached to the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College and travelled the other communist base areas extensively.

Already in 1940, he organized four training classes for photographers in the Jizhong military region (*Jizhong junqu* 冀中军区), and in the following years cooperated closely with the already introduced Sha Fei. He became vice director of Sha Fei's *Jinchaji Illustrated* in 1943 and continued to train photographers there as well. During the following years he became the leading administrator of photographic work in the communist-controlled areas, besides Sha Fei.

He represented the photographers as participant in the first congress of literature and art workers (*wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui* 文学艺术工作者代表大会) in 1949.

One year later he left the *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报, successor of the former *Jinchaji Illustrated*) to join the department of news photography at the general news office (*xinwen chubansongshu zhongyang xinwen sheying ju* 新闻出版总署中央新闻摄影局). After the transfer of the department of news photography to Xinhua News Agency, Shi Shaohua became the head of this new department of photography (*Xinhua she sheying bu* 新华社摄影部) in 1952, putting him in control of China's emerging system of centralized news photography.

1956 he was selected to be chairman of the newly established Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中国摄影学会), controlling both the publication of the association's vocational magazine *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影) as well as the committee selecting the photos for the annual national photographic art exhibitions (*Quanguo sheying yishu zhanlan* 全国摄影艺术展览), the PRC's most prestigious photo exhibition. He thus personally controlled both the production of photographs through his position at Xinhua, as well as the theoretical and political guidance of all photographers through his chairmanship of the Photography Association. In 1959 he became one of the vice-directors of Xinhua News Agency, as well as a member of the third Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. During the "Cultural Revolution" he fell from power for a short time, but was quickly rehabilitated.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 118–120. Yu 1989, p. 154. Yang 2009, pp. 8–9.

3.2 The Photography Department of Xinhua and its Local Branch Departments

In April 1952, the general news office of the central people's government was disbanded in favor of new organizational structures. Most of its personnel and internal departmental structures were transferred to Xinhua News Agency, where the former department of news photography formed the backbone of Xinhua's new department of news photography (*Xinhua she xinwen sheying bu* 新华社新闻摄影部), which in the sources often is also just called department of photography (*Sheying bu* 摄影部). While Xinhua News Agency already had a long history of service to the CCP's cause, going back even to the time before the war against Japan, until this point it had lacked the means to deliver the worldview of the communist leadership in photographic or pictorial form in an organized way.⁸⁸ The new department of photography joined the existing departments of Xinhua as per the following list:⁸⁹

The Departments and Offices of Xinhua News Agency.	
Domestic department (<i>Guonei bu</i> 国内部)	Administration office (<i>Xingzheng shi</i> 行政室)
International department (<i>Guoji bu</i> 国际部)	Secretary's office (<i>Mishu shi</i> 秘书室)
Foreign department (<i>Duiwai bu</i> 对外部)	Cadres office (<i>Ganbu shi</i> 干部室)
Reference and editing department (<i>Canbian bu</i> 参编部)	Financial office (<i>Caiwu shi</i> 财务室)
Translation department (<i>Fanyi bu</i> 翻译部)	Electric/telegraph office (<i>Dianwu shi</i> 电务室)
Military affairs department (<i>Junshi bu</i> 军事部)	Security office (<i>Baowei shi</i> 保卫室)
Foreign affairs department (<i>Waishi bu</i> 外事部)	Print shop (<i>Yinshua chang</i> 印刷厂)
Photography department (<i>Sheying bu</i> 摄影部)	

Zhongguo meishu guan 中国美术馆 (2018): *Shao ying huazhang* 韶影华章: *Shi Shaohua sheying huiguzhan* 石少华摄影回顾展 [Beautiful Works of Shadow: Shi Shaohua Restrospective Photo Exhibition], Beijing: Zhongguo meishu guan, pp. 82-87.

⁸⁸ Precursor organizations of Xinhua existed since 1931, when a Xinhua Agency was founded in Ruijin, in the so called "Jiangxi Soviet" under the control of the CCP. Xinhua News Agency was later (re)founded in Yan'an in 1937, and in the following years, branch offices were established in the other communist base areas. After 1949, Xinhua became the official news agency of the government of the PRC. Compare: Wang Huanqian 王浣倩 (ed.) (1984): *Medien der Kultur*, Beijing: Verlag für fremdsprachige Literatur, p. 1.

⁸⁹ The list is based on a textual description of Xinhua's departments found in: Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bianshen weiyuanhui 中国共产党组织史资料编审委员会 (ed.) (2000): *Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao* 中国共产党组织史资料. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengquan zuzhi* 中华人民共和国政权组织 (1949.10-1997.9). *fujian yi (shang)* 附卷一 (上) [Material on the Organizational History of the CCP. The Organization of State Power in the PRC. Appendix One, volume one], vol. 15, Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi CBS, pp. 160-161.

All English translations by author of this study. The source mentions the departments existed in this form until 1966, it is unclear when the structure of the departments was established in this form.

While an analysis of the complete structure of Xinhua News Agency is outside the scope of this study, a comparison of the arrangement of Xinhua's departments (including the department of photography) with the groups and offices within the department of photography – which are described in detail in the following section – reveals some striking similarities:

First of all, both in the arrangement of the departments of Xinhua, as well as in the groups and offices within the department of photography, there is a clear differentiation between “editorial” departments, responsible for the editorial work, and supporting offices responsible for providing the material base of editorial activities, such as payment of expenses, allocation of personnel, printing and distribution of the editorial content, communication with other organizations, etc.

Second, among the “editorial” departments, there were departments set up according to both source as well as destination of the editorial content. This explains the *prima facie* redundant existence (or at least naming) of international, foreign and foreign affairs departments, which handled incoming and outgoing information respectively. This holds true for the groups within the department of photography as well. What should be noted as remarkable though is the layered repetition of organizational structures within Xinhua, repeating itself from the level of general (i.e. based on written content) departments, to the photography department (handling photographic content), to the provincial level branch office photography departments.

In an article from 1959, describing the development of Xinhua's department of news photography, Shi Shaohua enumerated the main function of his department: It was supposed to offer the aggregate of all news pictures (*xinwen tupian* 新闻图片) of and to the whole country. Accordingly the department offered news photos both to the domestic and foreign press, which were produced by its own photographers, as well as offering those photos to the local Chinese press, which had been received from foreign countries by Xinhua News Agency. Xinhua therefore – at least nominally – controlled all exchange of news photos both in China, as well as between China and other countries.

Additionally, these photos were not only offered to other media units in the form of printed photos, but also as offset plates, to enable their use by press organs and publishing houses too small to produce these for themselves.⁹⁰ But this function of providing the press with pictures to use in publications only describes the department's position and function within the wider network of the state's printing media. Its primary *raison d'être* was to promote the CCP's and government's goals and aims in pictorial form, as becomes clear from Xinhua's requirements communicated to its photographers:

In order for the photographic news reportage to fully reach the effectiveness of collectivized propagandists, agitators and organizers, Xinhua's department of photography requires that its photographers and editors must undertake their work on the basis of the party's and government's guiding principles and policies, because the party's and governments resolutions and policies are the principles and directions mobilized by the nation's people.

At the same time [it] requires its photographers to deeply immerse themselves in reality, connect with the masses and select from life those things which have a representative meaning and are essential and of common interest to a wide readership. These should be reported using a skilled photographic technique to mobilize the people to fulfil the party's and government's decisions and give impetus to society's progress.⁹¹

The new department encompassed Shi Shaohua's former section of news photography which became the department of coverage and editing (*caibian bumen* 采编部门), the office of photographic research (*sheying yanjiushi* 摄影研究室), which continued as research office (*yanjiu shi* 研究室) and the department of picture-management (*tupian jingli bu* 图片经理部), which became the management office (*jingli shi* 经理室). The editorial department of the *People's Illustrated* was not transferred to Xinhua, it instead continued on its own as the *People's Illustrated* office (*Renmin huabao she* 人民画报社), though besides the photos produced by its own photographers it also printed photos provided by Xinhua's photographers.⁹² Like the wider structure of Xinhua itself, the three mentioned sub-departments and offices of the department of photography also contained further subordinated departments and offices as shown in figure 12:

⁹⁰ Shi Shaohua 石少华 (1959): "Fazhan zhong de Xinhua she xinwen sheying bu 发展中的新华社新闻摄影部 [The Ongoing Development at Xinhua's Department of Photography]", in: *Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影 [Popular Photography], 1959, no. 9, pp. 5–7. p. 5.

⁹¹ Shi 1959, p. 7.

⁹² Chen 1996, p. 224; Shi 1959, p. 6.

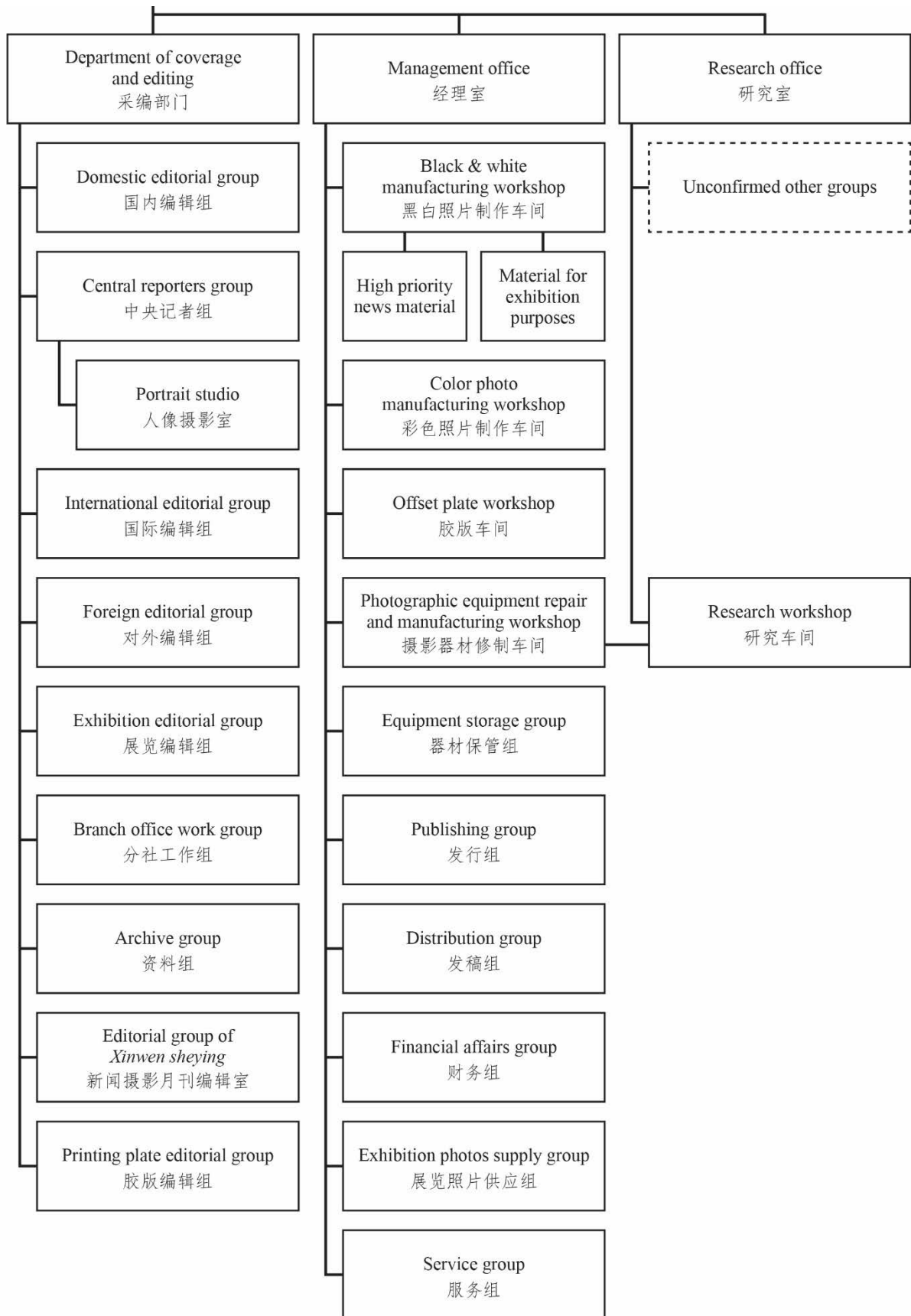


Figure 12: The departments and offices within Xinhua's department of photography. Design by author of this study, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.

3.2.1 The Department of Coverage and Editing

According to Shi Shaohua, the department of coverage and editing was the heart of Xinhua's department of photography. It managed photographic coverage of news events and editing by drafting the all-important news report plans (*baodao jihua* 报道计划), which regulated what would appear in the news and what would not. Following the planning, photographers were allocated accordingly through the central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhe zu* 中央记者组). At least in the early days of the department, the number of photographers attached to it was only 27, which necessitated dependency on other organizations' photographers to provide coverage for all of China.⁹³

The pictures received from the photographers inside and outside of Xinhua were edited by different subordinated groups according to their sources, as well as their intended areas of distribution, namely domestic and foreign. Another editorial group was responsible for preparing material received from international sources for distribution through Xinhua's network.⁹⁴ Similarly, another group handled the coordination with Xinhua's branch offices, which later on would have their own stables of photographers.

Still another group, the exhibition editorial group (*zhanlan bianjizu* 展览编辑组), was responsible for editing sets of photos for thematically arranged exhibitions on different topics like politics, military, industry, agriculture etc. These were exhibited in work units like factories, mines, schools and universities, libraries and later on people's communes and were an important direct outlet for Xinhua's photos which did not depend on illustrated magazines. These exhibition sets were distributed through Xinhua's own bookstores, which for example in 1959 already numbered 1302 all over China. To give an example of the scope of operations, the set *Long live the motherland* (*Zuguo wansui* 祖国万岁), produced to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in 1959, was printed in three formats – large, medium and “rural use” – with a combined print run of 2 million sets.⁹⁵

⁹³ Shi Shaohua 石少华 (et al.) (1984): *Sheying lilun he shijian* 摄影理论和实践 [Photographic Theory and Practice], 2nd ed, Beijing: Xinhua CBS. p. 172.

⁹⁴ Shi 1959, p. 6.

⁹⁵ Shi 1959, p. 5. Another exemplary set of these news photos for exhibition purposes, titled *Celebrating the 21st Anniversary of the Foundation of the PRC 1949—1970* (*Qingzhu Zonghua renmin gongheguo chengli ershiyi zhou nian* 庆祝中华人民共和国成立二十一周年 1949—1970), is shown in the historical section of the exhibition catalog Derenthal, Ludger; Zhang Yu (eds.) (2017): *Arbeiten in Geschichte: Zeitgenössische chinesische Fotografie und die Kulturrevolution* [Working on History: Contemporary Chinese Photography and the Cultural Revolution], Bielefeld: Kerber Photo Art, pp. 56-57.

3.2.2 The Management Office

The management office was responsible for handling the financial, material and technical aspects associated with the production and reproduction of photographs. Its subordinated manufacturing workshop (*zhizuo chejian* 制作车间) developed black and white as well as color negative films, enlarged and printed photos and reproduced them for distribution. These functions were handled by different sub-groups, with one group being responsible for handling the time-sensitive high priority material handed in by the photo reporters, while another, likely much larger sub-group was responsible for producing large numbers of photographic prints such as for the news photo exhibitions. The workshop was also able to retouch photos when necessary. The offset plate workshop (*jiaoban chejian* 胶版车间), established in 1956, was responsible for the production of offset printing plates of news photos. These were used by printing and publishing companies which lacked the equipment to produce their own plates. In 1959 more than 1000 publications were depending on Xinhua for the production of their printing plates.⁹⁶

In addition to these groups, there were further groups devoted to handling all the material aspects of the distribution of Xinhua's photographs.

3.2.3 The Research Office

The research office was responsible for improving the quality of work done by Xinhua's photographers, as well as the training of new photo reporters (*sheying jizhe* 摄影记者), editors (*bianji* 编辑) and manufacturing personnel (*zhizuo ren yuan* 制作人员) such as darkroom personnel (*anfang gongzuo ren yuan* 暗房工作人员), through specialized training classes (*xunlianban* 训练班). In 1952, these were planned to be held every year in September, with personnel from the branch offices coming to Beijing to receive training.⁹⁷

Furthermore the research office prepared texts and materials for publication in Xinhua's own vocational magazine *News photography* (*Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影), which itself was edited by an editorial group under the direction of the department of coverage and editing.

⁹⁶ Shi 1959, p. 6.

⁹⁷ "Zai ge zongfenshe he san ge fenshe jianli sheying jizhe zu de jue ding 在各总分社和三个分社建立摄影记者组的决定 [Decision on the Foundation of Photo Reporter Groups in Every Main Branch Office and Three Branch Offices] (01.07.1952)", in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiubu 新华社新闻研究部 (1978) *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], vol. 2, pp. 266-268, pp. 267-268.

The research office also controlled its own small attached workshop, which supported the management office's manufacturing workshop with technical expertise and otherwise was responsible for the manufacturing of experimental equipment like specialized cameras or enlargers.⁹⁸

Like indicated by the box drawn with a broken outline in the diagram in figure 12, the existence of further sub-departments under the research office seems highly likely, especially in light of the organizational and administrative abilities required for the training of new photographers coming to Beijing from all over China. Unfortunately, the sources do not detail further subdivisions of the research office.

3.2.4 Branch Office Photography Groups and Photography Departments

Soon after the establishment of the photography department, the photographers who had been concentrated in Beijing were spread over the administrative regions of China. Organized in photographer or photography groups (*sheying jizhe zu* 摄影记者组 or *sheying zu* 摄影组), they were attached to Xinhua's local branch offices. According to the official decision, the planned manpower of the photography groups in 1952 was to be as shown in the following table:

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Photography Groups at Xinhua's Branch Offices in 1952	
Branch office	Number of personnel
East China main branch office (<i>Huadong zongfenshe</i> 华东总分社), Shanghai.	4 (including 1 technician)
Northeast main branch office (<i>Dongbei zongfenshe</i> 东北总分社), Shenyang.	5 (including 1 technician)
North China main branch office (<i>Huabei zongfenshe</i> 华北总分社), no location given.	3 (including 1 technician)
Southwest main branch office (<i>Xinan zongfenshe</i> 西南总分社), Chongqing.	4 (including 1 technician)
Central-South main branch office (<i>Zhongnan zongfenshe</i> 中南总分社), Hankou.	3 (including 1 technician)
North-West main branch office (<i>Xibei zongfenshe</i> 西北总分社), Xi'an.	3 (including 1 technician)
Yunnan branch office (<i>Yunnan fenshe</i> 云南分社), Kunming.	1
Guangdong branch office (<i>Guangdong fenshe</i> 广东分社), Guangzhou.	1
Xinjiang branch office (<i>Xinjiang fenshe</i> 新疆分社), Wulumuqi.	1
Based on textual information in: "Zai ge zongfenshe he san ge fenshe jianli sheying jizhe zu de jue ding 在各总分社和三个分社建立摄影记者组的决定 [Decision on the Foundation of Photographers Groups in Every Main Branch Office and Three Branch Offices]" (01.07.1952) in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiubu 新华社新闻研究部 (1978) <i>Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian</i> 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency] 2nd of 5 vols. pp. 266-268. p. 266.	

Of these 25 groups members, 9 were full reporters, 10 were assistants (*zhuli* 助理) and trainees (*jianxi* 见习), 6 were manufacturing technicians (*zhizuoyuan* 制作员).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ "Zai ge zongfenshe he san ge fenshe [...]" 01.07.1952, p. 266.

Even though the photographer groups were nominally part of their respective branch office's organizational structure, the influence of the central photography department was still far reaching. While the branch offices had the right to select the photographers for their photographer groups – as long as the candidates were politically reliable, possessed photographic experience, possessed a certain level of writing ability and were of sound health – and were supposed to decide which news the photographers were to cover, the central department of photography still required copies of all news report plans (*baodao jihua* 报道计划) and work reports of the photographer groups, handled the training of the photographers as well as the allocation of tools (like cameras and darkroom equipment) and other materials. Most importantly, the photographs produced by the photographers groups were to be sent to the central photography department, before they could be distributed further,¹⁰⁰ resulting in complete control of Xinhua's center over all photographs deemed important.

Under the policy of the “Great Leap Forward” and following the rising demand for photos,¹⁰¹ in 1958 these photography groups were transformed into fully staffed photography departments, which mirrored the functions of Xinhua's central photography department in Beijing on a smaller, local scale. This was expected to allow the following changes in operation:

Branch offices' photography departments would no longer send photographs only to the center in Beijing, but would directly provide the media in their area of operation with the required photographs. This would help to meet demand and take pressure off the center. Furthermore, the branch departments could produce exhibition photos for their respective areas, which would not only raise the total output of these, but would also make it possible to produce photo exhibitions centered on local topics, thus being better suited to local conditions.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ In a report made by Xinhua's editorial board to the CCP's central propaganda section in September of 1958, it is mentioned that the number of pictures printed in newspapers had doubled compared to the year before, resulting in more pictures ordered from Xinhua: “Where small scale newspapers ordered 20 to 30 photos every month, now they order 50 or 60.” It is further mentioned that the number of large scale illustrated magazines was steadily increasing, which again would raise the demand for photographs. Finally, even though the output of exhibition photos rose from 2.5 mil. in 1957 to 4 mil. in 1958, demand could still not be met. Compare: “Guanyu zai quanguo Xinhua fenshe [...]” 1958.09.29, p. 289. While the numbers given should be taken with a grain of salt, the trend reported by Xinhua is likely true, for it compelled the agency to ask superior organs for permission to extend its operations.

Finally it was hoped that by organizing photographic training classes (*sheying xunlianban* 摄影训练班) through the local photography departments, the professional abilities of local photographers, working for organizations such as newspapers, could be raised.¹⁰²

In order for the branch office news photography departments (*fenshe xinwen sheying bu* 分社新闻摄影部) to be able to fulfil their newly assigned functions, the former photography groups' number of attached personnel was not only enlarged considerably, additionally, different technical and organizational specialists were added as well.

For a middle type photography department the personnel attached was planned to consist of the following:

Personnel planned to be allocated to a middle type photography department in 1958	
Head of department (<i>buzhuren</i> 部主任)	1
Photo reporters (<i>sheying jizhe</i> 摄影记者)	10-15
Editors and communication personnel (<i>bianji jian tonglian</i> 编辑兼通联)	2-3
Archive personnel (<i>zilio</i> 资料)	1-2
Manufacturing and printing plate technicians (<i>zhizuo he jiaoban gongren</i> 制作和胶版工人)	4-6
Distribution and financials personnel (<i>faxing jian caiwu</i> 发行兼财务)	1-2
Typist (<i>daziyuan</i> 打字员)	1
Total number of personnel	20-30
Based on textual information in: "Guanyu Xinhua fenshe sheying bu de renwu, ganbu bianzhi deng wenti de yijian 关于新华社摄影部的任务、干部编制等问题的意见 [Ideas on the Responsibilities, Cadre Strength and Other Problems of Photography Departments of Xinhua's Branch Offices] (13.10.1958)", Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): <i>Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian</i> 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 4, pp. 292-294.	

Under the slogan of "large-middle-small mutual relationships" (*dazhongxiao xianghu guanxi* 大中小相互关系), different branch photography departments were either classified as a middle-type (*zhongxing* 中型) or small type (*xiaoxing* 小型), with corresponding differences in responsibilities of the department and number of cadres allocated.

¹⁰² Ibid.

The central news photography department in Beijing was to be the only large-type (*daxing* 大型) in this relationships. Differing from the middle-type described in the table above, small-type photography departments only consisted of 12-17 persons, with the head of the department expected to work as a photographer or editor in addition to his administrative duties. It seems highly likely that the middle-type departments correspond with the main branch office photography groups mentioned earlier, with the small-type departments corresponding with the branch office photography groups.¹⁰³

In 1959, branch photography departments had been established in Xinhua's branch offices of Shanghai, Jiangsu, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Shandong, Fujian, Guangzhou, Gansu and Inner Mongolia. As a result, the number of photographers employed by Xinhua rose from 27 in 1952 – the year the central photography department was founded – to 179 in August 1959.¹⁰⁴ In places where a branch photography department had not been established yet, or it was otherwise impossible to station Xinhua's photographers, Xinhua's normal (i.e. writing reports) correspondents also took photos to the best of their abilities, or local photographers were expected to send in contributions.¹⁰⁵

3.2.4 The People's Liberation Army Branch Office

While not part of Xinhua's department of photography, but of Xinhua's general departmental structure (i.e. generally processing information in textual form), some attention needs to be given here to Xinhua's People's Liberation Army branch office (*Jiefangjun fenshe* 解放军分社). Established in 1956, its structure was similar to the provincial branch offices of Xinhua, with the important difference that it was located at Xinhua's main office in Beijing.

¹⁰³ Compare: "Guanyu Xinhua fenshe sheying bu de renwu, ganbu bianzhi deng wenti de yijian 关于新华分社摄影部的任务、干部编制等问题的意见 [Ideas on the Responsibilities, Cadre Strength and Other Problems of Photography Departments of Xinhua's Branch Offices] (13.10.1958)", Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 2, pp. 266-268.

¹⁰⁴ Shi 1984, p. 172.

¹⁰⁵ Shi 1959, p. 6.

The military's branch office was "responsible for undertaking military affairs reportage work on the scope of the entire army",¹⁰⁶ which more generally speaking meant to connect the PLA to Xinhua's organizational system. For this purpose it was provided with a number of personnel similar to the provincial branch offices, as shown in the following table:

Personnel planned to be allocated to the People's Liberation Army branch office in 1956	
Director (<i>shezhang</i> 社长)	1
Head of coverage and editing (<i>caibian zhuren</i> 采编主任)	1
Editors (<i>bianji</i> 编辑)	2
Reporters (<i>jizhe</i> 记者)	13
Archivist (<i>ziliaoyuan</i> 资料员)	1
Deciphering personnel (<i>jiyaoyuan</i> 机要员)	3
Driver (<i>qiche siji</i> 汽车司机)	1
Total number of personnel	22
Based on textual information in: "Work plan of the PLA branch office 解放军分社工作方案" (1956), p.589.	

This personnel was to be located in the same office as the military group (*junshizu* 军事组) of the domestic editorial department (*guonei xinwen bianjibu* 国内新闻编辑部).¹⁰⁷ However, since it was decided that the "[...] military reportages should revolve around the struggle for the liberation of Taiwan, and reportages on the situation of the struggle of the army and people of Fujian and other coastal areas against the enemy should be strengthened, [...]",¹⁰⁸ a reporter group (*jizhe zu* 记者组) consisting of 3 resident reporters – with one serving as group chief –, 2 deciphering specialists and one driver (provided with one car) was stationed at the Fujian branch office of Xinhua, with the group chief eligible to take part in the leadership work of the Fujian branch office. The reporters were also permitted to join the meetings of political departments and headquarters of the PLA, as well as the attached work units of the Fujian military region.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ "Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang'an 解放军分社工作方案 [Work Plan of the PLA Branch Office] (08.1956)", in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 3, pp. 588–591, p. 588.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ "Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang'an" 1956, p.588.

¹⁰⁹ "Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang'an" 1956, p.589.

To promote exchange with the military, the reporters were expected to be allocated to military training by the general political department of the PLA, and “young officers [of the PLA] of a suitable cultural level [were to be] accepted into the PLA branch office [of Xinhua].”¹¹⁰

In addition to the reporter group in Fujian, it was planned to invite the permanent reporters of the *PLA Newspaper* (*Jiefangjun bao* 解放军报) to become “special agreement reporters” (*teyue jizhe* 特约记者) for Xinhua, and to designate one reporter of every provincial branch office to concentrate on military reportage work.¹¹¹

All of this was to be done under shared leadership with the PLA:

Regarding political and professional questions, the PLA branch office [of Xinhua] receives dual leadership from the general political department [of the PLA], as well as Xinhua's main office. The PLA branch office is one of the departments directly subordinate to the general political department [of the PLA], and is under the day-to-day leadership of the general political department's department of propaganda (*zongzheng xuanchuanbu* 总政宣传部). The general political department's department of propaganda should give the branch office directives on the policies of military reportage in a timely fashion; it should also approve [reportages on] big events and the quarterly reportage plans, should supervise the daily work of the branch office and help it to solve necessary questions of work. The PLA branch office is at the same time also a part of the organization of Xinhua's main office, which should – same as with the other branch offices – strengthen its political and professional leadership and directly manage the daily news reportage work of the branch office.¹¹²

Leaving aside further specifics of this organizational cooperation, starting from 1956, the comparatively new civilian structures of Xinhua were connected with the existing journalistic or propagandistic structures of the PLA. While obviously not the center of attention in the work plan, even photography was given a thought:

In order to conform to the information and newsletters to be published, the reporters of the branch office can take pictures of military affairs in every army [unit]. The photos will be send by the photography department of the main office to all relevant departments for examination and distribution. But this work is not regarded as official responsibility of the reporters.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang’an” 1956, p.590.

¹¹² “Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang’an” 1956, p.591.

¹¹³ “Jiefangjun fenshe gongzuofang’an” 1956, p.589.

Thus even though the structures in 1956 were still somewhat provisional, the foundation for a permanent connection of the photo network and the military's media apparatus was laid. Even though the sources on this cooperation are extremely limited, the author wants to argue that the importance of this connection between (civilian) Xinhua and the People's Liberation Army cannot be underestimated.

Besides the personal background of a large part of the photographic administrators at Xinhua, e.g. Shi Shaohua, who were veterans of the PLA, there was now an ongoing connection to the military on an official, operational level. Not only does this make it possible to explain how the photos of model soldier Lei Feng – taken by photographers of the PLA – could later on circulate in the civilian media, it also offers an hypothetical explanation of why the people's militia – prominent topic of photographic reportage in the civilian media in the 1960s – were almost exclusively depicted wearing the costumes of the natives of the southern (Fujian?) coastline, the area designated as especially important for the work of Xinhua's PLA branch office. Last but not least, knowledge of this connection can perhaps help to explain why complete military control over Xinhua – naturally including the photography department – during the height of the "Cultural Revolution" could be established comparatively smoothly: both at Xinhua, as well as in the PLA there already existed specialists trained in and used to cooperating with the other organization.

3.2.5 Xinhua's Catalogue of Photos

As was already shown, the years following the foundation of Xinhua's department of photography were used to considerably widen the scope of photographic activities and capabilities, culminating in the publication of the first issue of *News Picture Weekly* (*Xinwen tupian zhoubao* 新闻图片周报) in January 1955. Published weekly, this catalogue was the channel through which Xinhua offered newspapers, illustrated magazines and other organs of the media a selection of photos produced by its photographers, as well as those photos received from other units or overseas. To facilitate easy identification of the needed pictures, they were printed with an order number.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Ma 1982, pp. 31-32.

As one manifestation of the industrial policy of the “Great Leap Forward”, from March 1958 onward, the catalogue was published daily, in order to be able to satisfy the already mentioned rise in demand for photos, as well as to be able to publish the growing number of photographs coming in from the branch offices. At the same time, the title of the catalogue was changed to *News Photos* (*Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片). In this form the catalogue was published daily until at least 1980.¹¹⁵ An example picture of a catalogue page is given in figure 13.



Figure 13: Photos to be used by media units for the campaign promoting model soldier Lei Feng as published in: *Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片 [News Photos], 1963, no. 1353 (14.02.1963), p. 3, (crop of page by author).

¹¹⁵ Ma 1982, p. 32.

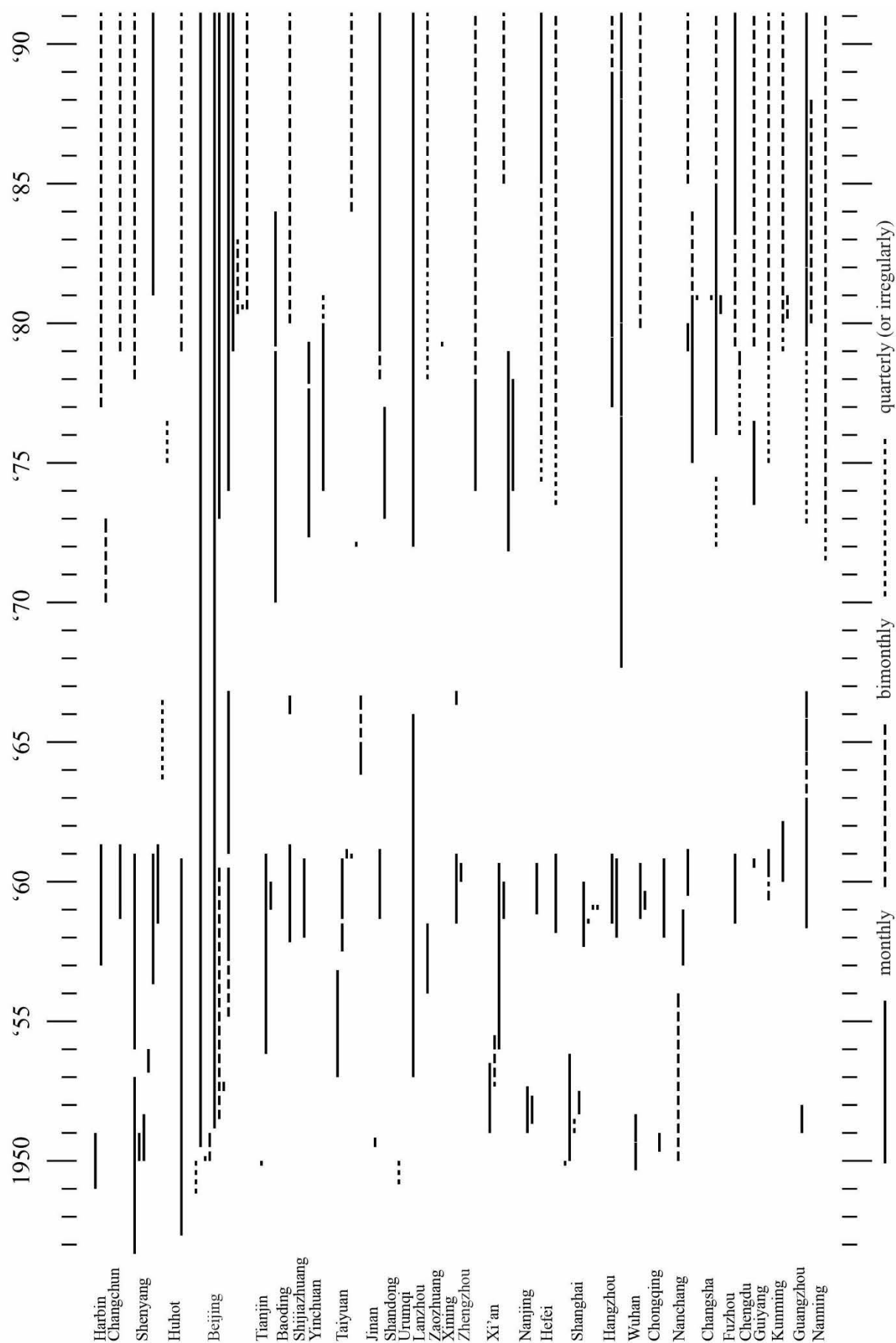
3.3 Distribution Media: Illustrated Magazines

Even though other forms of distribution for photographs existed, like the already mentioned news photo exhibitions organized by Xinhua itself, the most important distribution channel for photographs during the period under scrutiny were illustrated magazines. Some of these had their own attached photographer groups (*sheying zu* 摄影组), enabling them to produce their own photographs, while others completely depended on outside sources (e.g. Xinhua's department of photography and its catalogue of news photos) for photographs to print. Since these magazines are of such importance for the understanding of Chinese photography, a list of these publications is provided in the appendix of this study. A systematic survey of these by the author revealed some patterns in the development of the publishing environment in the period under scrutiny, which are depicted in figure 14 on the following page.

The diagram shows illustrated magazines published in China between about 1949 and 1990. Each magazine is represented by a line, with solid lines representing magazines published monthly or more often, broken lines representing magazines published bimonthly and dotted lines representing magazines published quarterly or even irregularly. The magazines are ordered from top to bottom of the diagram by the cities in which they were published, roughly following the cities' location in China on a North-South axis.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Since the purpose of this diagram is to show macroscopic developments, individual illustrated magazines are not named in the diagram.

Figure 14: Timeline of illustrated magazines published in the PRC. Design by author, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.



When comparing the dates and places of publication of these illustrated magazines, a couple of development trends can be discerned:

In establishing illustrated magazines in the closing stages of the civil war, and the beginning of reconstruction after the foundation of the PRC, a first wave of illustrated magazines were established between 1950 and 1952, beginning in the North of China. These by and large were magazines founded and controlled by the military, as was already introduced in the first chapter.

These illustrated magazines were joined by a growing number of other illustrated magazines, published by various organizations and institutions, which in most cases did not survive very long.

From 1958 on – the period of industrial construction under the policy of the “Great Leap Forward” – a large number of illustrated magazines were founded all over China. However, most of these were shut down in the spring of 1961, leaving photographic publishing with only a handful of distribution channels, among them the centrally controlled *People’s Illustrated* and *PLA Illustrated*, which are visible in the diagram as the two long unbroken lines in the area of Beijing.

3.3.1 Illustrated Magazines Published by Central Organizations

As the activities of Chinese photographers during the Anti-Japanese War and the civil war had proven, producing illustrated magazines locally was already a viable way to publish photographs, even when neither sophisticated printing technology nor distribution channels were available. Publishing on a national scale required much higher levels of organizational capabilities though, which were only gradually reached during the 1950s, paralleling the construction of administrative and governmental organizations in other areas.

In July of 1950, the first issue of *People’s Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报) was published by the general news office of the Central People’s Government (*Zhongyang renmin zhengfu xinwen zongshu* 中央人民政府新闻总署). After the other departments of the general news office were transferred to Xinhua in 1952, the editorial office of the *People’s Illustrated* continued on its own as the *People’s Illustrated* office (*Renmin huabao she* 人民画报社).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Compare Chen 1996, p. 224; Shi 1959, p. 6.

The magazine continues to be published monthly to this day, which makes it an outstanding source for analysis of the changes in Chinese photography. Over the years, the edition aimed at Chinese readers on the mainland was joined by a further 20 editions, including another edition in Chinese aimed at overseas readers, four in the languages of national minorities and 15 in different foreign languages.¹¹⁸

From February 1951, another illustrated magazine with national reach supplemented the party-center-controlled *People's Illustrated*. The *PLA Illustrated*, published by the *People's Liberation Army Illustrated* office (*Jiefangjun huabao she* 解放军画报社) under the general political department of the Military Affairs Committee of the Central People's Government (*Zhongyang renmin zhengfu renmin gemingjunshi weiyuanhui zongzhengzhibu* 中央人民政府人民革命军事委员会总政治部).¹¹⁹ Apart from irregular publishing schedules in some years, it was published monthly and presented the military's pictorial perspective on China.

In sharp contrast with the *People's Illustrated*, which was an entirely new project started by the Central People's Government in 1950, the editorial department of the *PLA Illustrated* consisted of the editorial department of the former *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报), which itself had been formed on the basis of the editorial department of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jinchaji huabao* 晋察冀画报) in 1948, thus being rooted deeply in the tradition of military-administered photographic publishing.¹²⁰

Added to these magazines in February 1955 was the *Nationalities Illustrated* (*Minzu huabao* 民族画报), published monthly by the General Affairs Committee for National Minorities (*Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui* 国家民族事务委员会) in the languages of five of China's largest national minorities, for example Korean and Tibetan.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Wu Jie 伍杰; Zhao Hankun 赵含坤 (2000): *Zhongwen qikan da cidian* 中文期刊大词典 [Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Periodicals], Beijing: Beijing daxue CBS, p. 1277.

¹¹⁹ Starting in November 1954 it was published by the General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (*Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zongzhengzhibu* 中国人民解放军总政治部), eventually being published by the People's Liberation Army Illustrated office (*Jiefangjun huabao she* 解放军画报社) since July 1957. It was published monthly, except for the time between July 1958 to April 1961, when it was published every two weeks and between February 1967 and September 1968, when it was published as a two-paged leaflet every ten days. Compare: Ma Yunzeng 马运增 (1983): "Xin Zhongguo huabao yilan 新中国画报一览 [General Survey of Illustrated Magazines in New China]", published in: *Zhongguo sheying shiliao* 中国摄影史料 [Historical Materials on Chinese Photography], 1983, no. 5/6, pp. 38-52.

¹²⁰ Chen 1996, p. 223.

¹²¹ Wu; Zhao 2000, p. 1070.

While it was also published on a national scale, besides some smaller irregularities in publishing,¹²² it had to stop publication between October 1966 and December 1973, which not only makes it a less suitable source for following the development of Chinese photography, but also shows it had little resistance to offer against being shut down or was not considered as strategically important as the *People's Illustrated* or the *PLA Illustrated*.

3.3.2 Illustrated Magazines Published by Regional and Local Organizations

Other than the three large illustrated magazines published by central organizations in Beijing, there were many smaller ones, which were published by regional and local organizations and thus were only available on a regional or even local scale. While the three centrally published magazines mostly showed a remarkable continuity, the regional magazines are much harder to trace, for their publication fluctuated considerably, with some magazines managing to stay in print for years while others disappeared after just one or two issues. Regarding the publishing environment for photography as a whole however, three distinct groups of illustrated magazines published by organizations not belonging to the center can be identified in the 1950s:

Firstly, and mirroring the organizational history of the military-controlled *PLA Illustrated*, during the early 1950s there were some magazines which had been founded during the war under military management that continued publication. These were soon joined by newly founded magazines of the military, affiliated with specific areas and units of the military administration. As for the coordination between these magazines, in early April 1951, the Central South (*Zhongnan junqu* 中南军区) and Southwest (*Xinan junqu* 西南军区) military regions held a conference on questions of photography within the military. The results of this conference were made available to other units through an article published in *Photo Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网) – the military's vocational magazine for photographers. The article recommended that every army district should publish an illustrated magazine. These could be published as a supplement of the local army newspapers (*junbao* 军报), which could also handle the administrative aspects of publishing such as editing, publishing, printing and distribution.

¹²² From February 1955 to December 1956 it was published bimonthly. Starting in January 1957 it was published monthly, but had to stop publication in July 1960. Publication was resumed again in January 1961, only to be stopped again in October 1966. Since January 1974 it continues to be published monthly. Compare Ma 1983, p. 43–44.

Responsible for providing the photos for the magazines were photography groups (*sheyingzu* 摄影组), attached to provincial military regions (*sheng junqu* 省军区) and armies (*jun* 军). Of these, the groups attached to a provincial military region were supposed to have six photographers, while the ones attached to armies were supposed to have five photographers, which the authorities in charge were supposed to recruit by themselves.¹²³ Based on the known number of illustrated magazines published by the military (which are corresponding to the number of military regions) there would have been between 30 to 36 full time photo journalists employed by the military in the early 1950s. An overview of these illustrated magazines published by the military is given in the attached table:

Illustrated magazines published by the administrations of military districts		
North China (Huabei)	<i>North China Illustrated</i> (<i>Huabei huabao</i> 华北画报)	Beijing, Oct. 1948 – 1950 (editorial office afterwards published <i>PLA Illustrated</i>)
Northeast (Dongbei)	<i>Northeast Illustrated</i> (<i>Dongbei huabao</i> 东北画报)	Shenyang, Dec. 1945 – May 1955
East China (Huadong)	<i>East China Illustrated</i> (<i>Huadong huabao</i> 华东画报)	Shanghai, Dec. 1949 – Feb. 1953
Central South (Zhongnan)	<i>Frontline Illustrated</i> (<i>Qianxian huabao</i> 前线画报)	Wuhan, Sept. 1949 – Sept. 1950
	<i>Soldier's Illustrated</i> (<i>Zhanshi huabao</i> 战士画报)	Wuhan, Sept. 1950 – Aug. 1951
Northwest (Xibei)	<i>Northwest Illustrated</i> (<i>Xibei huabao</i> 西北画报)	Xi'an, 1951 – June 1953
Southwest (Xinan)	<i>Southwest Illustrated</i> (<i>Xinan huabao</i> 西南画报)	Chongqing, May 1950 – Jul. 1951
The magazines presented here are taken from the list of illustrated magazines in the appendix, which contains further information on publishers and more specific information on publication dates.		

As can be seen from the table, these magazines were successively closed down until the middle of the 1950s. The main reason for this is very likely the establishment of the *PLA Illustrated* in 1951, which was published by the central military administration and allowed more control over the publication of photos as well as a more unified style.

¹²³ “Dangqian budui sheying gongzuo bixu jie jue de jige wenti 当前部队摄影工作必须解决的几个问题 [Questions in the Present Photographic Work of the Troops Needing to be Settled]”, in: *Sheying wang* 摄影网 [Photo Network], 1951, no. 7/8, pp. 3–6.

It has to be assumed that the military's photographers – who had not been assigned to the illustrated magazines anyway, but to specific military commands – continued their work much as before, with the only difference that their photos were now sent to Beijing for further distribution, rather than to the local illustrated magazine. After 1956, photographs taken by photographers of the military could additionally be circulated through the photo network, via Xinhua's own military branch office, making it even more unnecessary or even undesirable for lower-level units of the military to control their own publishing channels.

These military magazines were soon supplanted by a second group of magazines published by various local civilian organizations. Examples include the *Chinese Workers Illustrated* (*Zhongguo gongren huakan* 中国工人画刊), published in Beijing from 1950 to 1951, the *Jiangxi Illustrated* (*Jiangxi huabao* 江西画报), published in Nanchang from 1950 to 1956 or the *Peasant's Illustrated* (*Nongmin huabao* 农民画报), published in Shenyang from 1951 to 1952.¹²⁴ While most of these disappeared very quickly, some like the *Jiangxi Illustrated* were able to stay in print for years. Due to scarcity of source materials, no further information on photographers affiliated with these magazines can be provided. It seems very likely however that local “old photographers” – i.e. photographers who had received vocational training before the civil war – were staffing the photographer groups of these magazines under the guidance of local cadres, because the photographers trained by the military during wartime largely stayed with the military in the early 50s, with other central organizations like Xinhua or the *People's Illustrated* also having a high priority for receiving ideologically sound photographers, leaving the local press with whatever photographers were available to them locally.

A third – and the largest – distinct group of magazines began to appear in the late 1950s as a product of the economic policy of the “Great Leap Forward”: The administrations of most provinces started to publish illustrated magazines of their own, which concentrated on local topics and were named after their home province, like for example the *Shandong Illustrated* (*Shandong huabao* 山东画报). Further examples are given in the table on the following page:

¹²⁴ Sources and further references are given in the list of illustrated magazines in the addendum.

Illustrated magazines published in the provinces during the “Great Leap Forward”	
<i>Anhui Illustrated</i> (<i>Anhui huabao</i> 安徽画报)	Hefei, Feb. 1958 – Jan. 1961
<i>Gansu Illustrated</i> (<i>Gansu huabao</i> 甘肃画报)	Lanzhou, Jan. 1956 – June 1958
<i>Heilongjiang Illustrated</i> (<i>Heilongjiang huabao</i> 黑龙江画报)	Harbin, Jan. 1957 – Mar. 1961
<i>Shaanxi Illustrated</i> (<i>Shanxi huabao</i> 陕西画报)	Xi'an, Sept. 1958 – 1960
<i>Neimenggu Illustrated</i> (<i>Neimenggu huabao</i> 内蒙古画报)	Huhot, May 1947 – Nov. 1960
<i>Shanxi Illustrated</i> (<i>Shanxi huabao</i> 山西画报)	Taiyuan, Jul. 1957 – Oct. 1960
<i>Hebei Illustrated</i> (<i>Hebei huabao</i> 河北画报)	Baoding, Oct. 1957 – Mar. 1961
<i>Guangdong Illustrated</i> (<i>Guangdong huabao</i> 广东画报)	May 1958 – Jul. 1966
<i>Zhejiang Illustrated</i> (<i>Zhejiang huabao</i> 浙江画报)	Hangzhou, Jul. 1958 – Jan. 1961
<i>Qinghai Illustrated</i> (<i>Qinghai huabao</i> 青海画报)	Xining, Jul. 1958 – Jan. 1961
<i>Fujian Illustrated</i> (<i>Fujian huabao</i> 福建画报)	Fuzhou, Jan. 1958 – Dec. 1960
<i>Shandong Illustrated</i> (<i>Shandong huabao</i> 山东画报)	Jinan, Aug. 1958 – Feb. 1961
<i>Hubei Illustrated</i> (<i>Hubei huabao</i> 湖北画报)	Wuhan, Aug. 1958 – Aug. 1960
<i>Jilin Illustrated</i> (<i>Jilin huabao</i> 吉林画报)	Changchun, Aug. 1958 – Mar. 1961
<i>Jiangsu Illustrated</i> (<i>Jiangsu huabao</i> 江苏画报)	Nanjing, Oct. 1958 – Sept. 1960
<i>Chongqing Illustrated</i> (<i>Chongqing huabao</i> 重庆画报)	Chongqing, 1958 – Oct. 1960
<i>Sichuan Illustrated</i> (<i>Sichuan huabao</i> 四川画报)	Chengdu, Jul. 1960 – Oct. 1960
<i>Yunnan Illustrated</i> (<i>Yunnan huabao</i> 云南画报)	Kunming, Jan. 1960 – Feb. 1962
<i>Jiangxi Illustrated</i> (<i>Jiangxi huabao</i> 江西画报)	Nanchang, June 1959 – Feb. 1961
<i>Guizhou Illustrated</i> (<i>Guizhou huabao</i> 贵州画报)	Guiyang, Mar. 1959 – Feb. 1961
<i>Xinjiang Illustrated</i> (<i>Xinjiang huabao</i> 新疆画报)	Urumqi, 1953 – 1966
The magazines presented here are taken from the list of illustrated magazines in the appendix, which should be consulted for further reference. Where specific months are not given, the information was not available to the author.	

These magazines had their own attached groups of photographers to cover local events and developments, but also relied on the Xinhua News Agency (and its *News Photos* catalogue) to provide them with photos as well. This not only meant photos from other provinces or foreign countries, but also photos from Xinhua's local branch photography departments. To give just one example of this twofold sources of photographs published in the magazines, in *Shandong Illustrated* issue 1960, no. 12, two different photo stories on economic topics were credited to the photographers Wang Ruihua 王瑞华 and Chen Zhiping 陈之平.¹²⁵ While both of them were responsible for photographs published through the magazine, their organizational affiliation and educational backgrounds were markedly different.

Born in Shanghai in 1922, Chen Zhiping was an “old photographer”, whose pre-war education allowed him to gain an early foothold in the new photo network: Already before the war he had graduated from Shanghai's Private Journalism College (*Shanghai minzhi xinwen zhuanke xuexiao* 上海民治新闻专科学校), continuing his studies at the Shanghai East-China Journalism Institute (*Shanghai huadong xinwen xueyuan* 上海华东新闻学院) in 1949. Early the next year he began to work as a photo reporter for the department of news photography of the general news office of the Central People's Government. Between 1952 and 1963 he consecutively worked as a photojournalist for Xinhua's department of photography in Beijing, the East China branch office in Shanghai and finally the Shandong branch office in Jinan (*Jinan Xinhuashe Shandong fenshe* 济南新华社山东分社). He joined the CCP in 1955, and the Photography Association in 1959. In 1963 he was transferred back to the central photography department in Beijing, where he continued to work as a photo reporter and picture editor for many years.¹²⁶

Wang Ruihua on the other hand, born in Jinan in 1936, was only trained to be a photographer later, as a secondary career through the organizations of the photo network. After graduating in 1954 from the Jinan Cooperative Accounting School (*Jinan hezuo kuaiji xuexiao* 济南合作会计学校), he became a statistician at the Linqing wholesale station of the Shandong province supply and marketing cooperative (*Shandong sheng gongxiao hezuoshe Linqing pifa zhan* 山东省供销合作社临清批发站).

¹²⁵ Wang Ruihua 王瑞华; Shi Jimin 史记民 (1960): “Kaiyuanjieliu zhiyuan nongye 开源节流支援农业 [Support Agriculture by Increasing Income and Decreasing Expenditures]”, in: *Shandong huabao* 山东画报 [Shandong Illustrated], 1960, no. 12, pp. 22–23.

Chen Zhiping 陈之平. “Shiying renmin shenghuo xuyao jiji shengchan xiaoshangpin 适应人民生活需要积极生产小商品 [Vigorously Producing Small Commodities to Conform to the Requirements of the People's Life]”, in: *Shandong huabao* 山东画报 [Shandong Illustrated], 1960, no. 12, pp. 24–25.

¹²⁶ Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 478–479.

In 1956 he was transferred to the commerce office of Linqing city, where he worked as a section member (meaning a junior government employee), and joined the CCP in the same year. In 1958 he was transferred to the *Linqing City Newspaper* (*Linqing shibao* 临清市报) to become a reporter, and here he had his first professional contact with photography. In 1959 he took part in a training class for news photography (*xinwen sheying xuexi ban* 新闻摄影学习班) organized by Xinhua News Agency and was afterwards transferred to the *Shandong Illustrated* in 1960. After the magazine was closed down in 1961 he became an art editor (*meishu bianji* 美术编辑) at the art editorial office (*meishu bianji shi* 美术编辑室) of the Shandong People's Press (*Shandong renmin chubanshe* 山东人民出版社). Later that year he was transferred to the *Masses Daily* (*Dazhong ribao* 大众日报), where he continued to work as a photo reporter for the years to come.¹²⁷

Comparing the careers of Chen and Wang, it appears that in governing access to positions in the photo network, a distinct hierarchy was in existence. Gaining positions in the central institutions – or even their outposts in the branch offices – required either definite technical skills or political clout, while the positions in the local media were filled with anyone available after a short period of training. Even though no in-depth analysis of the photographers group (*sheyingzu* 摄影组) of the *Shandong Illustrated* was undertaken, the search for biographical information on photographers mentioned in its pages, other than Chen and Wang, turned up nothing. While this can have many possible reasons, it seems likely that these lower level photographers were not deemed to be important enough to be included in historical studies or reference works.

As for the situation at the other provincial magazines, perhaps the example of the *Shandong Illustrated* can serve as an indicator: While not reaching the level of places like Shanghai or Hong Kong, being a coastal province, Shandong was still comparatively well-developed. The availability of photographic manpower to work in local magazines in the provinces of the hinterland can be assumed to not have been better – and probably much more limited – than in Shandong, meaning that cases such as the one of Wang Ruihua – a statistician turned photographer – would have been common there as well.

¹²⁷ Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 84-85.

Apart from the curious cases of the *Guangdong Illustrated* and *Xinjiang Illustrated*, which were both published until 1966, all of these provincial illustrated magazines stopped publishing in the winter of 1960/61 under the economic (and political) pressure of the failed mass campaign of the “Great Leap Forward”, forcing their attached photographers to find employment elsewhere. This is discussed in section 3.9.5 of this chapter.

3.4 Vocational Magazines and Newsletters

As has been mentioned before, various centers of administration within the photo network published their own vocational magazines. These included the military as well as civilian centers, as shown in the following table.

Vocational magazines and semi-public newsletters published by various administrative bodies of photography		
People’s Liberation Army (<i>Jiefangjun</i> 解放军)	<i>Photo Network</i> (<i>Sheying wang</i> 摄影网)	Jun. 1948 – Nov. 1954
	<i>PLA Illustrated Newsletter</i> (<i>Jiefangjun huabao tongxun</i> 解放军画报通讯)	1955 – 1985
General news office of the Central People’s Government (<i>Zhongyang renmin zhengfu xinwen zongshu</i> 中央人民政府新闻总署)	<i>Photography Work</i> (<i>Sheying gongzuo</i> 摄影工作)	Mar. 1951 – Aug. 1952
Xinhua News Agency (<i>Xinhua tongxunshe</i> 新华通讯社)	<i>Photography Vocation</i> (<i>Sheying yewu</i> 摄影业务)	May 1953 – Dec. 1956
	<i>News Photography</i> (<i>Xinwen sheying</i> 新闻摄影)	Jan. 1957 – Aug. 1960
Photography Association (<i>Zhongguo sheying xuehui</i> 中 国摄影学会)	<i>Chinese Photography</i> (<i>Zhongguo sheying</i> 中国摄影)	Apr. 1957 – Mar. 1966 (and 1974 – today)
	<i>Popular Photography</i> (<i>Dazhong sheying</i> 大众摄影)	Jul. 1958 – Jul. 1960 (and 1979 – today)

Disregarding direct – verbal or written – communication within editorial departments, as well as internal newsletters, these publications were the primary means of communication among photographers and between the administration and photographers. They were used to make knowledge of technical advances in photography known to wider circles of readers, to exchange work experience in the various fields of photography, to discuss aesthetic merits or demerits of specific photographic artworks, to make summaries of conferences and study groups available and, last but not least, to publish debates and political campaigns through which the administration guided the direction of photographic work.

In contrast with the *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影), published by the Photography Association, especially the magazines published earlier quite clearly concentrated on those aspects of photography “dearest” to the administrative center publishing them, with *Photo Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网) concentrating mostly on military photography, while *Photography Vocation* (*Sheying yewu* 摄影业务) had a focus on (civilian) press photography.

After the association’s *Popular Photography* (*Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影) – aimed at amateur photographers – and Xinhua’s *News Photography* (*Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) – aimed at press photographers – stopped publication in July and August 1960 respectively, for the years to come *Chinese Photography* was the last vocational magazine on photography to be published openly to a non-specific audience of photographers and related persons.

The situation of the vocational magazines thus closely paralleled the condition of the wider illustrated press, which also saw most magazines closing down in the winter of 1960/61, leaving only the centrally published magazines to continue.

Acknowledging the continued necessity for directing the work of the media apparatus’ photographers, it seems that further internal newsletters published by different editorial groups ought to have existed after the winter of 1960/61, but without access to internal archives their existence can neither be conclusively proven nor disproven. The case is the same for the military’s *PLA Illustrated Newsletter* (*Jiefangjun huabao tongxun* 解放军画报通讯), which appears to have been published even during the “Cultural Revolution”,¹²⁸ but officially remains under lock and key until today.

¹²⁸ The author was able to acquire a handful of issues of the *PLA Illustrated Newsletter* (*Jiefangjun huabao tongxun* 解放军画报通讯) through the antiquarian market, even though they are all marked “internal publication – take care of preservation” (*neibu kanwu zhuyi baocun* 内部刊物 • 注意保存). Disregarding some gaps, these cover the period of 1971 to 1973. The first one of these, 1971 no. 3 notes on the back cover that

3.5 Exhibitions and other Means of Photographic Publication

Besides illustrated magazines and vocational magazines, another important outlet for photographs were exhibitions. These generally came in two types: Xinhua's own news photo exhibitions (*xinwen zhaopian zhanlan* 新闻照片展览) – already described above – which essentially were just another editorial form of the output of news photos, and more prestigious exhibitions like the national photographic art exhibitions, curated and organized every year by a committee made up of members of the Photography Association. These curators nominally had a different outlook from the editors responsible for the day-to-day editing of the photographs produced by the workers of the photo network, stressing the artistic aspects in the selection of photographs. This difference was largely theoretic though, since the leadership of the association was exclusively made up of high-ranking photographer cadres and editors of the photo network anyhow.

Furthermore, the photos they were curating still had to come from the photographers of the media, who were generally the only ones able to produce photos in notable numbers. An example of this is the following photo of a Vietnamese young woman, taken by Chen Bo 陈勃 (1925—2015),¹²⁹ which was both published as an artwork in the 1963 *National Photographic Art Exhibition* and as part of a photo essay on the “Brothers of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam” in the *People's Illustrated* 1964, no. 4.

in overall counting this issue was no. 130 (总第 130 期). Assuming one of these was published per month (as was the case after 1972), this would cover the ten years back to 1961.

¹²⁹ Chen was born in Hebei province, in the county of Fuping 阜平. Between 1940 and 1945 he was active in propaganda work for different work units in the Jin-Cha-Ji region. In 1945 he became a reporter and editor for the *Workers Daily* (*Gongren ribao* 工人日报) in Zhangjiakou. In 1947 he began to work for Xinhua News Agency in Shijiazhuang, as well as a reporter for the *Shijiazhuang Daily* (*Shijiazhuang ribao* 石家庄日报). After 1948 he worked simultaneously for the propaganda department and cultural and education department of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui* 中华全国总工会), as well as its editorial and publishing office. From 1949 on, he was involved with preparing the publication of the *Chinese Workers Illustrated* (*Zhongguo gongren huakan* 中国工人画刊) and became vice-director of the magazine. He afterwards transferred to the Workers Press (*Gongren chubanshe* 工人出版社), where he was responsible for the editing and publication of photo books.

From 1954 to 1956 he studied journalism at the central party school of the CCP (*Zhonggong zhongyang gaoji dangxiao* 中共中央高级党校), afterwards transferring to the *Workers Daily* again. In 1956 he was elected executive manager (*changwu lishi* 常务理事) and vice-secretary (*fumishuzhang* 副秘书长) of the newly founded Photography Association. In 1957 he transferred to the association's office, becoming full-time vice-secretary, deputy editor-in-chief of the *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影), and also organizer of the association's exhibition activities and contact with foreign countries. He continued his career in the 60s and 70s unhindered by the “Cultural Revolution”. Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 498-499.



Figure 15: Chen Bo 陈勃: “Vietnamese Girl” (*Yuenan guniang* 越南姑娘) in the catalogue of the National Art Photography Exhibition of 1963. Zhongguo sheying xuehui 中国摄影学会 (1963): *Di qi jie quanguo sheying yishu zhanlan mulu* 第七届全国摄影艺术展览目录 [Catalogue of the 7th National Photographic Art Exhibition], Beijing, pp. 22-23.



Figure 16: Chen Bo 陈勃: “Vietnamese Girl”, used in *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1964, no. 4, pp 36-37.

While the photo shown in figures 15 and 16 is the same in both cases, the differences in editorial usage give it different connotations of belonging to art or reportage.

Another indication of the origin of photos exhibited in the national photographic art exhibitions is a notice asking “photography workers” (*sheying gongzuozhe* 摄影工作者) to prepare photos for the 1957 national photographic art exhibition, which was published in the magazine *Photography Vocation* in 1956.¹³⁰ While nominally also addressing amateur photographers (*sheying aihaozhe* 摄影爱好者), both the publication of the notice in a vocational magazine, as well as the wording of the notice primarily targeted professionals working in the media:

To make the content of next year’s exhibition even more rich, and make the exhibits have an even higher level of ideological content (*sixiangxing* 思想性) and artistic quality (*yishuxing* 艺术性), the preparatory committee of the exhibition hopes that photography workers and amateurs nationwide create more outstanding works of photographic art. At the same time we hope that the newspapers’ photography groups, the different illustrated magazines and other photographic units pay attention to accumulating outstanding artworks, not waiting for the exhibition to start to collect artworks, but to immediately respond and manage to not miss out any good work.¹³¹

But what about the amateur photographers? While some number of amateur photographers obviously did exist in China – the publication of the magazine *Popular Photography* explicitly acknowledges the existence of such a group – they still had to adhere to the prescribed model of photography to have any chance of having their photos published. Furthermore, the differentiation between amateurs and professionals during the early years of the PRC would not have been as straightforward as the terms – amateurs vs. photography workers – suggest.

¹³⁰ “Sheying yishu zhanlan hui choubeizu xiwang gedi sheying gongzuozhe, sheying aihaozhe nuli chuangzuo zhunbei canjia 1957 nian de sheying yishu zhanlanhui 摄影艺术展览会筹备组希望各地摄影工作者、摄影爱好者努力创作准备参加 1957 年的摄影艺术展览 [The Preparatory Group for the Photographic Art Exhibition Hopes the Photography Workers and Amateurs Everywhere are Busy Creating to Prepare Joining the 1957 Photographic Art Exhibition]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1956, no. 2, p. 10.

¹³¹ Ibid.

With regard to the needs of the rapidly expanding photo network, whoever was able to merely semi-competently use a camera had the opportunity to be employed by an organization of the media sphere. This was even more valid for the accomplished photographers of the pre-war time, who were largely able to continue to work on a level equal to their former employment. If the abilities were not sufficient to work for one of the central organizations (e.g. Xinhua News Agency or the *People's Illustrated*), employment with some local magazine or newspaper was still a possibility. Moving out further towards the fringes of the photo network, even working as a usually non-publishing (documentary) photographer at a large factory, research institute or military base would be possible with only the most basic technical competency.

In reverse, if someone with the skills (and access to resources) necessary for ambitious amateur photography did not find employment in this area, the reason would have been problems of political reliability, which would have precluded access to the materials necessary for photography anyhow, not to speak of taking part in prestigious exhibitions. Therefore, a large part of the “artistic” or “amateur” photographers of this time were fully employed professionals of the media, who also used the resources made available to them (e.g. cameras and films, etc.) in their spare time. A good example of this is photographer Li Zhensheng 李振盛 (1940 –) of the *Heilongjiang Daily* (*Heilongjiang ribao* 黑龙江日报) who took documentary photos of the worst excesses of the “Cultural Revolution” besides his normal work, but was only able to do so because of his access to photographic materials through the newspaper where he was employed.¹³²

A rare example of an amateur photographer in the true meaning of the word, who nevertheless even managed to enter the national photographic art exhibitions, is Jiang Qing 江青 (1914—1991). By relying on her connections as the wife of chairman Mao, she managed to gain access to the highest echelons of the photo network, as well as the tools and materials needed for pursuing photography, which is described in more detail in chapter 4. Besides inclusion in the national photographic art exhibitions, this also allowed for publication of her photographs in the *People's Illustrated* and other illustrated magazines. To give an example, the photo of the plants, printed opposite Chen Bo's photo of the Vietnamese girl in the catalogue of the national photographic art exhibition shown above in figure 15, was taken by Jiang Qing, as indicated by her alias Li Jin 李进.

¹³² Li 2003.

At least one short paragraph also needs to be devoted to acknowledging the existence of photobooks in China during the period under scrutiny.¹³³ The author will not explore this topic further, because similar to the case of exhibitions described here (for which catalogues were naturally produced in the form of photo books as well), these books were just another outlet for the photographs produced by the photographers of the photo network.

3.6 The Photography Association

From December 19 to 22, 1956, yet another step was taken towards guiding and directing the work of the growing number of photographers: The founding conference of the Chinese Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中国摄影学会) was held in the assembly hall of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (*Zhongguo Wenxue Yishujie Lianhehui* 中国文学艺术界联合会). Present were 104 photographers (*sheyingjia* 摄影家), photo reporters (*sheying jizhe* 摄影记者), organizers of photographic work (*sheying gongzuo de zuzhizhe* 摄影工作的组织者), picture editors (*tupian bianji* 图片编辑) and professors of photography of colleges and universities (*gaodeng xuexiao de sheying jiaoshou* 高等学校的摄影教授), representing the target audience of the association: the people responsible for the pictorial representation of the “New China”.¹³⁴

The leadership of the association naturally included staunch communist veterans like Shi Shaohua, Wu Qun, Wu Yinxian and Yuan Ling (who all appear in other places in this chapter) but also a surprisingly large number of the so-called “old photographers”. Looking at the members list of the first board of directors of the association, there are Ding Cong 丁聪, vice editor-in-chief of the *People's Illustrated* and Cang Shi 苍石, head of the picture group of the *People's Daily*, who would both be persecuted in late 1957 for allegedly being “rightists”.¹³⁵

¹³³ For a rather thorough overview compare Parr, Martin; Wassink-Lundgren (eds.) (2015): *The Chinese photobook: From the 1900s to the present*, New York: Aperture.

¹³⁴ Shi Shaohua 石少华 (1957): “Zuzhi qilai, wei fanrong wo guo de sheying yishu chuangzuo er nuli! Zai zhongguo sheying xuehui chengli dahui shang de baogao 组织起来，为繁荣我国的摄影艺术创作而努力！在中国摄影学会成立大会上的报告 [Get Organized, and Make Great Efforts for a Flourishing National Photographic Art Creation! Speech at the Founding Conference of the Chinese Photography Association]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1957, no. 1, pp. 4–8, p. 4.

¹³⁵ Compare section 3.9.2 of this chapter.

As newly selected president of the association, it was Shi Shaohua's responsibility to address the photographers assembled on that day. After giving a brief overview of the development of photography in China up to the present, and postulating the arrival of a new developmental period heralded by the founding of the association, Shi enumerated four core tasks of the association in his opening speech.

1. To organize the creative activities of photographic artists (*sheying yishujia* 摄影艺术家) and photography workers (*sheying gongzuozhe* 摄影工作者), to ensure that their works would have a high ideological (*sixiangxing* 思想性) and artistic character (*yishuxing* 艺术性), in order to raise the people's enthusiasm for the construction of Socialism.
2. To organize the photographers' education in photographic theory and technique, to further the exchange and the pooling of work experience, to guide research of photographic theory and criticism.
3. To increase international exchange and propagate worthwhile photography from abroad as well as new technical developments from abroad, to show Chinese photography in other countries and promote friendship and understanding among nations.
4. To train young photographers and guide the activities of amateur photographers.¹³⁶

The implication of these tasks is quite clear: While Xinhua and the various illustrated magazines already tightly controlled the distribution of photographs and the daily work of their attached groups of press photographers through the work plans, the association was now extending this control over all remaining photographic activities. To ensure absolute control, not only the day-to-day work had to be covered, but especially the theoretic and educational foundations of photographic creation, as well as the influx of new knowledge from outside the country.

¹³⁶ Shi 1957, p. 7.

In another part of his 1956 speech, Shi Shaohua further explained the relationship to exist between photographers and the new authorities:

Concerning the creative method of photography, our history and past photographic experiences all prove that employing Socialist Realism is the correct way to go, moreover it has already brought forth quite a few outstanding works. Thus we think that photography, once it breaks away from real life and the struggle waged by the vast masses of the people, can only turn into a lifeless thing. But we also think that the photographer has complete freedom in choosing his creative method. Other creative methods should get an opportunity to exist and develop, as long as they benefit the people. We advocate the diversification of photographic subject matters and styles, and encourage everyone to shoot the life they are truly familiar with and the subject matter they are keen on. Only in this way can everyone's strength be completely brought out.

At present, many photographers in our country are engaged in news photography work. This is a result of the needs of our past revolutionary struggle, so it is completely correct for them. This peculiar trait will probably persist for a long time in the process of the construction of Socialism. Now some people think being engaged in news photography work might be harmful to their creation of photographic art. This view is clearly one-sided. Precisely because news photography has a close relationship with all kinds of aspects of real life, it is able to provide the artworks we create with extremely beneficial prerequisites. Furthermore, news photography has its own peculiarities and tasks and also often suffers the restrictions of time and space, so we can't require every single news photo to be a work of art. Still we think that as long as the news photography workers unceasingly raise their ideological level and their artistic accomplishments, then it is completely possible for them to produce photographs which possess a high standard of art. Many examples to prove this point can be found in the photographic art exhibition held in 1955.

We also still have many old photographers with abundant experience and a lot of artistic accomplishment scattered everywhere in the country and in different areas overseas. We want to build a close relationship with them and help them to completely bring out their strength.¹³⁷

Thus while the association seemingly allowed photographers the freedom to choose other styles of photography besides what was called "Socialist Realism" (*Shehui zhuyi xianshi zhuyi* 社会主义现实主义), it reserved itself the right to have the last word, introducing the benchmark of "benefitting the people" to judge between the "correct way" to do photography and photographs deemed a "lifeless thing".

¹³⁷ Shi 1957, p. 8.

Shi further touched on and justified the prevalent mode of photographic activity at the time: “news photography” (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影), which denoted the photographs produced by the photographers employed by the various organizations of the media sphere under the guidance of their supervisors.

The guidance and direction described by Shi was implemented through different channels. Besides organizing symposiums and discussion groups on different topics, the association reached most photographers through the already mentioned magazines *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影) and *Popular Photography* (*Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影). Starting in 1957, the association also held the – already mentioned – yearly national photographic art exhibitions (*quanguo sheying yishu zhanlan* 全国摄影艺术展览) to promote exemplary works of photography, as well as smaller single exhibitions of the works of famous veteran photographers like Zheng Jingkang, Wu Yinxian and Shi Shaohua himself.

In theory, the Photography Association was another organizational center in the photo network which would have had the ability to choose and publish selections of photographs differing from the output of Xinhua and the other centers.¹³⁸ In practice however, the leadership of the association consisted of the same persons that staffed the administrative centers of the photo network, ensuring that no differing concepts of photography had a chance to develop or even get published.

3.7 Civilian Training and Education of Photographers at Universities

In addition to Xinhua’s own training of its photographers and darkroom technicians, in the course of the 1950s, China’s most renowned universities began to establish classes and curricula for the training of photo reporters as well. Outstanding examples here are Shanghai’s Fudan University, which held the earliest classes already shortly after 1949, and starting from 1952, a required course on “news photography and pictorial editing” (*xinwen sheying yu huakan bianji* 新闻摄影与画刊编辑) was taught to the students of Fudan’s institute of journalism.

¹³⁸ While naturally having no way to publish the same quantity of photos like Xinhua or even just larger illustrated magazines like the *People’s Illustrated* or *PLA Illustrated*, the National Photographic Art Exhibitions organized by the association were the most prestigious and notable exhibitions of photography in China during the period under scrutiny, giving them a considerable importance.

The few sources available about these early attempts at establishing a college-level photographic education point to serious problems in implementation. In an article from 1957, describing the education of photographers at Fudan University, Shu Zongqiao 舒宗侨, one of the educators, explained the reasoning behind the structure of their curriculum.¹³⁹ Originally the goal was to provide writing reporters (*wenzi jizhe* 文字记者) with the skills necessary to also report news by using photography, but “afterwards we used the pattern of the Soviet Union's education plan and split the curriculum into a ‘news photography’ additional course (*jiaxiuke* 加修课) and a ‘pictorial publication propaganda’ optional course (*xuanxiuke* 选修课). Additionally, in the second year we taught eight class hours (*xueshi* 学时) of ‘the picture in newspapers and magazines’ (*baozhi zazhi shang de tupian* 报纸杂志上的图片), but the goal on the whole had not changed.”¹⁴⁰ In 1956 the news photography class was again restored to the status of a required class, with both allotted time as well as practice facilities being increased, “[t]o conform to the requirements of newspapers, illustrated publications and news agencies towards photo journalists and picture editors [...]” At the same time, a news photography teaching and research group (*xinwen sheying jiaoyanzu* 新闻摄影教研组) was established to help give a more systematic structure to the news photography education.¹⁴¹ Still, problems were encountered by both the students and the teachers:

A small number of students has trouble with their learning ability, in using their brain and in activities they are not very quick. Some students take studying the technical parts very seriously, but neglect the theory and the parts about integration with the business of journalism. In practice (fieldwork) they often forget the content that was taught to them, but still they feel the time for practice is too constrained. In every school year there are only a bit more than ten opportunities for practice, with the result that after studying, the abilities don't yet match the aspirations. These problems are maybe problems of ideological education, or problems of teaching material and teaching method, but they all need to be resolved by us.¹⁴²

Overall, Shu seems to have been quite pessimistic in his assessment of the classes at Fudan, writing that “[a]fter a few years of us engaging in photographic education work, it is out of the question to talk about achievements, we are just fumbling our way forward.

¹³⁹ Shu Zongqiao 舒宗侨 (1957): “Fudan daxue xinwenxi xinwen sheying yu tupian xuanchuan de jiaoxue gongzuo 复旦大学新闻系新闻摄影与图片宣传的教学工作 [Educational Work in News Photography and Pictorial Propaganda at the Journalism Institute of Fudan University]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 6, pp. 54–57.

¹⁴⁰ Shu 1957, p. 55.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Shu 1957, p. 56.

The entire unfolding educational work is still not very successful, but on the whole we are continuously developing.”¹⁴³ Perhaps the changing requirements towards the education of photo reporters made developing a consistent curriculum a considerable challenge, or perhaps Shu’s perspective on photographic education did not correspond with the “correct” one, for not much later, he became one of the victims of the “Anti-Rightist” campaign.

In an article published at the same time, Wu Fuqiang 伍福强 of Peking University described the news photography education at his institution.¹⁴⁴ Acknowledging Fudan University’s lead in news photography education, he explained that “Because [our] university was right in the middle of education reform and neither teachers nor the facilities were sufficient, at Peking University, there was no photography class.”¹⁴⁵

He goes on to describe the need of the illustrated media for competent photographers, which Peking University was unable to meet: “Many of the 1953 and ‘54 graduates of the Beida journalism major are assigned to Xinhua, where they should do photo work, but because they have no grasp of photography they need to learn everything from the beginning. [...] In light of this, the colleges and universities could not stay indifferent.”¹⁴⁶

In May 1955, work to prepare a class on news photography was begun at Peking University, with the assistance of Xinhua’s department of photography. Similar to the beginnings at Fudan, it was decided to provide writing reporters with the knowledge necessary to also handle photographic reportage:

The question of content was much more complex, deciding what basic principles of photography, photographic technique, rules of photographic news coverage and basics of newspaper picture work (*baozhi tupian gongzuo* 报纸图片工作) and picture editing work (*tupian bianji gongzuo* 图片编辑工作) a “writing photography worker” (*wenzi de sheying gongzuozhe* 文字的摄影工作者) should possess. Because this knowledge was all very comprehensive and it was not clear what should be the key point or what was only additional, it was decided to let actual teaching experience guide the decision later.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Wu Fuqiang 伍福强 (1957): “Yi nian lai xinwen sheying jiaoxue gongzuo de huigu 一年来新闻摄影教学工作的回顾 [A Review of One Year of News Photography Education]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 6, pp. 47–53.

¹⁴⁵ Wu 1957, p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ Wu 1957, p. 48.

¹⁴⁷ Wu 1957, p. 49.

Even using this ad hoc approach, Peking University still had to depend on Xinhua to get its news photography class going. As Wu described: “Most of the teachers are comrades from Xinhua's department of photography, who we invited. Besides the teaching, the instructors of this class also have to do the work of organizing the lectures.”¹⁴⁸ The fact that Xinhua's offices – like virtually all administrative organs of the state – were situated in Beijing and could assist with the implementation and organization of photography classes was probably a decisive advantage compared to Fudan University in Shanghai. Nevertheless, Wu also admitted to problems existing in the education work at Peking University. Students complained about the program's focus on theoretical aspects, like the policies of photographic reportage, while practical aspects of the education did not receive the necessary attention. This problem was acknowledged by Wu:

[T]he students should develop their films in a timely fashion, this way the work of the students can be analyzed and discussed, and good work can be exhibited and the students learn about their problems. In this point we failed badly, because in the last semester, we did not set up a darkroom yet, so the students could not research and discuss their work in a timely fashion.¹⁴⁹

In light of the material situation, it seems not surprising that educators focused on “theory”. Equally unsurprising, according to the idea “to let actual teaching experience guide the decision later” mentioned above, the lesson learned and thus the plan for the future was to give much more room to practical education:

The questions that we encountered in one year have already taught us a lot, we have already revised the outline of the classes, strengthened technique class, extended time for fieldwork, cancelled the classes on industrial and agricultural reportage, added portraiture, scenery and sport photography classes. This way, the students have more opportunities to grasp photographic craftsmanship, which is also convenient when they later arrive in the countryside or at a factory, where they photograph farmers or workers. There they can flexibly employ these photographic techniques according to different objects of photography.¹⁵⁰

This conclusion made after one year of educating photographers to be ready for service in the institutions of the photo network perhaps not surprisingly provided a diagnosis quite similar to the lessons learned in operation of the whole, still growing photo network:

¹⁴⁸ Wu 1957, p. 50.

¹⁴⁹ Wu 1957, p. 53.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

A conflict between the need for theoretical (which naturally included political) competence, and the need for vocational or technical competence. While in regard to university education, the limited resource was time, necessitating a choice or perhaps compromise between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge, for the photo network as a whole the limited resource was preexisting manpower, necessitating not a choice between, but inclusion of technically competent, but politically unreliable photographers in addition to the reliable wartime photographers, whose technical abilities were sometimes basic at best.

While the two reports above touch on this conflict, the contrasting viewpoints can be made out much better in the textbooks used for photographic education, which are analyzed in the next section.

3.7.1 Textbooks on Photography

As has been shown in the first chapter of this study, with Wu Yinxian's *General Knowledge of Photography* (*Sheying changshi* 摄影常识) published during the war against Japan in 1939, there is an example of a very early (and very basic) textbook on photography used for the wartime training of photographer cadres. However, with the establishment of Xinhua's department of photography in 1952, and college level education of photographers about to start, more sophisticated knowledge on photography was needed in order to educate new photographers for the expanding illustrated press.

Besides other new information published through the vocational magazines, the information published in the textbooks on photography established the framework of how photography could be conceived. Naturally the work of the "old photographers" already rested on tried and tested concepts of photography that were often incompatible with the CCP's perspective vis-à-vis photography, which made their case so complicated for the authorities. Photographers that were just beginning their education however, like the students of Fudan and Peking University, or (amateur) photographers in need of more education, could still be influenced to accept the CCP's version of photography as the correct and natural way to do photography. A critical role in this imprinting of concepts was played by the photography textbooks which formed the basis of theoretical education.

The author found three notable groups of textbooks on photography published in the 1950s, which each transported a specific perspective on photographic work.

The earliest ones are Lin Zecang's 林泽苍 *Photographic Essentials* (*Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知) and Mao Songyou's 毛松友 *News Photography* (*Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影)¹⁵¹, which were both published in Shanghai for the first time in 1951 and 1952 respectively, but went on to be republished in several editions each. These were supplanted by a wave of translations of Soviet textbooks in 1955 and 1956 which were either published in serialized form through the vocational magazines or as regular books. Translated to Chinese, these introduced both advanced technical knowledge as well as the so-called Soviet model of photography to Chinese photographers. Because they were one of the important mediums for bringing professional photographic knowledge from outside the country to Chinese photographers, these Soviet textbooks will be discussed in section 3.8.2 ("The Soviet model") of this chapter.

Nonetheless, the early textbooks of Lin Zecang and Mao Songyou should not be discounted as sources. Not only were they written by Chinese authors, at first glance they also appear to share a number of characteristics: Both were published quite early after the end of the war in 1951 and 1952, they were both published in Shanghai, the one by Lin Zecang at Sanhe chubanshe, the one by Mao Songyou at Zhonghua shuju. Both Lin and Mao were "old photographers" in the sense that they had been successful photographers already before the war. Even in "New China", they both managed to publish textbooks on photography, but from there on, their lives took different directions. Mao became a successful photographer, educator and administrator for Xinhua and other important state organizations, while Lin disappeared after becoming one of the last targets of the "anti-rightist" campaign in 1958. The reasons for this lay in their differing views on photography and their ability to make it conform to the type of photography demanded by the CCP.

Mao Songyou 毛松友 (1911—2000), born in the province of Zhejiang, had first come into contact with photography around 1930 as a student of Shanghai's Wusong University (*Wusong daxue* 吴淞大学), where he joined the student's photo club. He graduated with distinction and a letter of recommendation by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868—1940), president of the Academia Sinica, in 1932 and began to work as a photo reporter for Shanghai's *Chenbao* 晨报 in September of the same year.

¹⁵¹ Mao Songyou 毛松友 (1952): *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography]. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju.

In the winter of 1934 he joined the Black and White Photo Society in Shanghai and took part in their exhibition activities. After the outbreak of war in 1937, he worked as a photographer for the Red Cross, with a photo exhibition of his about refugees even being shown in Moscow in 1940. After the foundation of the PRC in 1949 he worked as a photographer for the bureau of popular science (*Kexue puji ju* 科学普及局) of the Ministry of Culture. In 1952, he was transferred to Xinhua, where he first worked as a photo reporter, before becoming a photo editor in 1957. He also worked for Xinhua's vocational publications as well. Since 1956 he was a member of the Photography Association. In 1965 he was transferred to the Ministry of Light Industry (*Qingongye bu* 轻工业部), for which he worked on the photobook *Chinese Artworks* (*Zhongguo yishu meishu pin* 中国艺术美术品), which was to be used internationally as an advertisement for Chinese products.¹⁵²

Mao is one example of an “old photographer” who made a seemingly effortless transition to work for the new rulers of the country after 1949, without having been active for the illustrated magazines of the communist base areas in between. Working at Xinhua's newly created department of photography in 1952, he was apparently already trusted enough from the start to even write a textbook on news photography.

Taking a closer look at the introduction of his textbook – dated “1951 on National Day in Beijing” – we get an idea about Mao's conception of (news) photography, which included a clear-cut sense of purpose:

The photography workers (*sheying gongzuozhe* 摄影工作者), who are engaged in pictorial propaganda are news reporters (*xinwen jizhe* 新闻记者) with a camera in hand. Using the technique of photography, they spread the experience of struggle within human life. They give the reflection of actual human life to their audience by means of the artistic form and produce a definite effect on the thinking and actions of their audience. This is a kind of political comment on life and to some extent a critique and revelation of the real things, which turns news photography into a powerful tool of propaganda and education.¹⁵³

Perhaps just in case his readers – Xinhua photographers in training, or students of photography – were unable to get the finer points of “experience[s] of struggle” or “political comment[s]”, Mao progressed to more specific points later on in the introduction:

¹⁵² Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 96-97.

¹⁵³ Mao 1952, p. 3.

From now on, the people who engage in photography, no matter if photography worker or amateur photographer, must unite as one under the great political task and make great efforts for news photography: Strengthen their ideological exercises, increase their research of technique, enrich their life experience, know the nation's policies by heart, so as to make photographic art serve the policies (*zhengce* 政策). The magnificent, brilliant atmosphere of New China, and the glorious creations of the working people – no matter if in the cities or villages – offers abundant material that is waiting for the photography workers to come and report it.¹⁵⁴

At 40 years of age in 1951, Mao Songyou might have qualified to be an “old photographer” according to the judgement of the leaders of the photo network, but he obviously knew how to pander to the new authorities. Of course it can also not be ruled out that he was indeed truly captivated by the “magnificent, brilliant atmosphere of new China”, and wanted to promote this perspective to future generations of photographers of his own accord. Anyhow, he did not encounter any problems after the publication of his textbook, which markedly contrasts with the following case of Lin Zecang.

3.7.2 The Case of Lin Zecang

As can be seen from the introductions of the different editions of his textbook, Lin Zecang also tried to increasingly pander to the new rulers of China, but was ultimately not successful. This led to him being persecuted in the campaign against “rightist elements” in 1958 and his eventual suicide in prison in 1961.¹⁵⁵

Lin was born in Fujian province in 1903. After graduating from Shanghai's Guanghai University (*Guanghai daxue* 光华大学) in 1925, he managed his own Sanhe publishing company (*Sanhe chubanshe* 三和出版社), and began to publish the magazine *Photography Illustrated* (*Sheying huabao* 摄影画报). He was also involved with the foundation of a Chinese Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中国摄影学会), which had no connection to the Association of the same name later founded in 1956. Besides managing his Sanhe publishing company, he also worked for the Linlin handicraft company (*Linlin gongyi she* 林林工艺社), where he developed a stereographic camera and a photometer.

¹⁵⁴ Mao 1952, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Compare: Zhao 2013, pp. 130-132. Chen; Xu 2011, pp. 432-433.

In 1929 he was one of the co-founders of the Shanghai Black and White Photo Society (*Heibai yingshe* 黑白影社). After the foundation of the PRC, he published his textbook on photography in 1951 through his Sanhe publishing company, and joined the (new) Chinese Photography Association in 1957. Having already attracted some attention with the publication of his textbook in 1951, after some further altercations with the authorities, in 1958 he was all-out attacked as a “rightist”, which ended his photography career for good.¹⁵⁶

As has been mentioned, Lin’s textbook *Photographic Essentials* (*Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知) was published for the first time in 1951, and was republished in 1954 and 1955, each time containing a revised introduction by Lin, which seemed to get closer to the CCP’s line on photography with every republication.¹⁵⁷ This makes it appear as if the book was well received by the readers – which might be true as well – but there is another dimension to the successive republications. As noted by Zhao (2013), already the publication of the first edition in 1951 was answered with a harshly worded criticism published in the vocational magazine *Photography Work* in August 1952,¹⁵⁸ which perhaps made Lin aware of the need to revise his textbook to conform to the new political situation. The next two (revised) editions were met with criticism as well, which provides researchers with the material to retrace this informal process of negotiation between Lin and the authorities on what perspectives vis-à-vis photography were permissible or not. Due to the unique nature of these sources of introductions followed by criticisms – including the final and most scathing one during the “anti-rightist” movement – Lin’s case will be discussed here, and not in the section on the “anti-rightist” movement.

¹⁵⁶ Yu 1989, p. 735.

¹⁵⁷ Compare: Lin Zecang 林泽苍 (1951): *Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知 [Photographic Essentials], Shanghai: Sanhe CBS.

Lin Zecang 林泽苍 (1954): *Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知 [Photographic Essentials], 2nd edition, Shanghai: Sanhe CBS.

Lin Zecang 林泽苍 (1955): *Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知 [Photographic Essentials], 3rd edition, Shanghai: Xin kexue shudian.

¹⁵⁸ Compare: Zhao 2013, pp. 130-132. See also: Di Yuancang 狄源沧 (1952) “Ping Sheying xuzhi 评摄影须知 [A Criticism of Photographic Essentials]”, in: *Sheying gongzuo* 摄影工作 [Photography Work], 1952, no. 6, pp. 13-14.

Without a doubt aware of the seminal changes happening in China, in the introduction to the first edition of his *Photographic Essentials* in 1951, Lin Zecang addressed his readers as “photographer comrades” (*sheying tongzhi* 摄影同志).¹⁵⁹ His motive was likely to establish a cordial relationship with the CCP and the photographers aligned with it, however the effect must surely have been a different one. Apart from Lin Zecang’s three different introductions to his textbook and the articles criticizing him published in different vocational magazines, while working on this study, the author found no other usage of the term “photographer comrade” in any source. While singular appearances of the term here and there cannot conclusively be ruled out, the term was definitely not in widespread use during the 1950s or 60s. Even though the term “comrade” was indeed used in addressing members of the illustrated media in formal settings such as speeches, generally the terms “photo reporter” (*sheying jizhe* 摄影记者) or just “reporter” (*jizhe* 记者), “photo worker” (*sheying gongzuozhe* 摄影工作者) or plain “photographer” (*sheyingjia* 摄影家) were used to address colleagues in articles published in vocational magazines. By choosing this uncommon (or possibly even unique) form of address, Lin invariably marked himself as an outsider from the beginning.

Still, in his introduction he declared the book to try to meet the demands of the “photographer comrades”:

[...] when studying photography, achievements can't be had overnight. With regard to the different types of photographic knowledge and the usage of materials, first of all their usefulness, functions and actions must be understood. Only like this can a good result be achieved. If you don't have suitable knowledge regarding photography, you will not only waste time, but also waste money. Therefore, this book was produced with the intention to meet the demand of the photographer comrades.

Photography [sic] should not only take photos clearly, but must study “composition” (*goutu* 构图) and strive for them to be vivid and vigorous and become living photos (*huode zhaopian* 活的照片). This book offers a systematic and complete description of “photography and composition” (*sheying yu goutu* 摄影与构图), “lively photography” (*shengdong zhi sheying* 生动之摄影), “artistic portrait photography” (*yishu renxiang sheying* 艺术人像摄影), “the beauty of available light photography” (*beiguang sheying de mei* 背光摄影的美) etc.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Lin 1951, p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

To paraphrase: Lin tried to provide the readers with all the skills necessary to make lively photos, without wasting either time or money. While frugal use of supplies would have also been a virtue for the employees of the media, this was commonly not a point stressed very much in discussions of photographic work, where the “correct” result always counted more than the process that led to it.

Following a common convention, Lin concluded his introduction with a humble acknowledgement of the possibilities of errors in his writing and an invitation to put forward ideas for improvements:

The materials for this humble author's clumsy short essay were only selected superficially, and errors in writing and proofreading were inevitable. If those hopefully more advanced in these ways, as well as the photographer comrades could point out suggestions for corrections to be made, I would be extremely happy.¹⁶¹

While these lines were perhaps only following conventions of publishing etiquette and were never meant to truly elicit responses by the readers, at least one response did appear, though perhaps more sternly worded than anticipated by Lin.

Di Yuancang 狄源沧 (1926—2003), editor in chief of the army's vocational magazine on photography *Photography Network* since wartime, and also editor for numerous illustrated magazines, published a harshly worded critique of Lin's textbook in the vocational magazine *Photography Work* 1952, no. 6.¹⁶² His position as editor-in-chief of the army's mouthpiece on photographic work made it clear that he spoke with the authority to formulate the official verdict on Lin Zecang's textbook, as opposed to just giving his personal opinion, and already in the first paragraph of his critique, he came straight to the point:

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² See footnote 156. Di Yuancang 狄源沧 was born in Taicang county of Jiangsu in 1926. He founded a photography association already while studying at Peking University. In 1949 he “joined the revolution” and became editor in chief of the vocational magazine *Photography Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网), while it was still published through the *North China Illustrated* office (华北画报社). Starting in 1955 he worked as an editor for the *PLA Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报), *Nationalities Illustrated* (*Minzu huabao* 民族画报) and *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影). In 1956 he joined the Photography Association and worked as an editor for the photo books *Fojiao huace* 佛教画册 and *Musilin huace* 穆斯林画册. In the following years he worked on numerous books. Compare: Yu 1989, p. 540.

Mister Lin Zecang's "Photography Essentials" was published in Shanghai on October 10, 1951, but even though the author introduces some new photographic equipment and materials, he does not introduce any new photographic ideas or standpoints, but on the contrary injects his readers with quite a few degenerate or even harmful photographic ideas and standpoints of the capitalist class, leading his readers onto the road towards a purely technological point of view removed from politics, or even Aestheticism (*Weimeizhuyi* 唯美主义).¹⁶³

Identifying Lin's writing with the "standpoints of the capitalist class" was a serious accusation with potentially grave consequences for the life and wellbeing of the accused, thus Di made sure to give examples for Lin's wrong perspectives:

Mister Lin Zecang separates the "living photos" (*huo de zhaopian* 活的照片) which he advocates into ten types, among which there is also the type of "expression of the wind's force" (*fengli de biao xian* 风力的表现). For this type, the author suggests we photograph this kind of subject matter: "Willow branches or hair moved by the wind, or the slight ripples on a pond caused by the wind." Excuse me, what use does it have for the people's masses to take this kind of photos? Where is the difference to the leisurely art photography of the capitalist class of old? Even in his two categories "workers life" (*gongren shenghuo* 工人生活) and "rural life" (*nongcun shenghuo* 农村生活) he does not advocate to photograph the new spirit in the factories and countryside after liberation, but merely generally calls us to photograph water buffaloes ploughing the fields, waterwheels, water carriers, rowboats...; [...] These photos that reflect the life of the workers and farmers from the standpoint of the capitalist class have nothing in common with photos that reflect the life of workers and farmers from the standpoint of the proletariat.¹⁶⁴

The sentence "Willow branches or hair moved by the wind, or the slight ripples on a pond caused by the wind." directly evokes subjects of traditional Chinese literati painting, which might explain Di's agitated response. But not just Lin's choice of subject matter was seen as problematic. Even where he selected the "correct" subject matter of workers and farmers his pursuit of idyllic scenes branded him as taking the "standpoint of the capitalist class".

This criticism was also extended to Lin's selection of illustrations:

¹⁶³ Di 1952, p. 13.

¹⁶⁴ Di 1952, p. 14.

The illustrations in “Photographic Essentials”, apart from the ones taken by Mister Lin Zecang himself, are almost completely taken from American photography magazines, and of these photos, the photos of women in different poses make up about 70% (more than 50 photos). The author even selected a photo of a group of stupid photographer comrades surrounding a woman to photograph (page 110) and called it “Lively situation of fighting for perspective” (*Zhengqu jiaodu zhi shengdong qingxing* 争取角度之生动情形), inspiring everyone to make women the subject to be photographed. Can it be that this kind of decadent, degenerated photographic standpoint is the direction of Chinese art photography? From this perspective, mister Lin Zecangs “Photographic Essentials” is really completely the same as American capitalist photo magazines.¹⁶⁵

Di’s inference that the choice of women as subjects of photography equals a “decadent, degenerated photographic standpoint” seems remarkable, especially in light of the rather tame photo given as an example. The photo, here given in figure 17, shows a group of “photographer comrades” taking photos of a woman who is posing for them.



Figure 17: Lin Zecang 林泽苍: “Lively situation of fighting for perspective”, in: Lin Zecang 林泽苍 (1951): *Sheying xuzhi* 摄影须知 [Photographic Essentials], Shanghai: Sanhe CBS, p. 110.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

The point of critique here of course was not the subject matter of women per se, which for example was no problem in the depiction of female workers or militia members. Associated with decadence and degeneration was the depiction of the female body with the intention of showing merely the beauty of its shape, as opposed to women fulfilling social roles in the same ways as men – i.e. according to the directives of the CCP. This, it is inferred by Di, makes Lin Zecang's textbook "completely the same as American capitalist photo magazines".

Damning as this verdict may have been, Lin was given a chance to mend his ways:

Mister Lin Zecang has already practiced photography for 30 years, and has a correspondingly rich experience, which is very praiseworthy. The reader welcomes that he is putting this experience to good use to serve the photographic enterprise of the New China. But the reader also demands that Mister Lin Zecang gets rid of the dense capitalist photographic ideology, which is still existing in his head. Because only like this can he reach the goal of serving his readers. Right now the ideological level of the Chinese amateur photographers is rising day after day: if mister Lin Zecang is firmly holding on to these dirty things without letting go, he may be cast aside by the readers.

I suggest to mister Lin Zecang to take the standpoint of the people, to completely and deeply self-criticize his own actions and behavior of the last thirty years, and earnestly draw up a plan to improve himself, and make a complete revision. This will benefit both himself and his readers.¹⁶⁶

This seems remarkable given the seriousness of the attacks against him, but it should be kept in mind that in 1951 and 1952, the CCP's hold on the media was just in the process of being consolidated, with the photo network not yet established, which forced the CCP to cooperate with other actors. As a case in point, Lin was still able to publish his textbook through his own publishing company, and even though he was harshly attacked in public – the limited public of a vocational magazine for photographers – his experience and perhaps also the ability to share it was valuable enough to not shut him down outright.

Lin Zecang seemed to have understood what was demanded of him, for in the introduction to the next edition of his *Photographic Essentials*, published in 1954, he addressed the points raised by Di Yuancang and apparently others:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

In these three years, I have received many letters from the photo comrades from all sides, putting forth valuable opinions and true criticism, enabling the author to timely redress and correct many things during the revision process, which was very helpful. I earnestly feel very grateful for this. Photography should serve the new life in the new society (*wei xin shehui de xin shenghuo fuwu* 为新社会的新生活服务) and should select meaningful new people and new developments as its subject. In this new revised edition, I want to put forward this direction.¹⁶⁷

By adopting the political buzzwords of the day, like “serving” (*wei ... fuwu* 为...服务), “new society” (*xin shehui* 新社会) or “new people” (*xin ren* 新人) and “new developments” (*xin shi* 新事), Lin tried to align himself with the authorities. But the photos which he used as examples throughout the book and which had already attracted Di’s criticism, could not be changed as easily as a few words in the introduction. This was acknowledged by Lin:

Most of the photos used in this book, with regard to convenience and suitability, have been taken by the author himself to function as explanations and examples for the text, exposure times and aperture values are therefore given for practical reference. Because the author [now] has few opportunities to go out and take photos, they lack new subject matter. That is why the content of both the newly added and the old photos still has shortcomings. They should only be regarded as diagrams for the text, used to explain how various photos were shot.¹⁶⁸

Unable to produce new photos for reasons unknown to the author, but aware of the political shortcomings of his old photos which would surely (and already had) attract criticism, Lin tried to resort to a conceptual trickery: Art photography or news photography not conforming to the ideals propagated by the authorities were an increasingly valid target of criticism, therefore Lin declared the photos in his textbook to be mere “explanations and examples” of the effects of different exposure times and aperture values. Perhaps by stressing the technical form of the photos, he hoped to avoid the problem of their content. In light of the fact that Di Yuancang had already criticized Lin’s “purely technological point of view” in 1952,¹⁶⁹ it is not surprising that these changes were not enough to appease the authorities.

While the author found no public criticisms of the 1954 edition of the *Photographic Essentials* in any vocational magazine, already in 1955 a new edition of the *Photographic Essentials* was published, the introduction of which again moved closer to what Lin must have considered the trends of the time.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Lin 1954, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Di 1952, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ Lin 1955.

Apart from again asking for understanding for the fact that he was forced to use old photos for the example pictures in his book, Lin also used the concept of the “new society” to describe the right subject matter for photography:

Photography is not a thing to be appreciated by only one individual, it should thoroughly express the people's most dynamic life, and reflect the most real developments of the new society. The new people and new developments (*xinren xinshi* 新人新事) possessing significance ought to be selected as subject matter, because only like this the art of photography (*sheying yishu* 摄影艺术) is the most efficient instrument for propaganda and education of the masses. Photography is a type of visual art, which creates artworks through new thinking, by taking a photo of the most active and lively developments expressing the real circumstances.¹⁷¹

Describing photography in this way, Lin's wording in 1955 is approaching the form which – politically trusted – Mao Songyou had used in the introduction of his textbook already in 1951, stressing the new social developments and photography's function as a tool for propaganda. However, Lin also kept referring to his own concept of “living photos” (*huode zhaopian* 活的照片)¹⁷², this time even backing the concept with somewhat disjointed quotations of the most “correct” advocates he could find:

The famous photojournalist ‘Baliqie’ermanci, Demiteli’ of Spark magazine of the USSR came to China in September 1954 and met Chinese photographers. He said “Photographers must know life well and have a high degree of artistic technique. ... It is not enough to take photos of characters, we still can't very well express people in a lively way, often living people are photographed like wooden images. ... People should be photographed in a lively, dynamic state and not in a static state. You should photograph in a dynamic situation.” In his text on portrait photography (*renxiang sheying* 人像摄影), ‘Aikai’erqieke’, winner of the Gold medal of the Stalin price, pointed out: “Display the most natural and most lively facial expression ... A person's every step can display vitality and outstanding vigour.” From this you can see that taking ‘living photos’ and ‘real portraits’ is correct and that's why in this book I point out this aspect first.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lin 1955, p. 11.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid. As in the case of the Soviet photographers discussed in section 3.8.2, it proved impossible to identify the names of the photographers given in an unsystematic Chinese transliteration with actual Soviet photographers.

By using the words of Soviet photographers to advocate his own style of photography, Lin followed exactly the method used by the administrators of the photo network in these years as well. From around 1954 to late 1955, Shi Shaohua and other high ranking photographer cadres advocated adherence to the Soviet model, though not for the sake of “living photographs”, but for promotion of strictly hierarchical structures in the organizations of the illustrated press. This is described in detail in section 3.8.2 of this chapter.

Even though Lin’s motive in quoting Soviet photographers was probably to appear to be in line with the forms of photography advocated by the authorities, similar to his use of the term “photographer comrade”, the effect cannot have been the one he had hoped for. Quite on the contrary, “incorrect” quotation of “correct” authorities (the Soviet photographers) was one of the most serious accusations brought forth against him in the final article attacking him and his *Photographic Essentials* in 1958.

This polemic published under the title “Exposing the Hideous Features of Lin Zecang and Criticizing his *Photographic Essentials*”¹⁷⁴ only appeared in 1958 in the magazine *Popular Photography* – as part of the wider campaigns unleashed in the late 1950s – but in addition to harsh personal attacks against Lin, the author Wu Qun 吴群 again devoted space to criticizing various aspects of the 1955 edition of the *Photographic Essentials*.

Like Di Yuancang, Wu was one of the trusted leading cadres of the photo network, showing that his scathing criticism of Lin was not mere personal opinion, but carried the weight of an official verdict.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Wu Qun 吴群 (1958): “Jielu Lin Zecang de chou'e zuilian jian ping ta bianzhu de “Sheying xuzhi” yi shu 揭露林泽苍的丑恶嘴脸:兼评他编著的“摄影须知”一书 [Exposing the Hideous Features of Lin Zecang and Criticizing his *Photographic Essentials*]”, in: *Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影, 1958, no. 1, pp. 13–15.

¹⁷⁵ Born in Shunde 顺德 county of Guangdong province in 1923, he “joined the revolution” in 1938 and worked as photo reporter for the Army’s *Life Newspaper* (*Budui shenghuo bao* 部队生活报) of the second district of the Jin-Cha-Ji military region, the *Ji-Jin “Our Own Army” Newspaper* (*Ji-Jin zidibing bao* 冀晋子弟兵报) and also Sha Fei’s *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jin-Cha-Ji huabao* 晋察冀画报). He went on to become head of the coverage group (*caifangzu* 采访组) and later vice-director of the *North China Illustrated* (*Huabei huabao* 华北画报) and vice-editor-in-chief of the *PLA illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报). As a standing director (*changwu lishi* 常务理事) of the Photography Association, he also served as editor-in-chief of the *Popular Photography* (*Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影) and as a member of the editorial committee of the *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影). In 1970 he became vice-director of Xinhua’s department of photography. In addition to his administrative duties, he was engaged in the training of photographer cadres both at Xinhua itself as well as People’s University in Beijing. Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 397-398.

Even though the polemics brought forth against Lin by Wu should not be taken as facts, they are reproduced here in detail with the aim to enhance understanding of how public attacks on photographers were worded in order to dehumanize them as targets of political campaigns and legitimize more violent actions against them, as well as scaring other members of the photo network into compliance, which as a goal of the campaigns was as important as removing politically questionable members of the photo network from their posts.

In his attack on Lin, Wu made it clear right from the start that the attack was to be seen in the context of the ongoing campaigns – at the end of the 1950s – in the photo network:

Every person's history is written by their own words and deeds. Lin Zecang is no exception here, through his consistently bad behavior he has written himself a hideous history. [...] That's why now it is still necessary to thoroughly expose Lin Zecang's hideous face and clean up his long time poisonous influence. After undergoing the rectification campaign (*zhengfeng yundong* 整风运动) and the fight against the rightists (*fan youpai douzheng* 反右派斗争) now we go a step further to prove through investigation: In the world of photography, Lin Zecang is a hooligan, who stops at no evil as well as an opportunistic businessman, whose entire body is soaked through with the stench of money.¹⁷⁶

Thus, even though the last edition of the *Photographic Essentials* was used to provide ammunition for the criticism of Lin, by now the point was not to criticize specific writings of his anymore, but instead to completely remove his influence on photography. For this purpose, similar to the earlier criticism by Di Yuancang, Lin's moral integrity and especially behavior and attitude towards women were made the topic of criticism, but Wu went even further and connected Lin with the Chinese wartime puppet government in the areas under Japanese control, which was nominally headed by Wang Jingwei 汪精卫 (1883-1944). While the factuality of this accusation remains difficult to ascertain, it clearly was one of the worst accusations possible:

Before the liberation, he held a position in the West Shanghai police bureau (*Shanghai Huxi jingchaju* 上海沪西警察局) for the Wang puppets, and was also in charge of publishing pornography to poison the people. At the time when he opened the Sanhe publishing company, he had illicit sexual relations with two female employees. After opening the Chinese Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying she* 中国摄影社), he offered nude pictures of women for a long time. When he was director of the magazines *Diansheng* (电声) and *Linglong* (玲珑) he continued to disseminate pornographic poison.

¹⁷⁶ Wu 1958, p. 13.

After the liberation, Lin Zecang still made no effort to reform himself, he continued to develop and print nude pictures of women for others, as well as photograph import-export certificates and land deeds, and secretly blackmailed his neighbor, one certain Liu. Up to the beginning of 1958, he still concealed a large batch of pornographic publications and nude photos of women in his home.¹⁷⁷

These attempts to connect Lin with pornography are the common thread running through the article, even though it would not be enough to justify this level of persecution just by itself. What did make Lin a prime target for persecution were his efforts to establish own structures for the organization of photographic activities. In addition to joining the CCP-controlled Photography Association in the spring of 1957, he also tried to establish a “Shanghai Photography Association” (*Shanghai sheying xuehui* 上海摄影学会) on his own in the summer of 1957, for which he not only lacked a permission of the Shanghai cultural bureau (*wenhuaaju* 文化局), but which also made him a rival of the just to be established preparatory committee of the Shanghai branch of the Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui Shanghai fenhui choubenhui* 中国摄影学会上海分会筹备会).¹⁷⁸ Wu alleged that Lin was “attempting to draw the masses to his side in seizing the leadership right over Shanghai's academic photographic organizations”.¹⁷⁹ Besides his continued ability to publish views on photography that did not conform to the party's views, this attempt at organizing photographers outside the control of the party was likely the final straw that led the authorities to take serious actions against him.

Still, for the readership of *Popular Photography*, the criticism of Lin's own “Photography Association” needed to be taken to a moral level. Thus Wu wrote:

When organizing the ‘Shanghai Photography Association’, on the surface it seemed decent, elegant and stately, but inwards it was a different thing. It has been brought to light that after receiving a large amount of membership fees, he planned to look for a building, buy sofas and install a stove so that the members could take photos of half-nude women there even in winter. Thus it can be seen what the so called art photography is that Lin Zecang wants to flourish and to where he wants to lead the amateur photographers.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Wu 1958, p. 13.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

On the next few pages of his article, Wu criticized the content of the *Photographic essentials* in quite some detail, especially concentrating on Lin's "incorrect" quotation of the Soviet photographers, but also noting that the chapter "Guide to the photo studio" (*zhaoxiangguan zhinan* 照相馆指南) was describing the inner workings of a photo studio as a "capitalist photo business", even though in 1955, when the book was published, transformation of the economy towards Socialism was already under way.¹⁸¹ Disputing Lin's claim to serve the readers with the publication of his book, Wu wrote that "[h]is photographic books are not faithfully serving the reader, but are a method for opportunistically gaining individual fame and wealth."¹⁸²

But even with this continued "incorrect" outlook, Lin Zecang was very useful to the authorities by serving as a bad example to encourage the others. This is admitted by Wu Qun quite frankly:

Through the unmasking and criticism of Lin Zecang, we get a step closer to seeing: The struggle between the two lines on the front of literature and arts (*wenyi zhanxian shang de liang tiao daolu de douzheng* 文艺战线上的两条道路的斗争) will take a long time. Taking the Socialist road or the Capitalist road, faithfully serving the people or desperately keeping to individualism without letting go? This urgent question is facing every photographer and amateur photographer. If you want to take the Socialist road, you have to thoroughly break with Capitalism, raise your political understanding, try hard to remold your thinking and make it fit the demands of the times. You have to serve the interests and needs of the numerous working people with the weapons of literature and art, instead of expressing yourself and satisfying your desire for individual fame and wealth and catering to the preferences of a minority. Thinking one way and acting another, by complying in public but being opposed in private will not do. There is no middle road. If you still persist in taking the Capitalist road like Lin Zecang did, in that case you will have to be cast aside by the people.¹⁸³

This time, Lin Zecang was not given another chance to mend his ways. Arrested and sentenced by the authorities of Shanghai in the spring of 1958, he ended his life by his own hands in prison in 1961.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Wu 1958, p. 14.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Wu 1958, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸⁴ Zhao 2013, p. 132.

Even though Lin had repeatedly tried to align his published perspective on photography with that of the party and those in control of the photo network by adding the buzzwords of the day and what he thought were concepts in line with the CCP's understanding of photography, it was never enough to get him off the hook. During the early 1950s, the CCP had to tolerate the publication of his textbook, for their control over the publishing sphere was still not complete and there was also an urgent demand for technical knowledge of photography which outweighed any political considerations. With the party's successively tighter grip on photography in the later 50s and the growing desire to also control education of new photographers, someone with the knowledge about alternative ways to conceptualize photography and also the ability to publish it like Lin could not be allowed to run free. This is the reason why Lin – one of the only influential voices on photography outside the photographic network – was silenced in the “anti-rightist” campaign, which otherwise targeted only photographers within the photo network. This campaign is described in more detail in section 3.9 of this chapter.

3.8 International Influences and Exchange

After the foundation of the PRC in 1949, foreigners living in China, such as Christian missionaries or representatives of western companies and governments found themselves among the designated enemies of the CCP. They symbolized the oppression of the Chinese people by “Imperialism” and thus had to be gotten rid of, similar to the “landlords”, who represented the oppression through “Feudalism”. While a number of foreigners were executed, most (even including those born in China to foreign parents) were pressured to leave the country in the years after the establishment of the CCP government, which soured relations with the western countries.¹⁸⁵

The fact that the United States supported the Guomindang government – opponent of the CCP during the Chinese Civil War – in their exile on Taiwan after 1949 also did its part to establish a so called “Bamboo curtain” between China and the western countries. After the Korean War started in 1950, China even found itself involved in direct exchanges of hostilities with the countries which – under United Nation's command – opposed the North Korean invasion of the South.

¹⁸⁵ Compare: Dikötter, Frank (2013): *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-57*, London: Bloomsbury. pp. 103-124.

Consequently, the Chinese government faced trade restrictions imposed on it by the United States and its allies, which covered resources of strategic importance.¹⁸⁶

With the new Chinese government – in dire need of political and economic support – aligning itself with Stalin’s USSR, the Chinese government’s relations to the so-called western countries reached rock bottom. Still, for the photographers of the illustrated press, an influx of material and information from the world outside of China continued to take place for the time to come. This was partly due to necessity, for example where advanced photographic equipment could only be obtained from other countries, and partly for political reasons, where exchange with foreign colleagues was deemed beneficial to the advancement of photographic knowledge.

3.8.1 Cameras and Equipment

As described in chapter one, during wartime the photographers of the Yan’an film group and those attached to the different illustrated magazines in the communist base areas used a hodgepodge of different cameras and related equipment of whichever type they could get hold of, resulting in published photos of sometimes questionable technical quality. After the establishment of the centralized organizations of illustrated media in the wake of the founding of the PRC, the question of which cameras to supply the press photographers with naturally had to be solved as well.

Quite surprisingly, Xinhua News Agency chose to supply its photographers with West(!)-German Leica 35mm rangefinder cameras and Rolleiflex 6x6 twin lens reflex cameras from 1952 onward.¹⁸⁷ It is unclear how this was achieved under the trade restrictions imposed on China by the United States, which the allies of the U.S. had to adhere to as well.

¹⁸⁶ Compare: Zhang Shuguang (2001): *Economic Cold War*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press. pp. 79-112.

¹⁸⁷ “Full reporters receive a Leica and a Rolleiflex, as well as a tele- and wide-angle lens for the Leica, with a multi-viewfinder and a flash. Assistants and trainees receive a Leica, with tele- and wide-angle lenses, as well as a multi-viewfinder.” Compare: “Zai ge zongfenshe he san ge fenshe jianli sheying jizhe zu de jue ding 在各总分社和三个分社建立摄影记者组的决定 [Decision on the foundation of photographers groups in every main branch agency and three branch agencies]” (01.07.1952) in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiubu 新华社新闻研究部 (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 2nd of 5 vols., pp. 266-268, p. 267.

The use of West-German cameras continued at least until 1966 (though likely until even later), because in some of the photos of chairman Mao taken at the receptions of the Red Guards in Beijing during the summer of that year, photographers using Leica M3 rangefinders – on the market since 1954, produced until 1966 – can be seen in the background. An example of this is given in figure 18.



Figure 18: Photographer with Leica in background of photo of Mao Zedong. In: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 9, p. 14. (Cropped by author).

What is remarkable about this is not only the use of foreign made cameras per se. Similar to other branches of industry reliant on precision engineering, China lacked the ability to produce camera systems of the quality necessary for professional use in sufficient numbers, making the import of suitable cameras a prerequisite for the establishment of its system of illustrated media. This apparently was recognized in China, for as part of the industrial policy of the “Great Leap Forward”, production of rangefinder cameras based on the design of the Leica was begun in different places of China:

Starting in 1956, the Dalai camera factory (*Beijing dalai zhaoxiangji chang* 北京大来照相机厂) in Beijing tested production of a Leica-copy, but produced only 12 pieces and concentrated on other, simpler cameras later.

In 1958, the Shanghai camera factory (*Shanghai zhaoxiangji chang* 上海照相机厂), newly founded as a subsidiary of the Shanghai timepieces and glasses factory (*Shanghai zhongbiao yanjing chang* 上海钟表眼镜厂), started to produce a Leica-copy as well, under the name Shanghai 58-1, of which 1.198 pieces were produced in 1958 and 1959. This was replaced in production by a Shanghai 58-2 with some changes to the original design in 1959, of which 11.888 pieces were produced; a limited range of accessories such as a light meter was available as well.

Also in 1958, the optical instrument plant in Nanjing (*Nanjing guangxue yiqi chang* 南京光学仪器厂) tested production of a copy of the FED-2 camera hailing from the Soviet Union, itself based on the design of early Leica cameras. About 600 pieces of these were produced.¹⁸⁸

While the small number of cameras produced indicates that they were not available to the general public, the author also found no sources pointing to their use by Chinese press photographers of the photo network. As shown by the above-mentioned appearance of Leicas in the hands of Xinhua photographers in 1966, it seems that Xinhua preferred to continue supplying its photographers with imported cameras, at least as far as the central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhe zu* 中央记者组) in Beijing was concerned.

What is indeed remarkable is the use of West-German camera brands, when cameras from the socialist German Democratic Republic would have been available too. The GDR, with its concentration of optical companies in Jena, was considered a leader in optical industries among (not only) the socialist countries.

¹⁸⁸ Compare: Rikuta Saburō 陆田三郎 (2009): *Zhongguo gudian xiangji gushi* 中国古典相机故事 [Stories of Classic Chinese Cameras], Beijing: Zhongguo sheying CBS, pp. 8-16.

Reviews of different brands and types of cameras, as well as descriptions of how to use them, published in Xinhua's vocational magazine *Photography Vocation* prove that awareness of the differences in the products of the optical industries competing internationally did exist at Xinhua.¹⁸⁹ Why the choice for the (West-German) brands Leica and Rollei was made remains unclear, as well as why the various other makes and brands of cameras were publicized among the members of the press corps, who had to use the cameras assigned to them by their organizations anyway.¹⁹⁰

3.8.2 The Soviet Model

Quite similar to the need for advanced photographic equipment, and already touched on in the section on the professional training of photographers, the expansion of the scope of the illustrated media's activities depended on an enlargement of its pool of photographers. Even the inclusion of the "old photographers" into the ranks of the press photographers did not satisfy the manpower requirements of the illustrated press. The only way to have enough photographers (and editors) to fill the newly created positions in the photo network was to educate more photographers, which in itself posed a new problem: The few photographic educators available were either fully occupied with their regular administrative occupations in the photo network, or were deemed to not be politically reliable. Therefore to be able to educate new photographers, China first needed to acquire photographic knowledge and the people able to teach it. Since the countries of "the West" were now counted among the enemies of China, the PRC had only the Soviet Union to turn to for support.

Due to the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet split, which began to gradually unfold after Khrushchev's secret speech "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" in which he denounced Stalin in February 1956, post factum information on Russian advisers in China is hard to come by. Regrettably, the few studies which are available in English omit the activities of Russian advisors in the Chinese media.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Compare for example: Introduction of West-German Linhof (林哈夫) field camera in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 1, pp. 51ff., introduction of West-German Rollei (禄来福) twin lens reflex in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 3, pp. 36ff., introduction of East-German company Carl Zeiss Jena (耶纳地方的卡尔·蔡司) in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 4, pp. 23ff., introduction of West-German Leica (徕卡) rangefinder in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 8, pp. 56ff., introduction of West-German Contax (康泰斯) rangefinder and USSR Kiev (基辅) copy thereof in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 10, pp. 48ff. as well as introduction of East-German Praktina (派莱克铁那) single lens reflex in *Photography Vocation* 1955, no. 11, p. 59ff.

¹⁹⁰ This question cannot be answered in this study, but it would be a compelling subject for further studies, perhaps beginning with retracing the way the German cameras took from Wetzlar (Leica) to Beijing.

¹⁹¹ Compare for example: Westad, Odd Arne (ed.) (2011): *Brothers in arms: The rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance, 1945-1963*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

However, based on a survey of the available historical sources it is possible to retrace the adaption of technical, organizational and aesthetic expertise from the photographers of the USSR by those of China.

This adaption happened in three important ways, namely translations of Soviet essays and textbooks on photography, made available in China either through the vocational magazines or even in book form, visits and internships of Chinese photographers at media organizations in the USSR and also the – seemingly very limited – presence of Soviet photographer-advisors in China.

According to Kaple, who describes the general situation of Soviet advisors in China, i.e. not especially assigned to the news media, “[...] substantive Soviet assistance did not begin until after Stalin’s death in 1953. [...] in most fields, during the first three years of the existence of the People’s Republic, the Chinese relied not on Soviet advisors but mostly on books and articles translated from Russian into Chinese.”¹⁹² This is corroborated by the historical sources available to the author. The first article translated from Russian already appeared in a vocational magazine in September 1952, in the form of an article on the Russian 19th-century photographer A.O. Karelin published in the PLA’s *Photo Network*,¹⁹³ with many further articles on various – mostly technical – subjects to follow in the next years.

The highpoint of this adaption of knowledge was reached in the years 1954 and 1955 with both a peak in the number of translated literature, presence of a very limited number of Soviet advisors in the Chinese illustrated media during this time, as well as a visit by a delegation of high-ranking photographer cadres of Xinhua to the Soviet Union’s TASS news agency.

However, the only examples of Soviet advisors visiting organizations of the illustrated media in China are two advisors whose names were transliterated as “Jisiluofu” 基斯洛夫 [Kislov] and “Baliqie’ermanci” 巴里切尔曼茨.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Kaple, Deborah A. (2011): “Soviet Advisors in China in the 1950s”, in: Westad, Odd Arne (ed.) (2011): *Brothers in arms: The rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance, 1945-1963*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, pp. 117–40. p. 119.

¹⁹³ Yigenuofu 伊葛诺夫 [Ivanov] (1952): “Kalielin de sheying yishu: Eluosi sheying shihua 卡列林的摄影艺术: 俄罗斯摄影史话 [Karelin’s Photography: Stories of Russian Photography]”, in: *Sheying wang* 摄影网 [Photo Network], 1952, no. 13, pp. 20–23.

¹⁹⁴ Unfortunately, in most cases, the Chinese sources do not give a Cyrillic or Western name for the Soviet photographers introduced, instead transliterating them into (obviously) Chinese. Since there was no standard method for the transliteration of Russian names into Chinese, even with the help of scholars fluent in both Chinese as well as Russian, the author was only able to reconstruct some of the names of the Soviet photographers appearing in this study. Where no transliterated names are given, they could not be reasonably reconstructed, demonstrating the difficulties in transmitting information across language boundaries.

“Jisiluofu” visited the editorial office of the *People’s Illustrated* in late 1954 and apparently held some lectures there, which were transcribed and published in different vocational magazines. He also visited the photography department of Xinhua at the invitation of the vocational study committee (*yewu xuexi weiyuanhui* 业务学习委员会) in early 1955 and gave a lecture there.¹⁹⁵

“Baliqie’ermanci” took part in a symposium with the photographers of different newspapers and illustrated magazines in Beijing in September 1954, which had been organized by the *People’s Illustrated* as well.¹⁹⁶ Since the desire to make the knowledge gained from the USSR available to as many photographers as possible is evident through the numerous articles published in the vocational magazines, it appears likely that the two were the only Soviet advisors within the Chinese illustrated media, on the base that no visits by other advisors were publicized.

The knowledge which “Jisiluofu” shared in his report at the *People’s Illustrated* was on the role of the photo reporter in the production of editorial content for illustrated magazines, and included a notable concept of a photo reporter’s creativity in the context of this production process:

The photo reporters of illustrated magazines (*huabao sheying jizhe* 画报摄影记者) are staff members of the editorial department who are rich in creativity (*fuyou chuangzaoxing* 富有创造性). Because of this, their work should not merely be to carry out the assignments given by the editorial department, but it should embody one principle: To actively and consciously take part in the work of dealing with the selection of [reportage] topics within the scope of the plans, reportage intentions (*baodao yitu* 报道意图) and detailed outline of the selected topics provided by the editorial department.

Even though the detailed outline of the selected topic is decided on by the relevant editorial group (*bianji zu* 编辑组), still the photo reporter responsible for the photographic work on this topic should also take part because it is very beneficial.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Compare: Jisiluofu 基斯洛夫 [Kislov] (1954): “Huabao sheying jizhe de gongzuo 画报摄影记者的工作 [The Work of Photo Reporters at Illustrated Magazines]”, in: *Sheying wang* 摄影网 [Photo Network], 1954, no. 22, pp. 2–9. Jisiluofu 基斯洛夫 [Kislov] (1955): “Guanyu xinwen tupian de yixie wenti 关于新闻图片的一些问题 [About a Few Questions of News Pictures]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 2, pp. 22–33.

¹⁹⁶ Compare: Xing 星 (1954): “Zhengui de huitan 珍贵的会谈 [A Precious Conversation]”, in: *Sheying wang* 摄影网 [Photo Network], 1954, no. 22, pp. 15–18.

¹⁹⁷ Jisiluofu 1954, p. 2.

Acceptance of this controversial type of limited creativity crucially depended on the understanding of the value of one's work vis-à-vis society, or as "Jisiluofu" put it:

As a true working cadre (*gongzuo ganbu* 工作干部), no matter where you work, you should not just regard your work as your source for earning money or a guarantee of your material life, but should instead regard your work as a part of your life.

Basically our lives can be divided into two aspects. One is work, the other is family life. And most of our lives is spent at our work stations. In case we say even if most of our time is spent at work, and even there we don't forget our family, then while spending time with our family, we should also not forget our work. These two aspects of life are integrated, and our life is made up of these two parts.

Now if we ardently love our work, and dedicate all our knowledge to our work and furthermore find the objective of our struggle in our work and understand our work is a useful social activity, then work will be cheerful and excite us and it will be a necessity of life. Like this, the achievements and the usefulness of our work will also be bigger, and it will benefit society more.

This kind of work attitude will make every worker feel spiritually satisfied, and this kind of satisfaction is much more valuable than [just] a salary.¹⁹⁸

This perception of work as a "useful social activity" or "benefitting society" naturally depended on the photographers accepting the intentions of the reportage plans given out by the editorial departments as indisputable, correct direction for photography – something which the photographers who had not received the military-style education during wartime found difficult to do. On the other hand, for those trained in the communist base areas, this was the natural way of handling work, which they also expected their new colleagues in the photo network to conform to. Perhaps not surprisingly, the cadres in control of the photo network, who did receive their education in the communist base areas during the war against Japan, or were even responsible for the organization of this education, took great care to have the knowledge shared by the soviet experts conform to their own existing conception of photographic work.

This is apparent throughout a number of articles appearing in 1955, which were credited to Kusovzhin, transliterated as "Kuzuofujin" 库佐夫金, director of the Department of Photography of TASS news agency, and "Guxiefu" 古谢夫, vice director of the same department.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Jisiluofu 1954, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ Kuzuofujin 库佐夫金 [Kusovzhin] (1955): "Tasishe sheying baodao de zuoyong 塔斯社摄影报道的作用 [The Function of TASS' Photo Reportages]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 8, pp. 1–4. As well as Guxiefu 古谢夫 (1955): "Guanyu xinwen zhaopian de xingzhi he chuanguo fangmian

Even though credited to the two Soviet photography administrators, small notes at the end of the articles informed the readers that Shi Shaohua himself had arranged them for publication. And while nominally credited to the Soviet functionaries, the content of the articles themselves was based on what Shi had learned when he had visited the photography department of TASS in the winter of 1954/55 as part of a delegation of high-ranking Xinhua cadres. Another member of the delegation, Yuan Ling 袁苓, who had even stayed at TASS for nine months from the end of 1954 to August 1955, extensively shared the knowledge he had gained in the Soviet Union,²⁰⁰ but was also responsible for the arrangement of articles credited to Soviet photographers and administrators.²⁰¹

Yuan himself had been trained by Sha Fei and Shi Shaohua during the war against Japan, became a photojournalist for Xinhua in 1950, and in the next years became head of Xinhua's photography department's central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhe zu* 中央记者组) and domestic editorial office (*guonei bianji shi* 国内编辑室) (after 1957), which not only shows he was trusted to be politically reliable enough to represent Xinhua in foreign countries, but also to work in positions of leadership.²⁰²

Thus for the readers of the vocational magazines, a large part of what might have appeared to be firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of the Soviet illustrated media did not come directly from Soviet sources, but was mediated by Shi Shaohua and Yuan Ling, based on what their Soviet colleagues allowed them to see while in the Soviet Union, what they were able to make of it (with the aid of translators) and ultimately what they decided to share of this with their colleagues at home.

On returning to China, they described the way how photographic work was organized at the Soviet Union's TASS news agency as the model to be emulated by Xinhua's photographers.²⁰³

de yixie wenti 关于新闻照片的性质和创作方面的一些问题 [Discussion of the Form of News Photos and a Few Questions on Creative Aspects]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 8, pp. 4–8.

²⁰⁰ Compare: Yuan Ling 袁苓 (1955): "Tasishe jizhe shi women xuexi de bangyang 塔斯社记者是我们学习的榜样 [The Reporters of TASS are our Models to Study]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 9, pp. 20–22.

Yuan Ling 袁苓 (1955): "Xinwen tupian de bianji gongzuo 新闻图片的编辑工作 [The Editorial Work on News Pictures]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 10, pp. 1–4.

Yuan Ling 袁苓 (1955): "Guanyu gongchang sheying 关于工厂摄影 [Photographing in a Factory]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 10, pp. 8–24.

²⁰¹ Compare: Liedanuofusiji 列达诺夫斯基 [Lidanovskiy] (1955): "Difang sheying jizhe de huodong 地方摄影记者的活动 [Activities of Local Photographers]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 9, pp. 17–19. Article arranged by Yuan Ling.

²⁰² Yu 1989, p. 916.

²⁰³ Compare for example: Yuan 1955, pp. 20–22.

In their reports, the Soviet photographers appear as larger-than-life types, which uncannily conforms to the photographic or pictorial depiction of model workers and soldiers in the Chinese illustrated media of the time.

Having studied half a year with Naum Granovskiy (transliterated as Gelanuofusiji 格拉诺夫斯基)²⁰⁴, “photo journalist for the TASS department of photography since 1927, and [...] the best architectural photographer in the Soviet Union”,²⁰⁵ Yuan Ling afterwards was full of praise for him in an article about the experience, describing his teacher’s achievements in a list of ten items. While many of these were solely about technical proficiency, other virtues were not forgotten as well, since Granovskiy:

(1) Has a high degree of consciousness, at all times and in all places paying attention to make his own photos express the great creations and high degree of skill of the people. [...]

(7) Has the utmost patience and highest efficiency. When he has to wait for the suitable light, clouds or cars and passersby on the street, he will stand on the snowy ground for one or two hours, but when the moment to hurry up arrives, he is able to act rapidly.

(8) Takes the editorial department and the editors' opinions very serious. Often, when a photo he thinks is very good is met with criticism or is even not accepted, he is never dissatisfied because of this. He says, listening to other people's opinions is very important, it is very helpful for improving one's work. [...]

(10) He is very good at social interactions, and can extensively establish connections and also depend on his trustworthiness in interactions. This way he is able to get a lot of help from other people. Like the one time he needed to take a photo on the street, he had a very nice chat with the police and as a result they helped him to organize the people on the street and guided him.²⁰⁶

Thus Granovskiy’s presentation as a model to be emulated rested not only on his technical abilities as a photographer, but also on his ability to function in the social environment of the Soviet Union and more specifically TASS’ department of photography.

In another article arranged by Yuan Ling, but credited to “Guxiefu” 古谢夫, vice-director of TASS’ department of photography, the requirements for photo reporters in the Soviet Union were listed in a more abstract way:

²⁰⁴ This article by Yuan Ling was one of the rare cases, where the original Cyrillic version of a Russian name was given.

²⁰⁵ Yuan 1955, p. 20.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Same as with the other workers at the news agency, the photo reporters should first of all be propagandists (*xuanchuanyuan* 宣传员); in regard to the foundation of their work, they should be highly technically skilled photographers with artistic training; in regard to their way of working, they should be very good reporters. Or more simply said: A photo reporter should be a propagandist, photographer and reporter. [...]

Apart from the above-mentioned qualifications, we still have the following demands towards photo reporters:

First of all, their conduct must be blameless, they must behave well and be an example for the people. Because they are representatives of the news agency, their behavior has a direct influence on the prestige of the agency. Second, the photo reporters must send authentic, valuable photos – the ones the editorial department needs – of the news that happen locally. We don't permit reporters to take sensational (*songrentingwen* 耸人听闻) photos and don't permit them to take “beautiful” (*piaoliang* 漂亮) photos without content, because our publications don't print these.

News photos should have a rich content and meaning, reflect the people's true situation and at the same time mobilize the people to achieve the tasks set forth by the party and government. We don't take photos for the sake of photos (*wei zhaopian er zhaopian* 为照片而照片), but seek photos that have a clear sense of purpose.²⁰⁷

Here it becomes clear that the ideal photo reporter – according to the Soviet model as presented by Yuan Ling – carried out the tasks given to him from above, and otherwise does everything necessary to become a well-functioning cogwheel in the media apparatus.

This apparatus itself was also presented as a model to be emulated. In the case of the department of photography of TASS, the work of the photographers was controlled by different editorial groups, with a central news group (*zhongyang xinwen zu* 中央新闻组) controlling the photo journalists in Moscow and a Soviet Union news group (*Sulian xinwen zu* 苏联新闻组) with attached local journalist supervision group (*difang jizhe zhidao xiaozu* 地方记者指导组) controlling the work and education of photographers scattered over the various prefectures of the USSR.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Guxiefu 古谢夫 (1955): “Sheying jizhe de gongzuo 摄影记者的工作 [The Work of Photo Reporters]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 9, pp. 1–12. p. 1.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

The central news group in Moscow even featured a portrait photo studio (*renxiang sheying shi* 人像摄影室), which “often invited nationally famous model workers (*laodong mofan* 劳动模范), heroes (*yingxiong* 英雄), artists (*yishujia* 艺术家), political activists (*zhengzhi huodongjia* 政治活动家), members of the Central Committee (*zhongyang weiyuan* 中央委员) and generals (*jiangjun* 将军) to take their political portraits (*zhengzhi renxiang* 政治人像).”²⁰⁹ The most important tool, which was used within these organizational structures to control the work of their attached photographers was the reportage plan, which:

[...] not only concentrates the power of all reporters to solve the main task of reportage, but also controls and disciplines the reporters. It has a supervisory function for the work of the reporters. The photo department draws up a three-month reportage plan (*baodao jihua* 报道计划), which is approved by the director of the agency. The reportage plan is formulated on the basis of the tasks given to all people of the nation by the party and government. The plan formulates the primary subject of photography, and also formulates the subject matter of the reportage on the different branches of the national economy. Every journalist needs to independently draw up his own reportage plan for every month, on the basis of the three-month reportage plan. In these plans it needs to be decided which subject matter to photograph in which place at what time. The reporters in Moscow need to give their plans to the head of the central news group to have them approved, the local journalists send them to the Soviet Union news group at the photo department to have them approved by the group head.²¹⁰

How closely the work of the photographers was controlled and monitored under the Soviet model becomes fully apparent in this quote. This was the framework in which the photographers were allowed to work, and which the leading cadres of Xinhua’s department of photography wanted to emulate in China. While the author did not find sources explicitly detailing (or decreeing) the process of organizational change at Xinhua to conform to the Soviet model, when comparing the structures described in the reports about the visit of the delegation in the USSR with the structures in existence at Xinhua in the late 1950s, the parallels are obvious, indicating that the Soviet model was indeed successfully implemented there. As described in section 3.2 of this chapter, Xinhua’s photography department featured a central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhezu* 中央记者组) with attached portrait photo studio (*renxiang sheying shi* 人像摄影室), which mirrored TASS’ central news group (*zhongyang xinwen zu* 中央新闻组).

²⁰⁹ Shi Shaohua 石少华 (1955): “Shu'ai ziji gongzuo de renmen 热爱自己工作的人们 [People Who Warmly Love Their Work]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 8, pp. 8–15. p. 10.

²¹⁰ Guxiefu 1955, p. 5.

It also featured a domestic editorial office (*guonei bianji shi* 国内编辑室) and branch office work group (*fenshe gongzuo zu* 分社工作组) which perhaps mirrored TASS' Soviet Union news group (*Sulian xinwen zu* 苏联新闻组) with attached local journalist supervision group (*difang jizhe zhidao xiaozu* 地方记者指导组). Thus in comparison of the departmental structure of Xinhua's department of photography and the presentation of TASS in the articles published in the vocational magazines, there are strong indications for the successful adoption of the Soviet model in the photo network. Another indicator of this successful adoption is the mentioning of the three-month reportage plans as the base of work in the photo network. These plans are not mentioned at all in the wartime-sources, but only appear from the mid-1950s onward, which is a strong indication that the concept of the illustrated media producing their output on the base of plans was one of the core components of the Soviet model.

Apart from these rather idealized descriptions of the Soviet model, the need for concrete, detailed technical expertise in the illustrated media was tried to be satisfied by the publication of Soviet textbooks on photography. Two translations of Soviet textbooks were directly published through Xinhua's vocational magazine *Photography vocation*, with the whole content of issue 1955, no. 5 being a translation of the 90-page textbook *Basic Principles of News Photography Composition* (*Xinwen sheying de goutu jiben yuanli* 新闻摄影的构图基本原理) by an author transliterated as "Dekuo" 德阔 [Dyko] and the content of issue 1955, no. 7 being a translation of the 71-page textbook *Agricultural Photography* (*Nongye sheying* 农业摄影) by an author transliterated as "Keli" 柯利. These textbooks were the only content of the respective issues, and published without further introductions or remarks, but an addendum found on a loose slip of paper between pages 70 and 71 of issue 1955 no. 5 informed the reader that these textbooks were published in lieu of the usual content, which the editorial office was unable to provide due to an unusually heavy workload.²¹¹

²¹¹ Dekuo 德阔 [Dyko] (1955): "Xinwen sheying de goutu jiben yuanli 新闻摄影的构图基本原理 [Basic Principles of News Photography Composition]", in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1955, no. 5, pp. 1–90, addendum on page 70.

The textbook *The Practice of Photography* (*Sheying de shijian* 摄影的实践) by one “Mikulin” 米库林 [Mikulin] was also published chapter by chapter as a sequence of articles in *Photography Vocation* during 1955, before it was eventually republished in Shanghai in the form of a book in 1956.²¹²

Interestingly, for this *Practice of Photography* there exists a review written by the photographer Tan Zhiqiang 谭志强, also published in 1956, in which he concentrates on discussing the book’s chapter on rural photography and the influence it had on him.²¹³

Tan seemingly follows the Soviet model at first, praising the clarity of “Mikulin’s” openly political advice to photographers:

How to prevent our agricultural reportage from losing its direction and simultaneously enable our reporters to be able to correctly work with the subject matter?

Mikulin’s essay answers this question very simple and clear: “Understand the party’s and government’s resolutions that are aimed at improving Socialist agriculture.” This is our foundation. After studying this essay, I again very carefully read the agricultural part of the first five year plan (*Wo guo fazhan guomin jingji de diyi ge wunian jihua* 我国发展国民经济的第一个五年计划) and realized that many subjects should have been reported on, but have been overlooked by us.²¹⁴

However, Tan then somewhat departs from the direction suggested by Mikulin, by proposing that just copying the Soviet model will not work for the agricultural photography of China:

In [Mikulin’s] essay it is described like this: “The topics to be photographed in agriculture, are those that have an organic relationship to the subject of the new life of the Soviet farmers.”

In our country the farmers are not like the farmers of the collective farms in the Soviet Union, who enjoy modern conveyances like cars or motorcycles, they furthermore don’t have reading rooms and naturally can’t buy radio sets, music instruments or cameras. [...] Maybe in the vast countryside of our country, there are individual farmers who have a radio or a camera, but if we photo reporters only pursue this aspect in our reportages, it would appear foolish.²¹⁵

²¹² Mikulin 米库林 [Mikulin] (1956): *Sheying de shijian* 摄影的实践 [The Practice of Photography], Shanghai: Renmin meishu CBS.

²¹³ Tan Zhiqiang 谭志强 (1956): “‘Sheying de shijian — nongcun sheying’ duhou “摄影的实践—农村摄影” 读后 [After reading *The Practice of Photography: Rural Photography*]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1956, no. 10, pp. 22–25.

²¹⁴ Tan 1956, p. 22.

²¹⁵ Tan 1956, p. 24.

He goes on to acknowledge “Mikulin’s” recommendation to concentrate on the depiction of “characters” (*renwu* 人物) in reportages about the countryside as “correct”,²¹⁶ but also suggests that in addition to this technique, (as well as familiarity with national policies), the photo reporters should furthermore be intimately knowledgeable about the local conditions at their assigned workplace:

To take the agricultural activities of Guangxi province as an example: I only stayed there one summer, but already the production activities for cereal crops alone among other things included the early rice harvest, tending to the middle-season rice as well as the transplanting of the late rice seedlings, extremely complicated. At the same time, the rules for this had a very precise timeliness, meaning that the time, geography and customs for this had differences in the southern, middle and northern areas of the province. With this kind of patterns, if we patiently and unceasingly pay attention to them in an organized way, then at any time we can understand what kind of work is done in any area of the local countryside and what work will be done in the future. If we can achieve this, then our photographic reportage will become more active and more timely. I suggest to give free rein to every journalists initiative, and I think if the work would start with this, it will surmount the key problem of our work being unorganized, passive and sluggish.²¹⁷

Similar to the “translation” of the Soviet model, which the Xinhua cadres who had visited Moscow had presented to their colleagues, Tan’s review testifies to the efforts undertaken to work with and adapt the Soviet model to local Chinese realities, perhaps even foreshadowing the tentative steps to test a bottom-up approach in the organization of the photo network during the following “Hundred Flowers”.

Nevertheless, the promotion of the Soviet model to Chinese photographers had all but ended during the year 1956, with the abovementioned review by Tan Zhiqiang being one of the last articles published concerning photography of the Soviet Union. One reason for this was surely the repercussion of Khrushchev’s secret speech “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences” in February 1956, in the wake of which the Chinese leadership gradually began to distance itself from the USSR.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Tan 1956, p. 23.

Owing to the centralized structure of the media – not just the photo network – this also had to be done by the photographers, in lieu of the fact that the “Soviet model” had been presented to them as “correct” in the preceding years. Perhaps another reason was that the time used for education of the photographers and the space in the vocational magazines which had been taken up by the campaign to learn from the Soviet Union was now needed for the soon to be launched rectification campaign of 1957/58. This campaign had the goal of unifying the still diverging perspectives on photographic creation in the photo network according to the needs of the CCP.

The question of the extent of the Soviet influence on Chinese photography remains difficult to fathom. While Soviet photography as a model for the work of the photographers of the photo network was certainly heavily promoted during the years from about 1953 to 1956, resulting in an undeniable formal similarity of the photos published throughout the late 1950s, not to mention organizational similarities like the three-month-plan-based production of editorial content, the influx of Soviet information ended as rapidly as it had begun, and while not outright denied, was at least downplayed soon after. Due to the souring of relations between China and the Soviet Union, in the following years the “Soviet model” could not be justified to be “correct” anymore.

Furthermore, the adaption of the Soviet forms was never just an automatic transfer. In the environment of the photo network, the promotion of the “Soviet model” was carefully directed by the leaders of the network to further their own purposes. This means that the “Soviet model” presented to Chinese photographers was not only arranged to fit the needs of the authorities, it was also mediated by the leadership’s understanding of what was happening in the USSR, which naturally depended on what the leadership of the USSR allowed them to see. This made the results of the implementation of the “Soviet model” in China not unlike the outcome of the children’s game “Chinese whispers”, wherein an information is whispered from ear to ear, to come out significantly changed after some iterations.

In addition, the way of implementation of the “Soviet model” makes it comparable to other campaigns launched at the end of the 1950s, which had the same goal of directing the work of the photo network’s photographers into certain directions. In light of this context, the promotion of the “Soviet model” was far from a unique occurrence.

Perhaps still more influential was the military's model of photography, which the leading cadres of the photo network continued to adhere to due to their own biographic experiences, and which proved to be the benchmark for "correct" photography for the years to come. Maybe a better question in regard to the "Soviet model" would be why did it have to be Soviet photography, when for example German cameras were also used by the photographers of the photo network?

The answer to this question has already been given in the above section: Firstly the Soviet expertise was still available to the authorities governing the photo network, even after the "Bamboo curtain" had come down between China and "the West", and second, the "Soviet model" of a centralized, top-down approach in media regulation fit the needs of the party and could be integrated with the experience of the leading administrators of the photo network, who had earned their spurs in the environment of more or less such a model during the war against Japan. Last but not least, during these years, the whole Chinese economy was transformed to a socialist, plan based economy, making it rather unlikely that the strategically important media would have been unaffected by this process.

3.9 Establishment of Full CCP Control of the Photo Network in the Late 1950s

At the height of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1959, the photo network had reached its largest extension and highest complexity yet. This is depicted in the diagram in figure 19, shown below. After the closure of the regional illustrated military magazines, the *PLA Illustrated* remained as the military's only publication channel for photos. Besides the photographers attached to its editorial office in Beijing, photographers which were attached to the different military regions of China provided photographs to the magazine. These did not have the ability to publish them locally. In order to coordinate the work of these photographers beyond the requirements of daily work, the editorial office of the *PLA Illustrated* published the vocational magazine *PLA Illustrated Newsletter*, which was exclusively available to the military's photographers.

The civilian part of the photo network on the other hand had developed in a different direction: Besides the illustrated magazines (and newspapers) with a national reach which were able to both produce and publish their own photographs, i.e. the *People's Illustrated* and the *Nationalities Illustrated*, Xinhua's branch office photography departments were

producing and distributing photographs on a local scale, without direct input from the center. The publications, which were supplied with photos by the branch office photography departments, included the provincial illustrated magazines, which additionally were also able to produce their own photos via their photographer groups. Nevertheless, they could also still obtain photos from Xinhua's center via its catalogue *News Photos*. The vocational magazine *News Photography*, published by Xinhua's center as well, provided a discussion forum for and a place to publish political guidance aimed at the photographers employed in the civilian part of the photo network.

Last but not least, removed from the daily work of the press, but still a part of the photo network was the Photography Association, which through the publication of the vocational magazines *Chinese Photography* and *Popular Photography*, as well as the curation of the national photographic art exhibitions, also published photographs with the aim to provide all Chinese photographers with "correct" models for their work, by showcasing outstanding photographs.

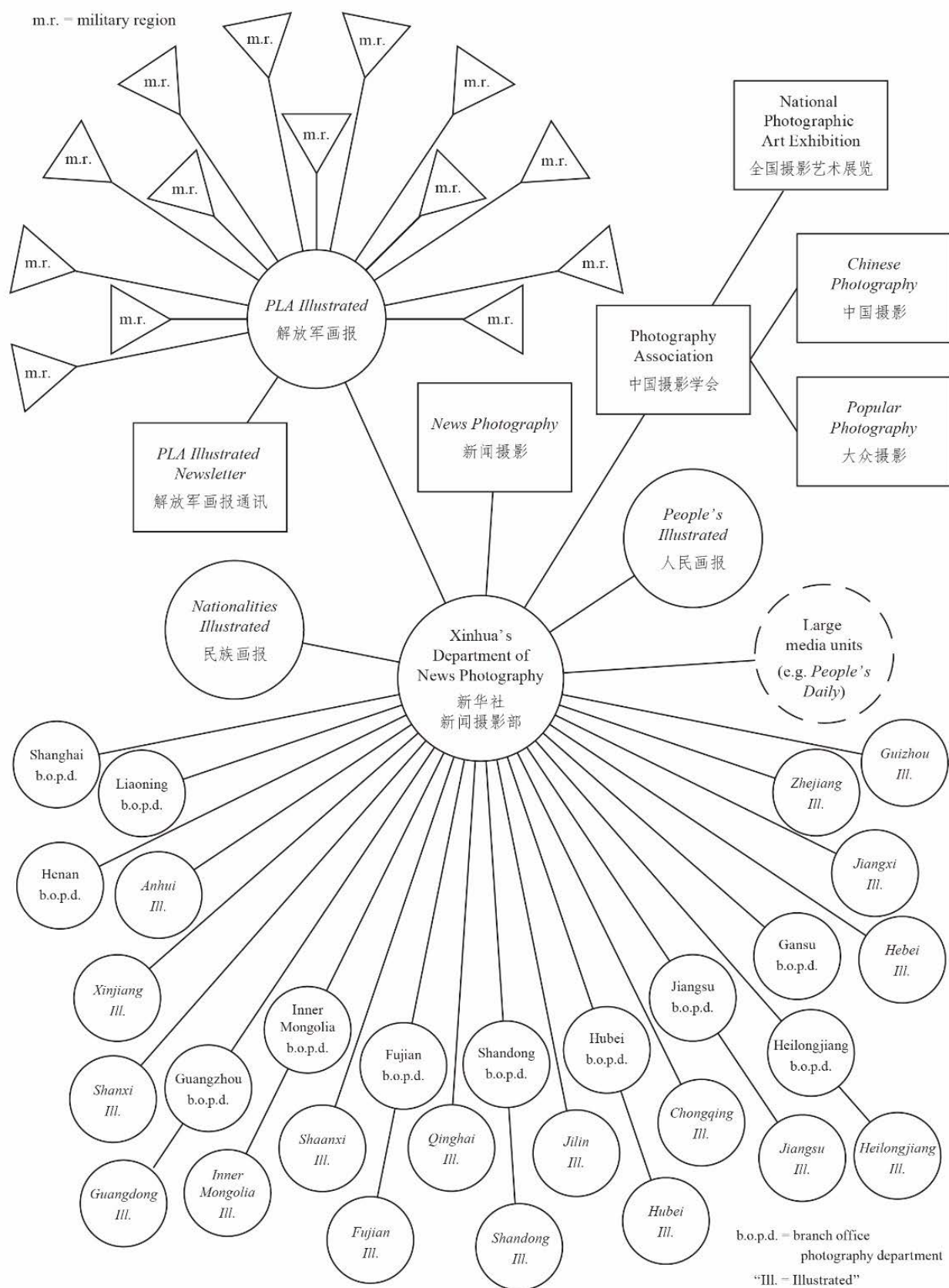


Figure 19: The photo network in the summer of 1959. Design by author of this study, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.

Apart from the day-to-day control exercised through the work plans, as well as control over the photographs published through the photo network, wider changes of direction in the work carried out within the photo network were announced and promoted through large-scale campaigns which were the topic of articles published in the vocational magazines, as well as meetings and symposiums held in the various organizations. One example of this, given in the last section, was the promotion of the “Soviet model” from about 1953 through 1956.

This was supplanted by various other campaigns beginning in 1956. In his study from 2011, photography historian Chen Shen lists them as the campaign of the “Hundred Flowers” (*shuangbai* 双百) of 1956, the campaign “against the rightists” (*fan youpai* 反右派) of 1957, the “Great Leap Forward” (*Dayuejin* 大跃进) of 1958 and opposition against “rightist tendencies” (*fan youqing* 反右倾) as well as “Revisionism” (*Xiuzhengzhuyi* 修正主义) in 1959. In 1961, in spite of the cultural policies having just been “readjusted” (*tiaozheng* 调整) – i.e. relaxed – to cope with the catastrophic repercussions of the failed “Great Leap Forward”, Mao Zedong nevertheless personally promoted the slogan “by all means do not neglect class struggle” (*qianwan buyao wangji jieji douzheng* 千万不要忘记阶级斗争).²¹⁸

Jiang Qisheng 蒋齐生 (1917—1997), a celebrated writer of news photography theory, reminisced in the somewhat autobiographical introduction to his *Selected Essays on News Photography* in 1982, that between 1954 and 1964 he personally took part in debates on the “question of manipulation and organized reworking” of photos (*baibu, zuzhi jiagong wenti* 摆布、组织加工问题), the “question of truth” (*zhenshixing wenti* 真实性问题), the “question of the reportage line” (*caifang luxian wenti* 采访路线问题) and the “question of the characteristics of news photography” (*xinwen sheying texing wenti* 新闻摄影特性问题), which were all discussed in symposiums and in the vocational magazines.²¹⁹ The author of this study wants to argue that this careful delineation of specific campaigns and debates – while having merits – does not further the understanding of the underlying causes of their emergence all that much.

Ultimately, the above mentioned campaigns carried out between 1957 and 1961 all served to establish or achieve as well as entrench CCP control of Chinese society, including the photo network, with the specific buzzwords used in each campaign serving more as rallying points for identification of friend and foe than as truly contentious practical issues.

²¹⁸ Chen; Xu 2011, pp. 431-432.

²¹⁹ Jiang Qisheng 蒋齐生 (1982): *Xinwen sheying lunji* 新闻摄影论集 [Selected Essays on News Photography], Beijing: Xinhua CBS. p. 3.

Therefore bringing the background of the campaigns' participants – be it as persecutor or victim, friend or foe – into focus is of more use in understanding what actually took place. In this study, the campaigns which shook the photo network in the second half of the 1950s will therefore be grouped and analyzed together in the following sections. An exception is made only for the campaign of the “Hundred Flowers”, which represented tentative steps in trying out a bottom-up approach in some aspects of administration of the photo network, which contrasted with the top-down approach used before and after.

3.9.1 The Free Airing of Views under the Policy of a “Hundred Flowers”

As has already been shown in the preceding sections, the establishment of the photographic network, especially of the mechanisms of CCP control between and within editorial departments and the resulting uniformity of photography, created friction and tension among photographers and picture editors. Some of these were CCP members and affiliates who owed their careers to the CCP's victory in the civil war, while others were specialists involved with the production of illustrated media since before the war, who had their own experience-based notions on how to run illustrated magazines. While their contrarian views on the hows and whys of photographic creation had occasionally appeared here and there in the vocational magazines before, in the summer of 1956 the situation changed markedly, when the CCP began to promote the principle of “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought content” (*Baihuaqifang baijiazhengming* 百花齐放百家争鸣)²²⁰, as part of a campaign to correct the work of party members through criticism voiced by other party members as well as members of the general public, who were encouraged to criticize shortcomings and mistakes in the ongoing construction of a new society, not just limited to the photo network.

For the first time since the establishment of the photo network, non-party-affiliated photographers and picture editors were empowered and even encouraged to voice fundamental criticism of the way in which photography was used in the media, in essence a departure from the top-down approach used until then, and perhaps a cautious step in abandoning the Soviet model promoted until then.

²²⁰ Zhuang Nanpo 庄南坡 (1956): “Sheying yishu de ‘baihua qifang’ yu ‘baijia zhengming’ 摄影艺术的‘百花齐放’与‘百家争鸣’ [Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Content in the Art of Photography]”, in: *Sheying yewu* 摄影业务 [Photography Vocation], 1956, no. 7. pp. 1–4. p. 1.

Based on a survey of the available vocational magazines, reception of this new policy of openly aired dissent among photographers seems to have been surprisingly lukewarm. After a first article advocating the “Hundred Flowers” was published by Zhuang Nanpo 庄南坡, an assistant editor of the *Nationalities Illustrated*,²²¹ in the vocational magazine *Photography Vocation* in July 1956, it took almost a year for the “Hundred Flowers” to become the topic of a dedicated article again. In his article, Zhuang criticized the shortcomings of photography in the newly constructed photo network in detail:

In the last few years, photographic work has been very successful, which is acknowledged by everyone. But we must also admit that in the domain of photographic art “the blooming of a hundred flowers” has not been achieved yet. This shortcoming can clearly be felt from the narrow and confined themes and subject matters of our photographic work and the monotony of form and style.²²²

He described this monotony as a result of the use of stereotypes (*gongshihua* 公式化) and abstraction (*gainianhua* 概念化) in the creation of photographs, meaning “their subjects are alike, their themes are similar, even their forms have no big differences. From these photographs we can't see the various aspects of the lively and interesting things in life.”²²³ The reason he gave for this state of affairs were the many colleagues who would not understand photography's own characteristics, while only caring for photographs as “sociological teaching material” (*shehuixue de jiaocai* 社会学的教材) and “diagrams of political concepts” (*zhengzhi gainian de tujie* 政治概念的图解). In consequence, photographs “lacking ideological content” (*quefa sixiang neirong* 缺乏思想内容) and “lacking political meaning” (*quefa zhengzhi yiyi* 缺乏政治意义) would not get taken, while manipulation of scenes according to “subjective intention” (*zhuguan yitu* 主观意图) and “political concepts” (*zhengzhi gainian* 政治概念) during reportage would be en vogue.²²⁴

²²¹ Possibly due to him openly advocating ways of working which would diminish CCP hold on the media apparatus, and consequently becoming a target of the campaign against “rightist elements” in 1957, it proved impossible to find information on Zhuang other than tidbits included in the articles attacking him and others in 1957. His eventual fate remains unknown or at least unpublished.

Compare: Tian Baofa 田宝发 (1957): “Chedi fensui dangnei youpai fenzi Huang Xiuyi de zichan jieji yishu sixiang 彻底粉碎党内右派分子黄修一的资产阶级艺术思想 [Thoroughly Smash Rightist-within-the-party Huang Xiuyi's Bourgeois Ideas on Art.]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 11. pp. 46–54. p. 49.

²²² Zhuang 1956, p. 1.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Zhuang 1956, p. 2.

Quite clearly the targets of this criticism were the editors and photographers who followed and carried out the directives of the CCP, no matter if formal members of the party or merely sympathetic to its goals.

Furthermore, Zhuang decried styles of photography with no direct political use being killed off, mentioning landscape photography as well as flower- and certain forms of portrait photography. In order to ameliorate the situation, and ensure a “healthy development of photography”, Zhuang demanded free discussion among photographers, of both mistakes as well as successes, as worded in the slogan of “let a hundred schools contend”.²²⁵

Quite surprisingly, it took almost one year before the “Hundred Flowers” became the topic of an article in a vocational magazine again. This apparent gap can be explained by the fact that staunch supporters of the CCP – like the already mentioned Wu Qun 吴群, editor-in-chief of *Popular Photography*, and Chen Changqian 陈昌谦, editor-in-chief of *News Photography* – were occupying the editorial departments of the vocational magazines, preventing open criticism from being published. Quotations of criticisms that went too far, used in attacks on “rightists” in the campaigns of the later 1950s, as well as the later characterization of the “Hundred Flowers” used as an opportunity for a “vicious advance against the party and Socialism”²²⁶ reveal that discussions and criticism must indeed have happened on a considerable scale within the editorial departments and other organizational centers of the photo network. Unfortunately, no sources documenting such vicious discussions are available to the author.

Following these discussions and deliberations within the various editorial departments, the editorial office of the vocational magazine *News Photography* held a conference of members of the media apparatus, in order to discuss how to implement the “Hundred Flowers” policy, publishing a protocol of the proceedings in May 1957,²²⁷ the first time for the “Hundred Flowers” to appear again after Zhuang’s article, which can perhaps serve to illustrate the narrowness and lack of open discussion decried by Zhuang in July 1956.

²²⁵ Zhuang 1956, p. 3.

²²⁶ “Quanti xinwen sheying gongzuo zhe dongyuan qilai, chedi fensui youpai fenzi de changkuang jingong 全体新闻摄影工作者动员起来，彻底粉碎右派分子的猖狂进攻 [All News Photography Workers Mobilize, Thoroughly Crush the Rightist Elements’ Savage Assault]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 8, pp. 1–3.

²²⁷ “Guanche ‘baihua qifang, baijia zhengming’ fangzhen, benkan bianjishi zhaokai zuotanhui 贯彻 ‘百花齐放、百家争鸣’ 方针，本刊编辑室召开座谈会 [Implementing the Policy of ‘Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Content’, a Symposium Held by the Editorial Office of this Publication]”, *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 5, pp. 1–11.

The high-ranking participants of the conference at the editorial office of *News Photography* presented ideas on how to improve the exchange of ideas between photographers and the possibility of widening the scope of photography, with some even offering constructive criticism of the way photography was handled by the media, i.e. by themselves and their subordinates.²²⁸

Not at all surprising, considering the participants' high positions in the press apparatus, CCP leadership of the press and its control of photography was not challenged by any participant (or if criticism of this kind was voiced, it did not become part of the protocol). Instead, the perceived shortcomings in the work of photographers were understood as problems in the organization of their work. Therefore, only the technicalities of encouraging and enabling more discussion and exchange among photographers were freely discussed.

As host of the conference, in his opening remarks Chen Changqian 陈昌谦 called for an open exchange of ideas on the content and form of publications, for this had not been done sufficiently in the past. Other commenters agreed, pointing to the lack of a discussion forum published both openly and nationwide as the possible reason for this shortcoming. Wei Shouzhong 魏守忠, a reporter of the *Dagong bao* criticized Xinhua's own vocational magazine *News Photography* for being not sufficiently wide-ranging in content, comparing unfavorably with *Kodak Magazine* (*Keda zazhi* 柯达杂志) which had been published in China before the war.²²⁹

Wu Qun criticized it for not being published widely enough as well, due to its official status as an internal publication, which was already handled leniently in practice. He suggested publishing it publicly, in order to enable discussion of similar problems appearing in different workplaces.²³⁰ Cai Shangxiong 蔡尚雄, deputy head of the editorial office of *People's Illustrated*, even went so far as to compare it with publications from capitalist countries, declaring that "in capitalist countries there are lots of good pictures and essays, the ones 'we' publish are not enough."²³¹ Wu Fuqiang, instructor of journalism at Peking

²²⁸ Participants included luminaries like the head of Xinhua's department of photography and the Photography Association Shi Shaohua, his deputy Chen Changqian 陈昌谦 (Vice-head of Xinhua's photography department, editor-in-chief of *News Photography*), Wu Qun 吴群 (deputy editor-in-chief of *PLA Illustrated*), Cai Shangxiong 蔡尚雄 (deputy head of the editorial office of *People's Illustrated*), Huang Xiuyi 黄修一 (editor-in-chief of *Nationalities Illustrated*) and Chen Bo 陈勃 (deputy general secretary of the Photography Association) as well as numerous other lesser functionaries, reporters and editors. Compare *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影, 1957, no. 5, pp. 1–11.

²²⁹ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 1.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 4.

University, raised a similar concern. Confessing that sometimes he read photographic magazines from Hong Kong for their essays, he confides that “as far as content is concerned, these essays are not that good, but because there is nothing like it in China, they are precious.”²³² Summarizing his colleagues’ criticism, Wang Qingxiang 王庆祥, head of the news picture group of the picture department of China News Agency 中国新闻社图片部新闻图片组, judged that “*News Photography* doesn’t satisfy the demand.”²³³

But apart from these criticisms of the publishing organs, participants of the conference pointed to the position of photography within the budding press apparatus as the cause for its perceived narrowness. This covered problems in the day-to-day work, as well as deeper rooted shortcomings of theory. Wei Shouzhong remarked: “Most editors judge photographs only based on the layout of the page, with photographers on assignment consequently only making the editor’s intention the guideline of their work. This naturally has a big influence on [photographic] creation”,²³⁴ no matter if the editors in question belonged to the CCP or not. Wu Qun described this as a contradiction between the editors and the photographers (*bianji jizhe jian de maodun* 编辑记者间的矛盾), acknowledging that the problem existed everywhere and needed to be resolved. Taking the side of the editors, he even linked it to a supposed contradiction between the leaders and the ones led (*lingdao he bei lingdao de maodun* 领导和被领导的矛盾) stressing that “as far as the reporters are concerned: Leadership is subjective, bureaucratic and doesn’t dare to let go; but the reporters just need to handle stuff according to their task.”²³⁵ Shu Ye 舒野, picture editor of *China Youth Daily* (*Zhongguo qingnian bao* 中国青年报), agreed with Wei on the influence of editors, adding that he “never saw a newspaper that used a photo as ‘headline’ news, if you ignore activities of Mao Zedong.”²³⁶

Going further, Shu pointed out that it should be kept in mind that the national photographic endeavor was still in its infancy and also that most photographers were engaged in news photography work. In spite of this situation, the question of the theoretical position of news photography within journalism had not been tackled yet, an obvious indicator of this being the lack of news photography education at the universities. Shu also implied the lack of a suitable organ for the publication of theory might help to explain this situation.²³⁷

²³² Ibid.

²³³ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 6.

²³⁴ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 4.

²³⁵ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 7.

²³⁶ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 4.

²³⁷ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 2.

Shi Shaohua, head of Xinhua's department of photography and highest ranking participant of the conference, took up the cue, criticizing that in spite of the scope of journalistic activity getting wider and wider – he mentions written journalism, photography, newsreels, radio and even nascent TV – many people still erroneously considered journalism to be just writing. He warned that if the theory of journalism would continue to lag behind the practice and situation, it would eventually impede the raising of quality. To promote the research of news photo theory and at the same time implement the CCP's Hundred Flower policy he suggested the following steps to be taken:

1. To organize all news photography workers to write essays.
2. To translate essays on news photography from all countries of the world, including capitalist England and the USA.
3. To publish more essays, including the ones with an erroneous theoretical perspective.²³⁸

Apart from Shi, other participants also offered concrete suggestions on how to improve photography which went further than just to extend the publication of *News Photography*. Chen Bo, deputy general secretary of the Photography Association, proposed that not only the theoretical and practical level of photography work needed to be raised, but especially the organization of work needed to be improved, because in some situations it was hindering the development of photography to its full potential. In effect he was also advocating the opening of more channels of communication between different editorial offices and organizations, decrying that “even though there are many reporters and photographers, their works are not widely used outside of their work units.” And criticizing Xinhua: “Xinhua is only publishing general material and can't meet the specialized needs of the newspapers. Furthermore, most work units have a group of photographers, and the amateur photographers have no way of getting in. This potential remains untapped.”²³⁹

Huang Xiuyi 黄修一, editor-in-chief of *Nationalities Illustrated*, criticized the low printing quality of photos in most newspapers, resulting in nearly black squares on the newspaper, saying that “the masses are calling these blackboard newspapers (*heibanbao* 黑板报).” And referring to the “Hundred Flowers” policy: “What should be opened are flowers and not blackboard newspapers.”

²³⁸ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 7.

²³⁹ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 9.

To promote outstanding photography and distinguish it more from the daily news photography, he advocated that “There should be a news picture exhibition at the end of 1957, to give the masses patriotic and internationalist education. Xinhua is able to do this.”

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It did not take long for some of the suggestions on improving the photographic network to get realized. December 1957 saw the first national photographic art exhibition (*diyijie quanguo sheying yishu zhanlan* 第一届全国摄影艺术展览) opening in Beijing, while *News Photography* from January 1958 on was no longer an internal publication. As was already detailed earlier, Xinhua opened local photography departments in its branch agencies in the fall of 1958, to better cope with local conditions and demands. To include wider circles of (amateur) photographers in the discourse on photography, the Photography Association began to publish *Popular Photography* (*Dazhong sheying* 大众摄影) in July 1958.

Even discussions among photographers took up steam, although these moved into a direction that the critics of photography’s condition in the photo network could not have had in mind:

August 1957 brought the beginning of the campaign against “rightist elements” (*youpai fenzi* 右派分子) in the media apparatus, which as mentioned was followed by similar campaigns over the coming years. All of these had the aim to stamp out any form of opposition or even indifference to CCP control of photography still in existence in the media apparatus, and were carried out by photographers and administrators loyal to the CCP’s cause and first targeted those who had spoken out under the policy of the “Hundred Flowers”.

In retrospect, it is unclear if the CCP had promoted the policy of the “Hundred Flowers” with the sole purpose of luring out critics to serve as targets to be persecuted in the following campaign against “rightist elements”, or if the goal of the “Hundred Flowers” had indeed been to improve the social conditions through open criticism which then unexpectedly went too far, endangering CCP control of Chinese society.

At least within the comparatively narrow scope of the photo network and its employees, it is possible to get the social background of the “Hundred Flowers” into focus: The rapid growth of the photo network had necessitated the inclusion of photographers who had neither received training by the CCP, nor were its brothers-in-arms during the civil war.

²⁴⁰ *Xinwen sheying*, 1957, no. 5, p. 10-11.

While the campaign of the “Hundred Flowers” is often depicted as the CCP’s unexpected, sudden encounter with criticism, at least within the photo network, resistance of the “old photographers” against the CCP’s control of their work must have progressively manifested itself all along in various more or less noticeable ways in the day-to-day work, making a sudden, unexpected confrontation with criticism somewhat unlikely.

This resistance naturally also had to be noticed by those in control, who were acutely aware of the growing pains of the photo network. To ensure that the media would speak with one voice, a plan for a rectification movement (*zhengfeng yundong* 整风运动) at Xinhua was drawn up. Its purpose was to ensure that the media would only publish the perspective of the CCP. The plan was drafted in early May 1957, at the same time that the “Hundred Flowers” conference was held at the editorial department of the *News Photography*, and about three months before the first articles attacking specific persons as “rightists” were published in vocational magazines.²⁴¹ It seems that similar to the organization of photographic work in the photo network, even campaigns against dissenting voices had to abide by a plan which followed the three month pattern. This plan, and the beginning campaign against “rightist elements” as its visible manifestation in the vocational magazines will be discussed in the next section.

3.9.2 The Rectification Movement of 1957 and Campaigns against “Old Photographers”

While this study only analyzes the carrying out of the rectification movement within the photo network, it needs to be called to mind that the rectification (and other campaigns like it) happened society-wide, with different administrative centers (like Xinhua) being responsible for the carrying out of the campaigns in their respective areas of operation.

As has been shown in the preceding section, while generally perceived as successful, the wide-scale expansion of the photo network had also brought along problems and growing pains. The abovementioned plan for the “general and deep-going rectification movement in the party organization within Xinhua” scheduled for 1957, justified itself as “completely necessary and timely”²⁴² for the following reasons:

²⁴¹ Compare: “Kaizhan zhengfeng yundong de jihua 开展整风运动的计划 09.05.1957 [Plan for the Launch of the Rectification Movement]”, in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 4, pp. 82–87.

²⁴² Ibid. p. 82.

The current professional construction of Xinhua agency is now in two developmental processes, one is the development from the former news agency of the [communist] base areas (*genjudi de tongxunshe* 根据地的通讯社) towards a national news agency. This process started on the day that the People's Republic of China was founded and until now still has not been concluded. The other process is from a domestic news agency (*guonei tongxunshe* 国内通讯社) towards a global news agency. This process was only begun one or two years ago. These two processes are developing simultaneously, and at the same time are interlocked and influence each other. In this new historical development process, Xinhua's construction work on new professional policies (*yewu fangzhen* 业务方针), professional ideology (*yewu sixiang* 业务思想), form of organization (*zuzhi xingshi* 组织形式), cadre training (*ganbu peiyang* 干部培养), electrification (*dianwu jianshe* 电务建设), operations and management (*jingying guanli* 经营管理) etc. all made new contradictions and problems arise. If these contradictions and problems are dealt with correctly, we can turn Xinhua into a powerful domestic news agency and a powerful global news agency. This is the arduous and glorious task of all party members and workers of Xinhua.²⁴³

Thus the launch of the campaign was presented as a necessary step in the development of the state administrated media. While aspects of organizational reform had been a topic of the "Hundred Flowers" campaign as discussed by the administrators of the photo network in May 1957, what was to be reformed in the rectification movement were not organizations, but the cadres working for said organizations:

Currently at Xinhua there are 453 formal and probationary party members, the vast majority of them are intellectuals (*zhishi fenzi dangyuan* 知识分子党员). Among them, those who experienced the rectification movement of 1942-43 make up only 20%, so the vast majority has not experienced education and tempering through a rectification movement. In these years, even though all the party members underwent the education of all previous political campaigns of the party and the ideological level has been raised somewhat, at the same time, a bureaucratism (*guanliao zhuyi* 官僚主义), factionalism (*zongpai zhuyi* 宗派主义) and subjectivism (*zhuguan zhuyi* 主观主义) has grown, both among old cadres and new cadres, among both cadres in charge as well as normal party members. These shortcomings in ideological style of work impede the raising of the cadres' standard, as well as the development of the party's organizational leadership function and thus impedes the accomplishment of Xinhua's new historical task.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ "Plan for Rectification Movement", p. 83.

The reference to the “rectification movement of 1942-43” is telling: Still engaged in a guerrilla war against Japan and the Guomindang, the CCP leadership had claimed and – in the areas it ruled – forcefully established control over all literature and art, which from then on was to serve only the needs of the party. Where it could be pushed through, this already discussed “Yan’an spirit” would continue to be the underlying principle of all cultural activities in China at least up to the middle 1970s.

In the case of Xinhua in 1957, because only about 20% of its cadres – the trusted wartime veterans – had undergone the first rectification movement, it was time for a second rectification to ensure the correct “development of the party’s organizational leadership function”. In order to tackle this issue, four specific problems were identified in the plan. Of these, the first two concerned technical aspects of work, e.g. Xinhua’s cooperation with foreign news agencies and the content of its news reportages (*xinwen baodao* 新闻报道), not unlike what had been discussed at the symposium on the “Hundred Flowers”. Only the last two problems were directly connected to Xinhua’s personnel:

- [...] (3) The problems of different aspects of the internal relations at Xinhua, i.e. to mobilize and unite all of Xinhua’s strengths and to transform all negative factors into strengths, the problem of making concerted efforts to manage Xinhua agency well. Among these internal contradictions, the primary ones are between the main office and branch offices (*zongshe yu fenshe* 总社与分社), between departments (*bumen yu bumen* 部门与部门), between leaders and the led (*lingdao yu beilingdao* 领导与被领导), between party members and the masses (*dangyuan yu qunzhong* 党员与群众) etc. [sic]
- (4) The problem of individual party member’s ideology, work style and working methods.²⁴⁵

Even though in the plan it was decreed to give precedence to the solution of the technical problems, in actuality the campaign targeted specific individuals from the get-go. In order to discover and correct ideological mistakes in the cadres’ way of working, different types of meetings were to be held: “These meetings can happen as small group meetings (*xiaozuhui* 小组会) with a small number of people, as symposiums, as one-on-one conversations between comrades, or also as conferences with a comparatively large number of people in which responsible cadres make reports and self-criticisms in line with the spirit of ‘seeking truth from facts’”.²⁴⁶ The purpose of these meetings was for:

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ “Plan for Rectification Movement”, p. 85.

[...] errors and shortcomings [to] be thoroughly exposed, thoroughly criticized and firmly corrected. In criticism and self-criticism, an attitude of “seeking truth from facts” and concrete analysis must be adopted. To achieve a gentle and mild way (*hefengxiyu* 和风细雨) [it] must be done according to the party center’s directive, and to ensure that the struggle will not be undertaken brutally, acceptance of complaints will not be forced, and there will be no organized punishments given, except for serious violators of law and discipline (*yanzhong weifaluanji zhe* 严重违法乱纪者).²⁴⁷

According to the plan, this “gentle and mild” rectification was to “wrap up at the end of [1957], after a duration of eight months.”²⁴⁸ These eight months were again to be separated into four steps or phases:

In the first step, all party members and workers of the whole agency will at the same time undertake study of how to handle contradictions among the people; the Rectification movement will start within the party. This phase requires [those] inside and outside of the party to read documents, understand the essence/spirit of the documents, and at the same time to expose contradictions and problems, to universally put forth complaints in order to make the situation clear and to complete preparation for the next phase. This is a free (*fang* 放) phase, a phase of big revelations. The duration should be about two months (May, June).

In the second step, concrete analysis of the contradictions and problems exposed, as well as the complaints voiced in the preceding phase should be undertaken, and methods to solve those problems be found in the style of seeking truths from facts. [This should be] integrated with an examination of work and at the same time examination of the ideology, work style and working method of the 59 party member leading cadres of agency-, department- and office-level. The duration of this phase should be three months (July, August, September).

The third step is the phase for the examination of the normal party members below the level of cadres responsible for departments and offices. Taking part in this phase are 388 persons in total. Apart from this, among Xinhua’s non-party workers, there are more than 200 who have requested to join the CCP, it is expected that not few of them will be required to take part in the Rectification to compete for membership in the party. Last year 80 persons were accepted into the party, this year the plan is for 38 persons to join. The education of this preparatory party members, and the probation work, as well as the acceptance of them [into the party] will be undertaken in this phase in coordination with the Rectification. The duration of this phase should be three months (October, November, December). [...]

The fourth step, the summing up of the rectification movement should be completed in the second half of December.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ “Plan for Rectification Movement”, p. 84.

²⁴⁸ “Plan for Rectification Movement”, p. 85.

²⁴⁹ “Plan for Rectification Movement”, pp. 85-86.

Even though the plan for the rectification movement kept referring to cadres and party members within Xinhua, in actuality the campaign would go on to target mostly “old photographers” and those without good relations to the party authorities. What is remarkable about the last quote is the mentioning of 200 persons who had requested to join the party, and who would have been required to “take part in the rectification to compete for membership in the party” with 38 party memberships available to 200 applicants. This competition might explain the fierceness, with which the campaign unfolded in the pages of the vocational magazines in the coming months.

For many, much more was at stake than just the success of an application for party membership. The last item of the plan for the rectification movement laconically announced:

In regard to physical labor (*tili laodong* 体力劳动), it has been decided that this will start with the comrades of the editorial board and CCP committee, a concrete plan will be drawn up later.²⁵⁰

Thus even though the plan called for a “gentle and mild” rectification campaign, this would prove to be as wrong as the announcement that being sent off to the countryside to do “physical labor” would start with the “comrades of the editorial board and CCP committee”, who were generally able to shield themselves from the worst excesses by relying on their connections to higher authorities. Already undergoing the group sessions mentioned earlier in the plan must have been a terrifying experience for those accused of “rightism”, for even though “organized punishments” were reserved only “for serious violators of law and discipline”, the judgement of who fell into this category rested solely with the authorities, decided on the base of political criteria. And this was only one part of the rectification campaign; its final outcome could mean permanent deportation to the countryside for those unmasked as “rightists”.

Still, the campaign should not be misunderstood as anonymous terror emanating from an abstract “above” or “the authorities”. While the campaign originated from the CCP center, it should be kept in mind that the execution of all political campaigns also had a decidedly apolitical and even personal side hinted at above in the case of the applicants for CCP membership: public disgrace of a photographer or picture editor following criticism of his political shortcomings naturally led to removal from their position, resulting in a post becoming available for those who had displayed their political reliability by attacking them in the first place.

²⁵⁰ “Plan for Rectification Movement”, p. 87.

Therefore the role of personal or intradepartmental antagonisms in these campaigns should not be overlooked, for it can explain why only some photographers sharing a similar or even mostly identical personal and professional biography fell victim to critique and purge, while others were never touched at all. It can also explain why the campaign – as observable through articles and polemics published in the vocational magazines – so quickly departed from the plan, not targeting just party members anymore, but instead anyone who had seemingly not supported the party enough, or even opposed it.

The label attached to those who allegedly opposed CCP control of the illustrated media was “old photographers” (*lao sheyingjia* 老摄影家), though as explained before this was not necessarily related to age. In August 1957, Qi Guanshan 齐观山 (1925—1969), member of the board of directors of the Photography Association and prominent photographer of Xinhua,²⁵¹ described the attitude of the authorities towards the “old photographers” like this:

The people who engage in photography in our country can generally be separated into two types: One type are those who grew up in the old society, the ones we now call old photographers. The other type are the young photographers who grew up and were educated in the Anti-Japanese War, the War of Liberation or after Liberation. In these two types there are further differences. For example among the old photographers, a small number took part in the revolution quite early. Their thinking has already undergone a thorough reformation. But the bigger part, who joined the work in the organizations after liberation, even though they have received some thought reform, it is not yet thorough enough. Some people even still have the standpoint of the bourgeois class. This situation is the same among the young photographers; those who took part in the revolution earlier have undergone more ideological training than those joining later.

²⁵¹ Qi was born in the province of Hebei in 1925. He “joined the revolution” in 1939 and took part in the first training group for photographers, which Sha Fei organized in the Jin-Cha-Ji military area. He joined the CCP in the same year. From 1942 to 1949 he consecutively worked as a photo reporter for the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jinchaji huabao* 晋察冀画报), *Ji-Re-Liao Illustrated* (*Ji-Re-Liao huabao* 冀热辽画报) and *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报), transferring to the news photography department of the central news office in 1950. In 1952 he became head of the coverage section (*caifang ke* 采访科) at Xinhua’s department of photography. From 1956 on, he was a director of the Photography Association. He died from liver cancer in 1969.

Compare: Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 195-196.

All in all, no matter if among the old or new photographers, there are backward elements everywhere, within the party or without. Because of this it is not strange that during the free airing of views they put forth common arguments and attempted to change the leadership of the Photography Association, its policies and line. To defend the party's position of leadership in the association and firmly take the Socialist road, not only can the party's leadership not be weakened, on the contrary it must be strengthened. Only like this will the policy of photography serving Socialism not waver.²⁵²

During the campaign against “rightist elements”, this “strengthening of the leadership of the party” was implemented through distinct steps, which by and large resemble the steps outlined in the plan for the execution of the campaign within Xinhua. First exemplary quotations of “rightist elements” criticizing CCP control and influence were repudiated and “unmasked” as attacks on Socialism itself.

Yao Wenyuan 姚文元 (1931—2005), literary critic from Shanghai with a bright future, for example took up some of the criticism voiced during the “Hundred Flowers”, namely the accusation of outsiders now running the illustrated press. He rejected this differentiation and postulated that it being a weapon of class struggle, the CCP had every right in assuming control of photography:

I don't know how to take photographs and vis-à-vis photographic technique, I am a complete outsider. If we were to talk about technical questions, I wouldn't have the right to write a single sentence. But as soon as photography became a tool to reflect life, and a kind of art, it involves a social nature and in a class society it involves a class character. Because of this I can speak a few sentences on this question. Nowadays, the time when the Proletariat is carrying out the final decisive battle against the Bourgeoisie, all art is a weapon of class struggle. The Proletariat must take the right to lead all branches of art into its own hands and in any branch of art without exception firmly establish the leadership of the party. Photography, slide shows and news reels can have a great effect in class struggle, so I am very happy about the recent achievements Xinhua gained in photography and I look forward to even more glorious achievements.²⁵³

²⁵² Qi Guanshan 齐观山 (1957): “Sixia “laosheyingjia” de jiamianju 撕下 “老摄影家” 的假面具 [Tearing Down the Mask of the “Old Photographers”]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 8, pp.11–14. pp. 12-13.

²⁵³ Yao Wenyuan 姚文元 (1957): “Sheying ye shi jieji douzheng de wuqi 摄影也是阶级斗争的武器 [Photography is Also a Weapon of Class Struggle]”. in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, pp. 22–25. p. 24.

These more generalized attacks were supplemented with articles attacking members of the media apparatus of high social profile, which exposed their faults and sins in detail, providing quotes from their writings and even photographs which illustrated their style of photography. This served to teach the members of the photographic network how to recognize the “rightists” among them.

Following was a string of articles attacking lesser “rightist elements”, often identified as disciples or henchmen of the formerly exposed leaders. At the same time, as per the plan, group meetings were held in all the important editorial offices of the photographic network to ferret out further “rightists” and spread fear of persecution among the photographers and editors, who were forced to go along or risk being denounced a “rightist element” themselves. The recurring campaigns would continue roughly until the beginning of the sixties, when the policies regarding media work were somewhat relaxed again to allow for more leeway in the specifics of carrying out work in the photo network. At that point the direction of work was not a contentious issue anymore: The “rightists” had been pushed out of the photo network, and any remaining “old photographers” had been scared into compliance. As has been shown with the case of Lin Zecang, who was persecuted in 1958 (see section 3.7.2), even photographers not working within the photo network could be targeted if they were influential enough.

3.9.3 Wei Nanchang, an “Old Photographer” as a Model-“Rightist”

In August of 1957, the editorial office of *News Photography* published an editorial, warning its readers of the “vicious advance against the party and Socialism” undertaken by the “rightist elements” using the “Hundred Flowers”-campaign as a guise.²⁵⁴ Paralleling the situation in other areas of society, the campaign against “rightist elements” was now unfolding on the “front of photography work” (*sheying gongzuo zhanxian* 摄影工作战线).²⁵⁵ As was mentioned before, apart from criticism of general “rightist” talking points, the first specific targets of the campaign were members of the photographic press apparatus of high prominence.

²⁵⁴ “Quanti xinwen sheying gongzuo zhe dongyuan qilai, chedi fensui youpai fenzi de changkuang jingong 全体新闻摄影工作者动员起来，彻底粉碎右派分子的猖狂进攻 [All News Photography Workers Mobilize, Thoroughly Crush the Rightist Elements’ Savage Assault]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 8, 1957, pp. 1–3.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

Comparable to the model personas populating the cultural products done in the style of “Socialist Realism”, they served as examples to be criticized, teaching the members of the press apparatus on how to find “rightists” among themselves and in their local editorial departments.

The first photographer to be openly criticized – as a kind of model-“rightist element” – was Wei Nanchang 魏南昌, member of the Photography Association’s board of directors and technical advisor of the workshop of Xinhua’s department of photography (*chejian jishu guwen* 车间技术顾问).²⁵⁶ In an article published in *News Photography* 1957, no. 8 he was attacked by Ge Liqun 葛力群 (1928–??), who “uncovered” anti-party remarks, which Wei allegedly had made in the past.²⁵⁷ Ge himself was a veteran of photographic work in the Communist base areas during the war and staunchly loyal to the party, which helped him to rise up through the institutions of the photo network. In 1957, he was head of the branch office reporters guidance group (*fenshe jizhe zhidao zu* 分社记者指导组) at Xinhua’s department of photography, as well as vice-head of the *News Photography* editing and research office (*Xinwen sheying bianyanshi* 新闻摄影编研室), which put him in control of the material published through Xinhua’s vocational magazine.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Apart from disconnected snippets of information, it proved impossible to find information about most of the photographers persecuted in the campaign against “rightist elements”, testifying to the systems efficiency in turning its opponents into unpersons. While some of their professional affiliations are mentioned in the attacks against them, their later whereabouts (the countryside?) or even basic biographical details remain impossible to reconstruct. Some of the photographers being persecuted and becoming unpersons during one campaign or the other, e.g. the “Cultural Revolution”, were rehabilitated and provided with a proper job position again in the late 1970s. Where this did not happen – as in the case of Wei Nanchang – it seems plausible to assume they lost their lives after being denounced, either through suicide, maltreatment while in prison, “accidents” during struggle sessions or the hardships of labor camps.

²⁵⁷ Ge Liqun 葛力群 (1957): “Naqi wuqi, yonggan de touru fan youpai douzheng 拿起武器，勇敢地投入反右派斗争 [Take up Arms and Bravely Participate in the Anti-Rightist Struggle]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 8, pp. 9–11.

²⁵⁸ Ge Liqun 葛力群 was born in the city of Tangshan in Hebei province in 1928. He “joined the revolution” in 1942/43. In 1945 he took part in photographic training class for cadres (*xinwen sheying ganbu xunlianban* 新闻摄影干部训练班) in the Ji-Re-Liao military area (*Ji-Re-Liao junqu* 冀热辽军区). After the class he went to Shenyang to help to prepare the launch of the *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报), where he first was employed as head of the security unit attached to the magazine. Only later did he become a photo reporter for the magazine and reported on all major military operations in Northeast China. In 1948 he joined the CCP, and was later on transferred to the news photography department of the central news office. In 1950 he went to Korea with the volunteer army to report on the war. After his return he was transferred to Xinhua’s department of photography and became leader of the capital’s group of photo reporters (*shoudu jizhezu* 首都记者组). In 1953 he was transferred to Xinhua’s Northeast branch office, where he helped to set up and became leader of a new photographers group (*fenshe sheying jizhezu* 分社摄影记者组). In 1955 he transferred back to Beijing, to head the branch office reporters guidance group (*fenshe jizhe zhidao zu* 分社记者指导组) at Xinhua’s department of photography, and serve as vice-head of the *News Photography* editing and research office (*Xinwen sheying bianyanshi* 新闻摄影编研室). In 1956 he helped with the preparatory work for the Photography Association. Chen; Ding 1985, pp. 843-844.

In his article he accused Wei of being a “rightist” who had used his status as an “old photographer” to attack the leadership of the party and Socialism itself, with the aim to reinstate Capitalism in China. Ge based his allegations on remarks Wei apparently had made at internal symposiums at Xinhua’s department of photography during the “Hundred Flowers”. Wei was quoted as saying that “the party cannot lead photographic work”, because “outsiders can’t lead professionals”,²⁵⁹ and furthermore that “if [we] want to restore the creative freedom of old photographers, [we] must abandon the inquiry into the creative method of Socialist Realism, and abolish the requirement that photographic works absolutely have to have ideology and authenticity.”²⁶⁰

It is no surprise that this was a contentious position for CCP veterans like Ge Liqun or Qi Guanshan. In his article on “Tearing down the mask of the ‘old photographers’”, already quoted above, Qi Guanshan not only attacked “old photographers” as an abstract group, but also Wei Nanchang personally, whom he accused of having tried to stop the unfolding correction movement in the Photography Association, and to have complained that the CCP-cadres among the directors of the Photography Association – like Qi Guanshan himself – were outsiders. Apparently in 1956 – during the “Hundred Flowers” – Wei Nanchang had complained that for the whole year he had only received two rolls of film, preventing him from doing creative work.²⁶¹

But the attacks on Wei Nanchang were not only limited to hearsay of his “incorrect” statements made during the “Hundred Flowers”. Befitting for professionals of the illustrated media, in the next issue of *News Photography*, 1957, no. 9, a group of four writers, including Ge Liqun, set out to criticize Wei’s “reactionary artistic standpoint” on the basis of some of his own photographs.²⁶² Starting with a slew of personal attacks on Wei Nanchang, their article continued with a statement explaining the direction of cultural work, as envisioned by the party, in order to establish the “correct” background in front of which to criticize Wei’s artistic standpoint:

²⁵⁹ Ge 1957, p. 10.

²⁶⁰ Ge 1957, p. 11.

²⁶¹ Qi 1957, p. 12.

²⁶² Ge Liqun 葛力群; Shen Jinguang 沈颢光; Deng Ligeng 邓历耕; Wang Enze 王恩泽 (1957): “Pipan sheyingjie de youpai fenzi Wei Nanchang de fandong yishu guandian 批判摄影界的右派分子魏南昌的反动艺术观点 [Criticizing Rightist-element-within-photography-circles Wei Nanchang's Reactionary Artistic Standpoint]”, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, pp. 9–21.

Literature and art must serve the workers, farmers and soldiers, this is our party's unflinching policy. Before liberation it was like this and now it is even more so. The CCP is leading the Chinese people's revolution. Apart from reaching thorough liberation in politics and economy, to topple and eliminate the old political system and economic foundation, to establish a socialist and communist society, the situation in literature and arts is the same. We have to get rid of those negative factors which were only enjoyed by a few of the leisured class, and have to prop up and develop literature and art made for the workers and farmers and the majority of the people in order to raise the workers and farmers ideological and cultural level. Like chairman Mao explained early on in his address to the Yan'an conference on literature and art: 'First for the workers, second for the farmers, third for the soldiers, fourth for the petty bourgeoisie of the cities..... [sic] this question is clearly decided.'²⁶³

In addition, the authors claimed that the sole purpose of their criticism was to help the intellectuals being criticized to transform themselves into “new people” (*xinren* 新人).

It comes as no surprise – in light of his alleged earlier criticism of the party's control over the illustrated media – Wei's own photography did not conform to the style demanded by the party, therefore the authors of the article attempted to help him transform into a “new person” through a criticism of the following five of his photos, which were printed alongside the article. All of the photos were monochrome and reproduced in a fairly low quality.



Figure 20: Photo of Rooster, taken by Wei Nanchang, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, p. 11.

The first photo of Wei to be criticized shows a light-toned rooster. The rooster, which takes up most of the area of the picture is crowing, perhaps standing on a pile of manure, but this cannot be clearly made out. The background of the picture is moderately out of focus, allowing the viewer to discern the roof of a building, some trees and a stretch of sky, but without giving away further details.

²⁶³ Ibid. p. 10.

The authors of the article criticized that even though Wei visited the countryside a few times, he did not take photos of the life of the farmers, coming back instead with just this photo of a rooster. The authors acknowledge that the main point of criticism is not the fact that the photo shows a rooster, but that Wei made the rooster the main aspect of the photo, instead of following the policy of serving the people.²⁶⁴



Figure 21: Photo of Donkey and Pagoda, taken by Wei Nanchang, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, p. 14.

The next photo of Wei to be criticized shows a donkey, a pagoda and low-hanging branches. The donkey is pulling some sort of agrarian implement – perhaps a plough – in the foreground in the lower half of the picture. In the background the outline of a pagoda can be seen. The upper half of the picture is taken up by the outline of tree branches hanging into the picture.

This photo is criticized for showing that Wei Nanchang is fond of outdated things “even eight years after liberation”, meaning the establishment of the PRC.²⁶⁵ The background of this photos creation is that Wei Nanchang went to the suburbs to take photos.

Allegedly he rode his bike for more than 20 kilometers to avoid the many – modern – high buildings in the suburbs, before he was able to find this “ideal subject matter” (*lixiang de tical* 理想的题材) of an “old pagoda and small donkey” (*guta he xiao maolü* 古塔和小毛驴).²⁶⁶ This further reinforced the point that Wei walked the extra mile to take photos of classical subject matter, spurning the products of new architecture in the process. While not mentioned by the authors of the article, but perhaps another reason why the photo was selected is that the branch hanging into the area of the photo from above evokes traditional Chinese landscape paintings.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 11-12.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 14.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.



Figure 23: Photo of Shepherd, taken by Wei Nanchang (1), in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, p. 15.

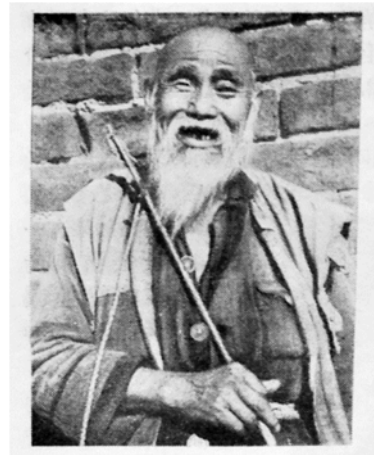


Figure 22: Photo of Shepherd, taken by Wei Nanchang (2), in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, p. 16.

The next two photos to be criticised both show shepherds, and were thus criticized together. Both were taken by Wei Nanchang before the war. The first photo shows a smiling young shepherd (*mutong* 牧童) clad in a dark jacket, who is holding two lambs in his hands; the second photo shows an old shepherd (*lao muyangren* 老牧羊人), who in spite of wearing worn-out clothes and missing a few teeth and possibly an eye, is also giving a smile to the camera. With these two photos, Wei was criticized for “showing a well-fed, happy shepherd, even though everyone knows that farmers and shepherds were under heavy pressure from bureaucrats and landlords at that time.”²⁶⁷ Giving special attention to the second photo of the old shepherd, the authors of the article deduce the fact that the shepherd is shown smiling, in spite of all the hardships he had to endure, means that figuratively speaking Wei took himself as a model here, expressing his happiness during the time of the old society.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.



Figure 24: Photo of Deer in Mountains, taken by Wei Nanchang, in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 9, p. 17.

With the fifth photo of Wei that is criticized, showing a deer in the mountains, the authors finally began to underpin their criticism with something resembling theoretical concepts. The photo shows a deer on a mountain ledge, with a distant mountain side being partly visible in the background, a tree leaning into the frame from the left edge of the picture lets its branches fill the upper half of the picture. For this photo, which departed even further from realistic reproduction of perspective than the photo of the donkey discussed before, Wei was criticized as emulating the style of the painter Qi Baishi 齐白石 (1864—1957), who worked with the traditional brush and ink, but was celebrated for reaching new forms of abstraction. Wei was also criticized for “getting onto the road of Aestheticism” (*Weimeizhuyi daolu* 唯美主义道路), while departing further from life. In the case of the deer, Wei is also being guilty of using an “idealistic” (*weixinde* 唯心的) technique, because he made a composite photo from different negatives, in accordance with the ideas in his mind. This was criticized as giving the viewer an “unhealthy” (*bu jiankang* 不健康) “otherworldly feeling” (*chushi gan* 出世感). Taken together, all this supposedly showed that Wei was “promoting the “reactionary thinking of bourgeois Aestheticism” (*Zichan jieji weimei zhuyi fandong sixiang* 资产阶级唯美主义反动思想)”.²⁶⁹

While it is not clear what ultimately happened to Wei – there are no further traces of him in the sources, apart from the attacks raised against him – perhaps a short notice published in *News Photography* 1957 no. 11 can give an indication of the fate awaiting those photographers unmasked as “rightists”:

²⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 18.

In order to actively answer the party's appeal to engage in manual labor to toughen ourselves, remake ourselves, and turn ourselves into revolutionary (*hongse* 红色) news workers (*xinwen gongzuozhe* 新闻工作者), the Beijing branch office under the unified leadership of the Beijing municipal party committee has approved to send more than ten comrades to the "China-USSR friendship agricultural cooperative" (*Zhong-Su youhao nongyeshe* 中苏友好农业社) on the outskirts of Beijing on the 18th of this month. Among these more than ten comrades, there are the two photo reporters comrade Yu Huiru 喻惠如 and comrade Gu Dehua 顾德华 and manufacturing technician Wang Chenzeng 王辰增.

On the eve of their departure to join manual labor, the Beijing branch office held a big farewell meeting. Director of the main office comrade Wu Lengxi 吴冷西, deputy director of the domestic department (*guonei bu* 国内部) comrade Dai Bang 戴邦 and deputy director of the photography department Chen Changqian 陈昌谦 took part in the meeting. Comrade Wu Lengxi and comrade Dai Bang gave speeches at the meeting. They unanimously pointed out: The necessity of taking part in manual labor for remolding the thinking and doing good news work. They also emphasized: According to the instructions of the party center, all reporters and editors of Xinhua should take turns to go to the grassroots level (*jiceng* 基层) to toughen and remake [themselves].²⁷⁰

In addition to the "rightists" found within Xinhua's editorial structures in Beijing, as well as model-"rightists" like Wei Nanchang, soon more and more "rightists" were uncovered among the photographers and editors of the photo network everywhere in the country. This will be discussed in the following section.

3.9.4 Further "Rightists"

In loose accordance with the plan for the rectification movement drafted at Xinhua, during the second half of 1957, more and more "rightists" were uncovered in different editorial departments and other organizational centers of the photo network by their colleagues. In addition to a slew of articles attacking specific individuals, published between August and December 1957, in December the editorial office of *News Photography* published a long article naming the "rightists" uncovered so far in the photo network, summing up their alleged offenses against the party line.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ "Beijing fenshe juxing huansong xiafang ganbu hui zongshe shezhang Wu Lengxi tongzhi zai hui shang jiang le hua 北京分社举行欢送下放干部会总社社长吴冷西同志在会上讲了话 [Beijing Branch Office Holds a Farewell Meeting for the Cadres Sent to the Countryside, Director of the Main Office Comrade Wu Lengxi Gave a Speech]", in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], no. 11, 1957, p. 45.

²⁷¹ Benkan bianjishi 本刊编辑室 (1957): "Sheyingjie youpai fenzi de lianpu zhongzhong 摄影界右派分子的脸谱种种 [Within Photography Circles, the Rightist Elements' Masks Have Many Forms]", in: *Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影 [News Photography], 1957, no. 12, pp. 25–36.

Besides Wei Nanchang, the other eleven people accused of being “rightists and mouthpieces of the Bourgeoisie within the party” (*Zichan jieji zai dangnei de daiyanren* 资产阶级在党内的代言人)²⁷² were:

Ding Cong 丁聪, vice editor-in-chief of the *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao fuzong bianji* 人民画报副总编辑) and vice chairman of the Photography Association (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui fuzhuxi* 中国摄影学会副主席), as well as a member of the China Democratic League (*Zhongguo minzhu tongmeng* 中国民主同盟). He was accused of working for the strategic intelligence agency of the U.S. forces (*Meijun zhanlüe qingbaoju* 美军战略情报局) in Kunming 昆明 during the war, which led to him pledging loyalty to “U.S. Imperialism” (*Mei diguozhuyi* 美帝国主义). After the foundation of the PRC, he was not content with his position as vice editor-in-chief, so he conspired with vice editor-in-chief Hu Kao 胡考, editor Shen Baichang 沈百昌 and editor Zhou Shaochang 周绍昌 to form an anti-party group at the *People's Illustrated*, with the aim of ending CCP control of the magazine. The group allegedly already had prepared a file detailing a new organizational structure of the magazine without any CCP influence and Ding Cong occupying the position of editor-in-chief.²⁷³

Cang Shi 苍石, CCP member for more than ten years, head of the picture group of the *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao tupian zuzhang* 人民日报图片组长) and director of the Photography Association was accused of opposing the leadership of the party and sowing discord between the party and the masses. During the “Hundred Flowers” he had allegedly questioned both the class character (*jiejixing* 阶级性) and sense of purpose (*mudixing* 目的性) of photography, in essence negating the direction of “Socialist Realism” (*Shehui zhuyi xianshi zhuyi* 社会主义现实主义). Perhaps even worse, during the “Hundred Flowers” he had also formed a small group of likeminded colleagues, who had run a blackboard newspaper, with one member of the group, Zhang Guanghua 张光华, criticizing the party by drawing cartoons. Unfortunately, none of these cartoons survived in the sources. In addition to all of this, Cang was also accused of supporting other “rightists” under persecution. Apparently Cang had published two photos taken by Wei Nanchang in the *People's Daily* – on July 4 and August 18, 1957 – “when it was already clear that Wei Nanchang was a rightist”. Apparently he justified this by saying that Wei's ideas were only an academic question, which still fell under the freedom of discussion.²⁷⁴

²⁷² “Sheyingjie youpai fenzi de lianpu zhongzhong”, p. 25.

²⁷³ Ibid. pp. 25-26.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. pp.26-27.



Figure 25: Photo of “Miner” (*Kuanggong* 矿工) by Wei Nanchang, in: *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [People's Daily], 04.07.1957, p. 8.



Figure 26: “Thread in the hands of a loving mother” (*Cimu shouzhong xian* 慈母手中线) by Wei Nanchang, in: *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [People's Daily], 18.08.1957, p. 8.

Said two photos taken by Wei Nanchang are both portraits, one of an old woman threading a needle, titled “Thread in the hands of a loving mother” (*Cimu shouzhong xian* 慈母手中线) and another one titled “Miner” (*Kuanggong* 矿工), showing a smiling miner.

While at least the photo of the miner would qualify as a photo showing progress in the “New Society” – the miner is smiling after all – curiously neither the photo of the miner, nor the photo of the old woman were printed in connection with any article on the same page, they were even missing explanatory captions, making their function on the page purely decorative. Even more curiously, these two photos were the only ones of Wei Nanchang ever printed in the *People's Daily*. Perhaps Cang had just tried to fill an empty space in the layout, or possibly he indeed did try to support the position of Wei, who was already openly attacked at this point. In any case, the decision to publish these two photos was used as ammunition against him later, but curiously not as ammunition against Wei. It seems that the group around Ge Liqun, who had attacked Wei on the base of some of his photos earlier, had taken great care to only select photos supporting their case, even though photos of Wei showing aspects of the “New Society” – as in the case of the smiling miner – also existed in published form.

Without going into further details here – the accusations against the “rightists” are by and large the same – the article also named the following other employees of media organizations as “rightists”:

Huang Xiuyi 黄修一, head of the editorial office of the *Nationalities Illustrated* (*Minzu huabao bianjishi zhuren* 民族画报编辑室主任) and director of the Photography Association, who also was accused of working against the party during the “Hundred Flowers”.

Dai Gezhi 戴戈之, former executive editor (*zhixing bianji* 执行编辑) of the vocational magazine *Photography Vocation* (*Sheying yewu* 摄影业务) and at the time reporter in the international group of Xinhua’s photography department (*Xinhua she sheying bu guojizu* 新华社摄影部国际组), as well as candidate director for the Photography Association (*houbu lishi* 候补理事), who was accused of the same.

Zhuang Nanpo 庄南坡, who was already introduced before, a deputy editor of the *Nationalities Illustrated* (*Minzu huabao daili bianji* 民族画报代理编辑) and member of the Photography Association. Apart from the publication of his article during the “Hundred Flowers”, which was already discussed above, he allegedly also collaborated with Huang Xiuyi and had pushed for democratic management of the *Nationalities Illustrated* through the setup of an editorial board, excluding party members “who don’t understand art”.

Even one member of a local editorial office was named as a “rightist”: He Nan 何南, deputy head of the editorial office of the *Liaoning Illustrated* (*Liaoning huabao she bianjishi daili zuzhang* 辽宁画报社编辑室代理组长).

Last but not least, one Yang Tixian 杨逖先 was attacked for coming from a bourgeois family and allegedly inciting his wife and his brother-in-law to attack the party. Furthermore, while working for the Photography Association, he allegedly had supported Wei Nanchang and Dai Gezhi.²⁷⁵

Finally, parts of the campaign published in *Popular Photography* in 1958, extended the attacks on photographers not part of the photo network, when – as described before – Shanghai’s Lin Zecang was publicly attacked and imprisoned.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. Pp. 29-36.

When looking for clues connecting those photographers persecuted as “rightists” at the end of the 1950s, the obvious shared feature is – as noted in the attacks against them – their status as “old photographers”, i.e. successful photographers who were trained and who prospered already before the war, in what was called “the old society” by those following the wording used by the CCP. However, the author wants to argue that this characterization does not sufficiently explain why some “old photographers” became targets of campaigns, while others apparently had no problems to integrate themselves in the photo network. Even Xinhua’s plan for the rectification movement, which was discussed in section 3.9.2, mentioned that only 20% of the party members among its workers had undergone rectification in 1942 and ’43, meaning they could reliably be trusted to follow the party line.²⁷⁶ The number of completely loyal followers of the party among the remaining workforce of Xinhua – including non-party-members – would have been even lower than 20%. Keeping in mind that only the most technically proficient and most politically reliable photographers were assigned to Xinhua, while the other organizations within the photo network had to make do with whatever photographers they could find, it seems remarkable that only such a comparatively low number – the author of this study estimates at most a double-digit figure – of photographers (and editors) in all of China was persecuted as “rightists”.

Mere differences in conceptions of photography to be used in press work can thus not have been the only reason to turn some “old photographers” into unpersons. The argument of “old photographers” “attacking” the party during the “Hundred Flowers”, thus necessitating the fight against them does seem plausible: In a photo network organized according to the “Soviet model” it would have been unacceptable to have members of the media publicly criticize its leadership. But even then, as became clear from an analysis of the vocational magazines and the wording of the attacks against the “rightists”, their criticisms rarely (if ever) went past the gatekeepers of the vocational magazines to reach the wider public, instead being largely restricted to be voiced within single editorial departments.

It can be argued that the crucial point in the selection of “rightists” to be persecuted would not have been their degree of outspokenness against the party – though this naturally helped with formulating accusations against them by quoting their criticisms, if they did not take nude photos of someone – but instead their ability to organize themselves and to initiate coordinated action.

²⁷⁶ “Plan for the rectification movement”, p. 83.

The accusation of organizing “alternative” structures was directly raised against Ding Cong and Cang Shi, and in the other cases the accusation of working against the party would have had a similar basis, with the accusation of supporting each other while under persecution also hinting at the accused photographers being bound by loyalties to someone other than the CCP. In the case of Lin Zecang, who ultimately only gained visibility in the photo network because he was being presented as a target of criticism, the accusations against him also pointed out that he tried to establish alternative structures for the organization of photographers in Shanghai, even if seemingly only for the purpose of taking nude photographs.

During the coming years, persecution of individual, identifiable members of the photo network ebbed down, but the pressure on photographers was kept up. With the industrial policy of the “Great Leap” failing spectacularly in the late 50s, the photo network additionally came under economic pressure, which will be described in the next section.

3.9.5 The Failed “Great Leap” and the Establishment of Orthodoxy

In the early 1960s, the push to make all photography within the photo network conform to the CCP’s directives seems to have been successful: The results of a photo competition published in the Photography Association’s mouthpiece *Chinese Photography* in May 1960 were titled “The Victory of the Worker-Farmer-Soldier Direction”, and thus showed photos which displayed happy people contributing to the advancement of society.²⁷⁷

Especially among the ranks of the members of the Photography Association, the effects of this “victory” could be clearly seen: In 1960, a conference was held to elect a new executive council for the Photography Association, which reflected the personal changes among Chinese photographers after the rectification that had taken place in the photo network in the preceding years. For the CCP-veterans like Shi Shaohua, Wu Qun, Chen Bo or Wu Yinxian and many others, not much had changed. They continued to occupy their leadership positions, with Shi Shaohua still holding the chairmanship of the association in addition to his directorship of Xinhua’s department of photography. Apparently he had fulfilled the various work plans to the satisfaction of his superiors.

²⁷⁷ “Gongnongbing fangxiang de shengli: Benkan 1957—1959 nian suo fabiao de youxiu zuopin zongpingxuan jiexiao 工农兵方向的胜利:本刊 1957—1959 年所发表的优秀作品总评选揭晓 [The Victory of the Worker-Farmer-Soldier Direction: Announcement of Selected Outstanding Works Published in this Magazine Between 1957 and 1959]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1960, no. 3, pp. 45–46.

Those members of the first executive council of 1956, who in the meantime had been persecuted as “rightists” however, were naturally not allowed to remain in the association. This concerned those openly attacked in the vocational magazines, like former vice-chairman of the association, Ding Cong, and managing directors Cang Shi and Huang Xiuyi, but did not stop with them. Of the 52 members making up the leadership of the association in 1956, 19 members were not represented in the leadership of the association in 1960 anymore.

It appears unlikely that all of these had been “rightists” or forcefully pushed out of the association, since even some staunch supporters of the CCP like Di Yuancang 狄源沧 (1926—2003), former editor-in-chief of the army’s vocational magazine on photography *Photo Network* – who had attacked Lin Zecang’s textbook in 1952 – were among those who dropped out of the association in 1960. However, a sparseness of sources makes it difficult to verify what exactly happened in the photo network – and to the photographers – during the “Great Leap”. Perhaps this sparseness can in part also be explained by the “Victory of the Worker-Farmer-Soldier Direction”? At the already mentioned conference of the Photography Association, during which the second executive council was elected, Chen Changqian, editor-in-chief of Xinhua’s vocational magazine *News Photography*, gave a speech in which he talked about the question of truth in news photography:

In 1958 and 1959, the news photography circles of our country concentrated on the problem of the truthfulness of news photography and had discussions about it. These discussions were helpful in raising the ideological and artistic character of our news photos.

Under the leadership of the party, we have always valued the truthfulness of news photography. The news photos we take and publish are all true. Here and now, our task is to further raise the ideological and artistic level of our work, make the content and form of our news photos more perfect and make them more persuasive.

The truthfulness of news photography that we are talking about is the truthfulness persisting in the principle of the party spirit of the Proletariat (*Wuchan jieji dangxing yuanze xia de zhenshixing* 无产阶级党性原则下的真实性), and has nothing in common with ‘truth for the sake of truth’ (*wei zhenshi er zhenshi* 为真实而真实). We demand and value the original appearance of things for through their appearance we reflect the essence of things, consequently we oppose fabrication and manipulation, but we also oppose the Naturalism (*Ziranzhuyi* 自然主义) of ‘recording everything one has heard’ (*you wen bi lu* 有闻必录).²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Chen Changqian, 陈昌谦 (et al.) (1962): “Wei fazhan geming de xinwen sheying shiye er fendou 为发展革命的新闻摄影事业而奋斗 [Struggle for the Development of a Revolutionary News Photography Enterprise]”, in: Zhongguo sheying xuehui lilun yanjiu bu 中国摄影学会理论研究部 (ed.) (1962): *Sheying yishu lunwen xuanji* 摄影艺术论文选集 [Selected Essays on Photography], Shanghai: Renmin meishu CBS, pp. 52–59. p. 57.

With any organized resistance – whether real or imagined – in the photo network removed, the party was now able to have the photographs circulated through the network conform exactly to its needs for “truthfulness”, without being bound by any “naturalistic” constraints.

This establishment of full control over the photo network, which found its expression through a visual orthodoxy of permissible forms in published photography, happened just at the right moment: As described by historical studies of the period with a wider focus,²⁷⁹ a combination of erroneous policy decisions on different political levels, further aggravated by the inability to give accurate feedback to higher institutions led to a nationwide dramatic shortage of food and a famine of historical dimensions. In addition to the agricultural sector, almost all parts of society were heavily struck, so naturally this calamity could not leave the photo network and its employees unaffected.

However, since the CCP’s definition of “truthfulness” guided not only the production of photos in the photo network, but also the compilation of textual source materials about the inner workings of the media, both photos, as well as textual historical sources openly showing or discussing negative events, like the effects of the failed “Great Leap”, are exceedingly rare. As Chen had said: “The news photos we take and publish are all true.” – This however, leaves us with a virtually unlimited amount of news photos which simply did not get taken (or edited and published), because their content would have been “untrue”. Naturally the same holds true for textual sources. This forces researchers to “connect the dots” between singular sources in order to arrive at something resembling a big picture.

Taking another look at the timeline of illustrated magazines shown in figure 14 on page 73, we can see that in the winter of 1960/61, apart from some exceptional cases of local illustrated magazines, the vast majority of the illustrated magazines published by provincial organizations ceased publishing, leaving only the *People’s Illustrated*, *PLA Illustrated* and – after a few uncertain months – the *Nationalities Illustrated* as available publication channels for photography-centered publishing. While specific reasons for this cessation of publishing are unclear, the quasi-simultaneous cessation of these local activities across all of China indicates the direness of the economic situation.

²⁷⁹ Compare: Hu, Angang (2013): *The Political and Economic History of China (1949-1976): Vol. 2. The Great Leap Forward 1957-1965*, Hong Kong: Enrich Professional Publishing.

The closures would have forced the photographers (and editors) attached to these illustrated magazines to find employment elsewhere,²⁸⁰ which must have certainly been difficult with the national economy in a nose dive. The figures Hu Angang gives for the growth of the PRC's gross domestic product are 21.3% in 1958, when the "Great Leap" was begun, slowing to 8.8% in 1959 and declining by -0.3% in 1960 and -27.3% in 1961, slowing the decline to -5.6% in 1962 and reverting to growth again with 10.2% in 1963.²⁸¹ While these economic indicators seem somewhat abstract, Hu also points out the very concrete effect the unfolding economic catastrophe had on the population:

The most glaring consequence of the Great Leap Forward was the drastic escalation of mortality to approximately 15 million people who were dying of starvation. American demographers offered a similar estimate of 16.5 million. Other estimates ranged from 2.3 to 30 million.²⁸²

While at the time none of this was made visible to the general population through the publication channels of the photo network, the organizational structure of the network itself showed the influence of this economic crisis quite clearly. Besides the closure of the provincial illustrated magazines, which coincided with the dramatic drop in GDP, there were several other adjustments undertaken to at least enable the photo network to continue operating under the new situation.

As formulated in a draft of "Suggestions for improving the photo reportage work of Xinhua News Agency" in 1962, the local photography departments in the provinces were allowed to continue their operations.²⁸³ As one component of the policy of the "Great Leap" in the photo network, they had only been established in 1958, with the aim of allowing Xinhua to cater more closely to the needs of local publishing media. With the closure of almost all the local illustrated magazines, a large part of this local needs had simply disappeared. The branch office photography departments – the structures of which in a few cases had apparently been de facto merged with structures of the local press – were thus ordered to reorient themselves towards Xinhua's central department of photography again:

²⁸⁰ Wang Ruihua of the *Shandong Illustrated* for example, whose case had already been discussed in section 3.3.2, found employment as an art editor at the art editorial office of the Shandong people's press, after his magazine closed down.

²⁸¹ Hu 2013, p. 113.

²⁸² Hu 2013, p. 117.

²⁸³ "Gaijin Xinhuashe sheying baodao gongzuo de yijian (caogao) 改进新华社摄影报道工作的意见（草稿）1962 [Suggestions for Improving the Photo Reportage Work of Xinhua News Agency (draft)]", in: Xinhuashe xinwen yanjiusuo 新华社新闻研究所 (ed.) (1978): *Xinhuashe wenjian ziliao xuanbian* 新华社文件资料选编 [Selected Documents and Materials of Xinhua News Agency], 5 vols., [internal publication], vol. 5, pp. 11–43.

The basic task of the photographic reportage of the branch offices is to speedily send contributions to the main office, so that the main office can issue news photos to the whole country and whole world. At the moment, the photography departments (groups) of some branch offices are merged together with the photo departments of local newspapers, and because the reportage requirements of the office and the newspapers are different it is very difficult to deal with them both. We think that where a branch office photography department (group) (*fenshe xinwen sheying bu (zu)* 分社新闻摄影部(组)) has already been merged with the photo group of a local newspaper, they should be separated.²⁸⁴

The local departments were also advised to “[...] preserve a relative stability [in numbers] of reporters with a comparatively high professional ability or an already developed career, and not let the fluctuation [of personnel] get too much.”²⁸⁵

The mentioned “fluctuation” in personnel is not detailed further in this source, but it seems almost certain that under the situation of the ongoing economical crisis, the meaning was a reduction of personnel, with the aim of reducing spending, at least in the local structures of Xinhua. The now superfluous personnel was not just sent home to be left to their own devices, the CCP center instead drew up plans to integrate them into rural production.

This is corroborated by two “notices” which the CCP center sent out to various state organs and organizations of the media in the middle of 1962, detailing “the main points to be propagated about the reduction in workers and staff members and the population of cities and towns”²⁸⁶ and “finding an appropriate place for and warmly receiving the workers and staff members sent to the countryside”.²⁸⁷

The content of both notices was not specifically aimed at staff members of the media, but as employees of state-operated organizations they shared the same fate like the workers of any factory or company which was forced to cut loose some of their employees due to the economic hardship.

²⁸⁴ Gaijin Xinhuashe sheying baodao gongzuo de yijian (caogao) 1962, p. 35.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ “Zhong Gong Zhongyang guanyu jianshao zhigong he cheng zhen renkou de xuanchuan yaodian de tongzhi 中共中央关于减少职工和城镇人口的宣传要点的同志 (21.05.1962) [Notice from the CCP Center about the Main Points to be Propagated About the Reduction in Workers and Staff Members and the Population of Cities and Towns]”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP]: 1957–1992 Beijing: Xuexi CBS, pp. 262–63.

²⁸⁷ “Zhongyang guanyu tuoshan anzhi he reqing jiedai xiaxiang zhigong de tongzhi 中央关于妥善安置和热情接待下乡职工的通知 (05.06.1962) [Notice from the CCP Center on Finding an Appropriate Place for and Warmly Receiving the Workers and Staff Members Sent to the Countryside]”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP]: 1957–1992, Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, pp. 264–265

Therefore the notices were not only relevant for editorial purposes, but the content directly concerned some employees of the media as well. This is made clear in the second notice:

Right now, all places in the whole country are adopting measurements according to the decision by the party center to resolutely reduce the industrial front (*gongye zhanxian* 工业战线), shrink the scale of cultural and educational work (*wenjiao shiye* 文教事业), to readjust the commercial system (*shangye tizhi* 商业体制), to simplify the administrative organs (*xingzheng guanli jigou* 行政管理机构), reduce the workers and staff members and the population of cities and towns, and mobilize the reduced workers and staff members as well as students to join agricultural production (*nongye shengchan* 农业生产).²⁸⁸

While the gravity of the situation was not shown through the photo network, the administrators who received these notices, namely “all regional bureaus of the Central Committee (*Zhongyang ju* 中央局), all provinces (*sheng* 省), cities (*shi* 市), party committees of autonomous regions (*Zizhiqu dangwei* 自治区党委), all central departments and committees (*Zhongyang bu, wei* 中央部、委), state organs (*Guojia jiguan* 国家机关) and all party groups of civic organizations (*Renmin tuanti dangzu* 人民团体党组) as well as the general political department (*Zongzhengzhibu* 总政治部) of the PLA”²⁸⁹ were advised to personally talk with those affected by the layoffs and resettlements, and inform them about the true situation:

When educating the workers and staff members [about the situation], it has to be made clear that the achievements made in the last few years by the people of the whole country, holding high the three red flags of the General Line, the Great Leap and the People’s Communes under the leadership of the party center and comrade Mao Zedong, are great and our future is bright. At the same time the grave influence of the more than three successive years of natural disasters (*lianxu san nian duo zaihuang* 连续三年多灾荒) need to be pointed out and shortcomings and errors in the leadership work need to be acknowledged in the way of ‘seeking truth from facts’. It needs to be made clear that the current financial and economic difficulties are serious and can only be overcome by very large efforts over a span of a few years.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ “Zhong Gong Zhongyang guanyu jianshao zhigong he cheng zhen renkou de xuanchuan yaodian de tongzhi 中共中央关于减少职工和城镇人口的宣传要点的同志 (21.05.1962) [Notice by the CCP center about the main points to be propagated about the reduction in workers and staff members and the population of cities and towns]”, p. 262.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

The countryside – most heavily affected by the famine – on the other hand was asked to warmly welcome those coming from the cities:

In all places, the rural cadres and peasants should be educated [about the problem], to make them understand how beneficial the reduction of the industrial front and the reduction of workers and staff members and the population of cities and towns is for strengthening the agricultural front (*nongye zhanxian* 农业战线), and for easing the pressure put on the countryside by the cities, as well as accelerating the recovery and development of agriculture. The rural cadres and peasants should warmly accept the workers, staff members and students sent to the countryside, and should actively assist the party and government in doing a good job in finding a place for them, giving them any kind of help necessary to settle down in the countryside and engage in production.²⁹¹

How well this program worked in actuality is difficult to ascertain. According to the figures given by Hu quoted above, the Chinese economy did manage to begin a slow recovery in 1962. For those taken from editorial- and research offices, institutions of higher learning and similar places, the experience of being sent to a distant, famine stricken countryside, not to stay for a few days to report on the “successes” there, but instead to do manual labor for an indefinite amount of time must have been traumatic. For those who were able to avoid this fate – similar to the rectification movement discussed above, this would have been those loyal to the party – the incentive to not step out of line would have been even higher than under the mere threat of persecution as a “rightist”.

The failure of the “Great Leap” thus had a far reaching effect on the photo network. Because Xinhua’s vocational magazine *News Photography*, as well as the magazine *Popular Photography* published by the Photography Association were terminated in 1960, the magazine *Chinese Photography*, also published by the Photography Association, remained the only vocational magazine on photography in existence. While Xinhua’s department of photography and other organizational centers of the photo network continued to distribute internal newsletters, these were neither made available to the public at the time, nor are they available as sources for research now.

This meant not only that most remaining publication channels for photos were centrally controlled, also the discussion forums of photographers were limited to the one – again centrally controlled – publication *Chinese Photography* of the Photography Association. In short, the photo network had by and large returned to its condition before the “Great Leap”.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Xinhua ensured that all institutions of the country had access to only “correct” and “true” photos, while the Photography Association ensured that discussions on photography and appreciation of artistic photography was limited to what was “correct”. Very conveniently, in his double role of director of Xinhua’s department of photography and chairman of the Photography Association, Shi Shaohua was firmly in control of both of these aspects.

After the failure of the “Great Leap”, in the early 1960s, aggressive political campaigns in the photo network were put on hold for the time, and photographers were given some leeway in how to fulfill the reportage plans. However, this only testified to two important outcomes of the upheaval of the preceding years: Photographers actively contesting the dominance of the CCP in governing media work had been sent to the countryside during the rectification campaign of 1957, and for those remaining in the photo network, the economical situation had changed completely. Jobs for photographers were not as plentiful anymore as they had been during the boom years following the foundation of the PRC and especially during the early “Great Leap Forward”. This further ensured ideological compliance of even the “old photographers”, who had the choice to either produce photos in the form asked of them, or to work in the famine-stricken countryside, though not as photographers anymore.

The state of the photo network after the failure of the “Great Leap” is shown in figure 27 below. While the military part of the network did not change its operations in any obvious way, the civilian part took a heavy blow. Almost all of the provincial illustrated magazines were closed down, and Xinhua’s branch office photography departments were reoriented towards the center again, meaning they did not distribute their own photos anymore, instead sending them only to the center in Beijing. This essentially reproduced the military’s way of organizing photographic work. Perhaps made superfluous by the reduction in personnel and organizational capabilities of the local branch office photography departments and cancellation of the provincial illustrated magazines, Xinhua’s vocational magazine *News Photography* ceased operations. Besides Xinhua, the *People’s Illustrated* and *Nationalities Illustrated* continued operation on a national level, as did large newspapers like the *People’s Daily*. The Photography Association was forced to discontinue their magazine *Popular Photography*, but continued to publish the *Chinese Photography* – now last vocational magazine on photography published to a general audience – and also continued to curate the national photographic art exhibitions.

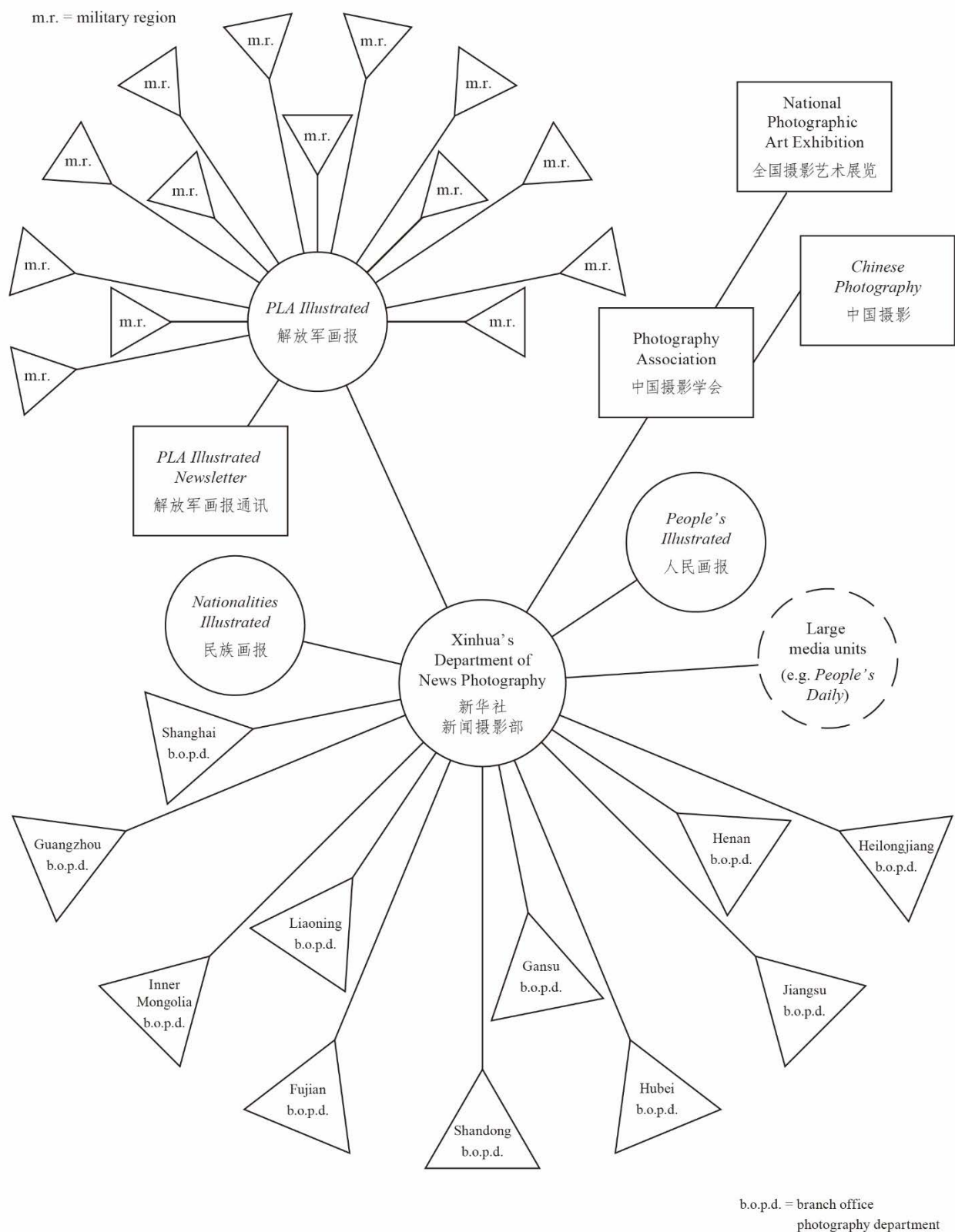


Figure 27: The photo network after 1961. Design by author of this study, technical execution by Shoko Tanaka.

3.10 Conclusion

This analysis of the Chinese photo network ends in the early 1960s, after the network had to be reduced to its centrally controlled components due to the effects of the failed “Great Leap Forward”. Until the outbreak of the “Great Cultural Revolution” in 1966, and the takeover of the central institutions of the media by the People’s Liberation Army in the following years, the basic form and operation procedures of the network would remain unchanged.

As for the photo network and its photographers, the period between 1949 and 1961 already allows analysis of a multitude of phenomena which are related to the creation of photography in an expanding and constricting network of centrally controlled visual communication.

The development of the photo network began with scattered military-controlled illustrated magazines and the photographers attached to them. While these were nominally centrally controlled through the overarching military chain of command, the socialization of the attached photographers and workflows employed by the magazines had their roots in distinctly separate photographic activities in the different communist base areas during wartime. With the ebbing down of hostilities in the early 1950s, civilian illustrated magazines made an unorganized come-back, while in 1950, the new communist government established a first department of news photography, including the editorial office of the *People’s Illustrated*, in order to control its own depiction in published photography. With the recovery of the country after the war, more institutions of the growing state founded own illustrated magazines, with the *Nationalities Illustrated* (by the general affairs committee for national minorities in 1955) and the *People’s Liberation Army Illustrated* (1951) being projects of comparable size to the *People’s Illustrated*. The establishment of the *People’s Liberation Army Illustrated* also represented the efforts undertaken by the military to unite its photographic activities under one command.

A comparative effort to change operation procedures for the civilian media was reached with the foundation of Xinhua’s department of photography in 1952. Differing from even the larger illustrated magazines, the aim of Xinhua’s photographic work was to offer the aggregate of all photos produced by the media of the whole country, both to the media within China, as well as outside of China. This national perspective – while still being under development – for the first time justified the description of the Chinese illustrated media as a photographic network.

The manpower requirements of this network necessitated inclusion of the “old photographers”, i.e. those who had not been educated by the CCP, which directly led to new requirements in the education of and leadership over the photo network’s employees:

Between the photographers trained by the CCP during wartime, who not only shared basic biographical facts, but also more or less believed in the CCP’s cause and were used to authoritative leadership due to their military training, conflict and dissent had been a rare occurrence.

The inclusion of photographers who had different experiences with photography however also brought dissenting voices into the photo network, which at first had to be tolerated due to the sheer need for technically proficient personnel. The foundation of the Photography Association – an institution not connected to the day-to-day press work – was an effort to unify conceptions of photography through carefully guided education, as seen through the national photographic art exhibitions – curated by the association – as well as through the publication of its vocational magazines *Chinese Photography* and *Popular Photography*.

The most influential of these prescribed concepts of photography, which was promoted within the photo network with the aim of providing photographers with a model to follow was the photography of the Soviet Union, which – differing from “Western” models – was both still in the reach of Chinese photographers and also fit the needs of the authorities in control of the photo network. It was promoted between ca. 1953-56, and represented the efforts to transform the Chinese economy to a socialist economy as undertaken within the institutions of the illustrated media. Following the considerable extension of the network down to the provincial level under the industrial policy of the “Great Leap Forward”, and policies that could be described as liberalizations of administrative procedures – like extending the availability of vocational magazines as discussion forums and allowing local photography departments a degree of autonomy from the center – the CCP authorities found themselves confronted by more resistance against their control than they could tolerate.

Were the persecutions and rectification campaigns of the late 1950s the necessary consequence of the inclusiveness towards “old photographers” and relaxations of control on a local level?

This question remains difficult to answer even today. While considerable efforts were undertaken to reverse “wrong” verdicts of the “Cultural Revolution”, and to erase traces of “Cultural Revolution”-era policies, what had happened to the photographers of the state media during the late 1950s was never acknowledged as problematic. This means that while it did not receive special attention anymore at a later time, the “anti-rightist” campaign (i.e. rectification campaign) was also not deleted from the available source materials, meaning it was not perceived as an error or mistake of the party that would have to be erased. It was information about the “rightists” that was erased from the sources.

As was hinted at already in the final section of this chapter on the failed “Great Leap Forward”, “truth” was defined by the CCP, therefore, political and aesthetic clashes within the photo network appear to revolve around the differentiation between a “right” and a “wrong” position, with the “right” position invariably being the CCP position and also invariably gaining the upper hand, leading to the “wrong” position to be deleted from the source material, except where remnants of it served to illustrate the wrong position through quotations.

This apparent “struggle of the two lines”, as it was called in political literature in the PRC,²⁹² should be understood as just a model used to describe reality in a way advantageous to the CCP. What this model of the two line struggle leads to however, is a textbook case of survivorship bias, in which not only the surviving “correct” side might be seen as the only one which had existed, but in essence only two sides seem to have existed, where the historical reality would have been much more diverse.

Another differentiation that is almost impossible to avoid in an analysis of a communicative network is the differentiation of an “inside” and an “outside” of the network, which in fact is also closely connected to the differentiation of “correct” and “wrong”. In an analysis of the communication making up the network – be it visual communication in the shape of photographs, or meta-communication discussing photography in writing – it is only possible to retrace communication that happened inside the network, because it was judged as “right” (or “wrong” enough to illustrate what was “correct”, essentially two sides of the same coin).

²⁹² Compare for example: Fudan daxue xinwenxi 复旦大学新闻系 (1974): *Xinwen zhanxian liangtiao luxian douzheng, lunwengao* 新闻战线两条路线斗争 1942-1966, 论文稿 [The Two-Line Struggle on the News Front, Manuscripts], Shanghai.

A case for this is the persecution of Lin Zecang, who apparently was able to continue publishing and organizing photographic activities in Shanghai well into the 1950s, independent from and invisible in the photo network. Later on, he only became visible in the photo network and therefore the sources of this study by being discussed in the vocational magazines because he was regarded as a threat that needed to be neutralized.

What this illustrates is that hypothetical other, unknown networks of photography might have well existed in China during the period under scrutiny. One example illustrating this possibility would be the military-controlled part of the photo network (i.e. the photographers working towards the *PLA Illustrated*). While it was indeed connected to the larger photo network, it rested on structures that could operate independently. Another example that can be conceived are local networks – Lin Zecang's nude photo circles in Shanghai, or local photographer groups around local photography departments during the “Great Leap Forward” – that were able to operate independently from the CCP's photo network.

Nevertheless, there are limits to this train of thought: Any other notable networks of photography would have been depicted in the CCP's photo network, either for the purpose of defamation as “wrong”, or as in the case of local groups of amateur photographers in the late 1970s as “reservoirs” of “correct” perspectives who had been “correct” all along, when the mainstream of photography fell into the hands of those who were “wrong”. Another example of other systems of photography becoming visible in the photo network would naturally also be the “Soviet model”. As indicated by the “strange” transliterated names of the Soviet photographers – “Kuzuofujin 库佐夫金” and “Jisiluofu 基斯洛夫” come to mind – this was not the actual Soviet network of photographic communication, but its depiction within the Chinese photo network under analysis here.²⁹³

With the photo network having reached a relatively stable state of development in the early 1960s, which would then not change in substantive ways for the years to come, in the following chapter this study changes gears to take the products – i.e. the visual communication – of the photo network into focus, analyzing the changes in depiction of the Chinese leadership from about 1949 to 1981.

²⁹³ While naturally outside the scope of this study, the liminal area where the two systems of photography – the Soviet one and the Chinese one – came close to touching each other, i.e. where “Dimitri” became “Dimiteli” would be a most interesting case for further studies.

4 The Depiction of Leaders through the Photo Network

In addition to the analysis of the photo network – as the social preconditions or “substructure” of Chinese photography – which was undertaken in the preceding chapters, the following chapter attempts to retrace the visual discourse in Chinese photography between 1949 and 1981. Since the range of topics covered in Chinese photography during that time would be far too wide to cover, only one topic, political leaders, will be analyzed in the following sections, since especially this topic can be assumed to have received the utmost attention by the members of the photo network. As shown by the example of Tao Zhu, discussed in section 4.4.2, making errors in the depiction of the leadership could have deadly consequences.

During the period under scrutiny in this part of the study, photography with a visibility to a large audience was exclusively practiced within and published through the CCP-administrated photo network, giving the political leaders of the PRC an extraordinary degree of control over their publicized image. Even though starting in the middle 1970s independent or even alternative photography made a slow (re)appearance, the photographers practicing it outside of the photo network had neither the opportunity nor the intention to depict the country’s leadership, pursuing other motifs instead. This analysis of the photographic depiction of the Chinese leadership is thus based almost exclusively on the products of the photo network, as it was defined in the preceding chapter.

This chapter is based on an extensive analysis of the source material, which encompasses the bulk of the illustrated magazines published nationally in China during the period under scrutiny, the catalogue of news photos published by the state-administrated Xinhua News Agency as well as the most important catalogues of (art) photo exhibitions. This material can be considered representative of the sum of all photographs in circulation during the period under scrutiny.

The sources used were personally surveyed and digitized by the author, ensuring the source material to be as close to the originally published material as possible. This aspect is of the utmost importance: Because most of the photographs analyzed here were produced as a coordinated effort within the photo network, involving both photographers and picture editors as well as political authorities, the precise published shape of a specific photograph in a specific moment of time is important for understanding its historical meaning. Only in this way is it possible to accurately follow the development of forms used for visual communication on leadership, as expressed through the medium of photography.

The counterexample would be to use photos as they are reproduced in published collections of historical photos or even databases and homepages. While these collections often contain many outstanding works, and can certainly enhance our understanding of the past, they are not part of the original visual discourse, even when the photos reproduced are from the correct time. One example of this are the photos Li Zhensheng took in the province of Heilongjiang during the “Cultural Revolution”.²⁹⁴ These are authentic photos from “Cultural Revolution”-era China, and they can without a doubt function as valuable visual evidence in their own right. As a matter of fact, on some occasions they are used in this study for exactly this purpose. They are however, not part of the visual discourse of the photo network as it was practiced during the “Cultural Revolution”, for their form did not adhere to the requirements of press photography at the time, preventing them from getting published and seen by others. Perusing these photographs, we can get an authentic impression of the “Cultural Revolution” (as seen by Li Zhenshen), however, these pictures do not show the “Cultural Revolution” the way it was presented in published Chinese photography of the 60s and 70s; they show the “Cultural Revolution” through the publication environment of New York and London in 2003. Therefore, including them in the analysis of visual forms, one needs to be aware of this danger of anachronism.

To require a given photograph’s history of publication to be completely retraceable, however, also can be problematic: For some periods of political upheaval,²⁹⁵ there are gaps in the transmitted published sources, where censors removed those materials from archives and libraries, which were no longer deemed in accordance with the officially (i.e. CCP) sanctioned historical narrative. In some cases the content of these gaps can be reasonably reconstructed, in other cases this remains impossible for the time being.

With these caveats in mind, in tracing the evolution of the depiction of leaders, the author selected photos which can by and large be divided into two types: The first type are typical forms, where just one example of a very common type of image needs to be provided, for example Mao Zedong’s presentation at the mass receptions of the Red Guards in late Summer 1966. The pictures given in this case naturally still constitute a selection by the author. However, they do not differ in any important way from other, essentially similar photos published simultaneously, which consequently need not be included here.

²⁹⁴ Li 2003.

²⁹⁵ Especially problematic are the late fifties, which saw the political campaigns of the “Hundred Flowers” (1956-57), the “Anti-Rightist Campaign” (1957-59) and the “Great Leap Forward” (1958-62).

The second type of images are examples of highly singular photos, which differ decisively from the bulk of photographs published around the same time. An example of this would be the photos of Mao Zedong's swim in the river Yangtze in July 1966, the form of which completely departed from the conventional depiction of politicians in China at that time. This type of photos, which differ markedly from the more common forms, often attest to profound changes happening in the photo network and the country at large, and are thus especially rich and valuable sources.

The assumption underlying this analysis of the depiction of leaders through the photo network is that the basic program controlling the operation of said network equated power with visibility and, vice versa, powerlessness with invisibility. Program here is to be understood as the sum of all coordinated actions within the photo network shaping its output, i.e. the published photos. This assumption seems to hold true for most of the period under scrutiny, even though during the "Cultural Revolution" (1966—1976) power would not be based on CCP, administrative or governmental positions anymore, but instead on personal loyalties, above all to chairman Mao. Remarkably, this visual program appears to have been reversed in the years following the ascend of Deng Xiaoping and the beginning of the reform policy in the late 1970s, as evidenced by the central illustrated media displaying cadres who had lost their power, without overly showcasing those who now held power.

4.1 Introduction to the Photographic Representation of Power in 20th-Century China

It would go too far to explore the depiction of powerful figures in China before wartime in detail, but it should at least be mentioned here that with the photographs of empress dowager Cixi (1835–1908), taken in the early 20th century, there are early examples of the photographic depiction of power in China which form a bridge between the formalized portraits taken of the leaders of the People's Republic and the long tradition of ancestor and emperor portraits in imperial China.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ Compare: Peng Ying-chen (2013): "Lingering between Tradition and Innovation: Photographic Portraits of Empress Dowager Cixi", in: *Ars Orientalis*, 2013, vol. 43, pp. 157–74. and Roberts, Claire (2013): "The Empress Dowager's Birthday: The Photographs of Cixi's Long Life Without End", in: *Ars Orientalis*, 2013, vol. 43, pp. 176–95.

This deserves attention, for while the later Soviet-Russian influences on the depiction of leadership (strongest in the early to middle 1950s) can neither be denied nor ignored, they also ought not to be assumed to be the sole model of or influence on the photographic depiction of leadership.

Another aspect which cannot be explored in detail is the photographic depiction of leadership figures of the Guomindang administration in the Republic of China (1911—1949, after 1949 on Taiwan). This would include the “first modern personality cult in China”²⁹⁷ centered on the founding father of the Republic, Sun Yat-sen, as well as his successor Chiang Kai-shek. While their pictorial representation had a strong influence on the depiction of Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders during wartime, and became the model for the creation of a personality cult in the CCP as well, it is outside the scope of this chapter to explore the similarities and differences in detail.

4.2 Mao as a Symbol for the Party and State

The foundation of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949 can be considered a turning point in Chinese history, with the country nominally unified (except for Taiwan and some remote provinces) after more than a decade of war. While fighting was still going on in some areas of the country and the occupation of Tibet and the Korean War would let a state of war continue on the periphery of China until 1953, it was important to express the legitimacy and stability of the new government as soon as possible, both to the population of China as well as the world at large. Besides the construction of governmental structures and organizations, the images publicized of the CCP’s leaders were in need of new forms as well.

²⁹⁷ Leese 2011, p. 5ff.



Figure 28: Chen Zhengqing 陈正青 (1949): “The Grand Ceremony of Founding the Country (*Kaiguo dadian* 开国大典)”, in: *Huadong huabao* 华东画报 [East China Illustrated], 1949, no. 1, p. 1.

The foundation of the PRC transformed the leaders of the CCP and especially Mao Zedong’s image from “revolutionaries” to “statesmen” or even “founding fathers”. This transformation of roles can be observed in the photo “The Grand Ceremony of Founding the Country” (“*Kaiguo dadian* 开国大典”) by photographer Chen Zhengqing 陈正青 (1917—1966),²⁹⁸ given in figure 28. The monochrome photo shows Mao Zedong in the moment he declares the establishment of the Central People’s Government on October 1, 1949. Mao is clad in a Sun Yat-sen suit and is holding a sheet of paper in his hands, which he intently gazes on. In front of Mao are several microphones, which record and transmit the declaration he reads from the sheet of paper. The background of this scene is a carved window shutter, which identifies the place as the rostrum of Tian’anmen.

²⁹⁸ Chen was born in Changsha. He studied at Shanghai’s Datong University (*Datong daxue* 大同大学) until 1936, joining the communist forces afterwards. He became a member of the CCP in 1937, and studied at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yan’an. From 1946 he served as the head of the photography section of the *Northeast Illustrated* (*Dongbei huabao* 东北画报), and after the war reached the post of vice-director of Xinhua’s department of photography. He died with his wife as victims of the “Cultural Revolution” in 1966. Compare: Yang 2009, p.16.

When compared with another version of the same photo published later (given in fig. 29),²⁹⁹ it can be seen that Dong Biwu 董必武 (1886—1975) has been retouched out of the photograph as it was originally published, while others were removed from the scene through use of a tighter crop.



Figure 29: Mao declaring the foundation of the PRC (unretouched), in: *Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报 [PLA Illustrated], 1959, no. 19, p. 10.

This served to give prominence to Mao Zedong, who by removing his colleagues from the photo was exclusively identified with the foundation of the PRC. Unlike the examples of retouched photos given in section 4.5 of this chapter however, the intention behind the removal here was not to express a fall from power of Dong, who continued to appear in the media afterwards, but instead to underscore the counterfactually singular role Mao played in the foundation of the PRC and to establish him not just as one of many, but as *the* founding father of the republic.

As the “new” founding father, Mao Zedong supplanted Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866—1925), who had before personified the Republic of China. Instead of Sun, who in the PRC was still held in high regard and whose portrait was still occasionally shown alongside Mao’s,³⁰⁰ Mao became the new personification of the Chinese government and state.

²⁹⁹ *Jiefangjun huabao* 1959, no. 19 (01.10.1959), p. 10.

³⁰⁰ Leese 2011, p. 38.

In order to give credence to this role, he was depicted with different attributes. In formal situations like the one in figure 28, he was always shown wearing what in the west is known as a Mao suit, but which in China is called *Zhongshan zhuang* 中山装 meaning Sun Yat-sen suit. This “combination of jacket and trousers based on student uniforms [...] imported via Japan [...] signified both enduring cultural values and political innovation: the pocket flaps were shaped like traditional brush rests, and the five buttons down the front of the jacket alluded to the five branches of government in Sun’s political philosophy.”³⁰¹ Sun Yat-sen had started to wear this type of suit in 1914, and although he preferred traditional Chinese clothing later in his life, “the Zhongshan suit became the prototype for Nationalist Party uniforms, as well as for the ubiquitous ‘Mao suits’ of the Communist era.”³⁰² The depiction of Mao thus had to remind the viewer of the former president of the Republic of China and made Mao appear to be his successor.

Mao was also often depicted on or in the vicinity of the Tian’anmen 天安门 (Gate of Heavenly Peace), the outer gate of the former imperial palace in Beijing. This is where the foundation of the PRC was declared, for it marks the visible outside of the center of political power since imperial times, and consequently the gate itself was and continues to be used as a symbol of political power in China.³⁰³

As such, the image of the gate even became part of the national emblem of the PRC, and the gate itself came to be associated with the Communist government. These symbols of state power – the image of Mao and the gate itself – gained a circular referentiality, when they were combined by affixing the portrait of Mao Zedong to the gate, which is shown in figure 30. This integrated the symbols of the gate and Mao Zedong, who from now on were not only both referring to the power of the Communist Government, but also to each other.

Over time, this identification of the gate and Mao Zedong also came to be recognized by the population, i.e. the consumers of the products of the photo network. This can be deduced from an article written by the professional souvenir photographers of Tian’anmen square in 1974, in which they primarily protested against their depiction in Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni’s (1912–2007) 1972 documentary *Chung Kuo, Cina*.

³⁰¹ Harrist, Robert E., JR (2005): “Clothes Make the Man: Dress, Modernity, and Masculinity in China, ca. 1912–1937”, in: Wu Hung; Tsiang, Katherine R. (eds.) (2005): *Body and face in Chinese visual culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 171–93. p. 183.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ For a general explanation of the political symbolism contained in the buildings surrounding Tian’anmen square compare: Wu Hung (1991): “Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monuments”, in: *Representations*, 1991, no. 35, pp. 84–117.

One of the souvenir photographers – belonging to the “Workers, peasants, soldiers photo studio” – explained the meaningfulness of his only seemingly mundane occupation:

To take a memorial photo in front of Beijing’s Tian’anmen is the biggest aspiration of the vast masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers. Standing in front of Tian’anmen is like standing next to chairman Mao himself, seeing Tian’anmen is like seeing chairman Mao himself.³⁰⁴

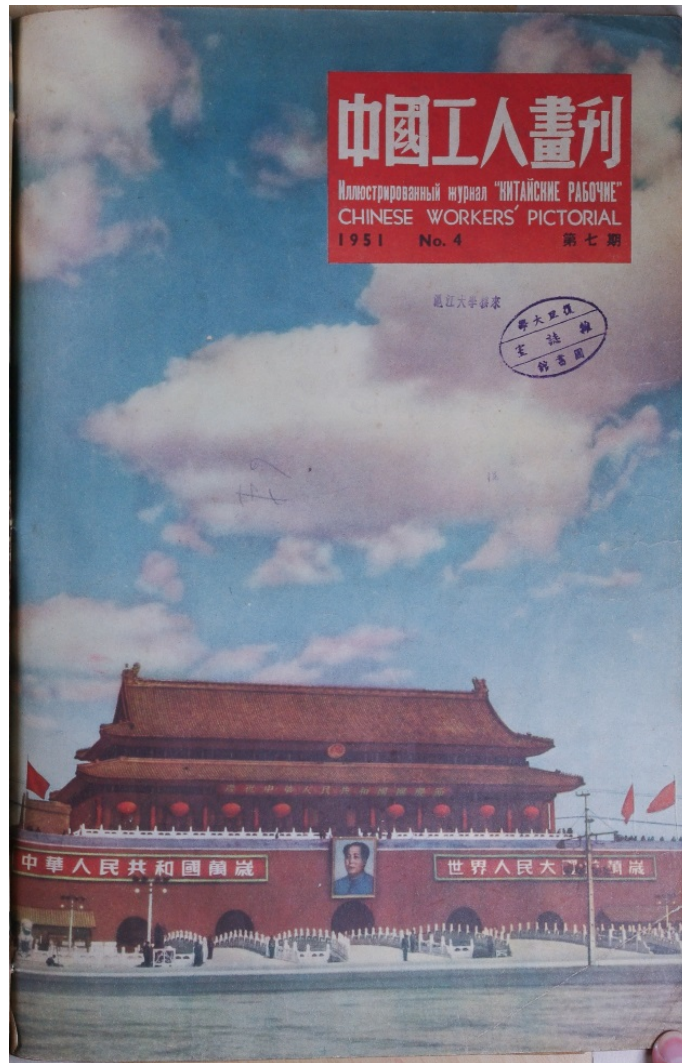


Figure 30: Portrait of Mao Zedong on Tian'anmen in 1951, in: *Zhongguo gongren huakan* 中国工人画刊 [Chinese Workers Pictorial], 1951, no. 4, cover page.

³⁰⁴ Gongnongbing zhaoxiangguan 工农兵照相馆; (et al.) (1974): “Women zhaoxiang wei renmin 我们照相为人民 [We are Photographing for the People]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1974, no. 1, p. 52.

Similar to the use of the gate itself as a symbol of state power, and contrary to the CCP's aspiration to create a new China, this placement of Mao's portrait on the gate however did not represent a revolutionary break with the past, for Chiang Kai-shek (1887—1975), leader of the nationalist Guomindang party and adversary of Mao during the civil war (1945—1949), had arranged to have his portrait attached to the gate already in 1945.³⁰⁵ Like the use of the Sun Yat-sen suit by the leading cadres of the CCP, this is an example of visual forms of expression which the CCP adopted from the formerly ruling Guomindang party.

4.3 The Standardized Depiction of Power

Even though due to his position as state president, Mao's portrait enjoyed the highest visibility compared to his peers, in administrative affairs he still had to share his power with the other members of the Central Committee of the party, who found roles as members of the new government as well.



Figure 31: Members of the new Chinese government, in: *Huadong huabao* 华东画报 [East China Illustrated], 1949, no. 1, pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁵ Wang, Helen (2008): *Chairman Mao Badges: Symbols and slogans of the Cultural Revolution*, London: The British Museum. p. 138. Regrettably the author was unable to find a photo of Chiang's portrait attached to Tian'anmen.

This formalization of power structures in the wake of the founding of the PRC led to a proliferation of the so called “leader photos” (*lingxiu zhaopian* 领袖照片), which served to illustrate the holder of offices in the new government. Figure 31 shows leadership photos for the leading functionaries of every single branch of the new government, as printed in *East China Illustrated* in 1949. In this example, all members of the government are represented by a portrait. Quite remarkably, while the likely aim for the technical and artistic execution was to give a uniform, orderly impression as expressed through the arrangement of the photos in a grid, surrounding a diagram showing the newly established branches and organizations of the government, the photos themselves differ in many details like the poses used, the background, as well as the exposure (i.e. grey values). This testifies to the condition of the illustrated media in the newly founded state, which before the foundation of Xinhua’s photography department in 1952 proved simply unable to deliver this number of portraits in a uniform style. But even acknowledging this variance in the technical execution of the photos, the expression of differences in rank and thus power among the politicians can be deduced from the different dimensions of the photos. As state president, Mao’s portrait is printed about four times as large as the portraits of the vice presidents and other high-ranking members of the government. Still their pictures are printed about twice as big as the portraits of lower ranking functionaries. In this case, visibility was directly tied to the institutional position and rank within the government.

Special care was given to the arrangement of the portraits during official holidays, namely National Day on October 1 and Labor Day, or as in figure 32, showing a double page from the *PLA Illustrated*, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the CCP (*Jiandangjie* 建党节) in 1951.



Figure 32: Portraits of Mao, Liu, Zhou and Zhu, in: *Jiefangjun huabao* 军解放军画报 [PLA Illustrated] 1951, no. 5, pp. 2-3.

While here Mao is printed in a way which suggests equality with his comrades – the caption below his photo still identifies him as president though – his portrait would have been the most important or even only one printed at publications without the resources of the *PLA Illustrated*. This can be seen from instructions on the handling of the CCP's anniversary, which the Central Propaganda Department had sent out to printing houses the year before:

- 1.1. Except for the portraits of Mao, Liu, Zhou and Zhu, normal newspapers can also publish the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. [...]
- 1.3. If at smaller newspapers they don't have photos of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin, it is ok to print them. If there are no photos of Liu, Zhou and Zhu, it is ok just to print one of chairman Mao.
2. In memorial assembly halls, the portraits of all eight of the above can be put up, in the order of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Liu, Zhou and Zhu, with Stalin and Mao in the center. If in small towns the space or pictures are not enough, regulation 1.3. takes effect.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ “Zhongyang guanyu jinian “qiyi” shi baozhi dengzai lingxiu zhaopian de guiding 中央关于纪念“七一”时报纸登载领袖照片的规定 [Regulations by the Center on the Publication of Leadership Photos during the Commemoration of First of July] (29.06.1951)” in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编: 1949—1956 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP], Beijing: Xuexi CBS. p. 247.

Quite similar to the examples of leadership portraits given in figure 31, the instructions acknowledge that the specific form of depiction of the leaders chosen on a given occasion was limited by the means available to the institution publishing them. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership in affairs related to Communism – here the anniversary of the CCP’s foundation – is acknowledged by the requirement to not only hang up portraits of Marx, Engels and Lenin, but Mao’s contemporary Stalin as well. In any case, Mao in his role as state president and chairman of the party was to be given supreme visibility, whenever the circumstances did not allow a more inclusive representation of the leadership.

As shown with the example of figure 31, immediately after the foundation of the PRC, the illustrated press was unable to meet the political demands vis-à-vis the depiction of politicians. Only beginning with the establishment of the centralized photo network did it become possible to have the same photos available in different locations.³⁰⁷ After the establishment of Xinhua News Agency’s department of news photography in 1952, there was a special central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhe zu* 中央记者组) which handled the coverage of the leadership, foreign guests of state and important news events. Attached to this group was also Xinhua’s portrait photo studio (*renxiang sheying shi* 人像摄影室) which was “responsible for taking portraits of the leaders of party and government, model workers (*laodong mofan* 劳动模范), combat heroes (*zhandou yingxiong* 战斗英雄), writers and artists (*wenxue yishu jia* 文学艺术家), scientists (*kexuejia* 科学家), famous persons (*shehui zhiming renshi* 社会知名人士) and international friends (*guoji youren* 国际友人)”.³⁰⁸

These portraits were distributed through the photo network, which provided the illustrated press with most of the photographs printed. Because access to the members of the central government was tightly controlled, the photos provided by Xinhua’s central reporters group were almost the only ones in circulation, while the state operated publication channels like newspapers, illustrated magazines and photo exhibitions were the only outlets for these photos. Paralleling these structures, the PLA possessed its own organizational structures to make, circulate and publish photos, which would prove to be of importance for Mao in the late 1950s.

³⁰⁷ It should be mentioned that the reach of the photo network was only gradually extended. In the periphery of China, or when portraits were used by non-centrally controlled organizations like the ones founded by the “Red Guards” (*Hongweibing* 红卫兵) during the Cultural Revolution, it was not unusual for outdated photos of the leaders to get used.

³⁰⁸ Shi 1984, p.163.

The goal behind the upkeep of these complex structures – described in chapter 3 – was the leadership’s complete control over their published image. The structure of this control over photography mirrored the extension of CCP power over Chinese society. Since this control of who and what was visible in print was a function of political power, it is therefore argued that the quantity and quality of a cadre’s depiction correlated directly with their relative power in the context of Chinese politics.

4.4 Visibility Equals Power: Mao’s Personality Cult and Non-Administrational Visibility

In light of the international situation in the middle of the 1950s, especially the beginning de-Stalinization in the USSR following Khrushchev’s secret speech “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences” in February 1956 and the uprisings in Poland and Hungary later that year, the CCP center allowed a short phase of political liberalization in the PRC to happen.

Besides other relaxations of the regulations governing media work detailed in chapter 3.9.1 of this study, in June 1956 the authorities responsible for the placement of leader portraits in government agencies were told that from now on they could essentially decide for themselves whose portrait they chose to display.³⁰⁹

In 1958, the CCP initiated the economic policy of the “Great Leap Forward”. By mobilizing its human resources and abandoning the USSR’s model of development, China was to catch up with the developed countries. While the institutional and structural liberalization policies initiated earlier were still being implemented, real and imagined political enemies who had been identified as a consequence of said policies began to come under fire. The nationwide campaign against “rightist elements” which had started in earnest in late 1957, led to persecutions even within the photo network. As a consequence, the employees of the network could now be divided into potential “rightist elements” and loyal followers of the CCP.

³⁰⁹ Compare: “Zhongyang guanyu gua xiang wenti de tongzhi 中央关于挂像问题的通知 [Notice by the Center on the Question of the Placement of Portraits] (25.06.1956)”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang’anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编: 1949—1956 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP], Beijing: Xuexi CBS. p. 1155.

Following the catastrophic failure of the “Great Leap Forward”, this division became apparent in the leadership as well. At the Lushan conference in July of 1959, minister of defense Peng Dehuai 彭德怀 (1898—1974) blamed Mao personally for the failure of the “Great Leap”. Mao in turn had Peng dismissed and replaced by Lin Biao 林彪 (1907—1971) in September 1959. Presumably under the impression of Stalin’s reevaluation by his successor Khrushchev, Mao feared for his heritage and identified criticism of himself and his policies with revisionism endangering the country’s revolutionary achievements. Therefore, anyone working against the chairman would have been a potential “rightist”.

Nevertheless, acknowledging errors made vis-à-vis the ongoing economic crisis, from April 1959 Mao had been forced to share the power and visibility at the top of the government apparatus with Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 (1898—1969), who became new chairman (i.e. president) of the People’s Republic. Mao however still was able to retain the powerful offices of chairman of the CCP and chairman of the Central Military Commission. This meant that at most official celebrations of state holidays like National Day, there were now two top leaders vying for attention of the masses. A central notice on the placement of leadership portraits, published in March 29, 1960, even advised newspapers that “Around the time of national day, newspapers should print photos of Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi on the first page, for Labor Day this is not necessary.”³¹⁰

³¹⁰ “Zhongyang guanyu xuangua lingxiuxiang de tongzhi 中央关于悬挂领袖像的通知 [Notice by the Center on the Hanging of Leader Portraits] (29.03.1960)”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编: 1957—1992 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP], Beijing: Xuexi CBS. pp. 186-187.



Figure 33: Liu and Mao with Zhu in the background, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1959, no. 10, p. 2.

An example of this is given in figure 33, a photo of Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi published in the October issue of *People's Illustrated* on the occasion of National Day in 1959. In the photo we see Liu Shaoqi and Mao Zedong next to each other, walking towards the viewer, with both of them looking towards the left side of the picture. Appearing to the left of them, and quite some distance behind, is Zhu De 朱德 (1886—1976), noted military hero and chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. While he was a high-level politician as well, his low visibility due to his position in the photo reduces him to the role of an extra, underlining the supposed equality between Liu and Mao. In the far background, there is a roof in the traditional Chinese architectural style, which suggests the roof of Tian'anmen and its reference to state power. Mao and Liu both wear Sun Yat-sen suits, but the one worn by Mao is of a much lighter shade, introducing an element of difference between him and Liu in an otherwise almost symmetrical composition.

Nevertheless, as far as the administrative apparatus was concerned, Mao still enjoyed precedency before Liu. In the central notice mentioned before, most state organs were given the choice of either displaying just one portrait of Mao, or seven portraits of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun, Lin Biao and Deng Xiaoping.

Liu's right to visibility thus did not exceed those of other top-level cadres, while Mao was in a league of his own. Even after handing the office of state president over to Liu, Mao's role as a symbol of the state apparently still surpassed that of his successor, for the notice also declared: "In the assembly hall of the People's Congress, either a portrait of Mao Zedong can be placed, or the state symbol can be placed instead of the portrait."³¹¹ This underlined the continuing functional equivalency of Mao's portrait and the state symbol, even though the role of state president had been taken over by Liu Shaoqi.

In spite of the regulations of the propaganda apparatus in fact still according him outstanding visibility compared to his peers and apparent rival, a distrustful Mao came to rely on the mass media network of the PLA to transmit his image to the population without the need to share the spotlight with anyone. After taking up office, Lin Biao, now minister of defense by the grace of Mao, began to establish a new cult of personality in the PLA, which centered on his powerful ally. This cult differed markedly from the earlier one employed by the state, because now Mao was neither presented as a "founding father" nor as a symbol of the state or party, but as a genius, whose own adaption of Marxist-Leninist theory, the "Mao Zedong thought" (*Mao Zedong sixiang* 毛泽东思想) was presented as a useful guideline for all aspects of military and everyday life.

Mao's pictorial representation was not central to this cult, and often he was only referenced indirectly through the promotion of model soldiers, who were extolled for their unwavering study and use of the Mao Zedong thought. Where the chairman appeared in pictorial form, it was now often in profile, like he was depicted on his collected works and the ubiquitous Mao badges which became immensely popular during the "Cultural Revolution".³¹²

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Compare Wang 2008.



Figure 34: Mao's likeness on the cover of: *Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报 [PLA Illustrated], 1961, no. 7, cover page.

An example of this form of depiction is given in figure 34, showing the cover of the *PLA Illustrated* 1961, issue 7. The cover is dominated by a large depiction of Mao Zedong's head in profile, looking to the left. Below Mao, and printed much smaller than him, is a stylized depiction of the Tian'anmen, as well as a group of farmers, soldiers and members of the national minorities, who are apparently engaging in celebrations. They are surrounding the figure of a lion, a costume used in the traditional lion dance performed on festive occasions. All of this is printed on a bright red background. The occasion for this unusual cover was the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party.

Differing from the frontal and three-quarter views normally employed in the depiction of the leadership (as discussed before), the depiction of Mao in profile references the depiction of important contributors to Marxism-Leninism, like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. In fact, the four of them did appear in this form on the very next page, given in figure 35.³¹³

³¹³ *Jiefangjun huabao* 1961, no. 7, p.1.



Figure 35: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin above Tian'anmen, in: *Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报 [PLA Illustrated], 1961, no. 7, inside page of cover.

Here they are shown in profile, next to each other. They are printed on a red cloth, which is flowing in the wind. Below the gold-hemmed lower edge of the cloth, three red flags³¹⁴ are flying in front of a stylized silhouette of the Tian'anmen, which itself is emitting rays of red and yellow. At the bottom of the picture, the years 1921, 1961, as well as the number 40 are spelled out, referring to the 40th anniversary of the party. Below the picture, a line declares “The victory of Marxism-Leninism in China.”

³¹⁴ These three red flags (*san mian hongqi* 三面红旗) represented the three policies of the General Line for Socialist Construction, the Great Leap Forward and the People's Communes, which were the core Maoist policies of the late 1950s. Compare: “Zhong Gong Zhongyang guanyu jianshao zhigong he cheng zhen renkou de xuanchuan yaodian de tongzhi 中共中央关于减少职工和城镇人口的宣传要点的同志 [Notice from the CCP Center about the Main Points to be Propagated About the Reduction in Workers and Staff Members and the Population of Cities and Towns] (21.05.1962)”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP]: 1957–1992. Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, pp. 262–63.

A reader of the magazine would have seen the two illustrations right after another, when turning over the page. This would have made the connection between Mao in profile and the other communist luminaries – shown in profile as well – very compelling, expressing the idea that the chairman was one of them. Showing just his head on a red background – the other side of the red banner on the next page, which the Marxists are printed on – removed his connection with everyday politics, embedding him instead in the communist hagiography. The size difference of Mao's profile compared to the Tian'anmen – referring to state power – and the people, above whom Mao's head is floating, shows that he was now larger than life, transcending the boundaries imposed by political institutions.

Therefore, by relying on his ally Lin Biao, Mao was able to ensure his continued public visibility no matter which specific position he was holding in the government. Based on the media controlled by the military, he was able to reach and mobilize the population without having to rely on the CCP or state apparatus.

4.4.1 Jiang Qing and the Cave of the Immortal on Lushan

However, chairman Mao was not the only one to enjoy visibility by relying on non-administrational connections. Starting in the early 1960s, his wife Jiang Qing began to make her presence felt in the photo network as well. It was not her depiction which became more visible though, but instead her own photographs, which were published in illustrated magazines, vocational magazines for photographers and even the prestigious national photographic art exhibitions.³¹⁵ These photos were not published under her own name, but instead under pseudonyms like Li Yunhe (李云鹤), Li Jin (李进), Da Hai (大海) and Jun Ling (峻岭).³¹⁶ While it remains unclear if the general population was aware whose photos were published under these names, there can be no doubt that the leadership of the photo network and the CCP were aware who was behind the pseudonyms and thus showcased her visible influence on the media.

³¹⁵ Apart from this publication of her photographs, on a few exceedingly rare occasions, Jiang appeared in the role of chairman Mao's wife, for example in a picture spread on National Day in *People's Illustrated*, 1962, no. 11, p. 4-5. This visibility was granted to the partners of other CCP leaders as well though, as can be seen on the same pages, showing Wang Guangmei 王光美, wife of Liu Shaoqi as well as Deng Yingchao 邓颖超, wife of Zhou Enlai.

³¹⁶ Compare: Zhao 2013, pp.194-196.

Jiang Qing was able to have her photos published through the photo network due to her personal connection with Shi Shaohua, director of Xinhua's Department of Photography, as well as chairman of the Photography Association and thus the leading figure among Chinese photographers from wartime until the Cultural Revolution.

Since a trip to Lushan in 1959, Jiang Qing had taken first photographic steps with a Hasselblad 500 C camera given to her by Mao Zedong himself, however, the complicated camera – a product of Sweden – proved hard to master for an amateur taking her first steps. In 1961 Mao Zedong therefore arranged for the most technically competent and politically reliable photographer he could find to teach Jiang Qing the basics of photography. As the highest ranking photographer in China, this task naturally fell to Shi Shaohua, who had no choice but to comply with the chairman's demand: As had become apparent by now, even for high-ranking cadres, it was dangerous to run afoul of the chairman. (Figure 36 shows a meeting between Mao Zedong and Shi Shaohua.)



Figure 36: Meeting between Shi Shaohua and Mao Zedong in 1962, in: *Zhongguo sheyingjia xiehui* 中国摄影家协会 (1996): *Zhongguo sheyingjia xiehui sishi nian* 中国摄影家协会四十年 [40 Years of Chinese Photographers Association], Beijing: Zhongguo sheying CBS, p. 3.

In the following years, Shi Shaohua would have a considerable influence on Jiang Qing's photographic development, even going so far as to crop and change some of her photos in order to improve them. While Zhao (2013) mentions that Mao's motivation behind giving a camera to Jiang Qing was to motivate her to go outside and help her recover from frequent illnesses,³¹⁷ especially the choice of Shi Shaohua as a teacher for Jiang must have also had the purpose to extend his influence – via Jiang Qing as intermediary – over the civilian parts of the photo network.

As for Jiang Qing, her enthusiasm for photography seems to have been sustained. When American historian Roxane Witke, known for her work on the Chinese women's movement, was granted multiple interviews with Jiang Qing in 1972, she noticed that Jiang enjoyed photography and even took some photos of Jiang using her camera, the before-mentioned Hasselblad, to take photos of carefully arranged flower compositions. (Compare figure 37)



Figure 37: Witke, Roxane: "Jiang Qing as a Photographer", in: Witke, Roxane (1979): *Genossin Tschiang Tsching: Die Gefährtin Maos erzählt ihr Leben*, Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein. p. 296, figure 7.

³¹⁷ Zhao 2013, pp. 190-193.

The photographs credited to Jiang Qing, or respectively her aliases, which were published in the early 1960s were all seemingly apolitical still lifes of flowers or landscapes, which contrasts markedly with the positions she was later to put forth on revolutionary art and her criticisms of old culture. But even ignoring their content, already their publication signaled the influence Jiang Qing was gaining in media circles. The most outstanding example of these photos is Jiang Qing's photo of the "Cave of the immortal on Lushan" (*Lushan xianrentong* 庐山仙人洞), shown in figure 38. It was published in the *People's Illustrated* 1964, issue 7, as well as in the *Chinese photography* issue 3 of the same year under her pseudonym Li Jin 李进.

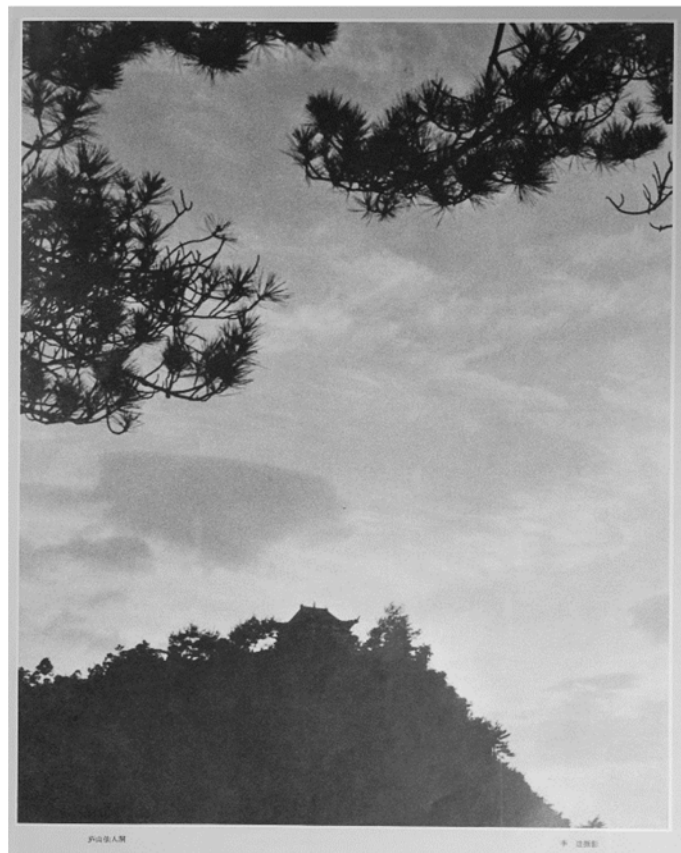


Figure 38: Jiang Qing: "Lushan xianrentong 庐山仙人洞 [Cave of the immortal on Lushan]", in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1964, no. 7, p. 1.

Near the bottom of the photo is the dark outline of a hilltop, with the roof of a pagoda visible on its edge, in front of a sky filled with clouds. Near the top of the photo, there are branches and needles of pine trees, hanging down into the picture, again outlined in black against the light grey sky and clouds.

While the photo was published in the *People's Illustrated* without further commentary, in *Chinese Photography* – the official publication of the Photography Association – it was accompanied by a short poem written by Mao Zedong himself, titled: “For a photo, which comrade Li Jin took of the Cave of the Immortal at Lushan (qijue)”

In the boundless shades of dusk beholding sturdy pines, disordered clouds
move swift yet [they remain] calm.
Heaven created a cave of the immortal, a boundless scenery on a perilous
peak.

(Mao Zedong, 09.09.1961)³¹⁸

Already the publication of the photo in the illustrated press, never mind the prestigious publication organ of the Photography Association, would have been a great honor for any amateur photographer. Ennobling it with the publication of a poem written by the chairman solely for this purpose had never before happened to any Chinese photographer. The chairman was clearly very pleased with this special photograph.

To add further clout to the publication of the photo, the poem of the chairman was accompanied by an article written by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892—1978), among other offices holder of the chairmanship of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, the roof organization of all other cultural associations – including the Photography Association – and nominally arbiter in all questions concerning the arts.³¹⁹ As Shi Shaohua's superior, his word carried weight even in photographic circles. He attempted to analyze the poem and photo, to further explain its importance to the readers of the *Chinese Photography*, primarily consisting of photographers and picture editors employed by the illustrated media.

³¹⁸ “暮色苍茫看劲松，乱云飞渡仍从容。天生一个仙人洞，无限风光在险峰。” *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影, 1964, no. 3, p. 3. A qijue 七绝 is a four-line poem with seven characters per line. Under the name quatrain (jueju 绝句) the style became popular in Tang Dynasty China in the seventh century A.D. Compare: Idema, W. L.; Haft, Lloyd (1997): *A Guide to Chinese Literature*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, p. 124.

³¹⁹ Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1964): “‘Wuxian fengguang zai xianfeng’ — du Mao zhuxi ‘Qijue. Wei Li Jin tongzhi ti suo she Lushan xianren tong zhao’” 无限风光在险峰 ‘——读毛主席《七绝·为李进同志题所摄庐山仙人洞照》 [‘A Boundless Scenery on a Perilous Peak’ — Reading Chairman Mao's Qijue “For a photo, which Comrade Li Jin Took of the Cave of the Immortals at Lushan”]”, in: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1964, no. 3, p. 3-4.

Guo first gave a short introduction on the background of the landscape depicted in the photo, explaining that the “pagoda of the imperial tablet” visible in the photo was erected by the founder of the imperial Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328—1398), to house a stone stele honoring the mythical immortal Zhou Dian, who had allegedly been encountered by Zhu on this mountain. The natural cave providing the photo with its title, as well as appearing in the poem, is situated in the cliff-face below the pavilion. Guo proceeded to tell the story of the encounter of Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhou Dian, but since he himself admitted it has nothing to do with the poem itself, it will not be reproduced here. Guo further explained that Mao did not write the poem about the location and scenery itself, but about the photo depicting it, thus he required the photo to make sense of the chairman’s writing: “All in all, only after looking at the photo did I suddenly see the poem of the chairman in a clear light.”³²⁰ He proceeded to give an explanation for every line of the poem:

‘In the boundless shades of dusk beholding sturdy pines’: What we see in the boundless shades of dusk are the sturdy pine branches in the upper part of the photo.

‘Disordered clouds move swift yet [they remain] calm’: This points to the turbulent great waves in the strip of clouds, but the magnificent pine branches are self-absorbed, calm and unhurried. ‘Heaven created a cave of the immortal’: This just relates to the place. While the cave itself does not appear in the photo, the landscape is situated very close to the cave of the immortal.

‘A boundless scenery on a perilous peak’: What is praised here is clearly not the cave, but the peak. In the photo, there truly is captured a boundless scenery, but it is captured from a perilous peak. Thus the poem of the chairman has a profound and far-reaching meaning, which can’t be understood from the surface.³²¹

Perhaps the same could be said about Guo’s somewhat terse explanation of the poem, but in the next sections Guo made sure that his readers would get the point, by introducing the background of the photos creation: According to Guo, in September 1961, on the international scene “American Imperialism” was gaining strength, while China was “struck by natural disasters going on for years” – a veiled reference to the economic havoc wreaked by the failed policy of the “Great Leap Forward”. In this situation, some people began to doubt the policies advocated by Mao, which Guo judged as appeasement towards “Imperialism and the international reactionary faction”.³²² This must have resonated with chairman Mao, who also had equated criticism of his policies with “Revisionism”.

³²⁰ Guo 1964, p. 4.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

Taking this perspective into account, Guo proposed that the “shades of dusk” and the “disordered clouds” refer to the situation of a “gloomy and pestilent atmosphere”, while the “sturdy pines” symbolize a “sturdy spirit that cannot be uprooted”, thus standing for Mao Zedong and his followers, who refuse to give in to their opponents both within the CCP and without.³²³

Guo further went on to identify the “boundless scenery” in the last line of the poem with Marx’ communist, classless society, which can only be realized by overcoming any hardships and resistance:

Let me talk about the great undertaking of building Socialism. If you want to build Socialism, you have to carry the revolution through to the end. If you want to carry the revolution through to the end, you have to pass many perilous peaks. If you fear hardships and dangers, and give up halfway or surrender to the enemies, you can’t make the world of necessities leap into a world of liberty. You will have no way to realize the Communist society’s scenery of “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”³²⁴

He went on to declare the chairman’s poems to be the best model (*dianxing* 典型) for the type of literature and art needed to educate and invigorate the people for building Socialism, and departing even further from the text of the poem, Guo expounded on what this meant for the people of China:

If we want to build Socialism, we need countless characters of the Lei Feng-type. Let’s let everyone become Lei Feng[s]. Let everyone strive to neither yield to any reactionary effort, nor to any difficult circumstances and to become an unselfish person with a firm standpoint. Like this we can promote the progress of the undertaking of building Socialism.³²⁵

It is remarkable what Guo Moruo was able to extract from a small poem of 28 characters written by chairman Mao, who followed a distinctly traditional style and employed symbols – the sturdy pine trees for example – used in Chinese literati literature and arts for hundreds of years. These symbols were also employed in the photograph, where they are encoded with the same meaning, perhaps echoing the relationship of traditional literati poetry and painting.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

Guo Moruo's detailed explanation of his analysis however, is still required to reach the overtly political reading he put forth. His reference to Lei Feng, a model soldier promoted in the military's Mao cult, openly shows what kind of forms he preferred in art creation, namely the ones employed by Mao's ally Lin Biao through the military's media apparatus.

It needs to be stressed that the use of traditional forms to express the ideas of Mao and his followers is quite remarkable. Merely a few months earlier, in December of 1963, the chairman had criticized the cultural establishment in a memo on literature and arts for still using old-fashioned – i.e. feudal or capitalist – forms of art, while failing to serve the economic base structure with socialist art:

In the various art forms — theater, folk vocal arts, music, the fine arts, dance, film, poetry and literature etc., there are many problems, the number of people engaged in this is very high, in many departments the socialist transformation until now has produced little effect. Until now, many of the departments have been ruled by corpses. We cannot underrate the successes in film, new poetry, folk songs, the fine arts and fiction writing, but even among those there are many problems. As for theater and other departments, there are even more problems. The economic base of society has already been transformed, but until now, the art departments which are part of the superstructure serving this base, still pose a big problem. We must get to work on investigating and researching this, earnestly paying attention to it.

Many CCP-members enthusiastically advocate feudalistic and capitalistic art, but don't advocate socialist art, isn't it absurd?³²⁶

The corpses ruling the departments referred to in this memo are the characters from traditional culture – like the mythical immortal Zhou Dian mentioned in Guo Moruo's article – who kept reappearing in works of art in spite of the efforts to establish a “new culture”. In light of the campaign against “rightist elements”, which had brought persecution of those deviating from the party's line to the photo network from 1957 onward, it can also be understood as a thinly veiled threat.

³²⁶ Mao Zedong (1963): “Guanyu wenxue yishu de pishi 关于文学艺术的批示 [Memo on Literature and Arts]”, in: Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangongting 中共中央宣传部办公厅; Zhongyang dang'anguan bianyanbu 中央档案馆编研部 (eds.) (1996): *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian* 中国共产党宣传工作文献选编: 1957—1992 [Selected Documents on the Propaganda Work of the CCP]. Beijing: Xuexi CBS. p. 334.

Remarkably, Mao also pointed out successes in art production, among other things specifically mentioning “new poetry”, which was free verse written in vernacular Chinese. Nevertheless, his own poem about Jiang Qing’s “Cave of the Immortal on Lushan” not only follows a style in use since the Tang dynasty (618-907), but is also written in the classical or literary Chinese despised as representing old culture. Furthermore, this didn’t stop Guo Moruo – leading figure in the cultural establishment – to praise the chairman’s poem as the model needed for new artworks:

The works of literature and art, which we require, need to unite a high degree of ideological content with a high degree of artistic quality. Here, the poetry of the chairman provides us with the best model.³²⁷

In conclusion it seems obvious that disregarding the wording of Mao’s criticism of the cultural establishment detailed above, and Guo Moruo’s supportive essay on Jiang Qing’s photo, the mere act of using traditional forms in literature and the arts was no problem in itself (or for the chairman himself). More important was the question of who was using this forms. For the chairman – and those loyal to him, like his wife Jiang Qing and the ever helpful Guo Moruo – it was completely acceptable to use old forms, even when nominally advocating a new culture, no matter how illogical this might appear. Only for those who opposed the chairman in other fields did it become dangerous to advocate anything but the building of Socialism, and even that might not be enough.

4.4.2 Displaying Loyalty

The publication of Jiang Qing’s photos marked a shift in the way power was translated into visibility. Instead of the official position held within the CCP and government, the relationship – or as perceived by Mao, loyalty – to the chairman became an ever-increasing factor in the regulation of visibility of cadres in the photographs published through the photo network.

³²⁷ Guo 1964, p. 4.



Figure 39: Jiang Qing: Portrait of Mao in chair, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 1, p. 1.

This connection was obviously noticed by those hoping to profit from their relationship to the chairman as well. Over time, Jiang Qing was able to enlarge her portfolio of published photographs by working towards Mao. In January 1966 she managed to publish a portrait of the chairman in the *People's Illustrated*, which was again credited to her alias Li Jin. The photograph is given in figure 39, showing Mao Zedong in three-quarter profile, sitting in a rattan chair. The space behind him is taken up by the side of a mountain in the distance. In this case, the view of Mao in three-quarter profile might be a reference to his depiction as a Marxist theoretician described earlier, and the mountains behind him might reference the historic conference at Lushan – the photo was taken there by Jiang Qing in 1959 –, in the case of this photo however, the author wants to argue that the content of the photo is not as important as the mere act of its publication through the photo network. As has been described in preceding sections, the depiction of powerful cadres was usually handled by Xinhua's central reporters group (*zhongyang jizhe zu* 中央记者组).

The fact that a photo of the most powerful man in the state, taken by an amateur photographer – even one as influential as Jiang Qing – was distributed through the photo network, indicated that the media’s operating procedures were not immune to influence from outside the established chain of command.

Similar to her landscape photo “Cave of the Immortal on Lushan” the publication of this photo marked Jiang Qing’s status as one of the few who legitimately spoke for or depicted the chairman. This shows that the meaning of a photo could not only be deduced from who was pictured in which way – since the form of depiction of the chairman here does not differ from other contemporary photos of him —but also from who took and published a given photograph. This testifies to the cracks and ruptures running from the core of the CCP leadership outward through the media apparatus including the photo network. Consequently, in the course of the “Cultural Revolution”, this photo was published and republished several times, every time demonstrating the influence of the CCP faction around Jiang Qing, and from their perspective, demonstrating their loyalty to the chairman. Expressively choosing to publish this photo instead of other ones was a way to express loyalty to the chairman, since it was taken not by the photographers of the photo network, but by his ally Jiang Qing.

The most outstanding example of this photo’s publication was its use as the cover of the magazine *New Photography* (*Xin sheying* 新摄影), which Jiang Qing managed to have published in only one issue at the height of the Cultural Revolution in 1968. (given in figure 40) Besides a few of her own photographs, the magazine contained mostly polemics attacking former leading personal of the photo network, including Jiang’s former teacher and ally Shi Shaohua, as well as examples of “old photography” which were severely criticized.



Figure 40: Jiang Qing: Portrait of Mao in chair, in: *Xin sheying* 新摄影 [New Photography], 1968, no. 1, cover page.

In addition to the use of chairman Mao's photo on the cover, the creators of the magazine also employed another device to express their loyalty to Mao, and thus their right to speak on cultural matters (or any matter at all): For the title of the magazine they chose to use calligraphy done by the chairman himself. This was nothing unusual in itself: During the tumultuous "Cultural Revolution", the *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报), *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报), *PLA Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报) and others used the chairman's calligraphy for their titles. This mark of distinction was highly sought after by publications and organizations, for it proved the chairman was looking favorably on the recipient honored by his attention. Even the *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影), publication organ of the Photography Association, which was severely attacked in *New Photography*, had managed to get an autograph by Mao for their title in 1960.

With *New Photography* however, the case seems to be different. In 2013, Zhao Junyi expressed doubt about the title of the magazine, writing that he personally owns two editions of *New Photography*, which both sport Mao's calligraphy on the title – one edition in black, the other in red – however, the calligraphy of the characters is different on the two editions, casting doubt on the authenticity of Mao's autograph. Zhao goes on to speculate that Jiang Qing must have forged the calligraphy used for the title.³²⁸

The author of this study only had one edition of *New Photography* at his disposal, specifically the one with the title printed in red. But even just analyzing one version of the chairman's calligraphy, there can be no doubt that something is amiss: A close look at the three Chinese characters of the title reveals that the first character seems to differ in execution from the last two characters, when comparing the rhythm of execution and thickness of the lines. (Compare figure 41)³²⁹ Is it possible that characters written by Mao on different occasions have been montaged together to make up the title?

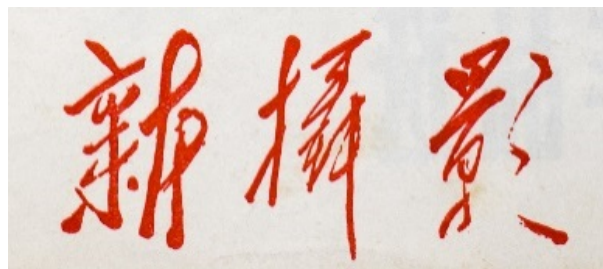


Figure 41: Mao's handwriting on the cover of: *Xin sheying* 新摄影 [New Photography], 1968, no. 1, cover.

There are known precedents for this practice: Li Zhensheng for example, photographer at the *Heilongjiang daily* (*Heilongjiang ribao* 黑龙江日报) during the “Cultural Revolution”, and his colleagues received armbands saying “Red-Color News Soldier” (*hongse xinwen bing* 红色新闻兵), when they visited Beijing in early 1967. The characters on the armbands were assembled from characters copied from different calligraphies of the chairman, to express the allegiance of the rebels to him.³³⁰

³²⁸ Zhao 2013, pp. 186-189.

³²⁹ *Xin sheying* 1968, no. 1, cover.

³³⁰ Li 2003, p. 79-80.

On the base of visual evidence arrived at through comparison of the large amount of calligraphic titles of publications surveyed by the author, the conclusion was reached that in the case of the characters making up the title of the *New Photography*, the last two characters were taken from the autograph which the *Chinese Photography* had used for its title since 1963, issue 1 (compare figure 42).³³¹

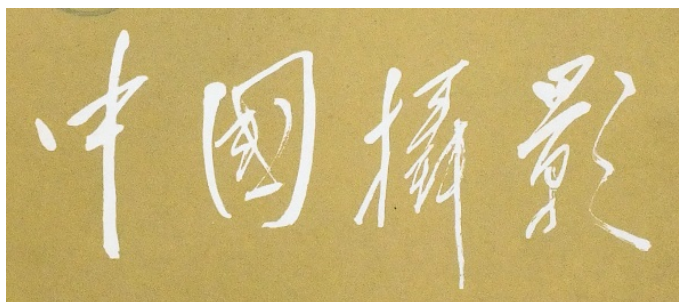


Figure 42: Mao's handwriting on cover of: *Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影 [Chinese Photography], 1963, no. 1, cover.

The first character however, which fittingly is expressing the “new” part of *New Photography*, was taken from an autograph Mao gave to the rebels at Peking University (*Beijing daxue* 北京大学, or in short *Beida* 北大) on August 22, 1966 for the title of their publication *New Peking University* (*Xin Beida* 新北大). (Compare figure 43) The autograph can be found in *News Photos* (*Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片) no. 1906³³² – Xinhua's catalogue of photos – which is also the likely way the chairman's autograph took from his brush to the printing plate used for the title page of *New Photography*.

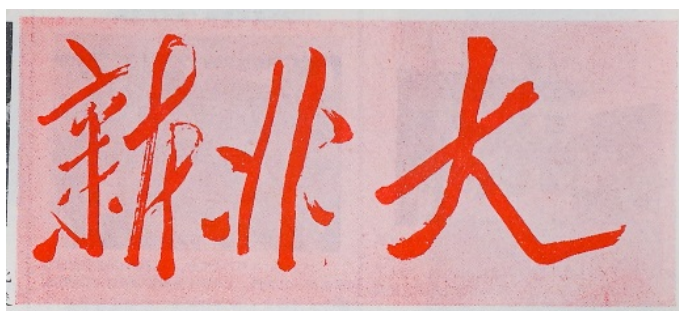


Figure 43: “Xin Beida” in Mao's handwriting, in: *Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片 [News Photos], 1966, no. 1906 (03.09.1966), p. 1.

The intention behind the use of Mao's autographs for titles of publications (or much more mundane things such as armbands) was the desire to express loyalty to the chairman and in return gain legitimacy in political struggles.

³³¹ *Zhongguo sheying* 1963, no. 1, cover.

³³² *Xinwen zhaopian* 1966, no. 1906 (03.09.1966), p. 1.

Even for those who did not receive an authentic autograph from the chairman, creating one by themselves was still a way to try to express loyalty. The case of *New Photography* described here, a “pet-project” of Jiang Qing herself, shows that even those later presumed to be the closest allies of the chairman – Jiang Qing was later named responsible for most of the excesses of the “Cultural Revolution”³³³ – could still not count on unequivocal support by the chairman – as expressed through the provision of an autograph. Thus, this first issue of *New Photography* also remained the only one published.

Nevertheless, in the years leading up to 1966, we find Mao’s allies in the army and the civilian photo network steadily gaining influence. This can be seen by how the personality cult of Mao practiced in the PLA began to find its way into civilian life, like Guo Moruo had demanded in his article about chairman Mao’s poem. This started with the propagation of Mao’s writings, but successively his depiction in non-administrative contexts crept into the illustrated magazines as well, like the aforementioned publication of Jiang Qing’s portrait of the chairman in January 1966.

³³³ Compare her depiction as a criminal discussed in section 4.7.3 of this chapter.

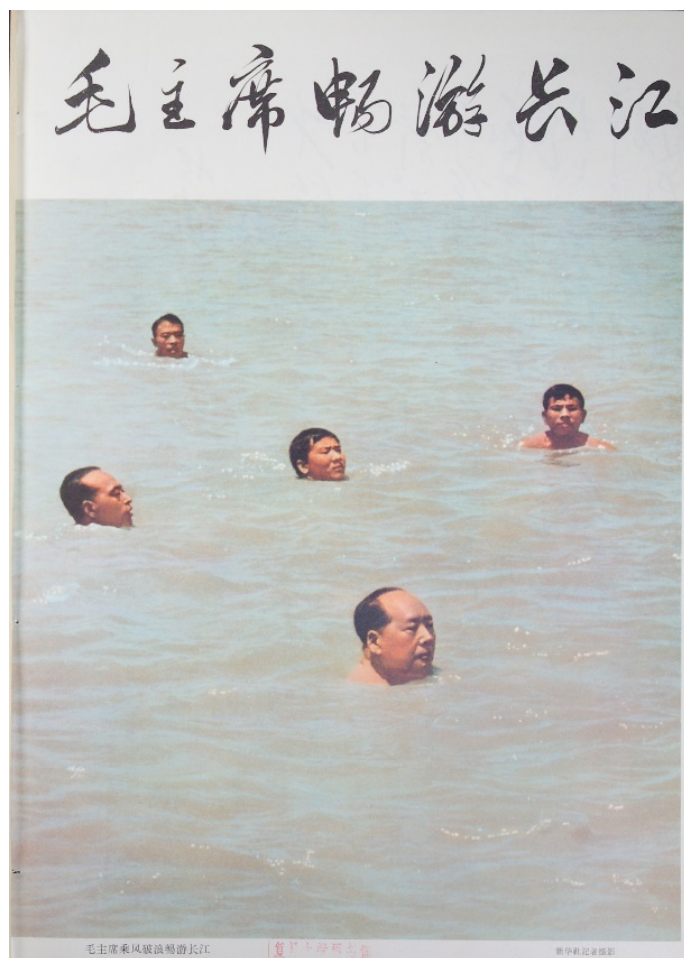


Figure 44: Mao Zedong swimming in the Yangtze, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 10, p. 2.

A new quality in the depiction of the chairman was reached with the photos of Mao's swim in the Yangtze on July 16, 1966, shown in figure 44. This definitely marked his claim to occupy the center of the political stage all by himself.

Perhaps testifying to the differing degrees of influence which the Maoists in the photo network were able to bring to bear on the various publications, the photos were publicized at different times. Xinhua published photos of the chairman's swim almost immediately, in the July 24th issue of its catalog *News Photos*. The *PLA Illustrated* directly published the photos in its August issue as well. Only the *People's Illustrated* waited until October to publish the photos, long after the "Cultural Revolution" had begun to unfold. This is in fact not surprising, for the Maoist rebels would only gain full control of the editorial department of the *People's Illustrated* in January 1967.³³⁴

³³⁴ Compare: *Renmin huabao geming zaofanpai* 《人民画报》革命造反派 (1967): "Gao duzhe shu 告读者书 [To the Readers]", in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1967, no. 3, pp. 41–42.

But perhaps it had not been a political decision to only publish the photos three months after the fact, but had been necessitated by the three-month report plans governing the work of most of the illustrated publications: In their message to the readers, even the Maoist rebels, who had taken over the editorial office of the *People's Illustrated* in January 1967, acknowledged that they would only be responsible for the content of the magazine from March 1967 onward, since the “next” three issues had already been finished. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1966, this situation made the *People's Illustrated* appear to lag behind both Xinhua, as well as the People's Liberation Army in their loyalty to chairman Mao. Perhaps these two institutions had been given an advance warning, about something important to happen in July?

Through the act of swimming, Mao was using his own body to demonstrate he was not just a teacher-figure who worked indirectly through his Mao Zedong thought or the publication of a pointed poem, but instead that he was vital enough to actively influence politics. In other words he publicly reclaimed the role of “revolutionary leader”. Furthermore, the Yangtze, dividing China into a northern and southern part, had been used to symbolize political unity or disunity already in imperial China. Consequently the crossing of the Yangtze by communist troops during the civil war in 1949 became part of the revolutionary lore.³³⁵ In the summer of 1966, the chairman himself set out to “unite” China once more, by suppressing his opponents.

³³⁵ Compare: Wang 2008, p. 117.



Figure 45: Mao after his swim in the Yangtze, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 10, p. 3.

But more important than the photo showing the chairman in the water, was the photo of him after leaving the water, which was printed on the next page, given in figure 45. The photo's caption tells us that "From the deck of a speedboat, chairman Mao is reviewing the large contingent of swimmers, who are wrestling with the water of the river." In the photo we see Mao wearing a bathrobe, his right hand raised in a gesture of greeting or blessing. On the left side of him is the water of the Yangtze, behind him is a tarpaulin and in the far background there is a steel girder bridge crossing the river. Apart from the act of swimming, which was already unusual in itself, Mao's depiction in a bathrobe completely left the hitherto established frame of reference for the depiction of politicians. Shown like this, he was removed from any institutional context, appearing as the man himself. This way, his authority was neither based on his governmental position, nor his writings or ideology, but instead on his own persona.

His hand, raised in the gesture of a greeting, or even blessing, is already anticipating a pose which would become iconic during the mass receptions of the Red Guards, held later that summer on the square in front of Tian'anmen, when the "Cultural Revolution" began to pick up steam. In the course of these eight mass rallies held in Beijing between August and November 1966, Mao reviewed a couple of million students who came to Beijing to learn about and participate in the "Cultural Revolution" and naturally also to see the chairman. Not surprisingly these mass rallies became the topic of an intensive media coverage, allowing even those who could not come to Beijing to feel close to the chairman.



Figure 46: Mao on the rostrum of Tian'anmen, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 9, p.

One of the photos most often reproduced (sometimes in black and white, sometimes in color) is given in figure 46. It shows Mao on the rostrum of Tian'anmen, clad in a uniform of the PLA. On his left arm there is an armband with the character *bing* 兵 for soldier, most likely the full inscription of the armband would be *hongweibing* 红卫兵 i.e. Red Guard, the name given to the students raising up against the party establishment on behalf of the chairman. Mao's right arm is again raised in a gesture of greeting or blessing. In his left arm he is holding the soldiers cap which is part of the uniform.

Distant buildings in the far background, visible behind Mao, make him appear larger than life, towering above the land. His depiction in three-quarter profile, outlined against the sky, evokes his depiction as important contributor to Marxism-Leninism.

Mao received the students turned Red Guards from the rostrum of Tian'anmen, again expressing his claim to supreme power. At least during the first rallies he wore a uniform of the PLA, expressing his allegiance with the military in opposition to the civilian government and party structure. By showing himself with the armband of the Red Guards, he was openly endorsing them as well. On the occasion of the first rally, Song Binbin 宋彬彬 (1949—), a representative of the Red Guards, had presented Mao with an armband bearing the inscription “Red Guard”. This act – shown in figure 47 – made her a star of the movement, but also allowed Mao to express his connection with the Red Guards, visually legitimizing them in the open struggle for power about to begin.



Figure 47: Mao and Song Binbin, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1966, no. 9, p. 29.

In the continuously unfolding “Cultural Revolution”, Mao was the axis that everything and everyone revolved around. In his study of the Mao cult, Leese mentions that in August 1966 it was decreed to replace all leadership portraits visible in public by the one of Mao.³³⁶

³³⁶ Leese 2011, p. 136.

The visibility which other members of the CCP and government were still able to enjoy now completely depended on their relationship to the chairman, for the center of the photo network, Xinhua's Department of Photography, got taken over by his followers at the latest in October 1966.³³⁷ At least as far as the central leadership was concerned, personal loyalty to the chairman had become the sole criterion for the gain or loss of power and thus also visibility.

Naturally, this connection between loyalty-based power and visibility also worked in the other direction, with “incorrectly” accorded visibility resulting in a fall from power. This happened to Tao Zhu 陶铸 (1908—1969), a CCP Central Committee member who as first secretary of the central-south bureau of the Central Committee had been responsible for the southern provinces of China since 1961 onward. Due to shifts of power in Beijing, in 1966 he was installed as director of the propaganda department of the Central Committee, which made him nominally responsible for Xinhua's operations as well.³³⁸

MacFarquhar and Schoenhals report that Tao Zhu ran afoul of the Maoists around Jiang Qing and Chen Boda 陈伯达 (1904—1989) in late 1966, which led to them attacking him, his purge in January 1967 and his eventual death in 1969.³³⁹ But what exactly led to the Maoists attacking Tao Zhu?

An article published in 1968 in the already discussed *New Photography* provides the accusations brought forth against Tao Zhu and incidentally against Shi Shaohua as well. In the article titled “From Tao Zhu's ‘art of changing heads’ to Shi Shaohua's ‘method of moving bodies’”, the author Xiao Jing 肖菁 accuses both Tao Zhu, as well as Shi Shaohua of manipulating news photos by changing heads and inserting whole people into photos to make them appear to have participated in events in which they actually did not participate.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Compare: Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bianshen weiyuanhui 中国共产党组织史资料编审委员会 (ed.) (2000): *Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao* 中国共产党组织史资料. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengquan zuzhi* 中华人民共和国政权组织 (1949.10-1997.9). *fujian yi (shang)* 附卷一 (上) [Material on the Organizational History of the CCP. The Organization of State Power in the PRC. Appendix One, volume one], vol. 15, Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi CBS, pp. 556-557.

³³⁸ Compare: Bartke, Wolfgang (1990): *Biographical dictionary and analysis of China's party leadership 1922-1988*, München: K.G. Saur. pp. 199-200.

³³⁹ MacFarquhar, Roderick; Schoenhals, Michael (2006): *Mao's last revolution*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press. p. 185 ff.

³⁴⁰ Xiao Jing (1968): “Cong Tao Zhu de ‘huan tou shu’ dao Shi Shaohua de ‘yi shen fa’ 从陶铸的‘换头术’到石少华的‘移身法’ [From Tao Zhu's ‘Art of Changing Heads’ to Shi Shaohua's ‘Method of Moving Bodies’]”, in: *Xin sheying* 新摄影 [New Photography], 1968, no. 1, pp. 18-19.

Specifically, the two of them were accused of being responsible for the appearance of Liu Shaoqi in photos taken at a mass rally of the Red Guards, which were even published in the party's mouthpiece *People's Daily* on September 16 and 17, 1966.³⁴¹ It needs to be stressed how unusual this must have appeared to the readers, since in other publications the Maoists presented Liu Shaoqi as Mao Zedong's most important enemy. Yet in the photos there he was, standing right next to the chairman who was reviewing his loyal Red Guards. These photos can also be found in Xinhua's catalog *News Photos* – credited to a reporter of Xinhua (*Xinhua jizhe she* 新华社记者摄) – demonstrating that the *People's Daily* had received the photos from Xinhua's department of photography, and therefore implicating Shi Shaohua as responsible for the incident.³⁴² Even though this must have been a considerable scandal in the upper echelons of the photo network and propaganda administration, even reaching the party's department of propaganda, about two weeks later, on National Day (October 1, 1966), Liu Shaoqi again appeared in a photo alongside his enemy chairman Mao (compare figure 48), indicating that the publication of the earlier photos had not been a mere mistake, but intentional.



Figure 48: Photo depicting Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi and Song Qingling on National Day, 1966, in: *Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片 [News Photos], 1966, no. 1919 (04.10.1966), p. 7.

The publication of the photo would have been “correct” according to the older regulations on visibility – making state president Liu visible on National Day – but in the unstable situation of the “Cultural Revolution”, its publication was clearly “incorrect”, due to publicly displaying loyalty to Liu instead of chairman Mao.

³⁴¹ Compare *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) 1966, no. 6643 (16.09.1966), p. 4. and *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) 1966, no. 6644 (17.09.1966), p. 4.

³⁴² Compare *News Photos* (*Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片), 1966, no. 1911 (15.09.1966), p. 2, p. 9.

The fallout was swift. Tao Zhu lost his post as the director of the department of propaganda, and later on even his life. Shi Shaohua, who as director of Xinhua's department of photography was perhaps even more directly responsible for the photos published through its catalog, also lost his post. But even though he was personally attacked in Jiang Qing's magazine *New Photography*, perhaps the relationship to his former "student" still protected him from the worst fallout. Already in 1971 he would make a comeback as a member of the cultural group of the State Council, and in the following years collaborated with Jiang Qing again.³⁴³ Nevertheless, the commotion around the "incorrect" publication of a photo of Liu Shaoqi proved that the access to public visibility through the photo network was not based on administrative positions anymore.

Besides the chairman himself, the one to profit most from the confusing situation in the beginning of the "Cultural Revolution" was Mao's second in command, minister of defense Lin Biao.



Figure 49: Mao and Lin Biao on the rostrum of Tian'anmen, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1967, no. 1, pp. 2-3.

³⁴³ Bartke 1990, p. 184.

Styling himself as Mao's best student, he was almost as visible as the chairman himself, appearing as Mao's shadow in almost every photo showing the chairman. An example of this is given in figure 49, which shows Mao and Lin on the rostrum of Tian'anmen during a reception of Red Guards. Both of them are wearing PLA uniforms with caps, they are standing at the railing of the rostrum next to each other, like they would have been seen by the Red Guards in front of the gate. The featureless blue sky behind them, and the full frontal perspective used, as well as the compression of perspective due to the use of a tele-lens, evokes the impression of the formal leader portraits, even though the casual postures and facial expressions of Mao and Lin are much more informal. While looking superficially similar, due to both of them wearing uniforms, Lin is identified as subordinate to the chairman not only by the little red book – a collection of the chairman's quotations – he is holding in his hands, befitting his role as Mao's most loyal student, but also by his smaller stature, which was made obvious in each and every photo published of the two.

Others stayed visible or became more visible in the course of the "Cultural Revolution" as well, by carefully working towards the chairman. Premier Zhou Enlai, directing the work of the parts of the government apparatus still functional, Mao's wife Jiang Qing, now nominally responsible for cultural affairs, and longtime head of the secret police Kang Sheng 康生 (1898—1975), now responsible for propaganda too, became or stayed visible as participants of the "Cultural Revolution". (Example given in figure 50.)



Figure 50: Jiang Qing, Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng at a mass rally, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1967, no. 3, p. 22.

Paralleling the erosion of state power under the attacks of the Red Guards and independent rebel organizations, the cult of loyalty towards Mao began to take on a life of its own between 1967 and 1969. In many places new forms of reverence towards the chairman began to appear, which were not directed by the center anymore. As mentioned, during these chaotic years, in contrast with the uniform products of the central photo network, outdated or wholly self-made representations of the chairman were sometimes used. Besides the example of the fake calligraphy on the title of *New Photography*, other examples of this can be found among Li Zhensheng's photos taken in Heilongjiang during the "Cultural Revolution". As an example, figure 51 shows different representations of Mao, as well as oversized "loyalty" (*zhong* 忠) characters, used by protesters at a local rally in Heilongjiang in June 1968.³⁴⁴ In photos published through the photo network however, which had to adhere to the official visual program, this display of "alternative" Mao images was exceedingly rare.

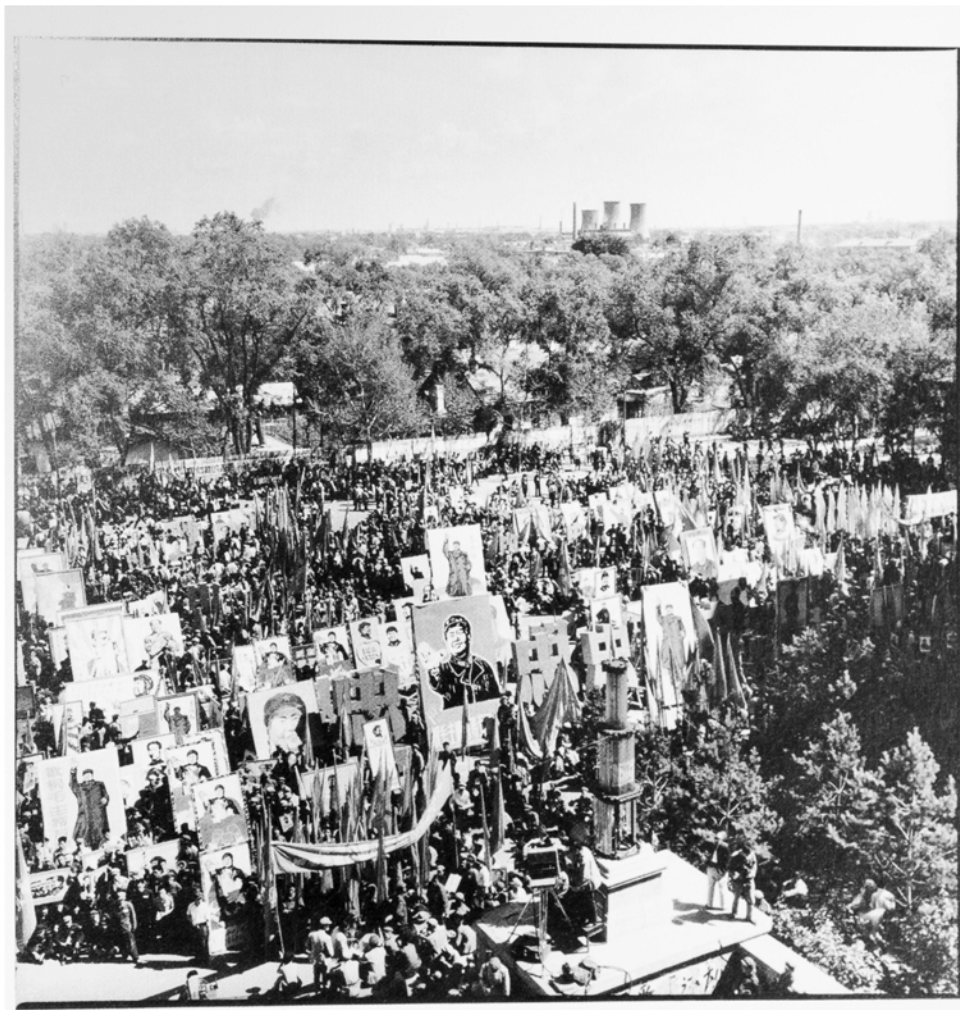


Figure 51: Li Zhensheng 李振盛 (1968): Different (selfmade) representations of Mao at a rally in Heilongjiang. The oversized Chinese characters held up by some of the protesters "zhong 忠" mean "loyalty", in: Li 2003, p. 219.

³⁴⁴ Li 2003, p. 219.

After the army stepped in and ended the state of open civil war in 1968/69, nominally elevating the rebel or Maoist faction – and conveniently also the army itself – to power, Mao was again depicted less as an active participant, but increasingly as a reference to or symbol of the unity of society. The focus was once more moved from his person to the study of his ideology by the population, like it had been done in the media of the PLA before the “Cultural Revolution”.

This swing in the depiction of the chairman, from the focus on his person to the focus on his ideology and the problems of a division of power contained therein, can be seen in a portrait of Lin Biao published in 1971, which Jiang Qing allegedly had made herself, as indicated by the photo being credited to her pseudonym Jun Ling. The photo is given in figure 52. Since the time of publication of the photo coincided with Lin Biao’s violent death in a plane crash in the autumn of that year, the author assumes that the photo’s publication – opposite a portrait of Mao – was a form of criticizing the division of power between Mao and Lin.

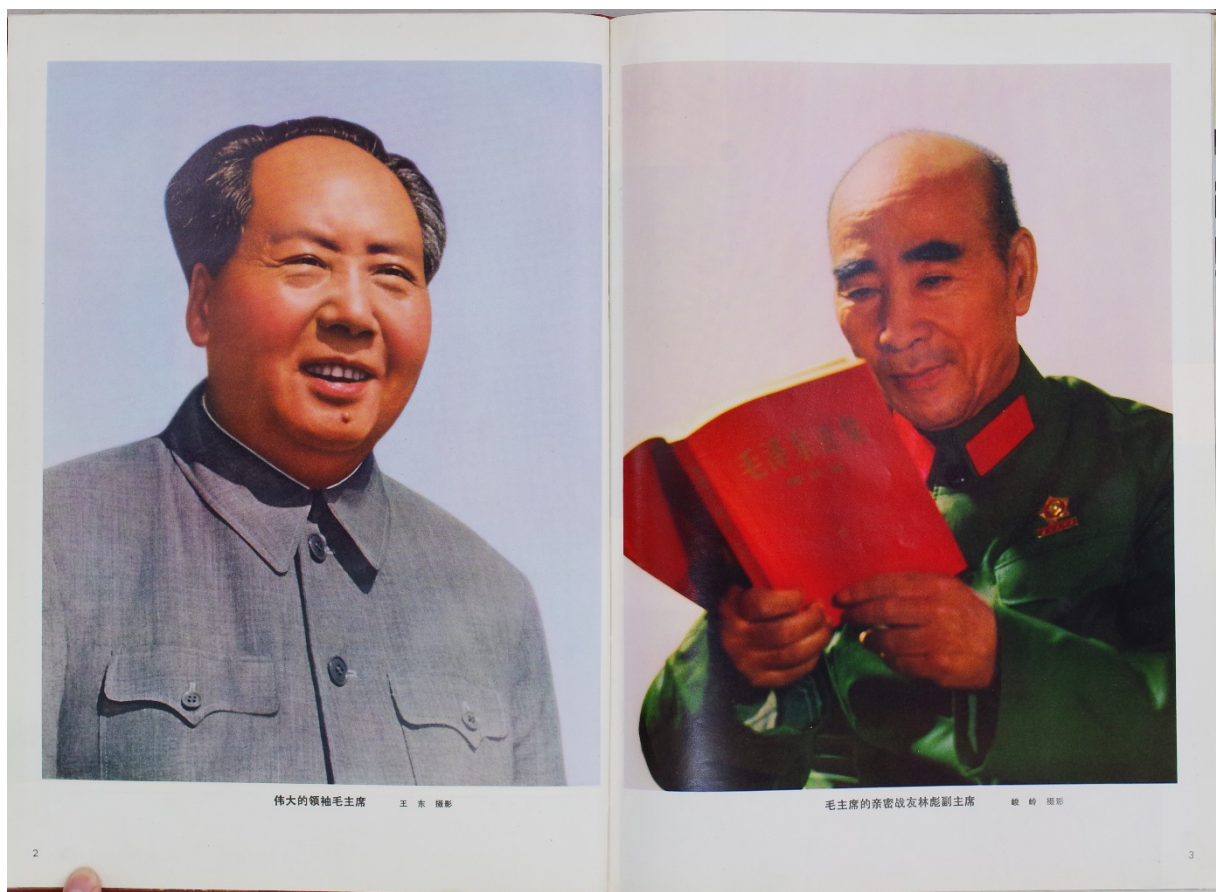


Figure 52: Portraits of Mao and Lin Biao, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1971, no. 7/8, pp. 2-3.

Already the circumstances surrounding the publication of the portrait deserve mention, for it was published in exactly the same shape – full page, facing a portrait of Mao on the opposite page – in both the *People's Illustrated*, as well as the *PLA Illustrated*. The respective issues of both magazines were also devoting several pages to other photos by Jiang Qing, again published under her penname Jun Ling. Furthermore, both the *People's Illustrated* as well as the *PLA Illustrated* combined the issues no. 7 and 8 (July and August) into an unprecedented combined issue (*hekan* 合刊). The portrait of Lin Biao was thus printed in what could be called a double-double issue, combining not just the content of two months, but integrating the content of and possibly editorial processes of the only two illustrated magazines published nationwide at the time. It need not be mentioned that this highly unusual and unprecedented change of publishing procedure pointed to equally unusual changes behind the scenes.

Looking at the portrait we see Lin Biao, holding a volume of Mao Zedong's selected works in his hands, which he seems to be reading. Compared to the ubiquitous little red books of Mao's quotations, the book held by Lin appears comically large. He is clad in a uniform of the PLA, with a Mao button on his chest, which was used to express loyalty to chairman Mao. Quite untypically, Lin is depicted without his customary PLA cap, which reveals his bald head. This makes him resemble the chairman, depicted on the opposite page.

In spite of the attributes through which Lin is expressing loyalty to Mao, the photo can be read in the opposite way, especially when taking into consideration the photo of Mao printed on the facing page and the highly unusual circumstances surrounding the photos publication. Read like this, the portraits reveal differences in the top-level leadership: The military uniform worn by Lin, contrasted by the civilian Zhongshan suit worn by Mao, reveal a subordination of the military under the party and state as represented by the chairman.

This is visually countered by Lin, who is holding a red book – Mao's writings – between the chairman and himself. The observer must have known that the ubiquitous little red book had been edited and published by the army, putting control over Mao's ideology into the hands of Lin. By controlling the all-powerful Mao Zedong thought, he would have been in the position to not depend on Mao himself anymore to legitimize his claim to power. Like mentioned before, in comparison with the more common pocket-sized quotations of chairman Mao (for example seen in figure 49), the large size of the book held by Lin gives it an almost comical aspect and draws attention to the question of control over the "Mao Zedong thought".

While seemingly humorous on first glance as well, a more serious meaning can be assigned to Lin's hair or lack thereof. His depiction without the customary PLA cap must have been intentional, for in all the years since Lin's ascend to power in 1959 there is no example of him shown without a form of headwear. As was mentioned before, his bald head makes him resemble the chairman printed on the opposite page, who is displaying his trademark lack of hair as well. In the context of the "Cultural Revolution", this would have been understood as a claim to the chairman's power.

Even though the grounds of this political criticism seem quite far-fetched, it was not without a precedent: In his account of the "Cultural Revolution", photographer Li Zhenshen describes how the governor of Heilongjiang province, Li Fanwu, was criticized at a Red Guard organized mass meeting on September 4, 1966. The public justification for the mistreatment and abuse which he suffered at the hands of the Red Guards, was that his haircut was too similar to the one Mao was known for.³⁴⁵

This photo was one of the last ones published of Lin Biao. He perished in September 1971, when a plane carrying him and members of his family crashed in Mongolia. Consequently, Lin vanished from the media and Mao alone continued to represent the highest power of the state. Only some years later was it publicly admitted that Lin had been killed in a failed coup d'état. Keeping in mind that this photo was allegedly taken by Jiang Qing herself, and that many other pages of the double-double issues of the *People's Illustrated* and the *PLA Illustrated* were devoted to printing her own photos, the publication of this photo marks the end of military control of the photo network, and the establishment of (civilian) control by Jiang Qing and her allies.

4.5 Invisibility and the Negation of Visibility

As has been demonstrated, visibility in the photo network was closely connected to power held over it or the mass-media network of the PLA. The other side of this program was invisibility – or at the very least a massive reduction in visibility – which followed a fall from power due to political infighting. On a larger scale this happened after the Maoist faction started to take over the photographic network in 1966, but of course single cadres had already disappeared from media coverage before, like Peng Dehuai after he ran afoul of Mao in 1959.

³⁴⁵ Li 2003, p. 75.

The antagonists of the radical faction, which the Maoists identified as the followers of a “black line”,³⁴⁶ gradually disappeared from the media after the start of the “Cultural Revolution” in late summer of 1966. This concerned mostly state president Liu Shaoqi, as well as CCP secretary-general Deng Xiaoping, who were last shown on the illustrated media in early autumn of 1966.

Naturally, this loss of visibility could only take effect for material published in the future. In the magazines and other visual media already published, the outcasts were still plainly visible, performing their former governmental functions.

The solution to this problem was put into the hands of the recipients of the propaganda materials: In a large number of sources surveyed by the author during this research, the followers of the so called “black line” have been found crudely crossed out, rendered symbolically invisible or turned into unpersons with two strokes of a common ballpoint pen. The principal victim of this practice was Liu Shaoqi, but there are examples of others who ran afoul of chairman Mao too, namely Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen.



Figure 53: Liu Shaoqi crossed out, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1965, no. 2, p. 2. As found in the library of Fudan University, Shanghai.

³⁴⁶ Fudan daxue xinwenxi 1974.

An example is given in figure 53, showing Liu Shaoqi in February 1965, with his face crossed out by use of a ballpoint pen. While the author did not encounter any documents that prove this act of crossing out was decreed by the party center, it can still be closely linked with the rebel or Maoist faction around Jiang Qing. Apart from the fact that all the targets of this practice belong to the real or imagined adversaries of Mao, traces of it can also be found in other contexts: In the photographic documentation of struggle sessions in the province of Heilongjiang, undertaken by Li Zhenshen, the victims struggled at the sessions were often forced to carry signboards around their necks which bore their alleged crimes and crossed out names. One example of this is given in figure 54, showing “The seven provincial party committee secretaries Li Fanwu, Wang Yilun, Chen Lei, Ren Zhongyi (present in both photographs), Li Jianbei, Li Rui, and Tan Yunhe (left to right), [...] denounced by Red Guards in front of the North plaza hotel. Each wears a placard with his name crossed out and a description of his alleged crime.”



Figure 54: Li Zhensheng 李振盛 (1968): Victims of a struggle session in Heilongjiang, in: Li 2003, pp. 166-167.

Besides suffering numerous other physical and mental abuses, occasionally the victims of a struggle session had ink poured over them, which took the act of crossing out from the two-dimensional level to the level of performance.

Besides the use of this visual form by the Maoist rebels, there are other leads as well, which can give a clue to the intended meaning behind the crossing out: Li Zhensheng himself also provides photos of a public execution, taken in Heilongjiang in the year 1968. In the photos, both political enemies, as well as common criminals (tried for murder) are shown with the signboards around their necks.

While this does connect the signboards with law practice, both the presence of political prisoners in the execution, as well as the fact that the execution happened during the “Cultural Revolution”, make it difficult to reliably connect the visual form of the signboard with Chinese legal practice.³⁴⁷

The form might also be echoing the punishment of using tattoos to mark criminals – especially thieves – in imperial China, practiced until 1911.³⁴⁸ Furthermore having the victims of struggle sessions carry signboards around their neck had to remind the viewer of the cangue (*jia* 枷), a device used for punishment consisting of a rectangular board of wood attached to the neck and sometimes hands of a criminal, not dissimilar to the European pillory or stocks. The cangue made it impossible for the criminal to reach his face with his hands, thus making it impossible to eat without assistance, “the intention was to warn the public but also to induce a sense of shame and repentance in the one being punished.”³⁴⁹ To further strengthen the aspect of shaming, the cangue also bore inscriptions of the criminal’s name and crime. An example of this is given in figure 55.



Figure 55: Thompson, John: Criminal having to wear the canque (*jia* 枷), in: Thomson, John (1979): *China, the land and its people: Early photographs*, Hong Kong: J. Warner Publications, p. 95. Unfortunately the photo is not dated, but was taken by Thompson in the late 19th century.

³⁴⁷ Compare: Bourgon, Jérôme (2012): “Obscene Vignettes of Truth. Construing Photographs of Chinese Executions as Historical Documents”, in: Henriot, Christian; Yeh Wen-hsin (eds.) (2012): *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still images in Historical Narratives*, Leiden: Brill. pp. 39-91.

In his study of late-Qing dynasty (late 19th to early 20th century) photographic documentation of executions, Bourgon does not mention signboards or other devices displaying the identity of the convict, nor similar visual practices.

³⁴⁸ Compare: “Article 269. Non-Manifest Theft”, in: Jones, William C (1994): *The Great Qing code*, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 251-252.

³⁴⁹ Mühlhahn, Klaus (2009): *Criminal justice in China: A history*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 34.

The form of marking someone (or something) as an enemy or deviant through crossing out can also be found in the aforementioned first issue of *New Photography*, which Jiang Qing had published in 1968. While surprisingly we do not find people crossed out inside the magazine, examples of “old” photography which are being treated to critique are reproduced with a cross printed squarely on top of them.



Figure 56: “Mama, let’s go there!” with cross printed on top of the photo, in: *Xin sheying* 新摄影 [New Photography], 1968, no. 1, p. 9.

An example of this is given in figure 56: It shows the photo “Mama, let’s go there!” (*Mama, dao naban qu* 妈妈，到那边去！), taken in 1957 by Tang Zunzhi, originally published in *People’s Illustrated* 1957, no. 5 (see figure 57). In the photo, a young boy is holding his mother’s hand, leading her along to some destination outside the frame of the photo. While at the time of the photo’s creation, the motive of the young leading the old fit the narrative of reconstruction and renewal of society, in 1968 the photo was deemed unacceptable due to the mother wearing a *Qipao*, symbol of old culture and associated with the nightlife of half-colonial Shanghai before “liberation”, i.e. establishment of CCP rule.



Figure 57: Tang Zunzhi: “Mama, dao nabian qu! 妈妈，到那边去！[Mama, let’s go there!]”, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1957, no. 5, p. 1.

Usage of the cross to mark enemies and deviants can therefore be attributed to the Maoist or rebel faction from the grassroots to the top level. Quite contrary to the faction’s pretension to establish a “new culture”, the methods they used for marking rested on a symbolism deeply embedded in the “old” Chinese imperial culture, which seems remarkably similar to Mao’s use of classic poetry in political struggle detailed earlier.

As mentioned before, the autumn of 1971 saw Lin Biao, head of the army and overall second in command disappear from the media. Contrary to the cases of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, there is no example of any of his depictions in the magazines suffering defacement, neither by crossing out nor any other method. Even in the political campaign to “Criticize Lin Biao, criticize Confucius” (*pi Lin pi Kong* 批林批孔), which was depicted in the illustrated media beginning in 1974, the image of Lin Biao – no matter whether crossed out or not – played no part.

The death of Mao Zedong on September 9, 1976 robbed his supporters of the most important legitimization of their claim to power, i.e. their loyalty to him. Consequently on October 9 they were arrested by military personnel under the command of minister of defense Ye Jianying 叶剑英 (1897—1986). The arrests happened after the official memorial ceremony for chairman Mao from September 11 to 17, but before the photos from the ceremony were published in *People's Illustrated* in November 1976 and *PLA Illustrated* in October 1976, which posed a considerable problem for the editorial departments within the photo network: The photos from the ceremony naturally showed the core leadership of the party, which at this time still included Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen – later called “Gang of Four” – as the representatives of the Maoist faction. When the time came to publish the photos, due to the struggles among the CCP’s core leadership they had become unpersons already. Therefore they had to be retouched out from the photos (compare figure 58).



Figure 58: “Gang of Four” retouched out from photo on top left, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1976, no. 11, pp. 12-13.

Since the gaps in the line of leading cadres paying their respect to Mao were impossible to cover, their position was still indicated in the photos’ captions, though little “X”s replaced the characters of their names.

This might have been a little nod to the practice of crossing out detailed before. Even though this deletion from photos might seem less violent than the practice of crossing out, it still made it just as clear that the ones deleted had lost any power over their own visibility.

4.6 Imitating Power: The Case of Hua Guofeng

Hua Guofeng 华国锋 (1921-2008) joined the CCP in 1938, while he served with the communist troops during the war against Japan. In his home province of Hunan, he steadily rose up through the ranks of the party, finally serving as party secretary of the province from 1959 to 1968. Mao Zedong took notice of him and had him appointed to the CCP Central Committee in 1969, a position Hua was to occupy until 2002. In 1975 he took up the position of vice-premier, which, after the death of Zhou Enlai in 1976 led to him occupying the position of premier of the PRC at the time of Mao's death.³⁵⁰

After the death of Mao on September 9, 1976, members of the leadership around minister of defense Ye Jianying conspired to remove the representatives of the Maoist faction from the central leadership. Even though he himself had profited from the "Cultural Revolution", Hua Guofeng joined the conspirators and was even personally involved with the arrest of some members of the so-called "Gang of Four" on October 6.³⁵¹

Unlike early party members like Ye Jianying, or the later paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, Hua was not able to rely on an extensive network of personal loyalties or even personal charisma to prop up his claim to power. On the contrary, his rapid rise through the ranks during the "Cultural Revolution" placed him in a difficult position vis-à-vis the old cadres, many of whom had been among the victims of the "Cultural Revolution".

Besides the goodwill of the other members of the leadership, who for the time being accepted him as candidate for leadership of the CCP, Hua based the public legitimization of his rule on Mao Zedong's authority, which was essentially a continuation of the loyalty-based access to power and public visibility of the "Cultural Revolution".

³⁵⁰ Bartke 1990, p. 65.

³⁵¹ MacFarquhar; Schoenhals 2006, p. 447.

Hua invoked the policy of the “two whatevers” (liang ge fanshi 两个凡是)³⁵² and enacted himself as Mao’s personally chosen successor, which was accomplished by the widespread dissemination of the painting “If you handle it, I’ll rest assured.” (Ni banshi, wo fangxin 你办事，我放心) both in the form of posters, and as reproduction in the usual illustrated magazines.



Figure 59: “Ni banshi, wo fangxin 你办事，我放心 [If you handle it, I’ll rest assured]”, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1977, no. 5, pp. 22-23.

The painting, given in figure 59, shows a meeting between Mao and Hua on April 30, 1976, with the old chairman handing Hua a piece of paper with instructions for the handling of a political campaign in southern China. Written on the piece of paper was the sentence “If you handle it, I’ll rest assured.”

³⁵² “Whatever policy Chairman Mao decided upon, we shall resolutely defend; whatever directives Chairman Mao issued, we shall steadfastly obey.” MacFarquhar; Schoenhals 2006, p. 452.

Hua later admitted he knew that the sentence meant only the specific campaign in southern China, but still he chose to depict the situation as a direct instruction by Mao on the question of his succession, thereby legitimizing his claim to power.³⁵³

But Hua's visual quotations of chairman Mao did not end there: After taking over the office of chairman of the CCP on October 7, 1976, another personality cult was ramped up, which now centered on both Mao and Hua. This meant that on many occasions, when Hua Guofeng's formal portrait was displayed, it was accompanied by a portrait of the late chairman Mao, as for example in figure 60, a double page from *People's Illustrated* 1976, issue 12.



Figure 60: Leader portraits of Mao and Hua, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1976, no. 12, pp. 0-1.

Remarkably, the display of Hua's portrait together with the portrait of the late Mao again expressed a visual division of power, which in the case of Mao and Liu or Mao and Lin had eventually proved to be problematic. In this case it was only Hua though, who had to share power with his deceased predecessor.

³⁵³ MacFarquhar; Schoenhals 2006, p. 434.



Figure 61: Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying on the rostrum of Tian'anmen, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1976, no. 12, pp. 4-5.

Furthermore, on the occasion of public appearances, Hua was styled exactly like the late chairman during the “Cultural Revolution”. This way Hua’s political stance – to do whatever Mao Zedong had done or would have done – was mediated in a visual way. Especially his pose with the arm raised in a greeting gesture (shown in figure 61) directly referenced the famous photo of Mao greeting the Red Guards during one of the mass rallies, given in figure 46 of this study. The PLA uniform which Hua is wearing in the photo, and which contributes to his likeness with Mao, naturally has two connotations in this case: Besides the reference to the late chairman Mao, it also demonstrated the support Hua enjoyed from the PLA. The army had been instrumental in his victory over the Maoist faction, showing that no matter who had to rely on the military to reinforce their claim to power, the military was always important. It is thus no coincidence that in the picture in figure 61 we see minister of defence Ye Jianying right behind Hua, in a manner not dissimilar to the way Lin Biao had joined Mao in many photos.

Unlike many high-ranking cadres discussed in the preceding section, Hua did not disappear from the illustrated media when his career came to an end due to power struggles within the party center. This is interpreted as an indication of the reversal of the visual program governing the operations of the photo network and will be discussed in the next section.

4.7 Reversing the Visual Program: Invisible Power and Visible Powerlessness

As detailed in the preceding sections, the visual program which controlled the photo network in the years following the foundation of the PRC connected power with visibility, no matter if this power came from governmental and administrative positions or personal loyalty to chairman Mao. In reverse, this meant a loss of visibility for cadres who had been removed from power, which – as has been shown in the preceding sections – was historically expressed in different ways.

Apparently, this program was overturned in the course of the power struggles between the Deng and Hua factions in the late 1970s. Gradually, power was not made visible anymore, while cadres who had fallen from power remained visible or were even made visible again. This hypothesis of the reversal of the visual program is based on the three following cases.

4.7.1 Hua Guofeng

The first depictions of Hua Guofeng in the wake of his takeover of power in October 1976 closely mirrored the personality cult Mao had enjoyed during the “Cultural Revolution”. However, in the following years both the frequency of Hua’s depiction, as well the emphasis on his personality were reduced considerably. This was due to the shift of power towards the opposing party faction around Deng Xiaoping.

In stark contrast to preceding power struggles, even following his almost complete loss of power at the 5th plenum of the 11th Central Committee in February 1980, after which Deng ruled supreme, Hua was allowed to hold on to some of his former offices as well as the public visibility to which they entailed him. This was of limited consequences though, for Deng’s depiction, even following his victory in the power struggles, was not expanded in any measurable way. In particular, there was no personality cult exceeding the depiction of Deng in pursuit of his offices. But this change in the depiction of power was not just relative, evident in comparing the depiction of different cadres.

Even absolutely the depiction of leaders and cadres in the early 1980s diminished. For example in the years up to 1984, National Day celebrations, which the leadership before had used to showcase itself, were not shown in the illustrated media.

This change in the media's depiction of leading cadres was the topic of two articles printed on September 4th 1980 in the CCP newspaper *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报): Gan Jinan's article "Consciously respect the policy of 'reduced propagation of the individual'" introduced the new policy, which prohibited the media from promoting single individuals. This was joined by an article written by Gu Jinping, which unfolded some quotations of Marx and Engels to show that the policies pursued during the "Cultural Revolution", i.e. the personality cult of Mao as well as the concentration on model personas in the depiction of the population, had not been Marxist positions.³⁵⁴ This was a thinly veiled attack on Hua Guofeng, who had relied on a personality cult in the early days of his rule as well. These articles also anticipated the "Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the founding of the PRC", which was adopted at the sixth plenum of the CCP on July 1, 1981. The resolution, pushed for by Deng Xiaoping, attempted to end the use of Maoist style politics for good – while preserving Mao's image as founding father of the PRC – by delivering the final verdict on his historical achievements and failures.³⁵⁵

4.7.2 Peng Dehuai, Tao Zhu and Liu Shaoqi

At the same time that the reduction in visibility of the leadership was put into effect, those who had lost their power earlier were made visible again. This concerned those like Hua Guofeng who had lost their power very recently or were on the point of losing it, but also the Maoists around Jiang Qing who had been toppled by Hua in 1976, as well as their victims, like the former state chairman Liu Shaoqi. Even Peng Dehuai, adversary of Mao in the late 1950s was allowed to make a posthumous comeback.

³⁵⁴ Gan Jinan 干吉楠 (1980): "Zijue de zunshou 'shao xuanchuan geren' de fangzhen 自觉地遵守“少宣传个人”的方针 [Consciously respect the policy of 'reduced propagation of the individual']", in: *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [People's Daily], 04.09.1980, p. 5. and Gu Jinping 顾锦屏 (1980): "Makesi he Engesi fandui tuchu geren 马克思和恩格斯反对突出个人 [Marx and Engels opposed giving prominence to individuals]", in: *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [People's Daily], 04.09.1980, p. 5.

³⁵⁵ MacFarquhar, Roderick (1991): "The succession to Mao and the end of Maoism." in: MacFarquhar, Roderick; Fairbank, John (eds.) (1991): *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 303-401. p. 390-392.

Peng, who had been discharged from office by Mao in 1959 and died in 1974, as well as Tao Zhu, who had been discharged in 1967 and died 1969 as a victim of the “Cultural Revolution” were honored through an article in the *People’s Illustrated* issue 1979 no. 3, shown in figure 62.



Figure 62: Article in memoriam of Peng Dehuai and Tao Zhu, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1979, no. 3, pp. 16-19.

In the context of the ongoing power struggle in the party leadership during the late 70s, this was a way to put pressure on those members of the leadership who had been elevated to their posts because of the “Cultural Revolution” like Hua Guofeng. During his reign the victims of the “Cultural Revolution” had remained invisible, so the beginning visual rehabilitation of some of these showed that ongoing shifts of power in the photographic network were happening. Nevertheless, still both Deng – in the bottom left photo – as well as Hua Guofeng – in the two top right photos – were shown exercising ceremonial duties in the article in figure 62.

Only after Deng finally took over power in the spring of 1980, the most prominent victim of the “Cultural Revolution”, Liu Shaoqi, became visible again. The *PLA Illustrated* devoted an article to him in issue 1980 no. 4, with the *People’s Illustrated* following suite in issue 1980 no. 5, even going so far as to place Liu on the cover, which is shown in figure 63.

This – somewhat ironically – placed the most prominent victim of Mao Zedong right under the title of the magazine, which – being the most important illustrated magazine of the country – still used an autograph by the revered founding father Mao Zedong for its title. Perhaps this shows that while within certain limits changes to the program of the photo network were possible, some corner stones could and would not be moved.



Figure 63: Liu Shaoqi on the cover of: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1980, no. 5, cover.

4.7.3 The Trial of the Gang of Four

Not only the victims of the “Cultural Revolution” became visible again when the visual program of the photo network got reversed. Even the members of the so called “Gang of Four” – Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Hongwen as well as some others – who had been identified as the culprits for the excesses of the “Cultural Revolution” and became unpersons in 1976, reappeared as well.

With the photos of the trial of the “Gang of Four”, which were published in January 1981, for the first time in the history of the photo network the losers of a power struggle were shown in the media, instead of being erased from it. The trial was publicized through a full-blown media campaign including publication of books³⁵⁶ and newsreels, therefore the two-page photo spread given in figure 64 should merely be taken as a representative example.



Figure 64: “Trial of the Lin Biao, Jiang Qing Counterrevolutionary Circle, the Case of the Ten Prime Culprits”, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People's Illustrated], 1981, no. 1, pp. 14-15.

³⁵⁶ For an example in English compare: *A Great Trial in Chinese History. The Trial of the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing Counter-Revolutionary Cliques*, Nov. 1980 – Jan. 1981, (1981) Beijing: New World Press. Unsurprisingly, being provided by the photographers of the photo network, the photos used in the book are the same as the ones published in the *People's Illustrated*.

Already the mere fact of the reappearance of the “Gang of Four” was remarkable, furthermore, they were identified not just as political deviationists or plain traitors, but as criminals who would now be judged in a formal court of law. Great care was taken to not only introduce the general layout of the courtroom, but also the principal institutional actors like the “defendants” (*beigaoren* 被告人) in the lower left photo, the presiding judge (*tingzhang* 庭长) and head of the special prosecution (*tebie jianchating tingzhang* 特别检察厅厅长), as well as the audience in the three upper right photos, as well as photos of the “ten prime culprits” with their guards on the bottom right. While the intention was probably to visually express the change in how power was to be exercised from now on as clearly as possible, this at the same time also inevitably produced the impression of witnessing something like a model trial, carefully arranged for the purpose, which it naturally was. Perhaps similar to the case of the very early leader photos given in figure 31, the photo network was yet unable to express these new forms in an uncontrived way?

Nonetheless, it actually was not the first time that a court of law had been shown in the illustrated media. This had happened only three months before, when the *People's Illustrated* published a report on the court proceedings following the sinking of the oil rig Bohai no. 2, shown in figure 65.



Figure 65: “The Capsizing and Sinking of Oil Rig ‘Bohai No. 2’”, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1980, no. 11, pp. 6-7.

Perhaps this first time that a legal trial was shown in the central illustrated media had indeed been a model for the later trial of the “Gang of Four”, since the presentation of the court proceedings was already undertaken in a similar way, with “defendants” (*beigao* 被告), “public prosecutor” (*jiancha yuan* 检察员), “experts” (appraisal group, *jianding zu* 鉴定组) and “witnesses” (*zheng ren* 证人) as well as “defenders” (*bianhuren* 辩护人) being separately introduced through photos. Instead of the later trial’s photo of the courtroom, a photo of the Bohai No. 2 signalled what this trial was about.

By widely publicizing the trial of the “Gang of Four” (as well as the earlier one about the Bohai no. 2), a clear signal was sent to the population and world at large: The times of all-out violent power struggles like they had happened before 1976 were supposed to be over. Rule by law was supposedly reinstated, which prevented the losers of power struggles – or those responsible for accidents and disasters – from just disappearing without a trace, instead bringing them to justice.

As has been shown before, even after the repudiation of personality cults and the propagation of individual persons through the photo network in 1980, the party’s and country’s leadership naturally still enjoyed some visibility based on their positions within the administration. The form in which they were now depicted however, allowed a surprising amount of individuality to shine through. Compared with Mao’s stone faced depiction as an icon – as in the portrait displayed in institutions of the government – or as a smiling, but unattainable godlike figure during the height of the “Cultural Revolution”, the readers of the *People’s Illustrated* must have been surprised to find a formal portrait of Peng Zhen 彭真 (1902—1997), chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, sporting a beaming smile in an article on the country’s leadership published in September of 1983, here given in figure 66.



Figure 66: Peng Zhen as one of the “New Leaders of the Country”, in: *Renmin huabao* 人民画报 [People’s Illustrated], 1983, no. 9, p. 3.

Even though the portraits of the leaders published in the article – besides Peng Zhen we find Li Xiannian 李先念 (1909—1992), Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳 (1919—2005), Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904—1997) and Deng Yingchao 邓颖超 (1904—1992) – followed the tried and tested form of the frontal bust portrait, the facial expressions given by the leaders on this occasion allow for an intimacy and humanity which had not been seen in the depiction of the Chinese leadership before. By depicting the members of the leadership in this way – as common people in the role of government leaders – it was also possible to avoid running afoul of the earlier ban of personality cults.

4.8 Conclusion

The assumption guiding this tentative exploration of the depiction of the PRC's leadership in the medium of photography was that for most of the period under scrutiny (1949—1981), visibility in the photo network was mediated through the power held by the different leading cadres. Even though the preconditions of access to power might have shifted during that time – most obviously in the run-up to and during the “Cultural Revolution”, when loyalty to Mao Zedong became a cadre's most important claim to power – the connection between power and visibility has become sufficiently clear.

Even the apparent changes in the depiction of cadres in the late 70s, understood by the author to prove a considerable change of operation procedure of the photo network, still point to the importance of the illustrated media in transmitting changes of political direction to the readers, i.e. the general population.

Perhaps this – the author has to admit rather obvious – connection between power and visibility in the photo network can even be considered to have a circular relationship: Visibility in the products of the photo network demonstrated power precisely because this visibility necessitated control (i.e. political power) over the apparatus of the photo network, to be able to influence its mode or program of operation.

And precisely because this relationship was so obvious, control over the illustrated media became a hotly contested issue, which especially the Maoist faction in the party identified as one of their core interests. The (illustrated) media was a strategic asset, control of which was just as important as control over the army or other parts of the government administration. Thus, even during the chaotic years of the “Cultural Revolution”, despite some struggles among the cadres employed in the photo network, the illustrated media with Xinhua's department of photography at its core was never allowed to become inoperational. On the contrary: the more the country drifted apart and took up arms, the more rigid and symbolic the visual language of the illustrated media became. When the country stood on its head, at least on the pages of the illustrated magazines, everyone was firmly standing on their feet.

5 Conclusion

On the preceding 234 pages, both the conditions influencing production of, as well as the content and form of Chinese (news) photography between about 1942 and 1981 were analyzed with the aim of clarifying the connection between them, and the following conclusions were reached:

The structures, which would later evolve into the photo network, began to appear much earlier, with the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* (*Jin-Cha-Ji huabao* 晋察冀画报) founded in 1942 in the communist base area of the same name, already integrating all factors and activities necessary to ensure photographic creation and distribution, as well as education of new photographers under the control of the CCP. Consequently this magazine became the model of photography emulated by other communist base areas in the north of China during the war against Japan and the following civil war. An important reason why photography was integrated into the war effort was its ability to reach the illiterate peasants and encourage them to join the CCP's cause.

Perhaps due to the difficult material situation in the base areas, photos published during this time still show a plethora of forms, which points to the limited level of political control the CCP could yet exercise over photography.

Interestingly, the concept of photographic creation under the leadership of the authorities, i.e. CCP, had been formulated by Sha Fei – the founder of the *Jin-Cha-Ji Illustrated* – and his colleagues almost three years before Mao Zedong would decree the same in the “Yan'an speeches”, showing not just how disparate the situation in the different communist base areas – Jin-Cha-Ji and its satellites vs. Yan'an in Shan-Gan-Ning – was at the time, but also how propagandistic practices in China could indeed predate political regulations on said practices, which until now has been scarcely observed.

After the war, and following the foundation of the PRC in 1949, the CCP leadership required a much larger system of illustrated media, in order to be able to visually communicate its policies to the population of China and the world. While the military's system of photographic publishing was allowed to coexist with the new civilian institutions – channels of exchange between the civilian and military photo network were eventually established as well – the establishment and growth of a civilian network of photography, constituted by state administrated Xinhua News Agency's department of photography, various illustrated

magazines and exhibition formats, was the dominant influence on Chinese photography during the early years of the PRC.

The photos of the leadership published during this time point to the condition of a “New China” under construction. Visibility in the photo network was governed by the administrative positions which the CCP’s leading cadres occupied in the newly formed government and state positions, and was successively regulated and standardized. Furthermore, Mao Zedong was visually raised above his peers, in order to function as a symbol for the new state, as the “founding father” of the PRC.

In stark difference to the understanding of the CCP’s propaganda system as a monumental, uniform block which mechanically implemented the leadership’s decrees on propaganda, the situation within the photo network was constantly shifting and volatile: The manpower requirements of the expanding network had necessitated inclusion of the “old photographers”, i.e. photographers who had received their education before the war – or even during the war from the CCP’s enemy Guomindang – which introduced dissent over the “correct” way to create photographs into the photo network. The example of the numerous editions of Lin Zecang’s textbook on photography shows how the photographers aligned with the CCP pushed through with their conception of photography in an individual case.

On a wider scale, the leadership of the photo network tried to prescribe “correct” models of photography to be followed by all photographers through the carrying-out of mass campaigns. The promotion of the “Soviet model” of photography between ca. 1953 and 1956 is an example of such a model presented to Chinese photographers.

Shortly after, following the abandonment of promotion of the “Soviet model”, during the industrial policy of the “Great Leap Forward”, further rapid growth and structural liberalizations of the photo network, as well as tentative steps to allow bottom-up feedback during the “Hundred Flowers” (1956/57) were tested in the photo network.

Due to considerable political differences becoming visible between the employees of the photo network, which – as perceived by those loyal to the CCP – even endangered CCP-control of the network, the late 1950s saw intense persecution of “rightists” (from 1957) among the photographers and editors of the network, through a meticulously planned rectification campaign, which over the coming years removed all opposition to CCP-control from the photo network. CCP-control was further fortified, when the failure of the “Great

Leap” necessitated the rapid reduction of the photo network to its central institutions, which removed many photographers from the network – starting with those of questionable political reliability – who were sent to the countryside to join agricultural production.

After the spectacular failure of the “Great Leap Forward”, these political differences had also become apparent in the leadership of the CCP. Mao Zedong increasingly relied on the military’s own photo network to present a new Mao Zedong to the population: Not merely founding father anymore, but a Marxist genius in line with Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, whose “Mao Zedong thought” could provide guidance for all aspects of life.

In the years to come, loyalty towards Mao Zedong came to be an ever increasing factor in the allocation of visibility through the photo network, which circumvented the established administrative structures and even allowed Mao’s wife Jiang Qing to have her photographs circulated through the network, by relying on her connections to leading cadres of the photo network.

Again, a new meaning of Mao’s image could be differentiated. Publication of a photo of Mao Zedong now did not refer to his role as “founding father” “symbol of state” or “Marxist genius” anymore, but instead signified membership to the group loyal to the chairman, in spite of any formal administrative bounds. This connection of visibility with loyalty also worked in the other direction: When photos of Mao’s perceived rival Liu Shaoqi were published through the photo network in late 1966, this led to Tao Zhu – head of the Propaganda Department of the CCP – to lose his post and later his life.

After the “Cultural Revolution” and a short extension of the loyalty based allocation of visibility under the reign of Hua Guofeng, who imitated the chairman’s depiction to gain political credibility, the operating procedure of the photo network was inverted in the run-up to the CCP’s repudiation of “Maoist”, revolutionary politics in 1981:

Powerful cadres did not become the objects of personality cults anymore, while cadres who had lost their power did not simply disappear from the media, instead being showcased in a “court of law”, visually showcasing the political changes in the country.

Apart from these rather detailed findings, larger questions are posed by the results of this study as well: Both the discussion of supposedly “rightist” photographs in section 3.9.3, as well as Guo Moruo’s discussion of Jiang Qing’s photograph in section 4.4 seem to show the limited applicability of descriptive monikers and demarcations of specific styles such as “Socialist Realism” in coming to terms with Chinese cultural products (such as photographs).

In the two instances encountered in this study, attribution of specific formal characteristics by the actors seems to have been handled rather whimsical, with Guo Moruo declaring the decidedly traditional forms used in Mao's poem and Jiang Qing's photograph to be the perfect model for art serving the socialist cause, while during the "anti-rightist" campaign formally similar photos were presented as evidence to condemn photographers as "rightists" deserving persecution.

Similar to this devaluation of identifiable forms and styles within photographs is the case of Chen Bo's photo of the Vietnamese girl, discussed in section 3.5, which raises the problem of the distinction of photos as "art" or something else during the period under scrutiny: Exactly the same photo was used at different times to both illustrate a reportage published in the *People's Illustrated*, and also to serve as an exhibit in the national photographic art exhibition.

This shows that the apparatus and operating procedures of the photo network had more influence on the creation of photographs than the photographer's personal intention or creative vision. It seems that the specific forms used in photography were therefore not as important as the fact of who (or which institution) employed a specific form, which brings us back to the productive preconditions of photography.

As was mentioned in the introduction, the photo network analyzed in this study represents but a thin, histological specimen removed from the historical actuality of Chinese society. Apart from the restrictions imposed by such a limited object of study, the rigid identification of the photo network also allows to open up new routes of inquiry, which could perhaps be pursued in further studies.

Having identified "the" photo network, controlled by the CCP, other networks of Chinese photography could well be differentiated from it, similar to the military's network, which was able to operate independently:

Local networks of photography, like those revolving around Xinhua's branch office photo departments during the "Great Leap" could reveal possible local adaptations of the CCP's propagandistic forms, or even forms not connected to CCP control at all.

Alternative photo networks and productive practices of photography, which would largely be constituted by "amateurs". Keeping in mind that a considerable number of photographers and editors of the photo network were cut loose in 1960/61, it would be interesting to retrace where they finally ended up, though likely without access to photographic materials. Perhaps

they formed the point of origin for the “alternative” ways of photography developed during the late 1970s, which began with the photographic documentation of the demonstrations following the death of popular prime minister Zhou Enlai and ran counter to what was considered to be “correct” photos in the photo network.

For the purpose of analysis in this study, the photo network – and with it the medium of photography itself – was separated from the wider social fabric of China. This gave the impression of an autonomy of the medium of photography, which it never actually had enjoyed to this extent. The control of the CCP connected the spheres of all visual arts, film production, poster production, sculpture, music, theater and opera etc. etc. and allowed them to exert different levels of influence on each other, as long as the messages transmitted to the audience were “correct”. As cases in point, Wu Yinxian, who was introduced in section 2, was perhaps more influential as a cameraman for movies than as a photographer.

Jiang Qing, who appeared as an amateur photographer in this study is of course better known for her work on adapting “revolutionary forms” in the traditional Peking opera during the “Cultural Revolution”. When her photography teacher, Shi Shaohua, made his comeback after having been purged during the “Cultural Revolution”, it was by taking colorful photographs of the revolutionary model operas staged by Jiang Qing. The painted portraits of Mao Zedong, which were affixed to the Tian’anmen gate (touched on in section 4.2), were themselves based on photographs of the chairman...

There would be countless more examples of networks of influence within the arts, literature, music, media, politics and economy during the period under scrutiny in this study, which would naturally require interdisciplinary studies to resolve the relationship between the medium of photography and other mediums of communication in China.

As for this study, the photographic forms expressed in Chinese news photography were put back on their feet, by retracing how they were produced. Perhaps like this, the contradiction between the concepts of “propaganda” and “reality” can be resolved, demonstrating news photography to be just one possible way of constructing a mass-media based, observable “reality”, and also answering Landsberger’s call for scholars to establish “the credentials of Chinese propaganda [...] as reliable sources”.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ Compare the introduction of this study, section 1.3.1, footnote 13.

6 Appendix: List of Illustrated Magazines Published in the PRC 1945—1980

The following list is largely based on a translation of:

Ma Yunzeng 马运增 (1983): “Xin Zhongguo huabao yilan 新中国画报一览 [General Survey of Illustrated Magazines in New China]”, published in: *Zhongguo sheying shiliao* 中国摄影史料 [Historical Materials on Chinese Photography], 1983, no. 5/6, pp. 38-52.

Ma’s list – which omits or glosses over a number of magazines published during the “Cultural Revolution” – has been translated and carefully edited by the author of this study, supplementing it with information from the catalogue of the library of the city of Shanghai – powerbase of the Maoists during the “Cultural Revolution”. Information coming from Ma is marked with a “(1)”, information from the catalogue of the library of the city of Shanghai is marked with a “(2)”. Where information appears to be missing it was not available to the author of this study.

Dongbei huabao 东北画报 [*Northeast Illustrated*], published in Shenyang 沈阳 by Dongbei huabao she 东北画报社. First issue published in Harbin December 1945, from 1949 in Shenyang. In the following years various changes of format, January 1953 discontinued after 104 issues. Resumed publication from January 1954 to June 1955, afterwards changed title to *Liaoning huabao* 辽宁画报 [*Liaoning Illustrated*]. (1)

Liaoning huabao 辽宁画报 [*Liaoning Illustrated*], published monthly in Shenyang 沈阳 by Liaoning huabao she 辽宁画报社. First issue published July 1955, discontinued January 1961. Resumed publication in January 1978, henceforth published bimonthly by Liaoning huabao bianjibu 辽宁画报编辑部 and Liaoning renmin chubanshe 辽宁人民出版社, later published by Liaoning meishu chubanshe 辽宁美术出版社. 228 issues have been published until December 1980. (1) Existed until 1998. (2)

Neimenggu huabao 内蒙古画报 [*Inner Mongolia Illustrated*], published monthly in Huhhot 呼和浩特 by Neimenggu huabao she 内蒙古画报社. First issue published May 1947, discontinued November 1960. (212 issues in total). Resumed publication in 1979, 212 issues published until December 1980. (1) After 1979 bimonthly publication as both a Chinese and Mongolian edition. Changed title in 1985 to *Inner Mongolia Pictorial*. (2)

Huabei huabao 华北画报 [*North China Illustrated*], published irregularly in Beijing 北京 by Huabei huabao she 华北画报社 and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huabei junqu zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军华北军区政治部. First issue published October 1948 in Shijiazhuang, from 1949 in Beijing. Discontinued 1950 after three issues. (1)

Qianfeng huakan 前锋画刊 [*Vanguard Pictorial*], published irregularly in Shandong 山东 by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun bohailunqu zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军渤海军区政治部. First issue published April 1949, last known issue December 1949. (1)

Qianxian huabao 前线画报 [*Front Line Illustrated*], published monthly in Wuhan 武汉 by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun disi yezhanjun zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军第四野战军政治部 and Huazhong junqu zhengzhibu 华中军区政治部. First issue published September 1, 1949, discontinued in September 1950 after 12 issues. (1)

Zhanshi huabao 战士画报 [*Soldier's Illustrated*], published monthly in Wuhan 武汉 by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhongnan junqu 中国人民解放军中南军区 u. Disi yezhanjun zhengzhibu 第四野战军政治部. Original title was *Qianxian huabao* 前线画报 [*Front Line Illustrated*]. First issue published September 13, 1950, discontinued in August 1951 after 21 issues. (1)

Dongfanghong huabao 东方红画报 [*The East is Red Illustrated*], published monthly in Shanghai 上海, by Dongfanghong huabao she 东方红画报社. First issue published October 10, 1949, discontinued in December 1949 after three issues. (1)

Huadong huabao 华东画报 [*East China Illustrated*], published monthly (semi-monthly after issue 33) in Shanghai 上海, originally published in Jinan 济南 (Shandong) by Huadong huabao she 华东画报社, from issue 33 (December 1949) by Huadong renmin chubanshe 华东人民出版社 in Shanghai, discontinued in February 1953 after 41 issues. (1) continued the *Shandong huabao* 山东画报 [*Shandong Illustrated*], which was published before 1949. (2)

Gongnongbing huabao 工农兵画报 [*Workers, Peasants, Soldiers Illustrated*], published semimonthly in Shanghai 上海, by Gongnongbing huabao she 工农兵画报社 (editorial office) and Huadong renmin meishu chubanshe 华东人民美术出版社 (publishing). First issue published March 5, 1953, discontinued in October 1953 after 14 issues. (1) continued the *Huadong huabao* 华东画报 [*East China Illustrated*]. (2)

Da shengchan yundong huakan 大生产运动画刊 [*Big Production Movement Pictorial*], published in Tianjin 天津, by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun diersi bingtuan zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军第二十兵团政治部. First issue published December 1949 (unknown duration of publishing). (1)

Huochetou huakan 火车头画刊 [*Locomotive Pictorial*], published monthly in Harbin 哈尔滨, by Huochetou huakan she 火车头画刊社. First issue published 1949, moved to Shenyang 沈阳 in December 1950 (unknown duration of publishing). (1)

Xinan huabao 西南画报 [*Southwest Illustrated*], published monthly in Chongqing 重庆, by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun xinan junqu zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军西南军区政治部. First issue published May 15, 1950. 15 issues published until July 1951. (1)

Zhanshi huakan 战士画刊 [*Soldier's Pictorial*], published semimonthly (later monthly) in Jinan 济南, by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun shandong junqu zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军山东军区政治部. First issue published June 15, 1950, discontinued November 1950. (1)

Renmin huabao 人民画报 [*People's Illustrated*], published monthly (semi-monthly between January 1957 and 1961) in Beijing 北京, by Renmin huabao she 人民画报社.

First issue published July 1950. Numerous editions in foreign languages and languages of the national minorities of China. (1) Published until today. (2)

Qianjin 前进 [*Progress*], published by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun disi yezhanjun zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军第四野战军政治部. First issue published 1950. (1)

Kangmei yuanchao huakan 抗美援朝画刊 [*Resist America Support Korea Pictorial*], published in Shenyang 沈阳, by Dongbei huabao she 东北画报社. First issue published in 1950, until 1951, more than 10 issues were published. (1)

Zhongguo gongren huakan 中国工人画刊 [*Chinese Worker's Pictorial*], published irregularly in Beijing 北京, by Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui 中华全国总工会 (editorial office) and Beijing gongren chubanshe 北京工人出版社 (publisher). First issue published in 1950, until 1951 7 issues had been published. Both Chinese/English and Chinese/Russian editions were published. (1)

Jiangxi huabao 江西画报 [*Jiangxi Illustrated*], published monthly in Nanchang 南昌, by Jiangxi huabao bianjibu 江西画报编辑部. First issue published 1950, from 1953 published by Jiangxisheng meishu gongzuoshi 江西省美术工作室. Discontinued 1956 after ca. 30 issues. (1)

Huadong zhanshi 华东战士 [*East China Soldier*], published monthly in Nanjing 南京, by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu zhengzhibu 中国人民解放军华东军区 and Disan yezhanjun zhengzhibu 第三野战军政治部. First issue published January 1951, internal publication for service members. 20 issues were published in 1951 and 1952. (1)

Huanan huabao 华南画报 [*South China Illustrated*], published monthly in Guangzhou 广州, by Huanan huabao she 华南画报社 (editorial office) and Huanan wenxueyishujie lianhehui 华南文学艺术界联合会 (publishing). First issue published January 15, 1951, discontinued December 1951 after 10 issues. (1)

Shanghai gong'an huabao 上海公安画报 [*Shanghai Public Security Illustrated*], published in Shanghai 上海, by Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu gong'anju 上海市人民政府公安局 (editorial office) and Xinhua shudian huadong zongfendian 新华书店华东总分店 (publishing). Two issues published in January 1951 and June 1951. Second issue published by Huadong renmin chubanshe 华东人民出版社 (Hg.). (1)

Jiefangjun huabao 解放军画报 [*People's Liberation Army Illustrated*], published monthly in Beijing 北京, by Jiefangjun huabao she 解放军画报社. Was published from February 1951 by Zhongyang renmin zhengfu renmin gemingjunshi weiyuanhui zongzhengzhibu 中央人民政府人民革命军事委员会总政治部, from November 1954 by Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zongzhengzhibu 中国人民解放军总政治部, from July 1957 by Jiefangjun huabao she 解放军画报社. First issue published February 1951, published semi-monthly between July 1958 and April 1961, between February 1967 and September 1968 as two-page leaflet every ten days. (1) published until today. (2)

Nongmin huabao 农民画报 [*Peasant's Illustrated*], published irregularly in Shenyang 沈阳, by Dongbei huabao she 东北画报社. First issue published March 1951, discontinued in

autumn of 1952 after more than ten issues. (1) According to catalogue of Shanghai Library published semi-monthly starting in 1950. (2)

Shishi huakan 时事画刊 [*Current Events Pictorial*], published every ten days in Nanjing 南京, by Nanjing shishi huakan she 南京时事画刊社. First issue published April 30, 1951. 32 Issues published until March 21, 1952. (1)

Lianhuanhua bao 连环画报 [*Picture-story Journal*], published semi-monthly in Beijing 北京, by Lianhuanhua bao bianjibu 连环画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Renmin meishu chubanshe 人民美术出版社 (publisher). First issue published June 1951, discontinued July 1961 after 219 issues. Resumed (monthly) publication in July 1973. (1) Published until today. (2)

Gongnong huabao 工农画报 [*Workers Peasants Illustrated*], published semimonthly in Shanghai 上海, by Gongnong huabao she 工农画报社 (editorial office) and Huadong renmin chubanshe 华东人民 (publisher). First issue published September 1951, discontinued July 1952 after 34 issues. (1)

Xibei huabao 西北画报 [*Northwest Illustrated*], published semimonthly in Xi'an 西安, by Xibei huabao she 西北画报社 (editorial office) and Xinhua shudian xibei zongfendian 新华书店西北总分店 (publisher). First issue published 1951 as single sheet; from 1952 full magazine; from April to June 1953 published monthly for a total of 47 issues. (1)

Xibei huabao 西北画报 [*Northwest Illustrated*], published bimonthly in Xi'an 西安, by Xibei minzushiwu weiyuanhui huabao she 西北民族事务委员会画报社. First issue published September 1952, 11 issues were published until June 1954. Texts in the magazine printed in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh, Tibetan and Mongolian. (1)

Xinjiang huabao 新疆画报 [*Xinjiang Illustrated*], published monthly in Wulumuqi 乌鲁木齐. First issue (single sheet) published 1952 by Xinjiang weiyu'er zizhiqu wenhua ju meishu gongzuoshi 新疆维吾尔自治区文化局美术工作室 (editorial office) and Xinjiang renmin chubanshe 新疆人民出版社 (publisher), since March 1957 published by Xinjiang huabao she 新疆画报社, since 1958 published by Xinjiang renmin chubanshe 新疆人民出版社, since 1962 by Xinjiang ribao she 新疆日报社. Discontinued in 1966, resumed publishing in July 1972, by Xinjiang huabao she 新疆画报社 (editorial office) and Xinjiang ribao she 新疆日报社 (publisher). 180 issues published until December 1980. Published in two editions: Chinese and Uyghur. (1) Published until today. (2)

Dongbei gongren 东北工人 [*Northeast Workers*], published semi-monthly in Shenyang 沈阳, by Dongbei wenyi chubanshe 东北文艺出版社, afterwards by Dongbei gongren huabao she 东北工人画报社. First issue published February 1953, discontinued December 1953 after 22 issues. (1)

Huabei jiefangjun huabao 华北解放军画报 [*North China People's Liberation Army Illustrated*], published in Beijing 北京, by Huabei junqu zhengzhibu Huabei huabao she 华北军区政治部华北画报社. First issue published July 1953, discontinued November 1953 after 6 issues. (1)

Tianjin huabao 天津画报 [*Tianjin Illustrated*], published monthly in Tianjin 天津, by Tianjinshi meishu gongzuoshi 天津市美术工作室 (editorial office) and Tianjin tongsu

chubanshe 天津通俗出版社 (publisher). First issue published October 1953, 87 issues published until December 1960. (1)

Taiyuan huabao 太原画报 [*Taiyuan Illustrated*], published semi-monthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Taiyuan huabao she 太原画报社. First issue published 1953, discontinued October 1956 after 80 issues. (1)

Funü huabao 妇女画报 [*Women's Illustrated*], published semi-monthly in Xi'an 西安, by Funü huabao she 妇女画报社 (editorial office) and Shanxi renmin chubanshe 陕西人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published 1954, 150 issues published until August 1960. (1)

Minzu huabao 民族画报 [*Nationalities Illustrated*], published monthly in Beijing 北京, by Minzu huabao she 民族画报社 (editorial office) and Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 (publisher). Published bimonthly between February 1955 and December 1956, published monthly from January 1957. Discontinued July 1960, resumed publication January 1961. Discontinued again October 1966, resumed publication again January 1974. Published in the Languages of various national minorities. (1) Since 1985 published by Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 国家民族事务委员会, 1993 changed title to Nationality Pictorial. (2)

Gansu huabao 甘肃画报 [*Gansu Illustrated*], published monthly in Lanzhou 兰州, by Gansu huabao she 甘肃画报社 (editorial office) and Gansu renmin chubanshe 甘肃人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published January 1956, discontinued June 1958 after 29 issues. Officially resumed publication in 1978, with test-issues published in 1977. Quarterly publication from 1979. (1) From 1978 published by Gansu xinwen tupian she 甘肃新闻图片社, bi-monthly publication from 1982. Changed title to *Xiburen* 西部人 [*Westerner*] in 2002. (2)

Nongmin huabao 农民画报 [*Peasant's Illustrated*], published monthly in Shenyang 沈阳, by Nongmin huabao bianjibu 农民画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Liaoning huabao she 辽宁画报社 (publisher). First issue published in April 1956, discontinued December 1960 after 57 issues. (1) Resumed monthly publication in 1981, changed title to *Xinchun huabao* 新春画报 [*Beginning of Spring Illustrated*], changed title to *Meishu daguan* 美术大观 [*Grand Sights of the Fine Arts*] in 1988, changed title again to *Art Panorama* in 1994. (2)

Heilongjiang huabao 黑龙江画报 [*Heilongjiang Illustrated*], published monthly in Harbin 哈尔滨, by Heilongjiang huabao bianjibu 黑龙江画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Heilongjiang huabao she 黑龙江画报社 (publisher). First issue published in January 1957, discontinued March 1961 after 50 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication in 1977 by Heilongjiang huabao she. 21 issues published until December 1980. (1) Renamed to Heilongjiang Pictorial in 1991. (2)

Jinggang shan huabao 井冈山画报 [*Jinggang Shan Illustrated*], published monthly in Nanchang 南昌, by Jiangxi sheng qunzhong yishuguan 江西省群众艺术馆 (editorial office) and Jiangxi renmin chubanshe 江西人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published 1957. 19 issues published until December 1958. (1)

Tianlong huakan 天龙画刊 [*Heavenly Dragon Pictorial*], published monthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Tianlong huakan bianji weiyuanhui 天龙画刊编辑委员会 (editorial office) and Tianlong huakan she 天龙画刊社 (publisher). First issue published in July 1957. Changed title to *Shanxi huabao* 山西画报 [*Shanxi Illustrated*] in July 1958, after 12 issues. (1)

Shanxi huabao 山西画报 [*Shanxi Illustrated*]. Former *Tianlong huakan*. Published monthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Shanxi huabao bianji weiyuanhui 山西画报编辑委员会 (editorial office) and Shanxi huabao she 山西画报社 (publisher). First issue in July 1958, discontinued October 1960 after 27 issues. (1)

Shangying huabao 上影画报 [*Shanghai Film Studio Illustrated*], published monthly in Shanghai 上海, by Shanghai dianying zhipian gongsi shangying huabao bianjibu 上海电影制片公司上影画报编辑部. First issue published August 1958. 29 issues published until December 1959. (1)

Hebei huabao 河北画报 [*Hebei Illustrated*], published monthly in Baoding 保定, by Hebei huabao she 河北画报社. First issue published in October 1957. From 1959 published in Tianjin 天津. Discontinued March 1961 after 41 issues. Resumed publication in January 1966, but discontinued again in July 1966. (1)

Anhui huabao 安徽画报 [*Anhui Illustrated*], published monthly in Hefei 合肥, by Anhui huabao she 安徽画报社. First issue published in February 1958, discontinued January 1961 after 34 issues. Resumed irregular publishing from May 1973, published quarterly from 1975, bimonthly from 1976. 35 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Guangdong huabao 广东画报 [*Guangdong Illustrated*], published monthly in Guangzhou 广州. First issue published in May 1958. In 1963 published bimonthly, from July 1964 again monthly. Renamed to Guangdong 广东 in July 1965. Discontinued July 1966 after 89 issues. Resumed irregular publication in October 1972, by Guangdong huabao she 广东画报社 (editorial office) and Guangdong renmin chubanshe 广东人民出版社 (publisher). 154 issues published until December 1980. (1) Renamed to Guangdong 广东 again in 1979, and renamed back to Guangdong huabao 广东画报 in 1982, published by Nanfang ribao she 南方日报社. From 1985 published again by Guangdong huabao she 广东画报社. Renamed to *Guangdong Pictorial* in 1986. (2)

Changchun dianying huabao 长春电影画报 [*Changchun Movie Illustrated*], published monthly in Shenyang 沈阳, by Changchun dianying zhipianchang 长春电影制片厂 (editorial office) and Liaoning huabao she 辽宁画报社 (publisher). First issue published in June 1958, discontinued March 1961 after 33 issues. (1)

Dayuejin qiangtou huabao 大跃进墙头画报 [*Great Leap [over the] Top of the Wall Illustrated*], published in Shanghai 上海, by Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe 上海人民美术出版社. First issue published June 1958. 7 issues published until August 1958. (1)

Fujian huabao 福建画报 [*Fujian Illustrated*], published monthly in Fuzhou 福州, by Fujian huabao she 福建画报社. First issue published July 1958, discontinued December 1960 after 30 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication in February 1979, by Fujian huabao bianjibu 福建画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Fujian renmin chubanshe 福建人民出版社 (publisher). 18 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Zhejiang huabao 浙江画报 [*Zhejiang Illustrated*], published monthly in Hangzhou 杭州, by Zhejiang huabao she 浙江画报社 (editorial office) and Zhejiang renmin chubanshe 浙江人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published July 1958, later in 1958 published by Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe 浙江人民美术出版社 (publisher), from 1959 published by Zhejiang huabao she 浙江画报社, discontinued January 1961 after 31 issues. From 1977

publication of a *Zhejiang tupian xinwen* 浙江图片新闻 [*Zhejiang Pictorial News*], in Hangzhou, by Zhejiang sheng sheying zhanlan bangongshi 浙江省摄影展览办公室 (editorial office) and Zhejiang renmin chubanshe 浙江人民出版社 (publisher). Renamed to *Zhejiang huabao* in July 1979, published by Zhejiang huabao bianjibu 浙江画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Zhejiang renmin chubanshe (publisher). 18 Issues published until December 1980. (1)

Qinghai huabao 青海画报 [*Qinghai Illustrated*], published monthly in Xining 西宁, by Qinghai huabao she 青海画报社. First issue published July 1958, discontinued January 1961 after 30 issues. Resumed monthly publication in April 1966, but discontinued again in August 1966 after 5 issues. (1)

Jilin huabao 吉林画报 [*Jilin Illustrated*], published monthly in Changchun 长春, by Jilin huabao she 吉林画报社. First issue published August 1958, discontinued March 1961 after 31 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication in January 1979. 43 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Shandong huabao 山东画报 [*Shandong Illustrated*], published monthly in Jinan 济南, by Shandong huabao she 山东画报社 (editorial office) and Shandong renmin chubanshe 山东人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published August 1958. From 1960 published by Shandong huabao she, discontinued February 1961 after 30 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication in January 1978, published monthly from 1979. 62 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Hubei huabao 湖北画报 [*Hubei Illustrated*], published monthly in Wuhan 武汉, by Hubei huabao bianjibu 湖北画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Hubei renmin chubanshe 湖北人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published August 1958, change of format in January 1959, discontinued in August 1960 after 19 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication in October 1979, by Hubei huabao she 湖北画报社, 8 issues published until 1980. (1)

Shanxi huabao 陕西画报 [*Shaanxi Illustrated*], published monthly in Xi'an 西安, by Shanxi huabao she 陕西画报社 (editorial office) and Chang'an meishu chubanshe 长安美术出版社 (publisher). First issue published September 1958, published at least until 1960. (1)

Jiangsu huabao 江苏画报 [*Jiangsu Illustrated*], published monthly in Nanjing 南京, by Jiangsu huabao she 江苏画报社. First issue published October 1958, 24 issues published until September 1960. (1)

Chongqing huabao 重庆画报 [*Chongqing Illustrated*], published semi-monthly (single sheet) in Chongqing 重庆, by Chongqing huabao she 重庆画报社. First issue published 1958, discontinued October 1960 after 48 issues. (1)

Yuejin huabao 跃进画报 [*Leap Illustrated*], published semi-monthly in Shijiazhuang 石家庄, by Yuejin huabao she 跃进画报社 (editorial office) and Hebei renmin meishu chubanshe 河北人民美术出版社 (publisher). First issue 1958, discontinued September 1959. (1)

Yuejin huabao 跃进画报 [*Leap Illustrated*], published semi-monthly in Hangzhou 杭州, by Yuejin huabao she 跃进画报社 (editorial office) and Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe

浙江人民美术出版社 (publisher). First issue published 1958, published monthly from 1960, discontinued October 1960 after 41 issues. (1)

Shaonian ertong huabao 少年儿童画报 [*Juvenile Illustrated*], published monthly in Tianjin 天津, by Shaonian ertong huabao bianjibu 少年儿童画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Tianjin shaonian ertong meishu chubanshe 天津少年儿童美术出版社 (publisher). First issue published January 1959, discontinued 1960. (1)

Hubei qunzhong huabao 湖北群众画报 [*Hubei Masses Illustrated*], published monthly in Wuhan 武汉, by Hubeisheng qunzhong yishuguan 湖北省群众艺术馆. First issue published January 1959, discontinued July 1959. (1)

Songjiang huabao 松江画报 [*Songjiang Illustrated*], published in Shanghai 上海, one issue published in January 1959. (1)

Qingpu huabao 青浦画报 [*Qingpu Illustrated*], published in Shanghai 上海, one issue published in January 1959. (1)

Guizhou huabao 贵州画报 [*Guizhou Illustrated*], published bimonthly in Guiyang 贵阳, by Guizhou renmin chubanshe 贵州人民出版社. First issue published March 1959, published monthly from 1960, discontinued February 1961 after 17 issues. Resumed (quarterly) publication in January 1975, by Guizhou xinwen tupian she 贵州新闻图片社, bimonthly publication from 1979. 28 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Jiangxi huabao 江西画报 [*Jiangxi Illustrated*], published monthly in Nanchang 南昌, by Jiangxi huabao she 江西画报社. First issue published June 1959, discontinued February 1961 after 20 issues. (1) resumed publication in 1979. (2)

Shangyou huabao 上游画报 [*Up River Illustrated*], published monthly in Xining 西宁, by Qinghai renmin chubanshe 青海人民出版社. First issue published January 1960, discontinued August 1960 after 8 issues. Texts in Chinese and Tibetan. (1)

Yunnan huabao 云南画报 [*Yunnan Illustrated*], published monthly in Kunming 昆明, by Yunnan huabao bianjibu 云南画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Yunnan ribao chubanshe 云南日报出版社 (publisher). First issue published January 1960, discontinued February 1962 after 26 issues. Resumed quarterly publication in January 1979, bimonthly from January 1980. 13 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Sichuan huabao 四川画报 [*Sichuan Illustrated*], published monthly in Chengdu 成都, by Sichuan huabao she 四川画报社. First issue published July 1960, discontinued October 1960 after 3 issues. Resumed monthly publishing in July 1973, published by Sichuan huabao bianjibu 四川画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Sichuan renmin chubanshe 四川人民出版社 (publisher). Discontinued again in June 1976 after 42 issues. Resumed bimonthly publication again in February 1979, by Sichuan huabao she. (1)

Shanxi qunzhong huabao 山西群众画报 [*Shanxi Masses Illustrated*], published monthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Shanxi qunzhong huabao she 山西群众画报社. First issue published October 1960, 5 issues published until February 1961. (1)

Shanxi huabao 山西画报 [*Shanxi Illustrated*], published bimonthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Shanxi huabao bianjibu 山西画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Shanxi ribao she 山西日报社 (publisher). First issue published October 1960, discontinued 1961 after 2 issues. (1)

Nongmin huakan 农民画刊 [*Peasant's Pictorial*], published irregularly in Shenyang 沈阳, by Liaoning meishu chubanshe 辽宁美术出版社. First issue published July 1963, from 1964 published quarterly by Nongmin huakan bianjibu 农民画刊编辑部 (editorial office) and Liaoning meishu chubanshe (publisher). Discontinued May 1966 after 12 issues. (1)

Qunzhong huabao 群众画报 [*Masses Illustrated*], published monthly in Taiyuan 太原, by Qunzhong huabao she 群众画报社. First issue published October 1963, published bimonthly from 1965. Discontinued September 1966 after 25 issues. (1)

Gongnongbing huabao 工农兵画报 [*Worker, Peasant, Soldier Illustrated*], published irregularly in Hangzhou 杭州, by Gongnongbing huabao bianjibu 工农兵画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe 浙江人民美术出版社 (publisher). First issue published August 1967, from October 1967 published every ten days, from 1972 published semi-monthly. From 1978 published monthly, discontinued December 1980. (1)

Hongxiaobing huabao 红小兵画报 [*Little Red Guards Illustrated*], published monthly in Tianjin 天津, by Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe 天津人民美术出版社. First issue published 1970, renamed *Ertong huabao* 儿童画报 [*Children's Illustrated*] in 1979. 119 issues published until December 1980. (1) (2)

Guangxi huabao 广西画报 [*Guangxi Illustrated*], published in Nanning 南宁, by Guangxi huabao bianjibu 广西画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Guangxi renmin chubanshe 广西人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published July 1971, from 1972 published quarterly, from 1973 bimonthly. 55 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Yan'an huakan 延安画刊 [*Yan'an Pictorial*], published monthly in Xi'an 西安, by Xi'an meishu xueyuan 西安美术学院 (editorial office) and Shanxi renmin chubanshe 陕西人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published November 1971. 86 issues published until December 1978. (1)

Shanxi gongnongbing huakan 山西工农兵画刊 [*Shanxi Workers, Peasants, Soldiers Illustrated*], published in Taiyuan 太原, by Shanxi renmin chubanshe 山西人民出版社. First issue 1972. (2)

Hebei gongnongbing huakan 河北工农兵画刊 [*Hebei Workers, Peasants, Soldiers Illustrated*], published monthly in Shijiazhuang 石家庄, by Hebei gongnongbing huakan bianjizu 河北工农兵画刊编辑组 (editorial office) and Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published March 1972, 70 issues published until January 1978. Renamed to Hebei huakan 河北画刊 [*Hebei Pictorial*] in January 1978, discontinued July 1979 after 18 issues. (1)

Hunan huabao 湖南画报 [*Hunan Illustrated*], published in Changsha 长沙, by Hunan huabao she 湖南画报社 (editorial office) and Hunan renmin chubanshe 湖南人民出版社 (publisher). First issue published 1972, discontinued March 1974 after 7 issues. Resumed monthly publishing January 1976, by Hunan sheng xinwen tupian huabaoshe 湖南省新闻图

片画报社, from August 1980 published by Hunan huabao bianjibu 湖南画报编辑部 (editorial office) and Hunan meishu chubanshe 湖南美术出版社 (publisher). 67 issues published until December 1980. (1)

Gongnongbing huabao 工农兵画报 [*Workers, Peasants, Soldiers Illustrated*], published bimonthly in Harbin 哈尔滨, by Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe 黑龙江人民出版社. First issue published 1972. 20 issues published until December 1972. According to catalog of Shanghai Library first issue published 1970. (2)

Shandong xinwen zhaopian 山东新闻照片 [*Shandong News Photos*], published monthly in Jinan 济南, by Shandong xinwen tupian she 山东新闻图片社. First issue 1973, 53 issues published until 1977. (2)

Henan xinwen zhaopian 河南新闻照片 [*Henan News Photos*], published monthly in Zhengzhou 郑州, by Henan sheng xinwen tupian she 河南省新闻图片社. First issue published 1974, renamed to Henan huabao 河南画报 [*Henan Illustrated*] in June 1978, henceforth published bimonthly. 12 issues published until December 1980. (1) (2)

Shanxi xinwen zhaopian 陕西新闻照片 [*Shaanxi News Photos*], published monthly in Xi'an 西安, by Shanxi xinwen zhaopian bianjibu 陕西新闻照片编辑部 (editorial office). First issue published 1974, published until 1978. (2)

Ningxia xinwen zhaopian 宁夏新闻照片 [*Ningxia News Photos*], published monthly in Yinchuan 银川, by Ningxia renmin chubanshe 宁夏人民出版社. First issue published 1974, published until 1980. (2)

Hunan xinwen zhaopian 湖南新闻照片 [*Hunan News Photos*], published in Changsha 长沙, by Hunan sheng xinwen tupian she 湖南省新闻图片社. Catalogue has issue from 1981, being number 128. (2)

Jiangxi xinwen zhaopian 江西新闻照片 [*Jiangxi News Photos*], published every ten days in Nanchang 南昌, by Jiangxi sheng xinwen zhaopian she 江西省新闻照片社, First issue published 1975, from 1981 published semi-monthly. (2)

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9 Abstract

The object of this study is the Chinese photo network and the news photography (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) distributed through it during the time from 1942 to 1981. In this study, the photo network is understood to be the agglomeration of institutions which undertook production and distribution of photographs, such as illustrated magazines on a national and regional scale, Xinhua News Agency's department of photography, different exhibition formats, etc. and also institutions of education and political guidance like the Photography Association, journalism institutes at universities etc., as well as the photographers, editors and other personnel employed in these institutions.

News photography – a definition of photography under the control of the CCP – was nominally the only form of photography allowed to be circulated in the photo network, and served as the CCP's visual communication of its policies to the population of China and the world at large.

In order to retrace the production and circulation of photos within the network, as well as to connect the forms of photographs with the organizational and institutional (as well as biographical) background of their creation, a large number of sources providing photographs, such as the *People's Illustrated* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报), *People's Liberation Army Illustrated* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报) and Xinhua News Agency's catalogue *News Photos* (*Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片) were surveyed and connected with textual information prescribing the “correct” creation of photographs. This information was found in a large number of vocational magazines published in China during the period under scrutiny, including the People's Liberation Army's *Photo Network* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网), Xinhua's *News Photography* (*Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影), as well as the Photography Association's *Chinese Photography* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影).

The findings of the study point to the emergence of a prototypical news photography in the communist controlled base areas during the “Anti-Japanese War” (1937—1945). After the war, and the foundation of the PRC, the photographers who had developed the concept of news photography came to occupy most of the influential positions within the growing photo network, and used mass campaigns and individual persecution of opponents to drive out those who opposed their concept of a CCP-controlled photography, and promote one style of “correct” photography, i.e. news photography.

Like the shifting number of organizations and photographers joined in the network itself, the forms of news photography – in this study, the scrutiny is concentrated on the depiction of the Chinese leadership – also varied and shifted over time, following the restrictions imposed by the conditions of its production.

Countering the perception of propaganda photography being necessarily “untrue”, the study finds that Chinese news photography did indeed closely reflect “reality”, for those able to understand its specific forms of expression.

Zusammenfassung

Der Untersuchungsgegenstand dieser Arbeit ist das chinesische Fotonetzwerk im Zeitraum von 1942 bis 1981, und die Nachrichtenfotografie (*xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影), welche durch das Netzwerk publiziert wurde. Das Fotonetzwerk wird dabei als die Summe der Institutionen verstanden, welche für die Produktion und den Vertrieb von Fotos zuständig waren, wie bspw. nationale und regionale illustrierte Zeitschriften, die Fotoabteilung der Xinhua Nachrichtenagentur, verschiedene Ausstellungsformate, sowie auch die für Ausbildung und politische Leitung verantwortlichen Institutionen wie die Fotografie-Gesellschaft, Journalismus-Institute an Universitäten, usw. sowie darüber hinaus die Fotografen, Redakteure und weitere Beschäftigte dieser Institutionen.

Nachrichtenfotografie – definiert als die Fotografie unter Kontrolle der KPCh – war prinzipiell die einzige Form der Fotografie, welche im Fotonetzwerk zirkulieren durfte, und stellte daher die visuelle Form der Vermittlung der Perspektive der KPCh gegenüber der Bevölkerung Chinas und der Welt dar.

Eine große Anzahl von (Bild-)Quellen, darunter die *Volksillustrierte* (*Renmin huabao* 人民画报), *Illustrierte der Volksbefreiungsarmee* (*Jiefangjun huabao* 解放军画报), sowie der Fotokatalog *Nachrichtenfotos* (*Xinwen zhaopian* 新闻照片) der staatlichen Nachrichtenagentur Xinhua wurden untersucht, um die Produktion und Zirkulation der Fotos im Netzwerk nachzuvollziehen, und die in den Fotos verwendeten Formen in einen Zusammenhang mit den organisatorischen, institutionellen und biografischen Hintergründen ihrer Entstehung zu bringen. Dazu wurden die Fotos in Verbindung mit Textquellen gebracht, welche die „korrekte“ Form der Anfertigung von Fotos beschreiben.

Diese Quellen sind vor allem fotografische Fachzeitschriften wie bspw. *Fotonetzwerk* (*Sheying wang* 摄影网) der Volksbefreiungsarmee, *Nachrichtenfotografie* (*Xinwen sheying* 新闻摄影) der Xinhua Nachrichtenagentur, sowie *Chinesische Fotografie* (*Zhongguo sheying* 中国摄影) des Fotografenverbands.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass eine prototypische Nachrichtenfotografie in den kommunistischen Basisgebieten des „Anti-Japanischen Krieges“ (1937—1945) entstand. Die Fotografen, welche diese Form der Fotografie entwickelt hatten, besetzten nach dem Ende des Krieges und der Gründung der VR China die einflussreichsten Positionen im Fotonetzwerk, und sorgten durch Massenkampagnen und die Verfolgung individueller Gegner dafür, dass jene, welche sich gegen eine durch die KPCh kontrollierte Fotografie ausgesprochen hatten, aus dem Fotonetzwerk gedrängt wurden, und die Nachrichtenfotografie zur einzigen „korrekten“ Form der Fotografie wurde.

Ähnlich der sich ständig verändernden Anzahl und Anordnung der im Fotonetzwerk verbundenen Organisationen und Fotografen veränderte sich auch die Form der Nachrichtenfotografie laufend, da diese den sich laufend ändernden Bedingungen ihrer Produktion folgte. In dieser Studie wird dabei insbesondere die Veränderung der Darstellung politischer Führer in der chinesischen Fotografie genauer analysiert.

Im Gegensatz zur verbreiteten Annahme, dass Propagandafotografie nicht die „Realität“ widerspiegelt, zeigt diese Studie, dass die chinesische Nachrichtenfotografie die historische Realität sehr detailliert widerspiegelt, sofern man die in ihr verwendeten Formen zu lesen versteht.

Eidesstattliche Versicherung

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation „The Photo Network: Visual Communication in the Media of the People’s Republic of China, 1942—1981“ selbst verfasst habe und keine anderen als die in der Dissertation angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Außerdem versichere ich an Eides statt, dass die Dissertation nicht schon einmal in einem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder als ungenügend beurteilt worden ist.

Hamburg, 21.02.2020