

Directive from the CCP Central Committee on the Report by the Central Propaganda Department
Regarding Errors in Newspaper Coverage of Comrade Stalin's Death

Date: April 1953

To: All Party Committees at Central Bureaus, Sub-Bureaus, Provincial Committees, and Municipal Committees

The Central Propaganda Department has recently reviewed the reports of 90 newspapers nationwide concerning their coverage of the great political event of Comrade Stalin's illness and death, and found that most newspapers committed errors of varying seriousness. This is a very grave matter that should command the full attention of all Party committees at every level.

Comrade Stalin's illness and passing represent an immeasurable loss to all progressive humanity around the world and are therefore one of the most significant political events that deeply concern our entire Party and the Chinese people. The various mistakes listed in the Propaganda Department's report reveal, on the one hand, that many responsible personnel and editors at newspapers lack political sensitivity and a proper sense of responsibility, showing political apathy and disorganization in their work; and on the other hand, that many Party committees and organizations—particularly those overseeing non-Party newspapers—have failed to provide necessary political guidance and supervision. This is a concentrated manifestation of the bureaucratism that has long plagued Party leadership in the press.

The errors made by newspapers in covering this major political event have already aroused public dissatisfaction and produced an unfavorable political impact. Therefore, the responsible persons in all newspaper offices, as well as the Party organs overseeing them, must carefully review and examine both editorial and leadership work in light of these mistakes. They must conduct a thorough self-criticism, provide serious political education to newspaper staff, and draw lessons to ensure concrete improvements in future work.

This directive, together with the Central Propaganda Department's report, shall be published in Party journals and distributed to all Party committees, newspaper offices, the Xinhua News Agency, radio stations, and magazine publishers for all Party members to study.

Attachment: Report by the Central Propaganda Department on the Errors in Newspaper Coverage of Comrade Stalin's Death

After reviewing 90 newspapers of various types and sizes, and examining additional reports from some regions, the Propaganda Department found that over 50 newspapers committed errors, many of them very serious. The findings are summarized below:

(1) Delays, omissions, and alterations in publishing key documents

Many newspapers failed to promptly or fully publish important documents concerning Comrade Stalin's illness and death.

Over ten newspapers, including *Qingdao Daily*, *Jilin Daily*, *Liaodong Masses' Daily*, *Liaoxi Daily*, *Rehe Masses' Daily*, *New Guizhou Daily*, *Heilongjiang Daily*, *Tangshan Labor Daily*, *Eastern Inner Mongolia Daily*, *Songjiang Daily*, and *Baotou Daily*, delayed publishing the Xinhua communiqué on Stalin's illness that was issued on March 4 and instructed to appear on March 5—only publishing it on March 6. *Qingdao Daily* never published the March 5 bulletin at all.

The *Wendeng Masses' Daily* received the news on the night of March 4 but delayed publication until March 10, printing the reports of Stalin's illness and death together. Other papers, such as *Sino-Soviet Friendship Daily*, *Changchun New Daily*, *Guangxi Daily*, *Xikang Daily*, *Zhangxuan Daily*, *Suiyuan Daily*, *Shandong Masses' Daily*, and *Nanjing Xinhua Daily*, also published key reports and documents one or two days late.

Some papers altered or truncated official Soviet documents, such as the *Central-South Workers' Daily*, which excerpted and rewrote portions of the Soviet joint resolution of the Party, Government, and Supreme Soviet Presidium, removing its introduction and thereby "greatly diminishing" its significance.

Several papers omitted entire bulletins, including *Handan Peasants' Daily* and *Fengfeng Workers' Daily*, which did not publish Stalin's illness bulletins, Mao's message of condolence, or reports of Mao and Party leaders visiting the Soviet embassy.

(2) Improper layout and presentation

Numerous newspapers mishandled the placement and prominence of key materials.

Some failed to print Stalin's illness bulletins in the top headline position of the front page—for example, *Inner Mongolia Daily*, *Suiyuan Daily*, *Jixi Workers' Daily*, *Hubei Daily*, *Ningxia Daily*, *Northeast New Workers' Daily*, *Xi'an Masses' Daily*, *Gansu Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Chongqing Xinhua Daily*, *Fujian Daily*, *Shanghai Xinmin Evening News*, and *Qinghai Daily*.

Others failed to print Mao's message of condolence after the bulletin, as required, such as *Songjiang Daily*, *Shijiazhuang Daily*, *Huadong Dawn News*, *Nanjing Xinhua Daily*, *New Hunan Daily*, and *Jiangxi Daily*.

Headlines were also too small or inconspicuous—for instance, *Suiyuan Daily* used small fonts and buried key bulletins at the bottom of the front page; *Shanghai Xinmin Evening News* split the story between corners of the page.

Serious misplacements included *Fengfeng Workers' Daily*, which published the CCP Central Committee and Central People's Government's announcements on the fourth page while placing a local condolence telegram on the first—a clear case of "putting local before central."

In some cases, visual presentation errors were politically damaging: some newspapers failed to print black mourning borders, misplaced images, or even drew the Soviet flag incorrectly in mourning photographs.

(3) Improper or politically erroneous language

A few newspapers used inappropriate emotional wording.

For instance, *East China Youth Daily* and *Yantai Workers' Daily* used "grief and anger" (悲愤) instead of "deep sorrow" (悲痛), and *Zibo Workers' Daily* described a worker as "hating" (痛恨) the news of Stalin's death. Such wording was labeled a serious political error inconsistent with the tone of mourning.

There were also many typographical mistakes that caused political problems—such as misspelling "Marx" as "Markko" and "Lenin" as "Ninglie." Some papers omitted key words like "joint plenary session" from Soviet resolutions, or miswrote titles such as "appointing" instead of "proposing" Voroshilov as chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium.

(4) Political and organizational causes

Comrade Stalin's death was a world-shaking political event that deeply affected all humanity. The widespread and repeated errors demonstrate political numbness, a lack of responsibility, and sloppy work style among editors, as well as weak political leadership and supervision from Party committees. These failings have caused public dissatisfaction and negative political effects.

The Hubei Provincial Party Committee, recognizing the seriousness of *Hubei Daily's* mistakes and the failure of its president Xie Feng to conduct proper self-criticism, submitted the case to the Central-South Bureau's Disciplinary Commission, which approved his removal from office and issued a formal reprimand to the newspaper's editorial committee.

The Propaganda Department recommends that all newspaper leadership and Party propaganda organs conduct comprehensive reviews and political education to overcome these shortcomings and improve the press's political reliability and professional standards.