

Demoralization From Within: Yuri Bezmenov's Ideological-Subversion Framework Tested Against the CCP's Patriotic Education and Information-Control System, 1949–2026

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Abstract

Yuri Bezmenov, a Soviet defector and former Novosti press agency journalist who said he had worked for the KGB, argued in the early 1980s that the decisive weapon of communist subversion was not espionage but a slow process he called ideological subversion, whose first and longest stage — demoralization — takes fifteen to

twenty years, the time required to educate one generation. A demoralized person, he claimed, is “unable to assess true information”: facts, documents and photographs no longer reach him, because the framework through which he perceives reality has itself been changed. This paper reconstructs Bezmenov’s framework from his primary corpus — the 1983 Los Angeles lecture, the 1984 interview with G. Edward Griffin, and *Love Letter to America* (1984) — and tests it, claim by claim, against the independently documented record of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). That record includes the thought-reform campaigns of 1942–1952, the post-1989 Patriotic Education Campaign and its replacement of a class-struggle narrative with a victimization narrative, contemporary research on the logic of mainland censorship, and the integration of Xi Jinping Thought into textbooks from primary school to university from 2021. The paper finds a substantial but incomplete fit, and one decisive divergence: Bezmenov described an external subverter working on a free society, whereas in the mainland the subverter is the sovereign ruler itself, demoralization has run not for one generation but for three, and “normalization” is not the final stage of the process but its starting condition. The paper also tests Bezmenov’s strongest claim — irreversibility — against the evidence of 1989 and the White Paper protests of November 2022, and finds it overstated: the process is deep, institutionalized and self-reinforcing, but contested and incomplete. It concludes that reversing it is likewise generational work, and sets out the institutional remedy — open archives, a truth commission, a victim registry, and constitutional-history education — already proposed in Free China Movement policy work.

Keywords: Yuri Bezmenov; ideological subversion; demoralization; patriotic education; thought reform; censorship; historical memory; PRC (Mainland); ROC (Taiwan)

1. Introduction: When Facts Tell Nothing

Every practitioner of dissent under a party-state knows the experience. You present a documented fact — a date, a photograph, a casualty record, a court judgment — to a person educated entirely inside that state’s system, and the fact does not land. It is not

examined and rejected; it is reclassified on arrival. The document is a forgery, the photograph is staged, the source is hostile, the question itself is disloyal. The argument is over before it begins, not because the evidence was weak, but because the faculty that would weigh evidence has been pre-empted.

Yuri Bezmenov gave that experience a name and a mechanism. Bezmenov (1939–1993), who worked for the Soviet Novosti press agency and, by his account, for the KGB, defected in 1970 from the Soviet mission in New Delhi, India, and settled in the West. In lectures and writings in the early 1980s he argued that only about fifteen percent of the KGB's effort went to espionage, and the rest to a slow, open process of ideological subversion whose purpose was "to change the perception of reality of every American to such an extent that despite the abundance of information no one is able to come to sensible conclusions in the interest of defending themselves, their families, their community and their country." [1]

His account circulates today mostly as viral fragments — short clips, quotation graphics, paraphrases in other languages. Those fragments are politically potent and scholarly unreliable in roughly equal measure. This paper therefore does two things that the viral version does not.

First, it returns to the primary corpus and reconstructs what Bezmenov actually said, in what order, with what qualifications, and with what textual variation between tellings. Second, it treats his framework not as revelation but as a hypothesis, and tests it against a case he did not analyze: the People's Republic of China (PRC, Mainland), where the party that rules the state also owns the schools, approves the textbooks, licenses the media, and operates the censorship apparatus.

Three research questions follow:

1. What, precisely, is Bezmenov's model — its stages, durations, mechanisms and endpoint claims?
2. How far does the documented CCP record — thought reform, patriotic education, textbook policy, censorship — conform to that model, and where does it diverge?
3. Is his endpoint claim true: that a completed demoralization is irreversible within the affected generation, reversible only by

educating a new one?

The method is source-graded. Grade A evidence consists of primary documents and official texts. Grade B consists of peer-reviewed or university-press scholarship. Grade C consists of defector and participant testimony, including Bezmenov himself: admissible for what the witness said and believed, admissible for facts about institutions only where independently corroborated. Grade D — viral quotation graphics, unattributed transcripts, social-media paraphrase — is used only as evidence of how the framework is now received, never as evidence for a factual claim. No factual claim about CCP practice in this paper rests on Bezmenov alone.

2. The Bezmenov Corpus, Authenticated

Three primary sources carry the framework.

The first is a lecture delivered in Los Angeles in 1983, preserved on video, in which Bezmenov sets out the four stages of ideological subversion and the demoralized-person passage in an early form. The second is the 1984 interview with G. Edward Griffin, published as *Soviet Subversion of the Free World Press*, which contains the fullest spoken version. The third is his book *Love Letter to America* (Los Angeles, 1984), issued under his cover name Tomas David Schuman, which presents the framework in print, including a chart assigning durations to the stages: demoralization, fifteen to twenty years; destabilization, two to five years; crisis, two to six months; and normalization, indefinite. [2]

The demoralized-person passage, in the 1984 interview version, reads:

“As I mentioned before, exposure to true information does not matter anymore. A person who is demoralized is unable to assess true information. The facts tell nothing to him. Even if I shower him with information, with authentic proof, with documents, with pictures. Even if I take him by force to the Soviet Union and show him a concentration camp, he will refuse to believe it — until he is going to receive a kick in his fat bottom. When the military boot crushes his balls, then

he will understand — but not before that. That is the tragedy of the situation of demoralization.” [3]

Two textual cautions matter for later chapters. First, the passage exists in variant forms: the 1983 lecture version is shorter, and modern quotation collections often silently splice the two. This paper quotes the 1984 interview version and treats shorter forms as abridgments of it. Second, Bezmenov’s biographical and institutional claims — his own rank, the fifteen/eighty-five percent division of KGB effort, the completeness of American demoralization by 1984 — are Grade C testimony. Some are plausible in outline and consistent with the documented Soviet practice of “active measures”; none should be repeated as established fact without the grading this paper gives them. What is not in doubt is the text itself: this is what he said, on the record, in 1983–1984, before the internet made it famous. That makes the corpus usable in the way this paper uses it — as a dated, attributed statement of a model, offered by a defector from the system that, in his account, operated it.

A further caution concerns reception. Bezmenov has become, four decades later, a prophet figure for audiences who use “demoralization” as a total explanation for any political disagreement. That use is itself a small demonstration of his point and a large distortion of it. His model names a specific mechanism — state-directed, generation-length re-education aimed at perception, not opinion — and it loses all analytical value when it is stretched to mean “people who disagree with me have been brainwashed.” Chapter 7 returns to this limit, because a framework that explains everything explains nothing, and this paper’s test of the CCP case is only meaningful if the framework can also fail.

3. The Framework Reconstructed

Bezmenov’s model has four elements.

Definition. Ideological subversion, also called active measures or psychological warfare, is the process of changing a target population’s perception of reality to the point where, despite abundant information, it cannot reach sensible conclusions in its own defense. Note what the target is: not belief in any particular

proposition, not party loyalty, not even opinion. The target is perception — the prior sorting of the world into the plausible and the absurd, the loyal and the hostile, the visible and the unseeable — on which all later opinions depend. A subverter who controls that sorting does not need to win arguments. He needs only to decide which arguments can be heard as arguments at all.

Stages and durations. Demoralization (fifteen to twenty years) works through education, media, culture and religion, and requires, Bezmenov stressed, at least one full generation of students exposed to the subverter's framing without effective counter-balance. Destabilization (two to five years) narrows to the essentials: economy, foreign relations, defense. Crisis (two to six months in the book's chart; some spoken versions compress it to a matter of weeks) brings violent change of power and structure. Normalization (indefinite) is the cynical stabilization that follows, under a new order that presents itself as the end of crisis. The durations are the model's most distinctive feature. Demoralization is slow because its unit of work is not an election cycle or a news cycle but a school cohort.

Mechanism: the programmed response. Of people formed by the process, Bezmenov said: "They are programmed to think and react to certain stimuli in a certain pattern. You cannot change their mind even if you expose them to authentic information. Even if you prove that white is white and black is black, you still cannot change the basic perception and the logic of behavior." [4] The word "programmed" should be read in the paper's analytical sense, not a technological one: a conditioned default, acquired through years of schooling and media environment, that fires before reflection and therefore rarely meets reflection at all.

Endpoint claims. Bezmenov made two strong claims at the endpoint. The first is irreversibility within the generation: exposure to true information "does not matter anymore" for the demoralized person, and change requires "another generation" educated differently. The second concerns the subverter's early collaborators in the target society — activists, academics and publicists who assist the process expecting to inherit power. In the interview he predicted that, on the new order's arrival, "most of them" would be eliminated, because their disillusionment, when it came, would

make them its most dangerous opponents. [5] Both claims are testable, in different ways, and Chapters 5 and 7 test them against the CCP record rather than assuming them.

One structural feature of the original model must be underlined before the test begins, because the mainland case reverses it. Bezmenov's subverter is external and denied: a foreign service working inside an open society that does not recognize what is being done to it, exploiting that society's own freedoms — its universities, press and entertainment — as the delivery system. Almost everything in the mainland case is the opposite: the subverter is the government, the process is official and compulsory, and the delivery system is not an exploited freedom but a state monopoly. The question of Chapter 5 is what happens to the model when that one variable is flipped.

4. Before Bezmenov: Thought Reform in the CCP, 1942–1976

The CCP did not need a Soviet manual to discover that perception could be re-engineered, and its practice predates Bezmenov's description by four decades. This chapter is deliberately brief: it establishes precedence, not a full history, and it makes no new archival claims.

The template was set at Yan'an. The Rectification Movement, formally launched in February 1942, subjected cadres and intellectuals to cycles of study, confession, criticism and self-criticism, and cadre screening, arriving at a single authorized line and a single authorized interpreter of it. [6] The techniques — group study of assigned texts, written self-examination, public confession of ideological error, and organizational verdict — became a reusable political technology, applied far beyond the wartime base area once the party held state power.

After 1949 the technology was generalized to the educated population of the new state. The Thought Reform Movement of 1951–1952, launched after Premier Zhou Enlai's call for intellectuals to reform their thought, required teachers and university staff to arm themselves with Marxism-Leninism and discard individualism, liberalism and what the *People's Daily* called the cultural thought of the "European-American reactionary

bourgeoisie.” Intellectuals trained abroad were pressed to confess their role as conduits of imperialist cultural invasion; curricula were restructured on Soviet models, and disciplines judged pseudo-bourgeois — sociology, political science, economics among them — were abolished. [7] Thought reform (思想改造, *sixiang gaizao*) and its later, softer administrative descendant, thought work (思想工作, *sixiang gongzuo*), name a continuous institutional practice: the party claims jurisdiction not only over conduct but over the inner framework that produces conduct.

The campaigns that followed — the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957, which destroyed many of the intellectuals who had spoken in the Hundred Flowers period, and the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, which closed universities, dispersed a generation of students to the countryside, and made ritual denunciation a mass experience — belong to the same lineage in one respect this paper needs: they taught, by reward and by terror, the practical rules of perception inside the system. What may be said; what must not be remembered in public; which victims count and which do not; which questions mark the questioner. A population does not need to believe the authorized account in private for those rules to work. It needs only to have learned, early and thoroughly, the sorting mechanism of Chapter 3: which facts can be heard as facts.

Two differences from Bezmenov’s model already appear in this early record, and both matter for the test. First, the early CCP campaigns were coercive and episodic — rectification by campaign, with terror as an integral instrument — whereas Bezmenov’s demoralization is described as slow, largely non-violent, and dependent on the target’s freedoms. The mainland system would later acquire the slow, curricular form Bezmenov described, but it never surrendered the coercive form; it holds both. Second, the target was internal from the start. The CCP was not subverting an adversary’s society; it was remolding its own. Demoralization, in the mainland, is a technology of rule, not of infiltration.

5. Systematization After 1989: The Patriotic Education Campaign

If one moment converted that inherited practice into a modern, generation-length educational system, it was the aftermath of June

4, 1989. The democracy movement of that spring — in which students and citizens in Beijing and hundreds of other cities demanded political reform, and which the party-state ended by military force — was, in the leadership's own post-mortem, an educational failure. Deng Xiaoping's own post-mortem pointed the same way. In his June 9, 1989 speech he framed the protests as the product of a failure to uphold party control and of ideological laxity toward Western values, and called for party orthodoxy to be entrenched among young people; in his stated lessons of the turmoil he put it as a direct instruction: "Ideological education should be strengthened." Zheng Wang's account of the period adds the leadership's sharper self-criticism — that the party's failure in education, its neglect of teaching young people what China had been and what the revolution had cost, had been a serious error. [19] The remedy was not a campaign of the old episodic kind. It was a curriculum.

The Patriotic Education Campaign, launched in 1991 and codified in the Central Committee Propaganda Department's *Outline on Implementing Patriotic Education* in 1994, was aimed explicitly at youth. [8] Suisheng Zhao, in the foundational study, called the result a "state-led nationalism": a campaign to re-establish the party's authority after Tiananmen by re-founding its legitimacy on patriotic rather than class-struggle grounds. [9]

Zheng Wang's *Never Forget National Humiliation* (Columbia University Press, 2012) documented the mechanism in detail. [10] The campaign executed three connected substitutions in the official historical narrative taught to every schoolchild:

1. **From class struggle to national struggle.** The organizing conflict of modern mainland history ceased to be internal — landlords against peasants, capitalists against workers — and became external: the Chinese nation against the foreign powers that had humiliated it.
2. **From victor narrative to victimization narrative.** The older Maoist account, in which the party had won national independence and stood the nation up, was superseded by an account centered on a "century of humiliation" at Western and Japanese hands — a trauma only the party, as the nation's savior and continuing defender, could answer and avenge.

3. **From textbook to total environment.** The narrative was institutionalized not only in rewritten history textbooks — from 1992, required in high school as well as middle school, and tested in the university entrance examinations — but in museums, monuments and a national network of patriotic education bases: one hundred national “demonstration bases,” forty of them, Wang notes, at memory sites of past conflicts with foreign countries. [11]

Read against Chapter 3, the correspondence with Bezmenov’s mechanism is close and should be stated plainly. The campaign’s unit of work is the school cohort. Its stated object is not a set of opinions but a historical consciousness — Wang’s “chosenness-myth-trauma complex” — installed before the student has any independent means of checking it, and refreshed by examinations that reward its reproduction. Its content is engineered so that criticism of the party is thereafter perceived, by the person formed in it, not as a political position to be weighed but as a repetition of the national humiliation: the critic sorts himself, in the hearer’s prior framework, with the foreign forces who wounded the nation. That is Bezmenov’s programmed response, produced not by a foreign service exploiting an open society, but by a ministry of education operating a compulsory one.

The case of Yuan Weishi shows the system defending itself against an internal exception. In 2006 Yuan, a history professor at Zhongshan University, published an essay in *Freezing Point*, the Sunday supplement of *China Youth Daily*, criticizing mainland textbooks for teaching an incomplete history that fostered blind nationalism and closed, anti-foreign thinking; he described the younger generation, in a phrase that became famous, as sheep still being raised on wolf’s milk. Within two weeks the supplement was shut down and its editors removed. [12] The episode is small and therefore useful. No foreign subverter was involved. A credentialed insider attempted, in a party newspaper, to correct the perception-framework at its source — the textbook — and the system’s response was to close the venue. Demoralization from within protects its curriculum the way Bezmenov’s subverter was supposed to protect his operation: not by answering the correction, but by ending the conditions under which it could be heard.

This chapter’s claim should be bounded as carefully as it was made.

Patriotic education is not identical to Soviet ideological subversion, and many of its elements — national history, memorial sites, civic pride — have analogues in democratic states, including the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) and the United States. The difference this paper identifies is not the existence of patriotic content. It is the conjunction of four conditions that do not jointly hold in an open society: a single authorized narrative; a monopoly provider (no competing textbooks, press or platform may systematically contradict it); examination and employment incentives for its reproduction; and penalties, demonstrated in the Yuan case and many since, for public correction. Under those four conditions, education in history becomes, functionally, what Bezmenov described: the generational installation of a perception-framework that sorts future information before it can be assessed.

6. The Digital and Xi-Era Extension

A framework installed at school would decay if the adult information environment contradicted it daily. In the mainland it does not, because the second system — information control — performs the maintenance. Two bodies of evidence describe how.

The first is empirical censorship research. Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret E. Roberts, analyzing millions of mainland social-media posts captured before censorship across nearly 1,400 services, found that the censorship program does not primarily target criticism of the state, its leaders or its policies: even vitriolic criticism is not, as such, more likely to be removed. What is removed, regardless of whether it is pro- or anti-government, is content that represents, reinforces or spurs collective action — social mobilization occurring now or that might occur in the future. [13] The finding refines Bezmenov rather than merely confirming him. The system's highest priority is not to make every subject believe the authorized account; it is to prevent subjects from discovering, in public, that others share their disbelief — to keep a privately demoralized or privately dissenting population publicly atomized. Perception is governed at school; expression is governed online; and the join between them is collective action, which the second system exists to forestall.

The second body of evidence is the Xi-era return of ideological

education to the center of the curriculum, in personalized form. In July 2021 the National Textbook Committee and Ministry of Education issued guidelines integrating Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era into textbooks at all levels; from the fall semester of 2021, primary and secondary schools across the mainland began using the five-volume student reader on Xi Jinping Thought, graded from lower primary to university, and in August 2023 an *Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought* was added as a textbook for ideological and political education in colleges and universities. [14] The Committee's stated rationale is itself a Grade A statement of this paper's thesis: textbooks, it said, "reflect the will of the Communist Party of China and the nation and directly impact the direction and quality of talent cultivation," and primary schools should "foster love and right understanding for the Party, country and socialism" in students. [15]

Set the two extensions side by side and the mainland system, by 2021–2023, satisfies a description Bezmenov never applied to any country, including his own. The Soviet system he described attempted demoralization abroad while its domestic population was held by a cruder mixture of propaganda and fear; it collapsed within one long lifetime. The mainland system couples (a) a compulsory, examination-enforced historical narrative installed in childhood, (b) a censorship apparatus whose empirically demonstrated priority is to prevent collective expression rather than to police private criticism, and (c) a leader's doctrine placed, by name, in the textbooks of every school level. It is demoralization with a ministry, a budget, an examination syllabus and a firewall — administered not against an adversary, but as the ordinary education of the ruler's own subjects, and renewed for each new cohort as a matter of routine administration rather than campaign.

7. Testing the Framework: Fits, Breaks, and Inversions

Where it fits. The mainland record confirms the framework's core mechanism with a precision Bezmenov's American material never supplied. A perception-framework is installed in childhood through a compulsory, examination-rewarded narrative (Chapter 5); it is maintained in adulthood by an information system whose demonstrated priority is preventing collective expression rather than correcting private belief (Chapter 6); and its characteristic

product is exactly the response Bezmenov predicted — not argued disagreement, but the prior reclassification of unwelcome facts as foreign, forged or disloyal. The duration thesis also fits, and is exceeded: where Bezmenov required fifteen to twenty years to form one generation, the mainland system has formed three in succession, each educated by teachers formed in the preceding one.

Where it inverts. Two elements of the original model reverse in the mainland case. First, agency: the subverter is not external and does not exploit the target society's freedoms; it is the sovereign, and it works through compulsion. Second, sequence: normalization — rule by a post-crisis order presenting itself as permanent stability — is not the terminal stage the process moves toward; it has been the baseline condition since 1949, within which each new round of demoralization is administered as routine governance. A model built for infiltration must be re-specified, not merely applied, when the infiltrator holds the ministry of education.

Where the collaborator claim must be handled with care.

Bezmenov predicted that a subverter's early helpers would be first in line for elimination once their usefulness ended, because their disillusionment would make them dangerous. Mainland history offers episodes that rhyme with this — intellectuals who answered the Hundred Flowers invitation in 1956–1957 and were destroyed in the Anti-Rightist Movement that followed; allies of each campaign discarded by the next — but rhyme is not proof of a general law, and this paper does not elevate Bezmenov's prediction into one. The defensible claim is narrower and documented: a system that rewards denunciation and punishes independent judgment reliably turns on its own instruments when their independent judgment survives their usefulness. That is a property of the incentive structure, not a prophecy.

Where it breaks: irreversibility. Bezmenov's strongest claim is also his weakest, and the mainland itself supplies the counter-evidence twice. In 1989, after forty years of thought reform and a decade into the period in which a formed generation should, on his account, have been unreachable, millions of mainland citizens — students educated entirely inside the system at their head — occupied public space across the country demanding political reform, free expression and accountable government. The system

answered with the army, which is an admission, in the regime's own conduct, that education had not completed its work.

In November 2022 it happened again, in a form that comments directly on this paper's subject. After a deadly fire in a locked-down apartment building in Urumqi, thousands took to the streets in Shanghai, Beijing and other cities in the largest nationwide demonstrations since 1989, defying the zero-COVID policy, chanting "We want human rights" and "Down with the Communist Party," and holding up blank sheets of paper as a symbol of censorship — the White Paper protests. [16] A blank sheet is the precise negation of the demoralized condition: a citizen who can no longer say what he means instead displays, publicly, the fact that he is forbidden to say it, and everyone who sees it understands. That is perception working correctly under conditions designed to disable it. The protests were suppressed, participants were detained, and some were imprisoned — and the state's zero-COVID policy was abandoned within days. Demoralization in the mainland is therefore best described, on the evidence, as deep, institutionalized and continuously renewed — and incomplete, contested, and capable of sudden public failure when lived experience (a lockdown, a fire, a boot, in Bezmenov's own brutal image) contradicts the installed framework at scale.

This finding matters beyond scholarly accuracy. If the process were truly irreversible within a generation, the only rational response would be despair or waiting. Because it is incomplete, a remedy is a practical question, and it is to the remedy — specified as institutions, not slogans — that the final chapter turns.

8. Proposed Solutions: Rebuilding the Faculty of Judgment

Bezmenov's own logic dictates the first principle of any remedy, and rules out the most common one. If the injury is to the faculty that assesses information, then simply supplying more information — more facts, more documents, more photographs — cannot be the cure, because it addresses the faculty that is damaged as if it were intact. A remedy must rebuild the faculty itself: the habits of source criticism, logical inference, historical memory and comparative judgment by which a citizen sorts a claim before deciding whether to believe it. And because the injury was generational and

institutional, the remedy must be generational and institutional too. This chapter sets out a five-part program. Its elements are not invented here: the first two restate Free China Movement policy already published, and the third quotes and builds on the Movement's existing Civic Education project — the remediation infrastructure that, unusually, already exists and is already operating online.

8.1 Open the archives, name the victims, establish the truth on the record

The Free China Movement's October 1 policy proposal — that the date be remade, by a future democratically authorized legislature, into a National Day of Suffering and Freedom — specifies the institutional core: “a national victim registry and digital archive; opening party and state archives; an independent truth commission; a national memorial and public education; and compensation, rehabilitation, and judicial remedy for verified victims, with individual responsibility based on evidence and due process rather than collective punishment.” [18]

Each element answers a specific element of demoralization. The opened archive answers the monopoly of narrative at its root: the party's history can be taught as the only history only while the documents that would falsify it are classified. The victim registry answers the sorting mechanism that decides which victims count: it counts them all, by name, on evidence. The truth commission answers the programmed response — the reflexive reclassification of fact as disloyalty — by creating an authoritative public setting in which facts are heard as facts, tested by due process, before the whole society. None of this is a fact-dump. It is the construction of institutions whose everyday operation trains citizens, by participation, in the assessment of evidence.

8.2 Reform the textbook under conditions that prevent a new monopoly

Textbook reform is the obvious remedy and the dangerous one: a transition government that simply replaced the party's authorized narrative with its own would reproduce the structure of demoralization under new management. The safeguards are therefore part of the proposal, not an afterthought: (a) competing textbooks, approved against published factual standards, with no

single authorized text; (b) source-based history teaching, in which students work from documents — including documents that contradict each other — rather than from conclusions; (c) explicit teaching of the suppressed record, including the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and 1989, under the same evidentiary standards as every other topic; and (d) examination reform, so that assessment rewards the evaluation of sources rather than the reproduction of a narrative. The measure of success is not that the next generation believes a different set of propositions. It is that it can tell how a proposition is established, and can say so when one is not.

8.3 Civic education as remediation: the CCE-100 program

Facts need a faculty; a faculty is built by practice, question by question. That is the design of the Free China Movement's Civic Education project, *100 Questions on Political Myths: Democracy, Freedom, Human Rights and the Modern Citizen* (CCE-100), published at FreeChina.live's Civic Education directory. The project states its own method, and the method is itself a model of anti-demoralization pedagogy:

"The 100 entries are research questions. They do not represent verified original propaganda texts or predetermined conclusions. Each question will undergo collection of original discourse, fact-checking, comparative research and independent review, and links will be added item by item after editorial approval." [17, translated from the directory]

A curriculum that begins from questions rather than conclusions, and that publishes its verification method with its results, trains precisely the faculty the party curriculum was designed to disable. Its ten chapters map directly onto the symptoms documented in Chapters 5 and 6 of this paper:

Demoralization symptom (this paper)

CCE-100 remediation

Criticism of the party perceived as unpatriotic, foreign-inspired

Ch. 3 — CCE-021: Does patriotism mean loving the ruling party? CCE-022: Is criticizing the government unpatriotic? CCE-029: Are state, government and ruling party the same thing?

Historical amnesia; suppressed events unmentionable

Ch. 5 — CCE-045: The Great Leap Forward; CCE-046: The Cultural Revolution; CCE-047: What happened in 1989, and why does preserving memory matter? CCE-050: What does opening historical archives mean for truth and reconciliation?

Inability to assess official or foreign information

Ch. 9, *Propaganda, Information and Logic* — CCE-081: How to verify official media; CCE-082: How to cross-verify foreign media; CCE-085: Censorship and rumor; CCE-086: Information cocoons and algorithmic recommendation; CCE-087: Correlation and causation; CCE-088: How political slogans affect thought; CCE-090: Verifying statistics and citations

Belief that ordinary citizens cannot judge politics

Ch. 1 — CCE-005: Are ordinary citizens capable of rational political choice? Ch. 10 — CCE-091: What rights knowledge should civic education contain? CCE-100: What political responsibilities should a modern citizen bear?

No lived

Ch. 7 — CCE-061: ROC (Taiwan)'s

Demoralization symptom (this paper)

CCE-100 remediation

model of
a
working
alternative

democratization; CCE-062: The ROC Constitution in practice in Taiwan; CCE-069: Paths of transition from authoritarianism

Two features make CCE-100 more than a syllabus for a hypothetical future. First, it is operating now — directory published, entries under production, completed essays linked from the directory as they are approved — and therefore available today to the audiences remediation can already reach: the diaspora, students outside the firewall, and mainland readers who cross it. Remediation does not have to wait for transition to begin; on Bezmenov’s own timetable logic, starting the fifteen-to-twenty-year clock now, with the generation now in school, is the entire point. Second, its question-first method is exportable as the template for the post-transition curriculum of §8.2, because it demonstrates in practice the difference between civic education and counter-propaganda: counter-propaganda installs a rival narrative; civic education installs a method, and accepts the risk — which is also its proof of good faith — that a citizen equipped with a method may reach conclusions the educator did not intend.

8.4 Restore an information environment in which judgment can be exercised

Civic education cannot survive contact with an information system designed to atomize it. The censorship finding of Chapter 6 defines the reform target precisely: a system whose priority is to silence collective expression must be replaced by one in which collective expression is the normal test of public claims. Concretely: abolition of the firewall and of pre-publication censorship; independent licensing of media under law, not party direction; platform transparency obligations in place of platform censorship obligations; and legal protection for the acts the present system most reliably punishes — reporting, archiving, commemorating and organizing.

The sequence matters. A citizen trained by §8.3 who returns to an environment governed by the old rules will relearn the old lesson — that judgment is dangerous and silence is safe — faster than any curriculum can teach the new one.

8.5 Sequence and timetable: a generation, in reverse

Bezmenov's one durable insight is the timetable, and the remedy should accept it rather than promise faster results than the mechanism allows. **Immediately, and already begun:** preservation — archives copied and held outside the party's reach, testimony recorded while witnesses live, civic education produced and read online (CCE-100) — so that the materials of re-education exist whatever happens. **At a transition:** the §8.1 institutions (archive opening, victim registry, truth commission) and the §8.4 legal reforms, which require state authority and must be enacted by democratically authorized bodies, as the October 1 proposal itself stipulates. **Across the following generation:** the §8.2 textbook settlement and §8.3 civic curriculum in schools, assessed not by attitudinal surveys — which a frightened population can be trained to pass — but by the observable recovery of the faculty itself: a press that contradicts the government without penalty, courts that rule against the state, elections whose outcomes are not known in advance, and a public that can hear an unwelcome fact and ask, first, whether it is true.

That last test is the paper's, and Bezmenov's, in a single sentence. Demoralization is complete when facts tell nothing. It is reversed on the day they tell something again — and the day is hastened, measurably, by every archive opened, every victim named, and every one of the hundred questions honestly asked and honestly answered.

Conclusion

Tested against the mainland record, Bezmenov's framework survives in a corrected form. Corrected, it reads: a ruling party that monopolizes education and information can, over generations, damage a population's faculty for assessing truth — not totally, not irreversibly, and not without continuous institutional effort, which is why the effort is still being made, in new textbooks and new

censorship systems, seventy-five years on. The viral version of Bezmenov invites despair or contempt for the people formed by such a system. The evidence supports neither. It supports work: the slow, institutional, generational work of preservation, truth-telling and civic education — begun now, in exile and online where necessary, and completed, when the archives can finally be opened, in the schools of a free China.

Notes

[1] Yuri Bezmenov, interview with G. Edward Griffin, *Soviet Subversion of the Free World Press* (1984), transcript: definition of ideological subversion. [2] Tomas David Schuman [Yuri Bezmenov], *Love Letter to America* (Los Angeles: W.I.N. Almanac Panorama, 1984), chart at p. 23: four stages and durations. [3] Bezmenov, 1984 Griffin interview, transcript, demoralization passage. A shorter variant appears in the 1983 Los Angeles lecture. [4] Bezmenov, 1983 Los Angeles lecture, as carried in the transcript-based account in *Big Think*, “39 years ago, a KGB defector chillingly predicted modern America” (2018, updated); Grade C testimony, wording as given there. [5] Bezmenov, 1984 Griffin interview, transcript: on collaborators “marked for extermination” and the psychological shock of the new order. [6] CCP Central Committee, Decision on the Rectification of the Three Styles of Work (February 1942); standard accounts of the Yan’an Rectification Movement, 1942–1944. [7] Thought Reform Movement, begun September 1951 after Zhou Enlai’s speech calling on intellectuals to reform their thought; *People’s Daily* calls to university staff; techniques included indoctrination, struggle sessions, propaganda, and criticism and self-criticism, as summarized in standard reference accounts of thought reform (*sixiang gaizao*) in the PRC. [8] Patriotic Education Campaign, launched 1991; CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department, *Outline on Implementing Patriotic Education* (1994). [9] Suisheng Zhao, “A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287–302. doi:10.1016/S0967-067X(98)00009-9. [10] Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[11] Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, ch. 4: textbooks from 1992, university entrance examination content, museums and 100 national demonstration bases (40 at foreign-conflict memory sites). [12] Yuan Weishi, essay in *Freezing Point* (*China Youth Daily* supplement), January 2006; supplement closed and editors removed within two weeks, as reported in contemporary coverage and surveyed in Edward Vickers (2009) and Gregory Fairbrother (2004) on patriotic education. [13] Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2 (May 2013): 326-343. doi:10.1017/S0003055413000014. [14] Ministry of Education / National Textbook Committee guidelines (July 2021) integrating Xi Jinping Thought into textbooks at all levels; Xi Jinping Thought student readers in primary and secondary schools from fall 2021; *Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era* added as a university ideological-political textbook, August 2023. [15] National Textbook Committee, statement accompanying the 2021 textbook guidelines, as reported by BBC News, "China schools: 'Xi Jinping Thought' introduced into curriculum," 25 August 2021, and *China Daily*. [16] Human Rights Watch, "China: Free 'White Paper' Protesters" (26 January 2023) and "The Legacy of the White Paper Protests" (23 November 2025): November 2022 protests after the 24 November 2022 Urumqi fire, blank-paper symbolism, slogans, detentions, and the subsequent abandonment of zero-COVID. [17] Free China Movement, Civic Education (CCE-100), *100 Questions on Political Myths: Democracy, Freedom, Human Rights and the Modern Citizen*, directory, <https://freechina.live/civic-education-100-questions/> — introduction and chapter contents (CCE-001–CCE-100), accessed 20 October 2026. English renderings of entry titles are the author's translations from the directory's Chinese text. [18] Free China Movement, "October 1 — National Day of Suffering and Freedom," policy proposal (20 September 2026), and press release, "Free China Movement Calls for October 1 to Become a National Day of Suffering and Freedom" (30 September 2026), <https://freechina.live/english/english-press-releases-statements/press-release-october-1-national-day-suffering-freedom/> [19] Deng Xiaoping, speech to cadres and soldiers of the martial-law troops, Beijing, 9 June 1989; and Deng Xiaoping, remarks on the lessons of the 1989 turmoil ("First priority should always be given to national

sovereignty and security,” 1989 talk, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*), on strengthening ideological education. Wang’s summary of the leadership’s education self-criticism: Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, introduction and ch. 4.

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