

Thomas Chao's Journalistic Activities and Influence on Increasing China's Voice Worldwide

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In the 1930s and 1940s, Thomas Chao, an internationally-renowned Chinese journalist, influenced Chinese journalists' way of covering and writing news with his own prominent experience in international news reporting. Based on his long-term news practice, Chao analyzed the differences between Chinese and Western press and explored the way for improvement. He called on the government to set up a national news agency so as to establish itself in the field of international communication, and helped the Central News Agency to take back Reuters' right to publish in China. Chao also actively promoted the exchange and cooperation between Chinese newspapers and news agencies and foreign press in international communication activities, striving to increase China's voice worldwide.

Keywords: Thomas Ming-heng Chao, Chinese press, Central News Agency (CNA), withdrawing the right to publish, China's voice worldwide

Thomas Ming-heng Chao (1904-1961), also known as Thomas Chao, born in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, was a Chinese journalist active in the international press in the 1930s and 1940s. He was famous at home and abroad for his sensational coverage of "the Kuramoto Incident", "the Xi'an Incident" and "the Cairo Conference", and won the "Golden Cigarette Box Award" issued by Reuters. The Chinese press praised him as "a news genius" (Huang, 2013, p. 54), and "a celebrated journalist with a distinctive style" (Liu, 2006, p. 56), "the most remarkable Chinese journalist" (Chen, 2007, p. 12).

From 1928 to 1945, Chao served as a Reuters special correspondent in Nanjing and Hankou, manager of Reuters Chongqing branch and China bureau, and also reported news on China for a number of foreign press. In the complicated domestic and international situations at that time, Chao, in his capacity as a Reuters correspondent and manager in China, had been taking the opportunity to assist his Chinese counterparts as well as offering advice on the press development, with the aim of increasing China's voice internationally. "As a Chinese, working for foreign news agencies and writing reports in English is after all an abnormal thing. Although I'm not sure about whether I'll be able to write news in Chinese in the future, or whether I can participate in the Chinese press, I should at least work towards that (Chao, 1994, p. 26)."

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As a famous person in the international press in the 1930s and 1940s, Chao was much concerned about the development of the press in China, especially in terms of international news reporting. He played an important role in establishing a national news agency in China, improving the channels for receiving and distributing news, Central News Agency's withdrawing Reuters' right to publish in China, and negotiating with foreign media as a member of the Chinese delegation to Britain from 1943 to 1944. What he had done contributed to raising China's voice at an international level.

Chao was the author of four books, *Fifteen Years of News Covering* (《采访十五年》), *Outside the Press* (《新闻圈外》), *The Foreign Press in China* (《外人在华新闻事业》), and *A Round-trip to London* (《伦敦去来》). *Fifteen Years of News Reporting* was "a summary of Mr. Chao's fifteen years of working experience in journalism" (Ma, in Chao, 1994, Preface). *Outside the Press* was a collection of Chao's column articles. *The Foreign Press in China* contained "a series of writings on the foreign newspapers in China, and discussed stories of the main foreign newspapers and journalists; each page of it was worth being expanded into a separate volume" (Chao, 2011, Preface). *A Round Trip to London* was the correspondence written in a dairy style by Chao at the request of Chen Ming-de (1897-1989), the then general manager of *Xinmin Daily*, during a round trip of a Chinese delegation from Chongqing to London from November 1944 to April 1945. Chao's works embodied his view on China-West comparative journalism and international communication, and constituted an important wealth to the intellectual history of Chinese journalism.

The present research on Thomas Chao and his journalistic career mainly focused on the period when he returned to China after studying in the United States, and discussed his engagement in the Chinese press and his success in the major reports on China's international affairs; a few papers (Bao, 2010; Deng, 2010) analyzed Chao's professionalism and its influence and the role he played in the international exchanges of the Chinese press. However, it had been neglected how Chao in his special capacity strived to raise China's voice in the international community; most of the works did not discuss this at all while some only mentioned the details and lacked holistic analysis.

Based on previous research on Thomas Chao and his journalistic activities, this paper aims to sort out Chao's writings on journalism and relevant literature, and analyze the role he played in raising China's voice internationally by honoring and promoting journalistic professionalism, advocating the Chinese government to establish a national news agency so as to gain a foothold in the field of international communication, assisting the Central News Agency to withdraw the right of Reuters to publish in China, and exploring ways of exchanges and cooperation between Chinese news agencies and the foreign press, thus providing some enlightenment for China's international news reporting and communication today.

1. A Patriotic Journalist with Professionalism

With his own experience in international news reporting, Thomas Chao had influenced the way of news gathering and writing of Chinese journalists as well as their way of thinking. Chao analyzed the differences between Chinese and western press, and learned lessons from his long-time news practice on how the Chinese press could improve. He played an important part in introducing the idea of professionalism from the west and put it into practical use in China.

1.1 A Chinese Journalist in Reuters Who Stands up for Justice and His Homeland

“Our career choice is often made by chance,” said Thomas Chao, who “stepped into the kingdom of journalism” this way (Chao, 1994, p. 1). With a cross-cultural educational background, Chao seized the opportunity of the time and determined to return to his homeland to pursue a career in journalism and later became a successful journalist.

In 1924, Chao went to the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri. In his view, a main reason for the success of the journalism school of this university was the emphasis placed by its founder, Dr. William, on the academic training of journalism principles. “We all understand that a journalist is not only a profession, but also carries a great mission with him” (Chao, 1994, p. 2); journalism is “a public organ of mankind, representative of the public opinion, a way of social education, synthesis of various arts, and a necessity for common people” (Huang, 1930, p. 1). Thus the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri had developed a tradition of providing journalism courses while offering sufficient opportunities for hands-on training. Thomas Chao was involved in the editing and publishing of *The Columbia Missourian*, a daily newspaper run by the School, and was the chief editor of *The Chinese Students' Monthly* while studying in the United States.

In the summer of 1926, when Mr. Dang Furu, vice president and director of the overseas section of the United Press, came to give a speech at the Missouri School of Journalism, Chao followed his advice and gave up the chance to work at the United Press China bureau, and went to work at *The Denver Post* in Colorado on Mr. Dang Furu recommendation. While working there, Chao got trained in various posts and learned the American-style news gathering skills.

In the fall of 1926, Thomas Chao left Denver for New York to pursue a master's degree at Columbia University and started a work-study life. Although he got a master's degree in journalism from the university one year later, Chao was not satisfied with what he had learned in the classroom. He believed that he actually learned from the personal contact with several professors (Chao, 1994, p. 7), including professors teaching introduction to books and newspapers and drama criticism, editorial writing, feature writing, and news gathering and writing, and benefited most from professor's guidance on news writing.

At the end of the 1920s, the social turmoil and political changes in China attracted the attention of the American society and newspapers. When Chao was about to graduate in the summer of 1926, Mr. Dang Furu of the United Press told him that he might be assigned to the China Bureau of the United Press after a certain period of training. Mr. Dang Furu gave him the advice that to be successful, a journalist should give up the job at a major metropolitan newspaper and go down to the countryside; and as a Chinese, he should go back to China (Chao, 1994, p. 5).

In the spring of 1927, Cluck, the chief editor of *Peking Leader*, met Chao in New York and persuaded him not to stay any longer in the United States but to return to China soon, and invited him to be the deputy editor of *Peking Leader*. By this time, Chao had already got his master's degree and served as an important page editor for the World Press Agency. He turned down the invitation from the Japanese journalist Kawakami Kiyoshi and others to accept Cluck's offer. In 1928, Chao returned to China to start his career as a Nanjing correspondent for Reuters.

From 1928 to 1933, Thomas Chao wrote news reports for Reuters and the Associated Press of America, at the same time worked for *The Daily Telegraph* in London, the Inter Press Service and World News Agency in the

U.S., Kyodo News in Japan, the *Asahi Shinbun* in Osaka and the Tass in the Soviet Union. After the Mukden Incident, Reuters officially opened its Nanjing Bureau, with Thomas Chao as the director. This was the first time a foreign news agency had hired a Chinese to head a branch in China. From 1939 to 1945, Chao was chief of the Reuters Chongqing Bureau and came to rise in the international press.

In his career as an international journalist, Chao always kept in mind that he was Chinese and that he should take a firm stand for his nation while behaving by the codes of practice, "... it was commendable that he was neither overbearing nor servile in his contacts with Europeans and Americans, preserved his national self-esteem, and had always hated the prevailing xenophilia towards foreign people and things (Liu, 2006. p. 57)."

In the early period of the Anti-Japanese War, when Thomas Chao was head of Reuters Far East Bureau, he sent a large amount of timely and accurate information about the war to the London headquarters, even ignoring the warning and obstruction of the Nationalist Party's publicity department, reported objectively and fairly on the operations of the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army of the Communist Party, and promptly reported on the "New Fourth Army Incident" and criticized the National Party authorities for sabotaging the anti-Japanese united front (Liu, 2006, pp. 56-58).

In the above-mentioned works written by Chao, he gave an objective account of the activities of the British colonialists in Africa and other places, even involving the ugly acts of foreign journalists in China, which provoked the discontent of Reuters and the British side who accused Chao of vilifying western journalists. Chao refused to stop publishing *A Round-trip to London* (1946) and quit his job as the director of Reuters Chongqing Bureau in the spring of 1945, a job with a salary of 5000 pounds a month (Xiao, 1997, p. 56).

After resigning from Reuters, Thomas Chao successively held the posts of chief editor of *The Weekly Express*, chief editor of *Chongqing World Journal* and chief editor of *Shanghai News*, and became an adjunct professor in journalism at Fudan University since August 1945. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chao kept teaching at Fudan University, but was arrested in July 1955 on suspicion of being an international spy and sentenced to seven years in prison. He died of a disease in Jiangxi province in 1961. In 1979, he was rehabilitated and recognized as a "patriotic journalist" (Chao, 1994, p. 1).

1.2 Upholding and Promoting Journalistic Professionalism

Thomas Chao, as an internationally famous journalist with a cross-cultural background, had devoted his whole life to pursuing journalistic professionalism, setting an example for his Chinese peers, thus introducing the western idea of journalistic professionalism. The core of journalistic professionalism is to require journalists to report facts in an objective and impartial manner, as the news agency is independent of the government, the public and any financial group, and shoulders special public responsibilities while abiding by the codes of practice and professional standards (Bao, 2010, pp. 172-173). Chao believed that journalists from Chinese newspapers and news agencies should learn from the journalistic professionalism of foreign newspapers and western press in China.

(1) News sensitivity is the basic requirement of professionalism for journalists

The reason why Thomas Chao grew to be a famous journalist firstly lied in his great news sensitivity to observe, judge and analyze news materials and their value. He was said to be "full of news" and "a reporter of great events" (Xiao, 1997, p. 53). "A journalist must have a 'nose for news' to be able to fulfill his accountability.

News is everywhere in the air as long as you are able to feel it (Huang, 1931, p. 38).” “Chao was successful because he had a nose and an eye for news. What others could not find, he could; what others was not able to write, he was (Chao, 1945, Introduction).”

After the Mukden Incident on September 18, 1931, the League of Nations sent a British delegation headed by the Earl of Lytton, and made up of British, American, French, German and Italian representatives to northeast China. When they arrived in Nanjing, Chiang Kai-shek and his wife hosted a dinner for the delegation at Lizhi She (the Inspiration Club, where officials and guests were entertained). Chao managed to enter the room next to their dining room to “eavesdrop” and take down everyone’s remarks. Before the release of the investigation report, Chao again managed to get the full report and published a summary of the report four hours ahead of others.

After Reuters published Thomas Chao’s report of the “Kuramoto Incident”, it became an international laughing stalk, which not only prevented the Japanese army and the Intelligence Agency of Japanese Foreign Ministry from seeking a plot to invade China, but also won honor for Reuters and Thomas Chao himself. Zhang Ji-luan, the chief editor of *Ta Kung Pao*, wrote a short humorous comment on this, saying that China should be grateful to the “patriotic” wolves in the Purple Mountain for not swallowing Kuramoto in a bite, otherwise the Chinese would not have been able to defend themselves. The Japanese were so infuriated by Chao’s report that Amou Eiji, the Director of the Intelligence Agency of Japanese Foreign Ministry, cursed Chao for being a vicious propagandist rather than a journalist, while he was entertaining reporters from around the world in Tokyo (Chao, 1994, pp. 38-39).

Thomas Chao was familiar with international communication rules, skilled in writing and reporting news in English and good at catching international news. In November 1943, when Chao went on a trip to London with a Chinese delegation, the plane stopped for a day in Cairo, where he met Chiang Kai-shek’s attendants and dignitaries from both the British and American governments, and he learned that the Mena House, next to the Pyramids, was heavily guarded. It turned out that the heads of China, the United States and the United Kingdom were meeting there to discuss the joint operation plan against Japan and how to deal with Japan after defeating it. The conference was almost over, and the British and American journalists who had come to cover it had already finished the dispatches which were sent to the Cairo telegraph office to be permitted. Considering that Cairo kept tight control over its post and telecommunications, Chao flew to neutral Lisbon in Portugal where he sent a telegram to Reuters headquarters in London. In the end, the Reuters report was 14 hours ahead of the Associated Press, the United Press and others, causing a sensation around the world.

(2) Fulfilling professionalism and optimism

Thomas Chao believed that journalists, especially war correspondents, should have a strong sense of professionalism. No matter how difficult or dangerous the reporting activities are, even if at the risk of their lives, journalists should go ahead without hesitation.

During the days when Thomas Chao was reporting in Nanjing, he accompanied Chiang Kai-shek to the Jiangxi front twice. His efforts to report the Jiangxi front failed in the summer of 1932. In the winter of 1937, there were no journalists from Chinese newspapers at the Jiangxi front, and Chao began to realize: for good reports, war correspondents must go to the front; good war news must be sent with good communication

equipment; and war correspondents should try every means to report on their own rather than relying on official channels for transportation and war information (Chao, 1994, pp. 25-26).

Secondly, Chao thought journalists should not be afraid of offending people and should rather be “fools” who observe the code of ethics than sophisticated “clever” men. “Thomas Chao took pride in his talents and was well-known in the news circle for easily offending people, but he was very polite to the typists, secretaries, servants and other staff around him, and rarely said hurtful things (Liu, 2006, p. 57).”

After the outbreak of the Shanghai War on January 28, 1932, the British Ambassador Lampson went to Shanghai by way of Nanjing for war mediation, Chao reported the news in time. When Lampson questioned about the news source and asked Chao to correct the news, Chao argued that he should observe professional ethics and have a sense of responsibility (Chao, 1994, p. 34).

Thirdly, Thomas Chao advocated employing the most talented people as journalists and giving them good terms of employment, “because I have always been a supporter for an elite team, hiring perfect people with perfect pay, providing them job security and guarantee of life so that they can keep their mind on their work and devote to serve the community. I’d rather employ less people (Chao, 1994, p. 49).”

In reviewing his career in journalism, Thomas Chao particularly emphasized that journalists should never leave their work behind. “A good field reporter should always do field work, and a good editor should always edit. A good journalist should not strive for fame and fortune, but should seek success in his career (Chen, 2007, p. 55).” In the press, every time a journalist achieved certain success in reporting, he was often promoted to the position of a director or manager, as many journalists would hope. They thought journalists are like officials, and it was always a good thing to get promotion and become rich. But Chao did not think that way. He thought journalists should never forget their professional morality no matter what they do.

Fourthly, as a famous journalist in international news reporting, Thomas Chao has repeatedly felt the confident, optimistic and even humorous attitude of British and American newspapers and their readers towards the war, in contrast to the attitude of the Chinese. He believed that Chinese newspapers, readers and the government departments should learn from the optimistic and humorous reporting methods of Western newspapers. When Chao first came to Chongqing for war reporting, he was invited to write humorous column articles such as “Inside Chongqing” for an English newspaper in Hankou, which was banned from publishing by the Foreign Ministry of the National Government of the Republic of China, with the reason that “the words were not serious enough to meet wartime needs”. In contrast, newspapers and magazines in Europe and the United States often published articles and pictures satirizing public figures and current social situations, even the people being satirized would laugh it off and did not care a thing (Chao, 1994, p. 75).

During World War II, the British government believed that entertainment could provide encouragement for people during wartime, so the government kept the entertaining theaters open, with a reprieve for actors and actresses. Even when London was under the heaviest bombardment, theaters opened as usual (Chao, 1945, p. 41). Chao and the members of the delegation were moved by the optimism of the British people and by the orderly and vigorous production in the factories during wartime (Chao, 1945, pp. 45-58).

(3) Respecting press freedom and flexible news censorship

Thomas Chao devoted his life to the pursuit of freedom of the press based on objective reporting. The meaning of journalistic professionalism included freedom of the press. Chao thought “the foreign press in China

was a special case in the world. Because of the treaty ports and concessions, the newspapers run by foreigners in China could freely publish political and military news, and comment on current affairs. As for the national newspapers, there is no such right" (Chao, 1932, p. 2).

Thomas Chao planned to run his own newspaper after resigning from Reuters, but his plans were discouraged by the National Party's publicity department which was concerned about "the runaway wild horse" because of his commitment to journalistic professionalism and freedom of the press. Xiao Tong-zi, president of the Central News Agency, gave up of idea of inviting Chao to join, considering Chao's ideas were incompatible with the National Party's publicity department (Xiao, 1997, p. 56).

In May 1931, the National Government of the Republic of China began to institute censorship of all telegrams. Thomas Chao believed that censorship would always be a tough issue. Journalists should not just attack press censorship, but they should propose wise ways of monitoring news. In fact, nearly every government in the world had been enforcing news censorship. No one could send out a message by cable or wire to countries like Japan, France, Italy or Russia without review by government officials. These officials might function as censors—letting the government know what was being sent by the telegraph.

As a member of the National Government's delegation to Britain, Chao paid particular attention to the censorship system of every country and city he visited and compared them with China's. In Portugal, the military was in charge of press censorship, and there were two types of news withheld: news banned from publication and news suspended from publication. The newspapers being censored would be punished with a fine or suspension of publication. The fine was about 200 pounds, while the duration of suspension ranged from a few days to several months, depending on the severity. As the censorship for editorials was not strict, many newspapers often published forbidden news in editorial pages. The censorship for magazines was the same as in China, not as strict as for newspapers (Chao, 1945, p. 22).

The British press censorship system, in Chao's view, was very simple. Strictly speaking, it could be said that there was no censorship. The British publicity department prohibited any news that was harmful to the national defense, and all other news could be published. The government could only inform the newspapers of what kind of news was prohibited, but had no right to prevent newspapers from publishing it. The government could bring an action in court against the newspapers that published forbidden news. The press censorship office, in performing its function, could only withhold the telegram but could not modify the message. When a British magazine published things that were harmful to the country's allied relations, the British government could only advise the publishing company against publication, but had no right to ban its publication (Chao, 1945, pp. 34-35).

Thomas Chao highly respected Mr. Hollington Tong, Deputy Minister of the Central Publicity Department of the National Party, for his flexibility in news censorship: anything that was correct, not malicious, and did not endanger China's war operations would be permitted. Chao believed the stricter the censorship was, the more reporters would try to reveal more information, and hence tighter news blackout. As the revealing of information could not be completely prohibited, it was only a matter of time before it was revealed. Communications could be controlled, but transportation could not be entirely blocked. Under too strict censorship, journalists were not able to develop their talents and would naturally choose to leave the newspaper. Too harsh censorship also exposed the government's weaknesses and unwillingness to admit its faults and correct its mistakes (Chao, 1945, p. 57).

2. Calling for the Establishment of a National News Agency and Helping the Central News Agency to Withdraw the right of Reuters to Publish in China

Thomas Chao had learned from his news practice that the difficulties in telegraph and transportation were the biggest headaches in China. "It is indeed necessary for us to improve our international transportation, otherwise we will always feel that China's news is too slow and insufficient (Chao, 1994, p. 97)." He thought China should release news as early as possible to allow sufficient time for journalists to send it abroad so that it could be published on time and the number of words in the telegram could be increased. "It is advisable that secretaries of the National Office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs should give an interview to foreign newspaper journalists on a weekly basis, replying to their questions. In the event of major political issues, if foreign journalists ask for an interview, it would be appropriate for the authorities in charge to accept as possibly as they could. The telegram can be reviewed for concerns about the accuracy of their reports. In addition, it would be desirable for the government to have people specially assigned for the job which is to communicate and keep contact with credible foreign journalists, often in a non-official manner. This is the way to scotch rumors, and should be brought to the attention of the government (Chao, 2011, p. 7)."

Foreign newspapers in China, especially English-language newspapers, had a major impact on the public opinion both at home and abroad. Foreigners living in China provided daily information to British, French, Russian, German or Japanese newspapers in such places as Tianjin, Peiping (Beijing), Shanghai or Hankou. Foreign newspapers were also the only source of foreign information for the Chinese. The main reason for this situation, in Chao's view, was that the correspondents and journalists of foreign newspapers in China mainly relied on foreign newspapers to convey information, and the only shortcut for them was to get what they needed from the local foreign press. Chinese newspapers usually gained news about Britain and the world from Reuters, the United States from the Associated Press, and Japan from the Japan Associated Press and Japan Telegraph News Agency. Therefore, it was absolutely essential to establish a national news agency in China, which, once established, could ally with news agencies in major countries around the world, so that news published by Chinese news agencies would naturally be sent abroad via such international news agencies as Reuters, United Press, Japan Associated Press, and Tass (Chao, 2011, pp. 3-4).

From the rise of the three biggest world news agencies, Agence Havas of France, Wolffs Telegraphisches Bureau of Germany and Reuters of Britain, to the early 1930s, Reuters was the leading foreign news agency in China. Reuters' entry into China began in 1872 when the head office sent Henry W. Collins to Shanghai to set up its Far East bureau, covering China, Russian Siberia, North Korea, Japan, the Philippines and Borneo. "Reuters Shanghai branch is ready to receive the signal and send it by post to Singapore, and then by telegram from Singapore to London. In the near future, the coastal telegraph cables will also be built between Shanghai and the Bay of Peter the Great ... (Chao, 2011, p. 41)." With the development of the telegraph in China in the 1870s and 1880s, Cable & Wireless had installed submarine cables in Shanghai, and Reuters' business extended to China. Subsequently, Havas, United Press, Japan's Oriental News Agency and Japan's Associated Press began to set up branches in China. In the early periods, foreign news agencies in China were limited to covering Chinese news and publishing it in other parts of the world. Later, they began to publish in major cities in China and provide reports to Chinese newspapers.

Before the Central News Agency was reorganized and the right of foreign news agencies to publish in China was taken back, Chinese journalists did far worse in reporting than their foreign counterparts, especially in war news reporting. Therefore, "Chinese newspapers still have to use reports from foreign news agencies" (Feng, 1974, p. 140). "At that time, domestic news was scattered and complex, while foreign news was modified at will. Foreign news agencies in China often published news out of personal preferences, giving rise to rumors and conjectures. There was no consensus, greatly affecting the public opinion (Fang, 1974, p. 17)."

In 1910, the National Press Union first proposed to establish an associated news agency. "In the proposal, it was pointed out that it was important for newspapers to report in detail, accurately and promptly, and that the Union should take the opportunity to set up a news agency. It could be first tried in the prosperous cities and trading ports in the country, and then progressively promoted to a wider range. But it was a pity that this proposal was not implemented (Huang, 1930, pp. 117-118)."

On May 5, 1920, the second annual conference of the National Press Association was held in Guangzhou. The 120 newspapers and news agencies participating in the conference passed 14 resolutions, including the founding of a national news agency. "Newspapers in our country often rely on foreign sources for diplomatic news and the current affairs in Europe and the United States. As foreign newspapers will always report out of their own interests and try to influence people with their propaganda, their reports often confuse facts and distort the truth. If we are not cautious enough when reprinting the news, we may easily fall into their traps. The number of foreign news agencies in our country is big, and they often arbitrarily spread the news, deliberately misrepresent the facts, and are prejudiced and reject different views, thus being not worthy of any trust. We cannot hope to find accurate comments and don't know what to believe in their newspapers" (Feng, 1974, p. 140).

From 1916 when the News Translating and Editing Agency was founded in Beijing to the early 1930s, China witnessed a rapid increase in its state-run, private-owned and foreign news agencies, with agencies setting up one after another in different places. However, many of the Chinese new agencies failed to grow into news agencies in the real sense or to play their due role in the international communication. "They merely bore a name, with simple equipment and poor management, either being the mouthpiece for one party or group, or pretending to be a flexible class (Huang, 1930, p. 118)." Although news published by Guowen News Agency, Fudan News Agency and the Central News Agency were adopted by other newspapers, these agencies were small in scale and relied on news sources from Reuters or the Associated Press with which Guomin News Agency had signed a contract to exchange news. There was a need for China to have a national news agency to report on China's affairs and to show the world the Chinese government's stand on international affairs.

As a journalist in Reuters Far East bureau, Thomas Chao often felt that he was unfamiliar with the political and military affairs at that time, and had no idea of the significance of what had happened or the future development. So he consulted Lai Jing-hu and Shi Xin-jia, chief editors of *Beijing News*, and Luo Pei-qi, director of the news covering department. The discrimination from foreign journalists and media against Chinese journalists and media made Chao deeply aware that China must have its own national news agency, and that the Chinese government should withdraw the right of foreign news agencies to publish in China as soon as possible. He also suggested the Central News Agency should sign a contract with Reuters to exchange news. In so doing,

the Central News Agency would not only improve its international status, but would also begin to taken back the right to publish (Chao, 1994, p. 22).

Miles W. Vaughn, the then manager of the Associated Press Tokyo Bureau, once commented, “news about China should be collected by news agencies organized by the Chinese for Chinese newspapers ... the Associated Press does not believe that a foreign-run news agency can satisfy Chinese readers by writing about China on their behalf. In other words, it will be most satisfactory to the people if a country can organize its own news agency to report its own news (Chao, 2011, p. 5).”

On April 13, 1931, Ta Kung Pao, in response to the Chinese government's restrictions on reporting in China by the Japan Press Association, published an editorial on the issue of banning foreign news agencies, and called on the government to set up a national news agency. “... Foreign news agencies reporting in China face many difficulties, especially when it comes to politics. It is not easy to obtain correct information, as it is preferred by the authorities to go against human nature and keep secrets than to tell the public. As a result, official information will always be doubted while rumors and hearsay will be readily accepted. However, as facts always speak for themselves, it won't take long for the rumors to be scotched, and those news agencies will finally lose their credibility. Therefore, if there is a specialized news agency in China, foreign news agencies won't necessarily refuse news from Chinese agencies. It shouldn't be too difficult to set up an international news agency like this, but the greatest difficulty lies in organizing the agency and qualified talents” (Chao, 2011, pp. 6-7).

After the Mukden Incident on September 18 in 1931, the National Party's Central Committee and its publicity department came to realize the significance of international communication and the importance of establishing an international news agency to take the initiative in publishing. While building up its own strengths, the Central News Agency had also been trying to take back the right of Reuters and other foreign news agencies to publish English and Chinese news in China. In May 1932, the National Government reorganized the Central News Agency with *The Central Daily*, and appointed Xiao Tong-zi as the president, with the aim of building it into an international news agency.

At first, Reuters objected to the Central News Agency's proposal to withdraw its right to publish in China on the grounds that Reuters was a purely commercial organization, and that they didn't want to give up China's increasingly developing news business; the competition between news agencies of different countries were so fierce that they were afraid of being surpassed by others if they handed over the right to publish to the Central News Agency (Chao, 1994, p. 50). Xiao Tong-zi explained to Reuters that it was only a matter of time before China took back the right to publish, and that the scope and efficiency of Reuters' publication in China could only be improved after the right was handed over to the Central News Agency. Being urged by China, Reuters finally made the decision to hand over the right to publish Chinese news to the Central News Agency, although it continued to reserve the right to publish English news in Shanghai, Nanjing, Peiping, Tianjin, Hankou, Qingdao and Guangzhou.

Thomas Chao recalled one day in July 1932, Cheng Tian-fang, Vice Minister of the publicity department called Chao to ask, “the thing you talked about, can we get down to it? If so, we can sign the contract at any time (Chao, 1994, pp. 22-23).” Chao immediately sent a telegram to invite Reuters Far East general manager Deng Erle to. The next morning, Deng Erle and his successor as Far East general manager, C. J. Chancellor, flew to Nanjing and met with Cheng Tian-fang right away to draft an exchange contract between the Central News

Agency and Reuters. It was agreed the Central News Agency would take over Reuters' radio equipment in Nanjing and Shanghai, and take back the right to publish Chinese news in Peiping and Tianjin. The contract was signed after being approved by the top authorities that morning, and the Chinese representatives were Minister Chen Bu-lei and Vice Minister Cheng Tian-fang (Chao, 1994, p. 22).

In December 1933, the Central News Agency renewed the news exchange contract with Reuters; in January 1934, the Agency took back Reuters' right to publish Chinese news outside Shanghai; and in January 1937, a news exchange contract was signed with the United Press, and the contracts were renewed with the Reuters and the Havas. The Shanghai Bureau of the Central News Agency chose to translate the Reuters English news into Chinese, published it in Shanghai and spread it nationwide. After a series of twists and turns, China successfully took back the right of foreign news agencies to publish in Chinese, and the leading role of foreign news agencies led by Reuters in reporting on China came to an end. The large amount of international news obtained by the Central News Agency was provided to domestic newspapers, so that Chinese people were able to catch up with the events happening all over the world in time. This also promoted the development of the Central News Agency which, by the end of World War II, had become an internationally influential news agency.

Through the Central News Agency's taking back the right of Reuters to publish in China, China became independent in publishing news. According to Thomas Chao, after China withdrew the right of foreign news agencies to publish English news in China, when the concessions and the extraterritoriality in China were revoked, foreign news agencies based in China should be officially registered and develop their business in compliance with all the laws and rules stipulated by the Chinese government. In order to compete with foreign news agencies such as Reuters and United Press, the Central News Agency should maintain and strengthen its status as a national news agency, and foreign news organizations in China should be controlled by China with most of the capital and managing staff be Chinese (Chao, 1994, p. 51).

3. Promoting Exchanges and Cooperation between Chinese and International Press

In his engagement in international news reporting and international exchange activities, Thomas Chao was much concerned about the development of journalism in his motherland and what was in urgent need of improvement. Whenever Chao saw advanced equipment or good news reports of foreign news agencies, he would compare them with those in China, and put forward insightful suggestions as well as provide practical help.

From November 1943 to May 1944, Thomas Chao, as a correspondent of Reuters Far East bureau, joined the Chinese delegation to Britain. During the six-month visit, the Chinese delegation actively sought the exchange of news and cooperation between the Central News Agency and Reuters so as to raise China's voice internationally. In January 1944, the delegation was in London. When attending the activities by London Press Club, Chao learned that British journalists wanted the Chinese Press Association to send them some Chinese newspapers to be displayed in the library. Chao immediately communicated with both sides. The committee decided to hold a general meeting at Christmas that year. Lord Esther formally accepted an official letter from the Chinese Press Association and decided to hang it in the conference room as a permanent memento (Chao, 1945, p. 30).

Thomas Chao made a detailed study of the British news streets (including the Fleet Street), analyzed the news operation mode and the reasons for Britain's thriving news business, and advocated the introduction of its

management and operation experience in the Chinese press. When he was traveling in London, he learned that common British newspapermen was interested in hearing the latest news from the Chinese press. During wartime, British newspapers did not publish much Chinese news, not because they did not care about China, but because local newspapers had limited pages due to the limited supply of newsprint by the government. News on the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, the war in Italy, the war in the Southwest Pacific, news on the U.S., on bombing Germany by British and American air forces, on British and American naval forces, and the political and social news in Britain were news that must be published, so there was not enough space to publish the news about China. The British general public regarded China as an unimportant battlefield, as there was no decisive battles and China was too far away from Britain. The average British people did not know anything about China's politics, geography, history and people, so they were simply confused about the news sent from China and immediately did not have any interest (Chao, 1945, p. 38).

During his travel in Britain, Thomas Chao kept persuading British newspapers to send more correspondents to China, and thought that the British press leaders should go to Chongqing to see what China was like during wartime (Chao, 1945, p. 35). In Chao's opinion, in order to promote the understanding and friendship between the Chinese and British people, China should try to make British newspapers publish more news about China, and the government should improve the way of sending telegrams: only the most important news should be sent with explanations; interesting features could be added to attract more readers; and a telegram from the President (Chiang Kai-shek) could be sent every Wednesday, explaining the background to the events in China during the week, so that the British could understand the developing situations in China (Chao, 1945, p. 39).

In visiting the British broadcasting industry during wartime, Thomas Chao felt that there were great differences between China and Britain in the sending of telegrams. He called on Reuters to improve its Chinese news release, and also recommended that the Chinese government improve its telegraph equipment and efficiency. Chao thought the Central News Agency in Chongqing could not receive very well news sent from Reuters, so he tried to negotiate with the British telegraph department to improve. In the end, Reuters reduced the width of the waves, tripling the power generating capacity, and chose important telegrams to send directly to Chongqing within a good receiving time for Chongqing (Chao, 1945, p. 32).

On the morning of January 5, 1944, C. J. Chancellor, general manager of Reuters, invited Ren Ling-xun, a correspondent from the Central News Agency in London to meet with and the director of Reuters telegraph department and Thomas Chao to discuss how to improve Reuters news release to the Central News Agency. Five suggestions were made: firstly, the Radio Station for Chongqing should be separated from that for India; secondly, the editorial office should choose news only for Chongqing and not be influenced by India; thirdly, news should be sent to Chongqing within a good receiving time; fourthly, the number of words in the telegram should be increased and the time for sending should be changed; fifthly, the antenna of the radio should be modified so that the radio waves could directly reach Chongqing (Chao, 1945, p. 70).

In every country or city the Chinese delegation visited, Thomas Chao would carefully study the development of local journalism and consider how the Chinese press could learn from the advanced practices of other countries. He also paid close attention to how Chinese news was spreading locally, as well as and the life of local Chinese people and their reception of the news about their motherland. Chao learned in London that Chinese people in Iran, Russia, Egypt, Portugal and across Europe often listened to Chinese radio broadcasts

from London. Therefore, the Chinese language broadcasting in London should target overseas Chinese people rather than Chongqing, and in addition to broadcasting world news, special attention should be paid to the news published from Chongqing (Chao, 1945, p. 59).

4. Conclusion

Although Thomas Chao lived in a time full of competition and challenges both at home and abroad, he endeavored to explore the way to improve China's journalism and managed to be an internationally renowned journalist with his prominent achievements. There is no doubt that the Chinese press and journalists can learn important lessons from Chao's practice in international news reporting and his views on international communication: first, on the basis of respecting journalistic professionalism and understanding the culture of the target country, China should tell its stories in accordance with international practices and standards; second, China should develop its media strengths in the light of media economics and industry rules, build up its core competitiveness and take the initiative in the competition of international communication; third, under the impact of new media technology and the challenges from the international media monopolies, China should learn from the experience of foreign media industry and enhance its communication and cooperation with the international press.

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