

CENSORSHIP

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Privilege ownership involves stripping human rights from all working people, while the bureaucratic class strives with all its might to reduce these to such "rights" as are commonly enjoyed only by beasts of burden. Such a reduction of rights is utterly intolerable! . . . Give us back democracy! Give us back freedom! Give us back equality! Give us back human rights!"

In November 1979, when the journal began to feel the effects of repression, Liu Qing decided to publish the transcript of the trial of Wei Jingsheng, the most outspoken activist of the Democracy Wall movement. This decision angered the authorities, for the transcript made public the controversial and critical statements Wei had made *in camera* in his own defence during his trial. Liu was arrested shortly afterwards. He spent several months in detention at Beijing's Number One Prison before being sent to a remote region of Shaanxi province for labour reform. In August 1982, Liu was secretly tried in Beijing and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment at a labour camp in Qinghai Province. The authorities moved to imprison Liu because, in 1981, he smuggled out of his detention cell the 196-page essay "Notes from Prison" ("Yuzhong shouji"). The essay, which described Liu's arrest and detention and his insightful observations on the Democracy Wall movement, was published in Hong Kong, much to the annoyance of the Beijing police.

Acting on his former colleague's behalf, for much of early 1980 Xu Wenli used *Siwu Luntan* to request Liu Qing's release. By way of balance, Xu continued to advocate cooperation with the authorities, publicly proclaimed his continued belief in Marxism, and maintained that democracy would only be achieved under the leadership of the Communist Party. When, in March 1980, *Siwu Luntan* was closed down by the party, Xu's comments became more outspoken. Addressing a seminar, he stated:

All prisoners of conscience should be immediately set free. People imprisoned in the past for political offences should be given retrials . . . The focal point of all reforms should be human liberation, and the respect for human

values and human rights. The free development of each individual is the basis for all social progress.

On 10 April 1981 Xu was taken from his home by the police. The following year, he was charged with organizing a counter-revolutionary group and engaging in counter-revolutionary propaganda, and was imprisoned for 15 years. A number of letters written by Xu in prison were smuggled out of China and published in Hong Kong in December 1985.

Xu was released in May 1993, but was arrested again in December 1998 after trying to establish the China Democratic Party. He was sentenced to another 13 years' imprisonment. Liu Qing is now based in the US.

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60 MINUTES

US television programme, established 1968

60 Minutes is the longest continuously broadcast television news-magazine programme in the United States. Produced for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), *60 Minutes* includes news, human-interest, and humorous stories. A full-screen image of a ticking clock is used to signal the beginning and end of each story, which is narrated by one of the programme's multiple anchors. Over the years, *60 Minutes* has been anchored by some of television's most prominent journalists.

60 Minutes was the first mainstream news programme in the United States to use investigative journalism approaches that are known colloquially as "in-your-face". Pioneered by the "guerrilla" or alternative media movement in the mid-1960s - when inexpensive, portable video equipment first became avail-

able - these tactics were used by counter-culture activists to catch wrongdoers in the act. Using hidden cameras or surprise interviews with reluctant or resistant subjects, guerrilla media sought to expose or embarrass the elite "establishment". The technique is now used by human-rights activists throughout the world to penetrate official censorship and to document government or corporate abuses.

The mainstreaming of the technique by *60 Minutes*, a commercially sponsored programme, was possible in the United States during the waning years of the Vietnam War because of the growing public distrust of government and other institutions. The programme was an instant success and has remained at or near the top of audience ratings throughout its long

history. *60 Minutes* has won many awards for journalistic achievement, and it has been widely imitated.

Like guerrilla media, *60 Minutes* established its reputation by taking on powerful interests, for example federal, state, and local government agencies, the military, corporations, the medical establishment, and organized crime. In addition to meticulous research and careful fact-checking, the use of hidden cameras and of "ambush" interviews with recalcitrant subjects are hallmarks of the programme. The typical subject of a camera ambush is a government or corporate figure, suspected of wrongdoing, who has refused the programme's request for an interview. Subjects often respond by ducking out of camera range, covering their faces with coats, shouting at the reporters, or even attacking the cameraman. These evasive actions usually produce strong responses, and they work dramatically to confirm the impression that the subject has something to hide.

From its inception, *60 Minutes* promoted itself as representing tough-minded, staunchly ethical, independent and objective journalism in the Jeffersonian tradition, which casts the media in the role of a watch-dog guarding citizens against abuses by powerful institutions. For this reason, the programme's relation to its corporate parent, CBS, had to be able withstand extraordinary scrutiny. The business department and the news department were vaunted to be separate and that separation was represented by both sides as inviolate.

In November 1995, however, the partition was penetrated when the business side of the network intervened and self-censored a *60 Minutes* investigative report on the tobacco industry. This exercise of prior restraint by the company, in turn, became one of the top news stories of late 1995 because of a series of ethical questions raised by the incident.

The story involved an interview with a former official of the Brown and Williamson tobacco company, Jeffery Wigand. While an employee of the company, Wigand had signed an employment contract that stated he would not disclose company secrets. Wigand's whistle-blowing *60 Minutes*' interview would violate that contract. CBS lawyers feared that the network could be held liable for Wigand's breach of his contract.

The American Broadcasting Company's (ABC's) news magazine, *Day One*, had been sued by tobacco interests for a (true) story about excess nicotine in cigarettes. That suit, settled a few months prior to the *60 Minutes* incident, had resulted in an apology by the network to cigarette makers; and it reportedly cost ABC millions of dollars. *60 Minutes* had endured protracted lawsuits in the past, such as *Westmoreland v. Wallace*. When CBS censored the Wigand story, Brown and Williamson had neither filed nor threatened a suit.

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, critical press coverage focused on the dangers to free expression resulting from conglomerate ownership and vertical integration of communications interests. The Tisch Family, headed by Lawrence Tisch, president of CBS, also had financial interests in the tobacco

industry; his son, Andrew H. Tisch, was chairman of America's fourth largest tobacco company, Lorillard Tobacco Company. In addition, at the time of the controversy, CBS was for sale. Some analysts linked suppression of the story to the deal, speculating that the prospective buyer, Westinghouse, would not go through with the acquisition if the network faced the prospect of a costly lawsuit.

As analysis of the network's actions unfolded, it became clear that CBS News was also compromised by the Wigand story. *60 Minutes* had always presented itself as a purist in the debates about "checkbook journalism", the practice of paying sources, which is common among tabloid journalists. Wigand was not paid for the *60 Minutes* interview, but he had been paid a \$12,000 consultant's fee by CBS for his work on a March 1994 story on cigarettes as possible fire hazards.

The Wigand interview was eventually aired. Brown and Williamson did not sue. *60 Minutes* continues to pursue controversial stories. Mike Wallace, longtime *60 Minutes* anchor, renewed his advocacy for creation of News Councils in the United States to review and assess controversial newspaper or broadcast reports. Media critics continue to lament the threats to open media that are posed by increasing concentration and conglomeration of ownership in communication industries.

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