

century disasters published in 1988. Last November, an explosion at a chemical plant in Jilin polluted the Songhua River, Harbin's water source, but this was only made public after being covered up by the authorities for several days. As for the unnatural deaths of more than 10 million people during the 1960s and the tragic fates of families who suffered persecution during the Cultural Revolution—these are still off-limits to reporters.

In recent years, many people of conscience in the news industry have attempted to break open areas that have been declared off-limits through official regulations. They have diligently used major incidents to expose the corruption and uselessness of officials at every level. Now it looks as if even this pathetically minimal leeway enjoyed by media outlets will also be eliminated. This turn of events further exposes both the fragility of China's social situation and the fear that lies in the hearts of those in power. It also illustrates the government's intractable opposition to the international trend toward press freedom and media transparency.

Neither the closing remarks delivered by Wu Bangguo, the chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, nor the meeting's press release mentioned the outcome of the deliberations on this draft law. However, according to normal operations of the Chinese government, the relevant departments of the Commu-

nist Party would have passed the law in principle before the State Council sent it to the NPC. Therefore, one can assume that, following revisions, the draft law will be sent to the NPC for ratification. The day this draft bill becomes law will be another day for the public to feel ashamed of its rubber-stamp People's Congress.

Translated by a friend of HRIC.

The original Chinese version of this article was posted on the Web site of Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/cantonese/pinglun/2006/06/30/>.

#### NOTE

1. The Chinese title of this draft law is Tufa Shijian Yingdui Fa Cao'an. For further information on the draft, see "Guojia tufa gonggong shijian yu'an tixi quanwen," People's Daily Online, January 12, 2006, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/57347/57350/4021527.html>; Josephine Ma, "Mainland Gag Would Include Foreign Media," South China Morning Post, July 4, 2006, <http://www.scmp.com/topnews/ZZZFLGX51PE.html>; "Chuanmeijie ji xinwen xuezheng pingsuo 'Tufa Shijian Yingdui Fa' cao'an zhong guanyu xinxi pilu de tiaokuan," Caijing, June 29, 2006, <http://caijing.hexun.com/text.aspx?lm=2550&id=1708357>.

## Salute

BY OUYANG XIAORONG

*Ouyang Xiaorong, a computer programmer based in Yunnan Province, was detained for nearly two months earlier this year while helping to coordinate a hunger strike led by rights defence lawyer Gao Zhisheng. Ouyang was detained again in Qingdao on August 21, and as this journal went to press, he was reportedly still under house arrest in Kunming.*

For conscience, and the tears and blood, the yearning . . .  
I salute you.

Youths who died so soon:  
I send you all  
A lover's kiss.  
Affixing a begonia stamp (tracing our ancestors' footprint),  
I consign a bottle to the waves to seek the gilded barque  
That has been drifting for a hundred years.  
Allow me, please,  
To pluck the bullet red-hot from your breast.  
I'll put it to good use  
—To brand a searing mark into my soul.

Elders whose homecoming's overdue:  
I send you all  
A son's blessing.  
With faith in your bequest, I'll roll a rose-red note  
And in the gloaming bind it to an osprey's wing.  
Allow me, please,

To take on your cascading grief.  
I'll put it to good use  
—And charge the air with longing when I weep.

Souls anguished in the nether world:  
I send you all  
A brother's care.  
Humming the tunes of our sacred land,  
I'll weave of winter blooms a stout warm coat  
And thus await, in frozen marsh,  
The night of wild rejoicing when the ghosts come home.  
Allow me, please,  
To ladle out a gourdful of your blood:  
A Yangtze's never-ending stream.  
I'll put it to good use  
—It shall sustain the small craft of my life.

For the path of suffering, and the human spirit, and all that  
is to come . . .  
I salute you.

Rendered into English by A. E. Clark

The original Chinese poem was posted on the Web site of the Asia Democracy Foundation, [www.asiademo.org](http://www.asiademo.org), on July 21, 2006.