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## Contradictions

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## NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

This chronicle is the insert published in Liu Xiaobo printed version article

- 1 In May 2004, three of the major daily newspapers in the People's Republic, including *The People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*), announced that they would no longer publish articles praising local authorities and other officials<sup>1</sup>. This was the umpteenth attempt to fight the corruption rampant in the media in China<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, if the article opposite, which appeared at the beginning of this year in the Hong Kong monthly *Kaifang zazhi* (Open)<sup>3</sup>, is to be believed, the phenomenon is reaching worrying proportions. Its author, Liu Xiaobo, is an intellectual known for his commitment to democracy, and still lives in China despite the persecution he is subjected to and the opportunity he has to settle abroad. In 1996, he co-signed a text addressed to the Chinese leadership, which earned him a sentence of three years of re-education through labour<sup>4</sup>.
- 2 Liu Xiaobo's article on the Chinese media is of even greater interest since the arrest for corruption of three people from the Canton press group Nanfang<sup>5</sup>. Yu Huafeng, director of the *Nanfang dushibao* (Southern Metropolis News), and Li Mingying, former editor-in-chief of the paper, who were arrested in January were in March respectively sentenced to jail terms of 12 and 11 years<sup>6</sup>. And on the March 19th came the arrest of Cheng Yizhong, editor-in-chief of the *Nanfang dushibao*, who was also accused of embezzlement. These arrests set up a wave of protest in China, including at the highest level<sup>7</sup>; Cheng Yizhong has been freed end of August without charge.
- 3 It was the *Nanfang dushibao* which last year revealed "the Sun Zhigang affair", after the name of a young graphic designer from Wuhan who, not having his identity papers with him, was beaten to death by the police in Canton. The case provoked such emotion that it led to the repeal of the administrative decree which made it possible to arrest migrant workers and send them home. The same daily had revealed, at the end of last year, a case of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in Canton. In November the

Nanfang group also launched, with the Peking press group Guangming, a new daily in Peking, the *Xin Jing bao*, of which Cheng Yizhong was also editor-in-chief.

- 4 In reality, it is probably the conception of news and the journalistic practices of the Nanfang group, disregarding the censorship directives of the authorities, which caused the arrests of the three men. The irony is that the journalists who are most at risk of being accused of corruption are those who do their jobs properly, who publish genuine news, rather than the corrupt journalists whose activity consists of trying to please the authorities or the *nouveau riche* by publishing false news for their own personal gain.

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## NOTES

1. The two other papers are the *Guangming ribao* and the *Jingji ribao*. See “Chequebook ‘news’ banned as papers seek credibility”, *South China Morning Post*, May 12th 2004, p. A5.
2. In October 2003, Chinese Central Television (CCTV) asked its journalists to no longer accept money. See “CCTV warns staff against accepting cash on the job”, *South China Morning Post*, October 12th 2003, p. 6.
3. Liu Xiaobo, “Xinwen fubai zai heian zhong”, *Kaifang zazhi*, January 2004, pp. 45-48.
4. This text (“On Some Vital Issues Concerning our Country”), written by Liu Xiaobo and Wang Xizhe, was published in *China Perspectives*, No 8, November-December 1996, pp. 6-13. See also Frank Muyard, “Liu Xiaobo: A Chinese Intellectual Confronts Traditionalism and Nationalism”, followed by a translation of two texts by Liu Xiaobo, *China Perspectives*, No 11, May-June 1997, pp. 23-31.
5. As well as the daily *Nanfang dushibao*, the press group publishes the *Nanfang ribao* (Nanfang Daily), the weekly *Nanfang zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), and the *21 shiji jingji baodao* (21st Century Business Herald) which appears on Mondays and Thursdays.
6. After an appeal, their sentences were respectively reduced to eight and six years in prison. “News executives in graft case get lighter terms”, *South China Morning Post*, June 16th 2004, p. A4.
7. See Pan Xiaohong, “‘Nandu an’ chuxian xianzhu bianshu”, *Caijing*, June 5th 2004, pp. 112-113.