In the mid-1980s, the diversity of political views among intellectuals had progressed. Politically concerned activists organized meetings to stimulate legal reforms, redefine socialism, and explore Chinese and foreign traditions for new modes of governance. Growing dissatisfaction among both reformists and conservatives led to increasingly open conflict, which culminated in the demonstrations of 1987 and 1989. For longer than two years after the Tiananmen Tragedy of June Four, the atmosphere at CASS remained oppressive, and attacks were made on bourgeois liberalism, nihilism, and political anarchism, which kept political reformist ideas in the background. At the beginning of the 1990s, the students and teachers at CASS seemed to have lost their political idealism.

After the 1989 demonstrations, apart from admonishing intellectuals for making mistakes and encouraging them to follow a patriotic Party line, the political leadership made the administrative leadership of CASS accountable to the newly set-up CASS Party Committee. In December 1989, the CASS leadership group was re-adjusted: Yu Wen (December 1989–December 1992) replaced Hu Sheng as first secretary of the Leading Party Committee. The relevance of this switch lay in the structural change planned in CASS’s future leadership and the renewed emphasis on the leading role of Marxism-Leninism in academic policies. In October 1991, the Party Committee (dangwei) was formally raised to the highest level of power and the head of CASS was made to comply with its policies.

But it was only after Deng’s Southern Inspection Tour in January 1992 that official interest in the reforms redeveloped. This time, ideas on the reforms were designed in a much more orderly manner. Thus, Party cadres at CASS had to study the speeches of Deng’s Southern Inspection Tour and the reports of top Party meetings—in which delegates from CASS also took part—so that new concepts more effectively took root in the research curricula of the various departments and offices of CASS (as will be shown in Part Four). In other words, a development took place that made possible the transformation of simple bipolar politics and rigid
factionalism in academic circles to a guided form of freedom. Within these boundaries the competition between a hundred schools of thought was made to flourish.

The primacy of the CASS Party Committee and the ‘responsibility system’

The new regulations of the Party Committee System stipulated the implementation of a new ‘responsibility system’ that made the president of CASS responsible to the leadership of the Party Committee. Thus, the Party Committee Secretary became first leader (yi batou 一把头) of CASS. This switch ushered in a development in which the Party Committee became more influential than the Party Group, that is, the administrative leading group. The original Party Group, which had led CASS under the liberalization policies since 1982, withdrew. It was emphasized that the Party Group had been responsible for allowing the demonstrations to occur: it had failed in its duty as ideological and political leader. The reason for its failure, it was argued, was a general slackening of ideological discipline, especially in institutes that had escaped Party control, such as the Institutes of Political Science, Marxism-Leninism, and Literature. Now that the CCP Central Committee had decided to introduce the responsibility system, the weight of power shifted in favour of the Party unit, and reflected a reversal to the situation before 1982. At the Academy level, Yu Wen stayed on as General Secretary of the Party Committee, and as Hu Sheng retained his post as President of CASS, he became accountable to Yu Wen. Hu Sheng, Liu Guoguang, Ru Xin, Zheng Bijian, Jiang Liu, Wu Jiemin, Liu Qilin and Wang Wenfeng were appointed as members of the Party Committee. And when Qu Weizhen fell ill, Wu Jiemin took on the responsibility for day-to-day Party affairs.

The responsibility system also meant that the leadership at the level of the research institutes became accountable to the Party Secretary of the Institute Party Committee. This, in turn, required the creation of Party Committees in all of CASS’s thirty-two research institutes. The new system of the institutes’ Party Committees and leadership was laid down in the CASS Institute Leadership Work Regulations (Try-Out) of February 12, 1991, and in the CCP CASS Research Institute Party Committee Work Regulations (Try-Out) of January 1992.¹ They stipulated that heads and deputy heads of