RESTRAINTS AND POSSIBILITIES:
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN
DENGIST CHINA - THE THREE GORGES DAM CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

In his famous poem *An early departure from the White Emperor City*, Tang poet Li Bai praised the tranquil and beautiful nature of the Three Gorges along the Yangtze River as comprising "rosy clouds", "cries of apes" and "range upon range of mountains". Writing a poem on the same place, Mao Zedong aspired to conquer the nature with human power and build up a dam to create a "calm lake" at the Three Gorges to "amaze the world".

Li's appreciation for the Yangtze scenery is typical of his contemporaries and many others in the younger generations. Preservation of the natural environment and historical constructions at the Three Gorges has been a focus of opposition against human destruction. But there are also many people who share Mao's ambition to tame the river, which has been bringing tremendous suffering to millions of people with its floods. As early as 1919, Sun Yat-sen suggested in his *Outline for Nation Building (Jianguo Fanglue)* to construct a dam at the Three Gorges to generate hydro-electricity and improve navigation. Under the Nationalist government engineers sent to the area to conduct a feasibility study recommended to construct a low dam to exploit the hydropower. In 1944 John L. Savage, the renowned American dam builder, was invited to China only to find that "I would rest my soul at the Three Gorges if God gives me time to accomplish the construction project". But his
proposal did not materialize in the face of the political and military upheavals.

After 1949, the Chinese communists eyed the construction of a Three Gorges dam as the possible realization of their ideological aspirations. Their eagerness was spurred by the 1954 flood, the biggest one in this century claiming 30,000 lives and suspending north-south railway transport for 100 days. Upon a tour of the Yangtze River in 1956, Mao wrote his "calm lake" poem, which determined the country's policy to plan to construct the world's biggest dam at the Three Gorges.

Under Mao the nature of power was highly centralized and decision-making was monopolized by the single leader. Mao was both a "true ruler" (zhen zhu) central in traditional Chinese ideas as the incarnation of truth and a political as well as ideological leader in a Marxist-Leninist system. No matter how rash and irrational, his words and even poems became policies, that is, the phenomenon of "one-man say" (yi yan tang). His "nodding projects" (to which the highest authority gave the nod without comprehensive planning) had resulted in disasters and severe losses. The Sanmenxia Project on the Yellow River and the Yangtze's Danjiangkou Project on its tributary Hanshui River are two examples. The Gezhouba Project along the Yangtze, considered a dress rehearsal for the future construction of the Three Gorges dam, commenced on December 26, 1970, Mao's birthday, without
proper planning. With ideological fervour, the dam builders undertook survey, design and construction work simultaneously. As a result, technical and design problems compelled premier Zhou Enlai to order a halt to construction in November 1972, which could not resume until October 1974. In the end the project took 20 years in total to complete, which lagged far behind the planned schedule, with a cost of 4.8 billion yuan, more than triple the proposed amount.

Mao did not completely close his ears to deviant opinions from bureaucrats like Li Rui, then the vice-minister of Electric Power, in the Three Gorges case, but this was confined to a highly limited circle in whom he trusted. Moreover, with "politics in command", dissidents were vulnerable to reprisals when the political climate changed. One's opinion was considered as an expression of one's ideological stand. This could in turn be taken as evidence for prosecuting a dissident in times of a political campaign.

Political irrationality was denounced in the late 1970s with the coming to power of Deng Xiaoping, who tried to reverse "leftist" practices by replacing the personal nature of political power with collective leadership and by restoring the legitimacy of the Party. He decried the overconcentration of power in the hands of individuals and the placing of individuals above the organization. Ideology was reduced to the Four Cardinal Principles, essentially the
leading role of the Party and in turn the leadership of Deng. Within this boundary the existence of diverse interests and articulation of deviant opinions were recognized. Deng also proposed to check the practice of perceiving "critical arguments" as coming from a specific "political background" and branding them as "political rumours". Though practiced with intermittent retractions and confined within limits, the new political orientation substantially attenuated the monolithic character of the Maoist political system.

The leadership's pragmatic and rational approach pointed to increased transparency in the post-Mao political setup. A system of "social consultation and dialogue" emphasizing that "on major matters (the Party will) let people know, and major problems will be discussed by the people", as endorsed in the 1987 Thirteenth Party plenum, became the new party line which was maintained until the summer of 1989. Knowledge and intellectual talent were respected as valuable resources for modernization. Consultation and feasibility studies were given more weight in the decision-making process. The leaders were well aware of the lessons of the disastrous Maoist policies. A wider space for interest articulation and expression of opinions was permitted both in the state institutions and society. As will be shown, this was exploited by political actors in various non-bureaucratic institutional and social sectors in the periphery to push for their causes.
However, the articulation of interests was far from a manifestation of freedom of expression per se. People's intrinsic rights have never been recognized and the prospect for the development of a western-style democracy has been emphatically rejected. The Party, dominated by a core leadership, has no intention to relinquish its leading role in ideology-defining, agenda-setting and decision-making. Official intervention is still prevalent. The leaders and those supported by them have much room, and indeed the biggest power, to manipulate the way things work. Their authority remains unchallenged, but the rules of the game changed - and they chose to have these changes.

The post-Mao development is reminiscent of the "consultative authoritarianism" inspired by Gordon Skilling and adopted by Harry Harding. In his discussion of the former Eastern Europe and Soviet Union, Skilling points out that under a consultative authoritarian regime bureaucratic groups such as the party and state administrators take over the position previously held by the police in the quasi-totalitarian state. But there is an increasing willingness to bring some of the professional groups, such as the economists and the scientists, into the decision-making process, although the party apparat continues to play the superior role both in theory and in practice. Broader social groups continue to be impotent. Intellectuals in the arts and humanities, moreover, remain under strict control, but
they can occasionally assert their own viewpoints.  

The theory can be applied to communist states in a transition from "quasi-totalitarianism", and sheds some light on the political development of post-Cultural Revolution China. From the Three Gorges dam case, one can discern that the leadership's rational approach to decision-making opens up wider breathing space for political participation and raises people's aspirations for more public supervision. Scientists and other intellectuals try various means to exploit the opportunity and push for their causes, not only in relation to the Three Gorges dam proposal, but also more broadly the decision-making process in general. The efforts, however, always end up with obstruction and frustration. Criticisms, if they are allowed, cannot go beyond the boundary of one-party rule devoid of political competition. "Consultation" here, applied to the Three Gorges case, means not only active solicitation of opinions, but also a passive willingness to heed, at least tolerate, alternative views. This does not imply that the decision-makers recognize that lower levels and non-establishment aspirants can attain any share in agenda-setting or decision-making. Nor does it mean that they give an impartial ear to all articulations from different interest backgrounds and draw an objective conclusion. Instead, they hold a pre-conceived leaning regarding the issue. Consultation is meant to improve the scheme that they opt for and possibly to affirm legitimacy.
for the project. But the element of "passive consultation" enables people to make counter-proposals with an idea that they will be tolerated. Ultimate decision-making power lies with the top leadership. The leaders, and the bureaucratic units they support, retain overwhelming power and leverage, in effecting an outcome which falls in line with their aspirations. This is not accomplished by coercion, personal power or ideology. Instead, they try to convince people to believe and follow by such ways as the manipulation of the availability of information and biased feasibility studies.

The intensity of debate, the leniency towards alternative voices, and the assertiveness of public initiatives involving the Three Gorges dam proposal are unprecedented. While this paper tries to show the decision-making process in a "consultative authoritarian" regime, it also expounds how the lower-level bureaucratic units, the non-bureaucratic institutions and individual political actors responded to the increased possibilities. It will start with a brief account of the debate that took place under Mao. In the second chapter I shall discuss the decision-making dynamics within the leadership and the bureaucracy. This will be followed by non-bureaucratic institutions - the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and then individual political actors in society. But findings on the Three Gorges dam case are by no means all-encompassing as an
indicator of the post-Mao political situation. It may be a special case in light of its unprecedented scale and impact, which requires exceptionally cautious consideration on the part of the leadership and also commands specific concern from the people from below.
ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE DEBATE

Following the 1954 flood, many people started to consider seriously constructing a Three Gorges dam. Debate over the desirability and feasibility of building a gigantic dam was triggered off in 1956. The major bureaucratic actors were the Yangtze Valley Planning Office (YVPO), Ministry of Water Resources and Electric Power (MWREP), Ministry of Communications, State Planning Commission (SPC), State Science and Technology Commission (SSTC), pertinent Machine Building Ministries, Ministry of Finance, Chongqing municipality, and the provinces along the Yangtze from Sichuan to Shanghai.

The two protagonists of the debate in the 1950s were Lin Yishan and Li Rui. The former was head of the YVPO, which was under the then Ministry of Water Resources and Electric Power. The latter was vice-minister of Electric Power and at one time Mao's secretary.

In general, people from the YVPO and the water conservancy sector supported a high dam for flood control, while those from the electric power sector held an opposite view of constructing smaller-scale dams on the tributaries to alleviate the problem of electricity shortage, rather than committing huge investment in building a single gigantic dam on the mainstream.
Lin, considering the project from the water conservancy standpoint, proposed to build a dam with a normal water level of 235 metres for flood control. This was opposed by Li. He insisted that the dam, should it be built, had to be planned as a multi-purpose project taking into account hydro-electric generation and navigation. He also observed that the existing level of economic development and technological knowhow could not provide sufficient conditions for the construction of a high dam which would involve immense costs and technical complications. Instead, he suggested to build smaller dams on the tributaries to perform the same tasks so that a major project could be considered when the national economy permitted. These arguments remained the central issues of the debate extending into the 1990s.

The contending parties tried to bring their arguments to the public, but the debate was strictly controlled by the leaders. To put it in another way, access to the mass media hinged on the liking of Mao and Zhou Enlai. The first article of the debate appeared in 1956 by an official from the Yangtze Water Conservancy Committee (which was later turned into the YVPO) in support of dam construction. This was later rebutted by Li in a journal on hydroelectricity. But both of them received little attention. On September 1, *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)* carried on the front page news that a survey on the Yangtze water resources had been
completed and that preparations for planning and construction technicalities of the dam were underway. Sensing the imminence of project endorsement, Li tried to launch a brief rebuttal in the paper, but was, according to Li, prevented by Zhou who "disapproved of publicly debating the issue in the newspaper at that time." Alternatively, Li wrote a short metaphorical piece "Big Fishing Nettism" on April 14, 1957 in *People's Daily*, which was used to support anti-party charges against him in subsequent political campaigns (more below). Opponents managed to get their views published, but this was only made possible by the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

Both Lin and Li tried to lobby the leadership, essentially Mao and Zhou, who was in charge of the matter. The debate was carried into the Nanning Conference in 1958, in which both were asked by Mao to present a paper on their views. This culminated in the adoption during the Chengdu Conference, held in the same year, of "The CCP Centre's Opinion on the Three Gorges Water Conservancy Hub and Yangtze Valley Planning" which took an intermediate position. Endorsing the project "in principle", it ratified the necessity of constructing a dam at the Three Gorges, but maintained that preparations had to be well in place before actual construction. It also estimated that from survey to construction would take 15 to 20 years.
Mao's stand. Up till his death in 1976, dam supporters tried several times to push for their cause, but failed in the face of economic and political instabilities. Every time the decision was made by Mao, be it endorsing the idea with his "calm lake" poem, demanding more thorough preparation, or deciding on a postponement of construction. One may consider the argument between Lin and Li as a kind of internal bargaining or consultation by the leader. But the consultation, should it be taken this way, was strictly controlled and confined to a minor bureaucratic circle trusted by Mao. There was no way that others could express their views on the subject, except at the time when the supreme leader permitted, that is, during the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

Dissidents, however, were vulnerable to reprisals under changing political climate. The same opinions which had been appreciated under a lenient political environment, defined by Mao, could turn into "evidence of a crime" in a political campaign. The reward for Li's opposition was 20 years' criticisms and repudiations starting in 1959. In this year his "Big Fishing Nettism" was used as evidence for accusations. Based on the metaphor of a failed attempt to knit a super-big net for an extraordinary fish harvest, Li criticized some people for trying to realize grand dreams, disregarding the realistic situation and putting aside other more urgent tasks. Put into the context of the Three Gorges debate at that time, his intention was clear enough.
Moreover, those who had shared Li's view were also drawn into the denunciation. From the late 1950s through to the Cultural Revolution, they were criticized as a whole as the "Li Rui anti-party clique". Not only Li, but also other officials in the electric power sector were accused of being "anti-Three Gorges, anti-water conservancy, anti-thermal power". Li could not regain his job or "freedom" of articulation until 1979.

From the late 1950s to 1978 dam proponents tried several times to get a go-ahead from the leadership but failed. China's efforts to recover from the Great Leap Forward were frustrated by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which seriously undermined the political, economic and social stability needed to support a project of the Three Gorges dam's scale. This was followed by the Sino-Soviet war scare in 1969-70, which might make a dam as big as the Three Gorges' a target of attack. It was not until the late 1970s when the economy started to expand, political stability resumed and the "four modernizations" was proposed that the project regained serious consideration.
After decades of debate, the State Council endorsed in April 1984 "in principle" the YVPO's "Feasibility Study Report for the Three Gorges Water Conservancy Hub's 150-metre Proposal", with a normal water level of 150 metres and a dam height of 175 metres. In the same year the first construction team was sent to the Three Gorges for preparatory work. Construction was scheduled to start in 1986.

The normal water level was the core issue of debate, as it determined the flood control capacity, power generation potential and the scale of the harbour to be created. It also affected the area to be inundated and thus the population to be resettled. The higher the dam was, the more technical problems there would be, such as siltation, water gate construction and environmental conservation. In general the MWREP and the YVPO were the keenest supporters of dam construction. It was also supported by the provinces which would benefit most from the dam, namely Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Jiangsu. However, the Ministry of Communications and the Sichuan provincial government held opposite views. The former was worried about transportation disruptions during the construction period as well as possible navigational problems because of siltation. The latter would suffer from the burden of resettlement since the reservoir
would flood part of the Sichuan province. To counter this opposition, the Party leadership accepted a proposal in 1984 to create a Three Gorges Province. However, the plan was abandoned in 1986 when the State Council decided to disband the Three Gorges Province Organizing Group.\textsuperscript{20}

The 150-metre proposal, considered a low dam, enjoyed considerable support. It included Qian Zhengying, the then minister of Water Resources and Electric Power. In an article,\textsuperscript{21} Qian noted that she and other colleagues had favoured the 150-metre proposal on the grounds that both the resettlement and siltation problems could be more easily handled. Li Rui also expressed support for the proposal, but he later explained that it was meant to be a tactic to delay the project.\textsuperscript{22}

However, the 150-metre proposal had two groups of opponents. The first were people in the surrounding area of the reservoir and those in the lower reaches. The former felt they would be required to make temporary removals in case of serious floods when the reservoir needs to retain excessive water and thereby inundate its shores. The latter felt unstable since the short dam's flood control capacity is limited.

The second main type of opposition came from Chongqing city, which played a significant part in reversing the original decision. In September 1984, the Chongqing
municipal government made a submission to the State Council proposing to raise the water level to 180 metres, so that a deep harbour could be dredged to allow 10,000-ton ships to go all the way to Chongqing, and thereby help the city's economy to prosper. The Ministry of Communications also joined in as an advocate, perhaps as a strategy of supporting a dam too tall and too much trouble to build and finance to be adopted. Co-inciding with this was a surge of opposition from the CPPCC - in an opposite direction which advocated that the project should be postponed or scrapped.

The endeavours resulted in a revocation of the 1984 decision. In June 1986, following an inspection tour to the Three Gorges area by the then premier Zhao Ziyang and vice-premier Li Peng, the party centre and the State Council jointly issued the "Circular Concerning the Problems of the Yangtze Three Gorges Project Feasibility Study", dubbed "number 15 document". It stated that "there are still some problems and new suggestions which need in-depth studies from the economic and technical perspectives" so as to make it "more meticulous, precise, and reliable".

Yet the 1984 decision, though "in principle", had been more solid than any previous ones. The leaders, especially Deng Xiaoping, could have sufficient authority to force it through by bypassing the bureaucracy. But they chose not to. Under the reforms, the nature of political power has changed to one which relies for its legitimacy more on general
support than coercion, ideology or personal charisma. At the same time, the legitimacy of decisions is based on rational consensus. As shown in the Three Gorges dam case, leaders are more willing to seek a "satisficing" solution, that is, an attempt to arrive at a decision which can secure the agreement of various relevant interests and priorities within the bureaucracy. To achieve this, the leadership needs to adopt consultation, be it active or passive. This is especially the case in a structurally-based "fragmented authoritarian" system, in which authority below the top leadership is fragmented and disjointed. The Chongqing incident can be interpreted as a process of consultation as well as bargaining, which together contributed to rational consensus-building.

Obviously the bureaucratic units took advantage of the new political development to press for an outcome as close to their interests as possible. While the new approach of decision-making left some more space for lower levels to assert their influence, the leadership's implicit recognition of diverse interests and the reduction in coercion emboldened them to push more forcefully for their causes. Officials from Chongqing municipality and the Ministry of Communications did not receive subsequent reprisals as their counterparts had under Mao.

Despite such changes, the nature of political power remains basically centralized - it becomes impersonalized
but not impartial. The leadership's inclination was spelled out as early as in 1982, when Deng expressed support for the 150-metre low dam proposal. His view was shared by other top-level leaders such as Chen Yun, Li Xiannian and Hu Yaobang.27 Shortly before the release of the "number 15 document", Deng made public that the Three Gorges dam project had more benefits than shortcomings,28 although he assured that "no start of construction work or imprudent moves will be made until a proposal with maximum benefit and minimum shortcomings is derived."29 Li Peng, for his part, is notorious for supporting the project. A former minister of Electric Power, he took charge of the Three Gorges project in mid-1984 as vice-premier. He has been supporting the endeavour, though at the same time toed the leadership line in recognizing the government's "cautious attitude". A year after the June Fourth suppression, after securing a top-level position, his supportive stand became more prominent.30 With his patronage the dam proponents got much advantage in controlling media opinion and the feasibility studies.

Not all of the top leaders, however, supported the project. According to Tian Fang, one of the key intellectual opponents, several top-level leaders had cautioned about the problems of resettlement, siltation and finance. They also criticized the ministry in charge, presumably the MWREP, for deterring the opposition from making public their views.31 It indicates a power balance within the leadership: under
the premises of rational policy-making and collective leadership, reservations of the "several top-level leaders" had counter-balanced Li Peng who could not assume the authority to ride roughshod over the leading opponents. But he had sufficient power, possibly with Deng's support, to manoeuvre and manipulate in favour of a project endorsement.

The supporters' pre-conceived position had set a fundamental boundary for the "consultation" exercise and a definition of the relevance of opinions. Although the regime became more consultative in allowing Chongqing to play such an influential part in the consensus-building exercise (the 1984 decision was revoked and that feasibility study was re-started), discussion had never gone beyond the line that a dam had to be built. Bargaining remained at the level of dam height and accompanying technicalities, and feasibility studies were meant to improve the dam's design, rather than exploring the desirability of constructing a Three Gorges dam.

The leadership retained overwhelming leverage over the political system as a whole. Bias towards the top leadership's preference was manifested by the MWREP's domination over the feasibility study. After the repudiation of the 1984 decision, the State Council appointed the MWREP to head a Three Gorges Project Demonstration Leading Group, while itself forming a Three Gorges Examination Committee. All the 11 members of the Leading Group were heads, deputy
heads or engineers of the MWREP, YVPO and the Corporation for Three Gorges Development, all of whom supported dam construction. Most leaders of the 14 expert groups under the Leading Group belonged to the water conservancy and electric power network. The corollary was that findings of the feasibility study were in favour of dam construction, falling within the boundary of the leaders' position. In 1988 the Leading Group released a report that "the Three Gorges project is indispensable for our country's four modernizations; it is technically feasible and economically reasonable. It is better to build it than not, more beneficial to do it early than late." The normal water level was proposed to be 175 metres. Moreover, the report was endorsed by almost all of the 412 experts involved, save ten who submitted their views separately as an annex.

Besides local investigation, the Leading Group also borrowed the favourable results of a Canadian consultancy firm's feasibility study which started in 1986 under the sponsorship of the Canadian government. In 1988 the Canadian consultancy cooperated with the Leading Group to conduct "complementary studies", and eventually produced findings that mostly were in line with those of the Chinese study, except to agree that normal water level should be at 160 metres.

Consistent with the rationality and pragmatism of the Dengist regime, the leadership had carried out lengthy
studies to ensure that the planning was economically and technically sound, and thereby hoped to command general support. However, though allowing lower-level bureaucratic participants to play a more assertive and influential role in the decision-making process, the leadership retained overwhelming authority to set the agenda, make the final decision and manipulate a favourable outcome out of a superficially "liberal" opinion-solicitation exercise.
THREE
NON-BUREAUCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

National People's Congress

In 1992 the National People's Congress (NPC) unprecedentedly moved away from its rubber stamp image and raised many an eyebrow with intense debate over the Three Gorges dam project and a show of opposition to the proposal. Out of the 2,633 attendants, 177 opposed, 664 abstained from voting, an indication of opposition, doubt and reservation, and 25 did not vote at all. The numbers added up to be about one third of the attending total.

A Taiwan deputy, Huang Shunshing, protested against the regime's "lack of respect for law" by walking out of the meeting after he was prevented from speaking before the voting. He was followed by another Taiwan deputy Liu Caipin who also walked out after voting "no".

The meeting also witnessed a more assertive attempt to represent sectoral interests. Fourteen deputies from Chongqing, remaining doubtful about the official feasibility study, submitted a motion demanding a more thorough study and appraisal on the effects the Three Gorges dam project might produce on Chongqing's economy and environment. Deviating from its 1984 stand in support of constructing a high dam, Chongqing came to realize that the project might bring various problems despite the economic benefits to be
made possible by the formation of a deeper harbour. Delegates were worried that siltation, for which the official feasibility study failed to provide a totally satisfactory solution, might eventually obstruct navigation and flood the wharves, which would undermine Chongqing's economic prosperity. In addition, siltation also increased the possibility of flooding in Chongqing. Environmentally, reduction in the speed of water flow behind the dam would intensify marine pollution along the Chongqing shore.

Interpreted as a gesture of defending local interests, a deputy from Sichuan, which downstream from Chongqing would suffer most from the project in light of the resettlement and environmental problems, suggested to divide NPC members into three groups for voting - those from areas around the Three Gorges (presumably including Sichuan), from Chongqing, and the remaining national representatives. He even suggested that delegates from "certain small number of constituencies" should have veto power on the project.35

The scale of defiance was unprecedented in Congress history. Deputies became more assertive in demanding greater responsiveness on the part of the government. As shown above, some of them had extricated themselves from the traditional role of NPC deputies in rationalizing central decisions based on national interests, and became more active in trying to uphold the well-being of their localities. In the process they refused to unquestioningly
toe the official line and at times defied it. The increased sense of representation and willingness to represent sectoral interests marked a significant change in the NPC. 36

This was made possible by the relatively mild political atmosphere in the 1980s. The NPC's increasing assertiveness developed with the leadership's calls for political reform on the basis of "socialist democracy" in the late 1980s. Deng's advocacy on the "institutionalization and legalization of democracy" (minzhu zhiduhua faluhua) was echoed by Zhao Ziyang's call to keep political reform in pace with economic reform. 37 They were answered by a proposal put forward by 270 deputies during the 1989 general session, calling on the project to be postponed until the next century. It was based on the consideration that the project, if undertaken now, would destabilise the national economy and social order in view of its scale and impact. Alternatively, it suggested that it would be best to first develop the tributaries and upper reaches.

In 1992, three years after the June Fourth crackdown, the reformist line revived with Deng's January tour to Shenzhen and Zhuhai, during which he spelled out in unequivocal terms the Party's determination to continue with the reform and open policy, and more importantly to identify "anti-leftism" as its major task. News about the tour was published in major official newspapers to coincide with the NPC general session in March. 38 It sent an implicit message to the
deputies that diverse interests and deviant opinions, results of the reform and open policy, were recognized as de facto legitimate. Li Peng's report, for example, got more than 150 amendments, including an insertion of the "anti-leftist" policy.

Although criticisms were given more space to survive, which raised people's aspirations to enhance the deputies' power, they required approval granted by the Party, i.e., the top leaders in power. The 1992 upheaval was made possible because Li Peng and General Secretary Jiang Zemin had declared before the session that "dissident opinions would not be treated as political matters", followed up by vice-premier and SPC head Zhou Jiahua, who assured the meeting that all "supportive, skeptical or dissident opinions" would be listened to reasonably rather than discriminated against.

The Party has never in practice recognized the NPC's constitutional status as an institution of representation in a true sense. It is unprecedented for the Party to present a major project to the body for scrutiny. Although the Party's entrusting the final decision-making power to the NPC in order to derive legitimacy for the project from an "elected" body, rather than from a supreme leader as had happened in the past, can be interpreted as an indication of the Party's implicit recognition of the NPC's nominal "representation", the Party never allows institutional responsiveness. Nor
does it permit political competition recognizing deputies' constitutional rights as ultimate decision-makers. The borderline of one-party rule is not to be trespassed. Though permitting wider space for criticisms, the Party does not allow the NPC power to act independently in performing legislative tasks. At best it is a legitimizing agent and an informal consultant. The final decision will remain the Party's monopoly.

However, the leaders adopted a consultative profile rather than utilizing their authority to ride roughshod over the deputies. By doing this, they could claim credit for having the project endorsed "democratically and scientifically". (The terms had almost become the catchwords of both the dam's proponents and opponents in debating the project and decision-making process). Nevertheless, the regime was in a dilemma: the intention to maintain centralized power was in conflict with truly democratic policy-making based on fair political competition.

To resolve the dilemma, dam supporters relied on new ways of control - manipulation of the availability of information and lobbying. With their overriding power, bureaucratic proponents of the dam under the leadership's patronage tried to shape a media opinion favourable to their inclinations. To ensure the proposal's endorsement in the NPC's 1992 session, articles supporting the Three Gorges dam had dominated the major mass media since December 1991.42 The
opposition, on the other hand, was not given an opportunity to be published. In the run up to the NPC general session, the bureaucracy organized fact-finding tours for NPC and CPPCC members to the designated construction site of Sandouping, and made sure that all positive responses were reported.43 During the NPC session, the government spent large amounts of money to hold a large-scale exhibition in Beijing for the deputies and distributed books published by the Water Resources and Electric Power Publisher, presumably under the MWREP, promoting the Three Gorges dam. Papers critical of the dam's implications were withheld: only one opposing document was distributed to deputies during the session. No opponent managed to get their messages transmitted through floor-speeches (which caused Taiwan deputy Huang Shunshing's walk-out), and official proposals for the project contained little information about the dissent. Moreover, to alleviate the doubts of deputies such as those from Chongqing, top officials like Zhou Jiahua and Qian Zhengying held direct interchanges with them to explain the project and strength of the feasibility study. They were engaged in what could be considered lobbying.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

The CPPCC's position as an advisor to the Party was upgraded with the Dengist government's emphasis on basing decisions upon scientifically derived knowledge, the
corollary of which was giving heavier weight to the role of experts. The post-Mao leaders' eagerness to tap the nation's intellectual resources for policy-making was manifested in their promotion of the CPPCC as a "depository of comprehensive talents" and a "think tank" for economic and political reforms.44

Delegates were ready to exploit their new role to play a more active part in influencing policy formulation. Assigning themselves the task of providing intellectual support for the "democratic and scientific" decision-making process,45 the delegates also hoped to help "supervise" the government with opinions and criticisms.46 This was demonstrated in the Three Gorges dam debate, in which some CPPCC members tried vigourously to shelve or scrap the project. Their performance commanded considerable public attention and was at times influential in delaying the decision.

In the 1985 CPPCC meeting, when debate over dam construction had been spurred by Chongqing's and other bureaucratic units' objections, economist Qian Jiaju and 49 other delegates made a "Proposal for experts to conduct a scientific study and to strike a consensus in view of the widespread impact of the Yangtze Three Gorges water conservancy project". This was followed by another 100 delegates' proposal to adopt a cautious attitude towards the project.47 In May, Xuan Yueqi, a leader of the Revolutionary
Guomindang "democratic party", led an investigation team of the Conference on a 38-day study tour along the Yangtze from Chengdu to Wuhan. Their conclusion was that the project presented more disadvantages than advantages. In their report to the Party and the State Council, they proposed to postpone the scheme and first develop Yangtze's tributaries.48

The CPPCC debate on the Three Gorges dam reached another climax in the 1986 national session when Qian Jiaju denounced the scheme as a "fishing project" (which was said to need limited investment at the beginning by the planners but later involved ever greater additional funds after it started). He proposed suspension of the project and to use the investment on compulsory education.49 His speech stirred up strong reactions and was interrupted 16 times by the audience's applause. On the same occasion, other delegates called for the construction of smaller-scale hydropower stations50 and warned against the environmental damage in Sichuan.51 That year the "number 15 document" was issued to re-start the feasibility study, and Li Peng expressed a prudent attitude. One cannot conclude that the leadership's decision was solely prompted by the CPPCC's opposition, but it exerted a certain influence.

In 1988, 182 CPPCC delegates went on another study tour to Hubei and Sichuan, and came back "very worried". Apart from financial and technical problems,52 they were disturbed by
the dishonesty of bureaucratic supporters who, for example, used fake film to exaggerate the beneficial results of the experiment on the proposed "developmental resettlement". Their report demanded "the Three Gorges project be postponed rather than go ahead soon". In a reply, Zhao Ziyang indicated that "the problems raised in the report should be seriously considered", and that "cautious decisions would be made as to the possibility and necessity (of constructing the dam) after sufficient study." The Leading Group's feasibility report continued to draw objections. In January 1989, 10 CPPCC members who were advisers to the Leading Group petitioned the government and presented their opinions. In April, the leadership announced it would shelve the project for five years. Given the confusing economic and political situation at that time, it is hard to speculate whether it was Zhao Ziyang's or Li Peng's inclinations, or economic constraints that determined the postponement.

The delegates not only asserted their points to the leadership through formal channels, but also tried to reach the public through various means. During the 1992 NPC session, they participated in a television debate on the Three Gorges project, apparently attempting to influence the outcome of the final decision. They also cooperated with the dissenting intellectuals to publish books expounding alternative views on different aspects. The Democratic League (Minmeng), of which Qian Jiaju, Fei Xiaotong, and the
late environmentalist Hao Xueyu are members, used its journal *Popular Tribune (Qunyan)* as a forum for dissident opinions in general. Since February 1987 there had been a special column on the Three Gorges dam project. The column was suspended in May 1989, probably because of the unstable political environment, until February 1990. Objections revolved around three main points: 1. Economic reasonability: they were afraid that it would be a "fishing project" with slow returns, since it would take twelve years at the earliest to generate electricity. 2. That the economy would face difficulty in supporting the huge investment of 57 billion yuan excluding interest and inflation. 3. Technicalities including siltation, navigation, environmental destruction and resettlement. Some were also worried about national security, as the dam would become an easy target of attack in case of war.

In the Three Gorges dam debate other "democratic parties" in addition to the Democratic League played a prominent role. These are not political parties *per se*, but professional associations of intellectuals. With their expertise they produced high-standard arguments to challenge the dam's supporters and to shake the leaders' confidence. In 1984, when Chongqing rejected the 150-metre proposal, the Jiusan Society, notably of engineers, reportedly on the basis of encouragement from the Sichuan provincial government, undertook its own feasibility study of the scheme and found severe technical problems. This was
circulated widely and had an impact at the State Council level. The Society's chairman, Zhou Peiyuan, was active in the debate. His standing as an acclaimed scientist gave his words substantial weight. Many people hoped to bolster the influence of the "democratic parties" in the policy-making process. But the control of the Party placed significant constraints on them - and they themselves did not show any intention to assume any direct political power.57

The "rejuvenation" of the CPPCC on the Three Gorges dam issue and the leadership's increased "eagerness" to solicit its opinions encouraged the members to expect an upgrade in the body's function of "political consultation and democratic supervision" (zhengzhi xieshang, minzhu jiandu).58 There were signs that delegates were perceiving a change in their roles from being a previous source of support for party policy, a channel for re-education and collection of historical materials to a "think tank". Within the five years of the Sixth CPPCC from 1983 to 1987, there were 7,661 proposals from members, as compared to the previous five years' 3,528. Among these, 99.5% were dealt with by the government, of which 75% were adopted.59 The official mass media, moreover, gave substantial coverage to the role of the "democratic parties' political participation.60

Evidence of this kind presents a picture that the leadership has put more emphasis on the CPPCC's advice in
its consultation exercise for a rational decision, as in the case of the Three Gorges dam issue. From the information available, its attitude towards the Conference seems to be more as a listening ear than an active lobbyist as in the case of the NPC. The leadership's high capacity for accommodation can be explained by the fact that the CPPCC does not have any decision-making power. Members' objections do not carry binding power, but given their professional knowledge can serve as resources for alternative considerations. Moreover, permitting an unthreatening organization to speak out can help shape a democratic image for the government. The bureaucrats and ultimately the leadership retained power to control things. CPPCC delegates were excluded from the project's Leading Group and were only invited to be advisers. Their views, moreover, could hardly be published in the official mass media.

The delegates, on the other hand, seemed to be well aware of the boundary that the government sanctioned. They exploited the lenient political atmosphere of the mid-1980s to articulate opposition, but stopped short after the NPC's resolution in 1992. Their criticisms had never trespassed the limits of the Chinese Communist Party's political monopoly or challenged the socialist system's integrity. Their opposition to the Three Gorges dam proposal was based more on their "patriotism" and aspirations to realize "socialist democracy" than any intention to realize their
intrinsic rights. Moreover, their selection by the Party rather than through popular elections gave their opinions limited credibility as being representative of society.
FOUR

THE DISSenting INTELLECTuals

Members of this group are key actors in the "passive consultation" process regarding the Three Gorges dam, in the sense that it was they who took the initiative to press their opinions through various channels rather than the state actively offering the agenda for scrutiny "from below". Their existence was made possible by the reforms which opened up a gap for public involvement, especially in the Three Gorges dam case. However, the leadership did not assign as much weight to their voices as it did to the non-bureaucratic institutions. The appeals of the intellectuals often fell on deaf ears; at worst they were subjected to reprisals when political climate changed.

The intellectuals who opposed the dam can be roughly identified as of two groups. The first mainly consists of retired cadres, including Li Rui and former SPC officials Tian Fang and Lin Fatang. They hold senior membership in the Chinese Communist Party, and some of them like Li Rui had undergone repeated political reprisals and rehabilitations in a "quasi-totalitarian" system. In the Three Gorges debate they actively challenged the hegemony of dam proponents, denouncing the domination of "one-man say", "one school's thought" and "subjectivism" with leftist characteristics. They also objected, especially Li, to any tendency to interpret the opponents' views as an expression of a
dissident political stand. While arguing against the feasibility study's reliability and the timing of project implementation, they queried the desirability of the existing decision-making mechanism. Li suggested the establishment of an institutionalized scientific decision-making system, while Tian advocated that improvements should be made in democratizing and increasing the transparency of the political system as well as supervision of government policies by public opinion. However, their arguments have never gone beyond the boundary of Party leadership. Tian personally identified himself as speaking out with the conscience of an "old party member" (lao dangyuan), rather than as exercising his civil rights. What intellectuals in his group expect from a "democratic and scientific" setup are the inclusion of public initiatives in the decision-making process and public supervision of state administration within the framework of socialist leadership and single-party control, recognizing the party centre's ultimate decision-making power and political non-competition, rather than an institutionalized recognition of societal forces with diverse interests and respect for them as legitimate political players on an equal footing with the Party in agenda-setting, let alone a recognition of people's civil rights and equality.

The second group comprises intellectuals led by Dai Qing. Their stand is relatively radical compared with the first
group. In his introduction to Dai Qing's Yangtze, Yangtze (Changjiang, Changjiang) published in early 1989, People's Daily's (Renmin Ribao) commentator Wu Guoguang used the metaphor of "sounding a bugle call" to explicitly challenge the centralized political system. He extended his argument from the Three Gorges debate to a more general principle that public political power should not be granted by leaders upon their liking, but a right independent from political restraints. He called for cooperation to manoeuvre towards the diversification of political and social life, so as to establish "scientific rationality" and people's independent identities.  

In an interview with me, Dai Qing identified herself as exercising her civil rights in articulating opposition to the Three Gorges dam project. Discerning that all existing unofficial organizations concentrate on recreational activities, some members of this group, including Dai, are trying to form an environmental group. If approved, it will be the first officially-recognized autonomous organization manned by dissidents in Chinese communist history. Exploiting the available political space under the reforms, organizers aspire to constrain the government's behaviour, and to help through this group to develop China's civil society (minjian shehui) and to groom social activists. While her counterparts in the first group concentrate their efforts to lobby domestically against the project, Dai brought her case abroad to gather foreign support for a boycott. She succeeded in getting
backing from such environmental groups as Friends of the Earth, Probe International, International Rivers Network and Green China. Together they put pressure on the World Bank and international corporate money-lenders to not fund the Three Gorges dam.

The intellectuals tried various ways to channel their opinions. These included direct lobbying by writing to top leaders. Li Rui wrote to Zhou Jiahua and Jiang Zemin demanding that they considered the project in the next century, and Tian Fang and Lin Fatang wrote to Qiao Shi. Materials supplied by Dai Qing to NPC Taiwanese deputy Liu Caipin helped the latter to shape her arguments in the Congress as well as in a letter to Qiao Shi. An important way to have their views made public and effectively conveyed to the leadership was their cooperation with CPPCC members in disseminating information and publishing books. In the Three Gorges debate, newspapers, journals and books were considered by both proponents and opponents essential ways to transmit their messages.

The dissenting intellectuals tried their best to have their voices heeded and to further enlarge the space available for criticisms, but their endeavours were often frustrated by the official restraints. At best they could get the tolerance of the state; at worst, they became vulnerable to political denunciation, though in a much smaller degree compared to that under Mao.
In 1987 Tian Fang and Lin Fatang, with CPPCC delegate Lin Hua as consultant, tried to publish the first book of dissident opinions about the Three Gorges dam project. But the endeavour drew the attention of the "department in charge", presumably the MWREP, which tried to block the book's distribution. It even offered to buy up all of the 3,100 printed copies. After lengthy negotiations with the top-level leadership through petition, possibly helped by Tian's personal connections through his former post as deputy head of the SPC's economic research centre, the book was finally put on sale. The book stirred up a strong response among readers and opened up a "second voice", defying the state's control, as other opponents and reporters issued comments on the book in various mass media, ranging from People's Daily to Outlook (Liaowang). Tian and Lin in March 1989 published a second book, this time with the sponsorship of the SSTC and the Sichuan People's Political Consultative Conference. In the same year, Dai Qing published her book Yangtze, Yangtze which collects together a series of interviews with opponents.

In the Maoist period these books would not have been permitted to be printed, let alone put on sale. But the books might not have been successfully published, and the opponents' views openly conveyed, without patronage. Dai Qing, for example, is late Marshal Ye Jianying's adopted daughter. Li Rui can rely on his own background as vice-
minister of the Electric Power and a member of the Central Advisory Committee. Even the dam's proponents cannot ignore the importance of patronage from higher levels. The MWREP is supported by Li Peng, and probably Deng as well.

It was this kind of guanxi that enabled the bureaucratic supporters to launch reprisals against their rivals after June Fourth. In September 1989, "two persons from the office of the Three Gorges Project Feasibility Study Leading Group" wrote to Tian Fang's and Lin Hua's work unit accusing them of having been involved in the publication of Yangtze, Yangtze, whose editor Dai Qing had been jailed for separate political reasons. The book was accused of promoting "bourgeois liberalism, going against the Four Cardinal Principles and formulating public opinion for turmoil and violence". Tian and Lin escaped reprisals through the support of their work unit's party secretary.

The opposition campaign naturally ebbed after the Tiananmen crackdown. Another wave did not emerge until early 1992, coincidentally a time when Deng toured Zhuhai and Shenzhen to make his "anti-leftist" speech. The breakthrough was made in January by an article written by Tian Fang and Lin Fatang in Technology Herald (Keji Daobao) sponsored by the Chinese Technology Association, which had been excluded from the feasibility study. This was followed by the release of other dissidents' articles, including Li Rui's. For the second time a "second voice" emerged, as the
dissenting intellectuals tried to fight for public and NPC opinion through the media. But it was an unfair competition. Official intervention continued. Access to major newspapers was strictly prohibited. Even though they managed to have their works published, these were only journals with a small readership, or even ones issued in Hong Kong.

Even so, except for a period after June Fourth, 1989, they were allowed some room to manoeuvre. The fact that the books and articles managed to be published indicates a significant difference from the situation in the Maoist period. Even after the NPC's endorsement for the project in 1992, the dissidents continued to publish their criticisms and write letters to Party leaders, as if testing the limit of political toleration. So far they have not received any reprisals.

However, the "passive" consultation did not seem to have any particular effect in changing the state's policy orientation. The dam proposal that the government presented to the NPC was similar to the Leading Group's 1989 report. While tolerating the intellectuals' activities, the state made sure that things were under its control. The state retained the authority to manipulate the content of published materials and to monopolize final decisions. Organized dissidence would not be permitted, and there is no sign that it can accept autonomous organizations like Dai Qing's environmental group.
CONCLUSION

The Dengist political system is characterized by the co-existence of possibilities and restraints. The post-Mao leaders' intention to deviate from their predecessor's line and rest their decisions on general support, rather than forcing them upon the lower levels with overriding power, requires greater toleration on their part to accommodate alternative opinions. In the Three Gorges dam case, consultation, be it active or passive, played a significant role in the decision-making process. Intellectual resources were emphasized as a valuable input for consideration, which brought the economists and scientists into the policy-making process. This opened up more possibilities for political participation from both bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic sectors. Active consultation, however, was confined to the institutional level. Those who did not belong to the state establishment were excluded. The dissenting intellectuals' efforts always ended up in frustration and obstruction, while those from the grassroots were a target of official "persuasion": there was never any opinion poll on whether people in the Three Gorges area could accept the project.

Yet compared with China under Mao, the political setup since the 1980s, save for a period after June Fourth 1989, has become more transparent and accommodating. The more dynamic scenario in the decision-making process marks a significant difference from the monolithic character of the
Maoist system. The opportunities for political participation, however, have never been institutionalized. The definition of "socialist democracy" hinges on the Party's liking, and NPC and CPPCC delegates' "right" to speak out depended on the top leaders' inclinations. The non-institutionalization of the new political possibilities means that these can be retracted any time, as in 1989, depending upon the leaders' aspirations, a change in personnel or a shift in the political climate for other reasons.

The leaders' reluctance to ratify institutionalized political competition points to the fact that Deng-era political power remains centralized. Public comment is not allowed to go beyond the borderline of party hegemony and socialist leadership. As shown in the Three Gorges case, the Party centre retained overwhelming power to make decisions and to manipulate developments. No organized activity or group was allowed to challenge the Party's position as the sole leader in defining ideology, agenda-setting and decision-making. But the tension between "democratic" policy making, an image which the leaders aspired to, and the authoritarian nature of the regime led to a change in the mode of control. To persuade people into supporting dam construction, the proponents had to rely on non-coercive but effective means - mass media, publications, exhibitions, and biased feasibility studies. Under the new rules of the game,
published materials such as newspapers, journals and books became an important source of competition for both sides. And it is always the ones in power who can get an edge.

The non-bureaucratic political participants, especially the independent intellectuals, were well aware of the disadvantageous position they were in and the political uncertainties they were facing. But they remain optimistic that under the reforms the Party can no longer effectively, and has no intention to, control everything. They are eager to make use of the political possibilities emerging in the debate to show their existence, and further open up a wider space for political participation (as manifested by Dai Qing's group's endeavour to form an environmental group) and a more accountable political system. Up till now the dissidents are still trying to make their voice heard through the channels mentioned above. The June Fourth crackdown indicated to them the parameters that the Party could tolerate. But it remains to be seen whether the subsequent reaffirmation of continuing reforms will offer more opportunities for political participation for them and other dissidents in general.
Notes

1. Guangming Ribao, Mar 23, 1992
2. see Schram chap.9
3. Qian Jiaju, FBIS May 22, 1986
4. Schram, p.249
5. Deng Xiaoping tongzhi lun gai ge kaifang p.6
7. see Skilling esp. p.223, in Johnson, Change in Communist Systems
8. Lieberthal p.283
9. for details see Lieberthal Policy Making in China chap 6; and Li Rui Lun Sanxia
10. Zhongguo Shuili no. 5 and 6, 1956 "A discussion on several problems of the Yangtze valley Planning"
11. Shuili Fadian no.9, 1956 "Concerning several problems of the Yangtze valley Planning"
12. see Li Rui Lun Sanxia p.1-2
13. Li Rui, Lun Sanxia p.2
14. see Chen Mutian, Li Dacheng, Ding Hao, Zhang Changling and Chen Keyi in Shuili Fadian.
15. see Lampton Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China, esp. p.177
16. see Guangming Ribao March 23, 1992 and Li Rui Lun Sanxia p.3
17. Li Rui, Lun Sanxia, p.75-77
18. Ibid, p.2
19. Lieberthal, p.305-6
20. see Lieberthal chap. 6 and Fearnside pg.618
21. see Qian Zhenying, "Wo dui Changjiang sanxia gongcheng"
22. In an interview with Dai Qing, Li explained that his support was a tactic to delay the project in light of the fact that the blueprint had already been endorsed by the Party centre and that there was no way to reverse it. Seeing that the YVPO had not finished all the feasibility studies and preparation work for actual construction, he used his nominal support as a delaying tactic. See Dai Qing, Changjiang sanxia, p.60
23. Lieberthal, p.325
24. Huang, Renda, p.26
25. Lieberthal, p.270
26. Lampton, see chap 1
27. Guangming Ribao, Mar. 23, 1992
28. see Ta Kung Pao report about Deng's meeting with Zhong Bao editor Fu Chaoshu April 2, 1986
29. Guangming Ribao, March 23, 1992
30. He called a meeting of 76 experts to scrap the moratorium announced in April 1989 by Yao Yilin, and revived deliberations on the project. See Ryder p.28
31. Tian, "Kankankeke lun sanxia", p.31
32. China News Analysis, p.3; or Dai, Changjiang sanxia,
33. Huang, *Renda*, p.26
34. Ryder, p.24-26
35. Huang, *Renda*, p.89
36. Shikai Hu argues that increasing sense of representation and willingness to represent challenge the Party's monopoly.
37. see *Liaowang* Jan 1988 esp.p.1
39. some deputies and mainland scholars expressed their hopes to increase the NPC's law-making and supervision power. See *Qunyan* 1992 no.6
40. Huang, *Renda* p.75
41. Ibid, p.18-19
42. see *Renmin Ribao* Dec 18, Dec 21, Dec 27 & Dec 29, 1991; Jan 3, Jan 4, Jan 11, Jan 15, Jan 26, Jan 30, Feb 2, Feb 16, Feb 20, Mar 25, Mar 29 & Apr 1, 1992 and *Jiefangjun Bao* Mar 27.
43. see, for example, *Renmin Ribao* Dec 27, 1991; Jan 3, 1992
44. see *Ta Kung Pao* Mar 25, 1986; *Renmin Ribao* Mar 27, 1986
45. Fei Xiaotong, *Qunyan*, 1987 Jan, pg.1
48. see Ibid; *Guangming Ribao* Mar 23, 1992
49. *FBIS* May 22, 1986
50. *Renmin Zhengxie Bao* Apr 18, 1986
51. Ibid, Apr 22, 1986
52. Zhou Peiyuan, *Qunyan*, no.4, 1989
53. Dai, *Changjiang sanxia*: interview with Zhou Peiyuan and Lin Hua
55. Huang, *Renda*, p.133
56. Lieberthal, p.325
57. Seymour, p.102-3
58. see *Qunyan* 1987, June and 1988, June
60. see, for example, *Renmin Ribao* Dec 25, 1991 and Mar 17, 1992
61. Dai, *Changjiang sanxia*, p.60-64
62. Tian Fang and Lin Fatang, *Zailun Sanxia* p.81
63. interview with Tian Fang Dec 27, 1993
64. for hints see Tian Fang and Lin Fatong *Lun Sanxia* p.10-15; Dai, *Changjiang sanxia*, p.60-64, and other Li Rui's works
65. see Dai, *Changjiang sanxia*, p.1-3
66. interview with Dai in late April, 1993
67. The message was implied in the interview
68. Tian and Lin, *Lun Sanxia* Nov 1987
69. Tian, "Kankankeke lun sanxia, p.27
70. all the articles are collected in Tian and Lin, *Zailun Sanxia*
72. Tian, "Kankankeke lun sanxia", p.30
73. *Keji Daobao* Jan 1992 "It's not an urgent task to endorse the Three Gorges project"

74. In July 1993 Li Rui, Tian Fang, Lin Fatang and six other intellectuals wrote to Jiang Zemin, Li Peng and other Party leaders proposing to postpone the project. The letter was published by *Ziran bianzhenfa tongxun* in 1993, no.5 with the full name of Qian Zhenying who was under criticism in the letter. See also Li Rui, *Ziran*, no.2, 1992 and no.3, 1993; Tian Fang, ibid, no.1, 1993; and Wang Delu, ibid, no.2, 1993; and "The Past of the Huang He" in *Jiefang Ribao* (Shanghai) Jul 20, 1993.

75. Examples are the dissidents' utilization of *Qunyan* and *Ziran bianzhenfa tongxun* as the forums for their opinions, while the MWREP used its journal *Renmin Changjiang*. For the latter see She Shiyi, tu Chuangui, Chen Yanlu, Tang Song, He Mingmin, Ding Gongyang, Shi Zhengu and Yan Zhongyi in *Renmin Changjiang*.

76. Li Rui and *Ziran bianzhenfa tongxun* editor Fan Dainian expressed the same viewpoint when I met them in Mar. and Oct. 1993 respectively.
Annex

Figure 1. Sketch map of the reservoir for the planned Three Gorges dam (175 metres).
Source: Fearnside, *China's Three Gorges Dam*

Figure 2. The surrounding provinces of the Three Gorges dam.
Source: Lieberthal, *Policy Making in China*
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Chronology

1954
Flood in the Yangtze valley
Mao wrote his "calm lake" poem endorsing the construction of a Three Gorges dam.

1956
The first article in support of dam construction appeared.
Li Rui wrote another article to rebut.
News appeared on People's Daily that a survey on the Yangtze water resources had been completed.

1957
Li Rui published his "Big Fishing Nettism"

1958
Nanning Conference: Li Rui and Lin Yishan presented their papers.
Chengdu Conference: Party centre took an intermediate position.

1959
Li Rui under purge

1982
Deng Xiaoping expressed support for the 150-metre dam proposal.

1984
The State Council endorsed "in principle" the 150-metre proposal.
The Three Gorges Province Organizing Group was formed.
Li Peng took charge of the project as vice-premier.
Chongqing requested to raise the water level to 180 metres; Ministry of Communications joined in.
CPPCC delegates queried the project's financial and technical feasibility, demanding a postponement.

1985
Qian Jiaju and 49 other CPPCC delegates made a proposal to conduct a scientific study. Another 100 delegates requested to adopt a cautious attitude towards the project. The CPPCC's Economic Construction Committee went on a 38-day study tour along the Yangtze, coming back with many negative findings.

1986
Qian Jiaju denounced the scheme as a "fishing project". Deng said the dam project had more benefits than shortcomings, but it needed more studies. The "number 15 document" was released; feasibility studies re-started.
The Three Gorges Project Demonstration Leading Group and the State Council's Three Gorges Examination Committee were formed.
The Canadian feasibility study started.
The Three Gorges Province Organizing Group was disbanded.

1987
Tian Fang and Lin Fatang published their first book; the "second voice" emerged.

1988
The Leading Group cooperated with the Canadian consultancy to conduct "complementary studies".
The Leading Group released its feasibility study report supporting a 175-metre proposal.
CPPCC delegates went on another study tour, and came back "very worried".

1989
Dai Qing's *Yangtze, Yangtze* was published.
Tian Fang and Lin Fatang published their second book.
All the Three Gorges feasibility studies were completed.
270 NPC deputies demanded a postponement of the project.
10 CPPCC delegates petitioned the government.
Yao Yilin announced that the project would be suspended for five years.
June Fourth crackdown.

1990
Li Peng ended the moratorium and continued the feasibility studies.

1991
The State Council's Three Gorges Examination Committee adopted the Leading Group's feasibility study report.

1992
The NPC endorsed the 175-metre proposal, with about one third opposing, abstaining or refusing to vote.